

Job 29:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel.

Analysis

Unto me men gave ear, and waited (לִשְׁמַעַו וַיַּחֲלֹל, li-shamu veiyichelu)—The verb shama means to hear with attention and obedience, not mere listening. Yachal (waited) implies expectant hope, the same word used for waiting on God (Psalm 42:5). People treated Job's words with the reverence due divine wisdom.

Kept silence at my counsel (וַיִּדְמֹם לֹמֶד עֲצָתִי, veyiddemu lemo atzati)—Damam (kept silence) suggests awed stillness, the same silence that greets God's voice (Habakkuk 2:20). Job's etzah (counsel, advice) commanded such respect that no one dared interrupt or contradict. This reception mirrors Solomon's judicial wisdom (1 Kings 3:28), yet becomes tragically ironic as Job's friends now reject his counsel and fill the silence with accusations.

Historical Context

In ancient legal proceedings, the elders sat at the city gate to render judgments (Ruth 4:1-2). Job describes in 29:7-10 how even princes and nobles fell silent when he spoke. This deference reflected both his age, wealth, and proven wisdom. The culture valued oral tradition and sage counsel highly, making Job's fall from respected counselor to ridiculed sufferer especially devastating.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why did Job's audience wait in silence rather than immediately questioning or debating his counsel?
2. How does the friends' current refusal to 'keep silence' reveal their failure to truly listen to Job?
3. When has God's wisdom through Scripture commanded your silent, expectant attention rather than immediate response?

Interlinear Text

לִי שָׁמַע וְלֹא יָדַם וְלֹמַד עַצְתִּי
unto me men gave ear and waited and kept silence at my counsel
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