

Job 38:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?

Analysis

"Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?" Divine irony punctuates God's questions. Job wasn't present at creation; his lifetime, though long by human standards, is infinitesimal compared to eternity. The Hebrew *ki-az tivaled* (כִּי־אָז תִּוָּלֵד, "for then you were born") uses biting sarcasm to humble human presumption. This rhetorical device teaches that temporal creatures cannot comprehend or judge the Eternal One's purposes. It prepares Job for humble submission rather than demanding explanations.

Historical Context

Job was known for his great age (he lived 140 years after his trials, 42:16). Yet even exceptional human longevity is nothing before God's eternity. Ancient cultures often revered age and experience. God's irony levels all human pretension—even the wisest elder is ignorant before the Ancient of Days.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing our temporal limitations shape our approach to eternal questions?
2. In what ways do we presume to judge God's timing or methods based on our limited perspective?

Interlinear Text

יָדָעְתָּ	כִּי	אָז	תֵּלֵד	וּמִסְפַּר
Knowest	H3588	H227	thou it because thou wast then born	or because the number
H3045			H3205	H4557
יְמֵי יְיָ	נִבְרָאִים:			
of thy days	is great			
H3117	H7227			

Additional Cross-References

Job 15:7 (Parallel theme): Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills?