

Laments איכה

Translations of *Eikhah* for our world

This booklet uses two translations of Laments, the book of mourning poems read on *Tish'a B'Av*. Chapters 1, 2, 4 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”, translating related Hebrew words with related English words and following the order and syntax of the Hebrew as much as possible. This translation also focuses on the more physical, earthy meaning of words, in order to draw the reader from modern thought patterns towards more ancient ways of seeing and feeling. In some cases alternate translations are given, indicated by a slash. (When reading aloud simply pick one of the translations. For YHVH, you can read *Adonai* or *Hashem* or “Eternal One”.) Chapter 3 is partly retranslated from James Moffat’s 1922 translation. Moffat followed the principles of “idiomatic” translation, recasting the Hebrew according to the word order and meaning of everyday English. Moffat, more than most idiomatic translators, evokes the emotional depth of the Hebrew. As a somewhat literal translation this work uses “He” and “His” as pronouns for God, but the Torah and common sense both command us not to make an exclusively male or female image of God. If you are using *Laments* liturgically please feel encouraged to change the pronouns. For brief essays on the theology of *Eikhah* and more, see the end of this booklet.

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Learn about and read sections from Rabbi Seidenberg’s groundbreaking book, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God’s Image in the More-Than-Human World* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) at www.kabbalahandecology.com.

Laments ©2016 by David Mevorach Seidenberg. Revised from 2008, based on translations made for the Aleph Kallah and National Havurah Institute in 2002 and 2003. Moffat’s translation first published by Hodder and Stoughton (out of copyright). Layout based on 2003 formatting by Mark Frydenberg; original translations begun in 1993. This booklet contains the sacred name in Hebrew for God. Please do not destroy or dispose of improperly.

May this work be dedicated to helping us remember the plight of all refugees from war and upheaval.



CHAPTER 1

- | | |
|---|---|
| א איכה
ישבה בוד
העיר רבתי עם
היתה כאלמנה
רבתי בגוים
שרתי במדינות
היתה למס:
ב בכו תבכה בלילה
ודמעתה על לחיה
אין לה מנחם
מכל אהביה
כל רעייה
בגדו בה
היו לה לאיבים:
ג גלתה יהודה
מעני ומרב עבודה
היא ישבה בגוים
לא מצאה מנוח
כל רדפיה השיונה
בין המצרים:
ד דרכי ציון אבלות
מבלי באי מועד
כל שעריה שוממים | 1 <i>Eikhah!</i> How can it be –
that she sat alone,
the city so great / so swelled with people?
She was like a widow.
The one great among the nations,
ministering among the states,
became a slave caste.
2 Crying, she will cry in the night,
her tear upon her cheek
There is none for her, no comforter,
from all her lovers.
All her companions
played traitor with her.
They became for her enemies.
3 She, Judah, was exiled,
by poverty, and by (so) much hard labor
She sat among the nations,
not finding any rest;
All her pursuers caught up with her
between the confined places.
4 Zion’s roads are mourning
from being without festival-goers,
all her gates desolated; |
|---|---|

כְּהַנִּיחַ נְאֻנָּחִים
 בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נוֹגוֹת
 וְהִיא מֵר־לָהּ:
 הָ הֵיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ
 אֵיבֵיהָ שָׁלוֹ
 כִּי־יְהוּהָ הוֹגָה
 עַל רַב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ
 עוֹלְלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי
 לְפָנֵי־צָר:
 וַיֵּצֵא מִן־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן
 כָּל־הַחֲדָרָה
 הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ כְּאֵילִים
 לֹא־מָצְאוּ מְרֻעָה
 וַיִּלְכוּ בְלֹא־כֹחַ
 לְפָנֵי רוֹדֵף:
 זַ זְכָרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
 יְמֵי עֲנִיָּה
 וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ
 כָּל מַחְמֹדֶיהָ
 אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיְמֵי קֶדֶם
 בְּנַפְלַע עֲמָהּ בְּיַד־צָר
 וְאֵין עֹזֵר לָהּ
 רְאוּהָ צָרִים
 שֹׁחֲקוּ עַל מִשְׁבֶּתָהּ:
 חַ חָטְא חָטְאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
 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 were like deer,
 not finding a place to graze;
 and (so) they walked, without strength,
 before a pursuer.
 7 Jerusalem remembered
 the days of her poverty / affliction
 and her downsliding,
 all her precious things
 which were from days long ago,
 while her people fell into a foe's hand;
 And there is no help for her.
 They saw her, her tormentors,
 laughing over her becoming stilled.
 8 Sinning she sinned, Jerusalem.

עַל־כֵּן לְנִידָה הָיְתָה
 כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הוֹיְלוּהָ
 כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוֹתָהּ
 גַּם־הִיא נְאֻנָּחָה
 וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲוָר:
 ט טִמְאַתָּהּ בְּשׂוּלֶיהָ
 לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרֵיתָהּ
 וַתֵּרַד פְּלֹאִים
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
 רְאֵה יְהוּהָ אֶת־עַנְיָי
 כִּי הִגְדִּיל אוֹיֵב:
 ו יְדוֹ פָּרַשׁ צָר
 עַל כָּל־מַחְמֹדֶיהָ
 כִּי־רָאָתָהּ גּוֹיִם
 בָּאוּ מִקְדְּשָׁהּ
 אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ
 לֹא־יָבֹאוּ
 בְּקִהְלֵ לָךְ:
 יא יא כָּל־עַמָּה נְאֻנָּחִים
 מְבַקְּשִׁים לֶחֶם
 נָתְנוּ מַחְמוּדֵיהֶם
 בְּאֹכֵל לְהַשִּׁיב נַפְשׁ
 רְאֵה יְהוּהָ
 וְהִבִּיטָה כִּי הֵיטִי זוּלָּתָהּ:
 יב לֹא אֶלֶיכֶם
 For this an outcast / *nidah* she became.
 All who honor her despise her,
 for they saw her nakedness.
 Also her, she is moaning,
 and turns 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;
 They gave up their precious things
 for food to restore life.
 See, YHVH,
 and look (at how) I was despised.
 12 Never to you,

