

Lamentations 5:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

Analysis

Chapter 5 is a communal prayer: "Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach" (zechor YHWH meh-hayah lanu habitah ure'eh et-kherpatenu, זִכְרֵנָה יְהוָה וְרִאֵה אֶת-חֶרְפָּתֵנוּ). The verb *zakhar* (זכור) "remember" is crucial. It's not that God forgets—His memory is perfect. But biblical "remembering" means acting on relationship. When God "remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1), the flood waters receded. When He "remembered His covenant" (Exodus 2:24), deliverance began. Here, the plea is for God to act based on remembering His people. The dual verbs "consider" (habitah, הַבִּיטָה, "look attentively") and "behold" (re'eh, רֵא, "see") request God's attention to their "reproach" (cherpah, חֶרְפָּה)—shame, disgrace. The people acknowledge their humiliated state and appeal to God's compassion. This models appropriate prayer after judgment: not demanding or presuming, but humbly requesting God notice and act. Psalm 74:18-22, 79:8-12, and 89:46-51 express similar appeals for God to remember and intervene.

Historical Context

Chapter 5 functions as communal lament and petition, likely used in post-exilic worship as the ruined Jerusalem community appealed for full restoration. While some Jews returned after Cyrus's decree (538 BC), Jerusalem remained desolate until Nehemiah's rebuilding (445 BC). For decades, returnees lived amid ruins,

facing opposition from surrounding peoples (Ezra 4, Nehemiah 4). The 'reproach' included:

1. mockery from neighbors like Sanballat and Tobiah (Nehemiah 4:1-3)
2. poverty and economic hardship (Nehemiah 5:1-5)
3. vulnerability to enemies (Nehemiah 4:11-12)
4. the temple's diminished glory compared to Solomon's (Ezra 3:12, Haggai 2:3).

The prayer 'remember...consider...behold' appeals to God's covenant relationship. Psalm 136's refrain 'His mercy endureth forever' repeats 26 times, emphasizing perpetual covenant love. God who remembered His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18, Exodus 2:24) would remember His covenant with David and Jerusalem.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to ask God to 'remember' us, and how does this relate to covenant relationship rather than divine forgetfulness?
2. How does this prayer model appropriate humility and dependence when appealing to God after experiencing judgment for sin?
3. What role does corporate prayer and lament play in church life, especially when communities face trials or consequences of past failures?

Interlinear Text

רִember זְכָר יְהוָה לְנָא בְּרִית מִתְהָמָה הַבְּרִית
Remember O LORD H4100 what is come upon us consider
H2142 H3068 H5027

וְרָא הִנֵּה אֶת רְגִפְתָּנוּ
and behold our reproach
H7200 H2781

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 79:12 (References Lord): And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

Psalms 79:4 (Parallel theme): We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

Jeremiah 15:15 (References Lord): O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

Nehemiah 4:4 (Parallel theme): Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

Habakkuk 3:2 (References Lord): O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Lamentations 2:15 (Parallel theme): All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Lamentations 3:19 (Parallel theme): Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

Lamentations 3:61 (References Lord): Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, and all their imaginations against me;

