Job - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 406. Shadows

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

Job 7:2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as a hireling looketh for the reward of his work.

The lengthening shadow indicates the close of day and the termination of toil, and is therefore desired by the weary laborer. In India time is measured by the length of one's shadow. If a man is asked for the time of day, he stands erect in the sunshine, observes where his shadow terminates, and then paces the distance, and is able to tell the time with considerable accuracy. A person wishing to leave his work often exclaims, "How long my shadow is in coming!" (Roberts, Oriental Customs, p. 261).

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 404. Grain and Thorns

Job 5:5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

This may refer either to the thief who takes all the grain, even that which is mixed with thorns, or to a custom which Dr. Thomson mentions as illustrating this text. He says, "The farmers, after they have threshed out the grain, frequently lay it aside in the chaff in some private place near the floor, and cover it up with thorn-bushes to keep it from being carried away or eaten by animals. Robbers who found and seized this would literally take it from among the thorns" (The Land and the Book, vol.1, p. 537).

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 425. Poetic Names

Job 42:14. He called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch.

Rosenmuller has the following note on this verse: "A Jewish writer, Solomon Jarchi, correctly remarks that the names of the daughters of Job indicate their beauty, as it is said in the fifteenth verse: 'And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.' The first name, Jemima, means resembling a clear day, (with the brilliancy of its beauty)—fair as the day. So, according to Hesychius, Hăimera, that is, day, was a surname of Diana. The second name, Kezia, means Cassia, one of the most valuable spices of antiquity. The third name, Keren-happuch, means Horn of the Eye-paint, that is, a vessel made of horn, wherein the Oriental women kept the paint which they used for their eyes. Thomas Roe, in his Travels, remarks that the Persians are accustomed to give their women names which mean spices, fragrant ointments, pearls or precious stones, or something otherwise beautiful and delightful" (Morgenland, vol. 3, p. 375).

It is proper to say, however, that the etymology above given is disputed by some authorities. Gesenius derives Jemima from an Arabic word signifying dove. Dr. Alexander, editor of Kitto's Cyclopedia, defines Kerenhappuch, Horn of adornment, or Horn of beauty. These interpretations, as much as the others given, represent the names as names of beauty.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 422. Fish Spears

Job 41:7. Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?

There is an allusion here to an instrument resembling the trident or two-tongued fish-spear in use by the Egyptians, and frequently depicted on the monuments. This spear was a slender rod some ten or twelve feet long, doubly feathered at the end, like a modern arrow. It had two sharp points about two feet in length, and on these the fish were impaled. The fisherman pushed along the Nile in a flat-bottomed boat among the papyrus reeds and lotus plants, and on seeing his finny prey drove the weapon with his right hand, steadying it through a curve in his left.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 403. The Value of Life

Job 2:4. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

Many interpretations have been given of this passage, which was evidently a familiar proverb in the early times when Job lived. It probably refers to some ancient custom of bartering by means of skins of animals slain in the chase. The hungry hunter trades with the grain grower, parting, for a supply of food, with the skins of the beasts he has slain, and if necessary he will exchange all he has in order to obtain bread. As Kitto says of this text. "It will then express the necessity of submitting to one great evil to avoid incurring a greater, answering to the Turkish proverb, 'We must give our beards to save our heads.'" (Daily Bible Illustrations, vol. 5, p. 83).

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 413. The Net in Combat

Job 19:6. Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.

Some commentators find here an illustration of an ancient mode of corn bat practiced among the Persians, Goths and Romans. Among the Romans one of the combatants had a sword and shield, while the other had a trident and net. The latter endeavored to throw his net over the head of his adversary. If he succeeded in this, he immediately drew the net around his neck with a noose which was attached to it, pulled him to the ground and dispatched him with the trident. If he failed to throw the net over the head, he in turn ran the risk of being destroyed by his adversary while seeking his net for another throw. If Job knew of this custom in his day, he represents himself in this text as having engaged in a contest with God, and, being defeated, he now lies entangled in the net and completely at the mercy of his conqueror.

clickbible.org