

## CHAPTER 1

- א איכה | 1 Eikhah! How can it be –  
יְשֵׁבָה בָּדָד that she sat alone,  
הָעִיר רַבְּתִי עָם the city so great / so swelled with people?  
הִיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה She was like a widow.  
רַבְּתִי בְּגוֹיִם The one great among the nations,  
שָׂרְתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת ministering among the states,  
הִיְתָה לְמָסִ: became a slave caste.  
ב בָּכּוּ תְּבֹכָה בַּלַּיְלָה 2 Crying, she will cry in the night,  
וְדִמְעָתָהּ עַל לַחְיָהּ her tear upon her cheek  
אֵין-לָהּ מְנַחֵם There is none for her, no comforter,  
מִכָּל-אַהֲבֶיהָ from all her lovers.  
כָּל-רֵעֶיהָ All her companions  
בְּגָדוּ בָּהּ played traitor with her.  
הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים: They became for her enemies.  
ג גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה 3 She, Judah, was exiled,  
מִעֲנִי וּמִרַב עֲבָדָה by poverty, and by(so)much hard labor  
הִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגוֹיִם She sat among the nations,  
לֹא מְצָאָה מְנוּחַ not finding any rest;  
כָּל-רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשִּׁיגוּהָ All her pursuers caught up with her  
בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים: between the confined places.  
ד דִּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת 4 Zion's roads are mourning

## Laments

### A new and old translation of *Eikhah*

This booklet uses two translations of Laments, the book of mourning poems read on *Tish'a B'Av*. Chapters 1, 2 and 5 were translated by Rabbi David Mevorach Seidenberg, with attention to the principles of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible. This translation strives to be “concordant” by translating related Hebrew words with related English words, and by following the order and syntax of the Hebrew as much as possible. In some cases alternate translations are given, indicated by a slash. This translation also focuses on the more physical, earthy meaning of words, drawing the reader from modern thought patterns towards more ancient ways of seeing and feeling. Chapters 3 and 4 were translated by James Moffat over a half century ago, according to the principles of “idiomatic” translation. This translation strives to recast the Hebrew according to the word order, meaning, and sense of everyday English, even to the point of reordering the verses (see 49-51 of chapter 3). Moffat, more than most idiomatic translators, evokes the emotional depth of the Hebrew.

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Translation revised from 2002, 2003 editions for the Aleph Kallah and the NHC Institute. Original translation © 1993, David Seidenberg. James Moffat's translation, from the Hodder and Stoughton edition (out of print), has been revised and updated in minor ways for this booklet. Based on layout for 2003 edition by Mark Frydenberg. This booklet contains the sacred name in Hebrew for God. Please do not destroy it or dispose of it improperly. ©July 2007, all applicable rights reserved.

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ראוה צרים  
 שחקו על משבתה:  
 ח חטא חטאה ירושלם  
 על-כן לנידה היתה  
 כל-מכבדה הזלילה  
 כי-ראו ערותה  
 גם-היא נאנחה  
 ותשב אחור:  
 ט טמאתה בשוליה  
 לא זכרה אחרייתה  
 ותדר פלאים  
 אין מנחם לה  
 ראה יהוה את-עניי  
 כי הגדיל אויב:  
 י ידו פרש צר  
 על כל-מחמדיה  
 כי-ראתה גוים  
 באו מקדשה  
 אשר צויתה  
 לא-יבאו  
 בקהל לה:  
 יא כל-עמה נאנחים  
 מבקשים לחם

They saw her, her tormentors,  
 laughing over her becoming stilled.  
 8 Sinning she sinned, Jerusalem.  
 For this an outcast / *nidah* she became.  
 All who honor her despise her,  
 for they saw her nakedness.  
 Also her, she is moaning,  
 turned around backward.  
 9 Her blood / *tum'ah* in her skirts,  
 she didn't remember her end after,  
 she descended wondrously.  
 There is no comforter for her.  
 YHVH, see my poverty, my humiliation,  
 for an enemy became great.  
 10 A foe / Trauma spread out his hand  
 over all her precious things;  
 She saw other nations  
 come within her holy place,  
 which you commanded her:  
 "They won't come in with  
 the community to you."  
 11 All her people are moaning  
 seeking bread;

מבלי באי מועד  
 כל-שעריה שוממים  
 כהניה נאנחים  
 בתולתיה נוגות  
 והיא מר-לה:  
 ה הוי צריה לראש  
 איביה שלו  
 כי-יהוה הוגה  
 על רב-פשעיה  
 עולליה הלכו שבי לפני-צר:  
 ו ויצא מן-בת-ציון  
 כל-הדרה  
 היו שריה כאילים  
 לא-מצאו מרעה  
 וילכו בלא-כח  
 לפני רודף:  
 ז זכרה ירושלם  
 ימי עניה  
 ומרודה  
 כל מחמדיה  
 אשר היו מימי קדם  
 בנפל עמה ביד-צר  
 ואין עזר לה

from being without festival-goers,  
 all her gates desolated;  
 Her priests are moaning,  
 her girls grieving;  
 And she – it is bitterness for her.  
 5 Her tormentors were at the head,  
 her enemies had ease  
 For YHVH aggrieved her  
 for the greatness of her sins.  
 Her babes walked captive before foe;  
 6 and all her splendor went out from  
 daughter Zion!  
 Her ministers, like deer,  
 not finding a place to graze;  
 They walked, without strength,  
 before a pursuer.  
 7 Jerusalem remembered  
 the days of her impoverishment  
 and her downsliding,  
 all her precious things  
 which were from early days,  
 while her people fell into a foe's hand;  
 And there is no help for her.

