
איכה § LAMENTATIONS

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 Ἰσραὴλ καὶ
Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐρημωθῆναι ἐκάθισεν Ἰερემίας κλαίων καὶ
ἐθρήνησεν τὸν θρήνον τοῦτον ἐπὶ Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ εἶπεν:

איכה | יְשְׁבָה בְּדָד א
הָעִיר רַבְּתִי עַם
הִיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה
רַבְּתִי בְּגוֹיִם
שָׂרָתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת
הִיְתָה לְמָס: {ס}

בְּכֹ תְבַכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה ב
וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לִחֶיהָ
אֵין־לָהּ מְנַחֵם
מִכָּל־אֲהָבֶיהָ

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.

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).

1 The adverb **איכה** 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, **אי** ('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 **מדינות** ('states') is an Aramaic loanword that refers to an administrative district or province in the empire (Ezk 19:8, Dn 8:2).

2 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 לְאֻיְבִים: {ס}

He friends have all betrayed her
and become her enemies.

GIMMEL

ג גַּלְתָּהּ יְהוּדָה מֵעָנִי
וּמִרַב עֲבָדָה
הִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגוֹיִם
לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ
כַּל־רֹדְפֶיהָ הַשִּׁיגוּהָ
בֵּין הַמִּצָּרִים: {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

ד דֶּרֶכֶי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת
מִבְּלִי בָּאִי מוֹעֵד
כַּל־שַׁעְרֶיהָ שׁוֹמְמִין
כֹּהֲנֶיהָ נֹאנְחִים
בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נֹוּגוֹת
וְהִיא מֵרָלָה: {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.

³ The noun מִצָּר (distress) 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^H 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.

⁴ The meaning of נֹוּגוֹת, 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 נִהְיָוֹת, 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).

הָיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ
אִיבֶיהָ שָׁלוֹ
כִּי־יָהוָה הוֹגָה
עַל רַב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ
עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי
לִפְנֵי־צָר: {ס}

וַיֵּצֵא מִן בֵּת [מִבֵּת־] עֵינֶיהָ
כָּל־הַדָּרָה
הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ
כְּאֵילִים לֹא־מָצְאוּ מְרֻעָה
וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא־כֹחַ
לִפְנֵי רוֹדֵף: {ס}

זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
יְמֵי עֲנִיָּה וּמְרוּדֶיהָ

HE

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.

VAV

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.

ZAYIN

7 Jerusalem remembers,
in her days of misery and distress,

⁵ 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'.

⁶ In place מִן בֵּת, here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* (and other MSS) have the assimilated form, מִבֵּת ('from the daughter'). 'Has departed' here reflects the MT (וַיֵּצֵא) and NJB/NRSV; the LXX (ἐξῆλθεν, 'has been taken away') reflects an alternate vocalisation of וַיֵּצֵא. In place of 'stags', the LXX has 'rams' (αἰοί). 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).

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

כָּל מַחֲמָדֶיהָ
 אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִימֵי קֶדֶם
 בְּנָפַל עִמָּהּ בְּיַד־צָר
 וְאֵין עֹזֵר לָהּ
 רָאוּהָ צָרִים
 שָׂחֲקוּ עַל מִשְׁבַּתָּהּ: {ס}

ח חָטָא חָטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
 עַל־כֵּן לְנִידָה הִיְתָה
 כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הִזִּילוּהָ
 כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוּתָהּ
 גָּם־הִיא נֹאנָחָה
 וּתְשֹׁב אַחֲזֹר: {ס}

ט טִמְאַתָּה בְּשׁוּלֶיהָ
 לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרִיתָהּ
 וַתִּרְדַּךְ פְּלָאִים
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
 רָאָה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנִי
 כִּי הִגְדִּיל 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!”

⁸ There is debate whether נִידָה means ‘thing unclean’ (from נָדָה, ‘to be impure’, as NJB & JPS), ‘mockery’ (from דָּוָד, ‘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 נָדָד, ‘to wander’, as the LXX, σάλον).

⁹ For the 1st 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 טִמְאַתָּה (‘filth’) refers generally to a state of ritual uncleanness.

יָדוֹ פָּרַשׁ צֶרֶךְ
עַל כָּל־מַחְמַדֶּיהָ
כִּי־רָאָתָהּ גּוֹיִם
בָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁהּ
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ
לֹא־יָבֹאוּ בִקְהָל לָךְ: {ס}

כָּל־עַמָּה נֹאנְחִים
מִבִּקְשֵׁים לֶחֶם
נִתְּנוּ מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם מִחֲמַדֵּיהֶם
בְּאֹכֵל לְהַשִּׁיב נַפְשׁ
רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָהּ
כִּי הִיִּיתִי זֹלֵלָה: {ס}

לֹא אֲלִיכֶם
כָּל־עֲבָרֵי דֶרֶךְ

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:

¹⁰ The noun קָהָל (*‘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).

¹¹ For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has *‘looking for something to eat’*. In light of its parallelism with אָכַל (*‘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 מִחֲמַדֵּיהֶם (*‘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^c to 22 (interrupted by v. 17) is uttered by Zion.

¹² ‘All you’ follows the LXX (Οὐ ... 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.

הַבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ אִם־יֵשׁ מִכָּאֹב
כַּמִּכְאֹבִי אֲשֶׁר עֹלָל לִי
אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה
בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ: {ס}

ג' מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ בְּעֶצְמֹתַי
וַיִּרְדָּנָה
פָּרַשׁ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי
הִשִּׁיבֵנִי אָחֹר
נִתְּנִי שִׁמְמָה
כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה: {ס}

יד נִשְׁקַד עַל פְּשָׁעֵי בִידּוֹ
יִשְׁתַּרְגְּנוּ עָלָיו
עַל־צוּאֵרִי
הַכְּשִׁיל כָּחִי
נִתְּנִי אֲדָנִי
בִּידֵי לֹא־אוּכַל קוּם: {ס}

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

MEM

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

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.

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

¹⁴ The 1st two lines here follow the NRSV (and MT); the NJB reconstructs following the LXX (Ἐργηγορήθη 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 נִשְׁקַד עַל פְּשָׁעֵי. In place of ‘they have risen to’ (עָלָיו), some – Lucian (τον ζυγον αὐτου) and Symmachus (ο λυγος αὐτου) – reflect an alternative vocalisation tradition of עָלָיו (‘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 סֶלָה כָּל־אֲבִירַי |
 אֲדָנִי בְּקֶרְבִּי
 קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד
 לְשַׁבֵּר בַּחוּרַי
 גַּת דֶּרֶךְ אֲדָנִי
 לְבַתּוּלַת בֵּת־יְהוּדָה: {ס}

טז עַל־אֵלֶּה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶה
 עֵינַי | עֵינֵי יִרְדָּה מַיִם
 כִּי־רָחַק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם
 מְשִׁיב נֶפְשִׁי
 הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים
 כִּי גִבֹּר אוֹיֵב: {ס}

יז פָּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בִּידֶיהָ
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
 צוּה 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.

¹⁵ The MT reads ב ('in') prefixed to קרבי ('my midst'); however, the LXX reads ἐκ μέσου μου, which reflects מִן ('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).

¹⁶ 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 (ὁ φθάλμιός 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).

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

הִיתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם לְנֹדָה
בִּינֵיהֶם: {ס}

יח צִדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה
כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי
שָׁמְעוּ-נָא כָּל-הָעַמִּים עִמִּים
וְרָאוּ מִכְּאֲבִי
בְּתוֹלְתִי וּבַחֲוָרִי
הִלְכוּ בַשָּׁבִי: {ס}

יט קָרָאתִי לַמַּאֲהָבִי
הִמָּה רְמוֹנִי
כַּהֲנִי וְזִקְנִי
בַּעִיר גּוֹעוּ
כִּי-בִקְשׁוּ אֲכָל לָמוֹ
וַיֵּשִׁיבוּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁם: {ס}

כ רֹאֵה יְהוָה כִּי-צָר-לִי
מֵעֵי חֲמָרְמוֹרוֹ

They treat Jerusalem
as though she were unclean.

TSADI

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

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

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

¹⁸ 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.

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

²⁰ The literal translation of the 2nd 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).

נִהְפֹךְ לִבִּי בְּקִרְבִּי
 כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיתִי
 מִחוּץ שְׁכָלָה-חֶרֶב
 בַּבַּיִת כַּמּוֹת: {ס}

כא שִׁמְעוּ כִּי נֹאנְחָה אָנִי
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי
 כָּל-אֵיבֵי שִׁמְעוּ רַעְתִּי שְׁשׂוּ
 כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ
 הַבֹּאת יוֹם-קִרְאָתָּ
 וַיְהִיו כַּמִּנִּי: {ס}

כב תָּבֹא כָל-רַעְתֶּם
 לִפְנֵי וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ
 כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹלֵלָתִי לִי
 עַל כָּל-פִּשְׁעֵי
 כִּי־רַבּוֹת אֲנֻחֲתִי
 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.”

²¹ ‘Listen’ and ‘bring’ follow the LXX (Ἀκούσατε, ἐπήγαγε) and Peshitta; the MT has (שִׁמְעוּ) ‘they have listened’ and (הַבֹּאת) ‘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).

²² 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 עוֹלֵלָתִי לִי.

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

- ¹ 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 ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ) in v. 2.
- ² 'Without mercy' follows the Kethib (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).
- ³ 'His ... anger' follows the LXX (θυμῷ 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 אַחֲזֹר יְמִינוֹ
מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב
וַיִּבְעַר בַּיַּעֲקֹב כָּאֵשׁ לְהִבָּה
אֲכָלָה סָבִיב: {ס}

דָּרַךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב ד
נָצַב יְמִינוֹ כְּצֹר
וַיַּהַרֵּג כָּל
מַחְמַדֵּי־עֵין
בְּאֵהֶל בַּת־צִיּוֹן
שָׁפַךְ כָּאֵשׁ חֲמָתוֹ: {ס}

הָיָה אֲדֹנִי | כְּאוֹיֵב ה
בָּלַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
בָּלַע כָּל־אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ
שָׁחַת מִבְצָרָיו
וַיִּרְבַּ בְּבֵת־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.

⁴ When the verb דָּרַךְ ('bend') is used with the noun קִשֶּׁת ('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'.

⁵ For the Kethib & Qere reading of אֲדֹנִי ('the Lord') and יְהוָה ('Yahweh'), see #1:14. For the last line, the LXX reads, 'for (the) one humbling and (the) one being humbled' (ταπεινους μὲνῃν καὶ τεταπεινω μὲνῃν).

