

Laments איכה

Translations of *Eikhah* for our world

<http://neohasid.org/resources/laments>



Laments 4:1, Margaret Adams Parker
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This work is dedicated to all refugees

Tisha B'Av is not primarily about the Temple – *Chaza"l*, the rabbis, figured out how to live without the Temple long ago. Rather, *Tisha B'Av* is about homelessness, fleeing from war into famine, being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection – things all too present in our world. It's an opportunity empathize, to confront the ways we abuse our power, as individuals, as a society, as a people, and as a species, turning other people, and other species, into refugees.

This year, *Tisha B'Av* is especially weighty. Deaths from the COVID plague increase wherever political leadership is slow to face reality. So many suffer the loss of community, wealth, and mental well-being. In the U.S., many believe letting elders die is an acceptable cost for revving the economy. And as the world struggles to face racism, the U.S. government concentrates brown immigrants and refugees in detention camps, where their lives are endangered by COVID, while the corrosive legacy of slavery is still killing Black people in the U.S. And with all this, as Jews we face growing anti-Semitism.

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# Laments איכה

Translations of *Eikhah* for our world

This translation of *Laments*, the book of mourning poems read on *Tish'a B'Av*, uses principles of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible. It strives to be “concordant”, translating related Hebrew words with related English words and following the order and syntax of the Hebrew where possible. It also focuses on the more physical, earthy meaning of words, in order to draw the modern reader towards more ancient ways of seeing and feeling. Sometimes 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 “the Eternal”.) James Moffat’s 1922 translation was consulted. As a somewhat literal translation, *Laments* uses “He” and “His” as pronouns for God, though Torah and common sense 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*, refugees, the Earth, and more, see the end of this booklet.



*Laments 4:1*, Margaret Adams Parker  
[www.margaretadamsparker.com](http://www.margaretadamsparker.com)  
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Read sections from Rabbi Seidenberg’s groundbreaking book, now in paperback, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God’s Image in the More-Than-Human World* (Cambridge U., 2015) at [kabbalahandecology.com](http://kabbalahandecology.com).

Find more *Tisha B’Av* resources, songs, and teachings online at: [theshalomcenter.org/node/1733](http://theshalomcenter.org/node/1733) and [neohasid.org/zman/tisha\\_bav/](http://neohasid.org/zman/tisha_bav/).

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## CHAPTER 1

- א איכָה | 1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –  
יְשֵׁבָה בָּדָד she sat alone,  
הָעִיר רַבַּתִּי עָם the city so great / so swelled with people?  
הִיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה She was like a widow.  
רַבַּתִּי בְּגוֹיִם The one great among the nations,  
שָׂרְתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת ministering among the states,  
הִיְתָה לְמָס: became a slave caste.
- ב בָּכוּ תַבֵּכָה בַּלַּיְלָה 2 Crying, she will cry in the night,  
וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לַחֲיָהּ 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  
בִּגְדוּ בָּהּ played traitor with her.  
הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים: They became for her enemies.
- ג גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה 3 She, Judah, was exiled,  
מֵעֲנִי וּמֵרַב עֲבֹדָה by poverty, and by (so) much hard labor  
הִיא יְשֵׁבָה 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 דְּרָכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת 4 Zion's roads are mourning  
מִבְּלִי בָּאֵי מוֹעֵד from being without festival-goers,  
כָּל-שַׁעְרֶיהָ שׁוּמְמִין all her gates desolated;

כְּהִנִּיָּה נֶאֱנָחִים  
 בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נוֹגְוֹת  
 וְהִיא מֵרָלָה:  
 הָ הָיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ  
 אִיְבֵיהָ שָׁלוֹ  
 כִּי־יְהוָה הוֹגָה  
 עַל־רֵב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ  
 עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי  
 לִפְנֵי־צָר:  
 וַיֵּצֵא מִן־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
 כָּל־הַדָּרָה  
 הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ כְּאַיִלִּים  
 לֹא־מָצְאוּ מְרֻעָה  
 וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא־כֹחַ  
 לִפְנֵי רוֹדֶף:  
 זַ זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 יְמֵי עֲנִיָּה  
 וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ  
 כָּל מַחֲמָדֶיהָ  
 אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיְמֵי קָדָם  
 בְּנִפְלַעַם בְּיַד־צָר  
 וְאֵין עֲזֹרָה לָּהּ  
 רָאוּהָ צָרִים  
 שֹׁחֲקוּ עַל מִשְׁבֶּתָּה:  
 ח 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 / the Eternal 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־מַכְבִּידֶיהָ הִזְלִיחָהּ  
 כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוּתָהּ  
 גַּם־הִיא נָאֲנָחָה  
 וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲזָר:  
 ט טַמְאָתָהּ בְּשׁוּלֶיהָ  
 לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרִיתָהּ  
 וַתֵּרֶד פִּלְאִים  
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
 רְאֵה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנִי  
 כִּי הִגְדִּיל אוֹיֵב:  
 י יָדוֹ פָּרַשׁ צָר  
 עַל כָּל־מַחְמַדֶּיהָ  
 כִּי־רָאֲתָהּ גּוֹיִם  
 בָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁהּ  
 אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ  
 לֹא־יָבֹאוּ  
 בְּקִהְלָ לָךְ:  
 יא כָּל־עַמָּה נֹאנָחִים  
 מְבַקְשִׁים לֶחֶם  
 נָתַנוּ מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם  
 בְּאֹכֶל לְהָשִׁיב נַפְשׁ  
 רְאֵה יְהוָה  
 וְהִבִּיטָהּ כִּי הָיִיתִי זוֹלָלָה:  
 יב לֹא אֵלֶיכֶם

- For this an outcast / *nidah* she became.  
 All who honor her despise her,  
 for they saw her nakedness.  
 Also her, she is moaning,  
 and 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;  
 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-עֲבָרֵי דֶרֶךְ  
 הִבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ  
 אִם-יֵשׁ מִכְאוֹב כְּמִכְאוֹבִי  
 אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי  
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה  
 בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:  
 יג מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח-אֵשׁ  
 בְּעֲצָמַי וַיִּדְבָּנָה  
 פָּרֶשׁ רָשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי  
 הִשְׁיבָנִי אֲחֹזֶר  
 נִתְּנָנִי שְׁמֵמָה  
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:  
 יד נִשְׁקַד עַל פִּשְׁעֵי  
 בִידּוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגְּוּ  
 עָלַי עַל-צַוְאָרִי  
 הִכְשִׁיל כַּחֲוִי  
 נִתְּנָנִי אֲדָנִי בַיָּד  
 לֹא-אוּכָל קוּם:

טו סֵלָה

כָּל-אֲפִירִי | אֲדָנִי בְּקֶרְבִי  
 קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד  
 לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחֲוָרִי  
 גֵּת דֶּבֶר אֲדָנִי  
 לְבַתּוּלָת בַּת-יְהוּדָה:  
 טז עַל-אַלְהָה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיהָ

all who pass on the way.  
 (All of you) 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 me / 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 יִרְדֶּה מַיִם  
 כִּי־רָחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם  
 מַשְׁבִּיב נַפְשִׁי  
 הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים  
 כִּי גָבַר אוֹיֵב:  
 יז פִּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ  
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
 צִוָּה יְהוָה לִיַּעֲקֹב  
 סָבִיבָיו צָרָיו  
 הִתְנָה יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 לְנִדָּה בֵּינֵיהֶם:  
 יח צַדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה  
 כִּי פִּיהוּ מְרִיתִי  
 שָׁמְעוּ־נָא כָל־הָעַמִּים  
 וְרָאוּ מַכְאֲבִי  
 בְּתוֹלָתִי וּבְחוּרֵי  
 הָלָכּוּ בַשָּׁבִי:  
 יט קָרָאתִי לַמֵּאֲהָבִי  
 הִמָּה רְמוּנֵי  
 כִּהְנִי וְזִקְנִי  
 בָּעִיר גָּוְעוּ  
 כִּי־בִקְשׁוּ אֲכָל לָמוֹ  
 וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם:  
 כ רָאָה יְהוָה כִּי־צָרָלִי  
 יַמְעִי חֲמָרְמָרוּ

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,  
 while they sought food for themselves  
 (that) would bring back their life / soul.  
 20 See YHVH – for mine is torment,  
 my guts were churning,



נִהְפָּךְ לִבִּי בְּקִרְבִּי  
 כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיתִי  
 מִחוּץ שְׂכָל־הַחַרֵּב  
 בַּבַּיִת כְּמוֹת:

כֹּא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נֹאנְחָה אָנִי  
 אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי  
 כָּל־אֹיְבֵי שָׁמְעוּ  
 רָעָתִי

שִׂשׂוּ כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ  
 הִבֵּאתָ יוֹם־קִרְאָתָהּ  
 וַיְהִיו כְּמוֹנִי:

כָּב תָּבֵא כָּל־רָעָתָם לְפָנַי  
 וְעוֹלָל לָמוּ כְּאִשָּׁר  
 עוֹלָלְתָּ לִּי עַל כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵי  
 כִּי־רַבּוֹת אֲנָחֲתִי  
 וּלְבִי רָגִי:

my heart overturned within me,  
 for rebelling I rebelled.

From outside sword bereaving;  
 In the house, like death itself.

21 They listened – for 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 let them be(come) like me.

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

אֵיכָהּ  
 יָעִיב בְּאַפּוֹ |  
 אֲדֹנָי אֶת־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
 הַשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ  
 תִּפְאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל

1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –

in His anger *Adonai* / the Lord  
 clouded over daughter Zion.

He cast down, from skies (to) earth,  
 Israel's glory,

וְלֹא־זָכַר  
 הַלִּסְר־גִּלְיוֹ  
 בְּיוֹם אָפוֹ:  
 בַּלְעַ אֲדֹנָי לֹא חָמַל  
 אֶת כָּל־נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב  
 הָרָס בְּעִבְרָתוֹ  
 מִבְּצָרֵי בֵּת־יְהוּדָה  
 הִגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ  
 חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ:  
 גַּגְדַּע בַּחֲרִי־אָף  
 כָּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 הִשִּׁיב אַחֲזֹר יָמִינוֹ  
 מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב  
 וַיִּבְעַר בְּיַעֲקֹב כָּאֵשׁ  
 לָהֶבֶת אֲכָלָה סָבִיב:  
 דַּ דִּרְךָ קִשְׁתּוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב  
 נִצָּב יָמִינוֹ  
 כְּצָר  
 וַיַּהַלֵּךְ כָּל  
 מִחְמַד־יָצִין  
 בְּאֶהֱל־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
 שָׁפַךְ כָּאֵשׁ חֲמָתוֹ:  
 הָ הָיָה אֲדֹנָי | כְּאוֹיֵב  
 בָּלַע יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בָּלַע כָּל־אַרְמֻנוֹתֶיהָ

- 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  
 before the enemy.  
 Burning into Jacob, like fire  
 flaming, consuming (all) around.
- 4 He worked His bow like an enemy,  
 He stood firm His right hand  
 as a foe / a tormentor  
 and He murdered everything  
 precious to the eye;  
 In daughter Zion's tent  
 He poured out His wrath like the fire.
- 5 *Adonai* was like an enemy;  
 He devoured / swallowed Israel.  
 He devoured all her citadels,

שֶׁחַת מִבְצָרָיו  
 וַיִּרְבֶּ בֵּית יְהוּדָה  
 תִּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנִיָּה:  
 וַיִּחַמַס כְּגֹן שֹׁכֵי  
 שֶׁחַת מוֹעֵדוֹ  
 שָׁפַח יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן  
 מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת  
 וַיִּנְאֹץ בְּזַעַם-אָפוֹ  
 מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן:  
 ז וַזָּנַח אֲדֹנָי | מִזִּבְחוֹ  
 נֶאֱדָר מִקִּדְשׁוֹ  
 הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד-אֹיֵב  
 חוֹמַת אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ  
 קוֹל נָתַנוּ בְּבֵית-יְהוָה  
 כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד:  
 ח חָשַׁב יְהוָה | לְהַשְׁחִית  
 חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן נִטָּה לָּו  
 לֹא-הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ  
 מִבִּלְעַ  
 וַיֵּאבֶל-חַל וְחוֹמָה  
 יַחְדָּו אֲמָלְלוּ:  
 ט טָבְעוּ בָאֶרֶץ שַׁעֲרֶיהָ  
 אֲבָד וְשֹׁבֵר בְּרִיחֶיהָ  
 מִלְּפָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם  
 אֵין תּוֹרָה

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 made shut with 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.  
 Her king and her ministers in the nations,  
 there is no Torah / no teaching.

