

Lamentations

Jerusalem Cries Over Her Destruction

¹ Jerusalem once was a city full of people,
 but now the city is so empty.
 She* was one of the greatest cities in the world,
 but now she is like a poor widow.
 She was once a princess among cities,
 but now she has been made a slave.
² She cries bitterly in the night.
 Her tears are on her cheeks.
 She has no one to comfort her.
 Many nations were friendly to her,
 but not one of them comforts her now.
 All her friends have turned their backs on her
 and have become her enemies.
³ Judah suffered very much,
 and then she was taken into captivity.
 She lives among other nations
 but has found no rest.
 The people who chased her caught her
 where there was no way out.†
⁴ The roads to Zion are very sad,
 because no one comes to Zion for the festivals any-
 more.
 All of Zion's gates have been destroyed;
 all her priests groan in sorrow.
 Zion's young women have been taken away,‡

* 1:1 She Throughout this poem, Jerusalem is represented as a woman.

† 1:3 where ... way out Or "in the narrow valleys." ‡ 1:4 have been taken away This is from the ancient Greek version. The standard Hebrew text has "are upset."

and all this made Zion sad.

⁵ Jerusalem's enemies have won.

Her enemies have been successful.

This happened because the LORD punished her.

He punished Jerusalem for her many sins.

Her children have gone away.

Their enemies captured them and took them away.

⁶ The beauty of Daughter Zion[§] has gone away.

Her princes were like deer that cannot find a meadow to feed in.

They walk away without strength from those who chased them.

⁷ Jerusalem thinks back.

She remembers the time when she was hurt
and when she lost her home.

She remembers all the nice things that she had in the past.

She remembers those nice things that she had in the
old days.

She remembers when her people were captured by the
enemy.

She remembers when there was no one to help her.

When her enemies saw her, they laughed,
because she was destroyed.

⁸ Jerusalem sinned very badly.

Because Jerusalem sinned,
she became a ruined city that people shake their
heads about.

In the past people respected her.

But now they hate her,
because they abused her.

Jerusalem groaned
and turned away.

§ 1:6 Daughter Zion Another name for Jerusalem. Also in 2:1, 8, 13, 18.

⁹ Jerusalem's skirts were dirty.

She gave no thought to what would become of her.
Her fall was amazing.

She had no one to comfort her.
She says, "LORD, see how I am hurt!
See how my enemy thinks he is so great!"

¹⁰ The enemy stretched out his hand.

He took all her nice things.
In fact, she saw the foreign nations go inside her Temple.
And you said those people could not join in our
assembly!

¹¹ All the people of Jerusalem are groaning.

All of her people are looking for food.
They are giving away all their nice things for food to
stay alive.

Jerusalem says, "Look, LORD. Look at me!

See how people hate me.

¹² All you who pass by on the road, you don't seem to care.

But look at me and see.
Is there any pain like my pain?
Is there any pain like the pain that has come to me?
Is there any pain like the pain that the LORD has punished
me with?

He has punished me on the day of his great anger.

¹³ The Lord sent fire from above
that went down into my bones.

He stretched out a net for my feet.
He turned me all the way around.

He made me into a wasteland.
I am sick all day.

¹⁴ "My sins were tied up like a yoke.

My sins were tied up in the Lord's hands.

His yoke is on my neck.

He has made me weak.

He has given me to those

who I cannot stand up against.

15 “The Lord rejected all my powerful men

who were inside the city.

Then he brought a group of people against me.

He brought them to kill my young soldiers.

The Lord has trampled his dearest city*

like grapes in a winepress.

16 “I cry about all these things.

Tears are flowing down my cheeks.

There is no one near to comfort me.

There is no one who can make me feel better.

My children are like a wasteland,

because the enemy won.”

17 Zion spread out her hands.

There was no one to comfort her.

The LORD had given orders to Jacob’s enemies.

He ordered them to surround the city.

Jerusalem has become a dirty rag

that her enemies threw away.

18 Now Jerusalem says, “I refused to listen to the LORD,

so he is right for doing these things.

So listen, all you people!

Look at my pain!

My young women and men

have gone into captivity.