טו סֵלָה 15 Adonai spurned  
 כָּל־אֲבִירַי | אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבִּי  
 קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד  
 לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחוּרֵי  
 גֶּת דְּרֹךְ אֲדֹנָי  
 לְבַתּוּלַת בֵּת־יְהוּדָה:  
 טז עַל־אַלֶּה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה  
 עֵינַי | עֵינֵי יִרְדָּה מַיִם  
 כִּי־רָחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם  
 מַעֲשֵׂיב נַפְשִׁי  
 הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים  
 כִּי גִבֹּר אוֹיֵב:  
 יז פָּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ  
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
 צִוָּה יְהוָה לְיַעֲקֹב  
 סָבִיבּוֹ צָרָיו  
 הִיטָה יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 לְנֶדָה בֵּינֵיהֶם:  
 יח צַדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה  
 כִּי פִיהוּ מָרִיתִי  
 שָׁמְעוּ־נָא כָל־הָעַמִּים  
 וְרֹאוּ מַכְאֲבִי  
 בַּתּוּלָתִי וּבַחוּרֵי

all my mighty warriors within me,  
 he called out over me a feast  
 for breaking my boys;  
 a winepress—Adonai stomped—  
 for daughter Judah's girl.  
 16 Over these, I am crying;  
 My eye, my eye, she drops water.  
 For so far from me is any comforter,  
 a restorer for my life.  
 My children were decimated,  
 for an enemy overwhelmed / triumphed.  
 17 Zion spread out with her hands,  
 there is no comforter for her.  
 YHVH commanded for Jacob,  
 surrounding him, his tormentors.  
 Jerusalem became  
 outcast / *nidah* between them.  
 18 Righteous is YHVH,  
 for his mouth I rebelled (against).  
 Listen, please – all peoples –  
 and see my pain!  
 My girls and my boys

נָתַנוּ מִחַמּוּדֵיהֶם  
 בְּאֹכֶל לְהַשִּׁיב נַפְשׁ  
 רֵאֵה יְהוָה  
 וְהִכִּיטָה כִּי הֵיטִיתִי זוּלָלָה:  
 יב לֹא אֵלֵיכֶם  
 כָּל־עֹבְרֵי דֶרֶךְ  
 הַבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ  
 אִם־יֵשׁ מַכְאוֹב כְּמַכְאֲבִי  
 אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי  
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה  
 בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:  
 יג מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמֹתַי  
 וַיִּרְדָּנָה  
 פָּרֹשֶׁת רַגְשִׁי לְרַגְלִי  
 הִשְׁכַּח אַחֲזֹר  
 נִתְּנִי שְׁמָמָה  
 כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:  
 יד נֶשֶׁקִּי עַל פִּשְׁעֵי  
 בִּידוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגֵּנוּ  
 עָלוּ עַל־צַוְאָרִי  
 הִכְשִׁיל כַּחֲוִי  
 נָתַנִּי אֲדֹנָי בְּיָדִי  
 לֹא־אוּכָל קוּם:

They gave up their precious things  
 for food to restore life.  
 See, YHVH!  
 Look (how much) I was despised.  
 12 Never to you,  
 all who pass on the way.  
 Look, you must see –  
 Could there be pain like my pain  
 which was doled out to me,  
 which YHVH caused to grieve  
 in the day of his furious anger?  
 13 From a height he sent fire in my bones  
 and he overwhelmed them.  
 He spread out a net for my feet;  
 He repelled me back;  
 he made me desolate,  
 all day – sickness.  
 14 The harness of my sins lashed on,  
 they were tied down by his hand,  
 brought up onto my neck,  
 making my strength fail.  
 Adonai gave me over into (such) hands  
 that I am unable to stand up.

כִּי־רַבּוֹת אֲנַחְתִּי  
וְלִבִּי דָוָי:

For so much are my sighs,  
and my heart is sickened.

## CHAPTER 2

אֵיכָה אֵיכָה  
יַעֲיֵב בְּאַפּוֹ |  
אֲדֹנָי אֶת־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
הִשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ  
תְּפִאֲרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְלֹא־זָכַר  
הַדָּם־רַגְלָיו  
בְּיוֹם אָפּוֹ:  
בַּלַּע אֲדֹנָי  
לֹא חָמַל  
אֶת כָּל־נַאֲוֹת יַעֲקֹב  
הָרָס בְּעִבְרָתוֹ  
מִבְצָרֵי־בֵת־יְהוּדָה  
הִגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ  
חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ:  
גָּדַע בַּחֲרִי־אָף  
כָּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הִשִּׁיב אֲחוֹר וַיִּמְנֹךְ

1 *Eikhah!* How can it be!  
In his anger  
*Adonai* darkened daughter Zion.  
He cast down, from skies (to) earth,  
Israel's glory,  
and didn't remember  
his foot's resting place  
in his day of anger.  
2 *Adonai* devoured  
—he had no pity—  
all of Jacob's pastures.  
He tore down with his burning  
daughter Judah's fortifications;  
he reached to the very ground.  
He violated kingdom and her ministers.  
3 With ferocious anger he hacked off  
all of Israel's horn.  
He turned his right hand backward

הָלְכוּ בַשָּׁבִי:

walked captive / into captivity.

יט קָרָאתִי לְמֵאֲהָבִי

19 I called to my lovers.

הִמָּה רְמוּנִי

Those deceived me.

כָּהֲנִי וְזִקְנִי

My priests, and my elders,

בָּעִיר גּוּעוּ

they wasted away in the city,

כִּי־בִקְשׁוּ אֹכֶל לָמוֹ

seeking food for them,

וַיָּשִׁיבוּ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם:

and to bring back their life.

כ רָאָה יְהוָה כִּי־צָר־לִי

20 See YHVH – for mine is torment,

מִצֵּי חֲמָרְמוֹרוֹ

my guts were churning,

נִהְפָּה לִבִּי בְקֶרְבִּי

my heart overturned within me,

כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי

for rebelling I rebelled.