גַּם־נְבִיאֶיהָ  
 לֹא־מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיְהוָה:  
 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ  
 וַיִּדְמּוּ וַיִּזְכְּנוּ בִתְצִיּוֹן  
 הֵעֲלּוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם  
 חָגְרוּ שַׁקִּים  
 הוֹרִידוּ לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן  
 בַּתּוֹלֵת יְרוּשָׁלַם:  
 יֵאָכְלוּ כָּלֹּ בְדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי  
 חִמְרָמוּ מִעֵי  
 נִשְׁפָּךְ לָאָרֶץ כְּבִדִּי  
 עַל־שֹׁבֵר  
 בֵּת־עַמִּי  
 בַּעֲטָף עוֹלִל וְיוֹזֵק  
 בְּרַחֲבוֹת קִרְיָה:  
 וַיִּבְּלוּ לְאִמָּתָם יְאֻמָּיו  
 אֵיךְ דָּגְנוּ וַיִּזְנוּ  
 בְּהִתְעַטְּפָם  
 כְּחָלָל בְּרַחֲבוֹת עִיר  
 בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשָׁם  
 אֶל־חֵיק אִמָּתָם:  
 יִגְמָה־אֶעֱיִיד  
 מָה אֲדַמֶּה־לָּךְ  
 הַבֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 מָה אֲשׁוּה־לָּךְ

Also her prophets,  
 They found no vision from *YHWH*.  
 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 liver 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 itself 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

וַאֲנִי־חֲמֹד׃  
בְּתוּלַת בֵּת־צִיּוֹן  
כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם שִׁבְרָךְ׃  
מִי יִרְפָּא־לָךְ׃  
יָד נְבִיאֶיךָ חָזוּ לָךְ  
שׂוֹא וְתַפֵּל  
וְלֹא־גָלוּ עַל־עוֹנֶךָ  
לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתֶךָ  
וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ  
מַשְׂאוֹת שׂוֹא וּמַדּוּחִים׃  
טו סָפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כַּפַּיִם  
כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרֶךְ  
שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעֻזוּ רֹאשָׁם  
עַל־בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם  
הַנָּאֵת הָעִיר שֶׁאִמְרוּ  
כְּלִילַת יָפִי  
מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ׃  
טז פָּצוּ עָלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם  
כָּל־אֹיְבֶיךָ  
שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחְרְקוּ־שֵׁן  
אָמְרוּ בְלָעֵנוּ  
אָךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ  
מִצָּאֵנוּ רְאִינוּ׃  
יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם  
בַּצֵּעַ אֶמְרָתוֹ

(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,  
we found, we saw!  
17 *YHVH* did what He conspired;  
He pushed through His saying

אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי-קֶדֶם  
 הָרָס וְלֹא חָמַל  
 וַיִּשְׂמַח עַל־יָדְךָ אוֹיֵב  
 חַיִּים קָרָן צָרֶיךָ:  
 יח צָעַק לָבָם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי  
 חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן  
 הוֹרִידִי כִנְחָל דִּמְעָה  
 יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה  
 אַל-תִּתְּנִי פּוּגַת לֶךְ  
 אֶל-תָּדוֹם בֵּת-עֵינֶיךָ:  
 יט קוּמִי | רִנֵּי בַלְיָה  
 לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֻׁמְרוֹת  
 שִׁפְכִי כַמִּים לְבֹךְ  
 גִּבַּח פָּנֶי אֲדֹנָי  
 שְׂאֵי אֵלָיו כַּפֶּיךָ  
 עַל-נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלֶיךָ  
 הֶעֱטוּפִים בָּרָעַב  
 בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת:  
 כ רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה  
 לְמִי עוֹלְלֹת כָּה  
 אִם-תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים פְּרִיָם  
 עַל־לֵי טַפָּחִים  
 אִם-יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי  
 כִּהְיֶה וְנִבְיָא:

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:  
 to whom did You deal thus?  
 If women will eat their fruit,  
 coddled babies—!  
 If priest and prophet are murdered  
 in *Adonai's* holy place—!

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁכְבוּ לָאָרֶץ חַיּוֹת  
 נָעַר וְזָקֵן בְּתוֹלְתֵי וּבְחֹרֵי  
 נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב  
 הָרַגְתָּ בַּיּוֹם אַפְּךָ  
 טָבַחְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלְתָּ:  
 כִּי תִקְרָא כַּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד  
 מִגּוֹרֵי מִסָּבִיב  
 וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֶף-יְהוָה  
 פָּלִיט וְשָׁרִיד  
 אֲשֶׁר-טִפַּחְתִּי וְרַבִּיתִי  
 אֹיְבֵי כָלָם:

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

אֲנִי הַגִּבֹּר רָאָה עָנִי  
 בְּשִׁבְט עֲבָרְתּוֹ:  
 בְּאוֹתֵי נִהַג וּלְלֶךְ  
 חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אוֹר:  
 גַּם אֵת בִּי יָשָׁב  
 יִהְיֶה יָדוֹ כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

1 I am the man who saw affliction  
 through the rod of His burning anger.  
 2 Me did He drive and He led –  
 darkness and no light;  
 3 *Akh* – Even against me He turned  
 upending His hand, all the day.

דָּ בָלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי  
 שָׁבַר עֲצָמוֹתַי:  
 הָ בָנָה עָלַי וַיִּקְרָה  
 רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:

4 He wore away my flesh and my skin,  
 He broke my bones;  
 5 He built against me and surrounded  
 – gall and wormwood.

וּבַמַּחֲשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי  
כְּמֵתֵי עוֹלָם:

6 In darkening-nights He made me dwell  
like those ever dead;

ז גָּדַר בְּעַדִּי  
וְלֹא אֵצֵא:

7 He barricaded against me,  
and I cannot go out / get away,  
He weighed down my bronze (shackle).

הַכְּבִיד נָחֲשָׁתִי:  
ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ  
שָׁתַם תְּפִלָּתִי:

8 Even when I would cry and plea,  
He stopped up my prayer;

ט גָּדַר דְּרָכִי  
בְּגִזִּית נְתִיבֹתַי עֲוֹה:

9 He barricaded my ways with  
stone blocks; my paths He twisted.

י דָּב אֲרַב הוּא לִי  
אֲרִי בְּמַסְתָּרִים:

10 For me He was a bear ambushing,  
a lion in hiding places / stalking;

יא דְּרָכִי סוּרָר וַיִּפְשְׁתָּנִי  
שָׁמַנִּי שָׁמֶם:

11 My ways He diverts and He would tear  
me up; He made me desolate.

יב דִּבְרָךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ וַיַּצִּיבָנִי  
כַּמִּטְרָא לַחֵץ:

12 He worked His bow and made me  
stand as the target for the arrow;

יג הֵבִיא בְּכִלְיוֹתַי  
בְּנֵי אֲשָׁפְתוֹ:

13 He guided into my kidneys  
what came from His quiver,

יד הִיֵּיתִי שְׂחָק לְכָל-עַמִּי  
נִגְנְנָתָם כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

14 I was a laughingstock for all my  
people, their song all the day.

טו הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בְּמֵרוֹרִים  
הָרוֹנִי לַעֲנָה:

15 He sated me with bitter herbs,  
and overfilled me with wormwood;



טז וַיִּגְרַם בְּחֶצֶץ שָׁנִי  
הִכְפִּישָׁנִי בְּאַפֶּר:  
יז וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלֹם נַפְשִׁי  
נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה:  
יח וָאָמַר אֲבַד נִצְחִי  
וַתוֹחַלְתִּי מִיְּהוָה:

16 He broke my teeth with gravel,  
and pressed me into the ashes.  
17 My soul was spurned from peace;  
I forgot goodness,  
18 and I said, “I have lost from *YHVH*  
my endurance and my hope!”

יט זְכַר-עֲנִי  
וּמְרוֹדֵי לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ:  
כ זָכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר  
וַתִּשָּׁחַח עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:  
כא זֹאת אָשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי  
עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל:

19 Remember my affliction and  
my scattering – wormwood and gall;  
20 Remembering, she will remember,  
my soul, and will sink down upon me.  
21 (Still) this will I turn toward my heart,  
for so will I hope:

כב חֶסֶד־יְהוָה  
כִּי לֹא-תִמָּנוּ  
כג לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:  
כד חֲדָשִׁים לְבָקָרִים  
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתָה:  
כה חֶלְקִי יְהוָה  
אָמְרָה נַפְשִׁי  
עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ:

22 *YHVH*’s love / kindnesses  
– they are never done,  
for His mercies were not used up.  
23 They are new by every morning;  
great is Your trust / faithfulness!  
24 My portion is *YHVH*  
—said my soul—  
therefore so will I hope for Him.

כה טוֹב יְהוָה  
לְקוֹי

25 Good is *YHVH*  
to those waiting for Him,

לְנֶפֶשׁ תִּדְרֹשׁנוּ:  
 כַּן טוֹב וַיְחַלּוּ וְדוּמָם  
 לְתַשׁוּעָתָהּ יְהוָה:  
 כֵּן טוֹב לְגֶבֶר  
 כִּי־יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו:

to a soul / person that would seek Him.  
 26 Good – and he should wait and  
 be silent, wait for YHWH's salvation.  
 27 Good it is for a man  
 that he carry a yoke in his youth.

כַּח יֵשֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּדָּם  
 כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו:  
 כֵּן יִתֵּן בְּעַפְרֹת פִּיּוֹ  
 אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה:  
 לֵי יִתֵּן לְמַכּוֹהוּ לְחֵי  
 יִשְׂבַּע בְּחִרְפָּה:

28 Let him sit alone and be silent,  
 since He laid (it) on him;  
 29 he should put his mouth in the dust –  
 maybe there is hope;  
 30 Put out his cheek for the one who  
 strikes, be satiated with shame.

לֹא כִּי לֹא יִזְנֶה  
 לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי:  
 לֵב כִּי אִם־הוֹלָה וְרַחֵם  
 כְּרַב חֶסֶדּוֹ:  
 לֵב כִּי לֹא עָנָה מִלְּבוֹ  
 וַיַּגֵּה בְּנִי־אִישׁ:

31 For Adonai would not  
 spurn forever;  
 32 for if He aggrieved and showed mercy,  
 it is according to His love's abundance;  
 33 for He did not afflict from His heart  
 and aggrieve human beings.

לֵד לְדַכָּא תַּחַת רַגְלָיו  
 כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ:  
 לַה לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפַּט־גֶּבֶר  
 נֶגֶד פָּנֵי עֲלִיוֹן:  
 לוֹ לְעוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבּוֹ

34 To crush under His feet  
 all imprisoned of the land,  
 35 to make bent a man's judgment,  
 right to the face of the Highest,  
 36 to twist / wrong a person in his

אֲדֹנָי לֹא רָאָה:

struggle – wouldn't *Adonai* see (that)?

לֹא מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי  
אֲדֹנָי לֹא צִוָּה:  
לֹחַ מִפִּי עֲלִיזֹן לֹא תֵצֵא  
הָרָעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:  
לֹט מִה־יִּתְאוּנוּ אָדָם חַי  
גָּבֵר עַל־חַטָּאָיו:

37 Who is this who spoke and it was  
– didn't *Adonai* so command?

38 From the mouth of the Highest  
don't the evils and the good come out?

39 How could a living person complain,  
a man, (if punished) for his sins?

מִן נַחֲפָשָׁה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנִחְלָרָה  
וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד־יְהוָה:  
מֵאֵל נִשָּׂא לְבַבֵּנוּ  
אֶל־כַּפָּיִם  
אֶל־אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם:  
מִבְּנַחֲנוּ פָשַׁעְנוּ וּמָרִינוּ  
אַתָּה לֹא סָלַחַתָּ:

40 Let us search our ways and dig deep,  
and let us return until *YHVH*,

41 Let us lift our hearts  
up to our hands (stretching them)  
toward God in the heavens.

42 Us, we sinned and rebelled.  
You – You did not pardon.

מִגַּם סִכַּתָּה בָּאָף  
וַתִּדְרֹפֵנוּ  
הָרָגְתָּ לֹא חֲמִלְתָּ:  
מִדִּ סִכּוּתָה בְּעֶזְנוֹ לָךְ  
מִעֲבוֹר תִּפְלָה:  
מִה סָחִי וּמֵאֹס  
תַּשְׁיִמְנוּ  
בְּקֶרֶב הָעַמִּים:

43 You took shelter in such anger,  
and You would pursue us,  
You murdered without pitying;

44 You sheltered Yourself within a  
cloud, far beyond prayer;

45 Scum and refuse  
You would make us  
in the midst of the peoples.

מו פָּצוּ עֲלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם  
 כָּל-אֹיְבֵינוּ:  
 מז פָּחַד וּפַחַת הָיָה לָנוּ  
 הַשָּׂאת וְהַשָּׁבֵר:  
 מח פָּלְגֵי-מַיִם תִּבְרַד עֵינִי  
 עַל-שֹׁבֵר בֵּית-עַמִּי:

46 All our enemies crack open  
 their mouth against us;  
 47 Trepidation and trap were ours,  
 the ruination and the shattering.  
 48 My eye drops floods of water  
 for my daughter people's shattering;

מט עֵינִי נִגְרָה  
 וְלֹא תִדְמָה  
 מֵאִין הַפְּגוֹת:  
 נ עד-יִשְׁקִיף  
 וְיֵרֶא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם:  
 נא עֵינִי עוֹלִלָה לְנַפְשִׁי  
 מִכָּל בָּנוֹת עִירִי:

49 My eye streams  
 and won't silence herself,  
 (she cries) with no breaks / no stutters,  
 50 until YHVH would look down  
 and see from heaven.  
 51 My eye doles sorrow to my soul  
 over all my city's daughters.

נב צוֹד צְדוֹנִי כַצְפוֹר  
 אֹיְבֵי חֲנָם:  
 נג צָמַתּוּ בַּבּוֹר חַיִּי  
 וַיִּדּוּ-אֶבֶן בִּי:  
 נד צָפוּ-מַיִם עַל-רֹאשִׁי  
 אָמַרְתִּי נִגְזַרְתִּי:

52 Hunting, they hunted me, like a bird,  
 (becoming) my enemies for no reason;  
 53 they sealed off my life in the pit,  
 and cast stone against me;  
 54 waters flowed over my head,  
 "I am cut off," I said.

נה קָרָאתִי שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה  
 מִבּוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת:  
 נו קוֹלִי שָׁמָעָתָּ

55 I called Your name, YHVH,  
 from a pit far underground.  
 56 You heard my voice:

אל־תִּעְלֹם אָזְנוֹךְ  
 לְרוּחֹתַי לְשׁוֹעָתִי:  
 נָו קָרַבְתָּ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָאָךְ  
 אָמַרְתָּ אֶל־תִּירָא:

Don't hide / conceal your ear  
 to my (plea for) relief, to my cry.

57 You were near the day I would call,  
 You said, "Don't fear."

נָח רַבָּת אֲדֹנָי  
 רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי גָאֲלָתָה חַיִּי:  
 נָט רָאִיתָה יְהוָה צוֹתָתִי  
 שְׁפָטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי:  
 ס רָאִיתָה כָּל־נִקְמָתָם  
 כָּל־מַחְשְׁבֹתַם לִי:

58 *Adonai*, You struggled (in) my  
 soul's struggles; You saved my life.

59 You saw my twisting;  
 (now) judge my judgment!  
 60 You saw all their vengeance  
 all their designs for me.

סָא שָׁמַעְתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה  
 כָּל־מַחְשְׁבֹתָם עָלַי:  
 סָב שִׁפְתַּי קָמִי  
 וְהִגִּיזוּם עָלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:  
 סָג שָׁבַתָם וְקִימָתָם  
 הִבִּיטָה אֲנִי מִגִּינָתָם

61 You heard their shaming, *YHVH*,  
 all their designs against me,  
 62 the speech of those rising at me,  
 their obsession over me every day,  
 63 (whether) sitting or rising up –  
 Look! I am their singsong!

סָד תִּשְׁלֹב לָהֶם גְּמוּלָה  
 יְהוָה כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם:  
 סָה תִתֵּן לָהֶם מִגְנַת־לֵב  
 תִּאָּלְתָּךְ לָהֶם:  
 סָו תִּרְדֹּף בְּאַף וְתִשְׁמִידֵם  
 מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִ יְהוָה:

64 You will pay them back, *YHVH*,  
 according to the work of their hands;  
 65 You will make theirs a heart walled  
 up – let Your curse be for them!  
 66 Pursue in anger and destroy them  
 from under *YHVH*'s heavens.

## CHAPTER 4

אַיִכָּה  
 יוֹעַם זָהָב  
 יִשְׁנָא הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב  
 תִּשְׁתַּפְּכֶנָּה אַבְנֵי-קֹדֶשׁ  
 בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת:  
 בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים  
 הַמִּסְלָאִים בַּפֶּן  
 אִיכָּה נִחְשְׁבוּ  
 לְנִבְלֵי-חֶרֶשׁ  
 מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי יוֹצֵר:  
 גַּם-תַּנִּינִים חָלְצוּ שָׂרָה  
 הַיִּנְיָקוֹ גּוֹרֵיהֶן  
 בֵּת-עַמִּי לְאַכְזֹר  
 כִּי־עֲנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר:  
 דָּבֵק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק  
 אֶל-חִכּוֹ בְּצִמָּא  
 עוֹלָלִים שָׁאֲלוּ לָחֶם  
 פָּרֶשׁ אֵין לָהֶם:  
 הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַדְנִים  
 נִשְׁמָו בַּחוּצוֹת  
 הָאֲמָנִים עָלֵי תוֹלַעַ  
 חִבְקוּ אֲשֵׁפֶתוֹת:  
 וַיִּגְדַּל עֵינֹן בֵּת-עַמִּי

