

Proverbs 30:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Analysis

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. This standalone proverb interrupts the numerical sayings with graphic warning against parental dishonor. The ayin (עַיִן, eye) that tilag (תִּלַּג, mocks) at father and tivuz (תִּבּוּז, despises) obeying mother will be devoured by orevim (עֲרָבִים, ravens) and benei-nesher (בְּנֵי-נֶשֶׁר, young eagles).

The eye symbolizes attitude—contemptuous glances, rolling eyes, sneering looks that express disdain. Mocking (laag) means to deride, scorn, treat with contempt. Despising obedience involves active rebellion, not passive neglect. The punishment is corpse desecration—being left unburied as carrion for scavengers, the ultimate shame in ancient culture where proper burial was essential (2 Samuel 21:10). This graphic imagery warns that dishonoring parents invites violent death and disgrace. The ravens and eagles suggest battlefield carnage or execution outside city walls, where bodies lay exposed.

Historical Context

The fifth commandment—"Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12)—is the first with promise attached. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 prescribed death by stoning for persistently rebellious sons. Exodus 21:17 declared: "He that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." Ancient Near Eastern

cultures universally valued filial piety, but Israel's law uniquely grounded parental authority in divine authority—dishonoring parents was dishonoring God. Jesus condemned Pharisees who used religious technicalities to avoid supporting parents (Mark 7:9-13). Paul repeated the command with promise (Ephesians 6:2-3). This proverb's violent imagery reflects covenant curses (Deuteronomy 28:26): "thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air."

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does contempt toward parents manifest in subtle ways—not just outright rebellion but dismissive attitudes, mocking humor, or prideful resistance to their counsel?
2. How does honoring parents relate to honoring God, and how does Christ's perfect submission to His Father (John 5:19) model this for believers?
3. In what ways can adult children honor parents while maintaining appropriate boundaries and not sinfully enabling destructive behavior?

Interlinear Text

עַיִן	תִּלְעַג	לְאָב	וְתִבֶּזֶז	לִיקְהָ ת	אִם
The eye	that mocketh	at his father	and despiseth	to obey	his mother
H5869	H3932	H1	H936	H3349	H517
וְיִקַּח וְהָ	עֲרָבִי	בַּחַל	וַיֹּאכַל וְהָ	בְּנֵי	נְשָׁרִים:
shall pick it out	the ravens	of the valley	shall eat	and the young	eagles
H5365	H6158	H5158	H398	H1121	H5404

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 23:22 (Parallel theme): Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

Proverbs 30:11 (Parallel theme): There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

Deuteronomy 28:26 (Parallel theme): And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

Leviticus 20:9 (Parallel theme): For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.

1 Samuel 17:44 (Parallel theme): And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

2 Samuel 21:10 (Parallel theme): And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.