

CHAPTER 1

- א איכה | 1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –
ישבה בודד that she sat alone,
העיר רבתי עָם the city so great / so swelled with people?
היתה כאלמנה She was like a widow.
רבתי בגוים The one great among the nations,
שָׂרְתִי בַמְדִינֹת ministering among the states,
היתה לַמָּס: became a slave caste.
- ב בכו תבכה בלילה 2 Crying, she will cry in the night,
ודמעתה על לחיה her tear upon her cheek
אין לה מנחם There is none for her, no comforter,
מכל אהביה from all her lovers.
כל רעייה All her companions
בגדו בה played traitor with her.
היו לה לאיבים They became for her enemies.
- ג גלתה יהודה 3 She, Judah, was exiled,
מעני ומרב עבודה by poverty, and by (so) much hard labor
היא ישבה בגוים She sat among the nations,
לא מצאה מנוח not finding any rest;
כל רדפיה השיגוה All her pursuers caught up with her
בין המצרים between the confined places.
- ד דרכי ציון אבלות 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, is able to evoke 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, 2008, all applicable rights reserved.

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ראוה צרים
 שחקו על משבתה:
 ח חטא חטאה ירושלים
 על-כן לנידה היתה
 כל-מכבדיה הזיליה
 כי-ראו ערותה
 גם-היא נאנחה
 ותשב אחור:
 ט טמאתה בשוליה
 לא זכרה אחריתה
 ותרד פלאים
 אין מנחם לה
 ראה יהוה את-עניי
 כי הגדיל אויב:
 י ידו פרח 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 שוממין
 כהניה נאנחים
 בתולתיה נוגות
 והיא מר-לה:
 ה הוי צריה לראש
 איביה שלו
 כי-הונה הונה
 על רב-פשעיה
 עולליה הלכו שבי לפני-צר:
 ו ויצא מן-בת-ציון
 כל-הדרה
 הוי שריה כאילים
 לא-מצאו מרעה
 וילכו בלא-כח
 לפני רוקף:
 ז זכרה ירושלים
 ימי עניה
 ומרודה
 כל מחמדיה
 אשר הוי מימי קדם
 בנפל עמה ביד-צר
 ואין עוזר 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 בְּקִרְבִי
 קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד
 לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחֲוָרַי
 גַּת דְּרֹךְ אֲדֹנָי
 לְבַת־וּלְתַת בַּת־יְהוּדָה:
 טז עַל־אֵלֶּה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה
 עֵינַי | עֵינַי לְדָדָה מַיִם
 כִּי־רַחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם
 מַשְׁיֵב נַפְשִׁי
 הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים
 כִּי גִבֵּר אוֹיְבֵי:
 יז פָּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
 צִוָּה יְהוָה לְיַעֲקֹב
 סָבִיבוּ צָרָיו
 הִיטָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
 לְגִנְדָה בֵּינֵיהֶם:
 יח צַדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה
 כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי
 שְׁמַעוּ־נָא כָּל־הָעַמִּים
 וְרֵאוּ מִכְּאֲבִי
 בְּתוּלַתִי וּבַחֲוָרַי

15 Adonai spurned
 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 לְהַשְׁיֵב נַפְשׁ
 רֵאֵה יְהוָה
 וְהִבִּיטָה כִּי הִיטִיתִי זוּלָלָה:
 יב לֹא לְוָא אֵלֵיכֶם
 כָּל־עַבְרֵי דְרֹךְ
 הַבֵּיטוּ וְרֵאוּ
 אִם־יֵשׁ מִכְּאוֹב כְּמִכְּאֲבִי
 אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה
 בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:
 יג מִמְרוֹם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמוֹתַי
 וַיִּדְרֹגָה
 פָּרַשׁ רְשֵׁת לְרַגְלִי
 הִשְׁבִּנִי אַחֲוֹר
 נָתַנְנִי שְׁמָמָה
 כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:
 יד נֶשְׂקִד עַל פְּשָׁעַי
 בְּיָדוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגְּוּ
 עָלוּ עַל־צַוְאָרִי
 הִכְשִׁיל כַּחֲוִי
 נָתַנְנִי אֲדֹנָי בְּיָדֵי
 לֹא־אוּכַל 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 אֲנַחֲתִי
וְלִבִּי דָוָי:

