EDIFIED EDITION

Lamentations

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

5	154	Old	25
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Lamentations 1 mourns Jerusalem as a widow, once great among the nations, now sitting alone and weeping in the night with none of her lovers to comfort her. Judah has gone into exile, Zion's roads mourn because no one comes to the festivals, and her enemies prosper, because the LORD has afflicted her for her many rebellions. Jerusalem sinned greatly and has become unclean; foreigners have entered her sanctuary. Then Zion herself speaks, calling on all who pass by to see whether any pain is like hers. The LORD has trampled her like grapes in a winepress. She admits that the LORD is in the right, for she rebelled against His word, and she asks Him to see her distress and deal with her enemies as He has dealt with her.

1 How lonely she sits, the city once full of people! She who was great among the nations has become like a widow. She who was a princess among the provinces has been put to forced labour.[1]

2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.

3 Judah has gone into exile after affliction and harsh slavery. She lives among the nations but finds no resting place. All her pursuers have overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

4 The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the appointed festivals. All her gates are desolate; her priests groan; her young women grieve, and she herself is in bitter anguish.

5 Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease, for the LORD has made her suffer because of her many rebellions. Her little children have gone away as captives before the foe.

6 All her splendour has departed from Daughter Zion. Her officials have become like deer that find no pasture; they have fled without strength before the pursuer.

7 In the days of her affliction and wandering Jerusalem remembers all the precious things that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe and no one helped her, her foes looked at her and laughed at her ruin.

8 Jerusalem has sinned greatly; so she has become
something unclean. All who honoured her despise
her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself
groans and turns away.

9 Her uncleanness clung to her skirts; she gave no
thought to her future. Her fall was astounding;
there is no one to comfort her. Look, LORD, on my
affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!

10 The foe has stretched out his hand over all her
precious things. She has seen the nations enter
her sanctuary, those You had forbidden to enter
Your assembly.[2]

11 All her people groan as they search for bread;
they trade their treasures for food to keep
themselves alive. Look, LORD, and see how
despised I have become!

12 Does it mean nothing to you, all who pass along
the road? Look closely and see: is there any pain
like the pain inflicted on me, which the LORD has
made me suffer on the day of His fierce anger?[3]

13 From on high He sent fire into my bones, and it
overpowered them. He spread a net for my feet
and turned me back. He has left me desolate, faint
all day long.

14 My rebellions have been bound into a yoke; by
His hand they are knotted together and laid on my
neck. He has sapped my strength; the Lord has
handed me over to those I cannot withstand.

15 The Lord has tossed aside every warrior in my
midst; He has called up a gathering against me to
break my young men. Like grapes in a press the
Lord has trampled the virgin Daughter Judah.

16 For these things I weep; my eyes, my eyes run
with tears. For a comforter is far from me, one to
restore my life. My children are desolate, for the
enemy has prevailed.

17 Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one
to comfort her. The LORD has commanded
concerning Jacob that his neighbours should be
his foes; Jerusalem has become something unclean
among them.

18 The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled
against His command. Listen, all you peoples, and
look on my pain: my young women and my young
men have gone into captivity.

19 I called to my lovers, but they deceived me. My
priests and my elders perished in the city as they
searched for food to keep themselves alive.

20 Look, LORD, at my distress! My insides are in
turmoil; my heart is overturned within me, for I
have been most rebellious. Outside, the sword
bereaves; inside, there is death.

21 They have heard how I groan, with no one to
comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my
trouble; they rejoice that You have done it. Bring
on the day You have announced, so that they
become like me.

22 Let all their wickedness come before You; deal
with them as You have dealt with me for all my
rebellions. For my groans are many, and my heart
is faint.

1 Chapters 1, 2 and 4 are acrostic poems: each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from aleph to taw. The book's Hebrew name, 'Ekhah', is its first word, 'How'.

2 See Deuteronomy 23:3.

3 The first words of this verse in Hebrew are difficult; they may also be read 'May it not happen to you'.

Chapter 2

> *Lamentations 2 describes the Lord's anger against Daughter Zion. In His wrath He has covered her with a cloud, thrown down Israel's splendour and forgotten His footstool. Like an enemy He has bent His bow, swallowed up her palaces, laid waste His own dwelling and abandoned His altar; there is no law and no vision. The elders sit in silence and sackcloth, and the poet's eyes fail with weeping as children faint in the streets and ask their mothers for bread. Zion's prophets saw false visions; passers-by hiss and ask, "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty?" The LORD has done what He planned long ago. Zion is urged to cry out to Him day and night for her children, and she asks Him to look at whom He has treated so.*

1 How the Lord in His anger has covered Daughter
Zion with a cloud! He has thrown down from
heaven to earth the splendour of Israel; in the day
of His anger He has not remembered His
footstool.[1]

2 The Lord has swallowed up without pity all the
dwellings of Jacob. In His wrath He has torn down
the strongholds of Daughter Judah; He has
brought them down to the ground, and profaned
the kingdom and its rulers.

