

# Lamentations

## Jerusalem Cries Over Her Destruction

**1** Jerusalem once was a city full of people,  
 but now the city is so empty.  
 She<sup>a</sup> was one of the greatest cities in the world,  
 but now she is like a poor widow.  
 She was once a princess among cities,  
 but now she has been made a slave.

**2** She cries bitterly in the night.  
 Her tears are on her cheeks.  
 She has no one to comfort her.  
 Many nations were friendly to her,  
 but not one of them comforts her now.  
 All her friends have turned their backs on her  
 and have become her enemies.

**3** Judah suffered very much,  
 and then she was taken into captivity.  
 She lives among other nations  
 but has found no rest.  
 The people who chased her caught her  
 where there was no way out.<sup>b</sup>

**4** The roads to Zion are very sad,  
 because no one comes to Zion for the festivals anymore.  
 All of Zion's gates have been destroyed;  
 all her priests groan in sorrow.  
 Zion's young women have been taken away,<sup>c</sup>  
 and all this made Zion sad.

**5** Jerusalem's enemies have won.  
 Her enemies have been successful.  
 This happened because the LORD punished her.

He punished Jerusalem for her many sins.  
 Her children have gone away.  
 Their enemies captured them and took them away.

**6** The beauty of Daughter Zion<sup>d</sup> has gone away.  
 Her princes were like deer that cannot find a meadow to feed in.  
 They walk away without strength from those who chased them.

**7** Jerusalem thinks back.  
 She remembers the time when she was hurt  
 and when she lost her home.  
 She remembers all the nice things that she had in the past.  
 She remembers those nice things that she had in the old days.  
 She remembers when her people were captured by the enemy.  
 She remembers when there was no one to help her.  
 When her enemies saw her, they laughed,  
 because she was destroyed.

**8** Jerusalem sinned very badly.  
 Because Jerusalem sinned,  
 she became a ruined city that people shake their heads about.  
 In the past people respected her.  
 But now they hate her,  
 because they abused her.  
 Jerusalem groaned  
 and turned away.

**9** Jerusalem's skirts were dirty.  
 She gave no thought to what would become of her.  
 Her fall was amazing.  
 She had no one to comfort her.

<sup>a</sup> **1:7 She** Throughout this poem, Jerusalem is represented as a woman.

<sup>b</sup> **1:3 where ... way out** Or "in the narrow valleys."

<sup>c</sup> **1:4 have been taken away** This is from the ancient Greek version. The standard Hebrew text has "are upset."

<sup>d</sup> **1:6 Daughter Zion** Another name for Jerusalem. Also in 2:1, 8, 13, 18.

- She says, “LORD, see how I am hurt!  
See how my enemy thinks he is so  
great!”
- <sup>10</sup> The enemy stretched out his hand.  
He took all her nice things.  
In fact, she saw the foreign nations go  
inside her Temple.  
And you said those people could  
not join in our assembly!
- <sup>11</sup> All the people of Jerusalem are  
groaning.  
All of her people are looking for  
food.  
They are giving away all their nice  
things for food to stay alive.  
Jerusalem says, “Look, LORD. Look  
at me!  
See how people hate me.”
- <sup>12</sup> All you who pass by on the road, you  
don’t seem to care.  
But look at me and see.  
Is there any pain like my pain?  
Is there any pain like the pain that  
has come to me?  
Is there any pain like the pain that the  
LORD has punished me with?  
He has punished me on the day of  
his great anger.
- <sup>13</sup> The Lord sent fire from above  
that went down into my bones.  
He stretched out a net for my feet.  
He turned me all the way around.  
He made me into a wasteland.  
I am sick all day.
- <sup>14</sup> “My sins were tied up like a yoke.  
My sins were tied up in the Lord’s  
hands.  
His yoke is on my neck.  
He has made me weak.  
He has given me to those  
who I cannot stand up against.”
- <sup>15</sup> “The Lord rejected all my powerful  
men  
who were inside the city.  
Then he brought a group of people  
against me.  
He brought them to kill my young  
soldiers.
- The Lord has trampled his dearest  
city<sup>a</sup>  
like grapes in a winepress.
- <sup>16</sup> “I cry about all these things.  
Tears are flowing down my cheeks.  
There is no one near to comfort me.  
There is no one who can make me  
feel better.  
My children are like a wasteland,  
because the enemy won.”
- <sup>17</sup> Zion spread out her hands.  
There was no one to comfort her.  
The LORD had given orders to Jacob’s  
enemies.  
He ordered them to surround the  
city.  
Jerusalem has become a dirty rag  
that her enemies threw away.
- <sup>18</sup> Now Jerusalem says, “I refused to listen  
to the LORD,  
so he is right for doing these things.  
So listen, all you people!  
Look at my pain!  
My young women and men  
have gone into captivity.”
- <sup>19</sup> I called out to my lovers,  
but they tricked me.  
My priests and my elders  
have died in the city.  
They were looking for food for  
themselves.  
They wanted to keep themselves  
alive.
- <sup>20</sup> “Look at me, LORD. I am in distress!  
I am upset, as if my heart turned  
upside down inside of me.  
I feel this way because  
I have been so stubborn.  
Out in the streets,  
I lost my children to the swords.  
Inside, it is like death.”
- <sup>21</sup> “Listen to me, I am groaning.  
I have no one to comfort me.”

