

Job 41:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.

Analysis

God describes Leviathan's contempt for human weapons. 'Esteemeth iron as straw' (yachshob ke-teben barzel, יַחֲשׁוֹב כְּתֵבֶן בַּרְזֶל) means it considers the strongest metal as worthless plant matter. 'Brass as rotten wood' (ets riqqabon nechushah, עֵץ רִקְקָבוֹן נְחֻשָּׁה) compares another durable metal to decayed, useless timber. Both iron and brass/bronze represented the pinnacle of ancient military technology and strength. Leviathan's indifference to them reveals the futility of human might against divinely ordained forces. This verse teaches that human strength, technology, and weaponry are ultimately powerless against spiritual enemies—we need divine armor (Ephesians 6:10-17). It also illustrates God's transcendent power—what overwhelms humanity is trivial to Him. The verse prepares for the New Testament truth that God uses the weak to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Historical Context

Iron Age technology revolutionized ancient warfare and agriculture, making iron symbolize ultimate human strength and progress. Bronze had previously held that status. God's description of Leviathan treating these metals as straw and rotten wood would have shocked ancient hearers by relativizing their greatest technological achievements.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What 'iron' strengths or 'brass' securities do you rely on that are actually as weak as straw before spiritual realities?
2. How does recognizing the limits of human strength drive you to depend on God's power?
3. In what ways has God used your weakness to accomplish what your strength could not?

Interlinear Text

יְהִשׁ ב	לֶתְ בָּן	בְּרִזְ ל	לֵעַ י	רָקֵב וִן	נְחוֹשֶׁה:
He esteemeth	as straw	iron	wood	as rotten	and brass
H2803	H8401	H1270	H6086	H7539	H5154

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