

Job 33:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Analysis

He keepeth back his soul from the pit (יְהִשְׁקֵעַ נֶפֶשׁוּ מִן־שָׁהַת, *yāhōšēk napšô min-šâhat*)—The verb *hâšak* means to withhold, restrain, or hold back, depicting God actively preventing the soul (*nepeš*, the life-force or inner being) from descending into *šâhat* (the pit, grave, or place of corruption). This Hebrew term for 'pit' appears in Psalm 16:10, prophetically applied to Christ's resurrection: 'neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' God's preserving action rescues from premature death and spiritual destruction.

And his life from perishing by the sword (וְהִיאָּתְּ מֵאָבָר בְּשָׁלָחַ, *wehayyâtô mē'âbôr bašâlah*)—The phrase 'perishing by the sword' uses 'âbar (to pass over, cross over) with *šelah* (spear, javelin, or weapon). The imagery suggests violent death in warfare or judgment. God's intervention spares physical life from destruction. This protective theology anticipates New Testament teaching that God numbers our days (Matthew 10:29-31) and sovereign providence shields believers until their appointed time.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures viewed premature or violent death as divine disfavor. Elihu counters this by presenting God's corrective suffering as life-preserving rather than life-destroying. The 'pit' (*šâhat*) in ancient cosmology represented Sheol, the realm of the dead, often depicted as a literal underground

cavern. Weapons like the sword or spear symbolized the ultimate threat to mortal existence in a warrior culture.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How have you experienced God's protective discipline that kept you from spiritual or physical destruction?
2. What does it mean that God's hardest mercies are sometimes His greatest kindnesses in preserving our souls?
3. How does this verse shape your understanding of suffering as potentially preventative rather than punitive?

Interlinear Text

מְעַבְּ רִ	וְ מִתְּחִיתָ	שֶׁ חַתְּמָה	מִבְּנֵי פְּשָׁוֹת	וְ יְחִישָׁה
He keepeth back	his soul	H4480	from the pit	and his life

בְּשַׁלְחָה:

Additional Cross-References

Job 33:30 (Parallel theme): To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.

Job 33:28 (Parallel theme): He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light

2 Peter 3:9 (Parallel theme): The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

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