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## איכה § LAMENTATIONS

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The Hebrew Bible includes *Lamentations* among the 'Writings' and counts it as one of the five *Megillot*, the 'scrolls' read on principal feasts, with *Lamentations* being chanted by Jews on the Ninth of Av; the *Septuagint* includes the work among the 'Books of the Prophets', placing it after the Book of Jeremiah (as in the *Vulgate* and modern Christian Bibles) and entitling it, "The Lamentations of Jeremiah." The book consists of laments over Jerusalem, following its destruction in 587/586 BCE; it has some of the Bible's most violent and brutal pieces of writing. The first four chapters are acrostic and the fifth has the same number of verses as letters of the alphabet. Chs 1, 2 & 4 are in the form of dirges over the dead city; the limping 3:2 meter is recognisable even in translation, together with the exclamatory, "How..." in the opening line as an expression of grief (2S 1:25, 27, Is 1:21); in Ch. 3, the sadness of the desolate people and reflection upon the meaning of the disaster are voiced by an individual; Ch. 5, in its form and language, recalls the liturgies for use in time of national trouble, such as Ps 74 & 79. The common theme of the book is the agony of the people, the apparent desertion of Zion by God, and the hope that God will yet restore a humbled and repentant Israel.

### AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

*Lamentations* may be the work of one or several authors, speaking out of the dreadful situation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem following the overthrow of the city. The tradition of authorship by Jeremiah, reinforced by the prologue in the *LXX*, is based on 2Ch 35:25 and is supported by the poems themselves, the subject matter of which reflects the times of the prophet. Even so, it is very difficult to credit Jeremiah with the book, because the thought and diction are entirely unlike Jeremiah's. The Jeremiah we know, from his authentic pronouncements, could never have said that the "voice of prophecy was silenced" (2:9) nor could he have praised Zedekiah (4:20), or put his trust in Egyptian help (4:17). His spontaneity would have burst through the literary curbs we find in these acrostic poems, which were most likely written in Palestine between the destruction of the Temple in 587 BCE and its restoration in 520 BCE.

## איכה פרק א

Καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὸ αἰχμαλωτισθῆναι τὸν Ἰσραηλ καὶ ἔρημωθῆναι ἑκάσθην Ἰερουσαλημ ἐρῆμωθῆναι ἐκάσθην Ἰερουσαλημ καὶ εἶπεν:

איכה | יִשְׁבֶּה בְּדָד א  
הָעִיר רַבְּתֵי עָם  
הִיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה  
רַבְּתֵי בְּגוּלִים  
שָׂרְתִי בַּמְּדִינֹת  
הִיְתָה לְמַסִּ: {ס}

בְּכֹ תַבְּכָה בַּלַּיְלָה ב  
וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לְחֵיָהּ  
אֵין־לָהּ מְנַחֵם  
מִכָּל־אֲהַבֵּיהָ

## LAMENTATIONS 1

§ After Israel had been taken into captivity and Jerusalem had become a desert, the prophet Jeremiah sat down weeping: And he uttered this lamentation over Jerusalem, saying ...

ALEF

- 1 How deserted she sits,  
the city once thronged with people!  
Once the greatest of nations,  
she is now like a widow.  
Once the princess of states,  
she is now put to forced labour.

BET

- 2 All night long, she is weeping,  
tears running down her cheeks.  
Not one of all her lovers  
remains to comfort her.

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### LAMENTATIONS 1

§ This introduction is from the *LXX* (included as part of v. 1 in most *MSS*) and is not present in the *MT* (or *NRSV*); the *NJB* includes it among the footnotes (whence the basis for this translation).

<sup>1</sup> The adverb אֵיכָּה is used as an exclamation of lament or desperation: 'How' or 'Alas' it is often the first word in laments (Is 1:21, Jr 48:17, Lm 1:1,2:1,4:1,2). Like the less emphatic exclamation, אֵי ('Alas', 2S 1:19, Is 14:4, 12, Ezk 26:17), it is used in contexts of lament and mourning. The prophets borrow this term from the funeral lament and rhetorically place it in the context of announcements or descriptions of God's judgment (Is 1:21, Jr 48:17, Ezk 26:17, Lm 1:1,2:1, 4:1,2). This creates a personification of the city/nation, which is either in danger of imminent 'death' or already has 'died' as a result of Yahweh's judgment. The noun מְדִינֹת ('states') is an Aramaic loanword that refers to an administrative district or province in the empire (Ezk 19:8, Dn 8:2)

<sup>2</sup> The 'lovers' are the former allies of Judah (cf. Jr 4:30, 30:14, Ezk 16:37-40, 23:22-29).

כַּל־רֵעֶיהָ בָּגְדוּ בָּהּ  
הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים: {ס}

He friends have all betrayed her  
and become her enemies.

GIMMEL

גַּלְתָּהּ יְהוּדָה מֵעָנִי ג  
וּמְרַב עֲבָדָה  
הִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגוֹיִם  
לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ  
כַּל־רֹדְפֶיהָ הַשִּׁיגוּהָ  
בֵּין הַמְצָרִים: {ס}

3 Judah has gone into exile  
after much pain and toil.  
Living among the nations,  
she finds no respite.  
Her persecutors all overtake her  
where there is no way out.

DALET

דַּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת ד  
מִבְּלִי בָּאִי מוֹעֵד  
כַּל־שַׁעְרֶיהָ שׁוֹמְמִין  
כַּהֲנִיָּה נֹאנְחִים  
בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נוֹגֹת  
וְהִיא מֵר־לָהּ: {ס}

4 The roads to Zion are in morning;  
no one comes to her festivals now.  
Her gateways are all deserted;  
her priests groan.  
Her young girls are grief-stricken;  
she suffers bitterly.

<sup>3</sup> The noun מִצָּר (*'pain'*) occurs only here and in Ps 118:5; here, the plural form is an example of the plural of intensity. The vocabulary of the last line (literally, 'between the narrow places') is unparalleled elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures; however, the line is paraphrased in "The Thanksgiving Psalm" from the Qumran MS (1Q<sup>H</sup> v. 29), which adds the phrase 'so I could not get away' (whence the interpretation used here). The LXX reads, "in the midst of the ones afflicting (her)" (ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν θλιβόντων) and the NRSV has 'in the midst of her distress'. Contrary to normal practice, Judah is personified here in the feminine.

<sup>4</sup> The meaning of נוֹגֹת, here translated as, 'are grief-stricken' (following the MT and NJB – the NRSV has 'grieve') is uncertain; the LXX has 'being led (captive)' (ἀγόμεναι), reflecting גְּהוּגוֹת, as also Aquila and Symmachus. The MT reading is an unusual form (Niphal participle from יָנָה, with dissimilated נ); this form appears only twice in the OT (here and Zc 3:18), both in contexts of sorrow. It would be difficult to explain the origin of the MT reading if the LXX reflects the original (Qal passive participle from נָהַג).

<p>הָיָו צָרִיחָ לְרֹאשׁ אִיבֵיהָ שְׁלוֹ כִּי־הָיָה הַזֹּגָה עַל רַב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי לִפְנֵי־צָר: {ס}</p> <p>וַיֵּצֵא מִן בַּת [מִבַּת־] צִיּוֹן כָּל־הַדְּרָה הָיָו שְׁרִיחָ כְּאֵילִים לֹא־מִצְאוּ מְרֻעָה וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא־כֹחַ לִפְנֵי רוֹדֵף: {ס}</p> <p>זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְמֵי עֲנִיָּה וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ</p>	<p>ה</p> <p>ו</p> <p>ז</p>	<p>HE</p> <p>5 Her foes now have the upper hand and her enemies prosper. For, Yahweh has made her suffer for her many, many crimes. Her children have gone away as captives, driven in front of the oppressor.</p> <p>VAV</p> <p>6 From the daughter of Zion, all her splendour has departed. Her princes were like stags that could find no pasture. They fled without strength before the hunter.</p> <p>ZAYIN</p> <p>7 Jerusalem remembers, in her days of misery and distress,</p>
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<sup>5</sup> The plural פְּשָׁעֶיהָ (*her crimes*) is an example of the plural of repeated action or characteristic behaviour; the suffix (*her*) probably functions as a subjective genitive: *her crimes* = *she has committed crimes*. The singular noun שְׁבִי is a collective singular, meaning *captives* or *prisoners*; it functions as an adverbial accusative of state: *(they were taken away) as captives*.

<sup>6</sup> In place *בַּת מִן*, here following the *Ketiv*, the *Qere* (and other *MSS*) have the assimilated form, *מִבַּת* (*from the daughter*). *Has departed* here reflects the *MT* (וַיֵּצֵא) and *NJB/NRSV*; the *LXX* (ἐξήλασεν, *has been taken away*) reflects an alternate vocalisation of וַיֵּצֵא. In place of *stags*, the *LXX* has *rams* (αἰοιοί). The term רוֹדֵף (*hunter*) (cf. 1S 26:20) is used figuratively of military enemies who *hunt down* those who flee for their lives (Gn 14:15, Lv 26:7,36, Jg 4:22, Ps 7:6,69:27,83:16,143:3, Is 17:13, Lm 5:5, Am 1:11).

<sup>7</sup> The *NJB* omits the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> lines (a gloss breaking the rhythm), here following the *NRSV*. In place of *her downfall* (מִשְׁבַּתָּהּ, literally *her annihilation*), the *LXX* reads *her displacement* (μετακοιμισία αὐτῆς); this may be a correction of κατοικισία αὐτῆς (*her dwelling*, reflecting שְׁבַתָּהּ).

כָּל מַחְמָדֶיהָ  
 אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִימֵי קֶדֶם  
 בְּנִפְלַעַת עַמָּהּ בְּיַד־צָר  
 וְאִין עֹזֵר לָהּ  
 רְאוּהָ צָרִים  
 שָׁחֲקוּ עַל מִשְׁבַּתָּהּ: {ס}

ח חטא חטאה ירושלם  
 על־כֵּן לְנִידָה הִיְתָה  
 כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הִזִּילוּהָ  
 כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוּתָהּ  
 גַּם־הִיא נֹאנְחָה  
 וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲזֹר: {ס}

ט טמאתה בשוליה  
 לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרֵיתָהּ  
 וַתִּרְדַּ פְּלָאִים  
 אִין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
 רְאֵה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנִי  
 כִּי הַגִּדִיל אוֹיֵב: {ס}

all her precious things,  
 existing from the days of old.  
 When her people fell into their enemies clutches,  
 there was no one to help her.  
 Her enemies looked on  
 and laughed at her downfall.

HET

8 Jerusalem has sinned so gravely  
 that she has become a thing unclean.  
 All who used to honour her despise her,  
 having seen her nakedness.  
 She herself groans aloud  
 and turns her face away.

TET

9 Her filth befouls her skirts –  
 she never thought to end like this.  
 Hence, her downfall was astonishing,  
 with no one to comfort her.  
 “Yahweh, look at my misery,  
 for the enemy is triumphant!”

<sup>8</sup> There is debate whether נִידָה means ‘thing unclean’ (from נדה, ‘to be impure’, as NJB & JPS), ‘mockery’ (from ניד, ‘to shake’, reflecting the Middle Eastern custom of shaking the head in scorn, cf. Jr 18:16, Ps 44:14, as the NRSV), or ‘wanderer’ (from נדד, ‘to wander’, as the LXX, σάλον).

