



איכה

The Book of Lamentations
and
Kinnah 8

Translated into rhyme by Mindy Schaper



Photo Credit Andrew Seaman

The Book of Lamentations

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1.

Alas, she sits alone now, the city once was great
 Now a widow silent grieves and contemplates her fate
 The greatest of the nations a tribute has become
 She weeps at night, her tears alight, her beauty's come undone.

Her lovers have betrayed her, her friends become her foes
 Now Judah's gone to exile, she's bent from all her woes
 She dwelt among the nations, but there she found no rest
 She tried to hide in narrow sides but there they caught her best.

Her roads are now in mourning; they do not pilgrims bear
 Her gates are wide but empty; now sighs of priests they hear
 Her rival's now her master, her children sold as slaves
 She lost her kin, God counts her sins, she's stripped from all her grace.

Her leaders found no pasture, they stumbled as they fled
 Jerusalem remembers the treasures which are bled
 When no one came to help her, her enemies rejoiced
 They wonder how she wanders now, but this was all her choice.

Iniquity she flaunted, to ends she paid no mind
 And now they loot her Temple, her treasures once confined
 The people sigh in hunger, they trade for loaves of bread
 I wish this not, this vapid rot, 'pon those who see my dread.

Oh, can you find another, afflicted so like I?
 From high He threw a fire so that I'd burn and die
 He made me trip and stumble, in constant misery
 My wrongs He packed in yoke compact which now enfetters me.

The Book of Lamentations

My heroes He has trampled, He crushes all my men
 And then He takes the maidens, and smashes them again
 Now this is why I wail, and this is why I cry
 No one is there with listening ear my spirit to revive.

Jerusalem is soiled, it's God who is the pure
 For I have disobeyed Him, obedience my cure
 My priests they have all perished, my elders food but seek
 My insides churn, revenge I yearn; what they did, let them reap.

2.

Alas, my Lord in anger has cast on us a cloud
 From His seat in Heaven our glory has thrown down
 Consuming without pity the places where we dwell
 Our fort He razed, our king disgraced, the Lord of Israel.

He burned us like a fire, He bent us like a bow
 He slaughtered all our fairest, He beat us down so low
 He pulverized our towers, He vanquished our forts
 What we forgot, but He did not; the Sabbath brought a tort.

The kings they did not matter, the priests He brushed aside
 The alter then He shattered; He led the spy inside
 While wrecking, they were festive, as God destroyed our wall
 The prophets mute as captors loot; the Torah, too, will fall.

The elders sit in silence, with ashes on their head
 On earth they mourn in sackcloth; they mourn a world that's dead
 My eyes are blind for weeping, my insides on the ground
 For what I see, it cannot be, yet witness I this sound.

The Book of Lamentations

“Oh, mama, where’s my supper?” the babies cry and beg
On streets they swoon, their end so soon, on mother’s laps they ebb
To what can I compare you, your ruin vast as sea
And yet the cause should give you pause, your own false prophecy.

They told you you were perfect, your vanity they soothed
The path you tread is flawless, it’s sin free and it’s smooth
But now all those who see you, they hoot and point their hands
Oh could this be the city we called Perfect of all lands?

God His plan enacted; He’s rendered His decree
Now we can but cry out, like rivers flow, do we
So cry out in the nighttime; pour out like rain your heart
Raise up your arms, and plead no harm, beg life not to depart.

Every corner fainting, where children die of thirst
Should women eat their offspring? Is this how we were cursed?
Cold lie both priest and prophet, their bodies in Your home
With swords they slew, they ran them through, both young & old condoned.

That day You showed no mercy, You sent as though to feast
My foes invite for their delight to view my true defeat
The day Your wrath escap’ed, when no one dared survive
Those I loved have flown above; Why am I still alive?

3.

I am the man whose anger from God’s hand have I seen
He scrapes my flesh so weary, breaks my bones repeatedly
Encircled here with darkness, I’m walled with all my pain
I cry, I plead, I ache, I bleed; You weight me still with chains.

The Book of Lamentations

My walls with stones He's block'ed; He tangles up my path
A lion He is hiding, He shoots thorns in His wrath
I have been made His target; His arrows hurl in me
A laughingstock, His heart is blocked, I'm filled with misery.

He grinds my teeth on gravel, I cower in the dust
I have forgotten goodness, my hope has turned to rust
Remembering affliction, like I remember yet
His mercies new, His faith in you, those I do not forget.

My God is all my portion, and I have hope in Him
He punishes but duly, not from caprice or whim
Submit to your allotment, from God it has all stemmed
Lay up your cheek, be low and meek, one day He will amend.

He does not hinder justice, corrupt He won't approve
If done, He did ordain it; without Him, none could move
Let us our ways examine, return to our God
Lift our hands, love His commands, or stricken be by rod.

Yet You're wrapped in a layer, no prayer yet can pierce
Our enemies they mock us, their jeering harsh and fierce
My eyes they stream with water, adversaries ensnare
From pit I cry, I call on high, but You refuse to hear.

You used to always listen, You'd champion my cause
In past You would redeem me; don't write me off as lost
All through the day they taunt me, repay them now in kind
Please break their heart and curse their start; erase them from my mind.