* 1:15 dearest city Literally, “virgin daughter Judah,” a name for the city of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ I called out to my lovers,
but they tricked me.

My priests and my elders
have died in the city.

They were looking for food for themselves.
They wanted to keep themselves alive.

²⁰ “Look at me, LORD. I am in distress!
I am upset, as if my heart turned upside down inside
of me.

I feel this way because
I have been so stubborn.

Out in the streets,
I lost my children to the swords.

Inside, it is like death.

²¹ “Listen to me, I am groaning.
I have no one to comfort me.

All my enemies have heard of my trouble.
They are happy that you did this to me.

You said there would be a time of punishment.
You said you would punish my enemies.

Now do what you said.
Let my enemies be like I am now.

²² “Look how evil my enemies are!
Then you can treat them the same way you treated
me
because of all my sins.

Do this because I am groaning again and again.
Do this because my heart is sick.”

2

The Lord Destroyed Jerusalem

¹ Look how the Lord has covered daughter Zion*
with the cloud of his anger.

He has thrown her, the glory of Israel,
from the sky to the ground.

In his anger he showed no care even for the Temple
where he rests his feet.†

² The Lord destroyed the houses of Jacob.
He destroyed them without mercy.

In his anger he destroyed the fortresses of Daughter
Judah.

He threw the kingdom of Judah and its rulers to the
ground.

He ruined the kingdom of Judah.

³ He was angry, and he destroyed
all the strength of Israel.

He took away his right hand from Israel.

He did this when the enemy came.

He burned like a flaming fire in Jacob.

He was like a fire that burns all around.

⁴ He bent his bow like an enemy.

He held his sword in his right hand.

He killed all the good-looking men of Judah.

He killed them as if they were the enemy.

He poured out his anger

like a fire on the tents of Zion.

⁵ The Lord has become like an enemy.

* 2:1 daughter Zion The city of Jerusalem pictured as a young woman. Similar language is used in verses 8, 13, 15, and 18. See “Zion” in the Word List. † 2:1 Temple ... feet Literally, “the footstool of his feet,” meaning the place God lived among his people.

He has swallowed up Israel.
 He has swallowed up all her palaces
 and all her fortresses.
 He has made much sadness and crying
 for the dead in Daughter Judah.

⁶ He pulled up his own tent[‡]
 as if it were a garden.
 He has ruined the place where the people
 came together to worship him.
 The LORD has made people forget
 the special assemblies and special days of rest[§] in
 Zion.
 He rejected the king and the priests.
 He was angry and rejected them.
⁷ He rejected his altar,
 and he left his holy place of worship.
 He let the enemy pull down the walls
 of the palaces of Jerusalem.
 The enemy shouted with joy in the LORD'S Temple.
 They made noise as though it were a festival.
⁸ The LORD planned to destroy
 the wall of Daughter Zion.
 He marked the wall with a measuring line.
 He didn't stop himself from destroying it.
 He made all the walls cry out in sadness.
 Together they wasted away.

⁹ Jerusalem's gates have sunk into the ground.

[‡] 2:6 his own tent This is a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. [§] 2:6 special days of rest Or "Sabbaths." This might mean Saturday (see "Sabbath" in the Word List) or all the special days when the people were not supposed to work.

The bars on her gates are completely destroyed.
Her king and princes have been taken to other nations.
The teaching of the law has stopped.
And her prophets no longer receive
visions from the LORD.

¹⁰ The elders of Zion sit on the ground.
They sit on the ground and are quiet.
They pour dust on their heads.
They put on sackcloth.
The young women of Jerusalem
bow their heads to the ground in sorrow.

¹¹ My eyes are worn out with tears,
and my insides are upset.
My heart feels like it has been poured on the ground;
I feel this way because of the destruction of my
people.
Children and babies are fainting
in the public squares of the city.

¹² They ask their mothers,
“Where is the bread and wine?”
as they pour out their life in their mother’s laps.

¹³ My dear Jerusalem, what can I say about you?
What can I compare you to?
What can I say you are like?
How can I comfort you, city of Zion?
You have been hurt much too badly
for anyone to heal.

