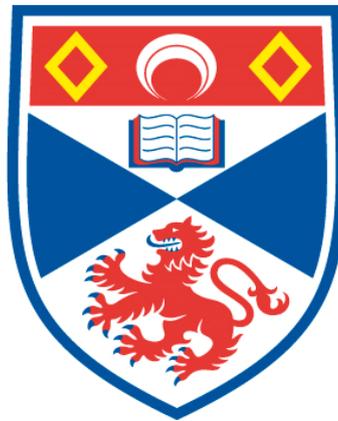


MEDIEVAL JEWISH EXEGESIS OF THE BOOK OF  
LAMENTATIONS

Deborah Anderson

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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# Medieval Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Lamentations

*Deborah Anderson*

*A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity*

*in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of*

*Philosophy at the*

*University of St Andrews.*

St Andrews, Scotland  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis is in two parts. The first part consists of translations of five medieval commentaries on the Book of Lamentations composed by Rashi, Yosef Kara, and Abraham ibn Ezra. While the Rashi and ibn Ezra commentaries are available in translation, the two written by Yosef Kara are not. These two Kara commentaries contain transliterated Medieval French dialects that are difficult to translate, at least in part, because the copyists did not appear to understand what they were copying. The translation of these texts has, therefore, begun the long task of trying to develop a system by which Kara's Medieval French explanations may be understood. The initial findings are recorded in the translations. The second part of this work concerns the development of a method by which these translations may be better understood. A comparison of eight verses from the Book of Lamentations was made, and a method based on sociolinguistic and literary theory was applied, to attempt an explanation of the use of *peshat* method of exegesis as a function of meaning.

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The Book of Lamentations consists of five communal laments voicing the pain and anguish of a people defeated: defeated by the enemy, defeated by themselves, and abandoned, although not forgotten, by their God. It is a poetic construction of beauty and emotion, frequently neglected because it refers to a situation in Israel's history that people would rather forget. In this, however, lies its great strength and relevance, not only as a piece of poetry but, as an historical record of a people's past.

In a recent interview<sup>1</sup>, the Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney made the following observation on the importance of poetry: *At moments of big communal crisis, when people want something said for them, and they feel a sense of large call, then they head for it, because it's one of the last modes of ritual, serious, tender really true expression. People recognise it.* This explains why the Book of Lamentations has been recited on the ninth of Av for centuries, and why it is now beginning to receive the attention that it deserves, both as literature, and as a means of communal expression. However, it is more than this. Heaney continues: *At a minimal level poetry is like a mantra, a few things learned off by heart. Just the sheer repeating of something that has been in your memory and possessing it has some kind of steadying effect, as if it's a wee banister that runs right down into your origin...but fundamentally, at a serious, high level it is a fortification for the self, and for your own intuitions and honesties and uneases about the world you're in...What poetry does quite often is indicate that it knows the score, and if you know the score you've fortified yourself.*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Seamus Heaney recorded in *The Herald*, Thursday July 10, 2003, by Rosemary Goring.

This raises two issues about the nature of the validity of Lamentations as a means of fortifying the self. First of all, when this poetic work is studied, what are the conditions in which the text satisfies this fundamental need; and secondly, how is the meaning affected when the text is presented in a language other than the original? The ramifications of the nature of these issues leads us into further examination of the content of Lamentations as a communal memory, a memory that is consistently authentic.

The idea of collective memory is an interesting one. It is argued to be a fictive idea as *it has no traceable location*<sup>2</sup>. It operates as a system by which it is possible to understand the past while at the same time sustaining it with the present. In this manner, it is possible to maintain an historical link with the past and even project it onto the future, or as Heaney puts it, when a big communal crisis exists it becomes *a fortification of the self* that indicates *that it knows the score*. It thus becomes a timeless link between what has gone before, and what will subsequently follow.

The issue of *how* to read the text is also important. In essence, there are two ways to read a text - by looking at the literal meaning of the words, or by reflecting on a figurative meaning of the writing. The theory behind the literal is that it is able to direct us to another meaning. This works with regard to both what words are *supposed* to mean, but also to what they are *unable* to say. Consequently, in any act of

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<sup>2</sup> Iser, Wolfgang. "Coda to the Discussion", in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (ed. Budick, S. and Iser, W. :Stanford University Press, 1996), 297.

