

Job 33:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;

Analysis

In a dream, in a vision of the night (בְּחָלוֹם חֶזְיוֹן לְיְלָה, ba-chalom chezyon laylah)—Elihu begins explaining how God does communicate, refuting Job's claim that God remains silent (33:14). **חָלוֹם** (chalom, 'dream') and **חֶזְיוֹן** (chezyon, 'vision') are paralleled, suggesting nocturnal divine revelation. Throughout Scripture, God spoke through dreams to believers and unbelievers alike—Jacob (Genesis 28:12), Joseph (Genesis 37:5-10), Pharaoh's officials (Genesis 40), Pharaoh (Genesis 41), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5), Daniel (Daniel 7:1), and Joseph husband of Mary (Matthew 1:20).

When deep sleep falleth upon men (בַּنְפֵל תַּרְדֵּמָה עַל-אָנָשִׁים) (tardemah, 'deep sleep') describes supernatural sleep God induces. The same word appears when God put Adam to sleep (Genesis 2:21), when Abram received the covenant (Genesis 15:12), and when Saul's guards slept while David took Saul's spear (1 Samuel 26:12). This isn't ordinary slumber but divinely imposed unconsciousness that enables revelation.

In slumberings upon the bed (בְּתַנּוּמֹת עַל-מִשְׁכָּב) (tenumah, 'slumbering') suggests lighter sleep or drowsiness. **מִשְׁכָּב** (mishkav, 'bed') indicates the normal place of rest. The verse describes the full spectrum of sleep states when God may speak—from deep supernatural sleep to ordinary nightly rest. Elihu's point: God actively communicates, but humans often miss it. This prepares verses 16-18 where God opens ears and seals instruction to turn people from sin.

Historical Context

Ancient cultures, including Israel, recognized dreams as potential divine communication (Numbers 12:6, Deuteronomy 13:1-5, Joel 2:28). However, Scripture distinguishes between true divine dreams and false ones from human imagination or demonic sources. Job had complained God remained distant and uncommunicative (23:8-9). Elihu corrects this: God speaks constantly through dreams, visions, suffering, and conscience—humans simply fail to perceive or heed His voice. This anticipates God's speech from the whirlwind, demonstrating He was never truly silent.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God speak to believers today—through Scripture, circumstances, conscience, Christian counsel?
2. Why might we fail to recognize God's communication in our lives?
3. How do we test whether impressions or 'leadings' come from God or our own desires?

Interlinear Text

אָנָשִׁים	עַל	תְּרַדְּמָה	בְּתַהֲרָה	לְילָה	לִלְכָּדָה	בְּצִיּוֹן	בְּחַלְוָמְדָן
In a dream	in a vision	of the night	sleep falleth	when deep	in thoughts	upon the bed	
H2472	H2384	H3915	H5307	H8639			H376
מִשְׁכָּבָה	עַל	בְּ	תְּנַוְּמָה	וְתַ			
in slumberings	H5921		upon the bed				
	H8572		H4904				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 12:6 (Parallel theme): And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

Job 4:13 (Parallel theme): In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,

Genesis 20:3 (Parallel theme): But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

Genesis 31:24 (Parallel theme): And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Daniel 4:5 (Parallel theme): I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Jeremiah 23:28 (Parallel theme): The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

Daniel 8:18 (Parallel theme): Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

Genesis 15:12 (Parallel theme): And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

Hebrews 1:1 (Parallel theme): God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org