<sup>a</sup> 1:15 **dearest city** Literally, “virgin daughter Judah,” a name for the city of Jerusalem.

All my enemies have heard of my trouble.

They are happy that you did this to me.

You said there would be a time of punishment.

You said you would punish my enemies.

Now do what you said.

Let my enemies be like I am now.

<sup>22</sup> “Look how evil my enemies are!

Then you can treat them the same way you treated me

because of all my sins.

Do this because I am groaning again and again.

Do this because my heart is sick.”

### The Lord Destroyed Jerusalem

**2** <sup>1</sup> Look how the Lord has covered daughter Zion<sup>a</sup>

with the cloud of his anger.

He has thrown her, the glory of Israel, from the sky to the ground.

In his anger he showed no care even for the Temple

where he rests his feet.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Lord destroyed the houses of Jacob.

He destroyed them without mercy.

In his anger he destroyed the fortresses of Daughter Judah.

He threw the kingdom of Judah and its rulers to the ground.

He ruined the kingdom of Judah.

<sup>3</sup> He was angry, and he destroyed all the strength of Israel.

He took away his right hand from Israel.

He did this when the enemy came.

He burned like a flaming fire in Jacob.

He was like a fire that burns all around.

<sup>4</sup> He bent his bow like an enemy.

He held his sword in his right hand.

He killed all the good-looking men of Judah.

He killed them as if they were the enemy.

He poured out his anger like a fire on the tents of Zion.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord has become like an enemy.

He has swallowed up Israel.

He has swallowed up all her palaces and all her fortresses.

He has made much sadness and crying for the dead in Daughter Judah.

<sup>6</sup> He pulled up his own tent<sup>c</sup> as if it were a garden.

He has ruined the place where the people

came together to worship him.

The LORD has made people forget the special assemblies and special days of rest<sup>d</sup> in Zion.

He rejected the king and the priests. He was angry and rejected them.

<sup>7</sup> He rejected his altar, and he left his holy place of worship.

He let the enemy pull down the walls of the palaces of Jerusalem.

The enemy shouted with joy in the LORD'S Temple.

They made noise as though it were a festival.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD planned to destroy the wall of Daughter Zion.

He marked the wall with a measuring line.

He didn't stop himself from destroying it.

He made all the walls cry out in sadness.

Together they wasted away.

<sup>9</sup> Jerusalem's gates have sunk into the ground.

The bars on her gates are completely destroyed.

<sup>a</sup> **2:1 daughter Zion** The city of Jerusalem pictured as a young woman. Similar language is used in verses 8, 13, 15, and 18. See “Zion” in the Word List.

<sup>b</sup> **2:1 Temple . . . feet** Literally, “the footstool of his feet,” meaning the place God lived among his people.

<sup>c</sup> **2:6 his own tent** This is a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>d</sup> **2:6 special days of rest** Or “Sabbaths.” This might mean Saturday (see “Sabbath” in the Word List) or all the special days when the people were not supposed to work.

Her king and princes have been taken  
to other nations.

The teaching of the law has stopped.  
And her prophets no longer receive  
visions from the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> The elders of Zion sit on the ground.  
They sit on the ground and are quiet.  
They pour dust on their heads.  
They put on sackcloth.  
The young women of Jerusalem  
bow their heads to the ground in  
sorrow.

<sup>11</sup> My eyes are worn out with tears,  
and my insides are upset.  
My heart feels like it has been poured  
on the ground;  
I feel this way because of the  
destruction of my people.  
Children and babies are fainting  
in the public squares of the city.

<sup>12</sup> They ask their mothers,  
“Where is the bread and wine?”  
as they pour out their life in their  
mother’s laps.

<sup>13</sup> My dear Jerusalem, what can I say  
about you?  
What can I compare you to?  
What can I say you are like?  
How can I comfort you, city of  
Zion?  
You have been hurt much too badly  
for anyone to heal.

