

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 (כֶּתֶף מִשְׁכָּמָה תִּפּוֹל, ketefi mi-shikmah tippol)—katef (כֶּתֶף, shoulder) and shekhem (שֶׁכֶּם, shoulder blade/neck) emphasize the arm's connection point. **Mine arm be broken from the bone** (וְאֶזְרְעִי מִקָּנָה תִּשָּׁשֵׁר, ve-ezro'i mi-qanah tishshaver)—qaneh (קָנָה, bone/reed) indicates complete severance. Shavar (שָׁבַר, 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

כִּי תִפֹּי	מִשְׁכָּמְ הַ	תִּפֹּ וּל	וְאֶזְרְעִי	מִקַּן הַ
Then let mine arm	from my shoulder blade	fall	and mine arm	from the bone
H3802	H7929	H5307	H248	H7070

תִּשְׁבֶּר:

be broken
H7665