

Job 30:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth.

Analysis

They were children of fools, yea, children of base men (בָּנֵי-טָבֵל גַּם-בָּנֵי בְּלִי-שֵׁם) Job describes his mockers' ancestry using devastating Hebrew terms. Nabal (טָבֵל) means not merely foolish but morally degenerate, the same word describing the churlish Nabal in 1 Samuel 25. Beli-shem (בְּלִי-שֵׁם) literally means 'without name'—men of no reputation, nameless outcasts. In honor-shame culture, this denotes the absolute bottom of society.

They were viler than the earth (מִנְקָאֹ מִן-פָּאָרֶץ) —The verb nikka'u means 'beaten out' or 'driven out,' suggesting violent expulsion from civilized society. These are not merely poor but debased, the socially invisible. The bitter irony: Job, once greatest of the East (1:3), now mocked by those beneath even earth's dignity. This descent from honor to shame prefigures Christ, who was despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3), numbered with transgressors though innocent.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern society operated on strict honor-shame hierarchies. The 'men of base repute' Job describes were likely nomadic outlaws, expelled from towns for crimes or moral failures. That such men now mock Job demonstrates his complete social reversal. In patriarchal culture, a man's honor came from ancestry, wealth, and reputation—Job has lost all three. His description of their baseness isn't merely personal offense but recognition of how far he's fallen when society's dregs feel emboldened to scorn him.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Job's humiliation by society's outcasts deepen our understanding of Christ's identification with the despised and rejected?
2. When has loss of status or reputation revealed who truly values you for character versus position?
3. How should Christians respond when mocked or scorned by those they once would have pitied?

Interlinear Text

בָּנִים	בָּנִים	בָּנִים	בָּנִים	בָּנִים	בָּנִים
They were children	of fools	H1571	They were children	H1097	of base men
H1121	H5036		H1121		H8034

בָּרָא	בָּרָא	בָּרָא
they were viler	H4480	than the earth
H5217		H776

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 32:6 (Parallel theme): For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

Proverbs 1:22 (Parallel theme): How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Proverbs 16:22 (Parallel theme): Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Jeremiah 7:18 (Parallel theme): The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Mark 6:24 (Parallel theme): And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

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