

The Book of Lamentations

Chapter 1:

How lonely sits the city

that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become,

she who was great among the nations!

She who was a princess among the provinces

has become a slave.

² She weeps bitterly in the night,

with tears on her cheeks;

among all her lovers

she has none to comfort her;

all her friends have dealt treacherously with her;

they have become her enemies.

³ Judah has gone into exile because of affliction

and hard servitude;

she dwells now among the nations,

but finds no resting place;

her pursuers have all overtaken her

in the midst of her distress.

⁴The roads to Zion mourn,
for none come to the festival;
all her gates are desolate;
her priests groan;
her virgins have been afflicted,
and she herself suffers bitterly.

⁵Her foes have become the head;
her enemies prosper,
because the Lord has afflicted her
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.

⁶From the daughter of Zion
all her majesty has departed.

Her princes have become like deer
that find no pasture;
they fled without strength
before the pursuer.

⁷Jerusalem remembers
in the days of her affliction and wandering
all the precious things

that were hers from days of old.

When her people fell into the hand of the foe,

and there was none to help her,

her foes gloated over her;

they mocked at her downfall.

⁸Jerusalem sinned grievously;

therefore she became filthy;

all who honored her despise her,

for they have seen her nakedness;

she herself groans

and turns her face away.

⁹Her uncleanness was in her skirts;

she took no thought of her future;

therefore her fall is terrible;

she has no comforter.

“O Lord, behold my affliction,

for the enemy has triumphed!”

¹⁰The enemy has stretched out his hands

over all her precious things;

for she has seen the nations

enter her sanctuary,

those whom you forbade
to enter your congregation.

¹¹All her people groan
as they search for bread;
they trade their treasures for food
to revive their strength.

“Look, O Lord, and see,
for I am despised.”

¹²“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the Lord inflicted
on the day of his fierce anger.

¹³“From on high he sent fire;
into my bones he made it descend;
he spread a net for my feet;
he turned me back;
he has left me stunned,
faint all the day long.

¹⁴ “My transgressions were bound into a yoke;
by his hand they were fastened together;
they were set upon my neck;
he caused my strength to fail;
the Lord gave me into the hands
of those whom I cannot withstand.

¹⁵ “The Lord rejected
all my mighty men in my midst;
he summoned an assembly against me
to crush my young men;
the Lord has trodden as in a winepress
the virgin daughter of Judah.

¹⁶ “For these things I weep;
my eyes flow with tears;
for a comforter is far from me,
one to revive my spirit;
my children are desolate,
for the enemy has prevailed.”

¹⁷ Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is none to comfort her;
the Lord has commanded against Jacob

that his neighbors should be his foes;
Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.

¹⁸ “The Lord is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word;
but hear, all you peoples,
and see my suffering;
my young women and my young men
have gone into captivity.

¹⁹ “I called to my lovers,
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city,
while they sought food
to revive their strength.

²⁰ “Look, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my stomach churns;
my heart is wrung within me,
because I have been very rebellious.

In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.

²¹ “They heard my groaning,
yet there is no one to comfort me.

All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have done it.

You have brought the day you announced;
now let them be as I am.

²² “Let all their evildoing come before you,
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my transgressions;
for my groans are many,
and my heart is faint.”

Chapter 2:

How the Lord in his anger
has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!

He has cast down from heaven to earth
the splendor of Israel;
he has not remembered his footstool
in the day of his anger.

²The Lord has swallowed up without mercy
all the habitations of Jacob;
in his wrath he has broken down
the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
he has brought down to the ground in dishonor
the kingdom and its rulers.

³He has cut down in fierce anger
all the might of Israel;
he has withdrawn from them his right hand
in the face of the enemy;
he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,
consuming all around.

⁴He has bent his bow like an enemy,
with his right hand set like a foe;
and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes
in the tent of the daughter of Zion;
he has poured out his fury like fire.

⁵The Lord has become like an enemy;
he has swallowed up Israel;
he has swallowed up all its palaces;
he has laid in ruins its strongholds,

and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah
mourning and lamentation.

⁶He has laid waste his booth like a garden,
laid in ruins his meeting place;
the Lord has made Zion forget
festival and Sabbath,
and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.

⁷The Lord has scorned his altar,
disowned his sanctuary;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy
the walls of her palaces;
they raised a clamor in the house of the Lord
as on the day of festival.

⁸The Lord determined to lay in ruins
the wall of the daughter of Zion;
he stretched out the measuring line;
he did not restrain his hand from destroying;
he caused rampart and wall to lament;
they languished together.

⁹Her gates have sunk into the ground;
he has ruined and broken her bars;

her king and princes are among the nations;
the law is no more,
and her prophets find
no vision from the Lord.

¹⁰The elders of the daughter of Zion
sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads
and put on sackcloth;
the young women of Jerusalem
have bowed their heads to the ground.