<p>וַיַּחַמֵּס בְּגֶן שָׂכֹו שָׁחַת מַעֲדֹו שָׁכַח יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבֹת וַיִּנְאַץ בְּזַעַם־אַפּוֹ מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן: {ס}</p>		<p>VAV</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>זָנַח אֲדָנִי מִזְבְּחוֹ נָאֵר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד־אֹיְבָיו חוֹמַת אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ קוֹל נִתְּנוּ בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד: {ס}</p>		<p>ZAYIN</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>חָשַׁב יְהוָה לְהַשְׁחִית חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן</p>		<p>HET</p> <p>8 Yahweh has resolved to destroy the walls of the daughter of Zion.</p>

⁶ Instead of 'like a garden' (בְּגֶן), following the MT, the LXX has 'like a vineyard' (ὡς ἀμπελον), reflecting כְּגִנָּה. The original reading may have been 'like a thief' (כְּגֹנֵב), 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').

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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־הִשִּׁיב יָדוֹ מִבִּלְעַ
וַיֹּאבִל־חֵל וְחוֹמָה
יַחֲדוֹ אִמְלָלוּ: {ס}

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

י יֹשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יְדָמוּ
זָקְנֵי בֵת־צִיּוֹן
הֵעִלוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם
חָגְרוּ שָׁקִים
הוֹרִידוּ לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן
בְּתוֹלֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם: {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

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

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.

⁹ '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*.

¹⁰ 'They sit on the ground' follows the MT, which vocalises יֹשְׁבוּ 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 בְדִמְעוֹת עֵינַי א
חֲמַרְמְרוּ מִעֵי
נִשְׁפָּךְ לְאָרֶץ כִּבְדִּי
עַל־שֹׁבֵר בֵּת־עַמִּי
בִּעְטָף עוֹלָל וְיוֹנֵק
בְּרַחֲבוֹת קִרְיָה: {ס}

לְאַמָּתָם יֹאמְרוּ יב
אֵיָּה דָגוּ וַיִּזֶן
בְּהִתְעַטָּפָם כְּחָלָל
בְּרַחֲבוֹת עִיר
בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשָׁם
אֶל־חֵיק אִמָּתָם: {ס}

מָה־אֶעֱיִידָךְ מָה אֲדַמָּה־לָּךְ 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?

¹¹ 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 2nd line here follows the NRSV; the NJB has 'my inmost being s in ferment' (see #1:20).

¹² The noun נַפְשָׁם refers to the 'life' of a dying infant (cf. v. 19); the term בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ (Hitpa'el infinitive construct + ב from, שֵׁפ, '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).

¹³ For the 1st 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' (בַּיִם), the LXX (ποτήριον) reflects כּוֹם ('a cup'); the textual variant is probably due to simple orthographic confusion.

מָה אֲשׁוּה־לָּךְ וְאַנְחִמֶךָ
בְּתוֹלַת בֵּת־צִיּוֹן
כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם שְׁבִירָךְ
מִי יִרְפָּא־לָךְ: {ס}

יָד נְבִיאֶיךָ
חָזוּ לָךְ שׁוּא וְתַפֵּל
וְלֹא־גָלוּ עַל־עוֹנֶיךָ
לְהַשִּׁיב שְׁבִיתְךָ שְׁבוּתָךְ
וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ מִשְׁאוֹת
שׁוּא וּמִדּוּחִים: {ס}

טו סָפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כַּפִּים
כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרֶךְ
שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רִאשָׁם
עַל־בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
הַזֹּאת הָעִיר שִׁיאֲמָרוּ כְּלִילַת יָפִי
מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ: {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

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

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?”

¹⁴ The noun שׁוּא (*emptiness*) functions adjectivally, modifying the 2nd noun וְתַפֵּל (*whitewash*), which retains its full nominal sense: ‘empty whitewash’. The 2nd 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 שְׁבִיתְךָ, here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has שְׁבוּתָךְ (‘your fortunes’). ‘To change your fortunes’ is a frequent expression in Jeremiah, also meaning ‘to bring back the captives’.

¹⁵ 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-אִיבֵיךָ
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחַרְקוּ-שֵׁן
 אָמְרוּ בִלְעָנוּ
 אֵךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ
 מִצָּאָנוּ רְאִינוּ: {ס}

יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם
 בָּצַע אִמְרָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר
 צִוָּה מִימֵי-קֶדֶם
 הָרַס וְלֹא חָמַל
 וַיִּשְׂמַח עַל־יָד אוֹיֵב
 הָרִים קֶרֶן צָרִיד: {ס}

יח צַעַק לִבָּם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי
 חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן
 הוֹרִידִי כִנָּחַל דְּמָעָה
 יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה

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.

¹⁶ 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*).

¹⁷ 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 אִמְרָת ('his word') means 'promise' or 'threat'; hence, this translation.

¹⁸ The 1st 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' (חַמָּה – instead of חוֹמַת), but this conjecture has no textual support.

אֶל־תִּתְּנִי פֹגַת לִי
אֶל־תִּתְּנִי בַת־עֵינַי: {ס}

ט קוּמִי | רְנִי בַלַּיְלָה
לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת
שִׁפְכִי כַּמִּים לִבָּךְ
נִכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנִי
שְׂאִי אֱלֹו בִּפְיֶךָ
עַל־נַפְשׁ עוֹלָלֶיךָ
הַעֲטוּפִים בָּרָעַב
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת: {ס}

כ רֹאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה
לְמִי עוֹלָלָתָ כֹּה
אִם־תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים
פָּרִים עֹלָלִי
טַפְּחִים אִם־יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ
אֲדֹנִי כֹהֵן וְנָבִיא: {ס}

כא שִׁכְּבוּ לָאָרֶץ
חֻצוֹת גֶּזֶר וְזִקְנָן

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.

