

# Lamentations 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom.

## Analysis

Children's suffering intensifies tragedy: "They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine?" (le-imotam yomru ayeh dagan vayayin). Dagan (דָּגָן, grain) and yayin (יָיִן, wine) represent basic sustenance. Children asking mothers for food that doesn't exist portrays heartbreakingly helplessness. "When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city" (be-hit'atafam ka-chalal bi-rchovot ir). The verb ataf (עָתָף, "swoon, faint") describes life ebbing away. Comparing children to "wounded" (chalal, חַלָּל) in streets equates famine's effects with warfare's casualties. "When their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom" (be-hishtapekh nafsham el-kheik immotam). The phrase "soul poured out" describes death—life leaving the body. Dying in mothers' arms amplifies anguish—mothers helpless to save their children. This fulfills Deuteronomy 28:53-57's curse but with devastating emotional impact. Children's innocent suffering serves as ultimate indictment of the sin that caused judgment.

## Historical Context

Child mortality during ancient sieges was catastrophic. Malnutrition, disease, and violence killed the most vulnerable first. Jeremiah 6:11 and 9:21 predict children dying in streets. Lamentations 4:4 describes nursing infants' tongues sticking to palates from thirst and children begging for bread no one can provide. The phrase 'corn and wine' represented covenant blessings—Deuteronomy 7:13, 11:14 promise these for obedience. Their absence marks covenant curse. Mothers'

inability to provide recalls Hannah's petition for a child (1 Samuel 1:11) and Mary's nurturing Christ (Luke 11:27)—motherhood meant protection and provision. But under judgment, even maternal love cannot shield from consequences. This horrible reality would motivate the post-exilic community to covenant faithfulness, ensuring their children wouldn't experience similar suffering.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does children asking 'Where is corn and wine?' illustrate the comprehensive reach of judgment, affecting even the innocent?
2. What does mothers' helplessness to save their dying children teach about the limits of human love and power under divine judgment?
3. How should awareness of judgment's devastating impact on children increase our urgency in pursuing covenant faithfulness and evangelism?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּהַתְעִטָּפָה מִ אֶמְתָּמָן אָמְתָּמָן  
into their mothers They say H346 Where is corn and wine when they swooned  
H517 H559 H1715 H3196 H5848

אֶל נֶפֶשׁ מִ בְּהַשְׁתַּפְתָּה גַּם בְּרַחֲבָה וְתַּכְלֵל  
as the wounded in the streets of the city was poured out when their soul H413  
H2491 H7339 H5892 H8210 H5315

בְּרַחֲבָה וְתַּכְלֵל  
bosom into their mothers  
H2436 H517

