OET Open English Translation

Open English Translation of the Bible

Sorrows

commonly called
Lamentations

Introduction

The document named *Sorrows* (or in older English *Lamentations*) is this collection of poems or sad songs describing the people's sorrow at the terrible destruction that had happened to Yerushalem, and the capture of its inhabitants 586 years before Yeshua (B.C.). However, despite the sadness displayed by these compositions, it's also possible to see hope shown through trusting Yahweh God and the hope of a better future. These poems were used by Yehudim[1] there in worship at time of fasting and sorrow each year, until today, in order to mourn Yerushalem's destruction.
Several of these sorrowful chapters are acrostic poems, i.e., the first verse starts with the first Hebrew letter (alef) and the second with the second Hebrew letter (beyt), etc. We have chosen to display those Hebrew letters to help the English reader understand that there is that acrostic background to the poem.

Main components of this document

Yerushalem's sorrows *1:1-22*
Yerushalem's punishment *2:1-22*
The punishment and the hope *3:1-66*
Yerushalem's demolition *4:1-22*
A prayer requesting help *5:1-22*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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1 **RV 1:0 · Note** The Yehudim were the descendants of Ya'akov (Jacob) who was later named 'Israel'. They were named Yehudim because they had lived in Yehudah (Judea) long ago.

Readers' Version

Yerushalem's sorrows

א (Alef)

1:1 Oh dear, how she sits alone, that city, a mighty people.
Once powerful among the nations, she's become like a widow.
From being a princess among the provinces, she became a slave.

ב (Beyt)

2 She weeps excessively in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks.
Despite having many lovers, no one brings her comfort.
All her friends betrayed her—they've become her enemies instead.

ג (Gimel)

3 Yehudah (Judah) is exiled and made to experience suffering and harsh slavery.
She sits among the nations but finds no rest.
All who pursue her, overtake her in the midst of distress.

ד (Dalet)

4 The roads of Tsiyon (Zion) mourn—no one's coming to the scheduled festivals.
All her gates are desolate. Her priests are groaning.
Her young women are grieving and she makes herself bitter.

ה (He)

5 Her enemies have become her masters—her enemies prosper
because Yahweh has made her suffer due to her frequent disobedience.
Her children get taken away as captives by the enemy.

ו (Vav)

6 All her splendour was sent out from the daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion).
Her leaders have become like deer—they can't find a pasture
so they have very little strength as they flee from the pursuer.

ז (Zayin)

7 Yerushalem (Jerusalem) remembers the days of her suffering and her homelessness,
all her treasures which were from former days.
When her people fell into the hand of the enemy and there was no one to help her,
her enemies saw her—they laughed over her destruction.

ח (Het)

8 Yerushalem disobeyed terribly, therefore, she became filth.
All her glory is scorned, because they've seen her nakedness.
Again, she groans and turns away.

ט (Tet)

9 Her uncleanness is in her skirt.
She didn't remember her end and her descent was marvellous.
There wasn't any comforter for her.
"Oh, Yahweh, see my suffering, because the enemy is powerful."

י (Yod)

10 The enemy spread his hand over all her treasures.
So, she saw the nations; they entered her sanctuary—
those who you had forbidden to enter into your gathering place.

כ (Kaf)

11 All her people are groaning, searching for bread.
They give their treasures to restore life with food.
"Look and see, Yahweh, because I've become worthless.

ל (Lamed)

12 Is it nothing to you, all those going past on the road?
Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been forced on me,
which Yahweh inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

מ (Mem)

13 He sent fire down from on high into my bones.
He spread a net for my feet and turned me away.
He made me desolate—feeling faint every day.