¹⁹ In place of בַּלַּיְלָה (a defective spelling), here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has בְּלַיְלָה ('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.

²⁰ The parallelism between seeing and understanding is often emphasised in the OT (Ex 16:6, Is 5:19, Job 11:11, Qo 6:5).

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

בְּתוֹלְתֵי וּבַחֹרֵי
נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב
הִרְגַתְּ בַּיּוֹם אַפָּךְ
טִבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלְתָּ: {ס}

כב תִּקְרָא כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד
מִגּוּרֵי מִסָּבִיב
וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם
אֶף־יִהְיֶה פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד
אֲשֶׁר־טִפַּחְתִּי וְרִבִּיתִי
אֵיבֵי כָלָם: {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.”

²² 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 רֹאֵה עֲנִי
בְּשֶׁבֶט עֲבֶרְתּוֹ:
ב אֹתִי נָהַג וַיִּלֶּךְ
חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹר:
ג אֵךְ בִּי יֵשֶׁב יִהְיֶה יָדוֹ
כָּל-הַיּוֹם: {ס}
ד בָּלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי
שִׁבְרַת עֲצָמוֹתַי:
ה בָּנָה עָלַי וִיקָר
רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:
ו בְּמַחֲשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי

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

- ¹ The noun **הַגִּבֹּר** ('man') refers to a strong man, distinguished from women, children, and other non-combatants, whom he is to defend. The noun **שֶׁבֶט** ('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).
- ² 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 **וַיִּלֶּךְ** ('brought me') is 'made me walk'.
- ³ 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).
- ⁴ The two nouns joined with *vav*, **בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי** ('my flesh and skin') may form a nominal hendiadys: 'my mortal skin'.
- ⁵ 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 (*ἐγκύκλιωσεν κεφαλῇν μου καὶ ἐμόχθησεν*).
- ⁶ The plural form of the noun **מַחֲשָׁכִים** ('all is dark') is an example of the plural of intensity.

כַּמְתִּי עוֹלָם: {ס}

ז גָּדַר בַּעֲדִי וְלֹא אֶצָּא

הַכְּבִיד נִחַשְׁתִּי:

ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ

שָׁתָם תִּפְלְתִּי:

ט גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בַּגִּזִּית

נְתִיבַתִּי עוֹהָ: {ס}

י דָּב אֲרֹב הוּא לִי

אֲרִיהַ בְּמַסְתָּרִים:

יא דְּרָכִי סוֹרֵר וַיִּפְשְׁחֵנִי

שָׁמְנִי שָׁמָם:

יב דֶּרֶךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּצְיָבֵנִי

כַּמֶּטְרָא לַחֵץ: {ס}

יג הִבִּיא בְּכִלְיָתִי

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.

7 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.

8 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 שָׁתָם ('shuts out') appears in the OT only once.

9 The LXX reads, "He has blocked up my ways, obstructed my roads, distracted me." (ἀνφροκόδομησεν ὁδούς μου, ἐνέφραξεν τρίβους μου, ἐτάραξεν.)

10 In place of אֲרִיהַ ('lion'), here following the Kethib, the Qere has אֲרִי; the latter is simply a shorter spelling of the same word.

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

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

13 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).

יָד	הִיִּיתִי שֶׂחֶק לְכָל־עַמִּי נְגִינָתָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם:	14	I have become a joke to all my people, their refrain all day long.
טו	הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בַמְרוֹרִים הַרְוֵנִי לַעֲנָה: {ס}	15	He has given me my fill of bitterness; he has made me drunk with wormwood.
טז	וַיִּגְרַס בַּחֲצֵץ שָׁנִי הַכְּפִישָׁנִי בָאֵפֶר:	VAV	16
יז	וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה:	17	He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has fed me on ashes.
יח	וְאָמַר אֲבָד נִצָּחִי וַתִּחַלְתִּי מִיְהוָה: {ס}	18	He has deprived my soul of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is.
יט	זָכַר־עֲנִי וּמְרוּדִי לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ:	ZAYIN	19
כ	זָכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר וַתִּשָּׂח וַתִּשׁוּחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:	20	Therefore, I say, "My strength has perished and hope in Yahweh is lost."
			Bring to mind my misery and anguish: it is wormwood and gall!
			My soul dwells on this continually and sinks within me.

¹⁴ 'My people' here follows the MT (עַמִּי); some Hebrew MSS and the Peshitta read 'all nations' (עַמִּימִים), identifying that the man of v. 1 with Israel.

¹⁵ For 'with wormwood', the LXX has 'with bile' (χολῆς).

¹⁶ 'Fed me on ashes' follows the LXX (ἐψώμισέν με σποδόν) and NJB; the MT and NRSV have 'made me cower in ashes'.

¹⁷ For the 1st line, here following the MT, the NJB and NRSV follow the LXX reading (ἀπώσατο ἐξ εἰρήνης ψυχῇ μου) of 'my soul is deprived of peace'; the latter reflects a reading of ותזנח in place of ותזנח.

¹⁸ The NJB lacks 'my strength has perished and...', here following the MT (the NRSV has 'glory' in place of 'strength').

¹⁹ 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'.

