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Lamentations

Chapter 1

¹Jerusalem was once full of people,
but now it is completely deserted.

Once it was a powerful nation,
but now it is alone, like a widow.

Once everyone in the world honored it like a king's daughter,
but now it is like a slave.

²We in the city weep bitterly all during the nights,
with tears flowing down our cheeks.

We did not trust Yahweh to help us, and the people groups that we did trust failed to help us;
none of those people comfort us now.

All the people groups that were friends with us have betrayed us;
they are all now our enemies.

³The people of Judah have become poor
and have suffered greatly.

Almost all of our people
were forced to leave our land.

We now live in another country
and we have no peace.

When the people of Judah were unable to defend ourselves,
that was when our enemies captured us.

⁴The roads to Mount Zion are empty
because no one comes here to celebrate the sacred festivals any longer.

No elders or leaders sit under the city gates to talk any more,
and Jerusalem's priests groan in sorrow.

The young women left in Jerusalem cry
because they are suffering greatly.

⁵Our enemies are now masters of our city,

and they prosper.

Yahweh has punished us, the people of Jerusalem,
because of all the sins that we have committed.

Our enemies have taken all our children
and made them go to other countries.

⁶Jerusalem was a beautiful city,
but it is not beautiful now.

The leaders of our city are like deer that are starving
because they can find no grass to eat.

They are very weak
and cannot run from our enemies.

⁷We, the people of Jerusalem, are sad and have no more homes to live in;
we think about all the splendid things that once filled our city.

But now our enemies have captured the city,
and there is no one to help us.

Our enemies destroyed our city
and laughed while they were doing it.

⁸We, the people of Jerusalem, have sinned very much;
our city has become like a bloody rag between a woman's legs.
Everyone who previously honored our city now despise it;
they are like people who strip a woman bare and then mock her.

Now we groan in the city;
we are like a woman without clothes who tries to cover herself with her hands.

⁹It is as if our city has become filthy because we have sinned so greatly;
we did not think about how God would punish us.

We did not imagine how we would suffer;
there is no one to comfort us.

We all call out to God, "Yahweh, look at how we are suffering
because our enemies have defeated us!"

¹⁰Our enemies have taken away all our treasures,
all the valuable things that we owned.

People who do not worship you, Yahweh, are going into our sacred temple,
where you had said no foreigner must go into the place where your people worship you.

11All the people in the city cry out with pain
while they search for food.

They have given their most valuable things
to get food to eat to restore their strength.

Yahweh, look at me,
no one values my life.

12You people who pass by,
you do not seem to care at all about what has happened to me.
Look around and see that there are no other people who are suffering as I do.
Yahweh has caused me to suffer

because he has punished me on the day he was angry with us, his people.

13It is as though he sent a fire from heaven
that burned in my bones;
it is as though he has placed a trap to entangle my feet,
and made me turn back.

He has abandoned me;
I am weak and alone every day, all during the day.

14He turned the sins that I have committed into a heavy load for me to carry;
it is as though he tied them around my neck.

Previously we were strong,
but he has caused me to become weak.
He has allowed my enemies to capture me,
and I was not able to do anything to resist them.

15The Lord looked at my mighty soldiers, who kept me safe.
He summoned a great army
to come and crush me to defeat my strong young soldiers.
The Lord has trampled on the people of Judah
as people trample on grapes in a pit to make juice.

16I weep because of all these things.

My eyes are filled with tears.

There is no one to comfort me.

The one who comforts me is far away from me.

My children have no hope

because the enemy has taken us all captive.

¹⁷The people who lived in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

have no one to give them comfort.

Yahweh has given the order that the people in nearby nations

will become the enemies of the descendants of our father Jacob (who are also called the Israelites).

Jerusalem has become disgusting to them.

¹⁸But what Yahweh has done to me is fair,

for I had refused to obey what he told me to do.

You people everywhere, listen to me!

Look and see that I am suffering greatly.

My young daughters and brave sons

have been taken away to far off lands.

¹⁹I pleaded with our allies, in whom we trusted, to help,

but they all refused,

they told lies and did not keep their promises.

My priests and my leaders

died within the walls of the city

while they searched for food to eat.

²⁰Yahweh, see that I am suffering very much!

Inside of my body I am in great distress.

I am sad in the center of my being,

because I have rebelled against you

and have caused you great sadness!

Our enemies kill people in the streets with their swords;

and that makes our homes the places where the dead are kept.

²¹Hear my groaning!

but no one came to comfort me.

All our enemies know what happened to me;
they were all happy to hear
about what Yahweh has done to his people.
Please do soon what you have promised,
when our enemies will suffer like we have suffered!
²²Yahweh, let those evil deeds come near to you
so you may see them all!
Punish them as you have punished me
for all my sins!
I suffer and groan very much,
and I faint within my inner self.

Chapter 2

¹The Lord was extremely angry with us;
it was as though he covered Jerusalem with a dark cloud.
Previously it was a beautiful city,
but he has caused it to become a ruin.
At the time he punished Israel,
he even abandoned his temple in Jerusalem.
²The Lord destroyed the homes of the people of Judah;
he did not act mercifully.
Because he was very angry,
he broke down the fortresses of Judah.
He has made our kingdom to be completely helpless, and
he has caused our rulers to lose all honor.
³Because he was extremely angry,
he has caused Israel to not be powerful anymore.
He has refused to assist us
when our enemies attacked us.
He has destroyed Israel
like a raging fire destroys everything.
⁴He has gotten ready to kill us, his people,

as though we were his enemies.

He prepared to kill the people whom we love the most,
members of our own families.

He is extremely angry with us people of Jerusalem;
his anger is like a fire.

⁵The Lord has become like an enemy
to us Israelites; he has destroyed us;
he has destroyed our palaces
and made our fortresses into ruins.
He has gotten rid of many people in Jerusalem,
and caused us to mourn and weep for those who were killed.

⁶He has caused our enemies to smash his temple
as easily as if it had been a hut in a garden.
He has caused us, his people, to forget
all our sacred festivals and Sabbath days.
He has hated our kings and priests
because he was extremely angry with them.

⁷Yahweh has rejected the very altar on which we had sacrificed animals to him;
he has abandoned his temple.
He has allowed our enemies to tear down the walls
of our temple and our palaces.
They shout victoriously in the temple of Yahweh,
like we previously shouted during our sacred festivals.

⁸Yahweh was determined
that our enemies would tear down our city wall.
It was as though he had first measured the walls
and then completely destroyed them.
It was as though he caused the towers and walls to lament
because they were now ruins.

⁹The city gates have collapsed;
the enemy has destroyed the bars that fastened the gates shut.

The king and his officials have been forced to go to other countries,
where no one teaches the laws that God gave to Moses.

The prophets do not receive any visions
because Yahweh does not give them any.

10The old men of Jerusalem sit on the ground,
and they say nothing.

They are so sad that they wear rough sackcloth
and throw dust on their heads.

The young girls of Jerusalem bow down sorrowfully,
their faces touch the ground.

11My eyes are very tired because of my tears;

I am very grieved within my inner being.

Because very many of my people have died,
in my inner being I grieve and am exhausted.

Even children and babies are fainting
and dying in the streets because they have no food.

12They cry out to their mothers,

“We need something to eat and drink!”

They collapse like wounded men
in the streets of the city.

They slowly die

in the arms of their mothers.

13You people of Jerusalem,

I cannot say anything to help you.

No people have suffered like you are suffering;

I do not know what I can do to comfort you.

You have fallen just as far

as if you had sunk in the ocean;

there is no one who can bring your city back to what it was.

14The prophets among you claimed that they had seen visions from Yahweh,

but what they said was false and worthless.

They did not work to save you from your enemies;
they did not tell you that you had sinned.
Instead, they announced to you things that they said Yahweh had told them;
they tempted you to believe them, and you did.

¹⁵All those who pass by you
make fun of you by clapping their hands;
they shake their heads and hiss at you;
They say, "Is this the great city of Jerusalem?
Is it the city that people said was the most beautiful city in the world,
the city that caused all the people on the earth to rejoice?"

¹⁶Now all our enemies laugh at you;
they hate you so much that they hiss at you and grind their teeth at you.
They say, "We have destroyed Israel!
This is what we longed for,
and now it has happened!"