- 1 *Eiklah!* How can it be –  
gold becomes dull,  
the best gold transmuted,  
stones of the holy poured / dumped out  
at every street head;
- 2 Zion's children, precious ones,  
weighed against the purest gold –  
how can it be that they are counted  
as clay jars,  
work of a maker's hands?
- 3 Even jackals draw out a breast,  
would give suck to their cubs.  
(But) my daughter people – so cruel,  
like ostriches in the wilderness.
- 4 A suckling's tongue, stuck  
to its palate with such thirst;  
babes sought bread –  
none break it off for them.
- 5 The ones who eat for delicacies  
were wasted in the streets,  
the ones nursed on scarlet  
were hugging trash heaps.
- 6 And my daughter people's iniquity

מִחַטָּאת סֶדֶם  
תִּהְיוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רֹגֶעַ  
וְלֹא-תִלּוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם:  
ז וְכֹה נְזִירֶיהָ מִשְׁלֵג  
צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב  
אֲדָמוֹ עֲצָם מִפְּנִינִים  
סִפִּיר גְּזֵרָתָם:  
ח חֲשֹׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר  
תִּתְאַרְם  
לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת  
צִפְרָ עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם  
יֵבֶשׁ הָיָה כְּעֵץ:  
ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי-חֶרֶב  
מִחֲלִי רָעֵב  
שָׁהָם יוֹבוּ מִדְּקָרִים  
מִתְנוּבֶת שְׂדֵי:  
י יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת  
בִּשְׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן  
הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ  
בְּשֹׁבֵר בֵּת-עַמִּי:  
יא כָלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ  
שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ  
וַיִּצֵּת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן  
וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֹתֶיהָ:  
יב לֹא הָאֱמִינוּ

grew great, beyond the sin of Sodom,  
the one overthrown, as (in) a moment,  
and no hands were laid on her.  
7 Her Nazirites were pure beyond snow,  
clearer than milk,  
red of bone, more than rubies,  
their cut shape sapphire crystal.  
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.  
9 Better were the sword-slain  
than the famine-slain,  
for those drain away, stabbed through  
from (want of) produce of the field.  
10 Merciful hands of merciful women  
stewed their children –  
they became provision for them  
in the shattering of my daughter people.  
11 YHVH used up His fury,  
poured out His burning anger,  
and He kindled a fire in Zion,  
and she consumed her foundations.  
12 They would not have believed,

בִּצְפִיתֵנוּ צָפִינוּ אֶל־גּוֹי  
לֹא יוֹשָׁע:

יח צָדוּ צַעֲדֵינוּ  
מִלִּבְתֵּי בִּרְחֻבֵּינוּ  
קָרַב קִצֵּינוּ מִלְּאוּ יָמֵינוּ  
כִּי־בָא קִצֵּינוּ:

יט קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ  
מִנְּשָׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם  
עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ  
בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ:  
כ רֹחַ אֶפְיָנוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה  
נִלְכַּד בַּשְּׁחִיתוֹתָם  
אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ  
נִחְיֶה בְּגוֹיִם:

כא שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־אֲדָוָה  
יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ  
גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תִּעְבֶּר־כּוֹס  
תִּשְׁכַּר וְתִתְעָרִי:

כב תִּמְצֹנֶיךָ  
בַת־צִיּוֹן  
לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִגְלוֹתָךְ  
פֶּקֶד עוֹנֶיךָ  
בַת־אֲדָוָה  
גְּלָה עַל־חַטֹּאתֶיךָ:

In our seeking, we sought / we peered  
toward 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,  
more 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,  
(the one) 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 (to) you,  
you will drink and strip yourself naked.

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



מְלֹכֵי-אָרֶץ  
כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל  
כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב  
בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:  
יג מִחַטָּאת נְבִיאֶיהָ  
עֲוֹנוֹת כֹּהֲנֶיהָ  
הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהָ  
דָּם צְדִיקִים:  
יד נָעוּ עֹרִים  
בַּחוּצוֹת נִגְאַלּוּ בָדָם  
בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ  
יָגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם:  
טו סִוְרוּ טָמְאָה  
קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ  
סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ אֶל-תִּגְעֻעַ  
כִּי נָצוּ גַם-נָעוּ  
אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם  
לֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לָגֹר:  
טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה  
חִלְקָם לֹא יוֹסִיף  
לְהִבִּיטָם  
פָּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ  
וְזִקְנִים לֹא חֲנָנוּ:  
יז עֹלֵינוּ תִכְלֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ  
אֶל-עֲזָרָתָנוּ הַבֵּל

- kings of the earth  
all the inhabitants of the world,  
that tormentor and enemy would come  
into the gates of Jerusalem –  
13 because of her prophets' sins,  
her priests' wrongs / iniquities,  
the ones who poured out inside her  
the blood of righteous people.  
14 They were shaking / staggering, blind  
in the streets, defiled with the blood,  
with none able / none willing (to)  
come in contact with their clothes.  
15 "Get out! Contaminated! / *Tamei!*"  
they would call to them,  
"Get out! Get out! Don't touch!"  
For they fled, even staggered.  
They said in the nations,  
they will no more (be allowed) to dwell.  
16 YHVH's presence / face  
divided them, He would no more  
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, (which is) emptiness.

## CHAPTER 5

א זְכוֹר יְהוָה מִה־הָיָה לָנוּ

הַבִּיטָה וּרְאֵה

אֶת־חֲרָפָתָנוּ:

ב נִחַלְתָנוּ נְהַפְכָה לְזָרִים

בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכְרִים:

ג יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ וְאֵין אָב

אִמֵּיתָנוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת:

ד מִיָּמֵינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ

עֵצֵינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ:

ה עַל צַוְאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדָּפְנוּ

וְגַעַצְנוּ וְלֹא הוֹנַח־לָנוּ:

ו מִצֵּרִים נָתַנוּ יָד

אֲשׁוּר לְשַׁבֵּעַ לָחֶם:

ז אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאֵינָם

וְאִנְחָנוּ עוֹנֵתֵיהֶם סָבְלוּ:

ח עֲבָדִים מָשְׁלוּ בָנוּ

פֶּרֶק אֵין מִיָּדָם:

ט בִּנְפְשֵׁנוּ נָבִיא לְחַיָּנוּ

מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר:

י עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתִנּוֹר נִכְמָרוּ

מִפְּנֵי זַלְעָפוֹת רָעָב:

יא נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָזוּ

בְּתִלְתַּת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה:

1 *YHWH*, 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 were we pursued,

wearry, and none would let us (rest).