כָּל-עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ |
הַבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ
אִם-יֵשׁ מִכְּאוֹב כְּמִכְּאוֹבִי
אֲשֶׁר עוֹלַל לִי
אֲשֶׁר הוֹגְהָ יְהוָה
בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפָּוֹ:
יג מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח-אַשׁ
בְּעֲצָמַי וַיִּרְדְּנָה
פָּרֶשׁ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי
הִשְׁבִּיבֵנִי אֲחֹזֵר
נִתְּנֵנִי שְׁמֵמָה
כָּל-הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:
יד נֶשְׂקֵךְ עַל פִּשְׁעֵי
בְּיָדוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגְּנוּ
עָלָו עַל-צַוְאַרְי
הַכֶּשֶׁל כַּחֲוִי
נִתְּנֵנִי אֲדֹנָי בְּיַדִּי
לֹא-אוּכַל קוּם:
טו סָלָה
כָּל-אֲבִירֵי | אֲדֹנָי בְּקֶרְבִּי
קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד
לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחֲוָרֵי
גַת דִּבְרֶךְ אֲדֹנָי
לְבַתּוּלַת בַּת-יְהוּדָה:
טז עַל-אַלְהָה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה

all who pass on the way.
(You all) must look and 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 overwhelmed them.
He spread out a net for my feet;
He turned / repelled me backward;
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.
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;

עֵינַי | עֵינַי יִרְדָּה מַיִם
כִּי-רַחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם
מִשְׁבִּיב נַפְשִׁי
הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים
כִּי גִבַר אוֹיֵב:
יז פָּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ
אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
צִוָּה יְהוָה לְיַעֲקֹב
סָבִיבֵיו צָרָיו
הִיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
לְנִדָּה בֵּינֵיהֶם:
יח צַדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה
כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי
שְׁמַעוּ-נָא כָּל-הָעַמִּים
וּרְאוּ מִכְּאוֹבִי
בְּתוּלַתִי וּבַחֲוָרֵי
הֶלְכּוּ בַשָּׁבִי:
יט קָרָאתִי לְמֵאֲהָבֵי
הִמָּה רַמּוֹנֵי
כִּהְנִי וּזְקֵנֵי
בְּעִיר גּוֹעוּ
כִּי-בִקְשׁוּ אֶכְלֵ לָמוֹ
וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁם:
כ רְאֵה יְהוָה כִּי-צָר-לִי
מֵעַי חֲמָרְמוֹרוּ

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
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 themselves,
and to bring back their life / soul.
20 See YHVH – for mine is torment,
my guts were churning,

נִהְפָּךְ לְבַי בְּקִרְבִּי
כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיתִי
מִחוּץ שְׂכֵלְהָ חָרַב
בְּבַיִת כַּמּוֹת:

my heart overturned within me,
for rebelling I rebelled.
From outside sword bereaving;
In the house, like death itself.

כִּי שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נִאֲנַחָה אָנֹכִי
אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי
כָּל-אֹיְבֵי שָׁמְעוּ
רַעְתִּי

21 They listened – for I am moaning,
there is no comforter for me.
All my enemies listened
for my evil doom.

שָׂשׂוּ כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ
הִבֵּאתָ יוֹם-קִרְאָתָּ
וַיְהִיו כְּמוֹנֵי:

They rejoiced, for You did it,
You brought the day You called for –
and let them be(come) like me.

כִּי תָבֹא כָּל-רַעְתֶּם לְפָנָי
וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ
כַּאֲשֶׁר עוֹלָלְתָּ לִּי
עַל כָּל-פְּשָׁעַי
כִּי-רַבּוֹת אֲנַחְתִּי
וְלִבִּי דוֹי:

22 May all their evil come before You,
and deal to them
as You dealt to me
for all my sins.
For so much are my sighs,
and my heart is sickened.

CHAPTER 2

אֵיכָּה

1 *Eikhah!* How can it be!

יְלֵיב בְּאַפּוֹ |

In His anger *Adonai*

אֲדַנִּי אֶת-בֵּית-צִיּוֹן

clouded over daughter Zion.

הִשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ

He cast down, from skies (to) earth,

תִּפְאַרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא-זָכַר
הַדָּם-רַגְלָיו
בְּיוֹם אָפּוֹ:

Israel's glory,
and didn't remember
His foot's resting place
in His day of anger.

בְּבֹלַע אֲדֹנָי לֹא חָמַל
אֶת כָּל-נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב
הָרָס בְּעֻבְרָתוֹ
מִבְּצֻרֵי בֵּת-יְהוּדָה
הִגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ
חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֵיהָ:

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.

גִּדְעָה בְּחַר־אֵף
כָּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל
הַשִּׁיב אַחֲזֹר יְמִינוֹ
מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב

3 With ferocious anger He hacked off
all of Israel's horn.
He turned His right hand backward
before the enemy.

וַיִּבְעַר בְּיַעֲקֹב כַּאֲשֶׁר
לִהְבֶּה אֶכְלָה סָבִיב:
דִּרְךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב

Burning into Jacob, like fire
flaming, consuming (all) around.