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

CHAPTER 2

אֵת אֵיכָהּ |
יַעֲיֵב בְּאַפּוֹ |
אֲדַנִּי אֶת־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן
הִשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ
תְּפִאֲרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא־זָכַר
הַדָּם־רַגְלָיו
בְּיוֹם אַפּוֹ:
בַּבֹּלַע אֲדָנִי
לֹא חָמַל
אֶת כָּל־נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב
הָרָס בְּעִבְרָתוֹ
מִבְּצֻרֵי־בֵת־יְהוּדָה
הִגִּיעַ לְאֶרֶץ
חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֵיהָ:
גָּדַע בְּחִרְי־אֵף
כָּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל
הִשִּׁיב אֶחָזֵר יְמִינוֹ

1 *Eiklah!* 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

הִלְכוּ בַשָּׁבִי:
יט קָרָאתִי לְמֵאֲהָבִי
הִמָּה רְמוּנֵי
כְּהִנֵּי וְזִקְנֵי
בְּעִיר גּוֹעֵו

walked captive / into captivity.
19 I called to my lovers.
Those deceived me.
My priests, and my elders,
they wasted away in the city,
seeking food for them,
and to bring back their life.

כִּי־בִקְשׁוּ אֹכֶל לָמוֹ
וַיִּשְׁיבוּ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם:
כ רְאֵה יְהוָה כִּי־צָר־לִי
מִצֵּי חֲמָרְמָרו
נִהְפָּה לִבִּי בְּקֶרְבִּי
כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי
מִחוּץ שֶׁכְּלָה־חֲרָב
בְּבַיִת כַּמוֹת:

20 See YHVH – for mine is torment,
my guts were churning,
my heart overturned within me,
for rebelling I rebelled.
From outside sword striking down;
In the house, like death itself.

כא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נֶאֱנַחָה אֲנִי
אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי
כֹל־אֵיבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רַעֲתִי
שָׂשׂוּ כִּי אָתָּה עָשִׂיתָ
הַבָּאת יוֹם־קִרְאָתְךָ
וַיְהִיו כְּמוֹנֵי:

21 They listened. I am moaning,
there is no comforter for me.
All my enemies listened for my evil doom.
They rejoiced, for you did it,
you brought the day you called for –
and they will be(come) like me.

כב תָּבֵא כָל־רַעֲוַתְּם לְפָנַי
וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ
כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹלָלְתָּ לִּי
עַל כָּל־פְּשָׁעַי

22 All their evil will come before you
Treat them
like you treated me
for all my sins.

הסגיר ביד־אויב
חומת ארמנותיה
קול נתנו בבית־יהוה
כיום מועד:
ח חשב יהוה | להשחית
חומת בת־ציון
נטה קו
לא־השיב ידו
מבלע
ויאכל־חל וחומה
יחדו אמללו:
ט טבעו בארץ שעריה
אבד ושבר בריחיה
מלכה ושריה בגוים
אין תורה
גם־נביאיה
לא־מצאו חזון מיהוה:
י יִשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יְדָמוּ
זקני בת־ציון
העלו עפר על־ראשם
הגרו שקים
הורידו לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן
בתולת ירושלים:

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.

