

Job 30:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword.

Analysis

And now am I their song (וְעַתָּה הֵיִתִי נְגִינָתָם)—The Hebrew neginah (נְגִינָה) means a mocking song or taunt, used of enemies' ridicule in Lamentations 3:14, 63. Job has become street entertainment, the subject of satirical ballads. **I am their byword** (אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לְמִלָּה)—Millah (מִלָּה) means proverb or byword, suggesting Job's name has become proverbial for calamity, like we might say 'a real Job situation.' His reputation, once synonymous with righteousness and blessing, now signifies cursed misfortune.

This verse captures devastating social death. In oral cultures, reputation was everything—to become a cautionary tale while still alive constitutes civic extinction. The psalmist echoes this agony: 'I am become a reproach...a byword among them' (Psalm 44:13-14). Yet Christ fulfilled this pattern perfectly, becoming 'a reproach of men, and despised of the people' (Psalm 22:6), mocked with a crown of thorns and a title of derision.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures preserved memory through oral tradition—songs, proverbs, and bywords. To become someone's 'song' meant your fate was memorialized as entertainment or warning. The book of Lamentations shows how conquered Jerusalem became a 'byword' among nations (Lamentations 2:15). Job's transformation from honored sage to ridiculed outcast would have been preserved in local folk memory, perhaps for generations. This public shaming intensified personal suffering—Job grieves not just pain but permanent disgrace.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does public humiliation compound personal suffering, and how did Christ endure both on the cross?
2. When have you been misrepresented or become the subject of gossip? How did you respond?
3. What does Job's willingness to describe his shame teach us about honest lament before God?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה
H6258	And now am I their song	H1961	H1961	H1992	yea I am their byword
	H5058				H4405

Additional Cross-References

Job 17:6 (Word): He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.

Lamentations 3:63 (Parallel theme): Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their musick.

Lamentations 3:14 (Parallel theme): I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.