3 In fierce anger He has cut off every horn of
Israel. He has drawn back His right hand in the
face of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a
flaming fire that consumes everything around it.

4 He has bent His bow like an enemy; His right
hand is set like a foe's. He has killed all who were
pleasing to the eye; on the tent of Daughter Zion
He has poured out His fury like fire.

5 Like an enemy the Lord has swallowed Israel
whole. He has devoured all her palaces and laid
his fortresses in ruins, heaping up grief upon grief
for Daughter Judah.

6 He has laid waste His booth like a garden; He
has destroyed His place of meeting. The LORD has
made Zion forget appointed feast and Sabbath,
and in His fierce indignation He has spurned king
and priest.

7 The Lord has rejected His altar and disowned His
sanctuary. He has handed over to the enemy the
walls of her palaces. They have raised a shout in
the house of the LORD as on the day of an
appointed feast.

8 The LORD determined to destroy the wall of
Daughter Zion. He stretched out a measuring line
and did not withdraw His hand from destroying.
He made rampart and wall lament; together they
languish.

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground; He has
broken and shattered their bars. Her king and her
officials are among the nations; there is no more
law, and her prophets find no vision from the
LORD.

10 The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in
silence. They have thrown dust on their heads and
put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem
have bowed their heads to the ground.

11 My eyes are spent with weeping; my insides are
in turmoil; my heart is poured out on the ground
because of the destruction of the daughter of my
people, as children and infants faint in the streets
of the city.

12 They say to their mothers, "Where is the bread
and wine?" as they faint like the wounded in the
streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their
mothers' arms.

13 What can I say for you? What can I compare you
to, Daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you,
to comfort you, virgin Daughter Zion? For your
ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you?

14 Your prophets saw for you visions that were
empty and false; they did not expose your iniquity
to restore your fortunes. The oracles they saw for
you were empty and misleading.

15 All who pass along the road clap their hands at
you; they hiss and shake their heads at Daughter
Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the
perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"

16 All your enemies open their mouths wide against
you; they hiss and grind their teeth. They say, "We
have swallowed her up! This is the day we hoped
for; we have lived to see it!"[2]

17 The LORD has done what He planned; He has
fulfilled His word, which He decreed long ago. He
has torn down without pity; He has let the enemy
gloat over you and exalted the horn of your foes.

18 Their heart cried out to the Lord. Wall of
Daughter Zion, let your tears run down like a river
day and night! Give yourself no rest; let your eyes
not cease.

19 Rise up and wail through the night, as each
watch begins! Pour your heart out like water in
the Lord's presence. Raise your hands to Him for
your little ones, who collapse from hunger at
every street corner.

20 Look, LORD, and consider: to whom have You
ever done this? Should women eat their own
offspring, the children they have cared for?
Should priest and prophet be killed in the
sanctuary of the Lord?

21 Boys and old men lie in the dust of the streets;
my girls and my young men have been cut down
by the sword. In the day of Your anger You struck
them dead; You slaughtered them and did not
spare.

22 You summoned, as for a day of festival, terrors
against me from every side. On the day of the
LORD's anger no one escaped or survived; those I
cared for and raised, my enemy has destroyed.

1 His footstool: the ark, or the temple (1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 132:7).

2 In chapters 2, 3 and 4 the verse for the letter pe comes before the verse for ayin, the reverse of the usual order (as also in some early alphabet lists).

Chapter 3

Lamentations 3 is spoken by a man who has known suffering beneath the rod of God's fury. He has been driven into darkness, walled in, his prayers shut out, his path made crooked; he has become the laughing-stock of his people and has forgotten what happiness is. Yet he calls to mind a reason for hope: the LORD's loyal kindness never runs out and His compassion never fails; they are new every morning. It is good to wait quietly for the LORD's salvation, for the Lord does not reject for ever, and He does not willingly afflict. The people are called to examine their ways and return to the LORD. The speaker remembers how he called from the depths of the pit and the LORD came near and said, "Do not be afraid," and he asks Him to repay his enemies.

