

Lamentations 3:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

Analysis

Continued suffering described: "He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood" (hisbi'ani ba-merurim hirvani la'anah, הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בַמְרוּרִים הִרְוָנִי לַעֲנָה). The verb sava (שָׂבַע, "filled, satisfied") normally describes positive satiation (Psalm 103:5, 107:9), but here it's perverted—filled not with good things but merurim (מְרוּרִים, "bitterness"). La'anah (לַעֲנָה, "wormwood") is the bitter herb from verse 19. Being "drunken" (hirvani, הִרְוָנִי) with wormwood suggests overwhelming, disorienting bitterness. Deuteronomy 29:18 warns of idolatry producing "a root that beareth gall and wormwood." Revelation 8:11 uses wormwood for divine judgment. The imagery conveys that suffering isn't minor discomfort but consuming, all-encompassing bitterness that saturates existence. Yet the very act of describing it in prayer to God shows that even overwhelming bitterness needn't sever relationship. The darkest laments in Scripture are still prayer—maintaining connection with God through suffering.

Historical Context

Wormwood (la'anah, *Artemisia absinthium*) is an extremely bitter plant used medicinally in small doses but poisonous in large amounts. Being 'drunken' with it would cause severe nausea, disorientation, and potentially death. The metaphor captures both the pervasive nature of suffering (like drunkenness affecting all faculties) and its intensely unpleasant character (like consuming poison). The exile generation experienced this comprehensively—every aspect of life was bitter. Loss of land, temple, independence, loved ones, certainty—all compounded into

overwhelming grief. Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15 use identical language as God's threatened judgment: 'I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.' The fulfillment was literal—life tasted of nothing but bitterness. Yet Exodus 15:22-25 shows God can make bitter waters sweet. The principle: God who sends bitterness can also remove it.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to be 'filled' and 'drunken' with bitterness, and how does this imagery help us acknowledge rather than minimize deep suffering?
2. How can even the bitterest experiences be brought to God in prayer rather than driving us away from Him?
3. In what ways does Christ taste the ultimate bitterness (the cup of God's wrath, Matthew 26:39) so believers eventually taste only sweetness?

Interlinear Text

הִשְׂבִּיעַ נִי	בְּמֶרֶוֹר יִם	הִרְוֵנִי	לְעֵנָה:
He hath filled	me with bitterness	he hath made me drunken	with wormwood
H7646	H4844	H7301	H3939

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 9:15 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

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