

## Tisha B'Av 5784 A Day of Lamentation

It is quite understandable that the destruction of Judah, along with the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, was most shocking to the Jewish people. But, this also was the case for the leaders and inhabitants of the world. The G-d of Israel had built Himself a great reputation by leading His people out of Egypt and defeating not only the Canaanites, but numerous other peoples, including the two powerful Amorite Kings, Sihon and Og. Therefore, the thought of Judah being defeated like the northern kingdom of Israel seemed most unlikely. There was primarily only one voice which warned that the impending doom was approaching, the Prophet Jeremiah. All the other prophets in Jerusalem were in unison that there would not be war, but rather peace. The main reason for these false prophets' confidence was the fact that the Temple of G-d was in the Holy City of Jerusalem and the idea that the House of G-d would be destroyed was beyond the people's comprehension.

There are two verses which I would like to discuss in this article. They are found in the Scroll of Lamentations. The actual name of this five chapter writing is איכה Ei-khah, which is derived from the Hebrew word איך meaning "how" and the Hebrew letter ה, which often relates to G-d. Hence, the book which is frequently called "*Lamentations*" is really named in Hebrew, "*How, O G-d?*" This name summarizes the feelings of the Jewish people as they witnessed both Jerusalem and the Holy Temple lying in ruins, having been completely destroyed. The two verses are Lamentations 4:12-13,

לֹא הָאֱמִינוּ מְלִכֵי-אֶרֶץ וְכָל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב בְּשַׁעֲרֵי  
יְרוּשָׁלַם: מִחֲטָאוֹת נְבִיאֶיהָ עֹנֹת כְּהֵנִיָּה הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהָ דָם צַדִּיקִים:

*"Kings of the earth and all the inhabitants of the world, did not believe that the adversary and enemy would enter the gates of Jerusalem; because of the sins of her prophets, the iniquity of her priests; the ones who shed blood of the righteous in her midst."*

These two verses make it most clear that all the tragic results of the destruction of Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple was due to the ungodly religious leadership of Judah. G-d gave those in Judah a clear lesson when the northern kingdom (Israel) was destroyed and taken into exile by Assyria in 721 BC. The prophets revealed that the reason for such a disaster was idolatry, which dominated in Israel. Unfortunately, Judah did not learn this lesson from her disobedient "sister" Israel and approximately

135 years later Judah experienced a similar punishment from her G-d. It would be wise to explore briefly the cause of this event, as found in verse 13.

There is no doubt that the sins of the prophets were foundational in bringing G-d's judgment upon Judah. These prophets were false and spoke not the truth of G-d, but what the people wanted to hear. They were not called by G-d nor did they speak the word of G-d. They were much more political than spiritual. This same spirit of falsehood and deception is found today among believers. Instead of standing against sin and injustice, many leaders are embracing a social gospel devoid of salvation and rooted in a misunderstanding of G-d's grace and mercy. G-d does not necessarily stand with the poor and weak, He stands with those who are in a covenantal relationship with Him and whose actions are in line with His Word.

As I am writing this, there is an expected attack coming upon Israel from Iran, Hezbollah, and other Iranian proxies from Yemen, Syria and Iraq. I do not believe that the fact that Tisha B'Av is a few days away is a mere coincidence. The difficult position in which Israel now finds herself is a direct outcome of not executing justice in Gaza and in Lebanon over the last several years. Literally thousands of attack rockets have been launched into Israel since 2001, and Israel did not arrest and bring the guilty terrorists to justice. The horrible events of October 7, 2023 are a direct result of this failure. Similarly, the Second Lebanon war ended with an agreement that Lebanon would be demilitarized south of the Litani River. However, no sooner did the war end on August 14, 2006 than Hezbollah began to violate this agreement, and instead of Israel resuming the war, there was an absence of a response by Israel and an allowing of Hezbollah to rearm and sit upon the Israeli northern border with nearly 200,000 power rockets in her arsenal. It was the consistent failure to act against international opinion which has led Israel to be in a most difficult current situation.

It is likely that only a few days away we will see how significant the attack will be from Iran and her terrorists 'proxies. It is our hope that the Israeli Defense Force will be able to either mount a preemptive strike or significant response which will defend the citizens of Israel successfully. Perhaps Iran and those with her will not want things to spiral out of control into a regional war and will actually have a more moderate response than the current rhetoric would lead one to conclude. Once again, time will reveal whether or not the Middle East is on the verge of a very significant event.

Also in verse 13 it states, "*the iniquity of her priests; the ones who shed blood of the righteous in her midst.*" These words demonstrate that the priests, who were commissioned by G-d to teach the Torah to the people (See Leviticus 10:11), failed in this pursuit. In fact, they were also responsible for killing those who were actually behaving righteously in the kingdom. The shedding of blood frequently brings about a swift response from G-d in judging those who were guilty. An important question which needs to be asked is why were the priests acting in such a manner? The answer is likely because they were more interested in pleasing the people than pleasing G-d.

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning this issue in a most clear manner. In Galatians 1:10, one reads from Paul,

Ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν; εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην

*“For now, men I am seeking to please or G-d? If I am seeking men to please, if still men I was seeking to please, A servant of the Messiah I would not be.”*

This is one of the most profound verses in all the Bible and so easily understood. The term “priest” is simply another word for a servant of G-d. Since a priest is a servant of G-d, it is G-d Whom he should want to please. Those who are involved in leadership today in the congregations of believers must strive to please G-d by teaching the truths of Scripture and never compromising the standards which are found in the Word of G-d. The Bible reveals that in the End Times there will be a time of apostasy (See 2 Thessalonians 2:3). When examining the theological changes that are appearing within much of Christianity, I believe this apostasy is already beginning. More and more denominations within the body of believers are embracing behaviors which the Scriptures clearly forbid and even call an abomination. There is also great confusion in regard to who is able to lead a local congregation and the qualifications which the Bible sets forth concerning leadership.

These recent changes, which go against what has been taught by the body of the Messiah for centuries, are evidence that the spirit of delusion which comes from the antichrist is already beginning to appear. All of these things will lead to an intense time of persecutions of believers. G-d’s judgment begins with His people and it is clear that many of the institutions which claim to be following the Messiah and His Word are not. This will lead to the L-rd’s discipline of His people, not for the purpose of destroying them, but to purify them. This principle is also seen in the Scroll of Lamentations 3:31-32

כִּי לֹא יַזְנֶה לְעוֹלָם אֶדְנִי: כִּי אִם־הוֹגָה וְרַחֵם כָּרַב חֶסֶד־וּ:

*“For the Lord will not abandon forever; for if grief, He will be merciful according to the abundance of His grace.”*

In the end, due to some very difficult times for believers in the End Times, John informs us and encourages us that,

χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν, καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοιμάσεν ἑαυτήν

*“We will rejoice and exult and will give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7*

Whenever G-d allows His people to suffer and go through hardships, He will work it out for our good and His glory. One must also remember that the Babylonian Exile produced a good change for the Jewish people and G-d redeemed them 70 years later and returned them once more to the Land of Judah, the city of Jerusalem and had the Second Temple built. All of this looks forward to the Temple that the Messiah will dwell in during the Millennial Kingdom.