מפני אויב
ויבער בעקב כאש להבה
אכלה סביב:
ד דרך קשתו כאויב
נצב ימינו
כצד
ויהרג כל
מתמדי־עין
באהל בת־ציון
שפך כאש חמתו:
ה הִיָּה אֲדֹנָי | כְּאוֹיֵב
בלע ישראל
בלע כל־ארמנותיה
שחת מבצרי
וירב בבת־יהודה
תאניה ואניה:
ו ויחמס כגן שכו
שחת מועדו
שכח יהוה | בציון
מועד ושבת
וינאץ בנעם־אפו מלך וכהן:
ז זנח אדני | מזבחו
נאר מקדשו

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.

שׁוֹא וְתַפֵּל
 וְלֹא־גָלוּ עַל־עֲוֹנֶךָ
 לְהִשָּׁיב שְׁבוּתֶךָ
 וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ
 מִשָּׂאוֹת שׁוֹא וּמַדּוּחִים:
 טו סָפְקוּ עֲלֶיךָ כַּפַּיִם
 כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרֶךְ
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעֻוּ רֹאשָׁם
 עַל־בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 הַזֹּאת
 הָעִיר שֶׁיֵּאמְרוּ
 כְּלִילַת יָפִי
 מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ:
 טז פָּצּוּ עֲלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם
 כָּל־אֹיְבֶיךָ
 שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחְרְקוּ־שֵׁן
 אָמְרוּ בְלַעַנּוּ
 אַךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ
 מִצָּאֵנוּ רְאִינוּ:
 יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם
 בְּצַע אָמְרָתוֹ
 אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי־קֶדֶם
 תִּרְס 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 בְדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי
 חֲמַרְמְרוּ מֵעֵי
 נִשְׁפְּפוּ לָאָרֶץ כְּבִדֵי
 עַל־שֹׁכֵר
 בַּת־עַמִּי
 בְּעֵטָף עוֹלָל וַיִּזְנֶק
 בְּרַחֲבוֹת קִרְיָה:
 יב לְאִמָּתָם יֵאמְרוּ
 אֵיךְ דָּגַן וַיַּיֵּן
 בְּהִתְעַטְּפֵם
 כְּחֻלָּל בְּרַחֲבוֹת
 לְעִיר בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשָׁם
 אֶל־חֵיק אִמָּתָם:
 יג מָה־אֶעֱיִדֶךָ
 מָה אֲדַמֶּה־לָּךְ
 הַבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 מָה אֲשׁוּהָ־לָּךְ
 וַאֲנִיחֶמְךָ
 בְּתוֹלַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן
 כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם
 שִׁבְרֶךָ
 מִי יִרְפָּא־לָּךְ:
 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 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

נַעַר וְזָקֵן
 בְּתוֹלְתַי וּבְחֹרָי
 נָפְלוּ בַחֶרֶב
 הִרְגַתְּ בַיּוֹם אַפְּךָ
 טַבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלָתָ:
 כִּי תִקְרָא כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד
 מִגּוּרֵי מְסָבִיב
 וְלֹא הָיָה בַיּוֹם אֶף-יְהוָה
 פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד
 אֲשֶׁר-טַפַּחְתִּי וְרַבִּיתִי
 אִבִּי כֻלָּם:

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 translation begins here.]

אֲנִי הַגֹּבֵר רָאָה עָנִי
 בְּשֹׁבֵט עֲבָרְתוֹ:
 בִּי אֹתִי נָתַג וַיִּלְךָ
 חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹר:
 גִּי אֶף בִּי יָשַׁב יַהֲפֹךְ יָדוֹ
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
 דִּבְלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי
 שִׁבְרָ 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 קַרְן צָרֶיךָ:
 יַח צָעַק לְבָם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי
 חוֹמַת בַּת-צִיּוֹן
 הוֹרִידִי כַנַּחַל דְּמָעָה
 יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
 אַל-תִּתְּנֵי פּוּגַת לֶךְ
 אַל-תִּתְּדִם בַּת-עֵינֶיךָ:
 יט קוּמִי | רְנִי בַלַּיְלָה
 לְרֵאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת
 שִׁפְכֵי כַמִּים לְבָרֶךְ
 גִּזְחַ פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי
 שְׂאֵי אֲלֵי כַפְיֶךָ
 עַל-נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלֶיךָ
 הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב
 בְּרֵאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת:
 כִּי רָאָה יְהוָה וַתִּבְיַטָּה
 לְמִי עוֹלְלָתָ כֹּה
 אִם-תֹּאכְלֶנָה נְשִׁים פְּרִיָם
 עֲלֵי טַפָּחִים
 אִם-יִהְרַג בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי
 כְּתֹן וְנִבְיָא:
 כִּי שָׁכְבוּ לְאָרֶץ 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,
 coddled babies –;
 If priest and prophet are murdered
 in *Adonai*'s holy place –!
 21 Laid down to the earth (in the) streets,