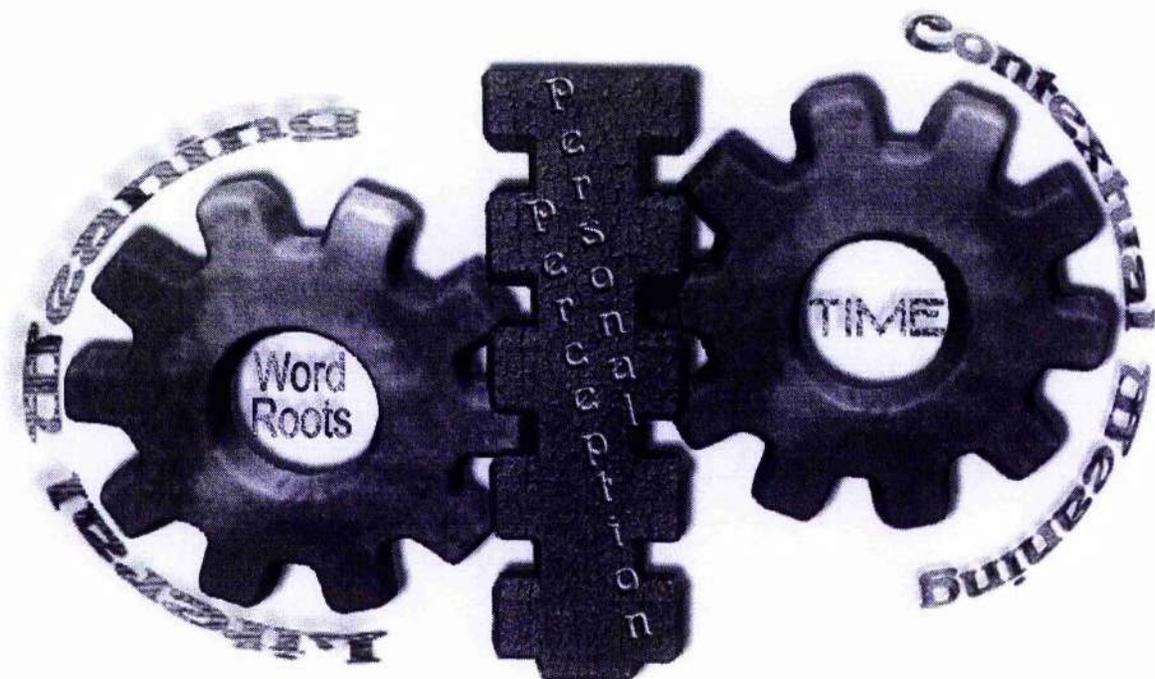
reading we are not just trying to translate words, we are trying to translate meanings. The current context of the reader dictates the context in which the past is read. This is how we translate *that* past into *this* future, whatever *that* and *this* are. With regards to the Book of Lamentations, its legitimacy is reflected in the way in which people turn to it in recognition of its true expression of crisis in grief. *Being true to yourself, says Heaney, takes in the world around you. How do you know the world but in your own temperament, and intelligence? You necessarily will express it, whether you master it or not*<sup>3</sup>. Expression, therefore, takes on meaning in the world of the one who *wants something said*; or in other words, in the *context* of the one in crisis.

This problem is exacerbated when we read a text in a language other than our native tongue. Not only is there the challenge of interpreting the meaning of a text from a different time, place and culture, but, we are confronted with the complication of working in another linguistic structure. Sometimes there is not a word that conveys the meaning of the term before us, so we are obliged to look at, and develop, word roots in an attempt to produce a meaningful translation. The literal meaning of the phrase is then useful in directing us towards an interpretation that is significant for our present context. Since there is no possible direct translation of the idea before us, we are compelled to use the literal meaning of the words to direct us to a well-grounded meaning in the vernacular, which in effect imposes on us the reality that we are operating in a space between two languages and cultures, so that our

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<sup>3</sup> In conversation with Rosemary Goring. See note 1.

translation is able to designate what is *unsaid*. This is represented diagrammatically below<sup>4</sup>.



On the one 'cog' we have literal meanings, which are affected by word roots. On the other 'cog', we have contextual meanings, which differ with time, place, and culture, and where these interact we have the meaning that we glean from the text before us.

This idea is reflected in the use of the Hebrew expressions of *peshat* and *derash*, or, for the purposes of transposition of ideas, *literal* and *figurative* meaning. In the Talmud is the repeated expression, *no text can be deprived of its peshat*<sup>5</sup>, and although this comment is supposed to be one of clarification, it actually confuses this issue

<sup>4</sup> Diagrammatic representation of this theory was developed and created by Iain Anderson and Missy Boling, and is used with permission.