מִחוּץ שֶׁכְּלָה־חֶרֶב

From outside sword striking down;

בְּבֵית כָּמוֹת:

In the house, like death itself.

כא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נֶאֱנַחָה אֲנִי

21 They listened. I am moaning,

אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי

there is no comforter for me.

כִּל־אֵיבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רָעָתִי

All my enemies listened for my evil doom.

שָׂשׂוּ כִּי אָתָּה עָשִׂיתָ

They rejoiced, for you did it,

הַבָּאת יוֹם־קִרְאָתָךְ

you brought the day you called for –

וַיְהִי כְמוֹנִי:

and they will be(come) like me.

כב תָּבֹא כָל־רָעָתָם לְפָנֶיךָ

22 All their evil will come before you

וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ

Treat them

כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹלָלְתָּ לִי

like you treated me

עַל כָּל־פְּשָׁעַי

for all my sins.

הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד־אֹיֵב  
חֹמֹת אֲרָמֹנוֹתֶיהָ  
קוֹל נָתַנוּ בְּבֵית־יְהוָה  
כַּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד:  
ח חֲשַׁב יְהוָה | לְהַשְׁחִית  
חֹמֹת בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
נָטָה קוֹ  
לֹא־הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ  
מִבִּלְעַ  
וַיַּאֲבֵל־חָל וְחֹמֶה  
יַחֲדוּ אִמָּלְלוּ:  
ט טָבְעוּ בָאֲרֶץ שְׁעָרֶיהָ  
אֶבֶד וְשֹׁבֵר בְּרִיחֶיהָ  
מִלְכָּה וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם  
אֵין תּוֹרָה  
גַּם־נְבִיאֶיהָ  
לֹא־מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיְהוָה:  
י יֹשְׁבוּ לָאֲרֶץ יְדֻמוּ  
זָקְנֵי בֵת־צִיּוֹן  
הֵעִלוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם  
חָגְרוּ שָׁקִים  
הוֹרִידוּ לָאֲרֶץ רֹאשָׁן  
בְּתוֹלֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם:

He turned over to an enemy's hand  
the walls of her citadels.  
They gave a shout in YHVH's house  
like a festival day.  
8 YHVH determined to ruin  
daughter Zion's wall.  
He stretched a line,  
he didn't turn his hand back  
from swallowing up,  
and he made rampart and wall,  
mourn together, wretched.  
9 They drowned in the earth, her gates.  
He smashed and broke her bars.  
Her king and her ministers in the nations,  
there is no Torah / no teaching.  
Also her prophets,  
They found no vision from YHVH.  
10 They sat down to the earth, silenced,  
daughter Zion's elders,  
they lifted dust over their head,  
tied on sackcloth.  
They let their head down to the earth,  
Jerusalem's girls.

מִפְנֵי אֹיֵב  
וַיִּבְעַר בַּיַּעֲקֹב כְּאֵשׁ לֹהֶבֶת  
אֹכְלָה סָבִיב:  
ד דִּרְךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ כְּאֹיֵב  
נִצָּב יְמִינוֹ  
כָּצָר  
וַיַּהַלֵּג כָּל  
מִחְמַד־עֵינַיִן  
בְּאֵחֶל בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
שָׁפַךְ כְּאֵשׁ חֲמָתוֹ:  
ה הָיָה אֲדֹנָי | כְּאֹיֵב  
בִּלְעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בִּלְעַ כָּל־אֲרָמֹנוֹתֶיהָ  
שָׁחַת מִבְצָרָיו  
וַיַּרְבַּ בְּבֵת־יְהוּדָה  
תַּאֲנִיָּה וְאִנְיָה:  
ו וַיַּחַמֵּס כַּגֵּן שִׁכּוֹ  
שָׁחַת מוֹעֲדוֹ  
שָׁכַח יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן  
מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבֹת  
וַיִּנְאֹץ בְּזַעַם־אָפוֹ מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן:  
ז זָנַח אֲדֹנָי | מִזְבְּחוֹ  
נִאָר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ

before the enemy.  
Burning into Jacob, like fire flaming  
consuming (all) around.  
4 He worked his bow like an enemy,  
he stood his right hand firm  
as a foe / a tormentor  
and he murdered everything  
precious to the eye;  
In daughter Zion's tent  
he poured out his wrath like fire.  
5 Adonai was like an enemy;  
he devoured Israel.  
He devoured all her citadels,  
undermined his fortifications;  
And he multiplied in daughter Zion  
grief and groaning.  
6 Like a garden, he tore apart his sukkah,  
he destroyed his feast.  
YHVH caused Shabbat and festival  
to be forgotten in Zion,  
by the rage of his anger, king and priest.  
7 Adonai abhorred his altar,  
disdained his holy place.

שְׁוֹא וְתַפֵּל  
 וְלֹא-גָלוּ עַל-עֲוֹנָךְ  
 לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתֶךָ  
 וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ  
 מִשָּׂאוֹת שְׁוֹא וּמַדּוּקִים:  
 טו סָפְקוּ עֲלֶיךָ כַּפַּיִם  
 כָּל-עֲבָרֵי דָרֶךְ  
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעֻזוּ רֹאשָׁם  
 עַל-בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 הִנָּאת  
 הָעִיר שִׁיאָמְרוּ  
 כְּלִילַת יָפִי  
 מִשְׁוֹשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ:  
 טז פָּצּוּ עֲלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם  
 כָּל-אֹיְבֶיךָ  
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחְרְקוּ-שֵׁן  
 אָמְרוּ בְּלַעֲנוּ  
 אַךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינוּהוּ  
 מִצָּאֵנוּ רָאִינוּ:  
 יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם  
 בַּצָּע אָמְרָתוֹ  
 אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי-קֶדֶם  
 הָרָם וְלֹא חָמַל