נָצַב יְמִינוֹ
כְּצָר

4 He worked His bow like an enemy,
He stood firm His right hand
as a foe / a tormentor

וַיַּהַרְגַּם כָּל

and He murdered everything

מִחֲמַדֵּי-עֵינַיִן

precious to the eye;

בְּאֹהֶל בֵּית-צִיּוֹן

In daughter Zion's tent

שָׁפַךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר חֲמָתוֹ:

He poured out His wrath like fire.

הָ הָיָה אֲדֹנָי | כְּאוֹיֵב

5 Adonai was like an enemy;

בֹּלַע יִשְׂרָאֵל

He devoured / swallowed Israel.

בלע כל־ארמנותיה
 שחת מבצריו
 וירב בבת־יהודה
 תאניה ואניה:
 ו ויחמס כגן שכו
 שחת מועדו
 שפח יהוה | בציון
 מועד ושבת
 וינאץ בנעם־אפו
 מלך וכהן:
 ז זנח אדני | מזבחו
 נאר מקדשו
 הסגיר ביד־אויב
 חומת ארמנותיה
 קול נתנו בבית־יהוה
 כיום מועד:
 ח חשב יהוה | להשחית
 חומת בת־ציון
 נטה קו
 לא־השיב ידו
 מבלע
 ויאבל־חל וחומה
 יחדו אמללו:
 ט טבעו בארץ שעריה
 אבד ושבר בריחיה

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,
 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.
 He shut by an enemy's hand
 the walls of her citadels.
 They gave a shout in YHVH's house
 like a festival day.
 8 YHVH plotted to ruin
 daughter Zion's wall,
 stretched a line,
 didn't turn back His hand
 from swallowing up,
 and He made rampart and wall mourn,
 together made wretched.
 9 They drowned in the earth, her gates.
 He smashed and broke her bars.

מלכה ושריה בגוים
 אין תורה
 גם־נביאיה
 לא־מצאו חזון מיהוה:
 ל ישובו לארץ
 ידמו וקני בת־ציון
 העלו עפר על־ראשם
 חגרו שקים
 הורידו לארץ ראשן
 בתולת ירושלים:
 יא כלו בדמעות עיני
 חמרמו מעי
 נשפך לארץ כבדי
 על־שבר
 בת־עמי
 בעטף עולל ויונק
 ברחבות קריה:
 יב לאמתם יאמרו
 איה דגן ויין
 בהתעטפם
 כחלל ברחבות
 עיר בהשתפך נפשם
 אל־חיק אמתם:
 יג מה־אעידך
 מה אדמה־לך

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, they
 stayed silent, daughter Zion's elders,
 they lifted dust over their head,
 tied on sackcloth.
 They let their head down to the earth,
 Jerusalem's girls.
 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 suckling
 in the town's 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?

הַבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
מָה אֲשׁוּהָ לָךְ
וְאֶנְחַמְךָ
בְּתוֹלַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן
כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם
שִׁבְרֶךָ
מִי יִרְפָּא־לָךְ:
יָד נְבִיאֶיךָ חָזוּ לָךְ
שָׁוָא וְתַפְּלָה
וְלֹא־גָלוּ עַל־עֲוֹנֶךָ
לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתֶךָ
וַיַּחְזוּ לָךְ
מִשְׂאוֹת שָׁוָא וּמַדּוּחִים:
טו סָפְקוּ עֲלֶיךָ כַּפַּיִם
כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרֶךְ
שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֹאשֵׁם
עַל־בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
הַזֹּאת הָעִיר שִׁיאָמְרוּ
כְּקִילַת יָפִי
מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ:
טז פָּצוּ עֲלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם
כָּל־אֹיְבֶיךָ
שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחְרְקוּ־שִׁנָּיִם
אָמְרוּ בְּלַעְנוּ
אָךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינוּהוּ

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
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, and they grit teeth.
They said: We swallowed;
Akh! This day that we hoped for,

מָצָאנוּ רְאִינוּ:
יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם
בַּצֵּעַ אָמַרְתּוּ
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי־קֶדֶם
הָרָס וְלֹא חָמַל
וַיִּשְׂמַח עֲלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב
הָרִים קָרוֹן צָרֶיךָ:
יח צָעַק לִבָּם אֶל־אֲדֹנָי
חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן
הוֹרִידִי כַנַּחַל הַמָּעַה
יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
אֶל־תִּתְּנִי פּוֹגַת לָךְ
אֶל־תִּתְּדֵם בַּת־עֵינֶיךָ:
יט קוּמִי | רִנֵּי בְלִילָה
לְרֹאשׁ אֲשַׁמְרוֹת
שִׁפְכֵי כַּמַּיִם לְבָךְ
נֹכַח פָּנַי אֲדַנֶּי
שִׁאֵי אֵלָיו כַּפְּיֶךָ
עַל־נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלֶיךָ
הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוֹצוֹת:
כ רְאֵה יְהוָה וַהֲבִיטָה
לְמִי עוֹלְלֹת כָּה
אִם־תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נְשִׁים פְּרִיָם
עֲלֵלֵי טַפְּחִים

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.
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 / deal with thus?
If women will eat their fruit,
coddled babes –;

אם־יהרג בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי
כִּהְיוּ וְנִבְיָאֵי:
כִּי שָׁכְבוּ לְאַרְצָךְ חוּצוֹתַי
נָעַר וְזָקֵן בְּתוֹלְתַי וּבְחוּרַי
נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב
הֲרַגְתָּ בַּיּוֹם אֲפָדְךָ
טִבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלְתָּ:
כִּי תִקְרָא כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד
מִגּוּרֵי מְסָבִיב
וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם אַף־יְהוָה
פָּלִיט וְשָׁרִיד
אֲשֶׁר־טַפַּחְתָּי וְרַבִּיתִי
אֵיבֵי כָלָם:

