

# Job 9:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.

## Analysis

**They are passed away as the swift ships** (חַלְפּוּ עַמְּדָנִים אֶבֶה, chalf'u im-oniyyot eveh)—Job employs two vivid metaphors for life's rapid passage. The 'swift ships' (likely papyrus reed boats used on the Nile or Jordan) were lightweight and extremely fast. The verb 'passed away' (chalaph, חַלָּף) means to pass on, change, or vanish—the same word used of watches in the night that disappear (Psalm 90:4).

**As the eagle that hasteth to the prey** (כְּנֶשֶׁר יָטוֹשׁ עַלְיָאָכֶל) completes the imagery. The eagle or vulture (nesher, נֶשֶׁר) stooping to carrion exemplifies speed and inevitability. The verb 'hasteth' (tush, יָטוֹשׁ) means to dart or swoop down. Job sees his days swooping toward death as inexorably as a raptor strikes prey. These three metaphors (runner, ship, eagle) emphasize acceleration—life doesn't merely pass but accelerates toward its end.

## Historical Context

Reed boats (papyrus vessels) were common in Egypt and could achieve remarkable speeds with skilled sailors. Egyptian tomb paintings depict these swift craft used for hunting and travel. Eagles and vultures in the ancient Near East were noted for their spectacular hunting dives, reaching speeds over 100 mph. Job, living in the patriarchal period, would have observed both phenomena. This verse reflects universal human consciousness of mortality heightened by suffering.

## Related Passages

## **John 3:16 — God's love and salvation**

## **Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith**

## Study Questions

1. Which of Job's three metaphors (runner, ship, eagle) most captures your sense of time's passage, and why?
2. How should awareness of life's acceleration inform our priorities and urgency in spiritual matters?

## Interlinear Text

## Additional Cross-References

**Habakkuk 1:8** (Parallel theme): Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

**Isaiah 18:2** (Parallel theme): That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!