¹⁷Yahweh has done what he planned;
long ago he threatened to destroy you,
and now he has done it.
He has destroyed your city without acting mercifully toward you;
he has enabled your enemies to be happy about defeating you;
he has enabled your enemies to continually become stronger.

¹⁸I wish the city walls could speak like the people who
cry out to Yahweh!
I would tell the walls, "Cry out for help to Yahweh!
Let your tears flow day and night!
Let them flow like rivers.
Do not stop grieving;
do not stop crying."

¹⁹Get up during every night and cry out;
tell Yahweh what you feel in your inner beings.
Raise your arms to plead to him

to act mercifully to prevent our children from dying;
they are fainting on the street corners
because they have no food to eat.

²⁰Yahweh, look at your people and have mercy on us.

Have you ever caused people to suffer like this before?

It is certainly not right that women are eating the flesh of their own children,
the children whom they have always taken care of.

It is not right that our enemies are killing priests and prophets
in your own temple!

²¹The corpses of people of all ages lie in the streets;

there are even corpses of young men and young women whom our enemies have killed with their swords.

Because you were very angry,

you caused them to be killed;

you have slaughtered them

without pitying them at all.

²²You summoned my enemies to attack from every direction,

as though you were calling them to come to a feast.

At that time you showed that you were very angry,

and no one escaped.

Our enemies murdered our little children,

the ones whom we took care of and reared up.

Chapter 3

¹I, the one who am writing this, am a man whom Yahweh made to suffer,
because he was angry.

²It was as though he caused me to walk in a very dark place
without any light at all.

³He has punished me many times,
many times during each day.

⁴He has caused my skin and my flesh to become old.

He has broken my bones.

⁵He has surrounded me with things
that make me suffer very bitterly.

⁶It is as though he has buried me in a dark place
like those who have been dead for a long time.

⁷It is as though he has built a prison wall around me,
and fastened me with heavy chains, so I cannot escape.

⁸Although I call out and cry out for him to help me,
he does not pay attention to me.

⁹It is as though he has blocked my path with a high stone wall
and has caused me to wander everywhere to try to get out.

¹⁰He has waited to attack me
like a bear or a lion hides and waits to attack a man.

¹¹It is as though a bear has dragged me off the path and mauled me,
and left me alone without help.

¹²It is as though he strung his bow and made me the target
to shoot at with his arrows.

¹³It is as though he shot his arrows
deep into my body.

¹⁴All my relatives laugh at me;
all during each day they sing songs that make fun of me.

¹⁵Yahweh has made me suffer greatly,
like someone suffers after drinking something very bitter.

¹⁶It is as though he has caused me to chew gravel that broke my teeth;
it is as though he has trampled me in the ground.

¹⁷Things no longer go well for me;
I no longer remember being prosperous.

¹⁸I continue to say to myself, "I am not strong enough to bear any more hardships.
I no longer expect that Yahweh will rescue me."

¹⁹When I think about how I suffer and how I wander far from home,
it is like drinking a very bitter liquid.

²⁰I will never forget this time

when I feel very depressed.

²¹However, I confidently expect Yahweh to do good things for me again,
and this I know is true.

²²Yahweh never stops faithfully loving us, and he shows his compassion for us forever.
He never stops acting kindly toward us.

²³Every morning he acts mercifully toward us again.
He is the one in whom we can always trust.

²⁴So I sincerely say to myself, "Yahweh gives me what I need!"
Because I believe this, I will confidently wait for him to do good things for me.

²⁵Yahweh is good to all those who depend on him,
to those who seek him to help them.

²⁶So it is good for us to wait quietly
for Yahweh to save us.

²⁷And it is good for us to suffer patiently
while we are young.

²⁸Those who seek him to help them should sit by themselves and not complain,
because they know that it is Yahweh who has allowed them to suffer.

²⁹They should lie in the dirt, with their faces on the ground,
because they can still hope that Yahweh will help them.

³⁰If someone strikes us on one cheek,
we should turn the other cheek toward that person in order that he may strike it, too,
and accept it when others insult us.

³¹The Lord does not abandon his people forever.

