

Job 33:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.

Analysis

Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave (wātiqrāḇ lašāḥaṭ napšô, וַתִּקְרַב לְשַׁחַת נַפְשׁוֹ)—The verb qārāḇ (to draw near, approach) describes progressive movement toward šāḥaṭ (the pit, grave, corruption). The soul's journey toward death is active, not passive—life ebbs incrementally. This pit is the same term from verse 18, where God 'keeps back' the soul from it. Now Elihu describes what happens without divine intervention: inevitable descent into corruption and death.

And his life to the destroyers (weḥayyātô lammētîm, וְחַיָּאתוֹ לַמֵּתִים)—Mētîm (literally 'the ones who put to death' or 'destroyers') may refer to death angels, demons, or death's agents. Some translations render this 'those who bring death.' The imagery depicts death as having personal agents executing its sentence. This personification appears throughout Scripture (Psalm 91:5-6, 1 Corinthians 15:26, Revelation 6:8). Life (ḥayyāh) approaches its terminators—the final enemy awaits.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cosmology personified death and its realm. Mesopotamian mythology included death deities and underworld messengers who claimed souls. Biblical faith demythologized these forces while acknowledging death's power under God's sovereignty. The 'destroyers' language may echo the Passover destroyer (Exodus 12:23) or the destroying angel sent for judgment (2 Samuel 24:16). Death remains a power, but subordinate to Yahweh.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the progression toward death described here create urgency for the gospel's intervention?
2. What does it mean that death has 'agents' or 'destroyers,' and how does Christ's victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) address this reality?
3. How should awareness of death's approach shape priorities and spiritual preparation?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּקְרַב	לְשֵׁן חַת	נֶפֶשׁ וְ	חַיָּת וְ	לְמַמְתֵּי:
draweth near	unto the grave	Yea his soul	and his life	to the destroyers
H7126	H7845	H5315	H2416	H4191

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 24:16 (Parallel theme): And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.