נְגִינַתְּם כָּל־הַיּוֹם: burden of their satire all day long.
 טו הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בַמְרוֹרִים 15 He has filled me up with bitter herbs,
 הִרְוַנִי לַעֲנָה: and sated me with wormwood;
 טז וַיִּגְרַס בְּחֻצֵי שֹׁנֵי 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel,
 הִכְפִּישָׁנִי בְּאַפָּר: and covered me with ashes.
 יז וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי 17 He has bereft me of all bliss,
 נִשְׁיִתִּי טוֹבָה: I forget what it is to prosper,
 יח וָאָמַר אֲבַד נִצְחִי 18 I said, “My strength is gone,
 וַתוֹחֲלֵתִי מִיְהוָה: and my hope in the Eternal [YHVH]!”
 יט זְכַר־עֲנִי וּמְרוֹדֵי 19 The thought of my stress and scattering
 לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ: is bitter gall to me;
 כ זְכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר 20 my soul is always thinking of it,
 וַתִּשׁוּחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי: and is crushed within me.
 כא זָאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל־לִבִּי 21 But I will call to mind,
 עַל־כֵּן אוֹחִיל: to give me hope,
 כב חֶסֶד־יְהוָה כִּי לֹא־תִמְנוּ 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 הִבְנֶה עָלַי וַיִּקְרָה 5 he has piled troubles up against me,
 רָאשׁ וַתִּלְאַחַה: right round my head;
 ו בְּמַחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי 6 he has made me dwell in the dark,
 כְּמֵתֵי עוֹלָם: like those long dead;
 ז גָּדַר בְּעֵדֵי 7 he has walled me round,
 וְלֹא אֵצֵא: till I cannot go out,
 ח הִכְבִּיד נְחֹשְׁתַּי: He has loaded me with chains;
 ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וַיֹּאשׁוּעַ 8 and when I fain would cry for help,
 שָׁתַם תְּפִלָּתִי: He stops my prayer;
 ט גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בְּגִזִּית 9 He blocks my way with boulders,
 נְתִיבַתִּי עֲוֹה: till my course is twisted;
 י יָבֵב אֲרֵב הוּא לִּי 10 He lurks for me like a bear,
 אֲרִי בַמְסֻתָּרִים: like a lion in ambush;
 יא יָאֵר דְּרָכִי סוּרָר וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי 11 He has chased and mangled me
 שָׁמְנֵי שָׁמִים: and left me all forlorn;
 יב דִּבְרָה קִשְׁתּוֹ 12 He has bent his bow
 וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי כַמִּטְרָא לַחֲץ: and made me target for his arrows;
 יג הִבִּיא בְּכִלְיוֹתָי 13 he has driven his shafts home,
 בְּנִי אֲשַׁפְתּוֹ: right into me;
 יד הֵייתִי שְׂחָק לְכָל־עַמִּי 14 I am the butt of all nations,

