

Job 28:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots.

Analysis

He putteth forth his hand upon the rock—the miner attacks the hardest geological formations. Hebrew *challamish* (שִׁלְמִישׁ) refers to flint, the hardest stone known to ancient people. **He overturneth the mountains by the roots** uses *haphak* (הִפָּךְ, "overturneth"), meaning to transform or revolutionize, and *shoresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ, "roots"), suggesting total excavation from foundation upward. Job describes mining's massive scale—humans literally reshape mountains seeking treasure.

This verse reaches the poem's height of human achievement: we conquer flint, we overturn mountains, we remake creation itself. Yet verses 12-14 reveal wisdom's location remains unknown despite these herculean efforts. The contrast is devastating—all human power cannot obtain what God alone provides. Jesus echoes this principle: "many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord... and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22-23). Religious activity, even of mountain-moving scale, doesn't equal knowing God. Wisdom comes through humble fear of the Lord (verse 28), not through conquering creation.

Historical Context

Ancient mining operations did indeed move mountains—quarrying stone, extracting ore, and physically reshaping landscapes. Archaeological evidence from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Sinai shows massive scale mining requiring thousands of workers and sophisticated engineering. Job's description isn't hyperbole but realistic portrayal of humanity's greatest technological

achievements. This makes the poem's conclusion more powerful: even our most impressive accomplishments are irrelevant to obtaining wisdom.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does our culture's ability to 'overturn mountains' through technology create the illusion that we can solve spiritual problems through human effort?
2. What does it mean that transforming external creation (mountains) doesn't transform internal character (heart)?
3. How should recognizing that wisdom comes from 'fearing the Lord' rather than human achievement reshape our discipleship and spiritual formation?

Interlinear Text

בְּ, חֲלָמִישׁ

upon the rock

H2496

שָׁלַח

He putteth forth

H7971

יָדוֹ

his hand

H3027

הִפֹּךְ

he overturneth

H2015

מִשְׁרָשׁ

by the roots

H8328

הָרִים:

the mountains

H2022