<sup>9</sup> For the 1<sup>st</sup> line, here following the MT (and NJB, NRSV & NETB), the LXX reads, ‘Her uncleanness is before her feet’ (Ἀκαθαρσία αὐτῆς πρὸς ποδῶν αὐτῆς); at least one MS has ‘gatehouses’ (πυλῶν) in place of ‘feet’ (ποδῶν). The noun טְמֵאת (‘filth’) refers generally to a state of ritual uncleanness.

יָדוּ פָּרַשׁ צֶרֶךְ  
עַל כָּל־מַחְמְדֵיהָ  
כִּי־רָאֲתָהּ גּוֹיִם  
בָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁהּ  
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ  
לֹא־יָבֹאוּ בִקְהָל לְךָ: {ס}

כָּל־עַמָּה נֹאנְחִים  
מִבִּקְשֵׁים לֶחֶם  
נִתְּנוּ מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם מִחֲמְדֵיהֶם  
בְּאֹכֵל לְהַשִּׁיב נַפְשׁוֹ  
רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָהּ  
כִּי הִיִּיתִי זוֹלָלָה: {ס}

לֹא אֶלֵיכֶם  
כָּל־עֲבָרֵי דָרְךָ

YOD

10 The enemy stretched out his hand  
for everything she treasured.  
She saw the heathen  
enter her sanctuary,  
whom you had forbidden  
to enter your Assembly.

KAF

11 All her people are groaning,  
as they search for bread.  
They have bartered their treasures,  
for food to keep themselves alive.  
“Look, Yahweh, and consider  
how despised I am!”

LAMED

12 “All you who pass this way,  
look and see:

<sup>10</sup> The noun קְהָל (*assembly*) does not refer here to the collective group of people assembled to worship Yahweh, but to the place of their assembly, the Temple; this is an example of a synecdoche of container (the Temple) for the people contained (the assembly).

<sup>11</sup> For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘looking for something to eat’. In light of its parallelism with אֹכֵל (*food*) in the next but one line, it is possible that לֶחֶם (*bread*) acts as a synecdoche of specific for general (cf. Gn 3:19, 31:54, 37:35, 43:32, Ex 2:20, Nb 14:18, Jg 13:16, 1S 14:24,28, 28:20,22, 30:12, Pr 22:9, 27:27, Ps 136:25). In place of מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם (*what they desired*), here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has מִחֲמְדֵיהֶם (*their treasures*); the term refers to the treasures of the Temple (cf. Jos 6:24, 1K 14:26, 2K 24:13), but also no doubt to the possessions of private persons deposited there (see also 2M 4:3ff). The lament of vv. 11<sup>c</sup> to 22 (interrupted by v. 17) is uttered by Zion.

<sup>12</sup> ‘All you’ follows the LXX (*Ὁὐ ... πάντες* – literally ‘all the ones’), Vg (*O vos omnes*) and NJB; the MT has ‘not for you’ and the NRSV has the conjectural translation, ‘is it nothing to you’. The opening ל is presented as a small letter, just as it appears in almost all Hebrew MSS.

הַבֵּיטוּ וּרְאוּ אִם־יֵשׁ מִכָּאוֹב  
כַּמִּכְאֹבִי אֲשֶׁר עוֹלַל לִי  
אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה  
בְּיוֹם תְּרוֹן אַפּוֹ: {ס}

is any sorrow like the sorrow  
inflicted on me,  
with which Yahweh struck me  
on the day of his burning anger?

MEM

מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמֹתַי \*ג  
וַיִּרְדְּנָה  
פָּרַשׁ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי  
הִשִּׁיבֵנִי אָחֹזֶר  
נִתְנַנְנִי שִׁמְמָה  
כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה: {ס}

13 “He sent fire from on high deep into my bones  
and it prevails against them.  
He stretched a net for my feet  
and pulled me back.  
He left me shattered,  
sick all day long.

NUN

נִשְׁקַדְּ עַל פְּשָׁעֵי בִידּוֹ \*ד  
יִשְׁתַּרְגְּוּ עָלָיו  
עַל־צוּאָרַי  
הַכְּשִׁיל כַּחֲוִי  
נִתְנַנְנִי אֲדָנִי  
בִּידֵי לֹא־אוּכַל קוּם: {ס}

14 “My transgressions were bound into a yoke;  
by his hand they were fastened together.  
They have risen to my neck;  
my strength is weakened,  
for the Lord has put me into clutches,  
which I am helpless to resist.

<sup>13</sup> The NJB and NRSV lack the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the MT (and NJPS). The LXX (κατήγαγεν αὐτό - ‘it descended’) reflects an alternate vocalisation as וַיִּרְדְּנָה, possibly under the influence of the preceding line.

<sup>14</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> two lines here follow the NRSV (and MT); the NJB reconstructs following the LXX (Ἐγρηγορήθη ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσεβήματά μου· ἐν χερσίν μου συνεπλάκησαν): “He has watched out for my offences; with my hands, they enmesh me.” The LXX agrees with the Tg & Peshitta in vocalising the first line as נִשְׁקַדְּ עַל פְּשָׁעֵי. In place of ‘they have risen to’ (עָלוּ), some – Lucian (τον ζυγον αυτου) and Symmachus (ο λυγος αυτου) – reflect an alternative vocalisation tradition of עָלוּ (‘his yoke is on’). In place of אֲדָנִי (‘The Lord’), here following the MT, many medieval Hebrew MSS read the consonantal name יהוה (‘Yahweh’); this same interchange occurs many times throughout the Book of Lamentations.

טו סֵלָה כָּל־אֲבִירַי |  
 אֲדַנִּי בְּקִרְבִּי  
 קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד  
 לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחֹרֵי  
 גַּת דָּרֶךְ אֲדָנִי  
 לְבַת־וֹלַת בֵּת־יְהוּדָה: {ס}

טז עַל־אֵלֶּהָ | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה  
 עֵינַי | עֵינֵי יְרֻדָה מַיִם  
 כִּי־רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם  
 מְשִׁיב נַפְשִׁי  
 הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים  
 כִּי גָבַר אוֹיֵב: {ס}

יז פִּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ  
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
 צוּהָ יְהוָה לִיעֲקֹב  
 סְבִיבּוֹ צָרָיו

SAMEKH

15 “The Lord has rejected  
 all my warriors from my midst.  
 He has summoned a host against me  
 to crush my young men.  
 In the winepress, the Lord trampled  
 the young daughter of Judah.

AYIN

16 “That is why I weep;  
 my eyes stream with water,  
 since a comforter who would revive me  
 is far away.  
 My children are shattered,  
 for the enemy has proved too strong.”

PE

17 Zion stretches out her hands  
 with no one to comfort her.  
 Yahweh has commanded against Jacob  
 that his neighbours should become his enemies.

<sup>15</sup> The MT reads ב ('in') prefixed to קרבי ('my midst'); however, the LXX reads ἐκ μέσου μου, which reflects כן ('from'); the deviation may be due to orthographic confusion and internal evidence favours the LXX. In place of 'young men', the LXX has 'choice men' (ἐκλεκτούς).

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of עֵינֵי עֵינֵי ('my eyes') is 'my eye, my eye'; the repetition could be merely stylistic (cf. 3:20) but could also express the plural; the LXX has the singular (ὄφθαλμός μου - 'my eye'), as does the Peshitta and Vg (oculus meus). The verb שׁוֹמְמִים ('are shattered') literally means 'to be desolated' or, when used in reference to land destroyed in battle, 'deserted' (Is 49:8, Ezk 33:28, 35:12, 15, 36:4). When used in reference to persons, it describes the aftermath of a physical attack, such as rape (2S 13:20) or the military overthrow of a city (Is 54:1, Lm 1:13,16, 3:11).

<sup>17</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> lines here follow the NRSV; the NJB has, "Yahweh has command Jacob's enemies to surround him."

הִיתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם לְנֹדָה  
בֵּינֵיהֶם: {ס}

They treat Jerusalem  
as though she were unclean.

TSADI

יח צְדִיק הוּא יְהוָה  
כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי  
שָׁמְעוּ-נָא כָּל-הָעַמִּים עִמִּים  
וּרְאוּ מַכְאָבִי  
בְּתוֹלְתֵי וּבַחֹרֵי  
הֲלָכוּ בְּשָׁבִי: {ס}

18 “Yahweh is in the right,  
for I rebelled against his word.  
Listen, all you peoples,  
and see my sorrow.  
My young girls and my young men  
have gone into captivity.

QOF

יט קָרָאתִי לְמֵאֲהָבַי  
הֵמָּה רָמוּנִי  
כַּהֲנֵי וְזִקְנֵי  
בְּעִיר גִּזְעוּ  
כִּי-בִקְשׁוּ אֲכָל לֶמֶן  
וַיֵּשִׁיבוּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁם: {ס}

19 “I called to my lovers;  
they failed me.  
My priest and my elders  
perished in this city,  
as they searched for food  
to keep themselves alive.

RESH

כ רֵאָה יְהוָה כִּי-צָר־לִי  
מֵעֵי חֲמֻרְמָרוּ

20 “Look, Yahweh, I am in distress!  
My stomach churns.

<sup>18</sup> The literal translation of ‘against his word’ (פִּיהוּ) is ‘against his mouth’; the noun often stands for spoken words (Ps 49:14, Qo 10:3, Is 29:13), declaration (Gn 41:40, Ex 38:21, Nb 35:30, Dt 17:6, Ezr 1:1) and commands of God (Ex 17:1, Nb 14:41, 22:18, Jos 15:13, 1S 15:24, 1Ch 12:24, Pr 8:29, Is 34:16, 62:2). The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here (an added letter) would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>19</sup> At the end of this verse, the *LXX* adds ‘and they did not find’ (καὶ οὐχ εὑρέον), which is probably an explanatory scribal gloss, indicated to explicate what appeared to be ambiguous. The *LXX* often adds explanatory glosses in many books of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the *NRSV*, is ‘my bowels burned’ (a common euphemism for lower-intestinal problems); the *NJB* uses the more figurative translation: “My inmost being is in ferment;” whereas the *LXX* has ‘my belly is disturbed’ (ἡ κοιλία μου ἐταράχθη).

נִהְפֵּד לְבִי בְּקִרְבִּי  
כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי  
מִחוּץ שְׂכָל־הַחָרֵב  
בְּבַיִת כַּמּוֹת: {ס}

כא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נֶאֱנַחָה אֲנִי  
אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי  
כָּל־אֵיבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רַעְתִּי שְׁשׂוּ  
כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ  
הַבָּאת יוֹם־קִרְאָתָּ  
וַיְהִיו כַּמְּנִי: {ס}

כב תָּבֵא כָּל־רַעְתָּם  
לְפָנַי וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ  
כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹלַלְתָּ לִּי  
עַל כָּל־פְּשָׁעַי  
כִּי־רַבּוֹת אֲנַחְתִּי  
וְלִבִּי דוּי: {פ}

My heart turns over inside me –  
how rebellious I have been!  
Outside, the sword bereaves;  
inside, it is like death.

SHIN

21 “Listen, for I am groaning,  
with no one to comfort me.  
All my enemies have heard of my disaster;  
they are glad about what you have done.  
Bring the Day you once foretold,  
so that they may be like me!

