

# Lamentations 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?

## Analysis

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A painful question: "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever? why dost thou forsake us so long time?" (lamah la-netsakh tishkachenu ta'azvenu le-orekh yamim, לָמָּהּ לְנֶצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְעֹרֶךְ יָמִים). The phrase "for ever" ( la-netsakh, לְנֶצַח) doesn't necessarily mean eternal duration but indefinite, seemingly endless time. "Long time" (le-orekh yamim, לְעֹרֶךְ יָמִים) literally means "for length of days"—implying protracted suffering. This isn't accusation but anguished questioning—wrestling with God's timing. Psalm 13:1 echoes: "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?" These questions arise from faith, not unbelief. Unbelief walks away; faith clings and cries out. The complaint honors God by taking Him seriously, treating Him as covenant partner who can be appealed to. The question implicitly affirms: You are able to help; please do so. The silence or delay feels like forgetting and forsaking, though verse 19 affirms God's eternal throne. The tension between God's unchanging sovereignty and experienced suffering is real and Scripture validates wrestling with it.

## Historical Context

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The exile lasted exactly 70 years as prophesied (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10). But for those experiencing it, especially in its early decades, the end seemed impossibly distant. A generation born in exile might die before restoration. The questioning "How long?" appears throughout Scripture: Job 19:2, Psalms 6:3, 35:17, 74:10, 79:5, 80:4, 89:46, 90:13, 94:3, Habakkuk 1:2, Zechariah 1:12, Revelation 6:10. It's the cry of those suffering while trusting God's justice and mercy will eventually

intervene. This models appropriate response to delayed answers. Hebrews 10:36 exhorts: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." 2 Peter 3:8-9 explains divine timing: "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering." What feels like forgetting is patience, allowing time for repentance.

## 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 asking 'How long?' represent faith rather than doubt, and why does Scripture repeatedly include such questions?
2. What's the difference between wrestling with God's timing (as Lamentations models) versus demanding He act according to our timetable?
3. How do we maintain faith when God's promises seem delayed and His intervention feels distant?

## Interlinear Text

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לְמָה	לָךְ עַד	תִּשְׁכַּח נֹ	תַעֲזֹב נֹ	לֹא כֵךְ	יָמִים:
H4100	us for ever	Wherefore dost thou forget	and forsake	us so long	time
	H5331	H7911	H5800	H753	H3117

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 13:1** (Parallel theme): How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

**Psalms 44:24** (Parallel theme): Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

