

Lamentations 2:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

Analysis

A stunning challenge to God: "Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long?" (re'eh YHWH ve-habitah le-mi olalta koh to'khalmah nashim piryam olelei tifukhim). The question "to whom thou hast done this" (le-mi olalta koh) emphasizes that this is God's own covenant people, not pagans. "Women eat their fruit" (nashim piryam)—"fruit" being their children—references the horrific cannibalism of Lamentations 4:10. "Children of a span long" (olelei tifukhim) refers to nursing infants. The question continues: "shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" (im-yehareg be-mikdash Adonai kohen venavi). Priests and prophets murdered in God's own sanctuary represents ultimate desecration. These questions aren't accusations but desperate appeals: See what Your judgment has caused! Consider the extremity! This bold prayer demonstrates the intimacy of covenant relationship—God's people can question and challenge Him respectfully.

Historical Context

The cannibalism described here fulfilled Deuteronomy 28:53-57's curse literally. 2 Kings 6:28-29 records an earlier instance during Samaria's siege. Josephus describes similar horrors during AD 70 siege. The slaying of priests and prophets in the sanctuary was fulfilled when Babylonians killed temple personnel (2 Kings

25:18-21). Jeremiah 26:20-23 records King Jehoiakim killing prophet Uriah. The temple's sanctity provided no protection once God's glory departed (Ezekiel 10-11). The boldness of questioning God echoes Abraham's intercession for Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33), Moses's pleas for Israel (Exodus 32:11-14, Numbers 14:13-19), and Job's protests (Job 10, 13:3, 23:3-7). This demonstrates that covenant relationship permits honest dialogue, not mere submission to arbitrary power. God invites His people to wrestle with Him (Genesis 32:24-30, Hosea 12:3-4).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the bold question 'to whom thou hast done this' demonstrate both the intimacy and accountability inherent in covenant relationship?
2. What's the difference between this kind of respectful challenging of God versus impious accusation or rebellion?
3. How do we process the reality that God's judgments sometimes include horrific consequences (cannibalism, murdered priests) while maintaining faith in His goodness?

Interlinear Text

אָמַן בְּ הַזֶּה
Behold O LORD and consider H7200 H3068 H5027 H4310 to whom thou hast done H5953 this H518 H3541

אָמַן טְפֵחַ יָמִן עַלְלִי
eat Shall the women their fruit and children of a span long H398 H802 H6529 H5768 H2949

יִגְבִּיאָנָה כֶּבֶשׂ אֶדְבָּן בְּמִזְבֵּחַ שְׁלָמִים
be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord shall the priest and the prophet H2026 H4720 H136 H3548 H5030

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 19:9 (Parallel theme): And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

Lamentations 4:10 (Parallel theme): The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Psalms 78:64 (Parallel theme): Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

Exodus 32:11 (References Lord): And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Deuteronomy 9:26 (References Lord): I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

Lamentations 4:13 (Prophecy): For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