If priest and prophet are murdered
in Adonai's holy place –!
21 Laid down to the earth (in the) streets,
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 הַגִּבּוֹר רָאָה עֵינַי
בַּשֶּׁבֶט עֲבַרְתּוֹ:
בִּי אֹתֵי נִהַג וַיִּלְךָ
חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹר:
גִּי אָנֹכִי בִּי יִשָּׁב יְהַפּוֹךְ יָדוֹ
כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
דִּבְלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי

1 I am the man who has suffered
under the rod of His anger:
2 I am the man He has been leading
in darkness with no light;
3 He has turned against me His hand
all the day long;
4 He has worn away my flesh and my

שִׁבְרֵי עֲצָמוֹתַי:
הִבְנִה עָלַי וַיִּקְרָף
רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:
וּבַמַּחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי
כַּמֵּיתֵי עוֹלָם:
זִגְדָר בְּעַדִּי
וְלֹא אֲצֵא
הַכְּבִיד נִחַשְׁתִּי:
חַגְמֵי כִּי אֲזַעַק וַיִּשְׁוֹעַ
שָׁתַם תַּפְלְתִּי:
טִגְדָר דְּרָכֵי בְגִזִּית
נִתְיַבְתִּי עֲוָה:

skin, broken my bones;
5 He has piled troubles up against me,
right round my head;
6 He has made me dwell in the dark,
like those long dead;
7 He has walled me round,
till I cannot go out,
He has loaded me with chains.
8 Even when I would cry and plea,
He stops my prayer;
9 He blocks my way with boulders,
till my course is twisted;

יִדְבֵּ אֲרִיב הוּא לִי
אֲרִי בַּמְסֻתָּרִים:
יֵאֵר דְּרָכֵי סוּרָר וַיִּפְשַׁחַנִּי
שָׁמְנֵי שָׁמֵם:
יִבֵּ דִבְרֵי קוֹשְׁתּוֹ
וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי כַּמִּטְרָא לַחִיץ:
יִגְדֵּי הִבִּיא בְּכִלְיוֹתַי
בְּנֵי אֲשַׁפְתּוֹ:
יִדְ הָיִיתִי שְׂחֹק לְכָל־עַמִּי
נְגִינָתָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

10 He lurks for me like a bear,
like a lion in ambush;
11 He has chased and mangled me
and left me desolate;
12 He has bent His bow
and made me target for His arrows;
13 He has driven His shafts home,
right into my kidneys;
14 I was a joke to all my people,
their mocking song all day long.

טו הַשְּׁבִיעַנִי בַמְרוֹרִים 15 He has filled me up with bitter herbs,
הָרוּנִי לַעֲנָה: and sated me with wormwood;

טז וַיִּגְרַס בְּחֻצַּי שִׁנָּי 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel,
הִכְפִּישָׁנִי בְּאַפָּר: and covered me with ashes.

יז וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלֹום נַפְשִׁי 17 He has bereft my soul of peace,
נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה: I forgot goodness,

יח וָאָמַר אֲבַד נִצְחִי 18 I said, "My strength is gone,
וַתִּחַלְתֵּי מִיְהוָה: and my hope in the Eternal [YHVH]!"

יט זְכַר-עֲנִי וּמְרוֹדֵי 19 Remembering my stress and my
לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ: scattering is as bitter gall to me;

כ זְכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר 20 my soul is always thinking of it,
וַתִּשׁוּחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי: and is crushed within me.

כא זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי 21 But this will I call to my heart,
עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל: to give me hope:

כב חֶסֶד־יְהוָה 22 the Eternal's love
כִּי לֹא-תִמְנוּ for it never ends,
כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו: for His mercies would never fail.

כג חֲדָשִׁים לְבִקְרִים 23 renewed every morning,
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ: great is your faithfulness!

כד חֶלְקִי יְהוָה 24 The Eternal is my allotted share,
אָמַרְהָ נַפְשִׁי my soul said,
עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל לָו: therefore I will hope in Him.

כה טוֹב יְהוָה 25 The Eternal is good
לְקַוּוֹ to those who wait for Him,
לְנַפְשׁ תִּדְרָשְׁנוּ: to a soul / person that seeks Him.

כו טוֹב וַיְחַיֵּל וְדוּמָם 26 It is good to wait in silence
לְתִשׁוּעַת יְהוָה: for the help of the Eternal;

כז טוֹב לְגִבֹר 27 it is good for a man
כִּי-יֵשֵׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו: to bear a yoke, while he has youth.

כח יֵשֵׁב בְּדַד וַיִּדָּם 28 Let him sit alone and be silent,
כִּי נִטַּל עָלָיו: since it is His hand;

כט יִתֵּן בְּעַפְרֵי פִיהוּ 29 let him lay his lips to the dust –
אוּלַּי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה: there may be hope for him;

ל יִתֵּן לְמַכְהוֹ לְחִי 30 let him offer his cheek to the striker,
יִשְׂבַּע בְּחַרְפָּה: be satisfied with insult.

לא לֹא כִּי לֹא יִזְנֹחַ 31 For the Lord [Adonai] will not
לְעוֹלָם אֲדַנִּי: always discard life;

לב כִּי אִם-הוֹגָה וְרַחֵם 32 If He aggrieves, He has pity,
כָּרֵב חֶסֶד־דָּוִד: so abundant is His love;

לג כִּי לֹא עֲנָה מִלְּבוֹ 33 Afflicting is not in His heart,
וַיִּגָּה בְּנֵי-אִישׁ: nor grieving the children of a man.