TAV

22 “Let all their wickedness come before you,  
and deal with them  
as you have dealt with me  
for all my crimes.  
Numberless are my groans,  
and I am sick at heart.”

<sup>21</sup> ‘Listen’ and ‘bring’ follow the LXX (Ἀκούσατε, ἐπήγαγε) and Peshitta; the MT has (שָׁמְעוּ) ‘they have listened’ and (הַבָּאת) ‘you have brought’. Disastrous for Israel in pre-Exilic thought (Am 5:18, Zp 1:14), the ‘Day of Yahweh’ was later to bode disaster for all nations of earth (Jl 3:14).

<sup>22</sup> The parallel statements ‘and deal with them’ and ‘as you have dealt with me’ in the translation (here following the NRSV – the NJB has ‘treat/treated’ instead of ‘deal/dealt with’) mirror the wordplay between וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ and עוֹלַלְתָּ לִּי.

## איכה פרק ב

א איכה יעיב באפו | אדני  
את-בת-ציון  
השליך משמים ארץ  
תפארת ישראל  
ולא-זכר הדם-רגליו  
ביום אפו: {ס}

ב בלע אדני לא ולא חמל  
את כל-נאות יעקב  
הרס בעברתו מבצרי  
בת-יהודה הגיע לארץ  
חלל ממלכה  
ושריה: {ס}

ג גדע בחרי-אף  
כל קרן ישראל

## LAMENTATIONS 2

ALEF

1 How the Lord in his anger  
has humiliated the daughter of Zion!  
He has flung the beauty of Israel  
from heaven to the ground,  
without regard for his footstool  
on the day of his anger.

BET

2 The Lord pitilessly engulfed  
all the homes of Jacob.  
In his fury, he tore down  
the fortresses of the daughters of Judah.  
He threw to the ground, he desecrated,  
the kingdom and its priests.

GIMMEL

3 In his burning anger,  
he broke all the might of Israel.

---

### LAMENTATIONS 2

- <sup>1</sup> This verse here follows the NRSV; the NJB reads, "In his anger, with what darkness has the Lord enveloped the daughter of Zion!" See #1:1 on the use of the adverb איכה in Lm. At least one LXX MS includes the last line (ἐν ἡμέρα ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ) in v. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> 'Without mercy' follows the Ketiv (לא חמל), LXX (οὐ φεισάμενος), JPS, NRSV, NIV and NJB; the Qere has 'he has shown no mercy' (ולא חמל), as do the Peshitta, Tg, Vg and KJV. In place of 'homes', the LXX has 'beautiful (things)' (ὡραῖα).
- <sup>3</sup> 'His ... anger' follows the LXX (θυμῶν αὐτοῦ), Peshitta and Vg, reflecting אפו; the MT has simply 'anger' (אף). The literal translation of 'all the might' is 'the whole horn'; the term קרן normally refers to the horn of a bull but is often used figuratively as a symbol of strength.

הָשִׁיב אֶחָזֹר יְמִינוֹ  
מִפְּנֵי אֹיֵב  
וַיִּבְעַר בַּיַּעֲקֹב כְּאֵשׁ לְהִבָּה  
אֲכָלָה סְבִיב: {ס}

דָּרַךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב ד  
נָצַב יְמִינוֹ כְּצֹר  
וַיַּהַרֵג כָּל  
מַחְמַדֵּי־עֵינַיִן  
בְּאֵהֶל בַּת־צִיּוֹן  
שָׁפַךְ כְּאֵשׁ חֲמָתוֹ: {ס}

הָיָה אֲדֹנָי | כְּאוֹיֵב ה  
בָּלַע יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בָּלַע כָּל־אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ  
שָׁחַת מִבְצָרָיו  
וַיִּרְבַּ בְּבַת־יְהוּדָה  
תִּאֲנִיָּה וַאֲנִיָּה: {ס}

He withdrew his protecting right hand  
at the coming of the enemy.  
He blazed against Jacob like a fire  
that burns up everything near it.

DALET

4 Like an enemy, he strung his bow  
and his right hand held firm.  
Like a foe, he slaughtered  
all those who were a delight to see.  
On the tent of the daughter of Zion,  
he poured out his fury like a fire.

HE

5 The Lord behaved like an enemy;  
he engulfed Israel.  
He engulfed all its citadels  
and he destroyed its fortresses.  
For the daughter of Judah,  
he multiplied weeping on wailing.

<sup>4</sup> When the verb דָּרַךְ ('bend') is used with the noun קִשְׁתָּה ('bow'), it means to bend a bow to string it, in preparation for shooting (1Ch 5:18,8:40, 2Ch 14:7, Jr 50:14,29, 51:3). This idiom is used figuratively to describe the assaults of the wicked (Ps 11:2, 37:14) and the judgments of Yahweh (Ps 7:13, Lm 2:4, 3:12). The translation, 'he strung his bow', is the modern English idiomatic equivalent of the ancient Hebrew idiom, 'he bent his bow' – both are preparations to get ready to shoot arrows. The singular noun אֵהֶל ('tent') probably functions as a collective, referring to all tents in Judah; a parallel expression occurs in v. 2 using the plural: 'all the dwellings of Jacob'.

<sup>5</sup> For the Kethib & Qere reading of אֲדֹנָי ('the Lord') and יְהוָה ('Yahweh'), see #1:14. For the last line, the LXX reads, 'for (the) one humbling and (the) one being humbled' (ταπεινουμένην και τεταπεινω μένην).

וַיִּחַמַּס בְּגֵן שָׂבוֹ י  
 שָׁחַת מֵעֵדוֹ  
 שָׁכַח יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן  
 מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת  
 וַיִּנְאַץ בְּזַעַם־אָפוֹ  
 מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן: {ס}

זָנַח אֲדָנִי | מִזְבְּחוֹ ז  
 נָאָר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ  
 הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד־אֹיֵב  
 חוֹמַת אֲרַמְנוֹתֶיהָ  
 קוֹל נִתְּנוּ בְּבַיִת־יְהוָה  
 כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד: {ס}

חָשַׁב יְהוָה | לְהַשְׁחִית ח  
 חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן

VAV

6 He wrecked his booth like a garden  
and destroyed his assembly-points.  
Yahweh erased the memory  
of festivals and Sabbaths in Zion.  
In the heat of his anger, he rejected  
king and priest.

ZAYIN

7 The Lord has rejected his altar  
and has come to loathe his sanctuary.  
He has given her palace walls  
into the clutches of the enemy.  
From the uproar they made in Yahweh's Temple,  
it might have been a festival day.

HET

8 Yahweh has resolved to destroy  
the walls of the daughter of Zion.

<sup>6</sup> Instead of 'like a garden' (בְּגֵן), following the MT, the LXX has 'like a vineyard' (ὡς ἄμπελον), reflecting כְּגַפְנֵי. The original reading may have been 'like a thief' (כְּגַנֵּב), changed later out of respect for God. 'Booth' (here following the NRSV – the NJB has 'domain') is the Temple (JPS has 'tabernacle' and the LXX has σκηνώμα, 'tent').

<sup>7</sup> The term מִקְדָּשׁוֹ ('his sanctuary') refers to the Temple (1Ch 22:19, 2Ch 36:17, Ps 74:7, Is 63:18, Ezk 48:21, Dn 8:11). The 'uproar' was the enemy's war cry, in place of the shout of acclamation in worship.

<sup>8</sup> The 'line' is a measuring line (cf. Job 38:5). In Hebrew, the idiom, 'stretch out the line', is used both literally (to describe a workman's preparation of measuring and marking stones before cutting them for building, Job 38:5, Jr 31:39, Zc 1:16) and figuratively (to describe God's planning and preparation to destroy a walled city, to mark it off for destruction, 2K 21:13, Is 34:11, Lm 2:8). It is unclear how a phrase from the vocabulary of building becomes a metaphor for destruction but it might picture a carefully planned measure from which God will not deviate.

נָטָה קוֹ  
 לֹא־הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ מִבְּלֹעַ  
 וַיֹּאבֶל־חֵל וְחוֹמָה  
 יַחֲדוֹ אִמְלָלוּ: {ס}

He stretched out the line, not staying his hand  
 until he engulfed everything.  
 He brought mourning on wall and rampart:  
 alike, they crumbled.

TET

ט טָבְעוּ בָאָרֶץ שַׁעֲרֶיהָ  
 אֲבָד וְשָׁבַר בְּרִיחֶיהָ  
 מֶלֶכָּהּ וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם  
 אֵין תּוֹרָה  
 גַּם־נְבִיאֶיהָ  
 לֹא־מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיְהוָה: {ס}

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;  
 he has broken and shattered their bars.  
 Her king and her princes are among the gentiles;  
 there is no instruction.  
 Furthermore, her prophets cannot find  
 any vision from Yahweh.

YOD

י יֵשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יְדָמוּ  
 זְקֵנֵי בַת־צִיּוֹן  
 הָעֵלוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם  
 חָגְרוּ שָׁקִים  
 הוֹרִידוּ לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן  
 בַּתּוֹלֵת יְרוּשָׁלַם: {ס}

10 Mute, they sit on the ground,  
 the elders of the daughter of Zion.  
 They have put dust on their heads  
 and wrapped themselves in sackcloth.  
 The young girls of Jerusalem bow their heads  
 to the ground.

<sup>9</sup> 'Instruction' translates תּוֹרָה (*Torah*); depending on whether the term is used in parallel with the preceding or following line, it refers to either political guidance that the now-exiled king had formerly provided or prophetic instruction that the now-ineffective prophets had formerly provided. It is possible that the three lines are arranged in an ABA chiastic structure, exploiting the semantic ambiguity of the noun. Note that the opening ט of this verse is presented as a small letter, as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.

<sup>10</sup> 'They sit on the ground' follows the *MT*, which vocalises יֵשְׁבוּ as the Qal imperfect 3MP of יָשַׁב ('to sit'); however, the *Peshitta*, *Tg* and *Vg* reflect a derivation from the root שׁוּב 'to return': 'they return to the ground (= grave)'.

כָּלוּ בַדְמָעוֹת עֵינַי א  
 חֲמַרְמְרוּ מֵעֵי  
 נִשְׁפָּדָה לְאַרְץ כְּבִדִי  
 עַל־שִׁבְרַת בְּתַעֲמֵי  
 בְּעֵטָף עוֹלָל וְיוֹנֵק  
 בְּרַחֲבוֹת קְרִיָּה: {ס}

בְּלִמְתָּם יֹאמְרוּ ב  
 אֵיךְ דָּגַן וְיִיזֵן  
 בְּהִתְעַטְּפָם כְּחָלָל  
 בְּרַחֲבוֹת עִיר  
 בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשָׁם  
 אֶל־חֵיק אִמָּתָם: {ס}

מָה־אֶעֱיִדְךָ מָה אֲדַמֶּה־לְךָ ג  
 הַבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם

KAF

11 My eyes are worn out with weeping;  
 my stomach churns.  
 My heart plummets  
 at the destruction of my young people,  
 As the children and babies grow faint  
 in the streets of the city.

LAMED

12 They keep saying to their mothers,  
 "Where is some food?"  
 as they faint like wounded men  
 in the streets of the city,  
 as they breathe their last  
 on their mothers' breasts.