<sup>5</sup> See *b. Shabb. 63a, Yevam. 11b & 24a*.

even further. The word *peshat* has been so variously defined that its real *function* has been clouded. For the moment, it will be used as an expression of *literality*, but its use will be later shown to develop into a wider operational purpose. The problem affecting this issue can be explained using a simple concept from sociolinguistics.

Languages change, or to be more precise, speakers innovate. This is best illustrated with examples. For instance, the word *nice* in a current English language dictionary is defined variously as *pleasant, satisfactory; kind, good-natured; subtle, fine; requiring care; and fastidious*<sup>6</sup>. However, while the first two explanations are commonly understood, the meaning of *nice* has varied over time, so that it used to be in common usage as *ignorant*, then *fastidious*, and then *precise* before it took on its rather meaningless current definition as *pleasant*. At least, according to this Oxford dictionary definition, its earlier meaning *fastidious* is retained, but is not common parlance. Similarly, the word *die* is no longer in common usage amongst young people. It appears that *die* is no longer associated with *a cube marked on each face with 1-6 spots*, and in modern British maths text books<sup>7</sup> its plural *dice* is now associated with the singular in common usage. It has, therefore, been replaced to the point where *die* is no longer understood, which is again reflected in an English dictionary where *die* is defined as (plural *dice*) *a dice*<sup>8</sup>. This demonstrates the idea of social variation as a means of speaker innovation.

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<sup>6</sup> Elliott, Julia et al. *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*. OUP, 2001, 501.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Newman, G. and Bull, R. *Essential Skills in Maths Book 1*. Nelson, 1996, 135, where publications use *dice* as a singular entity as students no longer understand *die*.

<sup>8</sup> *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language. Unabridged 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, Prentice hall Press, 1983, 507.

A third way in which language variation can be explained is illustrated in the translations of R. Yosef Kara below. Kara uses vernacular French to elucidate further the explanation of certain verses before him. However, this causes problems for the translator of the commentaries as the word lists he uses are not those common to the popular works of his near contemporary, R. Solomon ben Issac (Rashi). While Rashi uses the Medieval central French dialect in his writings, Kara does not. To understand Kara's use of Old French we have to turn to northern dialects to attempt a translation, and this has involved the development of the beginnings of a new translation system for reading his transliterated Medieval Hebrew<sup>9</sup>. For a modern illustration of regional change we can consider the Dundonian use of the word *how*. In response to the comment, *please don't do that*, the response is not the expected *why?* but rather *how?*. If you are not from Dundee, this can be initially very confusing, but it illustrates the point that this usage has been adopted by the local community, but has not been embraced by the whole population of Scotland. Similarly, the American gangster culture has introduced the neologism *bling* as an expression of excess, or being flash. Although this has crossed over from an American to an English male sub-group, it is not widely used by young Scottish men. Its use, therefore, may spread further but not be universally accepted, until it is either replaced by another new word, or continues to survive only as a sub-culture expression<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See p. 53 below.

<sup>10</sup> See Holmes, Janet. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 2d ed., Longman, 2001, 196.

So, if this is the case, it is not surprising that Lamentations can be read in different contexts and still be regarded as a legitimate form of communal expression, despite being apparently out of time and place. Heaney is convinced that the importance of poetry is to give us an experience that is like foreknowledge of certain things which we already seem to be remembering<sup>11</sup>. By examining the use of the Hebrew terms *peshat* and *derash* we can try to understand how this concept is working within Medieval commentaries on Lamentations. It also allows us to reflect on how the context of both speaker and reader leads us to a valid understanding of the text, so that we are able to recognise what is not being said to us as much as what is.

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## **peshat**

Much has been written on the history and meaning of *peshat*, or *the literal, simple, plain meaning*, but at this point it is necessary only to look briefly at the idea of *peshat* during the time of the Talmudic rabbis, and during the time of the medieval exegetes. In his book, *Peshat and Derash*<sup>12</sup>, Halivni argues that the Talmudic meaning of *peshat* can be defined as simply what the text says. This understanding is dictated by the context of the writing, whether it is regarded as the plain, simple meaning, or an applied one. Consequently, he does not accept that the root meaning of *p-sh-t* changes when applied to the noun, to mean anything other than *extention/expansion* with the further connotation of *context*. As the Talmud makes it

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<sup>11</sup> In conversation with Rosemary Goring, see note 1.

