

Psalm 139:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

Analysis

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways—The verb zarah (רָאַת, 'compassest') means to winnow or sift grain, examining every kernel. God sifts our path (journey, course of life) and our lying down (rest, private life). The phrase art acquainted comes from sakan (רָאַת), meaning to be familiar through careful observation, like a neighbor who knows your habits.

God's knowledge isn't abstract but detailed and specific. He knows not just that we travel but every step of the journey; not just that we rest but the quality of our sleep and the thoughts that keep us awake. Every way (derek, דֶּרֶךְ)—our habits, choices, patterns of behavior—stands open before Him. This is total transparency before absolute holiness.

Historical Context

In David's era, paths were dangerous—bandits, wild animals, harsh terrain. The imagery of God 'compassing' or encircling one's path evoked both protection and examination. Similarly, lying down in ancient tents offered little privacy. David uses these realities to illustrate that nothing in human life escapes divine awareness.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. If God is 'winnowing' your path, what chaff (worthless pursuits or sins) might He be separating from the wheat?
2. What do you do in private ('lying down') that you wouldn't do if you were fully conscious of God's presence?
3. How familiar (sakan) is God with your habitual 'ways'—and what do those patterns reveal about your heart?

Interlinear Text

דֶּרֶךְ אֶרְחָן יְרַבֵּעַ תְּרַכֵּת יְכָלֵל
my path and my lying down Thou compassest with all my ways
H734 H7252 H2219 H3605 H1870

הָסְכִּינָתָה:
and art acquainted
H5532

Additional Cross-References

Job 31:4 (Parallel theme): Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?

Jeremiah 23:24 (Parallel theme): Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

Psalms 139:18 (Parallel theme): If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 (Parallel theme): For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Isaiah 29:15 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

2 Samuel 11:27 (Parallel theme): And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

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