²⁰ In place of ('my soul'), here following the Qere (וַתִּשׁוּחַ), the Kethib reads וַתִּשָּׂח ('your soul'). For this verse, the LXX reads: μνησθήσεται καὶ καταδολεσχήσει ἐπ' ἐμὲ 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	חֲסְדֵי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא-תֵמָנוּ כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:	HET 22	Surely Yahweh's mercies are not over, his deeds of faithful love not exhausted.
כג	חֲדָשִׁים לְבָקָרִים רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתָךְ:	23	Every morning, they are renewed; ample is his faithfulness!
כד	חֲלָקֵי יְהוָה אֲמַרָה נַפְשִׁי עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ: {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 תִּדְרָשְׁנוּ:	TET 25	Yahweh is good to those who trust him, to the one who searches for him.
כו	טוֹב וַיַּחֲלֵ וְדוֹמָם לְתִשׁוּעַת יְהוָה:	26	It is good to wait silently for Yahweh to save.
כז	טוֹב לְגֶבֶר כִּי-יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו: {ס}	27	It is good for someone to bear the yoke from a younger age.

- ²¹ 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'.
- ²² Vv. 22–24 are not present in most LXX MSS.
- ²³ '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.
- ²⁴ The literal translation of 'all I have' (following the NJB) is 'my portion' (as in the NRSV).
- ²⁵ In place of 'to the one', the NJB has 'to all'; the term לַנֶּפֶשׁ (to the soul) is a synecdoche of part for the whole.
- ²⁶ In place of 'silently', the NJB has 'in silence'; the two adjectives וַיַּחֲלֵ (waiting) and וְדוֹמָם (silently) form a hendiadys.
- ²⁷ 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
 כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו:
 כט יִתֵּן בְּעַפְרֵ פִּיהוּ
 אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה:
 ל יִתֵּן לְמַכֵּהוּ לַחִי
 יִשְׁבַּע בַּחֲרָפָה: {ס}

לא כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח
 לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנִי:
 לב כִּי אֶסְהוֹגָה
 וְרַחֵם כְּרֵב חֲסָדָיו:
 לג כִּי לֹא עֲנָה מִלְּבוֹ
 וַיִּגָּה בְּנִי־אִישׁ: {ס}

לד לְדַכָּא תַּחַת רַגְלָיו
 כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ:

YOD

28 Let him sit in solitude and silence
 when it weighs heavy.

29 Let him lay his head in the dust –
 maybe there is hope.

30 Let him offer his cheek to the striker,
 to have his fill of disgrace!

KAF

31 For the Lord will not reject
 anyone forever.

32 If he brings grief, he will have pity
 out of the fullness of his faithful love.

33 For it is not for his own pleasure
 that he torments and grieves the human race.

LAMED

34 When all the prisoners in a country
 are crushed underfoot,

²⁸ The 2nd 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’.

²⁹ 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 κονιορτω το στομα αυτου*).

³⁰ Perhaps Jesus is thinking ironically of this passage in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:40, Lk 2:29).

³¹ On the *Kethib* & *Qere* reading of אֲדֹנִי (‘the Lord’) and יהוה (‘Yahweh’), see #1:14.

³² In place of חֲסָדָיו (‘pity’, literally ‘his kindnesses’), here following the *Qere*, the *Kethib* reads the singular form (חֶסֶד), as also do the LXX (ἐλέους *αὐτοῦ*) and Tg.

³³ The term מִלְּבוֹ (‘his heart’) is figurative: a metonymy of association for emotions, standing for enjoyment, pleasure, and desire.

³⁴ The literal translation of ‘in a country’ is ‘on earth’.

לֹה	לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָּט־גֹּבֵר	35	when human rights are overridden
	נִגְדַּד פָּנָיו עֲלֵיוֹן:		in defiance of the Most High,
לֹו	לְעֹוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבוֹ	36	when someone is cheated of justice,
	אֲדָנִי לֹא רָאָה: {ס}		does not the Lord see it?
לֹו	מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתֵּהִי	MEM	37 Who has only to speak and it is so done?
	אֲדָנִי לֹא עָוָה:		Who commands, if not he Lord?
לֹח	מִפִּי עֲלֵיוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא	38	From where, if not from the mouth of the Most High,
	הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:		do evil and good come?
לֹט	מִה־יִתְאוּנֶן אָדָם חֵי	39	Why then should anyone complain
	גֹּבֵר עַל־חַטָּאוֹ: {ס}		about the punishment of their sin?
מ	נַחֲפָשָׁה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחֲקָרָה	NUN	40 Let us carefully examine our path
	וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד־יְהוָה:		and return to Yahweh.
מֵא	נִשְׂא לִבֵּנוּ אֶל־כַּפָּיִם	41	Let us raise our hearts with our hands
	אֶל־אֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם:		to God in heaven.

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

³⁶ For the 2nd 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 לְעֹוֹת is presented as a small letter, just as it appears in almost all Hebrew MSS.

³⁷ The 1st 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?”

³⁸ 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?”

³⁹ 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’.

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

⁴¹ ‘With (our) hands’ follows the LXX (ἐπὶ χειρῶν); the MT has ‘towards our hands’ (אֶל־כַּפָּיִם).