לד לְדַכָּא תַחַת רַגְלָיו 34 To tread underfoot
כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ: the whole land's people, imprisoned,

לה לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפַּט-גֹּבֵר 35 to distort a man's just rights,

נָגַד פְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן: לוֹ לְעֹזֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבּוֹ אֲדַנִּי לֹא רָאָה:	before the face of the Most High, 36 to twist a person in his struggle, does the Lord not see it?	תְּשִׁימֵנו בְּקִרְבַּ הָעַמִּים:	You have made us in the midst of the peoples.
לֹא מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי אֲדַנִּי לֹא צִוָּה: לֹחַ מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תִצָּא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב: לֹט מִה־יִתְאוּנוּ אָדָם חַי גָּבַר עַל־חַטָּאָיו:	37 Has anyone spoken and it came true, unless the Lord also commanded? 38 Doesn't the mouth of the Most High decree evils and the good? 39 Why should one still living complain, a man, (if punished) for his sins?	מִזֵּ פִצּוּ עֲלֵינוּ פִיהֶם כָּל־אִיבֵינוּ: מִזֵּ פִחַד וּפְחַת הָיָה לָנוּ הַשָּׂאת וְהַשָּׁבֵר: מַח פִּלְגֵי־מַיִם תִּגַּד עֵינַי עַל־שָׁבֵר בֵּת־עַמִּי:	46 Our enemies, yelling, crack open their mouth against us; 47 dismay and destruction befall us, the ravage and the ruin. 48 Tears are flooding from my eyes for the ruin of my daughter people;
מ נַחֲפֹשֶׁה דְרֹכֵינוּ וְנַחֲלֶנָּה וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד־יְהוָה: מֵאָ נִשְׂאָ לְבַבְנוּ אֶל־כַּפָּיִם אֶל־אֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם: מִבְּ נַחֲנוּ פִשְׁעֵנוּ וּמְרִינוּ אֵתָהּ לֹא סָלַחְתָּ:	40 Let us scan our lives and search, and let us return to the Eternal, 41 lifting our hearts up to our hands (stretched out) toward God in heaven. 42 Our sin is our own, we have rebelled, and You – You have not pardoned;	מִט עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאִיִן הַפְּגוֹת: נ עַד־יִשְׁקֶף וְיֵרָא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם: נֵא עֵינַי עוֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מִכָּל בָּנוֹת עִירִי:	[Moffat reorders the next three verses: 51, 49, 50.] 49 my eye flows and won't be silent, unable to pause, 50 till the Eternal will look down and see, from heaven above. 51 My eyes doles sorrow to my soul over all my city's daughters.
מִג סִכְתָּה בְּאַף וַתִּרְדֹּפְנוּ הַרְגָתָ לֹא חִמְלָתָ: מִד סִכּוֹתָה בְּעָנָן לָךְ מִעֲבוֹר תְּפִלָּה: מִה סְחִי וּמְאוּס	43 You have veiled Your face in anger, pursuing us, killing without pity; 44 You have covered Yourself with a cloud no prayer can pierce; 45 mere scum and refuse	נִב צוֹד צָדוּנִי כַצְפוֹר אִיבֵי חֲנָם: נִג צָמְתוּ בְבוֹר חַיִּי וַיִּדּוּ־אֶבֶן בִּי: נִד צָפוּ־מַיִם עַל־רֹאשִׁי אָמַרְתִּי נִגְזַרְתִּי:	52 Hunting, they hunted me, like a bird, with no reason for their hate; 53 they sealed off my life in the pit, flinging stones at me; 54 waters flowed over my head, “I am cut off,” I said.

נה קראתי שמך יהוה 55 I called Your name, O Eternal,
 מבור תחתיות: from a nethermost pit.
 ון קולי שמעת 56 You did hear my voice:
 אל-תעלם אנני "Give ear, don't hide
 לרוחתי לשועתי: from my plea and cry";
 ון קרבת ביום אקראך 57 You came at my call,
 אמרת אל-תירא: saying, "Fear not."
 ון רבת אדני 58 O Lord, You took on
 ריבי נפשי גאלת חיי: my soul's struggles, saved my life.
 וט ראתה יהוה עונותי 59 And now you see my wrongs;
 שפטתה משפטי: Oh vindicate me!
 ס ראתה כל-נקמתם 60 You have seen all their vengeance
 כל-מחשבתם לי: their plotting against me.
 סא שמעת הרפתם יהוה 61 You have heard their insult, O Eternal,
 כל-מחשבתם עלי: all their plotting against me,
 סב שפתי קמי 62 the talk of those rising against me,
 והגיונם עלי כל-היום: their obsession all day long.
 סג שבתם וקמתם 63 Look at them, sitting or rising –
 הביטה אני מנגינתם I am their mocking song!
 סד תשיב להם גמול 64 You will requite them, O Eternal,
 יהוה כמעשה ידיהם: for all their hands have done;
 סה תתן להם מגנת-לב 65 You will enwall their heart –

תאלתך להם: Your curse be upon them!
 סו תרדף באף 66 You will chase them angrily,
 ותשמילם and crush them
 מתחת שמי יהוה: from under the heavens.

