

Lamentations

How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow
she has become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a
princess among the provinces has become a vassal. She weeps bitterly in the
night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has no one to
5 comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have
become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard
servitude; she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place; her
pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress. The roads to
Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals; all her gates are desolate, her
10 priests groan; her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter. Her foes have
become the masters, her enemies prosper, because the LORD has made her
suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away,
captives before the foe. From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty.
Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture; they fled without
15 strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her
affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of
old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to
help her, the foe looked on mocking over her downfall. Jerusalem sinned
grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her,
20 for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face

away. Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future;
her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her. "O LORD, look at my
affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" Enemies have stretched out their
hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade her
5 sanctuary, those whom you forbade to enter your congregation. All her
people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to
revive their strength. Look, O LORD, and see how worthless I have become.
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
10 inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. From on high he sent fire; it went
deep into my bones; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has
left me stunned, faint all day long. My transgressions were bound into a
yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; they weigh on my neck,
sapping my strength; the Lord handed me over to those whom I cannot
15 withstand. The LORD has rejected all my warriors in the midst of me; he
proclaimed a time against me to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden
as in a wine press the virgin daughter Judah. For these things I weep; my
eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my
courage; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed. Zion stretches
20 out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her; the LORD has

commanded against Jacob that his neighbors should become his foes;
Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them. The LORD is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and behold
my suffering; my young women and young men have gone into captivity. I
5 called to my lovers but they deceived me; my priests and elders perished in
the city while seeking food to revive their strength. See, O LORD, how
distressed I am; 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. They heard how I was groaning, with no one to comfort me. All
10 my enemies heard of my trouble; they are glad that you have done it. Bring
on the day you have announced, and let them be as I am. Let all their evil
doing 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. How the Lord in his anger has humiliated daughter Zion! He has
15 thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not
remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. The Lord has destroyed
without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down
the strongholds of daughter Judah; he has brought down to the ground in
dishonor the kingdom and its rulers. He has cut down in fierce anger all the
20 might of Israel; he has withdrawn his right hand from them in the face of

the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around.

He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; he has killed all in whom we took pride in the tent of daughter Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. The Lord has become like an enemy; he has

5 destroyed Israel; He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds, and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation. He has broken down his booth like a garden, he has destroyed his tabernacle; the LORD has abolished in Zion festival and sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. The Lord has scorned his altar,

10 disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; a clamor was raised in the house of the LORD as on a day of festival. The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of daughter Zion; he stretched the line; he did not withhold his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languish together. Her gates have

15 sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; guidance is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD. The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. My eyes are

20 spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the

ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city. They cry to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?" as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom. What can I say for you, to what

5 compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; who can heal you? Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen oracles for you that are false and misleading. All who pass along the way

10 clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem; "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?" All your enemies open their mouths against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We have devoured her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; at last we have seen it!" The LORD has done what he purposed,

15 he has carried out his threat; as he ordained long ago, he has demolished without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you, and exalted the might of your foes. Cry aloud to the Lord! O wall of daughter Zion! Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite! Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour

20 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. Look, O LORD, and consider! To whom have you done this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have borne? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? The young and the old are

5 lying on the ground in the streets; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword; in the day of your anger you have killed them, slaughtering without mercy. You invited my enemies from all around as if for a day of festival; and on the day of the anger of the LORD no one escaped or survived; those whom I bore and reared my enemy has destroyed.

10 I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; against me alone he turns his hand, again and again, all day long. He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my bones; he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; he has made me sit in darkness like the dead

15 of long ago. He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has put heavy chains on me; though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; he has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked. He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; he led me off my way and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; he bent his bow and set

20 me as a mark for his arrow. He shot into my vitals the arrows of his

quiver; I have become the laughingstock of all my people, the object of their
taunt-songs all day long. He has filled me with bitterness, he has sated me
with wormwood. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me
cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness
5 is; so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the
LORD." The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood
and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the
LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every
10 morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my
soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The LORD is good to those who wait
for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth,
to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, to put one's mouth to
15 the dust (there may yet be hope), to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be
filled with insults. For the Lord will not reject forever. Although he causes
grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast
love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone. When all the
prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are
20 perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one's case is subverted--

does the Lord not see it? Who can command and have it done, if the Lord
has not ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good
and bad come? Why should any who draw breath complain about the
punishment of their sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to
5 the LORD. Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven.
We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven. You have
wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; you have
wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. You have
made us filth and rubbish among the peoples. All our enemies have opened
10 their mouths against us; panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and
destruction. My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of
my people. My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, until the
LORD from heaven looks down and sees. My eyes cause me grief at the
fate of all the young women in my city. Those who were my enemies
15 without cause have hunted me like a bird; they flung me alive into a pit and
hurled stones on me; water closed over my head; I said, "I am lost." I called
on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea,
"Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!" You came
near when I called on you; you said, "Do not fear!" You have taken up my
20 cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life. You have seen the wrong done

to me, O LORD; judge my cause. You have seen all their malice, all their plots against me. You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me. The whispers and murmurs of my assailants are against me all day long. Whether they sit or rise--see, I am the object of their taunt-songs.

5 Pay them back for their deeds, O LORD, according to the work of their hands! Give them anguish of heart; your curse be on them! Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the Lord's heavens. How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street. The precious children of Zion, worth their weight in

10 fine gold-- how they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands! Even the jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything. Those who feasted on delicacies perish in

15 the streets; those who were brought up in purple cling to ash heaps. For the chastisement of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, though no hand was laid on it. Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than coral, their hair like sapphire. Now their visage is blacker than

20 soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their

bones; it has become as dry as wood. Happier were those pierced by the sword than those pierced by hunger, whose life drains away, deprived of the produce of the field. The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food in the destruction of my people. The

5 LORD gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem. It was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of

10 her. Blindly they wandered through the streets, so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. "Away! Unclean!" people shouted at them; "Away! Away! Do not touch!" So they became fugitives and wanderers; it was said among the nations, "They shall stay here no longer."

The LORD himself has scattered them, he will regard them no more; no

15 honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders. Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help; we were watching eagerly for a nation that could not save. They 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. Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles in the heavens; they chased us on the

20 mountains, they lay in wait for us in the wilderness. The Lord's anointed, the

breath of our life, was taken in their pits-- the one of whom we said,
"Under his shadow we shall live among the nations." Rejoice and be glad, O
daughter Edom, you that live in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup
shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. The punishment
5 of your iniquity, O daughter Zion, is accomplished, he will keep you in exile
no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will punish, he will
uncover your sins. Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see
our disgrace! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to
aliens. We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows. We
10 must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought. With a
yoke on our necks we are hard driven; we are weary, we are given no rest.
We have made a pact with Egypt and Assyria, to get enough bread. Our
ancestors sinned; they are no more, and we bear their iniquities. Slaves rule
over us; there is no one to deliver us from their hand. We get our bread at
15 the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is
black as an oven from the scorching heat of famine. Women are raped in
Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah. Princes are hung up by their hands; no
respect is shown to the elders. Young men are compelled to grind, and boys
stagger under loads of wood. The old men have left the city gate, the young
20 men their music. The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been

turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we
have sinned! Because of this our hearts are sick, because of these things our
eyes have grown dim: because of Mount Zion, which lies desolate; jackals
prowl over it. But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all
5 generations. Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken
us these many days? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be
restored; renew our days as of old-- unless you have utterly rejected us, and
are angry with us beyond measure. *

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