נ (Nun)

14 The yoke of my disobedience is bound.
With his hand it's assembled together and placed on my neck.

Readers' Version

My strength is gone so now I stumble.
My master arranged for me to be captured and I couldn't defend myself.
ס (Samek)
15 My master has rejected all my mighty warriors protecting me.
He has told us exactly when he plans to destroy my young men.
My master has stomped on the grapes for Yehudah's (Judah's) virgin daughter.
ע (Ayin)
16 As a result of those things, I weep.
My eyes, oh dear, my eyes overflow with water
because the comforter is far from me—one who restores my life.
My sons have become desolate, because the enemy is made mighty."
פ (Pe)
17 Tsiyon (Zion) has spread her hands wide—there is no comforter for her.
Yahweh commanded that those surrounding Ya'akov (Jacob) become his enemies.
Yerushalem (Jerusalem) has become filth in the middle of them.
צ (Tsade)
18 "Yahweh is surely righteous, but I disobeyed his command.
Hear, all peoples, and see my sorrow.
My young men and women have been taken into captivity.
ק (Qof)
19 I called to my lovers but they deceived me.
My priests and my elders perished in the city,
while they searched for food to stay alive.
ר (Resh)
20 Look, Yahweh, because I'm engulfed—my stomach churns.
My heart is undone within me, because I've disobeyed grievously.
Out in the street, the sword bereaves.
Inside the house, there's death.
ש (Sin/Shin)
21 Take notice because I'm groaning.
There's no comforter for me.
All my enemies heard my trouble—they rejoiced that you did it.
You brought about the day of punishment that you declared,
yet may those persecutors become like me.
ת (Tav)
22 May all their evil be noticed by you,
and deal with them just as you have dealt with me because of all my disobedience,
because my groans are many and my heart is faint."

Yahweh's punishment of Yerushalem

א (Alef)
2:1 Oh dear, how my master engulfed the daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion) in his anger.
He's thrown Yisrael's (Israel's) splendour down from heaven to earth.
And he hasn't remembered the footstool of his feet on the day of his anger.
ב (Beyt)
2 My master devoured—he didn't show compassion on all the pastures of Ya'akov (Jacob).
In his fury, he knocked down the fortifications of the daughter of Yehudah (Judah).
He struck the earth with disgrace—the kingdom and its leaders.
ג (Gimel)
3 With fierce anger he cut off all of Yisrael's power.
He stopped using his strength to protect her from the enemy.
And he has burnt Ya'akov—it consumed the surroundings like a fire.
ד (Dalet)
4 He's bent his bow like an enemy.
His sword hand is posed like an adversary.
And he has slain all those precious to the eye in the tent of the daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion).
He has poured out his rage like fire.
ה (He)
5 My master has become like an enemy—he's swallowed up Yisrael (Israel).
He has swallowed up all her palaces—he's destroyed its fortifications.
And he has multiplied mourning and lamentation within the daughter of Yehudah (Judah).
ו (Vav)
6 And he was violent with his garden tent—he ruined his appointed place.

Readers' Version

Yahweh has caused the appointed festival and Sabbath to be forgotten in Tsiyon (Zion).
And he has despised the king and priest in his indignant anger.
ז (Zayin)
7 My master has rejected his altar—he abandoned his sanctuary.
He has allowed the enemy to enter via the walls of her palaces.
They raised a shout in Yahweh's house, like on an appointed festival day.
ח (Het)
8 Yahweh planned to destroy the wall of the daughter that's Tsiyon.
He stretched out the measuring line.
He didn't withhold his hand from devouring,
and he's brought the ramparts and wall to mourning. Together they wasted away.
י (Yod)
9 Her gates sank into the ground.
He has destroyed and shattered their locking bars.
Her king and her leaders are among the nations. There's no law.
Also, her prophets don't receive any visions from Yahweh.
י (Yod)
10 They sit on the ground.
The elders of the daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion) are silenced.
They have thrown up dust on their heads and put on sackcloth.
Yerushalem's (Jerusalem's) young women have bowed their heads to the ground.
כ (Kaf)
11 My eyes have failed with tears.
My stomach churns.
My inner parts are poured out to the ground, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
when child and infant faint in the streets of the town.
ל (Lamed)
12 They ask their mothers, "Where's our food and drink?"
when they faint like the slain in the streets of the city,
when they die slowly in their mothers' laps.
מ (Mem)
13 What can I testify to you?
To what can I compare you, daughter of Yerushalem (Jerusalem)?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, virgin daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion)?
Because your brokenness is as great as the sea.
Who can heal you?
נ (Nun)
14 Your prophets have 'seen' false and worthless visions for you,
and they didn't expose your disobedience, to restore your fortunes,
but they have 'received' false and enticing messages for you.
ס (Samek)
15 All those passing on the road clap their hands at you.
They hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Yerushalem (Jerusalem).
"Is this the city that they called 'the fullness of beauty that makes the whole world happy'?"
ע (Ayin)
16 All your enemies spoke out against you.
They hiss and grind their teeth.
They say, "We have devoured.
Surely this is the time we'd longed for.
We have found, we have seen."
פ (Pe)
17 Yahweh has done what he planned.
He's fulfilled the message that he commanded in ancient times.
He has overthrown and shown no compassion,
and the enemy rejoiced over you.
He has enabled your enemies to get stronger.
צ (Tsade)
18 Their heart cried out to my master,
"You walls of the daughter that's Tsiyon (Zion)."
Like a tearful river, let your tears flow down day and night.
Don't allow yourself any relief from it.
Don't rest your eyes from the tears.
ק (Qof)