מב נַחֲנוּ פָשַׁעְנוּ וּמָרִינוּ
אַתָּה לֹא סָלַחְתָּ: {ס}

מג סְבוֹתָהּ בֶּאֱף וְתִרְדְּפָנוּ
הִרְגֵּתָ לֹא חֲמִלָּה:

מד סְבוֹתָהּ בִּעְנֵן לֶךְ
מַעְבֹּר תַּפְלָה:

מה סְחִי וּמֵאֹס תְּשִׁימָנוּ
בְּקֶרֶב הָעַמִּים: {ס}

מו פָּצוּ עֲלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם
כָּל-אִיְּבֵינוּ:

מז פָּחַד וּפִתְחַת הֵיָּה לָנוּ
הַשָּׂאת וְהַשָּׁבֵר:

מח פִּלְגֵי-מַיִם תִּרְדַּ עֵינַי
עַל-שָׁבֵר בֵּת-עַמִּי: {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.

⁴² In place of 'rebelliously', the NJB has 'and who have rebelled'; the two verbs פָּשַׁעְנוּ (*revolted*) and וּמָרִינוּ (*rebelled*) form a verbal hendiadys.

⁴³ In place of 'yourself', following the NRSV, the NJB has 'us'.

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

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

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

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

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

<p>מט עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוּת:</p>		<p>Pe 49 My eyes will weep ceaselessly, without relief,</p>
<p>ג עַד־יִשְׁקִיף וְיֵרָא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם:</p>		<p>50 until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees me.</p>
<p>נא עֵינַי עוֹלִלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מְכַל בָּנוֹת עִירִי: {ס}</p>		<p>51 My eyes cause me grief over all the daughters of my city.</p>
<p>גב צוֹד צָדוֹנִי בַּצָּפוֹר אֵיבֵי חֲנָם: גג צָמְתוּ בַּבּוֹר חַיִּי וַיִּדּוּ־אֶבֶן בִּי:</p>		<p>Tsadi 52 Unprovoked, my enemies hunted me down like a bird. 53 They shut me finally in a pit; they threw stones on me.</p>
<p>גד צָפוּ־מַיִם עַל־רֹאשִׁי אָמַרְתִּי נִגְזַרְתִּי: {ס}</p>		<p>54 The waters rose over my head; I thought, "I am lost!"</p>
<p>נה קָרָאתִי שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה מִבּוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת:</p>		<p>Qof 55 I called on your name, Yahweh, from the deep pit.</p>

- ⁴⁹ The noun הַפְּגוּת ('relief') occurs only once in the OT; the form of the noun is unusual, probably being derived from the denominative Hiphil verbal stem of the root פוג ('to grow numb', 'to become cold').
- ⁵⁰ 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)'.
- ⁵¹ 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').
- ⁵² The construction צוֹד צָדוֹנִי ('hunted me down') is emphatic: the Qal infinitive absolute of the same root of the perfect (3CP) plus the 1CS suffix.
- ⁵³ The term וַיִּדּוּ ('they threw' – Piel 3MP + vav) explains the previous statement: the enemies attempted to end his life in a pit by stoning him.
- ⁵⁴ The verb נִגְזַרְתִּי (Niphal perfect 1CS from נזר '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).
- ⁵⁵ 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).

56 קוֹלִי שָׁמַעַתָּ נג
 אֶל־תַּעֲלֹם אָזְנוֹךָ לְרוּחִתִּי לְשׁוֹעֲתִי:
 57 קִרְבָּתָ בַּיּוֹם אֶקְרָאָךְ נג
 אָמַרְתָּ אֶל־תִּירָא: {ס}
 58 רַבָּת אֲדֹנִי רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי נח
 גָּאֵלְתָּ חַיִּי:
 59 רָאִיתָה יְהוָה עֲוֹתַיִי נט
 שִׁפְטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי:
 60 רָאִיתָה כָּל־נִקְמָתָם ס
 כָּל־מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם לִי: {ס}
 61 שָׁמַעַתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה סא
 כָּל־מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם עָלַי:
 62 שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי וְהִגִּיזוּם סב
 עָלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
 63 שִׁבְתָּם וְקִימָתָם הַבֵּיטָה סג
 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 τὴν δέησίν μου' (which omits the following words, probably a gloss); the MT has 'to my liberation'.

57 The 1st 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 אֲדֹנִי ('the Lord') and יְהוָה ('Yahweh'), see #1:14.

59 For the 2nd 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 1st 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.

<p>סד תְּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּלַּי יְהוָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם:</p>		<p>TAV 64 Repay them, Yahweh, as their deeds deserve.</p>
<p>סה תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מְגִנַּת־לֵב תִּאֲלָתֶּךָ לָהֶם:</p>		<p>65 Lay hardness of heart as your curse on them.</p>
<p>סו תִּרְדָּף בְּאַף וְתִשְׁמִידֵם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִי יְהוָה: {פ}</p>		<p>66 Angrily pursue them, root them out from under Yahweh's heavens!</p>

⁶⁴ 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).

⁶⁵ The term מְגִנַּת ('hardness of heart') appears only once in the OT; its meaning is debated: earlier lexicographers suggested that it meant 'covering' but more recent lexicons suggest 'shamelessness' or 'insanity'.

⁶⁶ In place of 'Yahweh's heavens' (שָׁמַיִי 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 צִיּוֹן הִיקָרִים
המסלֹאִים בפֹּז
איכה נחשבו לנבלי־חֶרֶשׁ
מעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי יוֹצֵר: {ס}

ג גַּם־תַּנִּים תִּנּוּן חֲלָצוֹ שֹׁד
היִנִּיקוּ גוֹרֵיהֶן
בַּת־עַמִּי לְאַכֹּר
כי עֲנִים [כִּיעֲנִים] בַּמִּדְבָּר {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.

