

Job 31:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.

Analysis

Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade (קְתַפִּי מִשְׁכָּמָה תַּפּוֹל) —katef (קְתַפִּי, shoulder) and shekhem (שְׁכָמָה, shoulder blade/neck) emphasize the arm's connection point. **Mine arm be broken from the bone** (וְאַזְרָעִי מֵקְנָה תַּשְׁבָּר) —qaneh (קְנָה, bone/reed) indicates complete severance. Shavar (שָׁבָר, break) conveys violent destruction.

Job invokes measure-for-measure punishment: if he raised his hand against orphans (v. 21), let that hand be torn off. This self-malediction demonstrates absolute confidence in innocence. The specific anatomical detail (shoulder to bone) intensifies the horror. This echoes Jesus's teaching: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off" (Matthew 5:30)—better to lose a limb than sin. Job's willingness to be dismembered rather than abuse power reveals the seriousness of oppressing the vulnerable.

Historical Context

Ancient curses often invoked bodily dismemberment as punishment (Judges 1:6-7, 1 Samuel 11:2). The arm symbolized strength and action—to lose it meant complete powerlessness, the very state of the orphans Job swore to protect. This poetic justice (losing the arm that oppressed) reflects the principle of equivalent retribution in ancient law codes. Job's self curse demonstrates that integrity means accepting punishment if guilty.

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. How does Job's willingness to invoke dismemberment upon himself reflect the gravity of oppressing the powerless?
2. What 'arms' (abilities, resources, influence) might God require you to metaphorically 'lose' if you've misused them?
3. How does this severe self-accountability challenge modern tendencies to minimize or excuse harmful actions toward the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

מִקְנֵה	הַ	אֶזְרָעַ	יְ	תַּפְ	וְלָ	מִשְׁכַּנְתִּי	מִ	תַּפְ	וְ	מִקְנֵה				
Then	let	mine	arm	from	my	shoulder	blade	fall	and	mine	arm	from	the	bone
H3802				H7929				H5307		H248		H7070		

תַּשְׁבַּר:

be broken

H7665

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