Readers' Version

19 Arise, shout in the night at the beginning
of the night watches.
Pour out your heart like water in front of my
master.
Lift up your hands to him for the life of your
children who are fainting with hunger at the
end of every street.
ר (Resh)
20 Look, Yahweh, and see those you have dealt
with in this way.
Should women eat their own newborn chil-
dren?
Should priests and prophets be slaughtered in
my master's sanctuary?
שׁ (Sin/Shin)
21 The young and the old lie down in the dirt
in the streets.
My young men and women have fallen by the
sword.
You've had them struck down—at the time of
your anger you slaughtered.
You showed no compassion.
ת (Tav)
22 You've summoned terrors to surround me
like summoning people to a festival day,
and there wasn't anyone who escaped or sur-
vived on the day of Yahweh's anger.
Those who I birthed and multiplied, my en-
emy has ended.
א (Alef)

Yahweh's love

3:1 I am the man made to suffer from the rod
of his fury.
2 He led me and took me into darkness—not
light.
3 He certainly turned against me—he put the
screws on me all day.
ב (Beyt)
4 He made my skin and my flesh waste away.
He shattered my bones.
5 He built a ramp up against me
and besieged me with bitterness and hard-
ship.
6 He makes me live in darkness
like the dead of long ago.
ג (Gimel)
7 He built a wall around me so I can't escape.
He made my chains heavy.
8 Even though I call out and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer.
9 He made roadblocks with large cut stones.
He made it difficult to get anywhere.
ד (Dalet)
10 He's a bear lying in wait for me—
a lion hiding ready to attack.
11 He obstructed my paths and tore me apart.
He's isolated me.
12 He bent his bow back
and set me up like a target for an arrow.
ה (He)
13 He pierced my kidneys
with the arrows from his quiver.
14 I became a joke to all the people groups—
the one they mocked all day long.
15 He filled me with bitterness.
He stuffed me with bitter herbs.
ו (Vav)
16 He made my teeth grind with gravel.
He made me cower in the dust.
17 Now I can't find any inner peace.
I've forgotten what prosperity is.
18 Then I said, "My endurance has come to an
end,
as has my hope in Yahweh."
ז (Zayin)
19 Remember my suffering and my wander-
ings,
the wormwood and bitterness.
20 It continually remembers
and my insides turn to butter.
21 I bring that to mind,
therefore I have hope.
ח (Het)
22 Yahweh's loyal commitment doesn't cease.
His mercy doesn't end.
23 His loyal commitment and his mercy are
new morning by morning.
He is very faithful.
24 "Yahweh is my portion," I told myself,
"therefore, I'll place my hope in him."
ט (Tet)
25 Yahweh is good to those who depend on
him—
to anyone sincerely wanting to follow him.
26 It is good to be silent and wait

