

A Lament for Jerusalem – Part 1 (c. September 587 BC)

Lamentations 1–2

The Prophet Speaks:*Aleph*

1:1 Alas! The city once full of people
now sits all alone!
The prominent lady among the nations
has become a widow!
The princess who once ruled the provinces
has become a forced laborer!

Beth

2 She weeps bitterly at night;
tears stream down her cheeks.
She has no one to comfort her
among all her lovers.
All her friends have betrayed her;
they have become her enemies.

Gimel

3 Judah has departed into exile
under affliction and harsh oppression.
She lives among the nations;
she has found no resting place.
All who pursued her
overtook her in narrow straits.

Daleth

4 The roads to Zion mourn
because no one travels to the festivals.
All her city gates are deserted;
her priests groan.
Her virgins grieve;
she is in bitter anguish!

He

5 Her foes subjugated her;
her enemies are at ease.
For the LORD afflicted her
because of her many acts of rebellion.
Her children went away
captive before the enemy.

Waw

6 All of Daughter Zion's splendor
has departed.
Her leaders became like deer;
they found no pasture,
so they were too exhausted to escape
from the hunter.

Zayin

7 Jerusalem remembers,
when she became a poor homeless person,
all her treasures
that she owned in days of old.
When her people fell into an enemy's grip,
none of her allies came to her rescue.

Her enemies gloated over her;
they sneered at her downfall.

Heth

8 Jerusalem committed terrible sin;
therefore she became an object of scorn.
All who admired her have despised her
because they have seen her nakedness.
She groans aloud
and turns away in shame.

Teth

9 Her menstrual flow has soiled her clothing;
she did not consider the consequences of her sin.
Her demise was astonishing,
and there was no one to comfort her.
She cried, "Look, O LORD, on my affliction
because my enemy boasts!"

Yod

10 An enemy grabbed
all her valuables.
Indeed she watched in horror as Gentiles
invaded her holy temple—
those whom you had commanded:
"They must not enter your assembly place."

Kaph

11 All her people groaned
as they searched for a morsel of bread.
They exchanged their valuables
for just enough food to stay alive.

Jerusalem Speaks:

"Look, O LORD! Consider
that I have become worthless!"

Lamed

12 Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by on the road?
Look and see!
Is there any pain like mine?
The Lord has afflicted me,
he has inflicted it on me
when he burned with anger.

Mem

13 He sent down fire
into my bones, and it overcame them.
He spread out a trapper's net for my feet;
he made me turn back.
He has made me desolate;
I am faint all day long.

Nun

14 My sins are bound around my neck like a yoke;
they are fastened together by his hand.
He has placed his yoke on my neck;
he has sapped my strength.

The Lord has handed me over
to those whom I cannot resist.

Samech

15 He rounded up all my mighty ones;
The Lord did this in my midst.
He summoned an assembly against me
to shatter my young men.
The Lord has stomped like grapes
the virgin daughter, Judah.

Ayin

16 I weep because of these things;
my eyes flow with tears.
For there is no one in sight who can comfort me
or encourage me.
My children are desolated
because an enemy has prevailed.

The Prophet Speaks:

Pe

17 Zion spread out her hands,
but there is no one to comfort her.
The LORD has issued a decree against Jacob;
his neighbors have become his enemies.
Jerusalem has become
like filthy garbage in their midst.

Jerusalem Speaks:

Tsade

18 The LORD is right to judge me!
Yes, I rebelled against his commands.
Please listen, all you nations,
and look at my suffering!
My young women and men
have gone into exile.

Qoph

19 I called for my lovers,
but they had deceived me.
My priests and my elders
perished in the city.
Truly they had searched for food
to keep themselves alive.

Resh

20 Look, O LORD! I am distressed;
my stomach is in knots!
My heart is pounding inside me.
Yes, I was terribly rebellious!
Out in the street the sword bereaves a mother of her children;
Inside the house death is present.

Shin

21 They have heard that I groan,
yet there is no one to comfort me.
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have brought it about.

Bring about the day of judgment that you promised
so that they may end up like me!

Taw

22 Let all their wickedness come before you;
afflict them
just as you have afflicted me
because of all my acts of rebellion.
For my groans are many,
and my heart is sick with sorrow.