MEM

13 What shall I testify, or what shall I liken you to,  
 daughter of Jerusalem?

<sup>11</sup> The verb כָּלוּ is used of eyes exhausted by weeping (Job 11:20,17:5, Ps 69:4, Jr 14:6, Lm 2:11,4:17) and means either 'to be spent' or 'to fail'; it is rendered variously: 'my eyes fail' (NIV), 'my eyes are spent' (NRSV, JPS), 'my eyes are worn out' (NJB), and 'my eyes are red'; the LXX has 'my eyes have failed' (Ἐξέλιπον ... ὀφθαλμοί μου). The 2<sup>nd</sup> line here follows the NRSV; the NJB has 'my inmost being s in ferment' (see #1:20).

<sup>12</sup> The noun נַפְשָׁם refers to the 'life' of a dying infant (cf. v. 19); the term בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ (Hitpael infinitive construct + ב from, שִׁפ, 'to pour out') may be rendered: 'as they expire', 'when their soul was poured out' (KJV), 'as their life is poured out' (NRSV), 'as their life runs out' (JPS), 'as their lives ebb away' (NIV) or 'as they breathe their last' (NJB).

<sup>13</sup> For the 1<sup>st</sup> line, the NJB follows the Vg: "To what can I compare or liken you" (Cui comparabo te, vel cui assimilabo te); for the third line, it follows the LXX: "Who can rescue or comfort you" (τίς σώσει σε καὶ παρακαλέσει σε). In place of 'as the sea' (בַּיָּם), the LXX (ποτήριον) reflects כּוּם ('a cup'); the textual variant is probably due to simple orthographic confusion.

מָה אֲשׁוּה־לָּךְ וְאַנְחַמְךָ  
בַּתּוֹלַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן  
כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם שְׁבִרְךָ  
מִי יִרְפָּא־לָּךְ: {ס}

To what can I liken you to comfort you,  
young daughter of Zion?  
For, vast as the sea is your ruin:  
who can heal you?

NUN

יָד נְבִיאֶיךָ  
חָזוּ לָּךְ שׁוּא וְתַפֵּל  
וְלֹא־גִלוּ עַל־עוֹנֶיךָ  
לְהַשִּׁיב שְׁבוֹתֶךָ  
וַיַּחֲזוּ לָּךְ מִשְׁאוֹת  
שׁוּא וּמִדּוּחִים: {ס}

14 The vision your prophets had for you  
were empty whitewash.  
They did not lay bare your guilt  
to change your fortunes.  
The visions they told you  
were false and misleading.

SAMEKH

טו סִפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כַּפִּים  
כָּל־עֲבָרֵי דָרְךָ  
שִׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֵאשִׁים  
עַל־בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם  
הַזֹּאת הָעִיר שִׁיאֲמָרוּ כְּלִילַת יָפִי  
מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ: {ס}

15 All who pass your way  
clap their hands at the sight.  
They whistle and shake their heads  
over the daughter of Jerusalem:  
“Is this the city they call Perfection of Beauty,  
the joy of the whole world?”

<sup>14</sup> The noun שׁוּא (*emptiness*) functions adjectivally, modifying the 2<sup>nd</sup> noun וְתַפֵּל (*whitewash*), which retains its full nominal sense: ‘empty whitewash’. The 2<sup>nd</sup> noun is used literally in reference to a whitewashed wall (Ezk 13:10, 11, 14, 15) and figuratively in reference to false prophets (Ezk 22:28). In place of שְׁבוֹתֶךָ (*‘your fortunes’*), here following the *Qere*, the *Ketiv* has שְׁבִיתֶךָ. ‘To change your fortunes’ is a frequent expression in Jeremiah, also meaning ‘to bring back the captives’.

<sup>15</sup> The noun יָפִי (*‘beauty’*) functions as a genitive of respect in relation to the preceding construct noun: Jerusalem was perfect in respect to its physical beauty. For ‘Perfection of Beauty’, the LXX has ‘Crown of glory’ (Στέφανος δόξης).

טז פָּצוּ עַל־יָדָם פִּיהֶם  
 כָּל־אֵיבֵיךָ  
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחַרְקוּ־שֵׁן  
 אָמְרוּ בְלַעְנוּ  
 אֵךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ  
 מִצָּאֵנוּ רְאִינוּ: {ס}

יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם  
 בַּצֵּעַ אִמְרָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר  
 צִוָּה מִימֵי־קֶדֶם  
 הָרַס וְלֹא חָמַל  
 וַיִּשְׂמַח עַל־יָדְךָ אוֹיֵב  
 הָרִים קָרוֹן צָרִיךְ: {ס}

יח צַעַק לִבָּם אֶל־אֲדֹנָי  
 חוֹמַת בֵּית־צִיּוֹן  
 הוֹרִידִי כַנָּחַל דְּמָעָה  
 יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה

AYIN

16 Your enemies open their mouths  
 in chorus against you.  
 They whistle and grind their teeth;  
 they say, "We have swallowed her up.  
 This is the day we were waiting for;  
 at last, we have seen it!"

PE

17 Yahweh has done what he planned,  
 has carried out his threat.  
 As he ordained long ago,  
 he has destroyed without pity.  
 He has increased the might of your foes –  
 and let your foes get the credit.

TSADI

18 Cry then to the Lord,  
 rampart of the daughter of Zion.  
 Let your tears flow like a torrent,  
 day and night.

<sup>16</sup> The last line forms a hendiadys in which the first verb retains its full verbal sense and the second functions as an object complement; it forms a Hebrew idiom that means something like the translation given (here following the *NJB* & *NRSV*).

<sup>17</sup> The verb **בָּצַע** has a broad range of meanings: 'to cut off', 'to injure', 'to gain by violence', 'to finish' and 'to accomplish'; when used in collocation with the verb **בָּצַע**, the accusative noun **אִמְרָתוֹ** ('his word') means 'promise' or 'threat'; hence, this translation.

<sup>18</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> line is a conjectural translation, amending **צַעַק** to **צַעֲקִי**; and taking the **ם** on **לִבָּם** as an enclitic or adverbial suffix ('from the heart') rather than as a pronominal suffix; the *MT* reads 'their heart cried out to the Lord', which makes little sense in context. The image of the rampart does not make the best of sense, and some read 'groan, daughter of Zion' (**חַגַּר** – instead of **חוֹמַת**), but this conjecture has no textual support.

אֶל־תִּתְּנִי פֹגֶת לֶךְ  
אֶל־תִּתְּדַם בֵּת־עֵינַי: {ס}

ט קוּמִי רְנִי בַלַּיְלָה  
לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֵׁמְרוֹת  
שִׁפְכֵי כַמִּים לְבֶדֶךְ  
נִכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי  
שְׂאֵי אֱלֹו בְּפִיךָ  
עַל־נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלָיִךְ  
הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרַעֲב  
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצוֹת: {ס}

כ רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה  
לְמִי עוֹלְלֹתָ כֹּה  
אִם־תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נְשִׁים  
פְּרִים עֲלֵלֵי  
טַפְּחִים אִם־יִהְרַג בְּמִקְדָּשׁ  
אֲדֹנָי כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא: {ס}

כא שִׁכְּבוּ לָאָרֶץ  
חוּצוֹת גַּעַר וּזְקֵן

Allow yourself no respite;  
give your eyes no rest!

QOF

19 Up, cry out in the night,  
as each watch begins!  
Pour your heart out like water  
in Yahweh's presence!  
Raise your hands to him  
for the lives of your children,  
who faint with hunger  
at the end of every street.

RESH

20 "Look, Yahweh, and consider:  
whom have you ever treated like this?  
Should women eat their little ones,  
the children they have nursed?  
Should priest and prophet be slaughtered  
in the Lord's Sanctuary?

SHIN

21 "Children and old people are lying  
on the ground in the streets.

<sup>19</sup> In place of בליל (a defective spelling), here following the *Ketiv*, the *Qere* has בַּלַּיְלָה ('night'), which we follow in the translation; at least 1 LXX MS has 'meditate' (*αδολεσχῆσαι*) in place of 'cry out' (*ἀγαλλίασαι*). The last couplet breaks the rhythm and is probably an addition.

<sup>20</sup> The parallelism between seeing and understanding is often emphasised in the Hebrew Bible (Ex 16:6, Is 5:19, Job 11:11, Qo 6:5).

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of 'piteously' (following the NJB) is 'and you showed them no pity' (following the Tg, Peshitta & Vg – the MT lacks 'and').

בְּתוֹלְתַי וּבַחֹרֵי  
 נִפְּלוּ בַּחֶרֶב  
 הִרְגַתָּ בַּיּוֹם אֲפָדָה  
 טִבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֲמַלְתָּ: {ס}

כב תִּקְרָא כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד  
 מִגּוֹרֵי מִסְבִּיב  
 וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם  
 אֲפִי־הָזֶה פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד  
 אֲשֶׁר־טַפַּחְתִּי וְרִבִּיתִי  
 אֵיבֵי כָל־לָם: {פ}

My young men and young girls  
 have fallen by the sword.  
 You have killed them, on the day of your anger;  
 you have slaughtered them pitilessly.

TAV

22

“As though to a festival, you called together  
 terror from all sides.  
 On that day of Yahweh’s anger,  
 none escaped and none survived.  
 Those whom I had nursed and reared  
 my enemy has annihilated them all.”

<sup>22</sup> The first two lines (*NJB*) are awkward; the *NRSV* reads, “You invited my enemies from all around as if for a day of festival.”

## איכה פרק ג

א אֲנִי הַגִּבֹּר רָאָה עֲנִי  
בְּשֵׁבֶט עֲבָרְתוֹ:  
ב אֹתִי נָהַג וַיִּלֶּךְ  
חֲשֵׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹר:  
ג אֶךְ בִּי יֵשֶׁב יַהֲפֹךְ יָדוֹ  
כָּל-הַיּוֹם: {ס}  
ד בָּלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי  
שָׁבַר עַצְמוֹתַי:  
ה בָּנָה עָלַי וַיִּקַּף  
רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:  
ו בְּמַחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי

## LAMENTATIONS 3

ALEF

1 I am the man familiar with misery  
under the rod of his fury.  
2 He has led and brought me  
into darkness, not light.  
3 Against none but me does he turn his hand,  
again and again, all day long.