6 Egypt, we stretched a hand,

Assyria, to satisfy bread.

7 Our fathers sinned and are not,

and we shouldered their iniquities.

8 Slaves ruled us.

None can break us out from their hand.

9 For our lives we bring our bread,

from before the wilderness's sword.

10 Our skin like a furnace, glowing,

from before the delirium of hunger.

11 Women in Zion were victimized,

girls, in Judah's towns.

יב שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נָתְלוּ  
 פָּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדְּרוּ:  
 יג בַּחֲוָרִים טָחוּז נָשְׂאוּ  
 וּנְעָרִים בַּעֲץ כָּשְׁלוּ:  
 יד זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעָר שָׁבְתוּ  
 בַּחֲוָרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם:  
 טו שָׁבֵת מְשׁוֹשׁ לִבֵּנוּ  
 נִהְפָּךְ לְאֵבֶל מִחֻלֵּנוּ:  
 טז נִפְלָה עֲטֶרֶת רֹאשֵׁנוּ  
 אִי־נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטֵאנוּ:  
 יז עַל־זֶה הָיָה דְּהֵא לִבֵּנוּ  
 עַל־אַלֶּה חֲשָׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ:  
 יח עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם  
 שׁוֹעֲלִים הִלְכוּ־בָּו:  
 יט אַתָּה יְהוָה  
 לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב  
 כִּסְאֶךָ לְדָר וָדוֹר:  
 כ לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ  
 תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאֶדְרָךְ יָמִים:  
 כא הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
 וּנְשׁוּבָה  
 חֲדַשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:  
 כב כִּי אָם־מָאֵס  
 מֵאִסְתָּנוּ קִצְפָּתָ עָלֵינוּ  
 עַד־מָאֵד

12 Ministers by their hand were hung.  
 Elders' faces shown no majesty / respect.  
 13 Boys would carry a millstone,  
 and youths, stumbling with wood.  
 14 Elders ceased from gate,  
 boys from their play.  
 15 Our heart ceased / stopped any joy,  
 our dance overturned into mourning.  
 16 The crown on our head is fallen;  
 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 throne (lasts) for generations.  
 20 Why would you forget us forever?  
 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 (what) if rejecting you did reject  
 us / loath us, were enraged over us,  
 so very much—!

Hashiveinu      הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ  
 Adonai elekha      יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
 v'nashuvah      וְנָשׁוּבָה  
 Chadesh yamenu      חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ  
 k'kedem      כְּקֶדֶם:

Turn us,  
 YHVH, toward you,  
 and we will turn.  
 Make our days new again,  
 like dawn / long ago.

*Some more songs:*

*Shifkhi kamayim libeikh  
 nokhach p'nei Hashem*

Pour out your heart like water  
 right before Hashem

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

Judah will dwell for all time,  
 Jerusalem for generations

By the waters of Babylon we sat  
 down and wept for thee Zion  
 We remember thee Zion

*Nachamu 'ami.  
 Anokhi hu m'nachemchem*

Take comfort my people  
 I am the one who comforts you

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

My God, Zion and her towns, like  
 a woman in travail, like a virgin  
 wearing sackcloth for the  
 husband of her youth

*The observances of Tish'a B'Av*

The observances of *Tish'a B'Av*—not wearing fresh clothes, not washing, fasting from eating and drinking and sexual contact, not greeting each other, not sitting anywhere except on the ground—are closer to the experience of being a refugee than to being a mourner. The destruction of the Temple stands not just for the destruction of Jerusalem, but for the city being turned into a war zone, and the people becoming prey to hunger, violence, and death. *Tish'a B'Av* is not primarily about the Temple – *Chaza"l*, the rabbis, figured out how to live without the Temple long ago. Rather, *Tish'a B'Av* is about homelessness, fleeing from war into famine, being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection – things all too present in our world. It's an opportunity empathize, to confront the ways we abuse our power, as individuals, as a society, as a people, and as a species, turning other people and other species into refugees.



*City Shelter*, Kathe Kollwitz, 1926, public domain

*Eli Tsiyon, selected verses*

|                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Eli Tsiyon v'areha</i>       | My God, Zion and her towns,       |
| <i>k'mo ishah v'tsireha</i>     | like a woman in travail of labor, |
| <i>v'khivtulah chagurat sak</i> | like a virgin wearing sackcloth   |
| <i>al ba'al n'ureha</i>         | for the husband of her youth      |

|                                |                                        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>Alei hegyon m'choleha</i>   | For her dancers' concentration         |
| <i>asher damam b'areha</i>     | whose blood (ran) in her towns         |
| <i>V'al va'ad asher shamam</i> | and for the mob that destroyed         |
| <i>uvitul sanhed'reha</i>      | and ended her high court of<br>justice |

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Alei galut m'shartei El</i> | For the exile of God's servants |
| <i>n'imei shir z'mareha</i>    | sweet singers of her songs      |
| <i>V'al kolot m'charpeha</i>   | and for her scorers clamoring   |
| <i>b'eit rabu f'gareha</i>     | while the corpses piled up      |

|                                |                                                   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Alei pesha asher av'tah</i> | For the perversion she twisted                    |
| <i>s'lol derekh ashureha</i>   | paving the path of the well-off                   |
| <i>V'al tsiv'ot k'haleha</i>   | and for her amassed community                     |
| <i>sh'zufeha sh'choreha</i>    | her field workers, her brown,<br>her black people |

|                                   |                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Alei shimkha asher chulal</i>  | For Your name desecrated                         |
| <i>b'fi kamai m'tsareha</i>       | in the mouths who stand against<br>her oppressed |
| <i>V'al tachan y'tsavchu lakh</i> | and for the plea they cry to You                 |
| <i>Kashuv ush'ma amareha.</i>     | focus and listen to her word                     |

“The Hope of How” - By Yehudah Webster & Zahara Zahav  
(via Detroit Jews for Justice)

“My insides are churning” –

A most sacred home, in flames, deemed worthless, disposable; How?  
Eikhah? A pastor and worshipers slain, heads bowed, in the  
sanctuary; How?