CHAPTER 4

א איכה 1 Eikhah! How can it be
 יועם זהב that gold becomes dull,
 ישנא הכתם הטוב the finest gold transmuted,
 תשתפכנה אבני-קדש sacred gems poured / dumped out
 בראש כל-חוצות: at every street head;
 ב בני ציון היקרים 2 Children / sons of Zion, precious ones,
 המסלאים בפז weighed against the purest gold –
 איכה נחשבו how can it be that they are counted
 לנבלי-חרש as clay jars,
 מעשה ידי יוצר: work of maker's hands?
 ג גם-תנים תלצו שד 3 Even jackals draw out a breast,
 היניקו גורייהן would give suck to their cubs.
 בת-עמי לאכזר (But) my daughter people – so cruel,
 כיענים במדבר: like ostriches in the wilderness.
 ד דבק לשון יונק 4 A suckling's tongue, stuck
 אל-חכו בצמא to its palate with this thirst;
 עוללים שאלו לחם babes sought bread –

פָּרַשׁ אֵינן לָהֶם:	none break it off for them.	בְּשֹׁבֵר בַּת-עַמִּי:	in the shattering of my daughter people.
הָ הָאֹכְלִים לְמַעַד זַיִם נִשְׁמָו בַּחוּצוֹת הָאֲמֻנִים עָלַי תּוֹלָע חִבְּקוּ אֲשֵׁפֶתוֹת:	5 The ones eating for delicacies were wasted in the streets, the ones nursed on scarlet were hugging trash heaps.	יֵאֵץ כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חַמָּתוֹ שִׁפָּךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ וַיִּצַת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֹתֶיהָ:	11 YHVH used up His fury, poured out His burning anger, and He kindled a fire in Zion, and it consumed her foundations.
וַיִּגְדַּל עֲוֹן בַּת-עַמִּי מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם הַהַפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רֹגַע וְלֹא-תָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם:	6 And my daughter people's iniquity grew great, beyond Sodom's sin, the one overthrown, as if a moment, and no hands were laid on her.	יֵב לֹא הָאֲמִינוּ מַלְכֵי-אָרֶץ כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:	12 They would not have believed, kings of the earth all worldly inhabitants, that tormentor and enemy would come into the gates of Jerusalem.
ז וְכֹה נְזִירֶיהָ מִשְׁלֵג צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב אֲדָמוּ לְעֶצֶם מִפְּנִינִים סַפִּיר גִּזְרָתָם:	7 Her Nazirites were pure beyond snow, clearer than milk, red of bone more than rubies, their cut form sapphire crystal.	יֵג מִחַטָּאת נְבִיאֶיהָ עֹנֹת כְּהֵנֶיהָ הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקֶרְבָּהּ דָּם צְדִיקִים:	13 (It was) because of her prophets' sins, her priests' iniquities, who poured out inside her the blood of righteous people.
ח חֲשָׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר תִּאֲרָם לֹא נִכְרוּ בַחוּצוֹת צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כְּעֵץ:	8 (Now) darkened beyond black soot is their form, they are not recognized in the streets, their skin stretched taut over their bone, it was dried out like a stick.	יֵד נָעוּ עֹרִים בַּחוּצוֹת נִגְאָלוּ בְּדָם בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ יָגֵעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם:	14 They were shaking / staggering, blind in the streets, defiled with the blood, with none able / willing to come in contact with their clothes.
ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלֵלֵי-חֶרֶב מִחֲלֵלֵי רֶעֶב שֶׁהֵם יוֹבֹבוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְּנוּבַת שִׁדִּי:	9 Better were the sword-slain than the famine-slain, for they drain away, stabbed through by (want of) produce of the field.	טו סוּרוּ טָמְאָ קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ סוּרוּ סוּרוּ אֶל-תִּגְעוּ כִּי נָצוּ גַם-נָעוּ אָמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם לֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לָגוּר:	15 "Get out! Contaminated! <i>Tamei!</i> " they would call to them, "Get out! Get out! Don't touch!" For they fled, even staggered.
י יְדֵי נְשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיוֹת בְּשָׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ	10 Merciful hands of merciful women stewed their children – they became provision for them	טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה	16 YHVH's presence / face

חִלְקֵם לֹא יוֹסִיף
 לְהִבִּיטֵם
 פְּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ
 וְזִקְנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ:
 17 עוֹדֵינוּ תִּכְלֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ
 אֶל־עֲזָרָתְנוּ הַבֵּל
 בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צָפִינוּ אֶל־גּוֹי
 לֹא יוֹשֵׁעַ:
 18 יָח צָדוּ צָעֲדֵינוּ
 מִלִּכְתּוֹת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ
 קָרַב קִצְצֵנוּ מִלְּאוֹ יָמֵינוּ
 כִּי־בָא קִצְצֵנוּ:
 19 יוֹט קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ
 מִנְּשָׂרַי שָׁמַיִם
 עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ
 בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ:
 20 רֹחַ אִפְינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה
 נִלְכַּד בְּשַׁחֲיוֹתָם
 אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ
 נִחְיֶה בְּגוֹיִם:
 21 רֵא שִׂישׁ וְשִׂמְחֵל בַּת־אֲדוֹם
 יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ
 גַּם־עֲלֶיךָ תִּעְבֶּר־כּוֹס
 תִּשְׁכַּרְי וְתִתְעַרְי:
 22 רַב תִּמְצֹנֶךָ בַּת־צִיּוֹן

divided them, He would no longer
 look at them / notice them –
 (for) priest's faces they did not lift up,
 and (to) elders they did not show grace.
 17 Still will our eyes be used up / failing,
 toward our help, (finding) emptiness
 in our seeking, we scanned, we looked
 to a nation not [able to] save.
 18 They hunted / tracked our steps,
 (driven) from going in our squares.
 Our end draws close, our days filled,
 for our end has come.
 19 Swift were they, our pursuers, swifter
 than eagles of the heavens.
 Over the mountains they chased us,
 in the wilderness they laid ambush for us.
 20 Breath of our nose, YHVH's anointed,
 he was trapped by their destructions,
 of whom we said, in his shade
 we will live with the nations.
 21 Rejoice and be happy, daughter Edom,
 dwelling in the land of Utz –
 a cup will also pass over upon you,
 you will drink and strip yourself naked.
 22 Completed your iniquity, daughter Zion,

לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִגְלוֹתְךָ
 פֶּקֶד עֲוֹנֶךָ
 בַּת־אֲדוֹם
 גְּלָהּ עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ:

no more to be exiled / exposed.
 He has charged your iniquity,
 daughter Edom,
 (to) expose (you) for your sins.

