Jerusalem Cries Over Her Destruction

1 Jerusalem once was a city full of people,
but now the city is so empty.
She 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.

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;
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 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.

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a 1:1 She Throughout this poem, Jerusalem is represented as a woman.
b 1:3 where ... way out Or “in the narrow valleys.”
c 1:4 have been taken away This is from the ancient Greek version. The standard Hebrew text has “are upset.”
d 1:6 Daughter Zion Another name for Jerusalem. Also in 2:1, 8, 13, 18.

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She says, “LORD, see how I am hurt!
   See how my enemy thinks he is so
great!”

10 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!
11 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.
12 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.
13 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.

14 “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.
15 “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\(^a\)
   like grapes in a winepress.

16 “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.”

17 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.

18 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.
19 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.

20 “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.

21 “Listen to me, I am groaning.
   I have no one to comfort me.

\(^a\) 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.

22 “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 Look how the Lord has covered daughter Zion 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 He pulled up his own tent 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 in Zion.
He rejected the king and the priests.
He was angry and rejected them.

7 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.

8 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.

9 Jerusalem’s gates have sunk into the ground.
The bars on her gates are completely destroyed.

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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.

10 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.

11 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.

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

13 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.

14 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.

15 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’?”

16 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!”

17 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.

18 Cry out with all your heart 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.

19 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.

20 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?

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21 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!

22 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 I am a man who has seen much
trouble.
God beat us with a stick, and I saw
it happen.

2 He led and brought me
into darkness, not light.

3 He turned his hand against me.
He did this again and again, all day.

4 He wore out my flesh and skin.
He broke my bones.

5 He built up bitterness and trouble
against me.
He surrounded me with bitterness
and trouble.

6 He put me in the dark,
like someone who died long ago.

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

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

9 He has blocked up my path with stones.
He has made my path crooked.

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

11 He led me off my path.
He tore me to pieces and ruined me.

12 He made his bow ready.
He made me the target for his
arrows.

13 He shot me in the stomach
with his arrows.

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

15 He gave me this poison to drink.
He filled me with this bitter drink.

16 He pushed my teeth into rocky ground.
He pushed me into the dirt.

17 I thought I would never have peace
again.
I forgot about good things.

18 I said to myself, “I no longer have any
hope
that the LORD will help me.”

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

20 I remember well all my troubles,
and I am very sad.

21 But then I think about this,
and I have hope:

22 We are still alive because
the LORD’s faithful love never ends.

23 Every morning he shows it in new
ways!
You are so very true and loyal!

24 I say to myself, “The LORD is my God,
and I trust him.”

25 The LORD is good to those who wait
for him.
He is good to those who look for
him.

26 It is good to wait quietly
for the LORD to save them.

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

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

29 He should bow down to the Lord.
Maybe there is still hope.

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

31 He should remember that
the Lord does not reject people
forever.

\*3:24 The LORD . . . him Or “The LORD is my portion and I trust
him.”
When he punishes, he also has mercy. He has mercy because of his great love and kindness.

He does not enjoy causing people pain. He does not like to make anyone unhappy.

He does not like any prisoner on earth to be trampled down.

He does not like anyone to be unfair to another person.

Some people will do such things right in front of God Most High.

The Lord does not like anyone to cheat another person.

He does not like any of these things.

No one can say something and make it happen, unless the Lord orders it.

God Most High commands both good and bad things to happen.

No one alive can complain when he punishes them for their sins.

Let us check and see what we have done.

Then let us turn back to the Lord.

Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to the God of heaven.

Let us say to him, “We have sinned and have been stubborn.

Because of this, you have not forgiven us.

You wrapped yourself with anger. You chased us.

You killed us without mercy!

You wrapped yourself in a cloud so that no prayer could get through.

You made us like garbage and dirt to the other nations.

All of our enemies speak angrily against us.

We have been frightened.

We have fallen into a pit.

We have been badly hurt.

We have been broken.”

My eyes flow with streams of tears. I cry because of the destruction of my people.

My eyes will flow without stopping.

I will keep on crying.

I will continue to cry until you look down and see us, LORD!

I will continue to cry until you see us from heaven.

My eyes make me sad, when I see what happened to the young women in my city.

For no reason,

my enemies hunted me like a bird.

They threw me alive into a pit and then threw stones at me.

Water came up over my head.

I said to myself, “I am finished.”

LORD, I called your name from the bottom of the pit.

You heard my voice.

You didn’t close your ears.

You didn’t refuse to rescue me.

You came to me on the day that I called out to you.

You said to me, “Don’t be afraid.”

You defended me and brought me back to life.

LORD, you have seen my trouble.

Now judge my case for me.

You have seen how my enemies have hurt me.

You have seen all the evil plans that they made against me.

You heard them insult me, LORD.

You have heard all the evil plans that they made against me.

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!

Give them back what they deserve, LORD.

Pay them back for what they have done.

Make them stubborn and then curse them.

Chase them in anger and destroy them.
Wipe them off the face of the earth, Lord!

The Horrors of the Attack on Jerusalem

1 See how the gold has grown dark, how the pure gold has changed. There are jewels\(^a\) scattered all around at every street corner.

2 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.

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

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

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

6 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.\(^c\)

7 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 stones.

8 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.

9 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.

10 Then even nice women cooked their own children. The children were food for their mothers. This happened when my people were destroyed.

11 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.

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 People shouted, “Go away! Go away! Don’t touch us.” They wandered around and had no home. People in other nations said,

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\(a\) 4:1 jewels The meaning of the Hebrew word here is uncertain.

\(b\) 4:3 daughter of my people Another name for Jerusalem. Also in verse 6.

\(c\) 4:6 No human hand ... destruction The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.
“We don’t want them to live with us.”
16 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.
17 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.
18 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!
19 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.
20 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.”

Be happy, people of Edom. Be happy, you who live in the land of Uz.
21 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.
22 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.

A Prayer to the Lord
5 Remember, LORD, what happened to us. Look and see our shame.

2 Our land has been turned over to strangers. Our houses have been given to foreigners.
3 We have become orphans. We have no father. Our mothers have become like widows.
4 We have to buy the water that we drink. We have to pay for the wood that we use.
5 We are forced to wear a yoke on our necks. We get tired, and we have no rest.
6 We made an agreement with Egypt. We also made an agreement with Assyria to get enough bread.
7 Our ancestors sinned against you, and now they are dead. And we are suffering because of their sins.
8 Slaves have become our rulers. No one can save us from them.
9 We risk our lives to get food. There are men in the desert with swords.
10 Our skin is hot like an oven. We have a high fever because of our hunger.
11 The enemy raped the women of Zion. They raped the women in the cities of Judah.
12 The enemy hanged our princes. They didn’t honor our elders.
13 The enemy made our young men grind grain at the mill. Our young men stumbled under loads of wood.
14 The elders no longer sit at the gates of the city. The young men no longer make music.
15 We have no more joy in our hearts. Our dancing has changed to crying for the dead.
16 The crown has fallen from our head. Things have gone bad for us because we sinned.
17 For this reason, our hearts have become sick,
and our eyes cannot see clearly. 
Mount Zion is a wasteland. 
Foxes run around on Mount Zion. 
But you rule forever, LORD. 
Your kingly chair lasts forever and ever. 
You seem to have forgotten us forever.

You seem to have left us alone for such a long time.
Bring us back to you, LORD. 
We will gladly come back to you. 
Make our lives as they were before. 
You were very angry with us. 
Have you completely rejected us?
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