The Prophet Speaks:

Aleph

2:1 Alas! The Lord has covered
Daughter Zion with his anger.
He has thrown down the splendor of Israel
from heaven to earth;
he did not protect his temple
when he displayed his anger.

Beth

2 The Lord destroyed mercilessly
all the homes of Jacob's descendants.
In his anger he tore down
the fortified cities of Daughter Judah.
He knocked to the ground and humiliated
the kingdom and its rulers.

Gimel

3 In fierce anger he destroyed
the whole army of Israel.
He withdrew his right hand
as the enemy attacked.
He was like a raging fire in the land of Jacob;
it consumed everything around it.

Daleth

4 He prepared his bow like an enemy;
his right hand was ready to shoot.
Like a foe he killed everyone,
even our strong young men;
he has poured out his anger like fire
on the tent of Daughter Zion.

He

5 The Lord, like an enemy,
destroyed Israel.
He destroyed all her palaces;
he ruined her fortified cities.
He made everyone in Daughter Judah
mourn and lament.

Waw

6 He destroyed his temple as if it were a vineyard;
he destroyed his appointed meeting place.
The LORD has made those in Zion forget
both the festivals and the Sabbaths.
In his fierce anger he has spurned
both king and priest.

Zayin

7 The Lord rejected his altar
and abhorred his temple.
He handed over to the enemy
her palace walls;
the enemy shouted in the LORD's temple
as if it were a feast day.

Heth

8 The LORD was determined to tear down
Daughter Zion's wall.
He prepared to knock it down;
he did not withdraw his hand from destroying.
He made the ramparts and fortified walls lament;
together they mourned their ruin.

Teth

9 Her city gates have fallen to the ground;
he smashed to bits the bars that lock her gates.
Her king and princes were taken into exile;
there is no more guidance available.
As for her prophets,
they no longer receive a vision from the LORD.

Yod

10 The elders of Daughter Zion
sit on the ground in silence.
They have thrown dirt on their heads;
They have dressed in sackcloth.
Jerusalem's young women stare down at the ground.

Kaph

11 My eyes are worn out from weeping;
my stomach is in knots.
My heart is poured out on the ground
due to the destruction of my helpless people;
children and infants faint
in the town squares.

Lamed

12 Children say to their mothers,
"Where are food and drink?"
They faint like a wounded warrior
in the city squares.
They die slowly
in their mothers' arms.

Mem

13 With what can I equate you?
To what can I compare you, O Daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you
so that I might comfort you, O Virgin Daughter Zion?
Your wound is as deep as the sea.
Who can heal you?

Nun

14 Your prophets saw visions for you
that were worthless lies.

They failed to expose your sin
so as to restore your fortunes.
They saw oracles for you
that were worthless lies.

Samech

15 All who passed by on the road
clapped their hands to mock you.
They sneered and shook their heads
at Daughter Jerusalem.
“Ha! Is this the city they called
‘The perfection of beauty,
the source of joy of the whole earth!’?”

Pe

16 All your enemies
gloated over you.
They sneered and gnashed their teeth;
they said, “We have destroyed her!
Ha! We have waited a long time for this day.
We have lived to see it!”

Ayin

17 The LORD has done what he planned;
he has fulfilled his promise
that he threatened long ago:
He has overthrown you without mercy
and has enabled the enemy to gloat over you;
he has exalted your adversaries’ power.

Tsade

18 Cry out from your heart to the Lord,
O wall of Daughter Zion!
Make your tears flow like a river
all day and all night long!
Do not rest;
do not let your tears stop!

Qoph

19 Get up! Cry out in the night
when the night watches start!
Pour out your heart like water
before the face of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to him
for your children’s lives;
they are fainting
at every street corner.

Jerusalem Speaks:*Resh*

20 Look, O LORD! Consider!
Whom have you ever afflicted like this?
Should women eat their offspring,
their healthy infants?
Should priest and prophet
be killed in the Lord’s sanctuary?

Shin

21 The young boys and old men
lie dead on the ground in the streets.
My young women and my young men
have fallen by the sword.
You killed them when you were angry;
you slaughtered them without mercy.

Taw

22 As if it were a feast day, you call
enemies to terrify me on every side.
On the day of the Lord's anger
no one escaped or survived.
My enemy has finished off
those healthy infants whom I bore and raised.

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