CHAPTER 5

א זְכֹר יְהוָה מַה־הָיָה לָנוּ
 הַבִּיטָה וּרְאֵה
 אֶת־חַרְפֹּתֵנוּ:
 ב נִחַלְתָנוּ נְהַפְכָה לְזָרִים
 בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכְרִים:
 ג יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ וְאִין אָב
 אִמֹּתֵינוּ כְּאִלְמָנוֹת:
 ד מִיַּמֵּינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתֵינוּ
 עֵצֵינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֵאוּ:
 ה עַל צוּאֲרָנוּ נִרְדְּפָנוּ
 יִגְעָנוּ וְלֹא הוֹנַח־לָנוּ:
 ו מִצְרַיִם נָתַנוּ יָד
 אֲשׁוּר לְשַׂבַּע לָחֶם:
 ז אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאִינָם
 וְאִנְחָנוּ עֲוֹנֹתֵיהֶם סָבְלָנוּ:
 ח עַבְדִּים מְשָׁלוּ בָנוּ
 פֶּרַק אִין
 מִיָּדָם:

1 YHVH, remember what was ours.
 Look, and see
 our abuse / our shame!
 2 Our inheritance overturned, to strangers
 our houses to foreigners.
 3 We were orphans, there is no father,
 our mothers like widows.
 4 Our water we drank for money;
 our wood came (only) with a price.
 5 On our neck we were pursued,
 tired out, without letting us rest.
 6 Egypt, we stretched a hand,
 Assyria, to satisfy bread.
 7 Our fathers sinned and are not,
 and we shouldered their evils.
 8 Slaves ruled us.
 There is none to break us out
 from their hand.

ט בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נָבִיא לְחַמְנוּ 9 For our lives we bring our bread,
מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר׃ from the wilderness's sword.
י עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתַנּוּר נִכְמְרוּ 10 Our skin like a furnace, glowing,
מִפְּנֵי זַלְעָפוֹת רָעֵב׃ because of the delirium of hunger.
יא נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָזוּ 11 Women in Zion were victimized,
בְּתִלְתֵּי בְעָרֵי יְהוּדָה׃ girls, in Judah's towns.
יב שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נִתְלוּ 12 Ministers by their hand hung.
פְּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדְּרוּ׃ Elders' faces were void of majesty.
יג בַּחֹרִים טָחוּז נָשְׂאוּ 13 Boys would carry a millstone,
וּנְעָרִים בְּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ׃ and youths, stumbling with wood.
יד זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שְׁבָתוֹ 14 Elders ceased from gate,
בַּחֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם׃ boys from their play.
טו שְׁבַת מְשׁוֹשׁ לָבְנוּ 15 Our heart stopped any joy,
נִהְפָּךְ לְאֵבֶל מַחְלָנוּ׃ our dance overturned into mourning.
טז נִפְלָה עֲטֹרַת רֹאשֵׁנוּ 16 The crown on our head is fallen;
אִוִּי-נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ׃ Oy for us! For we sinned.
יז עַל-זֶה הָיָה דָוָה לָבְנוּ 17 For this our heart was sickened.
עַל-אֲלֵה חָשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ׃ For these our eyes darkened.
יח עַל-הַר-צִיּוֹן שָׁשְׂמִים 18 For Mount Zion, that was desolated
שׁוֹעֲלִים הִלְכוּ-בוֹ׃ foxes went through her.
יט אַתָּה יְהוָה 19 You, YHVH
לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב׃ will sit for all world-time,
כִּסְאֶךָ לְדָר וְדָד׃ Your throne (lasts) for generations.
כ לָמָּה לִנְצַחַת תִּשְׁכַּחֵנוּ 20 Why would you forget us forever?
תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ׃ Abandon us

לְאֶרֶךְ יָמִים׃ for the span of time's days?
כא הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ 21 Turn us, YHVH, toward you,
וְנָשׁוּבָה׃ and we will turn.
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֵדָם׃ Renew our days, like long before.
כב כִּי אִם-מָאֵס מְאִסְתָּנוּ 22 For if loathing, you should loathe us,
קִצְפָּת עָלֵינוּ עַד-מְאֹד׃ be enraged over us, so very much—!
הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ 23 Turn us, YHVH, toward you,
וְנָשׁוּבָה׃ and we will turn.
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ׃ Make our days new again,
כְּקֵדָם׃ like dawn / long ago.

Hashiveinu Adonai elekha

v'nashuvah.

Chadeish yameinu k'kedem.

Some other songs:

*Shifkhi kamayim libeikh
nokhach p'nei Hashem*

*Yehudah l'olam teishev,
Yerushalayim l'dor vador*

*Nachamu 'ami.
Anokhi hu m'nachemchem*

*Eli Tsiyon v'areha
k'mo ishah v'tsireha
v'khivtulah chagurat sak
al ba'al n'ureha*

On the observances of Tish'a B'Av

The observances of *Tish'a B'Av*—fasting from food and sexual contact, not washing or wearing clean clothes, not being able to sit anywhere except on the ground—are closer to the experience of being a refugee than being a mourner. The destruction of the Temple stands not just for the destruction of Jerusalem, but also for the people being made into refugees, with all that entails – becoming prey to poverty, hunger, crime, and death. *Tish'a B'Av* is not primarily about the end of the Temple – *Chaza"l*, the rabbis, figured out how to live without the Temple long ago. Rather, it's about homelessness, fleeing from war into famine, being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection – things that are all too present in our world. It's also an opportunity to confront the ways in which we as individuals, and as a people, use our power to make others (people and species) into refugees.

