

Job 28:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.

Analysis

He setteth an end to darkness (שָׁם לְחֹשֶׁךְ)—The verb sam (sets, appoints) with gets (end, boundary) shows human determination conquering natural obstacles. Choshek (darkness) represents the earth's underground depths where light never reaches. Miners bring artificial light into absolute darkness, extending human dominion into realms naturally hostile to life. This demonstrates humanity's God-given mandate to subdue creation (Genesis 1:28).

And searcheth out all perfection (וְלִכְלֹל־תְּכֵלִית הוּא חוֹקֵר)—The participle choqer (searching, investigating) depicts thorough examination. Takhlit denotes completeness, perfection, or the farthest extent. Miners pursue ore veins to their ultimate end, leaving nothing unexamined. **The stones of darkness, and the shadow of death** (אֶבֶן אֲפֶל וְצִלְמָוֶת)—Ophel (gloom) and tsalmaveth (death-shadow) emphasize the danger and mystery of deep mining. Ancient miners risked cave-ins, suffocation, and getting lost in labyrinthine tunnels. Yet for precious metals, humans braved death itself. Job's rhetorical strategy: if people risk death to mine gold, how much more should they pursue wisdom? But wisdom isn't found in death's darkness—it comes from the God who created light (28:23-27).

Historical Context

Ancient mining was extraordinarily dangerous. Miners descended into narrow shafts by rope, worked by lamplight, faced toxic gases, and risked collapse. Despite these hazards, major mining operations existed throughout the ancient

Near East for copper, silver, gold, and iron. Archaeological evidence from Timna (Sinai) and other sites confirms sophisticated mining from the third millennium BC. Job's description reflects firsthand knowledge of these operations, making his metaphor more powerful—humans will brave death for earthly treasure but often neglect the pursuit of heavenly wisdom.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What extreme efforts do people undertake for earthly gain while neglecting the pursuit of divine wisdom?
2. How does your investment of time and energy reveal what you truly treasure—earthly wealth or heavenly wisdom?
3. What 'darkness' are you willing to penetrate in pursuit of wisdom and knowledge of God?

Interlinear Text

קֵץ	שֶׁ	לְחֹשֶׁךְ	וְלְכָל	תְּכֵלֶת	הוּא	חֹקֵר
an end	He setteth	to darkness	H3605	all perfection	H1931	and searcheth out
H7093	H7760	H2822		H8503		H2713
אֲבָנִים	אֶפְלַח	וְצִלְמָוֶת:				
the stones	of darkness	and the shadow of death				
H68	H652	H6757				

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (Parallel theme): And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

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