LAMENTATIONS 4

- ¹ The 'gold' and 'sacred stones' (Temple treasures) symbolise the population of Jerusalem. The verb יועם (Hophal imperfect 3MS from עָמַם – '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'.
- ² For 'pots', the LXX has 'receptacles' (ἀγγεῖα).
- ³ The Qere has תַּנִּים ('jackals') in place of the תִּנּוּן in the Kethib (the plural ending יִן is diminutive); the LXX has 'dragons' (δράκοντες). The Qere has כִּיעֲנִים ('as the ostriches'), in place of the כי עֲנִים in the Kethib (textual corruption); the LXX has 'as a sparrow' (ὡς στρογγίον).

<p>דָּבַק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק אֶל־חִכּוֹ בְּצִמָּא עוֹלָלִים שְׁאֵלוּ לֶחֶם פָּרַשׁ אֵין לָהֶם: {ס}</p>	<p>ד</p>	<p>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>הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַדְנִים נִשְׁמּוּ בַּחוּצוֹת הָאֲמֻנִים עָלֵי תוֹלַע חִבְקוּ אֲשֵׁפֶתוֹת: {ס}</p>	<p>ה</p>	<p>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>וַיִּגְדַּל עֶזְרָא בֵּת־עַמִּי מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם הַהִפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ־רָגַע וְלֹא־חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם: {ס}</p>	<p>ו</p>	<p>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>זָכוּ נְזִירֶיהָ מִשֶּׁלֶג צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב</p>	<p>ז</p>	<p>ZAYIN</p> <p>7 Once, her young people were brighter than snow, whiter than milk.</p>

⁴ 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.

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

⁶ In place of ‘wickedness’ (עֶזְרָא) 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).

⁷ ‘Her young people’ is a conjectural translation (נִזְרִיָּה); the MT has ‘their Nazirites’ (נְזִירֶיהָ) and JPS has ‘her princes’. ‘Their hue’ follows the Syro-Hexaplar and Origen; the MT (נִזְרִיָּה) 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’.

אָדָמוֹ עֵצִים מִפְּנֵינִים סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם: {ס}		Their bodies were rosier than rubies and their hue like sapphire.
ח חֶשֶׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר תֵּאָרֶם לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל־עֲצָמָם יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כְּעֵץ: {ס}	HET 8	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.
ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי־חֶרֶב מִחֲלָלֵי רָעַב שֶׁהֵם יָזְבוּ מִדִּקְרִים מִתְנוּבֹת שָׂדֵי: {ס}	TET 9	Happier are those killed by the sword than those killed by famine. They waste away, sunken for lack of the fruits of the earth.
י יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת בִּשְׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ בְּשֹׁבֵר בַּת־עַמִּי: {ס}	YOD 10	With their own hands, kindly women cooked their own children. This was their food when the daughter of my people was ruined.

⁸ The Hebrew noun תֵּאָרֶם (*'faces'*) is related to the Phoenician noun meaning 'something gazed at' and the Aramaic verb 'to gaze at'; it is used in reference to the form of a woman (Gn 29:17, Dt 21:11, 1S 25:3, Es 2:7) and 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), but here it is used in a metonymical sense.

⁹ 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). The literal translation of the 3rd line is 'they flow away, pierced', perhaps in the sense 'made transparent by famine'.

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

יא כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ
שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ
וַיִּצֶת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן
וַתֹּאכַל יְסֻדֹתֶיהָ: {ס}

יב לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ
וְכָל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל
כִּי יבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב
בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם: {ס}

יג מִחַטָּאוֹת נְבִיאֶיהָ
עֲוֹנֹת כֹּהֲנֶיהָ
הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ
דָּם צַדִּיקִים: {ס}

יד נָעוּ עֹרִים בַּחוּצוֹת
נִגְאַלּוּ בַדָּם
בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ
יָגְעוּ בַלְבָּשֵׁיהֶם: {ס}

KAF

11 Yahweh indulged his fury;
he vented his fierce anger.
He lit a fire in Zion
that devoured her foundations.

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.

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.

NUN

14 They wandered blindly through the streets,
defiled with blood,
so that no one dared
to touch their clothes.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ The phrase *'it was'* does not appear in the MT but the introductory causal preposition כִּי (*'because'*) indicates its implication through elision.

¹⁴ In place of *'defiled'*, following the NRSV, the NJB has *'polluted'*.

טו סִּוְרוֹ טָמֵא קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ
 סִּוְרוֹ סִּוְרוֹ אֶל־תִּגָּעוּ
 כִּי נָצוּ גַם־נָעוּ
 אָמְרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם לֹא יוֹסְפוּ לָגוּר: {ס}

טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה חִלְקָם
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִבְיטָם
 פָּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׁאוּ
 זָקֵנִים וְזָקֵנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ: {ס}

יז עוֹדִינָה עוֹדִינוּ תִּכְלִינָה עֵינֵינוּ
 אֶל־עֲזָרְתָנוּ הִבֵּל
 בַּצְּפִיתָנוּ צָפִינוּ
 אֶל־גּוֹי לֹא יוֹשֵׁעַ: {ס}

יח צָדוּ צַעֲדֵינוּ
 מַלְכֶת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ
 קָרֵב קָצְנוּ מָלְאוּ יָמֵינוּ
 כִּי־בָא קָצְנוּ: {ס}

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.