Readers' Version

for Yahweh to rescue us.
27 It's good for people to experience hardship while they're young.
י (Yod)
28 A person should sit alone and stay quiet
when they've been disciplined by Yahweh.
29 Let him put his mouth in the dust—
perhaps there's hope.
30 Let him offer his cheek to the person striking him.
Let him be filled with shame.
כ (Kaf)
31 My master won't reject his people forever.
32 Though he brings grief,
he will be merciful due to the strength of his loyal commitment,
33 because he doesn't enjoy making people suffer
or delight in making humanity grieve.
ל (Lamed)
34 Crushing all the prisoners of the earth under his feet,
35 denying a person justice before the highest one,
36 subverting a person's lawsuit—the master approves none of those.
מ (Mem)
37 Who said that and made it happen, if it wasn't my master?
38 Didn't both trouble and good come from the command of the highest one?
39 How can any living person complain when it's their disobedience that they're getting punished for?
נ (Nun)
40 Let's examine our behaviour
and then strive to return to Yahweh.
41 Let us lift up our hearts
with our hands lifted to God in heaven.
42 We've certainly broken your rules and disobeyed you.
You haven't forgiven us.
ס (Samek)
43 You wrapped yourself with anger and chased after us.
You killed without showing any pity.
44 You enveloped yourself in a cloud,
so that no prayers could get through.
45 You cause us to be considered as outcasts
and as garbage among the nations.
ע (Ayin)
46 All our enemies spoke out against us.
47 Panic and pitfall have come for us—
devastation and destruction.
48 My eyes run with streams of water
because my people have been destroyed.
פ (Pe)
49 My tears flowed continually without any relief,
50 until Yahweh looked down from heaven and saw.
51 What I see grieves my insides,
because of the suffering of the city's daughters.
צ (Tsade)
52 My enemies certainly hunted me without cause—
like hunting a bird.
53 They shut down my life by throwing me into a pit,
and then heaving a rock onto the top.
54 They made water flow over my head.
I said, 'This must be my end!'
ק (Qof)
55 I called out your name, Yahweh, from the depths of the pit.
56 You heard my voice.
'Don't ignore my cry for help
and my need for relief.'
57 You approached me when I called you
and told me not to be afraid.
ר (Resh)
58 My master, you helped with my internal conflict.
You paid out to save my life.
59 Yes, Yahweh, you saw my suffering.
Judge my case.
60 You've seen all their insults—
all their plots against me.
ש (Sin/Shin)
61 You've heard their scorn, Yahweh—
all their plots against me.
62 Those harassing me spend all day speaking out against me

Readers' Version

and singing songs against me.
63 See how, whether they're sitting or rising,
they have their mocking song.
ת (Tav)
64 You, Yahweh, will pay them back for what they've done.
65 Give them over to shamelessness.
May your curse be on them.
66 Chase after them in your anger,
and wipe them off the face of the earth, Yahweh.
א (Alef)

Tsiyon's punishment

4:1 Wow, how the gold is tarnished—the pure gold has changed.
The holy stones are scattered on the corners of every street.
ב (Beyt)
2 The precious sons of Tsiyon (Zion) were once comparable with fine gold.
Now they're regarded as clay jars—the work of a potter's hands.
ג (Gimel)
3 Even the jackals offer their teats to suckle their cubs,
but my people are fierce like the ostriches in the wilderness.
ד (Dalet)
4 The tongue of the breast-feeding baby sticks to the roof of his mouth with thirst.
The children ask for food from those distributing it, but there's none for them.
ה (He)
5 Those used to eating the finest food are now desolate in the streets.
Those once attended by servants wearing scarlet now embrace piles of rubbish.
ו (Vav)
6 The guilt of my people is greater than Sedom's sin.
That city was overthrown in an instant,[2] but no one shed any tears about it.
ז (Zayin)
7 Her religious leaders were purer than snow—whiter than milk.
Their bones were redder than coral—their parts were sapphire.
ח (Het)
8 Blackness has darkened their form—they're not even recognised in the streets.
Their skin has shrivelled on their bones—it's become as dry and stiff as bark.
ט (Tet)
9 Those slain by the sword were happier than those who died from hunger—
those who slowly wasted away as if they were pierced through by the lack of produce from the countryside.
י (Yod)
10 The hands of compassionate women boiled their children.
They became a meal for them during the destruction of my people.[3]
כ (Kaf)
11 Yahweh brought his rage to completion.
He poured out his fierce anger
and he kindled a fire in Tsiyon (Zion) that consumed its foundations.
ל (Lamed)
12 None of the kings of the earth, and none of the world's inhabitants, ever believed
that the adversary and enemy would get through Yerushalem's (Jerusalem's) gates.
מ (Mem)
13 However, the sins of her prophets were even more than the disobedience of her priests.
They had poured the blood of godly people out right there in the middle of the city.
נ (Nun)
14 They stumble blind in the streets.
They're defiled with blood.
No one even dares to touch their clothes.
ס (Samek)
15 "Away! Unclean!" they shouted at them. "Away! Away! Don't touch!"
So they fled Yisrael (Israel), wandering around,
but it was said among the nations, "They can't stay here any longer."