לג כי לא ענה מלבּו ויגה בני-איש: 33 he is loathe to cause pain
 to grieve the sons of men.
 לד לדכא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ: 34 When a whole people is taken
 prisoner and downtrodden,
 לה לה להטות משפט-גבר נגד פני עליון: 35 when a man
 is deprived of his rights,
 לו לו לעות אדם בריבו אדני לא ראה: 36 when a person does not get justice,
 does the Lord not see it?
 לז מי זה אמר ותהי אדני לא צוה: 37 Who can carry out his will,
 unless it is the Lord's order?
 לח לח מפּי עליון לא תצא קרעות והטוב: 38 Are not weal and woe alike
 decreed by the Most High?
 לט מה-יתאונן אדם חי גבר על-חטאיו: 39 Then why should mortal men complain,
 when they are punished for their sins?
 מ נחפשה דרכינו ונחלקה ונשובה עד-יהוה: 40 Let us scan and search our lives,
 let us return to the Eternal,
 מא מא נשא לבבנו אל-כפּים אל-אל בשמים: 41 lifting our hearts up with our hands
 to God in heaven;
 מב מב נחנו פשענו ומרינו 42 The sin is ours, we have rebelled,

אמרה נפשי על-כן אוחיל לו: I say,
 therefore I will hope in him.
 כה כה טוב יהוה לקו לנפש תדרשנו: 25 The Eternal is good
 to those who wait for him,
 כו כו טוב ויחיל ודומם לתשועת יהוה: 26 It is good to wait in silence
 for the help of the Eternal;
 כז כז טוב לגבר כּי-ישא על בנעוריו: 27 it is good for a man
 to bear without a word
 the rebuke of the Eternal;
 כח כח ישב בדרד ויחם כּי נטל עליו: 28 Let him sit alone in silence,
 since it is the Eternal's hand;
 כט כט יתן בעפר פיהו אולי יש תקנה: 29 let him lay his lips to the dust –
 there may be hope for him;
 ל ל יתן למכהו לחי ישבע בחרפה: 30 let him offer his cheek to the striker,
 and suffer all taunts.
 לא לא כּי לא ינח לעולם אדני: 31 For the Lord [Adonai] will not
 always discard life;
 לב לב כּי אס-הוגה ורחם כרב חסדיו: 32 he wounds, but he has pity,
 so rich is his love;

נא עיני עוללה לנפשי 51 my eyes are sore with sorrow
 מכל בנות עירי: for all the woes of my city.
 נב צוד צדוני כצפור 52 They have hunted me like a bird,
 איבי חנם: with no reason for their hate;
 נג צמתו 53 they dropped me
 בבור חלי to die in a dungeon,
 וידו-אבן בי: flinging stones at me;
 נד צפומים על-ראשי 54 waters flowed over my head,
 אמרתי נגזרתי: "I am lost," I said.
 נה קראתי שמך יהוה מבור 55 From the depth of the dungeon
 תחתיות: I called, O Eternal, to you;
 נו קולי שמעת 56 you did hear me crying
 אל-תעלם אנך: "Give ear, don't hide
 לרוחתי לשועתי: from my plea and cry";
 נז קרבת ביום אקראך אמרת 57 you came at my call,
 אל-תירא: bidding me, "Fear not."
 נח רבת אדני ריבי נפשי 58 O Lord, you did take my part
 גאלת חיי: and save my life.
 נט ראיתך יהוה עונותי 59 And now you see my wrongs;
 שפטה משפטי: Oh vindicate me!
 ס ראיתך כל-נקמתם 60 You have seen all the revenge

אתה לא סלחת: and you – you have not pardoned;
 מג ספתה באף 43 You have veiled your face in anger,
 ותרדפנו pursuing us,
 הרגת לא חמלת: killing without pity;
 מד סכותה 44 you have covered
 בענן לך yourself with a cloud
 מעבור תפלה: no prayer can pierce;
 מה סחי ומאוס 45 you have made us
 תשימנו mere scum and refuse
 בקרב העמים: in the world.

