

Job 28:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.

Analysis

The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it—even the most powerful and wide-ranging beasts haven't discovered the miner's hidden path. Hebrew shachal (שָׁחָל, "lion's whelps") refers to young lions, while layish (לִיְשׁ, "fierce lion") denotes a mature, powerful lion. The verb darak (דָּרַךְ, "trodden") means to walk or march, suggesting these territorial predators patrol vast ranges yet never encounter mining operations.

Job builds his argument: neither keen-sighted birds (verse 7) nor powerful ranging beasts know the secret path. If all creation—from sharpest eyes to strongest bodies—cannot find the miner's way, how can humanity find wisdom's location? The parallelism emphasizes human achievement: miners work where creation's most gifted members never go. Yet this triumph over nature means nothing regarding wisdom, which remains "hid from the eyes of all living" (verse 21). This establishes that wisdom isn't found through natural means—not observation, not strength, not experience.

Historical Context

Lions roamed ancient Palestine and the Near East (extinct in the region by the 13th century AD). Their strength and territorial range made them symbols of power and dominion. Job's audience would immediately recognize the irony: humans through technology access places even apex predators cannot reach, yet

this doesn't grant access to wisdom. The passage subverts pride in human achievement by showing its irrelevance to the ultimate quest.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does human technological advancement (accessing places creation cannot) create false confidence that we can discover ultimate truth independently?
2. What does it mean that strength and natural dominance (symbolized by lions) are irrelevant to obtaining wisdom?
3. How should Christians respond to our culture's equation of knowledge accumulation with wisdom?

Interlinear Text

לֹא שַׁחַל הַלְּבָנִים וְהַמְּלָאכִים
H3808 have not trodden H1869 H1121 H7830 H3808 passed H5921 H5710

שַׁחַל:

it nor the fierce lion

H7826