BET

4 He has wasted my flesh and skin away,  
has broken my bones.  
5 He has besieged me  
with hardship and gall.  
6 He has forced me to dwell where all is dark,

---

### LAMENTATIONS 3

- <sup>1</sup> The noun הַגִּבֹּר (*'man'*) refers to a strong man, distinguished from women, children, and other non-combatants, whom he is to defend. The noun שֵׁבֶט (*'rod'*) refers to either the weapon with which to smite an enemy (Ex 21:20, 2S 23:21, 1C 11:3, Is 10:15, Mi 4:14) or the instrument of child-discipline (Pr 10:13,22:15,29:15); it is used figuratively to describe discipline of the individual (Job 9:34,21:9,37:13, 2S 7:14, Ps 89:33) and the nation (Is 10:5,24,14:29,30:31).
- <sup>2</sup> The verb נָהַג (*'led'*) may describe people being led away into captivity (1S 30:2 20, 22, Is 20:4) or livestock driven away as spoils of war (1S 23:5, Job 24:3). An alternative reading of the Hiphil verb יִלֶּךְ (*'brought me'*) is *'made me walk'*.
- <sup>3</sup> The verb שׁוּב (literally *'to return'*) functions adverbially to denote repetition: *'again and again'* (cf. Gn 26:18,30:31, Nb 11:4, Jg 19:7, 1S 3:5 6, 1K 13:33,19:6,21:3, 2Ch 33:3, Job 10:16,17:10, Ps 7:13, Jr 18:4,36:28, Dn 9:25, Zc 5:1,6:1, MI 1:4).
- <sup>4</sup> The two nouns joined with *vav*, בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי (*'my flesh and skin'*) may form a nominal hendiadys: *'my mortal skin'*.
- <sup>5</sup> In place of *'with gall and hardship'* (רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה), here following the MT, the NJB has the conjectural translation, *'hardship a circlet round my head'*, reflecting רֹשׁ תְּלָאָה and the LXX (ἐκύκλωσεν κεφαλῆν μου καὶ ἐμόχθησεν).
- <sup>6</sup> The plural form of the noun מַחְשָׁכִים (*'all is dark'*) is an example of the plural of intensity.

כַּמְתֵּי עוֹלָם: {ס}

ז גָּדַר בְּעַדֵּי וְלֹא אֶצֵּא

הַכְּבִיד נִחַשְׁתִּי:

ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ

שָׁתַם תְּפַלְתִּי:

ט גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בְּגִזִּית

נְתִיבַתִּי עוֹהָ: {ס}

י דָּב אֲרֵב הוּא לִי

אֲרִיָּה אֲרִי בְּמַסְתָּרִים:

י"א דְּרָכִי סוֹרֵר וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי

שָׁמְנִי שָׁמָם:

י"ב דֶּרֶךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּצִיבֵנִי

כַּמְטָרָא לַחֵץ: {ס}

י"ג הִבִּיא בְּכַלְיָתִי

בְּנֵי אֲשַׁפְתּוֹ:

like those long dead in their everlasting home.

GIMMEL

7 He has walled me in so that I cannot escape;  
he has weighed me down with chains.

8 Even when I shout for help,  
he shuts out my prayer.

9 He has closed my way with blocks of stone;  
he has obstructed my paths.

DALET

10 For me, he is a lurking bear,  
a lion in hiding.

11 Heading me off, he has torn me apart,  
he has made me desolate.

12 He has bent his bow and used me  
as a target for his arrow.

HE

13 He has shot deep into me  
with shafts from his quiver.

<sup>7</sup> The verb גָּדַר ('he has walled') has two meanings: 1 'to build up a wall' with stones, and 2 'to block a road' with a wall of stones.

<sup>8</sup> The verb שָׁוַע ('shout') usually refers to calling out to God for help or deliverance from a lamentable plight (Job 30:20,36:13,38:41, Ps 5:3, 18:7,42, 22:25, 28:2, 30:3, 31:23, 88:14, 119:147, Is 58:9, Jon 2:3, Hab 1:2). The verb שָׁתַם ('shuts out') appears in the Bible only once.

<sup>9</sup> The LXX reads, "He has blocked up my ways, obstructed my roads, distracted me." (ἀνφοκοδόμησεν ὁδοῦς μου, ἐνέφραξεν τρίβους μου, ἐτάραξεν.)

<sup>10</sup> In place of אֲרִיָּה ('lion'), here following the *Ketiv*, the *Qere* has אָרִי; the latter is simply a shorter spelling of the same word.

<sup>11</sup> For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the MT literally (and the NRSV), the NJB has, "leaving me shattered."

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'arrow', here following the MT, LXX (βέλος) and NRSV, the NJB has the plural, 'arrows'.

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of 'shafts' (בְּנֵי), here following the NJB, is 'sons' (the NRSV has 'arrows'). The term בֶּן (*son*) is often used idiomatically with a following genitive: 'son of a bow' (arrows, Job 41:2), 'son of a quiver' (arrows).

<p>יְיִתִּי שְׂחֹק לְכָל־עַמֵּי נְגִינַתְּם כָּל־הַיּוֹם: הַשְּׁבִיעֵנִי בַמְרוֹרִים הַרְוֵנִי לַעֲנָה: {ס}</p>	<p>יְד טו טז</p>	<p>14 I have become a joke to all my people, their refrain all day long. 15 He has given me my fill of bitterness; he has made me drunk with wormwood.</p>
VAV		
<p>וַיִּגְרַס בַּחֲצֵץ שָׁנִי הַכְּפִישָׁנִי בְּאַפָּר: וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה: וְאָמַר אֲבָד נִצְחִי וַתִּזְחַלְתִּי מִיְהוָה: {ס}</p>	<p>טז יז יח</p>	<p>16 He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has fed me on ashes. 17 He has deprived my soul of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is. 18 Therefore, I say, “My strength has perished and hope in Yahweh is lost.”</p>
ZAYIN		
<p>זְכַרְעֵנִי וּמְרוֹדֵי לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ: זְכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר וַתִּשָּׂח וַתִּשׁוּחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:</p>	<p>יט כ</p>	<p>19 Bring to mind my misery and anguish: it is wormwood and gall! 20 My soul dwells on this continually and sinks within me.</p>

- <sup>14</sup> ‘My people’ here follows the MT (עַמֵּי); some Hebrew MSS and the Peshitta read ‘all nations’ (עַנְמִים), identifying that the man of v. 1 with Israel.
- <sup>15</sup> For ‘with wormwood’, the LXX has ‘with bile’ (χολῆς).
- <sup>16</sup> ‘Fed me on ashes’ follows the LXX (ἐψώμισέν με σποδόν) and NJB; the MT and NRSV have ‘made me cower in ashes’.
- <sup>17</sup> For the 1<sup>st</sup> line, here following the MT, the NJB and NRSV follow the LXX reading (ἀπώσατο ἐξ εἰρήνης ψυχῆν μου) of ‘my soul is deprived of peace’; the latter reflects a reading of ותזנח in place of ותזנח.
- <sup>18</sup> The NJB lacks ‘my strength has perished and...’, here following the MT (the NRSV has ‘glory’ in place of ‘strength’).
- <sup>19</sup> In place of ‘bring to mind’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘the thought of’. The basic meaning זָכַר is ‘remember’; although it is often used in reference to recollection of past events, it can also describe consideration of present situations: ‘consider’, ‘bring to mind’.
- <sup>20</sup> In place of (‘my soul’), here following the Qere (וַתִּשׁוּחַ), the Ketiv reads וַתִּשָּׂח (‘your soul’). For this verse, the LXX reads: μνησθήσεται καὶ καταδολεσχήσει ἐπ’ ἐμέ ἡ ψυχὴ μου. (“I shall be remembered and my soul shall converse with me.”)

כא	זאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל: {ס}	21	This is what I shall keep in mind and thus regain some hope.
כב	חֶסְדֵי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא-תִמְנוּ כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:	22	Surely Yahweh's mercies are not over, his deeds of faithful love not exhausted.
כג	חֲדָשִׁים לְבַקְרִים רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתָךְ:	23	Every morning, they are renewed; ample is his faithfulness!
כד	חֲלָקֵי יְהוָה אֲמַרְהָ נַפְשִׁי עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל לֹא: {ס}	24	"Yahweh is all I have," I say to myself, "and so I shall put my hope in him."
כה	טוֹב יְהוָה לְקוֹן לְנַפֵּשׁ תְּדַרְשֶׁנוּ:	25	Yahweh is good to those who trust him, to the one who searches for him.
כו	טוֹב וַיְחַיל וְדוּמָם לְתִשׁוּעַת יְהוָה:	26	It is good to wait silently for Yahweh to save.
כז	טוֹב לְגֹבֵר כִּי-יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו: {ס}	27	It is good for someone to bear the yoke from a younger age.

<sup>21</sup> The noun לבב (literally 'heart') has a broad range of meanings, including its use as a metonymy of association, standing for thoughts and thinking (cf. Dt 32:46, 1Ch 29:18, Job 17:11, Ps 73:7, Is 10:7, Hg 1:5,7, 2:15,18, Zc 7:10, 8:17), hence the idiomatic translation 'keep in mind'.

<sup>22</sup> Vv. 22–24 are not present in most LXX MSS.

<sup>23</sup> 'His faithfulness' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'your faithfulness'. The adjective רב has a range of meanings: quantitative ('much', 'many', 'abundant') or, less often, in a qualitative sense ('great', 'strong'); most translations have 'great' but 'ample', (JPS) is probably better.

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of 'all I have' (following the NJB) is 'my portion' (as in the NRSV).

<sup>25</sup> In place of 'to the one', the NJB has 'to all'; the term לְנַפֵּשׁ (to the soul) is a synecdoche of part for the whole.

<sup>26</sup> In place of 'silently', the NJB has 'in silence'; the two adjectives וַיְחַיל (waiting) and דוּמָם (silently) form a hendiadys.

<sup>27</sup> The author is referring to the humiliation of subjugation to the Babylonians during the Exile. The Babylonians often used the phrase 'bear the yoke' as a metaphor: their subjects were as subservient to them as yoked oxen.

כח	יֵשֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּדָּם	28	Let him sit in solitude and silence
	כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו:		when it weighs heavy.
כט	יִתֵּן בְּעַפְרָ פִּיהוּ	29	Let him lay his head in the dust -
	אוּלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה:		maybe there is hope.
ל	יִתֵּן לְמַכְהוּ לְחֵי	30	Let him offer his cheek to the striker,
	יִשְׁבַּע בְּחַרְפָּה: {ס}		to have his fill of disgrace!
לא	כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח	31	For the Lord will not reject
	לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי:		anyone forever.
לב	כִּי אִם־הוֹגָה	32	If he brings grief, he will have pity
	וְרַחֵם כְּרַב חַסְדָּיו:		out of the fullness of his faithful love.
לג	כִּי לֹא עֲנָה מְלִבּוֹ	33	For it is not for his own pleasure
	וַיִּגָּה בְּנִי־אִישׁ: {ס}		that he torments and grieves the human race.
לד	לְדַכָּא תַּחַת רַגְלָיו	34	When all the prisoners in a country
	כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ:		are crushed underfoot,

- <sup>28</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> line here follows the *NJB*; the literal translation of the *MT* is ‘when he has laid it on him’ and the *NRSV* has ‘when the Lord has imposed it’.
- <sup>29</sup> The literal translation of ‘lay his head in the dust’ is ‘put his mouth in the dust’; the *LXX* reads ‘let him eat dust’ (literally, ‘let him put dust in his mouth’ – *ῥησει εν κομιοστω το στομα αυτου*).
- <sup>30</sup> Perhaps Jesus is thinking ironically of this passage in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:40, Lk 2:29).
- <sup>31</sup> On the *Ketiv* & *Qere* reading of אֲדָנִי (*‘the Lord’*) and יהוה (*‘Yahweh’*), see #1:14.
- <sup>32</sup> In place of חַסְדָּיו (*‘pity’*, literally ‘his kindnesses’), here following the *Qere*, the *Ketiv* reads the singular form (חַסְדוֹ), as also do the *LXX* (*ἐλέους αὐτοῦ*) and *Tg*.
- <sup>33</sup> The term מְלִבּוֹ (*‘his heart’*) is figurative: a metonymy of association for emotions, standing for enjoyment, pleasure, and desire.
- <sup>34</sup> The literal translation of ‘in a country’ is ‘on earth’.

