

Lamentations 3:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

Analysis

A devastating summary of judgment's impact: **"Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction."** The Hebrew pachad vafachat hayah lanu hashe'et vehashaver (פָּחַד וַפָּחַת הָיָה לָנוּ הֶשְׁעֵת וְהָשָׁבֵר) uses two word pairs that create alliteration and intensify the horror. Pachad (פָּחַד, "fear, terror") and pachat (פָּחַת, "pit, snare, trap") sound similar, suggesting inescapable dread. Hashe'et (הֶשְׁעֵת, "desolation, devastation") and hashaver (הָשָׁבֵר, "breaking, destruction") likewise echo each other.

The imagery of snare or pit recalls prophetic warnings. Isaiah 24:17-18 uses nearly identical language: "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth...he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare." The point is inescapability—fleeing one danger leads into another. Judgment is comprehensive, leaving no refuge.

Theologically, this verse captures the totality of covenant curses falling on Jerusalem. Fear (psychological terror), snare (inescapable trap), desolation (physical ruin), and destruction (complete breaking) encompass every dimension of disaster. Yet even this language prepares for hope—the very completeness of judgment means it accomplishes its purpose. Once fully broken, Israel can be rebuilt by God's grace alone. Only those who acknowledge their utter desolation can appreciate the wonder of restoration through Christ.

Historical Context

The siege and fall of Jerusalem (588-586 BC) exemplified each element of this verse. Fear gripped the city as Babylonian armies surrounded it (Jeremiah 32:2, 39:1). Famine during the siege created desperate conditions (Lamentations 4:9-10, 2 Kings 25:3). Attempts to escape proved futile—King Zedekiah fled but was captured near Jericho, illustrating the "snare" (2 Kings 25:4-5).

Desolation followed the city's fall. 2 Kings 25:9-10 describes systematic burning and demolition: "And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about." Archaeological excavations confirm extensive fire damage and destruction throughout Jerusalem.

The destruction was so complete that Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10 specified 70 years of desolation—nearly three generations. Those taken into exile in 597 and 586 BC would mostly die before return began under Cyrus in 538 BC. The totality of destruction forced recognition that only divine intervention could restore what judgment had shattered.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the combination of fear, snare, desolation, and destruction illustrate the comprehensive nature of experiencing God's judgment?

2. What does the imagery of inescapable snares teach about the futility of trying to avoid judgment apart from repentance?
3. In what ways did Christ experience the ultimate 'fear and snare' (Gethsemane's agony, the cross) to deliver us from the judgment we deserved?
4. How should the totality of Lamentations' description of judgment affect our evangelistic urgency and our gratitude for salvation?

Interlinear Text

פַּחַד	וּפִתְּ	הַיָּה	לָנוּ	הַיָּשׁ	אֶת	וְהַשְׁמָד:
Fear	and a snare	H1961	H0	is come upon us desolation		and destruction
H6343	H6354			H7612		H7667

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 51:19 (Parallel theme): These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?