deception, and irrelevance,  
 revealing nothing for your wrong  
 to turn back your destiny / your captivity,  
 and they envisioned for you  
 a burden of deceit and dejections.  
 15 They struck their hands over you,  
 all who passed on the road,  
 they hissed and they shook their head  
 over daughter Jerusalem:  
 “Is this it?  
 The city they said (was)  
 beauty’s completion,  
 joy’s source for all the earth?”  
 16 They crack open their mouth over you,  
 all your enemies.  
 They hissed, gritting teeth.  
 They said: We swallowed;  
 Akh! This day that we hoped for,  
 we found, we saw!  
 17 YHVH did what he conspired;  
 He pushed through his saying  
 which he commanded from early days.  
 He tore down and showed no pity.

יֵאָר כָּלוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי  
 חֲמַרְמְרוּ מִעֵי  
 נִשְׁפָּךְ לָאָרֶץ כִּבְדִּי  
 עַל-שֹׁכֵר  
 בֵּת-עַמִּי  
 בַּעֲטָף עוֹלָל וַיִּזְנַק בְּרַחֲבוֹת  
 קִרְיָה:  
 יב לְאִמָּתָם יֹאמְרוּ  
 אֵיךְ דָּגוּ וַיִּזֵּן  
 בְּהִתְעַטְפָם  
 כְּחָלָל בְּרַחֲבוֹת  
 עִיר בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשָׁם  
 אֶל-חֵיק אִמָּתָם:  
 יג מָה אֶעֱיִיד  
 מָה אֲדַמֶּה-לָךְ  
 הַבֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 מָה אֲשׁוּה-לָךְ  
 וַאֲנִיחֶמְךָ  
 בְּתוֹלַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן  
 כִּי-גָדוֹל כַּיָּם  
 שִׁבְרֶךָ  
 מִי יִרְפָּא-לָךְ:  
 יד נְבִיאֶיךָ חֲזוּ לָךְ

11 My eyes were used up by the tears,  
 my guts churned up,  
 my organs poured out to the ground  
 over the shattering of  
 my daughter people,  
 with the \*exhaustion of babe and \*infant  
 in city squares.  
 12 To their mothers they would say,  
 “Where is grain and wine?”,  
 stretching themselves out,  
 like a corpse, in city streets,  
 with their life force pouring out  
 onto their mothers’ chest.  
 13 What can I make testify?  
 What will I liken to you?  
 O daughter Jerusalem!  
 What can I compare to you  
 (that) I may comfort you,  
 daughter Zion’s girl?  
 For great, like the sea,  
 is your shattering  
 – who will bring healing to you?  
 14 For you did your prophets envision

נָעַר וְזָקֵן  
 בָּתוּלָתִי וּבְחוּרִי  
 נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב  
 הִרְגִּיתָ בַּיּוֹם אֵפֶף  
 טַבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלָּה:  
 כָּבֹד תִּקְרָא כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד  
 מִגֹּדְרֵי מִסְבִּיב  
 וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֶף-יְהוָה  
 פָּלִיט וְשָׁרִיד  
 אֲשֶׁר-טִפַּחְתִּי וְרַבִּיתִי  
 אֹיְבֵי כָלָם:

young and old,  
 my girls and my boys,  
 they fell by sword;  
 You murdered in the day of your anger.  
 You slaughtered, you had no pity.  
 22 You would call, like a festival day,  
 (for) my neighbors from all around;  
 and (so) in YHVH's day of anger  
 there weren't any escaped or remaining  
 which I had nursed and raised –  
 my enemy finished them all.

### CHAPTER 3

[Moffat transl. begins here.]

אֲנִי הַגֹּבֵר רָאָה עָנִי  
 בְּשֹׁבֵט עֲבָרָתוֹ:  
 בֹּאוּתִי נֶתַג וְיִלְדָּה  
 חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹר:  
 גֵּאָה בִּי יָשַׁב יִהְיֶה יָדוֹ  
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם:  
 דָּ בָלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי  
 שִׁבְרָה עֲצָמוֹתַי:

1 I am the man who has suffered  
 under the rod of his anger:  
 2 I am the man he has been leading  
 on a dark, unlighted road;  
 3 he has baffled me over and again,  
 all the day long;  
 4 he has worn away my skin and flesh,  
 and broken my bones;

וַיִּשְׂמַח עָלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב  
 הָרִים קֶרֶן צָרֶיךָ:  
 יָח צָעַק לָבָם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי  
 חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן  
 הוֹרִידִי כִנְחָל דִּמְעָה  
 יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה  
 אֶל-תַּתְנִי פּוּגַת לֶךְ  
 אֶל-תִּדְּמִים בֵּת-עֵינֶיךָ:  
 יֹט קוּמִי | רְנִי בַלַּיְלָה  
 לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת  
 שִׁפְכִי כַּמַּיִם לְבָרֶךְ  
 גִּבַּח פָּנֵי אֲדֹנָי  
 שָׂאֵי אֵלָיו כַּפְּיךָ  
 עַל-נֶפֶשׁ עוֹלָלֶיךָ  
 הֶעֱטוּפִים בְּרָעָב  
 בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת:  
 כֹּ רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה  
 לְמִי עוֹלָלָתָ כֹּה  
 אִם-תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים פְּרִיָם  
 עֹלְלֵי טַפָּחִים  
 אִם-יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי  
 כְּתֹן וְנִבְיָא:  
 כֹּת שִׁכְבוּ לָאָרֶץ חוּצוֹת

