

Lamentations 3:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

Analysis

The appropriate response to verses 39-40's call to self-examination: "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (nisa levabeinu el-kapayim el-El ba-shamayim, נִשָּׂא לִבֵּנוּ אֶל-כַּפָּיִם אֶל-אֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם). The gesture combines upraised hands (common prayer posture, Psalm 28:2, 63:4, 134:2, 141:2, 1 Timothy 2:8) with uplifted heart—the internal attitude matching external expression. The phrase "unto God in the heavens" emphasizes God's transcendence and sovereignty. He's above earthly circumstances, enthroned in glory. Lifting heart and hands acknowledges dependence and submission. This comes after calling to examine ways and turn to God (verse 40)—genuine repentance precedes acceptable prayer. The verse models integrated worship: external gesture (hands) and internal reality (heart) aligned. Mere outward forms without heart engagement are hypocrisy (Isaiah 29:13, Matthew 15:8). Mere internal attitudes without appropriate external expression can indicate embarrassment or half-heartedness. Psalm 51:17 reminds that God desires 'a broken and a contrite heart'—the internal posture that external gestures should express.

Historical Context

Physical prayer postures in ancient Israel were varied and meaningful. Kneeling signified submission (1 Kings 8:54, Ezra 9:5, Daniel 6:10, Ephesians 3:14). Prostration showed extreme humility (Joshua 7:6, 2 Chronicles 20:18, Matthew 26:39). Standing was common (1 Samuel 1:26, Mark 11:25, Luke 18:11, 13). Lifted hands expressed petition, praise, and surrender. The temple's architecture

facilitated this: Israelites gathered in courts, priests in Holy Place, high priest alone in Most Holy Place—all facing God's presence. After temple destruction, prayer toward Jerusalem continued (Daniel 6:10), maintaining orientation toward God's chosen place even when absent. The phrase 'God in the heavens' recalls Solomon's temple dedication: 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee' (1 Kings 8:27). God's heavenly throne transcends earthly temples. Hebrews 4:14-16 encourages believers to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace' since Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary. Physical postures still matter (kneeling, raising hands) when genuine, but ultimate access is spiritual through Christ.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does combining lifted hands with lifted heart challenge our tendency toward either empty ritual or invisible internal-only spirituality?
2. What's the value of physical prayer postures (kneeling, hands raised, prostration) when accompanied by corresponding heart attitudes?
3. How does directing prayer to 'God in the heavens' help us maintain proper perspective on His sovereignty versus earthly circumstances?

Interlinear Text

נָשָׂא אֶל לִבִּי נֹ	אֶל כָּפַי	אֶל לֵא	אֶל לֵא	בְּשָׁמַיִם:
Let us lift up	our heart	H413	with our hands	H413
H5375	H3824		H3709	
			unto God	in the heavens
			H410	H8064

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 25:1 (Parallel theme): Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

Psalms 28:2 (Parallel theme): Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

Psalms 86:4 (Parallel theme): Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Psalms 63:4 (Parallel theme): Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

Psalms 141:2 (Parallel theme): Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (References God): So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.