¹⁴ Your prophets saw visions for you,
but their visions were only worthless lies.
They didn’t speak against your sins.

They didn't try to make things better.
They spoke messages for you,
but they were false messages that fooled you.

¹⁵ Those who pass by on the road
clap their hands and laugh at you.
They make fun of Jerusalem,
shaking their heads at the sight of her.
They ask, "Is this the city that people called
'The Most Beautiful City'
and 'The Joy of all the Earth'?"

¹⁶ All your enemies laugh at you.
They whistle and grind their teeth at you.
They say, "We have swallowed them up!
This is the day we were hoping for.
We have finally seen this happen!"

¹⁷ The LORD did what he planned to do.
He did what he said he would do.
He did what he commanded a long time ago.
He destroyed, and he had no pity.
He made your enemies happy because of what hap-
pened to you.
He made your enemies strong.

¹⁸ Cry out with all your heart* to the Lord!
Jerusalem, let tears roll down your walls.
Let your tears flow like a stream day and night.
Don't stop crying
or let your eyes dry.

* 2:18 Cry out ... heart Or "Their hearts cried out."

¹⁹ Get up throughout the night and cry for help.
Let your sorrow pour out before the Lord like water.
Lift up your hands in prayer to him.
Ask him to let your children live.
They are starving to death on every street corner.

²⁰ Look at us, LORD!
Have you ever treated anyone else so badly?
Is it right for women to eat their own babies,
the children they have cared for?
Should priests and prophets be killed
in the Temple of the Lord?

²¹ Young men and old men
lie on the ground in the streets of the city.
My young women and young men
have been killed by the sword.
You killed them on the day of your anger.
You killed them without mercy!

²² You invited terror to come to me from all around.
You invited terror as though you were inviting it to
a festival.
No one escaped on the day of the LORD'S anger.
My enemy killed the people who I raised and brought
up.

3

The Meaning of Suffering

- ¹ I am a man who has seen much trouble.
God beat us with a stick, and I saw it happen.
² He led and brought me
into darkness, not light.
³ He turned his hand against me.

- He did this again and again, all day.
- ⁴ He wore out my flesh and skin.
He broke my bones.
- ⁵ He built up bitterness and trouble against me.
He surrounded me with bitterness and trouble.
- ⁶ He put me in the dark,
like someone who died long ago.
- ⁷ He shut me in, so I could not get out.
He put heavy chains on me.
- ⁸ Even when I cry out and ask for help,
he does not listen to my prayer.
- ⁹ He has blocked up my path with stones.
He has made my path crooked.
- ¹⁰ He is like a bear about to attack me,
like a lion that is in a hiding place.
- ¹¹ He led me off my path.
He tore me to pieces and ruined me.
- ¹² He made his bow ready.
He made me the target for his arrows.
- ¹³ He shot me in the stomach
with his arrows.
- ¹⁴ I have become a joke to all my people.
All day long they sing songs about me and make fun
of me.
- ¹⁵ He gave me this poison to drink.
He filled me with this bitter drink.
- ¹⁶ He pushed my teeth into rocky ground.
He pushed me into the dirt.
- ¹⁷ I thought I would never have peace again.
I forgot about good things.
- ¹⁸ I said to myself, "I no longer have any hope
that the LORD will help me."
- ¹⁹ Remember, I am very sad,
and I have no home.

- Remember the bitter poison that you gave me.
- 20 I remember well all my troubles,
and I am very sad.
- 21 But then I think about this,
and I have hope:
- 22 We are still alive because
the LORD'S faithful love never ends.
- 23 Every morning he shows it in new ways!
You are so very true and loyal!
- 24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my God,
and I trust him."*
- 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him.
He is good to those who look for him.
- 26 It is good to wait quietly
for the LORD to save them.
- 27 It is good for a man to wear his yoke
from the time he is young.
- 28 He should sit alone and be quiet
when the Lord puts his yoke on him.
- 29 He should bow down to the Lord.
Maybe there is still hope.
- 30 He should turn his cheek to the one who hits him
and let people insult him.
- 31 He should remember that
the Lord does not reject people forever.
- 32 When he punishes, he also has mercy.
He has mercy because of his great love and kindness.
- 33 He does not enjoy causing people pain.
He does not like to make anyone unhappy.
- 34 He does not like any prisoner on earth

* 3:24 The LORD ... him Or "The LORD is my portion and I trust him."

to be trampled down.