<sup>14</sup> Your prophets saw visions for you,  
but their visions were only  
worthless lies.  
They didn’t speak against your sins.  
They didn’t try to make things  
better.  
They spoke messages for you,  
but they were false messages that  
fooled you.

<sup>15</sup> Those who pass by on the road  
clap their hands and laugh at you.  
They make fun of Jerusalem,  
shaking their heads at the sight of  
her.

They ask, “Is this the city that people  
called  
‘The Most Beautiful City’  
and ‘The Joy of all the Earth’?”

<sup>16</sup> All your enemies laugh at you.  
They whistle and grind their teeth  
at you.  
They say, “We have swallowed them  
up!  
This is the day we were hoping for.  
We have finally seen this happen!”

<sup>17</sup> The LORD did what he planned to do.  
He did what he said he would do.  
He did what he commanded a long  
time ago.  
He destroyed, and he had no pity.  
He made your enemies happy  
because of what happened to  
you.  
He made your enemies strong.

<sup>18</sup> Cry out with all your heart<sup>a</sup> to the  
Lord!  
Jerusalem, let tears roll down your  
walls.  
Let your tears flow like a stream day  
and night.  
Don’t stop crying  
or let your eyes dry.

<sup>19</sup> Get up throughout the night and cry  
for help.  
Let your sorrow pour out before  
the Lord like water.  
Lift up your hands in prayer to him.  
Ask him to let your children live.  
They are starving to death on every  
street corner.

<sup>20</sup> Look at us, LORD!  
Have you ever treated anyone else  
so badly?  
Is it right for women to eat their own  
babies,  
the children they have cared for?  
Should priests and prophets be killed  
in the Temple of the Lord?

<sup>a</sup> 2:18 Cry out... heart Or “Their hearts cried out.”

<sup>21</sup> Young men and old men  
lie on the ground in the streets of  
the city.

My young women and young men  
have been killed by the sword.

You killed them on the day of your  
anger.

You killed them without mercy!

<sup>22</sup> You invited terror to come to me from  
all around.

You invited terror as though you  
were inviting it to a festival.

No one escaped on the day of the  
LORD'S anger.

My enemy killed the people who I  
raised and brought up.

### The Meaning of Suffering

**3** <sup>1</sup> I am a man who has seen much  
trouble.

God beat us with a stick, and I saw  
it happen.

<sup>2</sup> He led and brought me  
into darkness, not light.

<sup>3</sup> He turned his hand against me.  
He did this again and again, all day.

<sup>4</sup> He wore out my flesh and skin.  
He broke my bones.

<sup>5</sup> He built up bitterness and trouble  
against me.

He surrounded me with bitterness  
and trouble.

<sup>6</sup> He put me in the dark,  
like someone who died long ago.

<sup>7</sup> He shut me in, so I could not get out.  
He put heavy chains on me.

<sup>8</sup> Even when I cry out and ask for help,  
he does not listen to my prayer.

<sup>9</sup> He has blocked up my path with stones.  
He has made my path crooked.

<sup>10</sup> He is like a bear about to attack me,  
like a lion that is in a hiding place.

<sup>11</sup> He led me off my path.  
He tore me to pieces and ruined me.

<sup>12</sup> He made his bow ready.  
He made me the target for his  
arrows.

<sup>13</sup> He shot me in the stomach  
with his arrows.

<sup>14</sup> I have become a joke to all my people.  
All day long they sing songs about  
me and make fun of me.

<sup>15</sup> He gave me this poison to drink.  
He filled me with this bitter drink.

<sup>16</sup> He pushed my teeth into rocky ground.  
He pushed me into the dirt.

<sup>17</sup> I thought I would never have peace  
again.

I forgot about good things.

<sup>18</sup> I said to myself, "I no longer have any  
hope  
that the LORD will help me."

<sup>19</sup> Remember, I am very sad,  
and I have no home.  
Remember the bitter poison that  
you gave me.

<sup>20</sup> I remember well all my troubles,  
and I am very sad.

<sup>21</sup> But then I think about this,  
and I have hope:

<sup>22</sup> We are still alive because  
the LORD'S faithful love never ends.

<sup>23</sup> Every morning he shows it in new  
ways!

You are so very true and loyal!

<sup>24</sup> I say to myself, "The LORD is my God,  
and I trust him."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The LORD is good to those who wait  
for him.

He is good to those who look for  
him.

<sup>26</sup> It is good to wait quietly  
for the LORD to save them.

<sup>27</sup> It is good for a man to wear his yoke  
from the time he is young.

<sup>28</sup> He should sit alone and be quiet  
when the Lord puts his yoke on  
him.

