

Torah Musing - Lamentations 1:12

Jerusalem and Other Sorrows

My Dearest Jerusalem,

How Ironic!! Jerusalem means *city of peace* but in your long history you have known very little peace. Babylon destroyed you and as you laid waste, in despair you cried out:

הִבִּיטוּ וַיִּרְאוּ, אִם-יֵשׁ מִכְּאוֹב כְּמִכְּאוֹבִי

Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow!

So Beloved Jerusalem come and see...

Date	Event
701 BCE	King Sennacherib of Assyria sieged you ¹
597 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon besieged you and your King Yehoyakin was taken ²
586 BCE	After a two year siege ³ your citizens starved and you finally fell to Nebuchadnezzar II and the Babylonians. ⁴ You people were carried off to a foreign land and you lamented: אֵיכָה יִשְׁבָּה בְּדָד, הָעִיר רַבְתִּי עַם --הִיְתָה, כְּאַלְמָנָה "How lonely sits the city that was full of people." ⁵
539 BCE	King Cyrus and the Persians ⁶ take you
322- BCE	Alexander the Great and the Greeks ravage you
63 BCE	Pompey and the Romans brought you to tears.
638 CE	Imur Ibn al Khattab and Islam take you
1099-1187 CE	The Christians conquer you

1187 CE	At battle of Hattin Saladin conquers you. You were in the hands of the Ottoman Empire from 1516-1917
1917 CE	The English rule over you
1948 CE	The European Jews take you over

Jerusalem, you wondered are there any sorrows like yours? True, you have experienced tremendous suffering and unthinkable sorrow. Verily time and time again, you were ravaged but no sorrow like yours? South Africa was under European tutelage from the 18th century until the final days of the 20th century. Europeans maimed, murdered, destroyed and stole the gold and mineral riches of her shores. The South African Zulu, Swazi, Xhosa, Tswana have all known tremendous sorrow! In West Africa the English, French, Portuguese and Italians stole the country's true wealth, the people. The Yoruba, Fulani, Mandinka, other Niger-Congo peoples and Bantu speaking people have had their share of misery. The African slave trade endured for centuries and the mighty Atlantic Ocean is a veritable memorial to Sub-Saharan peoples. West Africa has endured unspeakable horror! In the 20th century millions of European Jews were systematically exterminated by other Europeans. For four hundred years the Cherokee, Aborigines of Australia, Navajo, Sioux, Cheyenne, Iroquois, Apache, the Metis, Cheyenne, Paiute, were merciless decimated by greedy and unscrupulous people. Haitians were shunned and purposefully economically underdeveloped by European nations simply because the Haitians demanded their freedom. The Spaniards had their way with the Maya and Aztecs of the Yucatan peninsula and South America. Alas, the people of the Americas have also known dreadful sorrows.

I am not like Yehuda Halevi⁷ whose heart (Jerusalem) was in the east but he dwelled in the west. I live in the uttermost parts of the west but you, Jerusalem are in my heart. Beloved, no city, country or people possess a monopoly on suffering and affliction. Sorrow, tears and misery have no geographic boundaries and seemingly no limitation. Jerusalem, I think of you often and I still turn and face you every time I pray. I have even left a seat for you at the Shabbat table. So, my dearest Jerusalem because I love you, I must tell you the truth. *Yes, there are sorrows like your sorrow.* I mourn for them and I mourn for you. In the meantime, and until we meet again I shall⁸

שאלו שלום ירושלם

Pray For the Peace of Jerusalem



שבת שלום מביתנו לביתך

Shabbat Shalom From Our House to Your House

Rabbi Malchah

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Endnotes

¹ In Sennacherib's annals he states that he trapped Hezekiah "like a caged bird." In II Kings 18:14 Sennacherib demands that King Hezekiah pay offers 30 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold as tribute to prevent the defeat of Jerusalem. II Kings 19:35 records that an angel prevented the defeat of Jerusalem

² See II Kings 24

³ 589-587 BCE. See II Kings 25

⁴ See II Kings 25

⁵ Lamentations 1:1

⁶ See Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45

⁷ Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141) A principal Hebrew poet of Spain. This idea is taken from his poem. "לְבִי בְּמִזְרָח" "My Heart is in the East."

⁸ Tehillim /Psalm 122:6 (partial)