The Book of Lamentations

4.
The gold has now been dimm'ed; the lustrous shine is dulled
They're diamonds on the roadside; my children clay and null
The beast will even suckle; my daughter now is cruel
They beg for bread, they thirst instead, their tongue dry as a rule.

The rich who daily feasted now fester in the streets
Those swaddling in scarlet have garbage at their feet
Far worse than even Sodom, whose wreckage yet was brief
Our suff'ring long, we sigh a song, and tremble like a leaf.

My princes who were lovely, their faces white as milk
Complexion red like rubies, and skin as soft as silk
Their face has now been darkened; they're withered and they're gray
With shriveled skin, He's done them in; they're dry like wood decay.

How lucky are the victims, those stabb'ed by the sword
More merciful than famine, inflicted by the Lord
Sweet mothers who were loving now cook their children soft
Your fire burned, our world o'erturned, the day that You were wroth.

And all this for the prophets who told us all was well
Priests who'd murdered others so their politics would swell
The blind through streets they wander, they slip on bloody piles
"Away! Don't touch!" they shout too much. As lepers, now we're vile.

We search in vain for rescue, but no one comes to save
Instead they come to haunt us, their enmity depraved
Our end is drawing nearer, like eagles in the sky
Through mounts pursued, in deserts too, within their traps we lie.

The Book of Lamentations

Go keep your minstrels singing, you daughter of the Red
The cup to you will pass by too, and Edom, you will dread
You'll drink until you vomit, the poison to refill
No deed untouched, you did too much; exceeded what God willed.

5.

Remember what's befallen, and come to see our shame
Our homes are now with strangers, and only us to blame
We orphans, widows, captives, we pay to drink our own
To Egypt hailed, for bread assailed; Assyria gave none.

We bear the sins of fathers, as well our own we bear
Our skin scorched like an oven, from faint we disappear
They ravaged dames in Zion, our leaders hung by hand
They mocked our old, youth bear their loads, and stumble through the
land.

The gates bereft of sages, the young ones sing no more
The joy has gone and left us; our dancing turned to mourn
On Zion roam the foxes, and yet we ask Your throne
Renew our days, You've done your rage, return us to our home.

Megillat Eichah can be read in its original at sefaria.org.

Kinnah 8

R' Elazar HaKalir

Translated into rhyme by Mindy Schaper

ה-א Aleph-Taf

I wish I could flutter till edge of the sky
I'd rend ope the heavens so that they would cry
I'd curse out the day on which double I died
I wish that the water would flow o'er my eye

ש-ב Beis-Shin

I'd cry in the desert, I'd cry there at night
I'd hear you all weeping as you take your flight
A weeping for weeping, an eye for an eye
I'm wishing for Sinai, for days filled with light.

ג-גimmel-Reish

My limbs have all fallen like olives from trees
The cry of my household soft wafts through the breeze
My master calls after, my state breeds unease
I wish I could trample like thorns enemies.

ק-ד Daled-Kuf

I'd battle to find Him, I'd grow faint my heart
I wish that my words knew forgiveness the art
I seek for my Shepherd, but He's traveled far
I mourn for the distance that keeps us apart.

ז-ה Hey-Tzadik

I'm spinning in circles, I'm spinning around
In tears I beseech Him, my face on the ground
The stars have iced over; the moon bears a frown
I shriek for remembrance, my words written down.

Kinnah 8

R' Elazar HaKalir

פ-ו Vav-Pey

The righteous deceivers who covered the fruit
They shame my deception, my greed for the loot
The stars shining down, e'en they hear my suit
They cry at my vestments, ripped open so brute.

ז-ז Zayin-Ayin

And out we were exiled, when Temple was bled
How bitterly I can recall we were wed
A waterfall plummets with tears that we shed
If like doves we had wings, by sky we'd have fled.

ח-ח Ches-Samach

My brothers the Ten Tribes were taken to Tyre
Like fields without water God withered in ire
Jerusalem city was grasped like wheat spires
My heart's with my country, e'en when all is dire.

ט-ט Tes-Nun

I'd set my camp up in the shadow of death
I'd linger with people who breathe their last breath
I'd tend to the people who yearn for world next
For which of the living escaped that duress?

י-י Yud-Mem

My Lord, I am pleading, redemption portend
For yearly my nation declares it's the end
But I must announce what I cannot defend
That God is our witness; our fate heaven sent.

Kinnah 8

R' Elazar HaKalir

כ Chuf

My head I will prostrate to God, our might
My knee take to bending because You are right
From pain I will crown You, my songs choked with blight
For You are my brother, support while I fight.

ל Lamed

The Temple cries out now, forget not its groans
And Judah and Israel restore from their roams
The thousands of angels, the legions of Rome
Was vidi and vici, now bring us back home.

Elazar-Mindy

But to this You answer, “From my ways you ceased
Mind you were who left me, and so I sent Greece,”
I groan and I howl; I search for **Elyse**
Are all my crowns tumbled as I fall from grief?

Kinnah 8 can be read in its original Hebrew on sefaria.org.

Translation note

As is apparent, the translation is not word for word or line by line. Most of the content was preserved. Translation assisted by the Artscroll Tishah B'Av siddur.

About the author

Mindy Schaper neé Friedlander was educated in the Bais Yaakov system. She has bachelor degrees from the University of Memphis in English, Psychology, and Judaic Studies. She is currently completing an MBA at Rutgers University.

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