לה	לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָּט־גֹּבֵר	35	when human rights are overridden
	נִגְדַד פְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן:		in defiance of the Most High,
לו	לְעוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבוֹ	36	when someone is cheated of justice,
	אֲדַנִּי לֹא רָאָה: {ס}		does not the Lord see it?
			MEM
לו	מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי	37	Who has only to speak and it is so done?
	אֲדַנִּי לֹא עָוָה:		Who commands, if not he Lord?
לח	מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא	38	From where, if not from the mouth of the Most High,
	הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:		do evil and good come?
לט	מִה־יִתְאוּנֶן אָדָם חָי	39	Why then should anyone complain
	גֹּבֵר עַל־חַטָּאוֹ: {ס}		about the punishment of their sin?
			NUN
מ	נַחֲפֹשֶׁה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחֲקֶרָה	40	Let us carefully examine our path
	וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד־יְהוָה:		and return to Yahweh.
מא	נִשְׂא לְבַבְנוּ אֶל־כַּפָּיִם	41	Let us raise our hearts with our hands
	אֶל־אֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם:		to God in heaven.

<sup>35</sup> For this verse, here following the *NJB*, the *NRSV* has, “when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High.”

<sup>36</sup> For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, *JPS* has ‘the Lord does not approve’; the verb רָאָה (‘to see’) is here used in reference to mental observation and approval: ‘to gaze at’ with joy and pleasure (cf. 2K 10:16, Mi 7:9, Jr 29:32, Is 52:8, Job 20:17, 33:28, Ps 54:9, 106:5, 128:5, Sg 3:11, 6:11, Qo 2:1). Note that the ע in לְעוֹת is presented as a small letter, just as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.

<sup>37</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> line here follows the *NJB*; the literal translation is, “who has spoken and it happened?” The *NRSV* has, “Who can command and have it done?”

<sup>38</sup> This verse follows the *NJB*; the *NRSV*, following the *MT* more literally, reads, “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?”

<sup>39</sup> In place of ‘their sin’ (חַטָּאוֹ), here following the *MT* and *LXX* (ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ), other *Hebrew MSS* (חטאיו), *Tg*, *Peshitta*, *Vg* (peccatis suis), *NJB* & *NRSV* have ‘their sins’.

<sup>40</sup> For the 1<sup>st</sup> line, the *NJB* reads, “Let us examine our path and ponder it.” The two verbs נַחֲפֹשֶׁה (‘test’) and וְנַחֲקֶרָה (‘examine’) form a verbal hendiadys, in which the first functions adverbially and the second retains its full verbal force.

<sup>41</sup> ‘With (our) hands’ follows the *LXX* (ἐπι χειρῶν); the *MT* has ‘towards our hands’ (אֶל־כַּפָּיִם).

מב נַחֲנוּ פִּשְׁעָנוּ וּמְרִינוּ  
אַתָּה לֹא סָלַחְתָּ: {ס}

מג סְבוֹתָהּ בְּאֵף וּתְרַדְפֵּנוּ  
הֲרַגְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלָתָּ:

מד סְבוֹתָהּ בְּעָנָן לֶךְ  
מִעֲבוֹר תְּפִלָּהּ:

מה סְחִי וּמֵאֹס תְּשִׂימֵנוּ  
בְּקֶרֶב הָעַמִּים: {ס}

מו פָּצוּ עֲלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם  
כָּל-אִיבֵינוּ:

מז פַּחַד וּפְחַת הָיָה לָנוּ  
הַשָּׂאת וְהַשְׁבֵּר:

מח פִּלְגֵי-מַיִם תִּרְדַּ עֵינַי  
עַל-שֶׁבֶר בְּתַעֲמִי: {ס}

42 We are the ones who have sinned rebelliously,  
and you have not forgiven.

SAMEKH

43 You have enveloped yourself in anger,  
pursuing us, slaughtering us without pity.

44 You have wrapped yourself in a cloud  
too thick for prayer to pierce.

45 You have reduced us to filth and rubbish  
among the nations.

AYIN

46 Our enemies open their mouths  
in chorus against us.

47 Panic and pitfall have been our lot,  
ravage and ruin.

48 My eyes dissolve in torrents of tears  
at the ruin of beloved people.

<sup>42</sup> In place of 'rebelliously', the NJB has 'and who have rebelled'; the two verbs פִּשְׁעָנוּ (*revolted*) and וּמְרִינוּ (*rebelled*) form a verbal hendiadys.

<sup>43</sup> In place of 'yourself', following the NRSV, the NJB has 'us'.

<sup>44</sup> Alternative readings for 'wrapped' (following the NJB and NRSV) are 'hidden' (NEB) and 'clothed' (JPS).

<sup>45</sup> The two nouns סְחִי (*'filth'*) and וּמֵאֹס (*'rubbish'*) may form a hendiadys, where the first functions as an adjective: 'filthy rubbish'.

<sup>46</sup> Used in reference to an enemy, the verb פָּצוּ (*'open their mouths'*) means to utter threats against someone (cf. 2:16, Ps 22:14).

<sup>47</sup> In place of 'panic' (here following the NRSV), the NJB has 'terror'; the similar sounding nouns פַּחַד (*'panic'*) and וּפְחַת (*'pitfall'*) are an example of paronomasia, a wordplay that emphasises the magnitude of Jerusalem's suffering. Similarly, הַשָּׂאת (*'ravage'*) and וְהַשְׁבֵּר (*'ruin'*) are alliterative (the NRSV has 'destruction and devastation').

<sup>48</sup> In place of 'beloved people', the LXX has 'daughter of my people' (θυγατρός τοῦ λαοῦ μου).

<p>מט עיני נגרה ולא תדמה מאין הפגות: ג עד-ישקיף וירא יהוה משמים: נא עיני עוללה לנפשי מכל בנות עירי: {ס}</p>	<p>מט ג נא</p>	<p>49 My eyes will weep ceaselessly, without relief, 50 until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees me. 51 My eyes cause me grief over all the daughters of my city.</p>	<p>PE</p>
TSADI			
<p>נב צוד צדוני בצפור איבי חנם: נג צמתו בבור חיי וידו-אבן בי: נד צפומים על-ראשי אמרתי נגזרתי: {ס}</p>	<p>נב נג נד</p>	<p>52 Unprovoked, my enemies hunted me down like a bird. 53 They shut me finally in a pit; they threw stones on me. 54 The waters rose over my head; I thought, "I am lost!"</p>	<p>TSADI</p>
QOF			
<p>נה קראתי שמך יהוה מבור תחתיות:</p>	<p>נה</p>	<p>55 I called on your name, Yahweh, from the deep pit.</p>	<p>QOF</p>

<sup>49</sup> The noun הַפְּגוּת (*'relief'*) occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible; the form of the noun is unusual, probably being derived from the denominative Hiphil verbal stem of the root פּוּג (*'to grow numb', 'to become cold'*).

<sup>50</sup> The word *'me'* (following the NJB) is not in the MT (or NRSV) and is added for clarity; some extend to *'what has happened (to me)'*.

<sup>51</sup> In place of *'cause me grief'* (as the NRSV), the NJB has *'have grown sore'*; נַפְשִׁי (*my soul*) is a synecdoche of part for the whole person (*'me'*).

<sup>52</sup> The construction צוֹד צְדוֹנִי (*'hunted me down'*) is emphatic: the Qal infinitive absolute of the same root of the perfect (3CP) plus the 1CS suffix.

<sup>53</sup> The term וִידוּ (*'they threw'* - Piel 3MP + *vav*) explains the previous statement: the enemies attempted to end his life in a pit by stoning him.

<sup>54</sup> The verb נִגְזַרְתִּי (Niphil perfect 1CS from נָזַר *'to be cut off'*) functions in an ingressive sense (*'about to be cut off'*); it is used in reference to the threat of death (cf. Ezk 37:11).

<sup>55</sup> In place of *'deep pit'* (following the NJB), the NRSV has *'depths of the pit'*; the literal translation of the MT is *'from a pit of lowest places'* and the LXX has *'lowermost pit'* (λάγκου κατωτάτου).

קוֹלִי שָׁמַעַתָּ 56  
אֶל־תַּעֲלֹם אָזְנְךָ לְרוּחֹתַי לְשׁוֹעֲתַי:

קִרְבָּתְךָ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָאָךָ 57  
אָמַרְתָּ אֶל־תִּירָא: {ס}

רַבַּת אֲדַנִּי רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי 58  
גָּאֵלְתָּ חַיִּי:

רְאִיתָה יְהוָה עֲוֹתָתִי 59  
שִׁפְטָה מִשִּׁפְטֵי:

רְאִיתָה כָּל־נִקְמָתָם 60  
כָּל־מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם לִי: {ס}

שָׁמַעַתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה 61  
כָּל־מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם עָלַי:

שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי וְהַגִּיזֹנִם 62  
עָלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

שִׁבְתָּם וְקִימָתָם הַבֵּיטָה 63  
אֲנִי מִנְּגִינָתָם: {ס}

56 You heard my voice:  
do not close your ear to my prayer, to my cry.

57 You came near when I called to you;  
you said, "Do not be afraid!"

RESH

58 Lord, you defended my cause;  
you have redeemed my life.

59 Yahweh, you have seen the wrong done to me;  
please judge my cause.

60 You have seen their vindictiveness,  
all their plots against me.

SHIN

61 You have heard their insults, Yahweh,  
all their plots against me.

62 The whispering and murmuring of my enemies  
are against me all day long.

63 Look, whether they sit or stand,  
I am their refrain.

56 'To my prayer' follows the LXX - 'εἰς τῆς δέησίν μου' (which omits the following words, probably a gloss); the MT has 'to my liberation'.

57 The 1<sup>st</sup> line here follows the NRSV; the NJB (and Vg - *Appropinquasti in die quando invocavi te*) has, "You are near when I call you."

58 God is the 'go-el' of those who trust him (see #Rt 2:0 and #Is 41:14). On the reading of אֲדַנִּי ('the Lord') and יהוה ('Yahweh'), see #1:14.

59 For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'grant me redress'; the literal translation of 'cause' is 'judgement'.

60 For 'against me' (עָלַי), here following the Tg, Peshitta, LXX (ἐν ἐμοί) & Vg (*adversum me*) and many Hebrew MSS, the MT reads 'to me' (לִי).

61 An alternative reading for 'insults' (NJB) is 'taunts' (NRSV).

62 The literal translation of the 1<sup>st</sup> line is, "The lips of my enemies and their thoughts."

63 Some see the terms שִׁבְתָּם ('their sitting') and וְקִימָתָם ('their rising') as a figurative merism referring to rising and going to sleep.

תְּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּל יְהוָה	טד	TAV	64	Repay them, Yahweh,
בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם:				as their deeds deserve.
תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מְגִנַת־לֵב	סה		65	Lay hardness of heart
תֵּאֲלֹתֶךָ לָהֶם:				as your curse on them.
תִּרְדָּף בְּאֵף וְתִשְׁמַדֵּם	סו		66	Angrily pursue them, root them out
מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי יְהוָה: {פ}				from under Yahweh's heavens!