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.

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

¹⁶ The MT reads the plural verb לֹא נִשְׁאוּ (‘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’.

יט קלים היו רדִפֵּינוּ
מִנְּשָׂרֵי שָׁמַיִם
עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ
בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ: {ס}

כ רוח אִפִּינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה
נִלְכַּד בְּשַׁחֲתוֹתָם
אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ
בְּצִלּוֹ נַחֲיָה בְּגוֹיִם: {ס}

כא שִׁישִׁי וְשִׁמְחִי בַת־אֲדוֹם
יּוֹשְׁבַתִי יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוֹץ
גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תַעֲבֹר־כּוֹס
תִּשְׁכְּרִי וְתִתְעַרִי: {ס}

כב תִּסְעֹנֶךָ בַת־צִיּוֹן
לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ
פָּקֵד עֹנֶךָ בַת־אֲדוֹם
גָּלָה עַל־חַטֹּאתֶיךָ: {פ}

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.

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!

¹⁹ In place of 'sky', the NRSV has 'heavens'; the word שָׁמַיִם may be translated 'heaven(s)' or 'sky', depending on the context.

²⁰ The term בְּצִלּוֹ ('in his shadow') is used figuratively here to refer to protection from military attack.

²¹ In place of 'daughter of Edom' (בַּת־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).

²² The perfect tense verb תִּסְעֹנֶךָ '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 מִה־הָיָה לָנוּ
הַבֵּיט הַבִּיטָה וּרְאֵה אֶת־חֲרָפָתָנוּ
ב נָחֲלָתָנוּ נִהְפָּכָה לְזָרִים
בָּתֵּינוּ לְנִכְרִים:
ג יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ אֵין וְאֵין אָב
אֲמֹתֵינוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת:
ד מִמֵּינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ
עַצֵּינוּ בַּמַּחֲרִיר יָבֵאוּ:
ה עַל צוּאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדָּפָנוּ
יִגְעֵנוּ לֹא וְלֹא הוֹנַח־לָנוּ:
ו מִצָּרִים נָתַנוּ יָד
אֲשׁוּר לְשַׁבַּע 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.

- ¹ The translation, 'consider', follows the *Qere* reading (הַבִּיטָה); the *Kethib* has '(he) looked' (הַבֵּיט). 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).
- ² The term נָחֲלָתָנוּ ('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).
- ³ In place of אֵין, here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has וְאֵין.
- ⁴ The literal translation for 'money' is 'silver' (a synecdoche of species for general).
- ⁵ '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.
- ⁶ 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 אִינֶם וְאִנֶּם אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲנַחְנוּ עֹנֵתֵיהֶם סַבְלָנוּ: עֲבָדִים מְשֻׁלוּ בָנוּ פָּרַק אֵין מִיָּדָם: ט	7	Our ancestors sinned; they are no more, but we bear the weight of their guilt.
ח	בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נִבְיֵא לַחֲמֵנוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר: י	8	Slaves rule us; there is no one to rescue us from their clutches.
ט	עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתִנּוֹר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעָב: יא	9	At the cost of our lives, we earn our bread, by risking the sword of the desert.
י	נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָנוּ בְּתֻלַת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה: יב	10	Our skin is as hot as an oven from the scorch of famine.
יא	שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נָתְלוּ פָּנֵי זָקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ: יג	11	The women in Zion have been raped, the young girls in the towns of Judah.
יב	בַּחֲוָרִים טָחוֹן נָשְׂאוּ וְנַעֲרִים בַּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ: יד	12	Princes have been hanged by their hands; the face of the old has won no respect.
יג	זָקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שַׁבָּתוֹ בַּחֲוָרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם:	13	Youths have been put to the mill; boys stagger under loads of wood.
יד		14	The elders have deserted the city gate; the young have given up their music.

⁷ 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).

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

⁹ 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.

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

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

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

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

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

טו	שִׁבַּת מְשׁוֹשׁ לִבֵּנוּ נִהְפָּךְ לְאֵבֶל מִחֻלֵּנוּ:	15	Joy has vanished from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning.
טז	נִפְלָה עֲטֹרַת רֹאשֵׁנוּ אֹי־נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטֵאנוּ:	16	The crown has fallen from our heads. Alas that we ever sinned!
יז	עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָּוָה לִבֵּנוּ עַל־אֵלֶּה חֲשָׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ:	17	This is why our hearts are sick; this is why our eyes are dim:
יח	עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם שׁוֹעֲלִים הֹלְכֵי־בוֹ:	18	Because Mount Zion is desolate, jackals roam back and forth on it.
{פ}			
יט	אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב כְּסֹאֲךָ לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:	19	Yet you, Yahweh, rule from eternity; your throne endures from age to age.
כ	לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֵנוּ תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים:	20	Why do you forget us completely? Why do you abandon us for so long?
כא	הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:	21	Make us come back to you, Yahweh, and we will come back. Restore us as we were before!

¹⁵ Vv. 15–18 lament the fall of the Davidic monarchy and the desertion of the Temple.

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

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

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

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

²⁰ 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.

²¹ The translation, ‘*make us come back*’, follows the Qere (וְנָשׁוּבָה); the Kethib (וְנָשׁוּבָה) has ‘*we will come back*’.

כִּי אִם־מָאֵס מְאֹדָּהּנוּ
קִצְפָּת עָלֵינוּ עַד־מְאֹד:
{ש}

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

²² 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).