

Job 35:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.

Analysis

By reason of the multitude of oppressions (מְרַב עֲשָׂוִים, me-rov ashuqim)—Rov (רַב) means 'abundance' or 'multitude'; osheq (עֲשָׂה) denotes 'oppression' or 'extortion.' Elihu describes widespread injustice driving victims to cry out. **They make the oppressed to cry** (יִצְעִילוּ, yaz'iqu)—from za'aq (זָעַק), 'to cry out' or 'call for help,' the technical term for distress cries reaching God (Exodus 2:23, 22:23).

They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty (יִשְׁאַל מִזְרָעַ בְּבִים, yeshave'u mi-zero'a rabbim)—Shava (שָׁבָע), 'to cry for help,' parallels za'aq. Zero'a (זִרְעָעַ), 'arm,' symbolizes power; rabbim (רְבִים), 'many' or 'mighty ones,' denotes oppressors.

Elihu observes that oppression prompts prayer—suffering drives people to seek help. Yet he'll argue (verse 10) that these cries often lack true God-seeking, remaining merely crisis appeals without authentic worship. This critique contains truth: adversity can produce shallow religiosity rather than genuine faith. However, Elihu risks dismissing legitimate lament. The psalms validate crying to God in oppression without requiring that every prayer demonstrate mature theology. Job's own cries, though confused, showed authentic faith-seeking-understanding. Elihu's standard—prayer must ask 'Where is God my maker?' (verse 10)—sets high bar that may condemn legitimate distress.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern societies witnessed pervasive oppression—slavery, forced labor, economic exploitation. Biblical law uniquely protected the vulnerable (widow, orphan, stranger), with God hearing their cries (Exodus 22:22-24). Elihu's observation about widespread oppression reflects this social reality, while his critique of superficial prayer addresses religious formalism plaguing all eras.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 – Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can we ensure our prayers during suffering seek God Himself, not merely relief from circumstances?
2. What distinguishes legitimate lament from the shallow religiosity Elihu critiques?
3. When observing others' suffering and prayers, how can we avoid Elihu's error of judging their spiritual authenticity prematurely?

Interlinear Text

מְרַב

עמ' ששה

י'זע

יְשִׁׁיעָה

By reason of the multitude

of oppressions

they make the oppressed to cry

they cry out

H7230

H6217

H2199

H7768

מזר וע

רַבִּים:

by reason of the arm

of the mighty

H2220

H7227

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 2:23 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Job 34:28 (Parallel theme): So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

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