

EKHAH

The Book of Lamentations, especially 1:21; 2:2f speak of two phases of the Day of the L-rd, the first already past in the fall of Jerusalem and the dissolution of the people of Judah, and a second in store for the gloating enemies of G-d's people. Therefore those who speak of 'Israel's Final Holocaust' had better be reminded that it will also be a holocaust for all the nations of the world. Jeremiah is the traditional author of Lamentations in the closing days of Judah's conflict with Babylon around 586, the date of Jerusalem's final capitulation to Nebuchadnezzar. The ninth of Av (August) is the Jewish commemoration of this disaster, and on that day, a full fast day, this scroll is read in the synagogue following the evening services. The other days associated in some way with this event are the Tenth of Tevet (marking the beginning of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem), the Seventeenth of Tammuz (which marks the first breach in the walls of Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege), and the Fast of Gedaliah (the third day of Tishri, the day following Rosh HaShanah, Tzom Gedaliah commemorating his assassination after he was appointed Governor of the Jewish people by Nebuchadnezzar). In this book of Ekhah (Lamentations), Jerusalem is personified and she weeps bitterly (1:2) because Judah has gone into the Golus (Exile)—see 1:3-5. The prodigal city remembers the wonderful days of old when her festivals brought rejoicing multitudes to her Beis Hamikdash. Now those days are gone, and she is mocked and despised, and enemies have invaded her sanctuary (1:10). Like the Moshiach, hanged on the etz,

the city is naked and humiliated and left to be seen by passers-by. 'Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which Hashem inflicted on the day of His charon af (fierce anger)' (Lam 1:12). See Lam 2:22. Jerusalem remembers her false prophets with their false and misleading visions (2:14) and her prophets who obtain no vision from the L-rd (2:9) and she remembers her own rebellion against G-d's word (1:18), and sees that all this desolation of altar and sanctuary, all this abolition of festival and Shabbos, is just punishment from Hashem Himself. The Gentile enemies gloat over her when they see Jerusalem's destruction in the Babylonian Exile, but she calls on G-d to bring on the Day of the L-rd when all the Gentile nations of the world will become as Jerusalem is (1:21). Judgment only begins at the household of G-d. See 3:64 and Zech 1:15; 2:8. A terrible picture of Gehinnom is seen in 3:7-8, for here we view a people (pre-Exilic Jerusalem) who refused to know G-d and we see them frozen in Gehinnom-like divine judgment. We are reminded again of the pierced Moshiach surrounded by mockers when we read 3:14. See also 3:30, 52-57. The burden of proof today is still on Judah's religious leaders as to whether or not they rebel against G-d's word (1:18), since it was their sins which caused the destruction of Jerusalem (4:13-16). They were as unreliable as that ally Egypt, a nation that could not save (4:17). Jewish religious leaders must prove that they rightly interpret the word of G-d, because that desolate

Jerusalem is still a rebuke and a challenge against them. Note for street ministry: homelessness is mentioned in 5:2. Jerusalem's survivors are homeless after G-d's judgment falls on them. But see the song of hope in 3:22-23. We see that to be thus humbled is good (3:27-29). There is hope in 3:31-32. If we don't grow bitter toward G-d but instead test and examine our ways and return to the L-rd, then there is indeed good in being humbled by Hashem (3:39-40). The hope of Israel's ultimate return to G-d is stated in 4:22 and 5:21. This is still the great hope of all Biblically defined believers. When one reads this book one needs to revisit the material in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28. See. Lam 2:17. This book is a vindication of Jeremiah's ministry and many of the prophetic themes of his preaching. Immediately in Jeremiah's ministry G-d shows him the coming crisis that we see has played out in Lamentations, represented by a 'boiling pot, tilted away from the north' (Jer 1:13). This pot was going to boil over and pour its hot lava of destruction as foreign soldiers came down on Jerusalem from the north. This threat from the north (Jer 1:14; 4:6; 6:1,22; 10:22; 13:20; 16:15; 25:9,26; 31:8) became concrete in the persons of King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian soldiers. G-d is telling Jeremiah to preach that there is no escape from these soldiers. The people have broken G-d's Law and now Hashem is sending His divine marshalls to put the people under arrest and take them off to Babylon to serve a Seventy Year Exile prison sentence (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). Go peaceably,