Some notes on the theology of *Eikhah*:

1. There has been no moment since the *Shoah* when *Tisha B'Av* was more relevant. The crisis of war refugees has overwhelmed European political systems and seems threatening to overwhelm the U.S.

We think of *Tisha B'Av* as a time of mourning, but *Tisha B'Av* is most importantly about identifying with the experience of the refugee, about being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection. That's what happened to the Jewish people when the Temples, and the nation and society they stood for, were destroyed, they were "like deer, not finding a place to graze; they walked, without strength, before a pursuer." (1:6)

The *Tisha B'Av* experience is partly about mourning for what has been lost, but what we think of as mourning customs – not wearing fresh clothes, not washing, eating or drinking, not being able to sit down – more closely resemble the experience of a refugee than of a mourner sitting *shiva*.

2. The idea that tragedy and disaster are punishment for our sins is alien to most modern Jews. The author(s) of *Eikhah* (traditionally Jeremiah) believed that what happened to Jerusalem was an expression of divine judgment.

This theology was consoling because it allowed people to find meaning in tragedy. (This is one reason why it can be hard to connect the Holocaust with what we mourn for on *Tish'a B'Av*.) It was also true that the physical downfall of Jerusalem was preceded by a moral one,

by oppression of poor and stranger.

For the ancients, the choices were to believe that the destruction was God's punishment, or that God no longer had interest in what happened to them. It is easy to imagine why people would choose a punishing God over an uncaring God – though the latter possibility is suggested in the very last verse, "For if you should loathe us..." So even though *Eikhah* sounds like it's about God punishing us, it's not really a theology of evil, but rather a prayer that tragedies prove God still cares about us, instead of proving God's indifference.

3. That doesn't mean we need to accept this theology – even in *Eikhah* itself, this idea is questioned. Only in chapter 3 is the destruction of Zion consistently seen as fair and just punishment. In all the other chapters, the degree of divine punishment is (subtly) described as excessive and abusive. The poet repeatedly begs God to pay attention: "See, YHVH, and look: whom did You treat thus? If women will eat their fruit, coddled babes – !" (2:20; also 1:9,11,20, 4:16, 5:1). It's as if the people in the nations saw and understood the tragedy that unfolded (1:12), but God did not.

4. This suggests one way to confront the images of sexual abuse in *Eikhah*: "All who honor her despise her, for they saw her nakedness." (1:8; also 1:10, 4:21, 5:11) In the prophets, such abuse is used as a metaphor for the punishment that follows Israel's "adulterous" chasing after other gods. But in *Eikhah*, the metaphor is used to hold up a mirror to God, to show that the punishment was abusive.

5. The real theology of *Eikhah* is expressed in the verse, "What can I compare to you, daughter Jerusalem, that I may comfort you?" (2:13) What images, what words, can help people bear the memory of tragedy? The poet is willing to say whatever is needed to be able to find meaning in this memory.

6. There is another way to look at the motif of divine punishment. According to Jeremiah, the reason for exile was that Israel had not allowed the land to rest every seven years during her Sabbatical or *Shmitah* year. 490 years without *Shmitah* equals 70 years of exile. However, this idea is not found in *Eikhah*, where the identification of the people with the land is total.

What does Jeremiah mean? The Torah portrays the land as a subject, with interests, rewards, and rights that take priority over our needs. Especially in the laws of the Jubilee and *Shmita* years (Lev 25)—and in the consequences that are supposed to befall the people if they do not observe these laws (Lev 26)—it is clear that God is ready to take the side of the land against the people.

Humanity as a social order and a species, as well as the Jewish people, have no moral standing when their interests conflict with the intrinsic needs of the land, who will "enjoy her Sabbaths" (Lev 26:34,43), even if that means the people must be exiled or wiped out. From the divine perspective, justice encompasses the land; what has intrinsic value is not humanity but justice, which is humanity's potential.

7. The Torah outlines six curses for not observing the Sabbatical year, which

describe how the relationship between the people and the land can unravel, marked by who eats what or whom. Two of the curses involve children being eaten – first by wild animals (v.22) and then by their parents (v.29). This image is repeated in *Eikhah* (2:20, 4:10), it is the strongest connection between *Eikhah* and the *Shmitah* year.

This progression, woven in and out of Leviticus 26, ends with "you will be lost in the nations and the land of your enemies will eat you" (v.38). Because the Jewish people was in exile for so long, the last curse does not sound like the worst. But symbolically, if the land eats us, this represents the complete reversal of right relationship between people and land.

8. 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. We can expect more wars over resources, as well as people fleeing areas that have become flooded, or turned into deserts, as climate change puts more and more pressure on our social systems. We need all the spiritual resources we can muster to stay open to the humanity of the refugee and the stranger while also taking care of each other. If we sympathize with these ideas, we can read *Eikhah* as an invitation to change our lives, towards justice for all people, for all species, and for the land herself.

Rabbi David Mevorach Seidenberg, 2016/5776. Some of this material is excerpted from *Kabbalah and Ecology*. Find more *Tish'a B'Av* resources, songs, and teachings at: theshalomcenter.org/node/1733 and neohasid.org/zman/tisha_bav.