

Job 4:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

Analysis

Eliphaz articulates the retribution theology that will dominate the friends' speeches: 'who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?' His rhetorical questions assume the innocent never suffer and the righteous never perish. The Hebrew uses *zakhar* (זָכַר, remember/recall) implying Eliphaz appeals to universal experience and wisdom tradition. This theology contains partial truth—sin does bring consequences—but fails as comprehensive explanation. Eliphaz cannot conceive of innocent suffering, making Job's situation incomprehensible except as evidence of hidden sin.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature generally taught strict retribution: righteousness brings prosperity, wickedness brings ruin. Texts like Proverbs often present this pattern as normative. Eliphaz represents conventional wisdom that works in many cases but breaks down when encountering mysteries like Job's suffering. His theology will be explicitly condemned by God (42:7), teaching that human wisdom must submit to divine mystery.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Eliphaz's theology represent the human desire for simple explanations of suffering?
2. In what ways do we still assume that suffering always indicates personal sin?

Interlinear Text

זָכֹר	נָ א	מִ י	ה וֵא	נִקְיָ י	אָב ד
Remember	H4994	H4310	H1931	being innocent	I pray thee who ever perished
H2142				H5355	H6
ה	אִיפֹ ה	יִשְׁרָ ים	נִכְדָּדוּ:		
or where	H375	were the righteous	cut off		
		H3477	H3582		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:25 (Righteousness): I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

2 Peter 2:9 (Righteousness): The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Acts 28:4 (Parallel theme): And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

Job 8:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers:

Job 36:7 (Righteousness): He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.