<sup>64</sup> Vv. 64–66 recall the cries against the enemies of the persecuted righteous in the Psalms (see Ps 3:7, 17:13,14, 35:26, 59:11–13 and compare Jr 11:20–23, 18:21–22).

<sup>65</sup> The term מְגִנַת (‘hardness of heart’) appears only once in the Hebrew Bible; its meaning is debated: earlier lexicographers suggested that it meant ‘covering’ but more recent lexicons suggest ‘shamelessness’ or ‘insanity’.

<sup>66</sup> In place of ‘Yahweh’s heavens’ (שָׁמַי יְהוָה), here following the MT, the LXX (τοῦ οὐρα νοῦ), Peshitta and NJB have ‘your heavens’.

## איכה פרק ד

א איכה יועם זהב \*  
ישנא הכתם הטוב  
תשתפכנה אבני־קֹדֶשׁ  
בראש כל־חוצות: {ס}

ב בני ציון היקרים \*  
המסלאים בפז  
איכה נחשבו לנבלי־חרש  
מעשה ידי יוצר: {ס}

ג גם־תנים תנין חלצו שד \*  
היניקו גוריהן  
בת־עמי לאכזר  
כי ענים [פיעינים] במדבר {ס}

## LAMENTATIONS 4

### ALEF

1 How the gold has tarnished,  
how the fine gold has changed!  
The sacred stones lie scattered  
at the corner of every street.

### BET

2 The precious children of Zion,  
worth their weight in fine gold:  
How they are reckoned as earthen pots,  
the work of a potter's hands!

### GIMMEL

3 Even the jackals give the breast  
and suckle their young,  
but the daughter of my people is as cruel  
as the ostriches of the desert.

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### LAMENTATIONS 4

- <sup>1</sup> The 'gold' and 'sacred stones' (Temple treasures) symbolise the population of Jerusalem. The verb יועם (Hophal imperfect 3MS from עמם – 'to conceal', 'to darken') literally means 'to be dimmed' or 'to be darkened'. Most translations render this literally: the gold has 'been darkened' (LXX – ἀμαυρωθήσεται), 'grown dim' (NRSV), 'is dulled' (JPS), or 'grown dull'; 'tarnished' follows the NJB, and the NIV has 'lost its lustre'.
- <sup>2</sup> For 'pots', the LXX has 'receptacles' (ἀγγεῖα).
- <sup>3</sup> The Qere has תנים ('jackals') in place of the תנין in the Ketiv (the plural ending ין is diminutive); the LXX has 'dragons' (δράκοντες). The Qere has פיעינים ('as the ostriches'), in place of the כי ענים in the Ketiv (textual corruption); the LXX has 'as a sparrow' (ὡς στρουθίον).

<p style="text-align: center;">דָּבַק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק    ד</p> <p style="text-align: center;">אֶל־חִכּוֹ בְּצִמָּא עוֹלָלִים שְׂאֵלוּ לֶחֶם פָּרַשׁ אֵין לָהֶם: {ס}</p> <p style="text-align: center;">הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַדְנִים    ה</p> <p style="text-align: center;">נִשְׁמּוּ בַחֻצוֹת הָאֲמִנִים עָלַי תוֹלַע חִבְקוּ אֲשֵׁפֶתוֹת: {ס}</p> <p style="text-align: center;">וַיִּגְדַּל עֵזֶן בֵּת־עַמִּי    ו</p> <p style="text-align: center;">מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם הִהְפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ־רִגַע וְלֹא־חָלּוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם: {ס}</p> <p style="text-align: center;">זָכוּ נְזִירֵיהָ מִשֶּׁלֶג    ז</p> <p style="text-align: center;">צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DALET</p> <p>4 The tongue of the baby at the breast sticks to its palate for thirst. Little children ask for bread but no one gives them any.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HE</p> <p>5 Those who used to eat only the best now lie dying in the streets. Those who were reared in the purple cling to the rubbish heaps.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VAV</p> <p>6 For the wickedness of the daughter of my people exceeded the sins of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand being laid on it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ZAYIN</p> <p>7 Once, her young people were brighter than snow, whiter than milk.</p>
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<sup>4</sup> The term פָּרַשׁ (Qal active participle from פָּרַס – ‘to divide’) refers to the action of breaking bread in two before giving it to a person to eat (Is 58:7, Jr 16:7); the form here is an alternate spelling.

<sup>5</sup> The term תוֹלַע (‘purple’) is a figurative description of expensive clothing: the colour of the dyed clothes stands for the clothes themselves.

<sup>6</sup> In place of ‘wickedness’ (עֵזֶן) and ‘sins’ (חַטָּאת), here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘chastisement’ and ‘punishment’; the latter interprets the nouns in their metonymical sense – cause (wickedness/sin) for effect (chastisement/punishment).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Her young people’ is a conjectural translation (נִזְרִיָּה); the MT has ‘their Nazirites’ (נְזִירֵיהָ) and JPS has ‘her princes’. ‘Their hue’ follows the Syro-Hexaplar and Origen; the MT (גִּזְרָתָם) is from a root meaning ‘to cut’ or ‘to separate’, but the exact meaning remains unexplained in this passage (the NRSV has ‘hair’). An alternative translation for ‘sapphire’ is ‘lapis lazuli’.

<p>אָדָמוּ עֵצִים מִפְּנֵינִים סִפִּיר גְּזָרְתָם: {ס}</p>	<p>ח</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Now their faces are blacker than soot; they are not recognised in the streets. Their skin has shrunk over their bones, as dry as a stick.</p>
<p>חֲשֵׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר תֶּאֱרָם לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל־עַצְמָם יִבֶשׁ הִיָּה כְּעֵץ: {ס}</p>	<p>ט</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Happier are those killed by the sword than those killed by famine. They waste away, sunken for lack of the fruits of the earth.</p>
<p>טוֹבִים הֵיוּ חֲלָלֵי־חֶרֶב מִחֲלָלֵי רָעַב שֵׁהֶם יָזְבוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְּנוּבַת שְׂדֵי: {ס}</p>	<p>י</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>With their own hands, kindly women cooked their own children. This was their food when the daughter of my people was ruined.</p>
<p>יָדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיוֹת בְּשָׁלוֹ יִלְדִיהֶן הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ בְּשִׁבְרַת־עַמִּי: {ס}</p>	<p>יא</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>Yahweh indulged his fury; he vented his fierce anger.</p>

<sup>8</sup> The noun תֶּאֱרָם (*'faces'*) is related to the Phoenician noun meaning 'something gazed at' and the Aramaic verb 'to gaze at'; it refers to the form of a woman (Gn 29:17, Dt 21:11, 1S 25:3, Es 2:7) or of a man (Gn 39:11, Jg 8:18, 1S 16:18, 28:14, 1K 1:6, 1Ch 17:17, Is 52:14,53:2).

<sup>9</sup> The noun חֲלָל refers to a 'fatal wound' and is used substantively to refer to 'the slain' (Nb 19:18, 31:8,19, 1S 17:52, 2S 23:8,18, 1Ch 11:11,20, Is 22:2, 66:16, Jr 14:18, 25:33, 51:49, Ezk 6:7, 30:11, 31:17,18, 32:20, Zp 2:12).

<sup>10</sup> Alternative readings for 'kindly' (NJB) are 'compassionate' (NRSV), 'pitiful' (WEBBE) and 'tender-hearted' (NIV).

<sup>11</sup> The verb כָּלָה (*'indulged'* - Piel perfect 3MS from כָּלָה, 'to complete') has a range of related meanings: **1** 'to bring to an end', **2** 'to accomplish', **3** 'to consume'. Used in reference to God's wrath, it describes his unleashing the full measure of anger so that divine justice is satisfied.

<p>וַיִּצַת־אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסוֹדֹתֶיהָ: {ס}</p> <p>יב לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ מַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ וְכָל כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל כִּי יבֹא עַר וְאוֹיֵב בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם: {ס}</p> <p>יג מִחַטָּאוֹת נְבִיאֶיהָ עֲוֹנֹת כַּהֲנֵיהָ הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ דָּם צְדִיקִים: {ס}</p> <p>יד נָעוּ עֹרִים בְּחוּצוֹת נִגְאָלוּ בְּדָם בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ יָגְעוּ בַלְבָּשֵׁיהֶם: {ס}</p> <p>טו סוּרוּ טָמֵא קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ סוּרוּ סוּרוּ אֶל־תִּגְעוּ כִּי נִצּוּ גַם־נָעוּ אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹלִים לֹא יוֹסְפוּ לָגוּר: {ס}</p>	<p>He lit a fire in Zion that devoured her foundations.</p> <p>LAMED 12 The kings of the earth never believed, nor did any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy would ever penetrate the gates of Jerusalem.</p> <p>MEM 13 It was for the sins of her prophets and the crimes of her priests, who had shed the blood of the upright in the heart of the city.</p> <p>NUN 14 They wandered blindly through the streets, defiled with blood, so that no one dared to touch their clothes.</p> <p>SAMEKH 15 “Keep away: unclean!” people shouted, “Keep away! Keep away! Don’t touch!” If they left and fled, it was said, to the nations, they were not allowed to stay there either.</p>
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<sup>12</sup> The verb הֶאֱמִינוּ (Hiphil perfect 3CP from אָמַן, ‘to believe’) is usually a term of faith and trust, but it occasionally functions cognitively (‘to think that’, cf. Job 9:16, 15:22, Ps 116:10) or ‘to be convinced that’ (Ps 27:13). The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here requires explanation.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase ‘it was’ does not appear in the *MT* but the introductory causal preposition כִּי (‘because’) indicates its implication through elision.

<sup>14</sup> In place of ‘defiled’, following the *NRSV*, the *NJB* has ‘polluted’.

<sup>15</sup> The guilty were treated like lepers. The *NJB* lacks ‘it was said’, here following the *NRSV*.

טז פְּנֵי יְהוָה חִלְּקֵם  
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַבִּיטֵם  
 פְּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ  
 זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ: {ס}

יז עוֹדִינָה עוֹדִינוּ תִכְלִינָה עֵינֵינוּ  
 אֶל־עֲזָרְתָנוּ הַבָּל  
 בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צַפִּינוּ  
 אֶל־גּוֹי לֹא יוֹשֵׁעַ: {ס}

יח צָדוּ צַעֲדֵינוּ  
 מְלַכְת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ  
 קָרַב קִצְנוּ מְלֵאוּ יָמֵינוּ  
 כִּי־בָא קִצְנוּ: {ס}

יט קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ  
 מִנְּשָׂרַי שָׁמַיִם  
 עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ  
 בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ: {ס}

AYIN

16 The face of Yahweh destroyed them;  
 he will look on them no more.  
 There was no respect for the priests,  
 no deference for the elders.

PE

17 Continually, we were wearing out our eyes,  
 watching for help – in vain.  
 From our towers, we watched for a nation  
 that could not save us anyway.

TSADI

18 Men dogged our steps  
 to keep us out of our streets.  
 Our end was near and our days were done,  
 for our end had come.

QOF

19 Our pursuers were swifter  
 than eagles in the sky.  
 They hounded our steps through the mountains;  
 they lay in ambush for us in the wilds.