<sup>29</sup> He should bow down to the Lord.  
Maybe there is still hope.

<sup>30</sup> He should turn his cheek to the one  
who hits him  
and let people insult him.

<sup>31</sup> He should remember that  
the Lord does not reject people  
forever.

<sup>a</sup> **3:24 The LORD ... him** Or "The LORD is my portion and I trust him."

- 32 When he punishes, he also has mercy.  
He has mercy because of his great  
love and kindness.
- 33 He does not enjoy causing people pain.  
He does not like to make anyone  
unhappy.
- 34 He does not like any prisoner on earth  
to be trampled down.
- 35 He does not like anyone to be unfair to  
another person.  
Some people will do such things  
right in front of God Most High.
- 36 The Lord does not like anyone to cheat  
another person.  
He does not like any of these things.
- 37 No one can say something and make it  
happen,  
unless the Lord orders it.
- 38 God Most High commands  
both good and bad things to  
happen.
- 39 No one alive can complain  
when he punishes them for their  
sins.
- 40 Let us check and see what we have  
done.  
Then let us turn back to the LORD.
- 41 Let us lift up our hearts and our hands  
to the God of heaven.
- 42 Let us say to him, "We have sinned and  
have been stubborn.  
Because of this, you have not  
forgiven us.
- 43 You wrapped yourself with anger.  
You chased us.  
You killed us without mercy!
- 44 You wrapped yourself in a cloud  
so that no prayer could get through.
- 45 You made us like garbage and dirt  
to the other nations.
- 46 All of our enemies  
speak angrily against us.
- 47 We have been frightened.  
We have fallen into a pit.  
We have been badly hurt.  
We have been broken."
- 48 My eyes flow with streams of tears.  
I cry because of the destruction of  
my people.
- 49 My eyes will flow without stopping.  
I will keep on crying.
- 50 I will continue to cry  
until you look down and see us,  
LORD!  
I will continue to cry  
until you see us from heaven.
- 51 My eyes make me sad, when I see  
what happened to the young  
women in my city.
- 52 For no reason,  
my enemies hunted me like a bird.
- 53 They threw me alive into a pit  
and then threw stones at me.
- 54 Water came up over my head.  
I said to myself, "I am finished."
- 55 LORD, I called your name  
from the bottom of the pit.
- 56 You heard my voice.  
You didn't close your ears.  
You didn't refuse to rescue me.
- 57 You came to me on the day that I  
called out to you.  
You said to me, "Don't be afraid."
- 58 You defended me  
and brought me back to life.
- 59 LORD, you have seen my trouble.  
Now judge my case for me.
- 60 You have seen how my enemies have  
hurt me.  
You have seen all the evil plans that  
they made against me.
- 61 You heard them insult me, LORD.  
You have heard all the evil plans that  
they made against me.
- 62 The words and the thoughts of my  
enemies  
are against me all the time—  
when they sit down and when they  
stand up.  
Look how they make fun of me!
- 64 Give them back what they deserve,  
LORD.  
Pay them back for what they have  
done.
- 65 Make them stubborn  
and then curse them.
- 66 Chase them in anger and destroy them.

Wipe them off the face of the earth,  
LORD!

### The Horrors of the Attack on Jerusalem

**4** <sup>1</sup>See how the gold has grown dark,  
how the pure gold has changed.  
There are jewels<sup>a</sup> scattered all around  
at every street corner.

<sup>2</sup>The precious people of Zion  
were once worth more than gold.  
But now they are treated like  
something worthless,  
like the cheap clay jars a potter  
makes.

<sup>3</sup>Even a wild dog feeds her babies.  
Even the jackal lets her pups suck at  
her breast.  
But the daughter of my people<sup>b</sup> is  
cruel.  
She is like the ostrich in the desert  
that forgets its eggs in the sand.

<sup>4</sup>Babies are so thirsty  
their tongues stick to the roof of  
their mouths.  
Young children ask for bread,  
but no one gives them any.

<sup>5</sup>Those who ate rich food  
are now dying in the streets.  
Those who grew up wearing nice red  
clothes  
now pick through garbage piles.

<sup>6</sup>The sin of the daughter of my people  
was very great.  
Their sin was greater than the sins of  
Sodom and Gomorrah.  
Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed  
suddenly.  
No human hand caused their  
destruction.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Some of the men of Judah were  
dedicated to God in a special way.  
They were very pure.  
They were whiter than snow,  
and whiter than milk.  
Their bodies were red like coral  
and their beards like sapphire

<sup>a</sup> **4:1 jewels** The meaning of the Hebrew word here is uncertain.

<sup>b</sup> **4:3 daughter of my people** Another name for Jerusalem. Also in verse 6.

