

A Lament for Jerusalem – Part 3 (c. September 587 BC)

Lamentations 4–5

The Prophet Speaks:*Aleph*

4:1 How *the* gold has grown dim,
the pure gold has changed.
The stones of holiness are scattered
at the head of every street.

Beth

2 The precious sons of Zion
weighed against fine gold,
how they are thought of as earthen vessels of clay,
the work of the potter's hands.

Gimel

3 Even the jackal bears the beast
and nurses their cubs;
but the daughter of my people has become ruthless,
like ostriches in the wilderness.

Daleth

4 The tongue of the nursling cleaves
to its palate in thirst.
Children beg *for* food,
no one lays it out before them.

He

5 The ones who eat delicacies,
they are ruined in the streets;
the ones nurtured in purple
lie *on* piles of trash.

Waw

6 The iniquity of the daughter of my people
is greater than the sin of Sodom;
it was overthrown in a moment
and no hands were laid on her.

Zayin

7 Her princes were purer than snow,
they were whiter than milk;
their bodies were more ruddy than rubies,
sapphire their appearance.

Heth

8 *Now* their appearance is blacker than soot,
they are not recognized in the streets;
their skin has shriveled on their bones,
it has become dry like wood.

Teth

9 Happier were *the* victims of *the* sword
than the victims of famine;
they have pined away, very hungry
for the crops of my field.

Yod

10 *The* hands of compassionate women,
have cooked their children;
they became as something to eat
in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Kaph

- 11 Yahweh has completed his anger,
he has poured out his fierce anger;
he has kindled a fire in Zion,
it consumed her foundations.

Lamed

- 12 *The* kings of *the* earth did not believe,
and all *the* inhabitants of *the* world,
that a foe and an enemy could enter
into the gates of Jerusalem.

Mem

- 13 Because of the sins of her prophets,
the guilt of her priests,
who shed blood in her midst,
of righteous people.

Nun

- 14 They wander blindly in the streets;
they were defiled with the blood,
their clothes could not be touched.

Samech

- 15 “Go away! Defiled!” they shout to them.
“Go away! Go away! Do not touch!”
so they left, they left; it was said among the nations,
“They will no longer dwell with us.”

Pe

- 16 The presence of Yahweh has scattered them,
he will no longer watch over them;
they did not honor the priests,
they did not show mercy *to* elders.

The People of Jerusalem Lament:*Ayin*

- 17 Still our eyes failed,
looking for our help in vain;
in our watchtower, we kept watch
for a nation that could not save.

Tsade

- 18 They hunted our steps,
from walking in our streets;
our end has come near, our days are finished,
our end has come.

Qoph

- 19 Our pursuers were swifter
than *the* eagles of *the* heavens;
they chased us on the mountains,
they have set an ambush for us in the desert.

Resh

- 20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed one of Yahweh,
was captured in their pits;
of whom we said, “In his shadow
we will live among the nations.”

The Prophet Speaks:*Shin*

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
you who dwell in the land of Uz;
but to you also the cup will pass,
you will become drunk and strip yourself bare.

Taw

22 The *punishment* of your iniquity is completed, O daughter of Zion,
your exile will not continue;
but he will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom,
he will reveal your sins.

The People of Jerusalem Pray:

5:1 Remember, O Yahweh, what has become of us;
take note, and see our disgrace!
2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our houses, to foreigners.
3 We have become orphans, fatherless,
our mothers are like widows.
4 We pay for water with money,
our wood comes *to us* at a price.
5 We are driven on our necks;
we are weary, there is no rest for us.
6 We have made a deal with Egypt *and* Assyria
to be satisfied *with* food.
7 Our fathers have sinned, they are no more;
we bear their iniquity.
8 Slaves rule over us;
there is no one to deliver us from their hand.
9 We risk our life for food
because of the sword of the desert.
10 Our skin is hot like an oven
because of the scorching famine.
11 They raped women in Zion,
young women in the cities of Judah.
12 They hang princes by their hand;
they do not show respect before elders.
13 Young men must carry a hand-mill
and boys stumble under the wood.
14 Elders are no longer at the gate,
young men no longer play stringed instruments.
15 The joy of our hearts has stopped;
our circle-dancing has changed to a mourning ceremony.
16 The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 Because of this, our heart has become faint,
because of these, our eyes have become dim.
18 Because of Mount Zion, which lies desolate,
foxes tread on it.
19 You, O Yahweh, will sit forever
on your throne for generation to generation.
20 Why have you forgotten us forever?
Why have you forsaken us for so long?
21 Restore us to you, O Yahweh, that we will be restored;
renew our days as of old.
22 Unless you have utterly rejected us,
unless you are angry with us beyond measure.