

# Lamentations 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

## Analysis

Divine rejection confirmed: "**The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.**" The Hebrew penei YHWH chillekam lo yosif lehabbitam penei kohanim lo nas'u zeqenim lo chananu declares God's active dispersal and rejection. Chillekam (חִלְקָם, "divided them, scattered them") indicates God intentionally dispersed these corrupt leaders. Lo yosif lehabbitam (לוֹיָסִיף לְהַבִּיטָם) means God has withdrawn His favorable attention.

The indictment follows: "they respected not the persons of the priests" (penei kohanim lo nas'u, נְשָׁא פָּנִים) means to show honor, favor, or respect. These leaders showed no respect even for their own office. "They favoured not the elders" (zeqenim lo chananu, זָקְנִים לֹא חָנָנוּ) means to show favor, grace, or mercy.

Theologically, this teaches that those who dishonor their sacred offices lose God's favor. When priests acted contrary to their calling and elders abandoned wisdom, God scattered them. The principle appears in 1 Samuel 2:30: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Leadership isn't a license for corruption but a stewardship requiring faithfulness. Failure brings divine rejection.

## Historical Context

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The anger of the LORD scattering these leaders refers to the exile. Rather than maintaining the priesthood and eldership intact during captivity, God dispersed them. Some priests were executed (2 Kings 25:18-21). Others were scattered among exilic communities. The unified religious leadership structure was broken.

The charge that they "respected not the persons of the priests" likely refers to earlier corruption. Younger priests elevated through political connections rather than proper Aaronic succession, or priests who abandoned their duties for profit (Micah 3:11: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire"). They treated their own office with contempt through greed and corruption.

Similarly, "they favoured not the elders" indicates breakdown of traditional respect. Younger leaders disregarded older sages. Isaiah 3:5 describes this inversion: "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable." This generational disrespect contributed to societal collapse. When even religious leaders show no regard for their own offices or for traditional wisdom, chaos ensues. God responded by scattering them, removing the pretense of legitimate leadership.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does God scattering leaders who disrespected their own offices demonstrate that position without faithfulness brings judgment?
2. What does this verse teach about the importance of honoring both sacred offices and traditional wisdom?
3. In what ways can Christian leaders today 'respect not the persons of the priests/elders'—dishonoring their own calling?

4. How does 1 Samuel 2:30 ('them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed') connect to this verse?

## Interlinear Text

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לְהַבִּיט	בְּ	יְוָסִיף	לְאַ	חַלְקָם	יְהִיה	בְּ	פָּנָי
<b>regard</b>		<b>will no more</b>	<b>he</b>	<b>divided</b>	<b>hath</b>	<b>the</b>	<b>anger</b>
H5027		H3254		H2505	H3808		H6440
<b>The anger of the LORD hath divided them he will no more regard</b>							
לְאַ	כָּבָדִים	בְּנֵי	לְאַ	כָּבָדִים	בְּנֵי	לְאַ	כָּבָדִים
<b>not the elders</b>	<b>elders</b>	<b>they respected</b>	<b>not the elders</b>	<b>elders</b>	<b>they respected</b>	<b>not the elders</b>	<b>elders</b>
H2205	H3808	H5375	H2205	H3808	H5375	H2205	H3808
<b>The anger of the priests they respected not the elders</b>							
<b>בְּנֵי:</b>							
בְּנֵי:							
<b>they favoured</b>							
H2603							

## Additional Cross-References

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**Lamentations 5:12** (Parallel theme): Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured.

**Hebrews 8:9** (References Lord): Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

**Jeremiah 24:9** (Parallel theme): And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

**Deuteronomy 32:26** (Parallel theme): I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:

**Deuteronomy 28:25** (References Lord): The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

