

Psalms 127:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Analysis

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—Shav (vain, worthless). **For so he giveth his beloved sleep** (כֵּן יִתֵּן לִיְדִידוֹ שָׁנָא, ken yitten li-ydido shena). Psalm 127 contrasts anxious striving with God-dependent rest. The issue isn't hard work but anxious toil driven by self-reliance. God gives his beloved sleep—not just physical rest but peace of trusting him. This echoes Jesus: "Take no thought for your life" (Matthew 6:25-32). Faith works hard but rests easy.

Historical Context

A Song of Ascents sung by pilgrims to Jerusalem. After verse 1's warning about building without God, verse 2 addresses anxious labor. In agrarian societies, farmers worked dawn to dusk, constantly anxious. This psalm taught God-dependence.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What areas involve anxious striving rather than diligent trust?
2. How do you distinguish godly hard work from "bread of sorrows" mentality?
3. What would receiving "sleep" as God's gift look like practically?

Interlinear Text

אֵין כְּלִי	שָׁן בֵּית	מְאֵרִי	קִוּם	מִשָּׁן יָמִי	לָךְ מֶ	שָׁן וְאֵין
to eat	to sit up	late	for you to rise up	early	H0	It is vain
H398	H3427	H309	H6965	H7925		H7723
שָׁנָא:	לִידִיד וְ	יֵת	כֵּן	הַעֲצָב יָם	לָ הֵם	
sleep	his beloved	for so he giveth		of sorrows	the bread	
H8142	H3039	H5414		H6089	H3899	

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 5:12 (Parallel theme): The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

Psalms 4:8 (Parallel theme): I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Job 11:18 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.

Psalms 3:5 (Parallel theme): I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

Jeremiah 31:26 (Parallel theme): Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

Ezekiel 34:25 (Parallel theme): And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 (Parallel theme): I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 (Parallel theme): All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

Ecclesiastes 4:8 (Parallel theme): There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

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