

Job 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.

Analysis

Job wishes he had been 'as an hidden untimely birth'—a miscarriage buried without ceremony. The Hebrew 'nephel' (untimely birth/miscarriage) represents the ultimate obscurity—existence so brief it never achieves recognition. Job considers this preferable to his current suffering. The phrase 'as infants which never saw light' emphasizes that even momentary existence with subsequent suffering seems worse than never having lived at all from Job's current perspective.

Historical Context

Miscarried infants in the ancient Near East were typically buried without the ceremonies accorded to those who lived. Job considers such anonymous non-existence preferable to his painful notoriety.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does Job's wish for complete obscurity teach us about how suffering affects our desire for significance?
2. How do you maintain hope when suffering makes even existence itself seem undesirable?

Interlinear Text

א ו	כִּנְּ פֶל	ט מוֹן	א ל ה	אֶהֱ ה	כִּנְּ לֵל ים
H176	untimely birth H5309	Or as an hidden H2934	H3808	H1961	I had not been as infants H5768
לא	כִּנְּ א ו	אֶהֱ:			
H3808	which never saw H7200	light H216			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 58:8 (Parallel theme): As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

Ecclesiastes 6:3 (Parallel theme): If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.

1 Corinthians 15:8 (Parallel theme): And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.