

Job 36:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Analysis

They die in youth (יָמָת בָּנוֹעַר, yamuthu ba-no'ar)—Elihu describes the fate of the wicked who reject God's discipline. The Hebrew no'ar means 'youth' or 'prime of life,' indicating premature death before natural old age. This echoes the covenant curse in Deuteronomy 28:20-22 where rebellion brings untimely death.

Their life is among the unclean (וְחַיָּתָם בְּקָדְשֵׁם, v'chayyatam baq'deshim)—The shocking phrase qedeshim literally means 'holy ones' but refers ironically to male cult prostitutes at pagan shrines. The same word appears in Deuteronomy 23:17 and 1 Kings 14:24. Elihu warns that those who persist in sin end their lives in the most degrading circumstances, dying among temple prostitutes rather than in honored old age. This represents complete moral and social degradation—the opposite of Job's righteous life. The parallel construction suggests divine judgment removes the impenitent before their time, and their death occurs in shame rather than dignity.

Historical Context

Elihu, the youngest of Job's counselors, speaks in chapters 32-37 with a different tone than the three friends. Writing during the patriarchal period (c. 2000-1800 BC), the text assumes familiarity with Canaanite cult prostitution, a persistent temptation for Israel throughout the Old Testament era. The qedeshim served at fertility shrines, engaging in ritualized sexual acts believed to ensure agricultural prosperity.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does premature death serve as both natural consequence and divine judgment for persistent sin?
2. In what ways does modern culture normalize spiritual 'prostitution'—giving ourselves to false gods for material or sensual benefits?
3. How should the warning of dying in disgrace motivate us to embrace God's discipline when it comes?

Interlinear Text

בְּקַרְבֵּן תָּמִים תָּמִים בְּנֵי עָרָב נְפָשָׁם ! בְּקַרְבֵּן :

die in youth They and their life is among the unclean

H4191 H5290 H5315 H2416 H6945

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:17 (Parallel theme): There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

Psalms 55:23 (Parallel theme): But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

Job 22:16 (Parallel theme): Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood:

Job 15:32 (Parallel theme): It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green.

