

Job 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?

Analysis

Job wishes he had died at birth: 'Why did the knees receive me? or why the breasts that I should suck?' The 'knees' refers to the midwife or father receiving the newborn, while 'breasts' indicates nursing that sustains life. Job questions why these normal life-giving actions occurred—better to have died immediately than to live only to experience his current agony. This reflects how suffering can make survival itself seem undesirable, yet Job still doesn't take action to end his life.

Historical Context

Midwifery practices in the ancient Near East included receiving the newborn on the knees of the midwife or father (Genesis 50:23), symbolizing acceptance into the family. Nursing established the mother-child bond.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. When has suffering made you question why you were preserved when death seemed preferable?

2. How do you distinguish between wishing for death and actively pursuing it?

Interlinear Text

מִן דִּוְעַ	קָדַם וְנִי	בְּרַךְ יָם	וְיָמָה	שָׁן יָם	כִּי
H4069	prevent H6923	Why did the knees H1290	H4100	me or why the breasts H7699	H3588
אֵינִי קֹן:					
that I should suck H3243					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:12 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

Genesis 30:3 (Parallel theme): And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

Genesis 50:23 (Parallel theme): And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.