He made an enemy rejoice over you;  
 your tormentors' horn was exalted.  
 18 Their heart screamed out to Adonai.  
 Wall of daughter Zion,  
 let down a tear like a torrent,  
 day and night.  
 Don't give yourself any break;  
 Don't let your daughter eye fall silent.  
 19 Get up! Sing out in the night  
 to the first of the nightwatches:  
 Pour out your heart like water  
 right before Adonai!  
 Lift your palms toward him –  
 for the life of your babies  
 stretched out by famine  
 at every street head!  
 20 See YHVH and look:  
 Whom did you treat like this?  
 If women will eat their fruit,  
 nursing\*\*\* babies –;  
 If priest and prophet are murdered  
 in Adonai's holy place –!  
 21 Laid down to the earth (in the) streets,

נְגִינַתָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם:	burden of their satire all day long.
טו הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בַמְרוֹרִים	15 He has filled me up with bitter herbs,
הִרְוֵנִי לַעֲנָה:	and sated me with wormwood;
טז וַיִּגְרַס בְּחֶצֶץ שָׁנִי	16 He has broken my teeth with gravel,
הִכְפִּישָׁנִי בָאָפֶר:	and covered me with ashes.
יז וַתִּזְנַח מְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי	17 He has bereft me of all bliss,
נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה:	I forget what it is to prosper,
יח וָאָמַר אֲבַד נִצְחִי	18 I said, "My strength is gone,
וַתוֹחֲלֵתִי מִיְּהוָה:	and my hope in the Eternal / YHVH!"
יט זְכַר־עֲנִי וּמְרוֹדִי	19 The thought of my stress and scattering
לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ:	is bitter gall to me;
כ זָכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר	20 my soul is always thinking of it,
וַתִּשּׁוּחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:	and is crushed within me.
כא זָאת אֶשְׁיב אֶל־לִבִּי	21 But I will call to mind,
עַל־כֵּן אוֹחִיל:	to give me hope,
כב חֶסֶד־יְהוָה כִּי לֹא־תִמָּנוּ	22 that the Eternal's love is lasting,
כִּי לֹא־כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:	and will never fail.
כג חֲדָשִׁים לְבֹקְרִים	23 Fresh every morning is your kindness,
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ:	great is your faithfulness!
כד חֶלְקִי יְהוָה	24 The Eternal is my allotted share,

ה בָּנָה עָלַי וִיָקָף	5 he has piled troubles up against me,
רָאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:	right round my head;
ו בְּמַחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי	6 he has made me dwell in the dark,
כַּמֵּתֵי עוֹלָם:	like those long dead;
ז גָּדַר בְּעֵדִי	7 he has walled me round,
וְלֹא אֵצֵא	till I cannot go out,
הִכְבִּיד נִחְשָׁתִי:	He has loaded me with chains;
ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ	8 and when I fain would cry for help,
שָׁתַם תַּפְלָתִי:	He stops my prayer;
ט גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בְּגִזִּית	9 He blocks my way with boulders,
נִתְיַבְתִּי עֲוָה:	till my course is twisted;
י דָּב אֵרֵב הוּא לִי	10 He lurks for me like a bear,
אֲרִי בַמִּסְתָּרִים:	like a lion in ambush;
יא דָּרַכִי סוּרָר וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי	11 He has chased and mangled me
שָׁמְנִי שָׁמָם:	and left me all forlorn;
יב דִּבֶּךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ	12 He has bent his bow
וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי כַמִּטְרָא לַחֲזִץ:	and made me target for his arrows;
יג הֵבִיא בְּכִלְיוֹתָי	13 he has driven his shafts home,
בְּנִי אֶשְׁפָּתוֹ:	right into me;
יד הֵייתִי שֹׁחַק לְכָל־עַמִּי	14 I am the butt of all nations,



לֹגֵר כִּי לֹא עֲנָה מִלְּבֹו  
וַיִּגָּה בְּנִי-אִישׁ׃ 33 he is loathe to cause pain  
to grieve the sons of men.

לֹד לְדַבֵּא תַחַת רַגְלָיו  
כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ׃ 34 When a whole people is taken  
prisoner and downtrodden,

לֹה לְהַטּוֹת  
מִשְׁפָּט-גֹּבֵר  
נִגְדַּד פָּנָיו עָלֵינוּ׃ 35 when a man  
is deprived of his rights,  
under the eyes of the Most High,

לֹו לְעֹוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבֹו  
אֲדָנִי לֹא רָאָה׃ 36 when a person does not get justice,  
does the Lord not see it?

לֹז מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי  
אֲדָנִי לֹא צִוָּה׃ 37 Who can carry out his will,  
unless it is the Lord's order?

לֹחַ מִפִּי עָלִיוֹן לֹא תִצָּא  
הֲרָעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב׃ 38 Are not weal and woe alike  
decreed by the Most High?

לֹט מִהָיִתָּאוֹנִן אָדָם חִי  
גֹבֵר עַל-חַטָּאוֹיו׃ 39 Then why should mortal men complain,  
when they are punished for their sins?

מִנְחַפְשָׁה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנִחְלָקָהּ  
וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד-יְהוָה׃ 40 Let us scan and search our lives,  
let us return to the Eternal,

מִזַּע נִשְׂאָ לְבַבֵּנוּ אֶל-כַּפָּיִם  
אֶל-אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם׃ 41 lifting our hearts up with our hands  
to God in heaven;

מִבְּנַחֲנוּ פָשַׁעְנוּ וּמָרִינוּ 42 The sin is ours, we have rebelled,

אֶמְרָה נַפְשִׁי  
עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ׃ I say,  
therefore I will hope in him.

כֹּה טוֹב יְהוָה  
לְקַוֹּ 25 The Eternal is good  
to those who wait for him,

לְנַפֵּשׁ תִּדְרָשׁוּ׃ 25 to a soul that seeks him.

