

Job 34:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.

Analysis

For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat (כִּי־אֶזֶן מִלִּין תִּבְחָן וְחֹךְ יִטְעֵם) (ki-ozen millin tibchan v'chek yit'am le'ekhol)—Elihu employs a wisdom proverb comparing intellectual discernment to sensory taste. The verb bachan (test, try, examine) means rigorous evaluation, used elsewhere for testing metals (Zechariah 13:9) or hearts (Psalm 17:3). The ear must bachan words (millim) with the same discrimination the palate (chek) exercises when tasting food (le'ekhol).

This epistemological principle appears throughout wisdom literature: truth requires active discernment, not passive reception. Just as taste distinguishes nourishing from poisonous, sweet from bitter, so the wise ear must evaluate theological propositions for soundness. Paul echoes this: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The sensory analogy democratizes theology—everyone possesses the capacity for discernment, not just elite scholars. Yet it also warns: discernment requires cultivation, like developing a refined palate.

Historical Context

This proverb reflects ancient wisdom tradition that used analogies from everyday life to teach spiritual truths. Israelite and Near Eastern wisdom literature frequently employed comparisons to eating, drinking, and sensory experience as accessible teaching tools. The emphasis on testing/trying words addresses the dialogue context where competing theological claims needed evaluation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do you cultivate spiritual discernment to 'taste and see' whether theological claims are sound?
2. What role does Scripture play as the standard by which we 'test' theological words and teachings?
3. How does this verse challenge both blind acceptance of tradition and uncritical embrace of novelty?

Interlinear Text

פִּי	אֶזְנוֹ	מִלִּין	תִּבְחֶיךָ	וְהַיִּתְּ	יִטְעֶם	לֶאֱכֹל:
H3588	For the ear	words	trieth	as the mouth	tasteth	meat
	H241	H4405	H974	H2441	H2938	H398

Additional Cross-References

Job 12:11 (Word): Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?

Hebrews 5:14 (Parallel theme): But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

1 Corinthians 2:15 (Parallel theme): But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