³⁵ He does not like anyone to be unfair to another person.
Some people will do such things right in front of God
Most High.

³⁶ The Lord does not like anyone to cheat another person.
He does not like any of these things.

³⁷ No one can say something and make it happen,
unless the Lord orders it.

³⁸ God Most High commands
both good and bad things to happen.

³⁹ No one alive can complain
when he punishes them for their sins.

⁴⁰ Let us check and see what we have done.
Then let us turn back to the LORD.

⁴¹ Let us lift up our hearts and our hands
to the God of heaven.

⁴² Let us say to him, "We have sinned and have been
stubborn.
Because of this, you have not forgiven us.

⁴³ You wrapped yourself with anger.
You chased us.
You killed us without mercy!

⁴⁴ You wrapped yourself in a cloud
so that no prayer could get through.

⁴⁵ You made us like garbage and dirt
to the other nations.

⁴⁶ All of our enemies
speak angrily against us.

⁴⁷ We have been frightened.
We have fallen into a pit.

We have been badly hurt.
We have been broken."

⁴⁸ My eyes flow with streams of tears.

- I cry because of the destruction of my people.
49 My eyes will flow without stopping.
I will keep on crying.
50 I will continue to cry
until you look down and see us, LORD!
I will continue to cry
until you see us from heaven.
51 My eyes make me sad, when I see
what happened to the young women in my city.
52 For no reason,
my enemies hunted me like a bird.
53 They threw me alive into a pit
and then threw stones at me.
54 Water came up over my head.
I said to myself, "I am finished."
55 LORD, I called your name
from the bottom of the pit.
56 You heard my voice.
You didn't close your ears.
You didn't refuse to rescue me.
57 You came to me on the day that I called out to you.
You said to me, "Don't be afraid."
58 You defended me
and bought me back to life.
59 LORD, you have seen my trouble.
Now judge my case for me.
60 You have seen how my enemies have hurt me.
You have seen all the evil plans that they made
against me.
61 You heard them insult me, LORD.
You have heard all the evil plans that they made
against me.
62 The words and the thoughts of my enemies
are against me all the time—

- ⁶³ when they sit down and when they stand up.
 Look how they make fun of me!
⁶⁴ Give them back what they deserve, LORD.
 Pay them back for what they have done.
⁶⁵ Make them stubborn
 and then curse them.
⁶⁶ Chase them in anger and destroy them.
 Wipe them off the face of the earth, LORD!

4

The Horrors of the Attack on Jerusalem

- ¹ See how the gold has grown dark,
 how the pure gold has changed.
 There are jewels* scattered all around
 at every street corner.
² The precious people of Zion
 were once worth more than gold.
 But now they are treated like something worthless,
 like the cheap clay jars a potter makes.
³ Even a wild dog feeds her babies.
 Even the jackal lets her pups suck at her breast.
 But the daughter of my people† is cruel.
 She is like the ostrich in the desert that forgets its
 eggs in the sand.
⁴ Babies are so thirsty
 their tongues stick to the roof of their mouths.
 Young children ask for bread,
 but no one gives them any.
⁵ Those who ate rich food

* 4:1 jewels The meaning of the Hebrew word here is uncertain. † 4:3 daughter of my people Another name for Jerusalem. Also in verse 6.

are now dying in the streets.
Those who grew up wearing nice red clothes
now pick through garbage piles.

⁶ The sin of the daughter of my people was very great.
Their sin was greater than the sins of Sodom and
Gomorrah.
Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed suddenly.
No human hand caused their destruction.[‡]

⁷ Some of the men of Judah were dedicated to God in a
special way.
They were very pure.
They were whiter than snow,
and whiter than milk.
Their bodies were red like coral
and their beards like sapphire stones.

⁸ But now their faces are blacker than soot.
No one even recognizes them in the streets.
Their skin is wrinkled over their bones.
Their skin is like wood.