³²Sometimes he causes us to suffer,
but he also acts kindly toward us
because he continually and faithfully loves us.

³³And he does not take pleasure when he causes people to suffer
or be sad.

³⁴If people mistreat and oppress all the prisoners,

³⁵or if they rebel against God
by refusing to do for others what is right,

³⁶Or if they cause judges to decide matters unjustly,
the Lord certainly sees all these things.

³⁷No one can make something happen
unless Yahweh has already decided that it should happen.

³⁸God in heaven is the one who commands that disasters should happen,
and he also causes good things to happen.

³⁹So it is certainly not right for us, who are only people on earth, to complain
when he punishes us for the sins that we have committed.

⁴⁰Instead, we should think carefully about how we behave;
we should turn back to Yahweh.

⁴¹We should pray with all our inner beings and lift up our arms
toward God in heaven, and say,

⁴²"We have sinned and rebelled against you,
and you have not forgiven us.

⁴³You have been very angry and chased after us;
you have slaughtered us without pitying us.

⁴⁴You have hidden yourself away, as if you were in a cloud,
so that you will not hear us when we pray.

⁴⁵You have made us go among the foreign peoples,
and they think we are only garbage.

⁴⁶All our enemies have spoken things to insult us.

⁴⁷We are constantly afraid that people will trap us,
because we have experienced so many disasters and so much ruin.

⁴⁸Many tears flow from my eyes
because my people have been destroyed.

⁴⁹My tears continually flow;
they will not stop

⁵⁰until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees us.

⁵¹I am very grieved
because of what has happened to the women of my city.

⁵²My enemies hunted for me

like people hunt for a bird to kill it
even though there was no reason for them to do that.

⁵³They threw me into a pit to kill me,
and placed a heavy stone over the top of it.

⁵⁴The water in the pit rose above my head,
and I said to myself, 'I am about to die!'

⁵⁵But from the bottom of the pit I cried out to you,
'Yahweh, help me!'

⁵⁶I pleaded with you,
'Do not refuse to hear me when I cry out to you!'

⁵⁷Then you answered me
and said, 'Do not be afraid!'

⁵⁸Yahweh, you argued for me when people wanted to condemn me and execute me;
you did not allow me to die.

⁵⁹Now, Yahweh, you have seen the evil things that my enemies have done to me,
so judge my case and show that I have done nothing wrong.

⁶⁰You know the evil things
that they are planning to do to me.

⁶¹Yahweh, you have heard them insult me;
you have heard what they plan to do to me.

⁶²Every day they whisper and mutter things about me,
all during the day.

⁶³Look at them! Whatever they are doing at the moment,
they make fun of me by the songs that they sing.

⁶⁴Yahweh, give them what they deserve!
Pay them back for what they have done to me!

⁶⁵You permit them to do whatever they want,
and you punish them by taking away their shame.
That is why your curse is upon them.

⁶⁶Because you are angry with them, pursue them and get rid of them,
until none of them remain on the earth."

Chapter 4

¹Previously our people were like pure gold,
but now they are worthless.

Just as our enemies have scattered the sacred stones in the temple,
so they have also scattered our young men.

²The young men of Jerusalem were as valuable as large amounts of gold,
but now people consider them to be as worthless as ordinary clay pots.

³Even the female jackals feed their pups,
but my people act cruelly toward their own children;
the mothers are like ostriches in the desert that abandon their eggs.

⁴My people's infants' tongues cling to the roofs of their mouths
because they are extremely thirsty;
the children plead for some food,
but no one gives them any.

⁵People who previously ate fine food
are now starving in the streets;
those who previously wore fine clothes
now lie upon the rubbish heaps with nothing to eat.

⁶The people of Sodom died very suddenly in a disaster.
But God punished my people
more severely than the people of Sodom,
and no one was concerned about all that we suffered.

⁷Our leaders used to be like pure snow or white milk,
they were so clean and spotless.
Their bodies were healthy,
pink like coral and brilliant like sapphires.

⁸Now our leaders' faces are blacker than soot,
and no one recognizes them when they walk in the streets.
Their skin has shriveled and it hangs on their bones,
and it has become as dry as a stick of wood.

⁹It is better to die in a battle

than to die of hunger.

