

## Lamentations

How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the cities has become a vassal. She weeps bitterly in the night, tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her

5 friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.

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. The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the appointed feasts; all her gates are desolate, her priests

10 groan; her maidens have been dragged away, and she herself suffers bitterly.

Her foes have become the head, 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 the daughter of Zion has departed all her majesty. Her princes have become like harts that find no pasture; they

15 fled without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness 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, the foe gloated over her, mocking at her downfall. Jerusalem sinned grievously, therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise

20 her, for they have seen her nakedness; yea, she herself groans, and turns her

face away. Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her doom; therefore her fall is terrible, she has no comforter. "O LORD, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" The enemy has stretched out his hands over all her precious things; yea, she has seen the nations invade

5 her sanctuary, those whom thou didst forbid to enter thy congregation. All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. "Look, O LORD, and behold, for I am despised." "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

10 the day of his fierce anger. "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. "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

15 whom I cannot withstand. "The LORD flouted all my mighty men in the midst of me; he summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter of 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

20 prevailed." 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. "The LORD is in the  
right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and  
behold my suffering; my maidens and my young men have gone into  
5 captivity. "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. "Behold,  
O LORD, for I am in distress, my soul is in tumult, 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. "Hear how I groan; there is none to  
10 comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that  
thou hast done it. Bring thou the day thou hast announced, and let them be  
as I am. "Let all their evil doing come before thee; and deal with them as  
thou hast 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 set the  
15 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. The Lord has destroyed 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. He  
20 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. He has bent his bow like an enemy,  
 with his right hand set like a foe; and he has slain all the pride of our eyes  
 in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. The  
 5 Lord has become like an enemy, he has destroyed Israel; he has destroyed  
 all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds; and he has multiplied in the  
 daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. He has broken down his booth  
 like that of a garden, laid in ruins the place of his appointed feasts; the  
 LORD has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and sabbath, and in his  
 10 fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. The Lord has scorned his  
 altar, 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 the day of an appointed feast. The LORD determined to lay in ruins the  
 wall of the daughter of Zion; he marked it off by the line; he restrained not  
 15 his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament, they  
 languish together. Her 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 obtain no vision from the LORD. The elders of the  
 daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have cast dust on their  
 20 heads and put on sackcloth; the maidens of Jerusalem have bowed their

heads to the ground. My eyes are spent with weeping; my soul is in tumult;  
my heart is poured out in grief because of the destruction of the daughter 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 wounded  
5 men in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers'  
bosom. 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 vast as the sea is your ruin; who can restore you?  
Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not  
10 exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles  
false and misleading. 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  
which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?" All your  
enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We  
15 have destroyed her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; now we have it; we  
see it!" The LORD has done what he purposed, 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 daughter of Zion! Let tears stream down like a torrent day and  
20 night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite! Arise, cry out in the

night, at the beginning of the 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. Look, O LORD,  
and see! With whom hast thou dealt thus? Should women eat their offspring,  
5 the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be slain in the  
sanctuary of the Lord? In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old;  
my maidens and my young men have fallen by the sword; in the day of thy  
anger thou hast slain them, slaughtering without mercy. Thou didst invite as  
to the day of an appointed feast my terrors on every side; and on the day of  
10 the anger of the LORD none escaped or survived; those whom I dandled and  
reared my enemy destroyed. I am the man who has seen affliction under the  
rod of his wrath; he has driven and brought me into darkness without any  
light; surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day  
long. He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my  
15 bones; he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; he  
has made me dwell in darkness like the dead 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 to me like a bear lying  
20 in wait, like 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 me as a mark for his  
arrow. He drove into my heart the arrows of his quiver; I have become the  
laughingstock of all peoples, the burden of their songs all day long. He has  
filled me with bitterness, he has sated me with wormwood. He has made my  
5 teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of  
peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "Gone is my glory, and  
my expectation from the LORD." Remember my affliction and my bitterness,  
the wormwood and the 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  
10 steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning; great is thy 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 a man that  
15 he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when he has laid  
it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust--there may yet be hope; let him  
give his cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. For the Lord will not  
cast off for ever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly  
20 afflict or grieve the sons of men. To crush under foot all the prisoners of

