

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

Lamentations 4–5

The Prophet Speaks:*Aleph*

4:1 How dark the gold has become,
How the pure gold has changed!
The sacred stones are poured out
At the corner of every street.

Beth

2 The precious sons of Zion,
Weighed against fine gold,
How they are regarded as earthen jars,
The work of a potter's hands!

Gimel

3 Even jackals offer the breast,
They nurse their young;
But the daughter of my people has become cruel
Like ostriches in the wilderness.

Daleth

4 The tongue of the infant cleaves
To the roof of its mouth because of thirst;
The little ones ask for bread,
But no one breaks *it* for them.

He

5 Those who ate delicacies
Are desolate in the streets;
Those reared in purple
Embrace ash pits.

Waw

6 For the iniquity of the daughter of my people
Is greater than the sin of Sodom,
Which was overthrown as in a moment,
And no hands were turned toward her.

Zayin

7 Her consecrated ones were purer than snow,
They were whiter than milk;
They were more ruddy *in* body than corals,
Their polishing *was like* lapis lazuli.

Heth

8 Their appearance is blacker than soot,
They are not recognized in the streets;
Their skin is shriveled on their bones,
It is withered, it has become like wood.

Teth

9 Better are those slain with the sword
Than those slain with hunger;
For they pine away, being stricken
For lack of the fruits of the field.

Yod

- 10 The hands of compassionate women
Boiled their own children;
They became food for them
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Kaph

- 11 The LORD has accomplished His wrath,
He has poured out His fierce anger;
And He has kindled a fire in Zion
Which has consumed its foundations.

Lamed

- 12 The kings of the earth did not believe,
Nor *did* any of the inhabitants of the world,
That the adversary and the enemy
Could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

Mem

- 13 Because of the sins of her prophets
And the iniquities of her priests,
Who have shed in her midst
The blood of the righteous;

Nun

- 14 They wandered, blind, in the streets;
They were defiled with blood
So that no one could touch their garments.

Samech

- 15 "Depart! Unclean!" they cried of themselves.
"Depart, depart, do not touch!"
So they fled and wandered;
Men among the nations said,
"They shall not continue to dwell *with us.*"

Pe

- 16 The presence of the LORD has scattered them,
He will not continue to regard them;
They did not honor the priests,
They did not favor the elders.

The People of Jerusalem Lament:*Ayin*

- 17 Yet our eyes failed,
Looking for help was useless;
In our watching we have watched
For a nation that could not save.

Tsade

- 18 They hunted our steps
So that we could not walk in our streets;
Our end drew near,
Our days were finished
For our end had come.

Qoph

19 Our pursuers were swifter
 Than the eagles of the sky;
 They chased us on the mountains,
 They waited in ambush for us in the wilderness.

Resh

20 The breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed,
 Was captured in their pits,
 Of whom we had said, "Under his shadow
 We shall live among the nations."

The Prophet Speaks:*Shin*

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
 Who dwells in the land of Uz;
But the cup will come around to you as well,
 You will become drunk and make yourself naked.

Taw

22 *The punishment* of your iniquity has been completed, O daughter of Zion;
 He will exile you no longer.
But He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom;
 He will expose your sins!

The People of Jerusalem Pray:

5:1 Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
 Look, and see our reproach!
 2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
 Our houses to aliens.
 3 We have become orphans without a father,
 Our mothers are like widows.
 4 We have to pay for our drinking water,
 Our wood comes *to us* at a price.
 5 Our pursuers are at our necks;
 We are worn out, there is no rest for us.
 6 We have submitted to Egypt *and* Assyria to get enough bread.
 7 Our fathers sinned, *and* are no more;
 It is we who have borne their iniquities.
 8 Slaves rule over us;
 There is no one to deliver us from their hand.
 9 We get our bread at the risk of our lives
 Because of the sword in the wilderness.
 10 Our skin has become as hot as an oven,
 Because of the burning heat of famine.
 11 They ravished the women in Zion,
 The virgins in the cities of Judah.
 12 Princes were hung by their hands;
 Elders were not respected.
 13 Young men worked at the grinding mill,
 And youths stumbled under *loads* of wood.
 14 Elders are gone from the gate,
 Young men from their music.
 15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;
 Our dancing has been turned into mourning.
 16 The crown has fallen from our head;
 Woe to us, for we have sinned!
 17 Because of this our heart is faint,

- Because of these things our eyes are dim;
18 Because of Mount Zion which lies desolate,
Foxes prowl in it.
19 You, O LORD, rule forever;
Your throne is from generation to generation.
20 Why do You forget us forever?
Why do You forsake us so long?
21 Restore us to You, O LORD, that we may be restored;
Renew our days as of old,
22 Unless You have utterly rejected us
And are exceedingly angry with us.

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