

# Affliction

Hebrew expression: *‘anah*

Pronunciation: *‘aw NAWH*

Strong’s Number: 6031



## KEY VERSES

Ruth 1:21; 1 Kings 8:35; Psalm 119:67, 71;  
Isaiah 53:7; Lamentations 3:33

The word “affliction” is a word that brings to mind physical and mental suffering. Someone who is afflicted is disturbed or possibly frightened because of danger, pain, or some kind of distress. Many people blame God when they experience affliction. According to the Bible, however, the Lord does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone ([Lam. 3:33](#)). The Hebrew verb *‘anah*, “to be bowed down, afflicted, or humbled,” can be translated in slightly different ways to reflect these basic meanings. These translations of *‘anah* include “bring grief” ([NJPS](#)), “afflict” ([KJV](#)), “does not hurt” ([NLT](#)) people, and “bring affliction” ([NIV](#)). About five other nouns and adjectives are based on this root and mean things like “afflicted, humble, poverty, or affliction.” *‘Anah* does not describe the state of being or condition that God desires His people to be in. He desires them to be standing up straight, healthy and hopeful for things to come.

As noted above, the author of Lamentations asserts that God does not afflict a person willingly. The Hebrew text says literally that He does not afflict them “from His heart.” It is not in His character! Oppression and affliction come because of many other reasons, some which we cannot even fathom just as Job could not do so ([Job 42:1–6](#)).

The noun *‘oni*, meaning “affliction,” is used many times in Lamentations, for it is recorded in this book that God has truly afflicted His people, not because He desired to, but because He had to. The Israelites’ rebellion called for their judgment and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. God has, however, a redemptive purpose for the Israelites. He wants them, because of their affliction, to return to Him and repent so that He may forgive them. God wants their correction and healing ([1 Kgs. 8:35](#); [2 Kgs. 17:20](#)) and His goals are just. The psalmist said that before he was “afflicted,” *‘anah*, he strayed from the Lord. Through his affliction he was brought back to obedience of the Lord’s word. Affliction is one of God’s training grounds, but not one that He willingly chooses for us.

Jesus Christ knew what it was to experience affliction and bore it with patience ([Col. 1:24](#), *thlipsis* in Greek). Paul encourages us to be joyful in our hope in the Lord and to be patient in affliction as well ([Rom. 12:12](#)). It does not have to be our lot to suffer affliction and harsh burdens

from the Lord ([Lam. 1:3](#)), but if we do, He will give us grace to endure them.