<sup>c</sup> **4:6 No human hand ... destruction** The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

stones.

<sup>8</sup>But now their faces are blacker than  
soot.

No one even recognizes them in the  
streets.

Their skin is wrinkled over their bones.  
Their skin is like wood.

<sup>9</sup>It was better for those who were killed  
by the sword  
than for those who died of hunger.  
Those starving people were sad and  
hurt.

They died because they got no food  
from the field.

<sup>10</sup>Then even nice women  
cooked their own children.  
The children were food for their  
mothers.

This happened when my people  
were destroyed.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD used all of his anger.  
He poured out all his anger.  
He made a fire in Zion  
that burned it down to the  
foundations.

<sup>12</sup>The kings of the earth could not  
believe what had happened.  
The people of the world could not  
believe what had happened.  
They could not believe that enemies  
would be able to come through the  
city gates of Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>This happened because the prophets  
of Jerusalem sinned.  
This happened because the priests  
of Jerusalem did evil things.  
They were shedding the blood of good  
people  
in the city of Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>The prophets and priests walked  
around  
like blind men in the streets.  
They had become dirty with blood.  
No one could even touch their  
clothes because they were dirty.

<sup>15</sup>People shouted, "Go away!  
Go away! Don't touch us."  
They wandered around and had no  
home.

People in other nations said,

“We don’t want them to live with us.”

<sup>16</sup> The LORD himself destroyed them.

He didn’t look after them anymore.

He didn’t respect the priests.

He was not friendly to the elders of Judah.

<sup>17</sup> We have worn out our eyes looking for help,

but no help comes.

We kept on looking for a nation to save us.

We kept watch from our watchtower,

but no nation came to us.

<sup>18</sup> Our enemies hunted us all the time.

We could not even go out into the streets.

Our end came near. Our time was up.

Our end came!

<sup>19</sup> The men who chased us

were faster than eagles in the sky.

They chased us into the mountains.

They hid in the desert to catch us.

<sup>20</sup> The king was very important to us.

He was like the breath we breathe, but he was trapped by them.

The LORD himself chose the king, and we said this about the king,

“We will live in his shadow.

He protects us from the nations.”

<sup>21</sup> Be happy, people of Edom.

Be happy, you who live in the land of Uz.

But remember, the cup of the Lord’s anger will come around to you too.

When you drink from that cup, you will get drunk and strip off all your clothes.

<sup>22</sup> Your punishment is complete, Zion.

You will not go into captivity again.

But the Lord will punish your sins, people of Edom.

He will uncover your sins.

<sup>2</sup> Our land has been turned over to strangers.

Our houses have been given to foreigners.

<sup>3</sup> We have become orphans.

We have no father.

Our mothers have become like widows.

<sup>4</sup> We have to buy the water that we drink.

We have to pay for the wood that we use.

<sup>5</sup> We are forced to wear a yoke on our necks.

We get tired, and we have no rest.

<sup>6</sup> We made an agreement with Egypt.

We also made an agreement with Assyria to get enough bread.

<sup>7</sup> Our ancestors sinned against you, and now they are dead.

And we are suffering because of their sins.

<sup>8</sup> Slaves have become our rulers.

No one can save us from them.

<sup>9</sup> We risk our lives to get food.

There are men in the desert with swords.

<sup>10</sup> Our skin is hot like an oven.

We have a high fever because of our hunger.

<sup>11</sup> The enemy raped the women of Zion.

They raped the women in the cities of Judah.

<sup>12</sup> The enemy hanged our princes.

They didn’t honor our elders.

<sup>13</sup> The enemy made our young men grind grain at the mill.

Our young men stumbled under loads of wood.

<sup>14</sup> The elders no longer sit at the gates of the city.

The young men no longer make music.

<sup>15</sup> We have no more joy in our hearts.

Our dancing has changed to crying for the dead.

<sup>16</sup> The crown has fallen from our head.

Things have gone bad for us because we sinned.

<sup>17</sup> For this reason, our hearts have become sick,

### A Prayer to the Lord

**5** <sup>1</sup>Remember, LORD, what happened to us.

Look and see our shame.

and our eyes cannot see clearly.

<sup>18</sup> Mount Zion is a wasteland.

Foxes run around on Mount Zion.

<sup>19</sup> But you rule forever, LORD.

Your kingly chair lasts forever and  
ever.

<sup>20</sup> You seem to have forgotten us forever.

You seem to have left us alone for  
such a long time.

<sup>21</sup> Bring us back to you, LORD.

We will gladly come back to you.

Make our lives as they were before.

<sup>22</sup> You were very angry with us.

Have you completely rejected us?

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