

Psalms 89:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made
all men in vain?

Analysis

Remember how short my time is (זֶכְרוּ אֲנִי מֵהַחַלָּה zekhor-ani meh-chaled)—zakhar (remember) is covenant language, appealing to God's promises. Chaled (lifetime, duration) emphasizes life's brevity. The psalmist urges God to act before death makes intervention futile. **Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?** (עַל־מָה־ שָׁוַיְתָּ אֱלֹהִים בְּרִאשִׁית יְמֵי אָדָם al-mah-shav barata kol-benei-adam)—shav means emptiness, futility, vanity. If covenant promises fail and death ends all, human existence is meaningless.

This verse raises existential questions: What is humanity's purpose if God doesn't keep covenant? The question anticipates Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities...all is vanity" (1:2). Yet biblical "vanity" isn't atheistic nihilism—it's protest against a world that seems purposeless without God's faithfulness. Paul answers: God didn't create in vain; creation groans awaiting redemption (Romans 8:20-21). Christ's resurrection proves life isn't futile—death is defeated, covenant promises fulfilled. The brevity of life gains meaning when connected to eternity through Christ.

Historical Context

Exiles in Babylon faced mortality without seeing promises fulfilled. Would they die before restoration? Would the covenant fail with their generation? God's answer: restoration came, but the ultimate answer is resurrection. Life isn't vain because death isn't final. The "shortness" of earthly life (James 4:14: "a vapour") gains significance when it's the vestibule to eternity.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does awareness of life's brevity affect your priorities and prayers?
Should it create urgency or despair?
2. If God seems slow to act, does human existence become "vain"? How does Romans 8:20-21 answer this fear?
3. How does Christ's resurrection prove God didn't create humanity "in vain" despite death's apparent victory?

Interlinear Text

זָכֹר	אֲנִי	מָה	כִּי לָד	עַל	מָה	וְאֵל
Remember	H589	H4100	how short	H5921	H4100	in vain
H2142			H2465			H7723
	בְּכִי אֶתְּ		כָּל	בְּנֵי	אָדָם:	
	my time is wherefore hast thou made		H3605	all men	H120	
	H1254			H1121		

Additional Cross-References

Job 7:7 (Parallel theme): O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good.

Job 10:9 (Creation): Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Job 14:1 (Parallel theme): Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