מו פצו עלינו פיהם 46 Our foes all yell
 כל-איבינו: against us;
 מז פחד ופחת תיה לנו 47 dismay and destruction befall us,
 השאת והשבר: ravage and ruin.
 מח פלגי-מים תרד עיני 48 Tears are flooding from my eyes
 על-שבר בת-עמי: for the ruin of my people;

[Next 3 verses were reordered by Moffat, sequenced in his translation: 51; 49; 50.]

מט עיני נגרה ולא תדמה 49 My eyes stream without ceasing,
 מאין הפגות: without rest,
 נ עד-ישקוף 50 till the Eternal will look down
 וירא יהוה משמים: from heaven above,

ב בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים 2 the priceless sons of Zion,
 הַמְּסֻלָּאִים בַּפֶּזֶן worth their weight in gold,
 אֵיכָה נִחְשְׁבוּ לְנִבְלֵי-חֶרֶשׁ count no more than crockery,
 מִעֲשֵׂה יַדֵּי יוֹצֵר: mere pots of clay!
 ג גַּם-תַּנִּים תִּלְצוּ שֵׁד 3 Even jackals give the breast
 הַיְנִיקוּ גּוּרֵיהֶן and suckle their whelps;
 בַּת-עַמִּי לְאֶכָזֶר but the women of my people are cruel
 כִּיעֲנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר: as the ostrich wild;
 ד דִּבְק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק 4 For the tongue of the nursling cleaves
 אֶל-חִכּוֹ בַצִּמָּא for thirst to the roof of its mouth,
 עוֹלָלִים שְׁאֵלוּ לָחֶם the children beg for food,
 פֶּרֶשׁ אֵינֹן לָהֶם: and no one gives it.
 ה הָאֶכְלִים לְמַעַד נְזִים 5 Those who fared on dainties
 נִשְׁמוּ בַחֹצוֹת rot upon the street;
 הַיַּמְנִים עָלַי תוֹלָע those who lay on scarlet rugs
 חִבְּקוּ אֶשְׁפָּתוֹת: huddle on an ash-heap.
 ו וַיִּגְדַּל עֲוֹן בַּת-עַמִּי 6 The guilt of my people was greater
 מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם than even the sin of Sodom,
 הַקְּפוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רֹגַע Sodom that fell in a flash,
 וְלֹא-חָלוּ בָּהּ יַדַּיִם: before any could wring his hands.
 ז זָכוּ נְזִירֶיהָ 7 Her headmen were brighter
 מִשֶּׁלֶג than snow,
 צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב and whiter than milk,

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 שִׁפְתַי קָמִי וְהִגִּיזוּם עָלַי 62 the talk of the ones who attack me,
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם: their muttering all the day long.
 סג שִׁבְתֶּם וְקִימְתֶם הַבִּיטָה 63 Look at them, sitting or rising –
 אֲנִי מִנְגִּינְתֶּם 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 מַגְנַת-לֵב 65 you will blind their vision –
 תִּאֲלָתֶךָ לָהֶם: your curse be upon them!
 סו תִּרְדֹּף בְּאַף 66 You will chase them angrily,
 וְתִשְׁמִידֵם and crush them
 מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה: out of life.

CHAPTER 4

א אֵיכָה 1 Eikhah! Ah!
 יוֹעַם זָהָב how the gold is dimmed,
 יִשְׁנָא הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב how changed the gold so pure!
 תִּשְׁתַּפְּכְנָה אֲבִי-קֹדֶשׁ the sacred gems are scattered
 בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חֹצוֹת: over every street;