There was no food to harvest in the fields,

so the people slowly starved until they died.

¹⁰Women who usually acted with love and compassion

have killed and cooked their own children;

they ate them when there was no other food,

when Jerusalem was being destroyed by attacking armies.

¹¹Yahweh has shown to everyone how angry he was with his people!

His anger spread like a fire in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

that burned the city down to its rock foundations.

¹²None of the kings on the earth or anyone else

believed that any of our enemies could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³But that is what happened;

it happened because the prophets sinned;

the priests also sinned

by causing innocent people to die.

¹⁴The priests and prophets wander through the streets

as though they were blind.

No one will touch them

because their clothes are stained with the blood of those innocent people.

¹⁵These people shouted at the priests and prophets, saying,

“Stay away from us! Do not touch us!”

So the priests and prophets have fled from Israel,

and they wander around from one country to another,

but people in each country keep saying to them, “You cannot stay here!”

¹⁶It is Yahweh himself who has scattered them;

he no longer is concerned about them.

People do not welcome our priests any longer, and they care nothing for the elders.

¹⁷We continued to look for someone to help us before it was too late,

but it was useless.

We continued to watch to see if one of our allies would save us,
but none of the nations that we were waiting for was willing to help us.

¹⁸Our enemies were pursuing us,
so we could not even walk in our streets because they could take us as prisoners.
Our enemies were about to capture us;
it was time for them to kill us.

¹⁹Those who ran after us were faster than eagles flying in the sky.
Even if we fled to the mountains
or hid in the desert,
they went there ahead of us and waited to attack us.

²⁰Our king, whom Yahweh had appointed,
the one who enabled us to live,
the one whom we trusted to protect us
when we had to live in the other nations as slaves—
the enemy captured him,
as you would capture an animal in a pit.

²¹You people of Edom and Uz,
you should be happy while you can,
but Yahweh will punish you also.
You will become so drunk that you will strip off your own clothes.

²²You people of Zion (whose home is in Jerusalem),
the time when Yahweh punishes you for your sins will come to an end.
He will bring an end to the time you must spend in exile.
But you people who are from Edom, Yahweh will punish you for your sins
and he will make known to everyone the wicked things you have done.

Chapter 5

¹Yahweh, think about what has happened to us.
See how no one respects us any longer.

²Foreigners have seized our property,
and now they live in our homes.

³Our enemies have killed our fathers,
and caused our mothers to become widows.

⁴Now they make us pay for water to drink,
and pay for firewood.

⁵The enemy runs after us and is very close to us;
we are exhausted, but they do not allow us to rest.

⁶In order to get enough food to remain alive,
we begged Egypt and Assyria to help us.

⁷Our ancestors sinned, and now they are dead,
but we are suffering for the sins that they committed.

⁸Now the people who rule over us are themselves slaves to their own masters in Babylon.
There is no one who can rescue us from their power.

⁹We go far to look for food, but we are in danger of dying when we do so,
because of the robbers who live in the wilderness.

¹⁰Our skin has become hot like an oven,
and we have a very high fever because we are extremely hungry.

¹¹Our enemies have violated the women in Jerusalem,
and they have done that to the young women in all the towns of Judea.

¹²Our enemies have hanged our leaders,
and they have not respected our elders.

¹³They force our young men to grind flour with millstones,
and young boys stagger while they are forced to carry heavy loads of firewood.

¹⁴Our elders no longer sit at the city gates to make important decisions;
the young men no longer play their musical instruments.

¹⁵We are no longer joyful;
instead of dancing joyfully, we now mourn.

¹⁶The wreaths of flowers have fallen off our heads.
Terrible things have happened to us because of the sins that we committed.

¹⁷We are tired and discouraged,
and we cannot see well because our eyes are full of tears.

¹⁸Jerusalem has no one living any more in it,

and jackals prowl around in it.

19But Yahweh, you rule forever!

You continue to rule from one generation to the next generation.

20So why have you forgotten us?

Will you abandon us for a very long time?

21Please enable us to return to you,

and enable us to prosper as we did previously.

22Please do that, or is it really true that you have rejected us forever?

Is it really true that you will never stop being extremely angry with us?

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