16 The MT reads the plural verb לֹא נִשְׂאוּ ('they did not respect') but the Tg, Peshitta & Vg have the singular form, reflecting לֹא נִשָּׂא ('he did not respect'). For the last line, the LXX has 'they did not show mercy on the prophets' (προσβύτας οὐκ ἠλέησαν). The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.  
 17 The 'nation' was Egypt, Judah's ally in the previous war. The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.  
 18 In place of 'done', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'numbered'; the literal translation is 'full'.  
 19 In place of 'sky', the NRSV has 'heavens'; the word שָׁמַיִם may be translated 'heaven(s)' or 'sky', depending on the context.

כ רוח אֶפְיָנוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה  
 נִלְכַּד בְּשַׁחֲתוֹתֵם  
 אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ  
 בְּצִלּוֹ נַחֲיָה בְּגוֹיִם: {ס}

כא שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בֵּת-אֲדוֹם  
 יוֹשְׁבַתִּי יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוּז  
 גַּם-עֲלֶיךָ תִּעְבְּר־כּוֹס  
 תִּשְׁכַּרְי וְתִתְעַרִי: {ס}

כב תִּם-עוֹנֵךָ בֵּת-צִיּוֹן  
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ  
 פֶּקֶד עוֹנֵךָ בֵּת-אֲדוֹם  
 גְּלָה עַל-חַטָּאתֶיךָ: {פ}

RESH

20 The breath of our nostrils, Yahweh's anointed,  
 was caught in their traps:  
 He of whom we said,  
 "In his shadow, we shall live among the nations."

SHIN

21 Rejoice, exult, daughter of Edom,  
 you who reside in Uz!  
 To you in turn the cup will pass;  
 you will get drunk and strip yourself naked!

TAV

22 Your wickedness is atoned for, daughter of Zion;  
 he will never banish you again.  
 Your iniquity, daughter of Edom, he will punish;  
 your sins he will lay bare!

<sup>20</sup> The term בְּצִלּוֹ (*in his shadow*) is used figuratively here to refer to protection from military attack.

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'daughter of Edom' (בֵּת-אֲדוֹם - θυγάτηρ Εδωμ), the LXX here has 'daughter of Idumaea' (θυγάτηρ Ιδουμαίας), but not in the following verse. The translation, 'you who reside', follows the Qere reading (יוֹשְׁבַת).

<sup>22</sup> The perfect tense verb תִּם *'is atoned for'* (Qal perfect 3MS from תָּמַם *'to be complete'*) is an example of the so-called 'prophetic perfect', depicting an event as 'complete' (as good as done) or certain to take place from the viewpoint of the prophet.

## איכה פרק ה

א זְכֹר יְהוָה מַה־הָיָה לָנוּ  
הַבַּיִת הַבֵּיטָה וּרְאָה אֶת־חֲרַפְתָּנוּ  
ב נַחֲלָתֵנוּ נִהְפְּכָה לְזָרִים  
בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכְרִים:  
ג יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ אֵין וְאֵין אָב  
אִמֹתֵינוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת:  
ד מִימֵינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ  
עַצֵּינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ:  
ה עַל צוּאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדְּפָנוּ  
יִגְעָנוּ לֹא וְלֹא הוֹנַח־לָנוּ:  
ו מְצָרִים נָתַנוּ יָד  
אֲשׁוּר לְשִׁבְעַת לֶחֶם:

## LAMENTATIONS 5

1 Remember, Yahweh, what has happened to us;  
consider, and see our degradation.  
2 Our heritage has passed to strangers,  
our homes to foreigners.  
3 We are orphans, we are fatherless;  
our mothers are like widows.  
4 We must pay money for own water to drink;  
our own wood, we can only get at a price.  
5 The yoke is on our necks; we are persecuted;  
exhausted we are, allowed no rest.  
6 We made a pact with Egypt,  
with Assyria, to have plenty of food.

### LAMENTATIONS 5

This lament is entitled 'The Prayer of Jeremiah' (*Oratio Jeremiae*) in some Vg MSS.

- <sup>1</sup> The translation, 'consider', follows the *Qere* reading (הַבֵּיטָה); the *Ketiv* has '(he) looked' (הַבִּיט). Although normally used in reference to visual perception, the verb can also (as here) refer to cognitive appreciation of a situation (cf. 1S 16:7, 2K 3:14, Is 22:8, 51:1,2).
- <sup>2</sup> The term נַחֲלָתֵנוּ ('our heritage') has a range of meanings: 'inheritance', 'portion', and 'property'. The land of Canaan was given by Yahweh to Israel as its inheritance (Dt 4:21, 15:4, 19:10, 20:16, 21:23, 24:4, 25:19, 26:1, Jos 20:6) and distributed among the tribes, clans and families (Nb 16:14, 36:2, Dt 29:7, Jos 11:23, 13:6, 14:3,13, 17:4,6,14, 19:49, 23:4, Jg 18:1, Ezk 45:1, 47:22,29). The family provided an inheritance (property) to its children, with the first-born receiving pride of position (Gn 31:14 Nb 27:7-11, 36:3 8, 1K 21:3,4, Job 42:15, Pr 19:14, Ezk 46:16).
- <sup>3</sup> The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
- <sup>4</sup> The literal translation for 'money' is 'silver' (a synecdoche of species for general).
- <sup>5</sup> 'Yoke' follows *Symmachus*; the word (עַל) has fallen from the MT (and LXX) by haplography before 'on' (עַל). The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
- <sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'made a pact with' is 'given the hand to'. 'Assyria' is a conventional expression, here designating Babylon (see Jr 2:18).

ז	אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ אִינָם וְאִינָם אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲנַחְנוּ עֹנֵתֵיהֶם סָבְלָנוּ:	7	Our ancestors sinned; they are no more, but we bear the weight of their guilt.
ח	עֲבָדִים מָשְׁלוּ בָנוּ פָּרַק אֵין מִיָּדָם:	8	Slaves rule us; there is no one to rescue us from their clutches.
ט	בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נָבִיא לַחַמָּנוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר:	9	At the cost of our lives, we earn our bread, by risking the sword of the desert.
י	עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתִנּוֹר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעֵב:	10	Our skin is as hot as an oven from the scorch of famine.
יא	נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָנוּ בְּתִלַּת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה:	11	The women in Zion have been raped, the young girls in the towns of Judah.
יב	שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נָתְלוּ פָּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ:	12	Princes have been hanged by their hands; the face of the old has won no respect.
יג	בַּחֹרִים טָחוּן נָשְׂאוּ וְנִעְרִים בְּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ:	13	Youths have been put to the mill; boys stagger under loads of wood.
יד	זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שַׁבָּתוֹ בַּחֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם:	14	The elders have deserted the city gate; the young have given up their music.

<sup>7</sup> The *Kethib/Qere* differences here would benefit from explanation – the *Qere* is supported by the *Tg, Peshitta* and *LXX* (ἡμεῖς τὰ). The author sees the present disaster in terms of collective retribution; this has not yet yielded to the principle of individual retribution (see #Ezk 14:12).

<sup>8</sup> The ‘slaves’ are the Chaldaean officials: the technical term for officials of the king (עֲבָדִים – ‘servants’) is here used in an insulting sense.

<sup>9</sup> In the phrase בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ (‘at the cost of our lives’), the preposition ב denotes a price paid; to venture out from hiding in search of food was risky.

<sup>10</sup> In place of ‘hot’, here following the *MT* and *NJB*, the *NRSV*, following the *LXX*, (ἐπαισιώθη – ‘has been blackened’) has ‘black’.

<sup>11</sup> In place of ‘women’ and ‘young girls’, here following the *NJB*, some have ‘wives’ (*NIV*) and ‘virgins’ (*NRVS*).

<sup>12</sup> The phrase ‘won no respect’ is a figurative expression of understatement: to show no respect to elders is to terribly mistreat them.

<sup>13</sup> The expression ‘put to the mill’, here following the *NJB* is a synecdoche of species (grinding) for the general (physical labour).

<sup>14</sup> The ‘city gate’ was where, in better times, the ‘elders’ conducted business.

<p>טו שִׁבַּת מְשׁוֹשׁ לִבֵּנוּ  נִהְפָּדָה לְאַבֵּל מִחֻלָּנוּ:  טז נִפְלָה עֲטֹרַת רֵאשֵׁנוּ  אֲוִי־נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטֵאנוּ:  יז עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָוָה לִבֵּנוּ  עַל־אֲלֵה חָשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ:  יח עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שָׁשְׂמָם  שׁוֹעֲלִים הִלְכוּ־בוּ:  {פ}  יט אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב  כסָּאֶף לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:  כ לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֵנוּ  תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְבַּי יָמִים:  כא הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה   אֵלֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה  חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:</p>	<p>15 Joy has vanished from our hearts;  our dancing has turned to mourning.  16 The crown has fallen from our heads.  Alas that we ever sinned!  17 This is why our hearts are sick;  this is why our eyes are dim:  18 Because Mount Zion is desolate,  jackals roam back and forth on it.  19 Yet you, Yahweh, rule from eternity;  your throne endures from age to age.  20 Why do you forget us completely?  Why do you abandon us for so long?  21 Make us come back to you, Yahweh, and we will come back.  Restore us as we were before!</p>
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<sup>15</sup> Vv. 15–18 lament the fall of the Davidic monarchy and the desertion of the Temple.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Crown’ is a double reference to the garland of the dancers and the king’s crown.

<sup>17</sup> The adjective דַּוִּי (*faint*) refers to emotional sorrow (Is 1:5, Lm 1:22, Jr 8:18); the adjective דָּוָה means ‘(physically) sick’ or ‘(emotionally) sad’.

<sup>18</sup> The term ‘jackals’ (the LXX has *άλώπαικες*, ‘foxes’) is used as a synecdoche of species for general (wild animals).

<sup>19</sup> Despite the ruin of his earthly Temple, Yahweh, ever glorious and mighty, reigns in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> The verbs ‘to forget’ and ‘to remember’ are often used figuratively in scripture when God is the subject, particularly in contexts of judgment (God has forgotten his people) and restoration of blessing (God remembers his people). In this case, the verb ‘to forget’ draws a comparison between God’s judgment and rejection of Jerusalem to a person forgetting that Jerusalem even exists. God’s judgment of Jerusalem was so intense and enduring that it seemed as though he had forgotten her. The synonymous parallelism between “Why do you forget us...?” and “Why do you abandon us...?” makes this clear.

<sup>21</sup> The translation, ‘make us come back’, follows the *Qere* (וְנָשׁוּבָה); the *Ketiv* (וְנָשׁוּבָה) has ‘we will come back’.

כּי אִם־מָאֵס מְאֹסָתָנוּ  
קִצְפָּתָ עֲלֵינוּ עַד־מְאֹד:  
{ש}

22 Unless you have utterly rejected us  
and are angry with us beyond measure.

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<sup>22</sup> The construction עַד־מְאֹד (*'beyond measure'*) literally means 'up to an abundance', 'to a great degree', 'exceedingly' (cf. Gn 27:33,34, 1S 11:15, 25:36, 2S 2:17, 1K 1:4, Ps 38:7,9, 119:8,43,51,107, Is 64:9,12, Dn 8:8, 11:25).