כֵּן טוֹב וַיְחַל וְדוֹמָם  
לְתִשׁוּעַת יְהוָה׃ 26 It is good to wait in silence  
for the help of the Eternal;

כֵּן טוֹב לְגֹבֵר  
כִּי-יֵשָׂא עַל  
בְּנִעוּרָיו׃ 27 it is good for a man  
to bear without a word  
the rebuke of the Eternal;

כֹּחַ יֵשֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּלֵּם  
כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו׃ 28 Let him sit alone in silence,  
since it is the Eternal's hand;

כֹּט יִתֵּן בְּעָפָר פִּיהוּ  
אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה׃ 29 let him lay his lips to the dust –  
there may be hope for him;

לֹ יִתֵּן לְמַכְהוּ לֹחֵי  
יִשָּׁבַע בְּחִרְפָּה׃ 30 let him offer his cheek to the striker,  
and suffer all taunts.

לֹא כִי לֹא יִזְנֹחַ  
לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי׃ 31 For the Lord will not always  
discard life;

לֵב כִּי אִם-הוֹגָה וְרַחֵם  
כָּרֵב חֲסִדָּיו׃ 32 he wounds, but he has pity,  
so rich is his love;

נַא עֵינִי עֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מִכָּל בְּנוֹת עִירִי:	50 till the Eternal will look down from heaven above.
נִב צֹד צְדוֹנִי כַצֹּד אִיבֵי חָנָם:	52 They have hunted me like a bird, with no reason for their hate;
נִג צָמְתוּ בְּבוֹר חַיִּי וַיִּדּוּ-אֲבָן בִּי:	53 they dropped me to die in a dungeon, flinging stones at me;
נִד צָפוּ-מַיִם עַל-רֹאשִׁי אָמַרְתִּי נִגְזַרְתִּי:	54 waters flowed over my head, “I am lost,” I said.
נִה קָרָאתִי שְׁמֹךְ יְהוָה מְבוֹר תַּחֲתִיּוֹת:	55 From the depth of the dungeon I called, O Eternal, to you;
נִו קוֹלִי שָׁמַעַתְּ אֶל-תַּעֲלָם אֲזִנְךָ לְרוֹחֲתִי לְשׁוֹעֲתִי:	56 you did hear me crying “Give ear, don’t hide from my plea and cry”;
נִז קָרַבְתָּ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָאךָ אָמַרְתָּ אֶל-תִּירָא:	57 you came at my call, bidding me, “Fear not.”
נח רַבַּת אֲדָנִי רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי נָצַלְתָּ חַיִּי:	58 O Lord, you did take my part and save my life.
נֹט רָאִיתָה יְהוָה עֲוֹנֹתַי שְׁפֹטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי:	59 And now you see my wrongs; Oh vindicate me!

אַתָּה לֹא סָלַחְתָּ:	and you – you have not pardoned;
מִג סִפְתָּה בָּאֵף וַתִּרְדְּפֵנוּ תִּרְגַּתְּ לֹא חֲמִלְתָּ:	43 You have veiled your face in anger, pursuing us, killing without pity;
מִד סִכּוֹתָה בָּעָנָן לְךָ מִעֲבוֹר תִּפְלָה:	44 you have covered yourself with a cloud no prayer can pierce;
מִה סְחִי וּמָאוֹס תִּשְׁמִינּוּ בִקְרֹב הָעַמִּים:	45 you have made us mere scum and refuse in the world.
מִו פָּצוּ עָלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם כָּל-אִיבֵינוּ:	46 Our foes all yell against us;
מִז פָּחַד וּפְחַת תִּהְיֶה לָנוּ הַשָּׂאת וְהַשְׁבֵּר:	47 dismay and destruction befall us, ravage and ruin.
מִח פִּלְגֵי-מַיִם תִּכְרַד עֵינִי עַל-שֹׁבֵר בֵּת-עַמִּי:	48 Tears are flooding from my eyes for the ruin of my people;
(Next three verses reordered in English by transl.)	
מִט עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוֹת:	51 my eyes are sore with sorrow for all the woes of my city;
נ עַד-יִשְׁקִיף וְיֵרָא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם:	49 my eyes stream without ceasing, without rest,

בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת: over every street;  
 בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הִיקָרוּם 2 the priceless sons of Zion,  
 הַמְּסֻלָּאִים בַּפָּז worth their weight in gold,  
 אִיכָּה נִחְשְׁבוּ לִנְבִל־חֶרֶשׁ count no more than crockery,  
 מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי יוֹצֵר: mere pots of clay!  
 גַּם-תְּנִינִים תִּלְצוּ שֹׁד 3 Even jackals give the breast  
 הַיִּנְיָקוֹ גּוֹרִיחֵן and suckle their whelps;  
 בַּת-עַמִּי לְאַכְזֹר but the women of my people are cruel  
 כִּיעֲנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר: as the ostrich wild;  
 דְּבֶק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק 4 For the tongue of the nursling cleaves  
 אֶל-חִכּוֹ בְּצִמָּא for thirst to the roof of its mouth,  
 עוֹלָלִים שְׁאֵלוּ לֶחֶם the children beg for food,  
 פֶּרֶשׁ אֵין לָהֶם: and no one gives it.  
 הַהֹאכְלִים לְמַעַדְנִים 5 Those who fared on dainties  
 נִשְׁמּוּ בַחוּצוֹת rot upon the street;  
 הָאֲמֻנִים עָלֵי תוֹלַע those who lay on scarlet rugs  
 חִבְּקוּ אֶשְׁפָּתוֹת: huddle on an ash-heap.  
 וַיִּגְדֵּל עֲזוֹן בַּת-עַמִּי 6 The guilt of my people was greater  
 מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם than even the sin of Sodom,  
 הַהִפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רֹגַע Sodom that fell in a flash,  
 וְלֹא-חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם: before any could wring his hands.  
 זַכּוֹ נִזְיָרֶיהָ 7 Her headmen were brighter  
 מִשְׁלֵג than snow,

