

# 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** (yāḥōšēk napšô min-šāḥaṭ, יַחֲשֹׁעַ נַפְשׁוֹ מִן־שַׁחַת)—The verb ḥāśak means to withhold, restrain, or hold back, depicting God actively preventing the soul (nepeš, the life-force or inner being) from descending into šāḥaṭ (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** (weḥayyātô mē'ăḇôr bašālah, וַיַּחְיֶהוּ מֵעֲבֹר בַּשֶּׁלַח)—The phrase 'perishing by the sword' uses 'āḇar (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' (šāḥaṭ) 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

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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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

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יִחַשׁ֩	נַפְשׁוֹ	מִנִּי	שְׁחַת	וְחַיָּתוֹ	מִמָּוֶת
He keepeth back	his soul	H4480	from the pit	and his life	from perishing
H2820	H5315		H7845	H2416	H5674

בְּשֵׁלַח:  
by the sword  
H7973

## Additional Cross-References

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**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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