¹¹My eyes are spent with weeping;
my stomach churns;
my bile is poured out to the ground
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
because infants and babies faint
in the streets of the city.

¹²They cry to their mothers,
“Where is bread and wine?”
as they faint like a wounded man
in the streets of the city,

as their life is poured out

on their mothers' bosom.

¹³ What can I say for you, to what compare you,

O daughter of Jerusalem?

What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you,

O virgin daughter of Zion?

For your ruin is vast as the sea;

who can heal you?

¹⁴ Your prophets have seen for you

false and deceptive visions;

they have not exposed your iniquity

to restore your fortunes,

but have seen for you oracles

that are false and misleading.

¹⁵ All who pass along the way

clap their hands at you;

they hiss and wag their heads

at the daughter of Jerusalem:

“Is this the city that was called

the perfection of beauty,

the joy of all the earth?”

¹⁶All your enemies
 rail against you;
they hiss, they gnash their teeth,
 they cry: “We have swallowed her!

Ah, this is the day we longed for;
 now we have it; we see it!”

¹⁷The Lord has done what he purposed;
 he has carried out his word,
which he commanded long ago;
 he has thrown down without pity;
he has made the enemy rejoice over you
 and exalted the might of your foes.

¹⁸Their heart cried to the Lord.

O wall of the daughter of Zion,
let tears stream down like a torrent
 day and night!

Give yourself no rest,
 your eyes no respite!

¹⁹“Arise, cry out in the night,
 at the beginning of the night watches!
Pour out your heart like water

before the presence of the Lord!

Lift your hands to him

for the lives of your children,

who faint for hunger

at the head of every street."

²⁰Look, O Lord, and see!

With whom have you dealt thus?

Should women eat the fruit of their womb,

the children of their tender care?

Should priest and prophet be killed

in the sanctuary of the Lord?

²¹In the dust of the streets

lie the young and the old;

my young women and my young men

have fallen by the sword;

you have killed them in the day of your anger,

slaughtering without pity.

²²You summoned as if to a festival day

my terrors on every side,

and on the day of the anger of the Lord

no one escaped or survived;

those whom I held and raised
my enemy destroyed.

Chapter 3:

I am the man who has seen affliction

under the rod of his wrath;

²he has driven and brought me

into darkness without any light;

³surely against me he turns his hand

again and again the whole day long.

⁴He has made my flesh and my skin waste away;

he has broken my bones;

⁵he has besieged and enveloped me

with bitterness and tribulation;

⁶he has made me dwell in darkness

like the dead of long ago.

⁷He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;

he has made my chains heavy;

⁸though I call and cry for help,

he shuts out my prayer;

⁹he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones;

he has made my paths crooked.

¹⁰He is a bear lying in wait for me,

a lion in hiding;

¹¹he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces;

he has made me desolate;

¹²he bent his bow and set me

as a target for his arrow.

¹³He drove into my kidneys

the arrows of his quiver;

¹⁴I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,

the object of their taunts all day long.

¹⁵He has filled me with bitterness;

he has sated me with wormwood.

¹⁶He has made my teeth grind on gravel,

and made me cower in ashes;

¹⁷my soul is bereft of peace;

I have forgotten what happiness is;

¹⁸so I say, “My endurance has perished;

so has my hope from the Lord.”

¹⁹Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!

²⁰My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.

²¹But this I call to mind,

and therefore I have hope:

²²The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;

his mercies never come to an end;

²³they are new every morning;

great is your faithfulness.

²⁴“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”

²⁵The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul who seeks him.

²⁶It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

²⁷It is good for a man that he bear
the yoke in his youth.

²⁸Let him sit alone in silence
when it is laid on him;
²⁹let him put his mouth in the dust—

there may yet be hope;

³⁰let him give his cheek to the one who strikes,

and let him be filled with insults.

³¹For the Lord will not

cast off forever,

³²but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion

according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

³³for he does not afflict from his heart

or grieve the children of men.

³⁴To crush underfoot

all the prisoners of the earth,

³⁵to deny a man justice

in the presence of the Most High,

³⁶to subvert a man in his lawsuit,

the Lord does not approve.

³⁷Who has spoken and it came to pass,

unless the Lord has commanded it?

³⁸Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

that good and bad come?

³⁹Why should a living man complain,

a man, about the punishment of his sins?

⁴⁰Let us test and examine our ways,

and return to the Lord!

⁴¹Let us lift up our hearts and hands

to God in heaven:

⁴²“We have transgressed and rebelled,

and you have not forgiven.

⁴³“You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us,

killing without pity;

⁴⁴you have wrapped yourself with a cloud

so that no prayer can pass through.

⁴⁵You have made us scum and garbage

among the peoples.