A mother sits in the street where her son’s soul was poured out;  
How? A world turns its back again, again, again – there is none to  
comfort her; How?

A people shown their Black bodies, tears, families do not matter;  
How?

How have we fallen to such disgrace? How long will we slink away  
from justice? How do we allow? How do we hope? How do we dance  
when so heavy with grief? How do we turn to face each other?

A woman climbs where no one dared, tears down a flag of hatred;  
How? A mother refuses to back down, power yields to her demands;  
How?

A wave of clergy rise up to meet resounding call for a different world;  
How? A movement plants seeds everywhere, sprouts flowers over  
burial ground; How?

A black man’s cry, “I can’t breathe” amplified in the streets for all to  
hear; How?

With this hope we pray that we do not reach the point of total  
destruction. We pray that we desist from senseless hatred and  
brutality. That sacred places remain holy, unstained from the blood of  
racism. That we do not repeat the mistakes of our ancestors, taking  
instead honest account of our obligations.

May community, allyship and love forge new bridges of  
understanding and trust. That we continue to hope and believe in  
each other. Demanding as one that black lives truly do matter. All  
these things we pray in solidarity together

Some notes on the theology of *Eikhah*:

1. *Tish'a B'Av* could not be more relevant than it is today, when the crisis of war refugees and fear of terrorism have overwhelmed the political process in so many countries. We think of *Tish'a B'Av* as a time of mourning, but it is more importantly a call to identify with the experience of refugees who are forced to risk their lives and even their children's lives in order to escape violence, hunger, devastation. That's what the Jewish people went through when the Temple, and the nation and society it stood for, were destroyed, when they became "like deer, not finding a place to graze, walking without strength before a pursuer." (1:6)

2. The idea that tragedy and disaster are punishment for sins seems alien to many modern Jews. This is also why it can be hard to connect the Holocaust with *Tish'a B'Av*. But this theology can also be consoling, because it allows people to find meaning in tragedy.

3. The author(s) of *Eikhah* (traditionally Jeremiah) believed that what happened to Jerusalem expressed divine judgment. For our ancestors, the choice was to believe either that the destruction was God's punishment, or that God no longer cared about what happened to them. It is easy to imagine people choosing a punishing God over an uncaring God (though the latter possibility is also suggested in the last verse of *Eikhah*). Even though *Eikhah* sounds like it's about God punishing us, it's not really a theodicy, a justification of God. Rather, it expresses the hope that tragedy proves that God cares about us, instead of proving the opposite.

4. That doesn't mean we need to accept that theology – even in *Eikhah* itself, this idea is questioned. Only in chapter three is Zion's destruction consistently seen as fair and just punishment. In all the other chapters, the degree of divine punishment is described as excessive and abusive. In every chapter, the poet begs God to pay attention: "See, *YHVH*, and look: to whom did You deal thus? If women will eat their fruit, coddled babes – !" (2:20; also 1:9, 1:11, 1:20, 3:63, 4:16, 5:1). It's as if other people could see and understand the tragedy that unfolded (1:12), but God could not.

5. 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 a metaphor for the "just" punishment that follows Israel's "adulterous" pursuit of other gods. But in *Eikhah*, the metaphor is used to hold up a mirror to God, to show that the punishment was intolerably abusive.

6. The real theology of *Eikhah* is summed up 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 enable the people to find meaning.

7. There is another way to understand the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah, the reason for the exile was that Israel did not let the land rest every seven years after they entered the land. (2 Chron. 36:21) Since 490 years had passed without a sabbatical year, Israel had to go into exile for 70 years.

8. What does this mean? The Torah portrays the land as a subject with rights and interests that take priority over our needs. Especially in the flood story and the laws of Jubilee and sabbatical years (Lev. 25)—and in the consequences that are supposed to befall the people if they do not observe these laws (Lev. 26)—the Torah teaches that God will take the side of the land against the people if forced to. The land will “enjoy her Sabbaths” (Lev. 26:34,43) – even if that means the people are exiled or wiped out. From the divine perspective, the land can sue for justice. What has intrinsic value is not humanity but justice, which is humanity’s potential. See: [neohasid.org/torah/genesis-shmitah](http://neohasid.org/torah/genesis-shmitah)

9. The Torah outlines six curses for not observing the sabbatical year that describe an unraveling relationship between people and land. Two curses involve children being eaten – by wild animals (v.22), then by their parents (v.29). That image is repeated in *Eikhah* (2:20, 4:10), and it is the main connection between *Eikhah* and Leviticus. The final curse in Leviticus is that “you will be lost in the nations and the land of your enemies will eat you” (v.38). The last curse does not sound like the worst. But if the land eats us, this represents a complete reversal of the right relationship between the people and the land.

10. In ancient times, people believed that the Temple existed to promote fertility and abundance. Temple rituals were performed for the sake of the land and for all life, not just for the Jews or even for all humanity. The Temple’s purpose had already been destroyed by the way people treated the land.

11. The idea that destruction came because of how the Jewish people treated the land is not found in *Eikhah*, where identification of the land with the people is total. Instead, Jerusalem’s downfall results from the moral downfall in relationships between human beings. In Jeremiah too, the fate of Jerusalem is sealed only after the rich, who briefly set their slaves free, re-enslave them when it looks like the danger has passed. (Jer. 34) How we treat the stranger, the poor, the refugee, is what determines if we have the right to be in the land.

12. Creation is compared to a sacred Temple (*Tanchuma Pekudei, P’ri Eitz Hadar*). In an age when our ecological “sins” are coming home to roost, the connection between natural disaster and divine retribution is not farfetched. However, when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, there were other lands to flee to. If we destroy the Temple that is this Earth, there will be no place to flee. (Cantor Richard Kaplan’s *Kinah L’churban Gan Eden*, on [neohasid.org](http://neohasid.org), can help you focus on this theme.)

13. We can expect more wars over resources, as well as people fleeing areas that have flooded or become deserts, as climate change puts more pressure on our ecosystems and 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. *Eikhah* is an invitation to move towards justice for all people, for all species, and for the land herself.

Rabbi David Mevorach Seidenberg  
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