

Lamentations 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

Analysis

Chapter 3 shifts to a singular voice: "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath" (ani ha-gever raah oni be-shevet avrato, אֲנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה אֹנִי בַשֵּׁבֶט). The term *gever* (גֶּבֶר) means "strong man, warrior"—suggesting one who should be able to endure. Yet even the strong are helpless before divine wrath. "Affliction" (oni, אֹנִי) denotes misery, poverty, and oppression. The "rod of his wrath" (shevet avrato) combines two images: the shepherd's rod that disciplines sheep (Psalm 23:4) and the rod of parental discipline (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14). This isn't random suffering but purposeful divine correction. Hebrews 12:5-11 explains that God disciplines those He loves as a father disciplines children, producing "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Who is this "man"? Interpretively, it could be:

1. Jeremiah himself, who suffered greatly for his faithful ministry
2. a representative Israelite experiencing national judgment
3. the personified nation speaking as an individual; or
4. prophetically, Christ who bore God's wrath for sin (Isaiah 53:4-5, 10).

All these layers enrich our understanding. The shift from corporate lament (chapters 1-2) to individual testimony (chapter 3) prepares for personal appropriation of hope in God's mercies (3:22-26).

Historical Context

Jeremiah's life embodied the affliction described. Called to prophesy in 627 BC, he ministered for over 40 years, witnessing Judah's decline and fall. He was rejected

by his hometown (Jeremiah 11:21), beaten and put in stocks (20:1-2), thrown into cisterns (38:6), accused of treason (37:11-15), and threatened with death (26:8-11). After Jerusalem fell, he was forcibly taken to Egypt where tradition says he was eventually stoned to death. Yet Jeremiah's suffering had purpose. His life illustrated the cost of faithfulness in rebellious times. His prophecies, initially rejected, were eventually recognized as God's true word. The book of Lamentations may be his composition, though this is debated. His experience of affliction "by the rod of his wrath" gives authority to the hope expressed in verses 22-26. Christians have long seen Christ prefigured in this "man of affliction." Isaiah 53:3 calls Him "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He bore God's wrath against sin, experiencing divine abandonment (Matthew 27:46) so believers would never be forsaken. 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains: "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The innocent One endured the rod of wrath we deserved.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the image of a 'strong man' (gever) unable to escape God's rod challenge our confidence in human strength and self-sufficiency?
2. What does it mean that affliction comes 'by the rod of his wrath,' and how does understanding divine purpose in suffering change our response to hardship?
3. In what ways does Christ fulfill the role of the ultimate 'man of affliction' who endured God's wrath so we wouldn't have to?
4. How can recognizing God's fatherly discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11) in our trials transform bitterness into worship and submission?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי	הִנְּנִי	רָאָה	עָנִי	בֶּטֶן	עֲבֹרֹתָיו:
H589	I am the man	that hath seen	affliction	by the rod	of his wrath
	H1397	H7200	H6040	H7626	H5678

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 88:7 (Judgment): Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.

Job 19:21 (Parallel theme): Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.