⁴⁶“All our enemies

open their mouths against us;

⁴⁷panic and pitfall have come upon us,

devastation and destruction;

⁴⁸my eyes flow with rivers of tears

because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

⁴⁹“My eyes will flow without ceasing,

without respite,

⁵⁰until the Lord from heaven

looks down and sees;
 ⁵¹ my eyes cause me grief
 at the fate of all the daughters of my city.
 ⁵² “I have been hunted like a bird
 by those who were my enemies without cause;
 ⁵³ they flung me alive into the pit
 and cast stones on me;
 ⁵⁴ water closed over my head;
 I said, ‘I am lost.’
 ⁵⁵ “I called on your name, O Lord,
 from the depths of the pit;
 ⁵⁶ you heard my plea, ‘Do not close
 your ear to my cry for help!’
 ⁵⁷ You came near when I called on you;
 you said, ‘Do not fear!’
 ⁵⁸ “You have taken up my cause, O Lord;
 you have redeemed my life.
 ⁵⁹ You have seen the wrong done to me, O Lord;
 judge my cause.
 ⁶⁰ You have seen all their vengeance,
 all their plots against me.

⁶¹ “You have heard their taunts, O Lord,

all their plots against me.

⁶² The lips and thoughts of my assailants

are against me all the day long.

⁶³ Behold their sitting and their rising;

I am the object of their taunts.

⁶⁴ “You will repay them, O Lord,

according to the work of their hands.

⁶⁵ You will give them dullness of heart;

your curse will be on them.

⁶⁶ You will pursue them in anger and destroy them

from under your heavens, O Lord.”

Chapter 4:

How the gold has grown dim,

how the pure gold is changed!

The holy stones lie scattered

at the head of every street.

² The precious sons of Zion,

worth their weight in fine gold,

how they are regarded as earthen pots,

the work of a potter's hands!

³Even jackals offer the breast;

they nurse their young;

but the daughter of my people has become cruel,

like the ostriches in the wilderness.

⁴The tongue of the nursing infant sticks

to the roof of its mouth for thirst;

the children beg for food,

but no one gives to them.

⁵Those who once feasted on delicacies

perish in the streets;

those who were brought up in purple

embrace ash heaps.

⁶For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater

than the punishment of Sodom,

which was overthrown in a moment,

and no hands were wrung for her.

⁷Her princes were purer than snow,

whiter than milk;

their bodies were more ruddy than coral,
the beauty of their form was like sapphire.

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

⁹Happier were the victims of the sword
than the victims of hunger,
who wasted away, pierced
by lack of the fruits of the field.

¹⁰The hands of compassionate women
have boiled their own children;
they became their food
during the destruction of the daughter of my people.

¹¹The Lord gave full vent to his wrath;
he poured out his hot anger,
and he kindled a fire in Zion
that consumed its foundations.

¹²The kings of the earth did not believe,
nor any of the inhabitants of the world,

that foe or enemy could enter

the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³This was for the sins of her prophets

and the iniquities of her priests,

who shed in the midst of her

the blood of the righteous.

¹⁴They wandered, blind, through the streets;

they were so defiled with blood

that no one was able to touch

their garments.

¹⁵“Away! Unclean!” people cried at them.

“Away! Away! Do not touch!”

So they became fugitives and wanderers;

people said among the nations,

“They shall stay with us no longer.”

¹⁶The Lord himself has scattered them;

he will regard them no more;

no honor was shown to the priests,

no favor to the elders.

¹⁷Our eyes failed, ever watching

vainly for help;

in our watching we watched
for a nation which could not save.

¹⁸They dogged our steps
so that we could not walk in our streets;
our end drew near; our days were numbered,
for our end had come.

¹⁹Our pursuers were swifter
than the eagles in the heavens;
they chased us on the mountains;
they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

²⁰The breath of our nostrils, the Lord's anointed,
was captured in their pits,
of whom we said, "Under his shadow
we shall live among the nations."

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

²²The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished;
he will keep you in exile no longer;

but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish;
he will uncover your sins.

Chapter 5:

Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!

²Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.

³We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.

⁴We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.

⁵Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.

⁶We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria,
to get bread enough.

⁷Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
and we bear their iniquities.

⁸Slaves rule over us;
there is none to deliver us from their hand.

⁹We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
because of the sword in the wilderness.

¹⁰Our skin is hot as an oven
with the burning heat of famine.

¹¹Women are raped in Zion,
young women in the towns of Judah.

¹²Princes are hung up by their hands;
no respect is shown to the elders.

¹³Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,
and boys stagger under loads of wood.

¹⁴The old men have left the city gate,
the young men their music.

¹⁵The joy of our hearts has ceased;
our dancing has been turned to mourning.

¹⁶The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!

¹⁷For this our heart has become sick,
for these things our eyes have grown dim,
¹⁸for Mount Zion which lies desolate;
jackals prowl over it.

¹⁹But you, O Lord, reign forever;

your throne endures to all generations.

²⁰Why do you forget us forever,
why do you forsake us for so many days?

²¹Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!

Renew our days as of old—

²²unless you have utterly rejected us,
and you remain exceedingly angry with us.