יג מַחֲטָאת נְבִיאֶיהָ 13 It was all for the sin of her prophets,
 עֲוֹנוֹת כֹּהֲנֶיהָ for the crime of her priests,
 הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ who shed in her
 דָּם צְדִיקִים: the blood of the just.
 יד נָעוּ עֲוֵרִים בְּחוּצוֹת 14 Now, stained with blood,
 נִגְאָלוּ בָדָם they wander blindly about the streets,
 בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ יָגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם: brushing against men they once avoided.
 טו סוּרוּ טֹמֵא 15 “Begone! You are unclean!”
 קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ men shout at them,
 סוּרוּ סוּרוּ אֶל-תִּגְעוּ “Begone! Avoid us.”
 כִּי נָצוּ גַם-נָעוּ So they stagger and wander,
 אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם לֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לָגוּר: finding no more shelter abroad.
 טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה 16 The Eternal himself
 חֲלָקָם has scattered them,
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִבְיטָם caring no more for them,
 פָּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ disregarding the priests,
 וְזִקְנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ: and heedless of the prophets.
 יז עוֹלֵינוּ תִכְלִינָה עֵינֵינוּ 17 Our eyes are strained and failing,
 אֶל-עֲוֹרֹתֵנוּ הֶבֶל as we look for aid, empty of hope;
 בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צְפִינוּ אֶל-גּוֹי watching for a nation
 לֹא יוֹשֵׁעַ: that never brought salvation.
 יח צְדוּ צְעֵדֵינוּ 18 Foes dog our steps,
 מַלְכֶת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ till we dare not walk in the street,

אֲדָמוּ לְעָצָם מִפְּנִינִים ruddier than rubies,
 סַפִּיר גִּזְרָתָם: their bodies veined like sapphires;
 ח הַשֵּׁף מִשְׁחֹר 8 and now they look
 תֵּאָרוֹם more darksome than the night –
 לֹא נִכְרוּ בְּחוּצוֹת none knows them as they pass –
 צַפֵּד עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם their skin drawn tight over the bone,
 יבֵשׁ הָיָה כְּעֵץ: dry as a stick.
 ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלָלֵי-חֶרֶב 9 Better to die by the sword
 מִחֲלָלֵי רֶעֶב than by starving,
 שֵׁיהֶם יוֹבֹבוּ מִדְּקָרִים stabbed to death by hunger
 מִתְּנוּבַת שָׂדֵי: suddenly in the field!
 י יָדֵי נְשִׁים רַחֲמַנִּיּוֹת 10 The hands of tender women
 בִּשְׁלוּ יְלָדֵיהֶן have cooked their own children,
 הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ making that their food,
 בְּשֶׁבֶר בֵּת-עַמִּי: amid the wreck.
 יא כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חַמָּתוֹ 11 The Eternal has carried out his fury,
 שָׂפַד חֶרֶז אָפוֹ vented his hot anger,
 וַיִּצַּת אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן lit a fire in Zion
 וַתֵּאֱכַל יְסוּדֹתֶיהָ: that burns her to the base.
 יב לֹא הָאֱמִינוּ מַלְכֵי-אֲרָץ 12 None could believe, no king,
 כֹּל יִשְׁבֵי תִבְלַי no one in all the world,
 כִּי יָבֹא צֶר וְאוֹיֵב that foe or enemy could ever enter
 בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלָּם: inside Jerusalem.

את־חרפתנו: our abuse / our shame!
 ב נחלתנו נהפכה לזרים 2 Our inheritance overturned,
 to strangers
 בתינו לזכרים: our houses to foreigners.
 ג יתומים הלינו ואין אב 3 We were orphans, there is no father,
 אמתנו כאלמנות: our mothers like widows.
 ד מימינו בכסף שתינו 4 Our water we drank for money;
 עצינו במחיר יבאו: our wood came (only) with a price.
 ה על צוארנו נרדפנו 5 On our neck we were pursued,
 יגענו ולא הונח לנו: tired out, without letting us rest.
 ו מצרים נתנו יד 6 Egypt, we stretched a hand,
 אשור לשבע לחם: Assyria, to satisfy bread.
 ז אבותינו חטאו ואינם 7 Our fathers sinned and are not,
 ונאנחנו עונתיהם סבלנו: and we shouldered their evils.
 ח עבדים משלו לנו 8 Slaves ruled us.
 פרק אין 9 There is none to break us out
 מידם: from their hand.
 ט בנפשנו נביא לחמנו מפני 9 For our lives we bring our bread,
 קרב המדבר: from the wilderness' sword.
 י עורנו כתנור נכמרו 10 Our skin like a furnace, glowing,
 מפני זלעפות רעב: from the delirium of hunger.
 יא נשים בציון ענו 11 Women in Zion were victimized,
 בתלת בערי יהודה: girls, in Judah's towns.