1 I am the man who has known suffering beneath the rod of His fury.[1]

2 He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness and not in light.

3 Surely against me He turns His hand again and again, all day long.

4 He has wasted my flesh and skin away and shattered my bones.

5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship.

6 He has made me dwell in dark places like those long dead.

7 He has walled me in so that I cannot get out; He has weighed me down with chains.

8 However loudly I shout and plead for help, He blocks out my prayer.

9 He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked.

10 He is to me a bear lying in wait, a lion in hiding.

11 He has turned aside my ways and torn me to pieces; He has left me desolate.

12 He bent His bow and set me up as a target for His arrow.

13 He drove into my insides the arrows of His quiver.

14 I have become the laughing-stock of all my people, the theme of their mocking songs all day long.

15 He has filled me with bitter herbs and made me drink my fill of wormwood.

16 He has made my teeth grind on gravel and trampled me in the ashes.

17 My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten what good is.

18 So I said, "My strength has perished, and my hope from the LORD."

19 Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and the gall!

20 My soul remembers it continually and is bowed down within me.

21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

22 The LORD's loyal kindness never runs out; His compassion never comes to an end.[2]

23 They are new every single morning; Your faithfulness is vast.

24 My soul says, "The LORD is all I have," and so I will wait for Him in hope.

25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the one who seeks Him.

26 It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of the LORD.

27 It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.

28 Let him sit alone in silence when it has been laid on him.

29 Let him bury his face in the dust; perhaps there is hope after all.

30 Let him offer his cheek to the one who strikes him and be filled with insults.

31 For the Lord will not reject for ever.

32 Though He brings grief, He will show compassion according to the abundance of His loyal kindness.

33 For He does not afflict from His heart or grieve the children of men.

34 To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth,

35 to deny a man justice before the face of the Most High,

36 to subvert a person in his lawsuit: the Lord does not approve of these things.

37 Who can speak and have it happen, unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both disaster and good come?

39 Why should any living person complain, any man, about the punishment of his sins?

40 Let us search and examine our ways and return to the LORD.

41 Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven:

42 We have rebelled and transgressed, and You have not forgiven.

43 You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have killed without pity.

44 You have wrapped Yourself in a cloud that no prayer can pierce.

45 You have made us scum and refuse among the peoples.

46 All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us.

47 Panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction.

48 My eyes stream with rivers of water because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

49 My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite,

50 until the LORD looks down and sees from heaven.

51 What I see brings grief to my soul, because of all the daughters of my city.

52 Those who were my enemies without cause hunted me like a bird.

53 They tried to end my life in a pit and threw stones at me.

54 Waters closed over my head; I said, “I am cut off!”

55 I called on Your name, LORD, from the depths of the pit.

56 You heard my voice: “Do not close Your ear to my cry for relief!”

57 You came near on the day I called to You; You said, “Do not be afraid!”

58 You took up my case, Lord; You redeemed my life.

59 You have seen, LORD, the wrong done to me; judge my cause!

60 You have seen all their vengeance, all their plots against me.

61 You have heard their insults, LORD, all their plots against me,

62 the lips and murmurs of my attackers against me all day long.

63 Look at them sitting and rising; I am the theme of their mocking songs.

64 Repay them, LORD, according to the work of their hands.

65 Give them a hardened heart; let Your curse be on them.

66 Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the LORD’s heavens.

1 This chapter is a triple acrostic: three verses begin with each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in turn.

2 The Hebrew reads ‘we are not consumed’; a slight change gives ‘they do not cease’, as in the Syriac and the Aramaic paraphrase.

Chapter 4

Lamentations 4 contrasts Zion’s former glory with her present ruin. The gold has grown dim, and the precious children of Zion are treated like clay pots. Infants’ tongues stick to the roofs of their mouths with thirst, those brought up in luxury cling to rubbish heaps, and compassionate mothers have cooked their own children. Zion’s punishment is greater than Sodom’s. It came because of the sins of her prophets and priests, who shed the blood of the righteous; now they wander the streets like the blind, defiled with blood. The people watched in vain for a nation that could not save them, and the LORD’s anointed was caught in their pits. The cup will pass to Edom, but Zion’s punishment is complete, and she will not be exiled again.

1 How the gold has grown dim, the finest gold has changed! The sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street.[1]

2 The precious children of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are now counted as clay pots, the work of a potter’s hands!