2 **RV 4:6 · Cross-ref.** Gen 19:24.
3 **RV 4:10 · Cross-ref.** Deu 28:57; Eze 5:10.

Readers' Version

ע (Ayin)
16 Yahweh's presence scattered them—he
won't continue to watch over them.
The people no longer honoured the priests.
They showed no favour to the elders.
פ (Pe)
17 Our eyes failed as we waited uselessly for
help.
From our watchtowers, we expected to see
other nations come to rescue us, but no.
צ (Tsade)
18 They tracked our steps,
walking in our paths.
Our end was coming closer.
Our days had been numbered, because our
end had come.
ק (Qof)
19 The ones chasing after us were faster than
the eagles in the sky.
They chased us over the mountains,
then they ambushed us in the wilderness.
ר (Resh)
20 A breath of our nostrils, Yahweh's anointed
one was captured in their pits—
the one we'd spoken about, saying, "We'll live
among the nations under his protection."
ש (Sin/Shin)
21 Celebrate and be glad, Edom, living there in
the Uts (Uz) region.
The cup of suffering will also pass to you.
You'll get drunk and go around naked.
ת (Tav)
22 People of Tsiyon (Zion), your guilt will fin-
ish—he won't extend your exile.
^He'll deal with your guilt, people of
Edom—he'll uncover your sins.

The mercy of Yisrael

5:1 Yahweh, take notice
of what's happened to us.
Look and see our disgrace.
2 The land that was our inheritance has been
turned over to strangers—
our houses to foreigners.
3 We have become orphans, without a father,
and our mothers are like widows.
4 We pay to drink water.
We bring in our firewood for a price.
5 We're driven hard with the yoke on our
necks.
We work hard, yet never get any rest.
6 We've made a treaty with Mitsrayim (Egypt),
and with Ashur (Assyria) to get food.
7 Our ancestors sinned but they're gone now.
→We ourselves bear the results of their dis-
obedience.
8 Babylonian slaves rule over us.
There's no one to rescue us from their con-
trol.
9 We bring in our food at the cost of our lives,
due to the sword blades out there in the
wilderness.
10 Our skin grows as hot as an oven
from the burning heat of hunger.
11 Women are raped in Tsiyon (Zion)—
young women in Yehudah's (Judah's) cities.
12 Princes were hung by their hands.
The city elders were treated with no respect.
13 Young men lift the grind stone
and boys stagger under loads of wood.
14 The elders no longer make decisions at the
city gate,
The young men have stopped their music.
15 We're no longer happy and contented.
Our dancing has turned to mourning.
16 The crown has fallen off our head.
We won't end well, because we've sinned.
17 As a result of that, we've become de-
pressed.
On account of those things, our eyes grow
dim.
18 On account of Mt. Tsiyon (Zion),
which is desolate with jackals roaming over it.
19 You, Yahweh, exist forever.
You'll sit on your throne throughout the gen-
erations.
20 Why do you forget us for so long?
Why do you abandon us for many days?
21 Bring us back to yourself, Yahweh, and
we'll be restored.
Renew our life back to what it was before
22 unless you've totally rejected us—

unless you're angry with us beyond measure.

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