⁹ It was better for those who were killed by the sword
than for those who died of hunger.
Those starving people were sad and hurt.
They died because they got no food from the field.

¹⁰ Then even nice women
cooked their own children.
The children were food for their mothers.
This happened when my people were destroyed.

¹¹ The LORD used all of his anger.
He poured out all his anger.
He made a fire in Zion
that burned it down to the foundations.

¹² The kings of the earth could not believe what had
happened.

[‡] 4:6 No human hand ... destruction The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

The people of the world could not believe what had happened.
They could not believe that enemies
would be able to come through the city gates of
Jerusalem.

¹³ This happened because the prophets
of Jerusalem sinned.
This happened because the priests
of Jerusalem did evil things.
They were shedding the blood of good people
in the city of Jerusalem.

¹⁴ The prophets and priests walked around
like blind men in the streets.
They had become dirty with blood.
No one could even touch their clothes because they
were dirty.

¹⁵ People shouted, "Go away!
Go away! Don't touch us."
They wandered around and had no home.
People in other nations said,
"We don't want them to live with us."

¹⁶ The LORD himself destroyed them.
He didn't look after them anymore.
He didn't respect the priests.
He was not friendly to the elders of Judah.

¹⁷ We have worn out our eyes looking for help,
but no help comes.
We kept on looking for a nation to save us.
We kept watch from our watchtower,
but no nation came to us.

¹⁸ Our enemies hunted us all the time.
We could not even go out into the streets.
Our end came near. Our time was up.
Our end came!

¹⁹ The men who chased us
were faster than eagles in the sky.

They chased us into the mountains.

They hid in the desert to catch us.

²⁰ The king was very important to us.

He was like the breath we breathe,
but he was trapped by them.

The LORD himself chose the king,
and we said this about the king,

“We will live in his shadow.
He protects us from the nations.”

²¹ Be happy, people of Edom.

Be happy, you who live in the land of Uz.

But remember, the cup of the Lord’s anger will come
around to you too.

When you drink from that cup,
you will get drunk and strip off all your clothes.

²² Your punishment is complete, Zion.

You will not go into captivity again.

But the Lord will punish your sins, people of Edom.

He will uncover your sins.

5

A Prayer to the Lord

¹ Remember, LORD, what happened to us.

Look and see our shame.

² Our land has been turned over to strangers.

Our houses have been given to foreigners.

³ We have become orphans.

We have no father.

Our mothers have become like widows.

⁴ We have to buy the water that we drink.

- We have to pay for the wood that we use.
- ⁵ We are forced to wear a yoke on our necks.
We get tired, and we have no rest.
- ⁶ We made an agreement with Egypt.
We also made an agreement with Assyria to get
enough bread.
- ⁷ Our ancestors sinned against you, and now they are
dead.
And we are suffering because of their sins.
- ⁸ Slaves have become our rulers.
No one can save us from them.
- ⁹ We risk our lives to get food.
There are men in the desert with swords.
- ¹⁰ Our skin is hot like an oven.
We have a high fever because of our hunger.
- ¹¹ The enemy raped the women of Zion.
They raped the women in the cities of Judah.
- ¹² The enemy hanged our princes.
They didn't honor our elders.
- ¹³ The enemy made our young men grind grain at the mill.
Our young men stumbled under loads of wood.
- ¹⁴ The elders no longer sit at the gates of the city.
The young men no longer make music.
- ¹⁵ We have no more joy in our hearts.
Our dancing has changed to crying for the dead.
- ¹⁶ The crown has fallen from our head.
Things have gone bad for us because we sinned.
- ¹⁷ For this reason, our hearts have become sick,
and our eyes cannot see clearly.
- ¹⁸ Mount Zion is a wasteland.
Foxes run around on Mount Zion.
- ¹⁹ But you rule forever, LORD.
Your kingly chair lasts forever and ever.
- ²⁰ You seem to have forgotten us forever.

You seem to have left us alone for such a long time.

²¹ Bring us back to you, LORD.

We will gladly come back to you.

Make our lives as they were before.

²² You were very angry with us.

Have you completely rejected us?

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