3 Even jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like ostriches in the desert.[2]

4 The nursing infant’s tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth with thirst; little children beg for bread, but no one breaks it for them.

5 Those who once ate delicacies are desolate in the streets; those brought up in purple now cling to rubbish heaps.

6 The punishment of the daughter of my people is greater than the penalty of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand laid on her.

7 Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were ruddier than coral, their form like sapphire.

8 Now their appearance is blacker than soot; they are not recognised in the streets. Their skin has shrivelled on their bones; it has become as dry as wood.

9 Those killed by the sword are better off than those killed by hunger, who waste away, pierced through for lack of the produce of the field.

10 The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food when the daughter of my people was destroyed.[3]

11 The LORD has spent His fury to the full and let loose His burning anger. He lit a fire in Zion that burned her to her foundations.

12 The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world's inhabitants, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

13 It was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous.

14 They wandered blind through the streets, so defiled with blood that no one dared touch their garments.

15 "Go away! Unclean!" people cried to them. "Go away! Go away! Do not touch!" So they fled and wandered, and among the nations it was said, "They shall stay here no longer."

16 The face of the LORD has scattered them; He will regard them no more. No honour was shown to the priests, no favour to the elders.

17 Our eyes still failed as we looked in vain for help. From our watchtower we watched for a nation that could not save us.[4]

18 They dogged our steps so that we could not walk in our streets. Our end drew near; our days were numbered, for our end had come.

19 Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert.

20 The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life, was caught in their pits, he of whom we had said, "Under his shadow we will live among the nations."[5]

21 Rejoice and be glad, Daughter Edom, you who live in the land of Uz! But to you also the cup will pass; you will become drunk and strip yourself naked.

22 Your punishment is complete, Daughter Zion; He will not keep you in exile any longer. But He will punish your iniquity, Daughter Edom; He will lay bare your sins.

1 Chapter 4, like chapters 1 and 2, is an acrostic, but each verse has two lines instead of three.

2 The ostrich was thought to neglect its eggs; see Job 39:13–16.

3 See 2 Kings 6:28–29; Deuteronomy 28:53–57.

4 Probably Egypt; see Jeremiah 37:5–8.

5 King Zedekiah, captured as he fled (Jeremiah 39:4–7).

Chapter 5

> *Lamentations 5 is the community's prayer. The LORD is asked to remember what has happened to them and to see their disgrace: their inheritance has been handed over to strangers, they are like orphans, they must pay for their own water, and slaves rule over them. Women have been violated, princes hanged, elders dishonoured, young men forced to grind at the mill; the joy of their hearts has ceased and the crown has fallen from their heads. Mount Zion lies desolate, with foxes prowling over it. Yet the LORD reigns for ever. The poem ends with the plea, "Bring us back to You, LORD, that we may return," unless He has utterly rejected them.*

1 Remember, LORD, what has happened to us; look, and see our disgrace![1]

2 Our inheritance has been handed over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

3 We have become orphans without a father; our
mothers are like widows.
4 We must pay for the water we drink; our wood
comes to us only at a price.
5 Our pursuers are at our necks; we are weary and
given no rest.
6 We submitted to Egypt and to Assyria to get
enough bread.
7 Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear
their iniquities.
8 Slaves rule over us, and there is no one to rescue
us from their hand.
9 We risk our lives to bring in our bread, facing the
sword of the desert.
10 Our skin is as hot as an oven from the fever of
famine.
11 Women have been raped in Zion, virgins in the
towns of Judah.
12 Princes have been hanged by their hands; elders
are shown no respect.
13 Young men toil at the millstones, and boys
stagger under loads of wood.
14 The elders have left the city gate, the young
men their music.
15 Joy has gone from our hearts; our dancing has
turned to mourning.
16 The crown has toppled from our heads. Alas for
us, because we have sinned!
17 Because of this our hearts are faint; because of
these things our eyes grow dim,
18 for Mount Zion, which lies desolate, with foxes
prowling over it.
19 But You, LORD, reign for ever; Your throne
endures from generation to generation.
20 Why do You forget us for ever? Why do You
forsake us for so long?
21 Bring us back to You, LORD, that we may return;
renew our days as of old,
22 unless You have utterly rejected us and are
angry with us beyond measure.[2]

1 This last poem has 22 verses, like the acrostics, but its verses do not follow the alphabet.

2 Or ‘For You have utterly rejected us’. When the book is read in the synagogue, 5:21 is repeated after this verse so that it does not end on rejection.