

Job 29:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.

Analysis

My root was spread out by the waters (shoresh שָׁרֵשׁ, root; patuach פָּתֹעַ, spread out, open; mayim מַיִם, water)—Job compares his former prosperity to a well-watered tree with deep, spreading roots ensuring stability and nourishment. The imagery recalls Psalm 1:3's blessed man: 'like a tree planted by the rivers of water.' Shoresh suggests deep foundations invisible to observers but crucial for growth and endurance. **And the dew lay all night upon my branch** (tal טל, dew; lin לִן, to lodge, remain overnight; qatsir קַצִּיר, branch/harvest)—continuous refreshment and blessing.

Dew in the ancient Near East represented divine blessing in arid climates where it provided essential moisture (Genesis 27:28, Deuteronomy 33:28, Hosea 14:5). Job describes sustained blessing—not occasional rain but nightly dew ensuring constant renewal. The branch imagery suggests fruitfulness and vitality (Psalm 92:12-14). Together, the root/branch metaphor encompasses both hidden foundation and visible fruitfulness, both stability and productivity. This verse's tragedy lies in its past tense—Job's roots once spread by waters, his branches once refreshed by dew. Now he sits on an ash heap, his roots dried, his branches withered. Yet this very imagery anticipates Job's eventual restoration when God will again cause him to flourish (Job 42:10-17).

Historical Context

Agricultural imagery permeates ancient Near Eastern literature because prosperity depended on successful cultivation in challenging climates. Trees planted by water sources represented security and blessing, while drought-stricken trees symbolized curse and judgment (Jeremiah 17:5-8). Dew provided critical moisture in regions with limited rainfall, making its presence a sign of divine favor. Job's metaphor would resonate deeply with an agricultural society intimately familiar with the difference between well-watered and drought-stricken vegetation. The contrast between Job's former flourishing and present desolation mirrors the difference between irrigated and desert landscapes.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What are the 'roots' of your spiritual life—the hidden sources of nourishment that sustain you when circumstances change?
2. How do you respond when God seems to withdraw the 'waters' and 'dew' that once sustained your flourishing?
3. In what ways does Job's tree imagery point forward to Christ as the true vine (John 15:5) and believers as branches dependent on Him?

Interlinear Text

שָׁרֵשׁ
My root was spread out H413

פָּתָח
H6605

אֶל
H4325

תִּדְבַּר
H2919

לִלְלָה
H3885

בְּצִירִי
upon my branch
H7105

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 1:3 (Parallel theme): And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Jeremiah 17:8 (Parallel theme): For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Job 18:16 (Parallel theme): His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.

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