

Lamentations 3:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

Analysis

This wisdom proverb appears within Lamentations' context: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (tov la-gever ki-yisa ol bi-neurav, טוב לגבר כי-ישא על בנוירא). The term gever (strong man) from verse 1 reappears. The "yoke" (ol, עול) metaphorically represents burden, discipline, labor, or submission to authority. Why is bearing the yoke in youth (neurim, נוערים, "good"? Several reasons emerge:

1. Youth possesses physical and spiritual resilience to endure hardship that age may lack
2. Early discipline forms character, establishing patterns of faithfulness
3. Learning submission and trust in youth prepares one for greater responsibilities
4. Experiencing God's faithfulness through trials in youth builds lifelong confidence in Him.

The immediate context (verses 25-30) emphasizes waiting patiently for God's salvation, sitting alone in silence, and submitting to discipline without complaint. This counter-cultural wisdom contradicts modern insistence on youthful freedom from constraint. Proverbs 22:6 similarly counsels: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Suffering and discipline in youth, though difficult, produce spiritual maturity and Christlikeness (Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7).

Historical Context

Ancient Hebrew culture understood that formative years shape character permanently. The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) commanded teaching children diligently, making God's law central to education. Proverbs repeatedly addresses "my son," emphasizing wisdom's intergenerational transmission through parental discipline and instruction. The "yoke" metaphor was familiar in agricultural society. Young oxen were trained by yoking them with experienced animals, teaching them to pull plows and submit to direction. This training, though restrictive, enabled oxen to serve productively. Similarly, children and youth needed "yoking"—submission to parental authority, Torah instruction, and divine discipline. Historical examples illustrate the principle: Joseph's youthful trials (slavery, false accusation, imprisonment) prepared him to administer Egypt and save his family (Genesis 37-50). David's youth shepherding sheep, facing lions and bears, and fleeing Saul formed the king who would write psalms of deep trust in God. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken to Babylon as teenagers, yet their youthful formation in Torah enabled them to remain faithful in exile. Jesus Himself "learned...obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Though eternally God, in His humanity He experienced growth through submission and hardship. If even Christ was perfected through suffering, how much more do believers need discipline to conform to His image?

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does modern culture's emphasis on youthful freedom and self-expression conflict with the biblical wisdom of bearing the yoke in youth?

2. What specific 'yokes' (disciplines, training, submission to authority) should Christian parents and churches ensure young people experience?
3. In what ways did bearing hardship or discipline in your youth shape your current character and faith, and how can you see God's purpose in it?
4. How does Jesus's call to take His yoke (Matthew 11:29-30) transform the concept of submission from burden to rest?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵוֹתִים: עַל יְשָׁאָה יְשָׁאָה לְגַת בָּרְתָּךְ כִּי
It is good **for a man** H3588 **that he bear** H5375 **the yoke** H5923 **in his youth** H5271
 H2896 H1397 H5375 H5923 H5271

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 12:1 (Parallel theme): Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Psalms 119:71 (Good): It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Psalms 94:12 (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

Psalms 90:12 (Parallel theme): So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.