

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 (יַיִן, wine) represent basic sustenance. Children asking mothers for food that doesn't exist portrays heartbreaking helplessness. "When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city" (be-hit'ataf ka-chalal bi-rchovot ir). The verb ataf (אָטַף, "swoon, faint") describes life ebbing away. Comparing children to "wounded" (chalal, חָלַל) 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

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

אִמֹתָם:	אֵי הָ, יֹאמְרוּ וְ	אֵי הָ	וְגַן	וְיַיִן	בְּהִתְעָטְפוּ מְ
into their mothers	They say	H346	Where is corn	and wine	when they swooned
H517	H559		H1715	H3196	H5848
כְּחַלָּל	בְּרֹחֲבוֹת	עִיר	בְּהִשָּׁתַּף	נַפְשָׁם	אֶל
as the wounded	in the streets	of the city	was poured out	when their soul	H413
H2491	H7339	H5892	H8210	H5315	
בְּיֶקֶב	אִמֹתָם:				
bosom	into their mothers				
H2436	H517				