the earth, to turn aside the right of a man in the presence of the Most High,  
to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord does not approve. Who has  
commanded and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not  
from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come? Why should a  
5 living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? Let us test  
and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Let us lift up our hearts  
and hands to God in heaven: "We have transgressed and rebelled, and thou  
hast not forgiven. "Thou hast wrapped thyself with anger and pursued us,  
slaying without pity; thou hast wrapped thyself with a cloud so that no  
10 prayer can pass through. Thou hast made us offscouring and refuse among  
the peoples. "All our enemies rail against us; panic and pitfall have come  
upon us, devastation and destruction; my eyes flow with rivers of tears  
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people. "My eyes will flow  
without ceasing, without respite, until the LORD from heaven looks down  
15 and sees; my eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the maidens of my city.  
"I have been hunted like a bird by those who were my enemies without  
cause; they flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me; water closed  
over my head; I said, 'I am lost.' "I called on thy name, O LORD, from the  
depths of the pit; thou didst hear my plea, 'Do not close thine ear to my cry  
20 for help!' Thou didst come near when I called on thee; thou didst say, 'Do



not fear!" "Thou hast taken up my cause, O Lord, thou hast redeemed my  
life. Thou hast seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge thou my cause.  
Thou hast seen all their vengeance, all their devices against me. "Thou hast  
heard their taunts, O LORD, all their devices against me. The lips and  
5 thoughts of my assailants are against me all the day long. Behold their  
sitting and their rising; I am the burden of their songs. "Thou wilt requite  
them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. Thou wilt give them  
dullness of heart; thy curse will be on them. Thou wilt pursue them in anger  
and destroy them from under thy heavens, O LORD." How the gold has  
10 grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at  
the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in  
fine gold, how they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's  
hands! Even the jackals give the breast and suckle their young, but the  
daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.  
15 The tongue of the nursling cleaves to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the  
children beg for food, but no one gives to them. Those who feasted on  
dainties perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple lie on ash  
heaps. For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater  
than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, no hand  
20 being laid on it. Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their

bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form was like  
sapphire. Now their visage is blacker than soot, they are not recognized in  
the streets; their skin has shriveled upon their bones, it has become as dry as  
wood. Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger,  
5 who pined away, stricken by want of the fruits of the field. The hands of  
compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food  
in the destruction of the daughter of my people. The LORD gave full vent  
to his wrath, he poured out his hot anger; and he kindled a fire in Zion,  
which consumed its foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, or  
10 any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates  
of Jerusalem. This 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. They  
wandered, blind, through the streets, so defiled with blood that none could  
touch their garments. "Away! Unclean!" men cried at them; "Away! Away!  
15 Touch not!" So they became fugitives and wanderers; men said among the  
nations, "They shall stay with us no longer." The LORD himself has  
scattered them, he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the  
priests, no favor to the elders. Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help;  
in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save. Men dogged  
20 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 vultures in the heavens; they chased us on the mountains, they lay in wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed, was taken in their pits, he of whom we said, "Under his shadow

5 we shall live among the nations." Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, dweller in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. The 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

10 sins. Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; behold, 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 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.

15 We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to get bread enough. Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities. Slaves rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand. We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine. Women are ravished in

20 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 at the mill; and boys stagger under loads of wood. The old men have quit the city gate, the young men their music. The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head;

5    woe to us, for we have sinned! For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim, for Mount Zion which lies desolate; jackals prowl over it. But thou, O LORD, dost reign for ever; thy throne endures to all generations. Why dost thou forget us for ever, why dost thou so long forsake us? Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew

10   our days as of old! Or hast thou utterly rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?\*

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