קרב קצינו מלאו ימינו 19 More swift were our pursuers
 כי־בא קצינו: than eagles of the air,
 יט קלים היו רדפינו 19 More swift were our pursuers
 מנשרי שמים: than eagles of the air,
 על־ההרים דלקנו 20 They trapped the king, the Eternal's
 במדבר ארבו לנו: choice, breath of our lives,
 כ רוח אפינו משית יהוה 20 They trapped the king, the Eternal's
 נלכד בשחיתותם: of whom we said, "Under his reign
 אשר אמרנו בצל 20 They trapped the king, the Eternal's
 נחיה בגוים: we shall hold out among the nations!"
 כא שיש ושמחי בת־אדום 21 Rejoice and be glad in your
 יושבת בארץ עוז 21 Rejoice and be glad in your
 גם־עליך תעבר־פוס 21 Rejoice and be glad in your
 תשכרי ותתערי: home-land, O maiden Edom!
 כב תם־עונך בת־ציון 22 Zion, your guilt is over and gone,
 לא יוסף להגלותך 22 Zion, your guilt is over and gone,
 פקד עונך 22 Zion, your guilt is over and gone,
 בת־אדום 22 Zion, your guilt is over and gone,
 גלה על־חטאתיך: no more exile for you!
 But Edom,
 your guilt shall be punished,
 your sins laid bare!

CHAPTER 5

א זכר יהוה מה־היה לנו 1 YHVH, remember what was ours.
 הביטה וראה Look, and see

לְאַרְךָ יָמִים:
 כִּי הִשְׁיִבְנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ
 וְנִשְׁוֵבָה
 חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:
 כִּי בִי אִם-מָאֵס מְאַסְתָּנוּ
 קִצְפָּת עָלֵינוּ עַד-מָאֵד

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—!

הִשְׁיִבְנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ
 וְנִשְׁוֵבָה
 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.

יָב שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נִתְלוּ 12 Ministers by their hand hung.
 פְּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ: Elders' faces were void of majesty.
 יָג בַּחֹרִים טְחוּז נָשְׂאוּ 13 Boys would carry a millstone,
 וַיִּזְעָרִים בְּעֵץ כְּשָׂלוּ: and youths, stumbling with wood.
 יָד זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שְׁבָתוֹ 14 Elders ceased from gate,
 בַּחֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם: boys from their play.
 טו שְׂבַת מְשׁוֹשׁ לִבֵּנוּ 15 Our heart stopped any joy,
 נִהְפָּד לְאָבֶל 16 our dance overturned
 מְחֻלָּנוּ: into mourning.
 טז נִפְלָה עֲטֹרַת רֵאשֵׁנוּ 16 The crown on our head fell;
 אִי-נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטֵאנוּ: Oy for us! For we sinned.
 יז עַל-זֶה הָיָה דָוָה לִּבֵּנוּ 17 For this our heart was sickened.
 עַל-אַלֶּה חֲשָׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ: For these our eyes darkened.
 יח עַל הַר-צִיּוֹן 18 For Mount Zion,
 שְׁשָׁמִם 19 that was desolated,
 שׁוֹעֲלִים הִלְכוּ-בָּהּ: foxes went through her.
 יט אַתָּה יְהוָה 19 You, YHVH
 לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב 20 will sit for all world-time,
 כְּסֵאֶךָ 21 your seat
 לְדָר וְדוֹר: through generations and generations.
 כ לָמָּה 20 Why
 לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ 21 would you forget us forever?
 תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ 22 Abandon us