

Job 28:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire.

Analysis

As for the earth, out of it cometh bread—the surface produces sustenance through agriculture. Yet **under it is turned up as it were fire** (Hebrew tahath, תַּחַת, "beneath"). This stark contrast between earth's peaceful surface and violent subterranean mining operations introduces Job's theme: wisdom is harder to obtain than extracting gems from deep mines. The Hebrew haphak (הָפַךְ, "turned up") means to overturn or transform, depicting miners literally turning the earth inside-out seeking treasure.

Ancient miners used fire-setting—heating rock faces then dousing them with water to fracture stone. Job's audience would recognize this dangerous, labor-intensive process. The verse establishes irony: humans violently assault the earth to extract material wealth, yet cannot penetrate wisdom's hiding place through any amount of effort. This anticipates verse 28's conclusion that wisdom is found not through human excavation but divine revelation: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom."

Historical Context

Mining in the ancient Near East was perilous work requiring technological sophistication. Fire-setting, tunnel excavation, and ore processing all demanded specialized knowledge. Job's description reflects firsthand familiarity with mining operations, supporting a patriarchal date when such industries flourished. The contrast between surface agriculture (peaceful, life-giving) and underground

mining (violent, death-risking) would resonate powerfully with Job's original audience.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the contrast between surface bread and subterranean fire illustrate the difference between common grace (provision) and the difficult search for ultimate truth?
2. What does this verse teach about the limits of human effort in obtaining spiritual wisdom?
3. How might our culture's confidence in technology and extraction mirror Job's contemporaries' mining prowess, yet still miss wisdom?

Interlinear Text

<p>אֶרֶץ</p> <p>As for the earth</p> <p>H776</p>	<p>מִמֶּנָּה</p> <p>H4480</p>	<p>יֵצֵא</p> <p>out of it cometh</p> <p>H3318</p>	<p>לֶחֶם</p> <p>bread</p> <p>H3899</p>	<p>! תַּחֲתֵי יָדָיו</p> <p>H8478</p>
<p>וְנֶהְפְּךָ</p> <p>and under it is turned up</p> <p>H2015</p>	<p>כִּמּוֹ</p> <p>H3644</p>	<p>אֵשׁ:</p> <p>as it were fire</p> <p>H784</p>		