

Job 39:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;

Analysis

"She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear." The ostrich appears callous toward offspring—the Hebrew *hiqshah* (הִקְשָׁה, "hardened/cruel") suggests harshness. Yet this perceived cruelty is actually God-given instinct serving the species' survival. The ostrich doesn't fear its "labour" being "in vain" (*reyq*, רֵק, "empty/worthless") because God designed this behavior. This teaches that God's wisdom often contradicts human sentimentality.

Historical Context

Ancient cultures valued parental devotion; the ostrich seemed to violate natural affection. Yet this behavior served survival in harsh deserts where excessive attachment might endanger parent and remaining offspring. God's wisdom transcends human emotional expectations, sometimes requiring what appears as hardness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this passage challenge equating God's love with human sentimentality?
2. What situations require firm resolve that others might misinterpret as harshness?

Interlinear Text

הַקְשֵׁ יְם	בְּתִ יְם	לֹא	לְהַ	לְיָם
She is hardened	against her young ones	as though they were not	^{H0}	is in vain
H7188	H1121	H3808		H7385

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 4:3 (Parallel theme): Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

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