ס רְאִיתָה כָּל-נִקְמָתָם 60 You have seen all the revenge  
 כָּל-מַחְשַׁבְתָּם לִי: they have plotted against me.  
 סא שָׁמַעְתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה 61 You have heard all the insults  
 כָּל-מַחְשַׁבְתָּם עָלַי: they plotted against me,  
 סב שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי וְהִגִּיזוּם עָלַי 62 the talk of the ones who attack me,  
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם: their muttering all the day long.  
 סג שִׁבְתָּם וְקִימָתָם הִבִּיטָה 63 Look at them, sitting or rising –  
 אֲנִי מִנְּגִינָתָם I am the burden of their satire!  
 סד תִּשְׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּל יְהוָה 64 You will requite them, O Eternal,  
 כְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם: for all they have done;  
 סה תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מַגֶּנֶת-לֵב 65 you will blind their vision –  
 תִּאָּלְתֶּךָ לָהֶם: your curse be upon them!  
 סו תִּרְדֹּף בָּאֵף 66 You will chase them angrily,  
 וְתִשְׁמִידֵם and crush them  
 מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי יְהוָה: out of life.

#### CHAPTER 4

א אִיכָּה 1 Eikhah! Ah!  
 יוֹעַם זָהָב how the gold is dimmed,  
 יִשָּׁנָה הִכְתָּם הַטּוֹב how changed the gold so pure!  
 תִּשְׁתַּפְּכֶנָּה אַבְנֵי-קֶדֶשׁ the sacred gems are scattered

בְּשַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם׃  
 יג מִחַטָּאת נְבִיאֶיהָ  
 עֲוֹנוֹת כֹּהֲנֶיהָ  
 הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקֶרְבָּהּ  
 דָּם צְדִיקִים׃  
 יד נָעוּ עֹרִים בַּחוּצוֹת  
 נִגְאָלוּ בָדָם  
 בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ יִגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם׃  
 טו סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ טָמְאָה  
 קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ  
 סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ אֶל-תִּגְעֻו  
 כִּי נָצוּ גַם-נָעוּ  
 אֲמָרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם לֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לָגוּר׃  
 טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה  
 חֲלָקָם  
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִבְיטָם  
 פָּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׁאוּ  
 וְזִקְנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ׃  
 יז עֵינֵינוּ תִכְלִינָה עֵינֵינוּ  
 אֶל-עֲזָרָתָנוּ הִבֵּל  
 בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צָפִינוּ אֶל-גּוֹי  
 לֹא יוֹשָׁע׃  
 יח צָדוּ צָדוּ צָדוּנוּ

inside Jerusalem.  
 13 It was all for the sin of her prophets,  
 for the crime of her priests,  
 who shed in her  
 the blood of the just.  
 14 Now, stained with blood,  
 they wander blindly about the streets,  
 brushing against men they once avoided.  
 15 “Begone! You are unclean!”  
 men shout at them,  
 “Begone! Avoid us.”  
 So they stagger and wander,  
 finding no more shelter abroad.  
 16 The Eternal himself  
 has scattered them,  
 caring no more for them,  
 disregarding the priests,  
 and heedless of the prophets.  
 17 Our eyes are strained and failing,  
 as we look for aid, empty of hope;  
 watching for a nation  
 that never brought salvation.  
 18 Foes dog our steps,

צָחוּ מִחָלָב  
 אֲדָמוּ לְעֶצֶם מִפְּנִינִים  
 סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם׃  
 ח חֲשֹׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר  
 תֵּאֲרָם  
 לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת  
 צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם  
 יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כַּעֵץ׃  
 ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי-חֶרֶב  
 מִחֲלִי רָעָב  
 שָׁהָם יוֹבֹו מִדְּקָרִים  
 מִתְּנוּבַת שָׂדֵי׃  
 י יָדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת  
 בִּשְׁלוּ יְלָדֵיהֶן  
 הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ  
 בְּשֹׁבֵר בֵּת-עָמִי׃  
 יא כָלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ  
 שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ  
 וַיִּצֵּת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן  
 וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֹתֶיהָ׃  
 יב לֹא הָאֱמִינוּ מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ  
 כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּבֵּל  
 כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב

and whiter than milk,  
 ruddier than rubies,  
 their bodies veined like sapphires;  
 8 and now they look  
 more darksome than the night –  
 none knows them as they pass –  
 their skin drawn tight over the bone,  
 dry as a stick.  
 9 Better to die by the sword  
 than by starving,  
 stabbed to death by hunger  
 suddenly in the field!  
 10 The hands of tender women  
 have cooked their own children,  
 making that their food,  
 amid the wreck.  
 11 The Eternal has carried out his fury,  
 vented his hot anger,  
 lit a fire in Zion  
 that burns her to the base.  
 12 None could believe, no king,  
 no one in all the world,  
 that foe or enemy could ever enter

