

# Lamentations 3:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

## Analysis

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Continuing the list of disapproved actions: **"To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High."** The Hebrew *le-hattot mishpat gaver neged penei Elyon* addresses perversion of justice. The verb *natah* (נָטָה, "turn aside, pervert") suggests bending or twisting what should be straight. *Mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) means justice, judgment, or legal rights.

The term *gaver* (גִּבּוֹר, "man, strong man") refers to an individual person—emphasizing that every human has rights that should be honored. The phrase "before the face of the most High" (*neged penei Elyon*) is striking. *Elyon* (עֶלְיוֹן, "Most High") is one of God's ancient names (Genesis 14:18-20). To pervert justice happens "before His face"—in His presence, under His observation.

This verse addresses a crucial concern: Did Babylon's unjust treatment of Judah escape God's notice? The implicit answer: No. Though God used Babylon to discipline Judah, He observed every injustice and would hold oppressors accountable. This principle operates throughout Scripture—God defends the oppressed even when using oppression as discipline (Exodus 22:21-24, Psalm 103:6). It points forward to Christ, the perfectly just judge (Acts 17:31, 2 Timothy 4:8).

## Historical Context

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Justice perverted "before the face of the Most High" had special resonance for exilic Israel. In Jerusalem, the temple represented God's dwelling—justice was to be rendered in His presence. Deuteronomy 16:18-20 commanded judges to make just judgments.

But Israel's leaders had systematically perverted justice. Isaiah 1:21-23 laments how the faithful city became corrupt. Jeremiah 22:13-17 condemns King Jehoiakim for building his palace through unrighteousness and oppression.

Now in exile, Israel experienced what they had inflicted. Babylonian justice favored the powerful; captives had no legal recourse or protections. Yet Lamentations asserts that though this injustice served God's disciplinary purposes, He neither approved nor ignored it. Daniel 5 shows God eventually judging Babylon for its sins. Perverting justice may succeed temporarily, but it occurs "before the face of the Most High" who misses nothing.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does the phrase 'before the face of the Most High' remind us that no injustice escapes God's notice, even when He seems silent?
2. What is the relationship between God using unjust instruments (like Babylon) to accomplish His purposes and His disapproval of injustice?
3. In what ways did Christ experience the ultimate perversion of justice (false trials, false witnesses, unjust condemnation)?
4. How should believers pursue justice in society while trusting God's sovereignty even when justice is perverted?

## Interlinear Text

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לְהִטּוֹת	מִשְׁפָּט	גֵּבֶר	נָגִיד	פָּנֵי	עֲלִיּוֹן:
<b>To turn aside</b>	<b>the right</b>	<b>of a man</b>	H5048	<b>before the face</b>	<b>of the most High</b>
H5186	H4941	H1397		H6440	H5945

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