

Job 28:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.

Analysis

The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant—(פֹּרֵץ נַחַל מַעֲמָדָר) —This difficult verse describes underground water bursting forth where miners work. The verb parats (to break out, burst forth) with nachal (stream, wadi, torrent) depicts sudden flooding in mine shafts. Me'im-gar (from with the sojourner/inhabitant) may refer to water breaking into inhabited mining areas, creating life-threatening emergencies. Ancient miners constantly battled groundwater, requiring drainage systems and careful engineering.

Even the waters forgotten of the foot (הַנְשָׁכְחִים מִפַּרְגֵּל) —These waters are nishkachim (forgotten ones) minni-ragel (from/by the foot). This likely describes underground streams never touched by human foot—waters flowing in complete darkness where no one walks. The image emphasizes the inaccessible, unknown regions miners penetrate. **They are dried up, they are gone away from men** (דָלְלוּ מַאֲנוֹשׁ תָּעוּ) —The verbs dallu (they hang, are dried up) and na'u (they wander, move) may describe miners suspended on ropes, swinging away from solid ground as they descend into shafts, or water systems drained away from human contact. The verse's overall point: miners access utterly remote, dangerous places—depths where underground rivers flow unseen, where humans must be lowered by ropes into the dark unknown. This extreme effort for earthly metals contrasts with wisdom's source—not in earth's hidden places but in the fear of God (28:28).

Historical Context

Ancient mining required advanced engineering. Evidence from Egyptian, Cypriot, and Mesopotamian sites shows vertical shafts up to 100 feet deep, rope systems for lowering miners, drainage tunnels, and ventilation shafts. Miners faced flooding from underground aquifers, requiring constant bailing and drainage. Job's description reflects detailed knowledge of these hazards, suggesting either personal observation or expert testimony. The technological sophistication makes his theological point stronger—humans master incredible engineering challenges but cannot engineer their way to wisdom.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do modern technological achievements tempt us to believe we can solve spiritual problems through human ingenuity?
2. What does it mean that wisdom cannot be 'mined' from creation but must be received through relationship with the Creator?
3. How should the truth that wisdom comes through 'the fear of the Lord' shape our educational priorities and life pursuits?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------------|---------------------------|----|-------|
| בָּזֶה | מִעֵם | נִכְלָה | רָא | מִנְשָׁכָה | מִ | מִ |
| breaketh out | The flood | H5973 | from the inhabitant | even the waters forgotten | | H4480 |
| H6555 | H5158 | | H1481 | H7911 | | |

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|-------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| בְּזֶל | לִלְכָה | מִאֵנָךְ וְשָׁ | תָּעוֹז: |
| of the foot | they are dried up | from men | they are gone away |
| H7272 | H1809 | H582 | H5128 |