הִבִּיטָה וּרְאָה אֶת־חֲרָפָתָנוּ:	Look, and see our abuse / our shame!
ב נִחַלְתָנוּ נַהֲפָכָה לְזָרִים	2 Our inheritance overturned, to strangers
בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכְרִים:	our houses to foreigners.
ג יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ וְאֵין אָב אִמָּתֵנוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת:	3 We were orphans, there is no father, our mothers like widows.
ד מִמֵּינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ עֵצֵינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ:	4 Our water we drank for money; our wood came (only) with a price.
ה עַל צוּאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדָּפְנוּ יִגָּעֵנוּ וְלֹא הוֹנַח־לָנוּ:	5 On our neck we were pursued, tired out, without letting us rest.
ו מִצְרַיִם נִתְּנוּ לָד אַשּׁוּר לְשֹׁבַע לֶחֶם:	6 Egypt, we stretched a hand, Assyria, to satisfy bread.
ז אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאֵינָם וְאִנְחָנוּ עוֹנֵי תִּיהֶם סָבְלוּ:	7 Our fathers sinned and are not, and we shouldered their evils.
ח עֲבָדִים מְשָׁלוּ בָנוּ פָּרַק אֵין מִיָּדָם:	8 Slaves ruled us. There is none to break us out from their hand.
ט בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נָבִיא לַחֲמֵנוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר:	9 For our lives we bring our bread, from the wilderness' sword.
י עוֹרֵנוּ כִּתְנוֹר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעֵב:	10 Our skin like a furnace, we* glowed, from the delirium of hunger.
יא נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָנוּ	11 Women in Zion were victimized,

מַלְכָּת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ קָרֵב קִצֵּינוּ מִלְּאוּ יָמֵינוּ כִּי־בָא קִצֵּינוּ:	till we dare not walk in the street, our days are numbered and over, for our end has come.
יט קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ מִנְּשָׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם עַל־הַתְּרִים וְלָקְנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ:	19 More swift were our pursuers than eagles of the air, hunting us over the hills, ambushing us on the wilds;
כ רֵיחַ אִפְּיֵנוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה נִלְכַּד בְּשַׁחֲתוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ נַחֲיָה בְּגוֹיִם:	20 They trapped the king, the Eternal's choice, breath of our lives, of whom we said, "Under his reign we shall hold out among the nations!"
כא שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בֵּת־אֱדוֹם יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאַרְצָךְ עֵוֶן גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תִּעָבֶר־כּוֹס תִּשְׁכָּרִי וְתִתְעַרְרִי:	21 Rejoice and be glad in your home-land, O maiden Edom! But the cup will come round to you, and leave you drunk and disheveled.
כב תִּם־עוֹנֶיךָ בֵּת־צִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתָךְ פֶּקֶד עוֹנֶיךָ בֵּת־אֱדוֹם גִּלְיָה עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ:	22 Zion, your guilt is over and gone, no more exile for you! But Edom, your guilt shall be punished, your sins laid bare!

## CHAPTER 5

א זְכוֹר יְהוָה מַה־הָיָה לָנוּ	1 YHVH, remember what was ours.
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תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים: כֹּא הִשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה   אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם: כִּי אִם-מָאָס מְאֹסֵתָנוּ קִצְפָּת עָלֵינוּ עַד-מָאֹד	Abandon us for the span of time's days? 21 Turn us, YHVH, toward you, and we will turn. Renew our days , like long before. 22 For if loathing, you should loathe us, be enraged over us, so very much—!
הִשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה   אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:	Turn us, YHVH, toward you, and we will turn. Make our days new again, like dawn / long ago.

Some notes on the theology of *Eikhah*:

The idea that tragedy and disaster are punishment for our sins is alien to most modern Jews. The author(s) of *Eikhah* believed that what happened to Zion was divine punishment. (This is one reason why it is hard to connect the Holocaust with what we mourn on *Tish'a B'av*.)

Besides the obvious consolation of believing that the tragedy had meaning, the reader might also consider that for the ancients, the two choices were to believe that the destruction was punishment, or that God simply had no interest in them. It is easy to imagine why people would choose the image of a punishing God over the complete absence of God – though the latter possibility is suggested in the very last line of the text, before we go back to repeat the more comforting line “Turn us...”

Only in chapter 3 is the destruction of Zion consistently seen as fair and just punishment. In other chapters, the degree of divine punishment is (subtly) described as excessive and abusive (e.g. “See YHVH and look: Whom did you treat like this?” in chapter 2).

According to Jeremiah, the reason for exile was that Israel had not allowed the land to rest during her Jubilee years – an outcome promised in the Torah. (This idea is not found in *Eikhah*, where the identification of the people with the land is total.) In an age when we have good reason to believe that our ecological “sins” are coming home to roost, the connection between disaster and divine retribution may not seem so farfetched. If we sympathize with this idea, we can read *Eikhah* as an invitation to change our lives, towards justice for all peoples, for all species, and for the land herself.

בְּתִלֹת בָּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה: יָב שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נִתְּלוּ פָּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדְּרוּ: יָג בַּחֹרִים טָחוּן נָשָׂאוּ וְנַעֲרִים בַּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ: יָד זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שַׁבָּתוֹ בַּחֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם: טו שַׁבַּת מְשׁוּשׁ לִבֵּנוּ נִהְפָּד לְאַבֵּל מְחִלָּנוּ: טז נִפְלָה עֲטֶרֶת רֹאשֵׁנוּ אִוִּי-נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ: יז עַל-זֶה הָיָה דְּוָה לִבֵּנוּ עַל-אַלֶּה חֲשָׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ: יח עַל הַר-צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמִם שׁוּעָלִים הִלְכוּ-בָּו: יט אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב בְּסִפְּאָךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר: כ לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ	girls, in Judah's towns. 12 Ministers by their hand hung. Elders' faces were void of majesty. 13 Boys would carry a millstone, and youths, stumbling with wood. 14 Elders ceased from gate, boys from their play. 15 Our heart stopped any joy, our dance overturned into mourning. 16 The crown on our head fell; Oy for us! For we sinned. 17 For this our heart was sickened. For these our eyes darkened. 18 For Mount Zion, that was desolated, foxes went through her. 19 You, YHVH will sit for all world-time, your seat through generations and generations. 20 Why would you forget us forever?
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