<sup>12</sup> Halivni, D. W. *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*. OUP, 1991, 52.

quite clear that *no text can be deprived of its peshat*, it follows that this meaning is regarded as of primary importance, over and above any homiletic exposition, or *derash*, subsequently derived from the passage under scrutiny. That is not to say that the *derash* is of no consequence, but rather that it is of secondary value because not all texts have a *derash* interpretation.

There are three passages<sup>13</sup> in the Talmud where the comment *no text can be deprived of its peshat* can be found. In addition to these, there are eleven references<sup>14</sup> to *peshatei* (Babylonian Talmud), and *peshutei* (Palestinian Talmud) meaning *the peshat of*. In each case the meaning should be read as *context*<sup>15</sup>. However, as we examine medieval commentaries it becomes clear that what is one person's *peshat* is another's *derash*, so that the interpretation of the writing in its surrounding text is only one context to be addressed. This can be illustrated by Rashi's opening comments on Lam 1:1 where he says that *Jeremiah wrote the Book of Laments. This is the scroll that Jehoiakim burned upon the brazier that was upon the fire. It contained three alphabetic acrostics...* Later in the same verse he comments, *there are many Aggadic Midrashim, but I have come to explain the language of Scripture according to its plain meaning*<sup>16</sup>. Based in midrash, this explanation is stated as the plain meaning by Rashi, but it is not considered to be plain meaning by either Kara or ibn Ezra, who reject by omission; and it would not be regarded as the plain meaning by a modern exegete, but rather treated as *derash*. The context of the definition of the exegetical method

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 54 – 61: *b. Shabb.* 63a, *Yevam.* 11b, and *Yevam.* 24a.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 63 – 76: *b. Ketub.* 111b; *b. Eruv.* 23b; *b. Qidd.* 80b; *b. Zevah.* 113a; *b. Hul.* 6a; *b. Hul.* 133a; *b. Arak.* 8b; *b. Arak.* 32a; *y. Sanh.*, beginning; *b. Sanh.* 100b; and *b. Ketub.* 38b. Halivni examines each of these references in detail.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Plain meaning here is indicated by Rashi with the use of *כמשמטו* according to its plain meaning.

being applied, therefore, also has to be taken into account. The context of *time*, as in speaker innovation, dictates how a passage is approached, just as it influences the conclusions reached. Also, it should be remembered that while the three medieval exegetes, whose commentaries on Lamentations are to be discussed, all read Hebrew and were expert in its exposition, their native tongues were French and Spanish. This means that there are time, spatial, and social variations both in relation to the text, and also with each other. It is not surprising, therefore, that the notion of *peshat* and *derash* is seen to change and develop not only from Talmudic times, but also within medieval exegesis itself.

By the tenth century the concept of *peshat* as illustrated in the Talmud has begun to change. The *peshat* interpretation is beginning to be regarded as superior to a *derash* exposition. In the works of Maimonides<sup>17</sup>, this develops to the point where any interference with the surface meaning of the passage culminates in the downright rejection of *derash*. However, this extreme understanding of *no text can be deprived of its peshat*, is not unilaterally shared. Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra explore the idea that *peshat* and *derash* can coexist, but, in varying degrees of interpretation, *peshat* is to be given priority. Both spatial and social variations have parts to play in this development.

As Rashi begins to break the rabbinic exegetical mould with his changing view of *peshat* exegesis, he is still able to utilise the homiletic explanations found in Talmud

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<sup>17</sup> See for example his *Book of Commandments* where *peshat* is regarded as the only legitimate means of interpretation.

and Midrash as and when he feels that they are valid. He also includes vernacular explanations in central medieval French dialect in an attempt to elucidate meaning. Kara, however, although a pupil of Rashi's, is also greatly influenced by his uncle, the commentator Menachem ben Helbo<sup>18</sup>, whose works and ideas he freely quotes. He does not feel bound by a line-by-line exegesis, but rather explains the verse in the context of the surrounding passage. Although Kara includes vernacular Medieval French to further clarify a point he is trying to make, it is in dialects of northern France, and he is far less likely to utilise *derash* unless he either wishes to criticise it, or it seems to suggest the best solution. For ibn Ezra there is even more tension in the *peshat/derash* dichotomy. He prefers to use *peshat* explanations to clarify a passage, and explores the context of the verse within the written text, but is disinclined to say that if the authoritative explanation of the rabbis negates the *peshat*, then they were wrong. As his works display a greater influence from Arabic culture than either Rashi or Kara, it is not surprising that his arguments are more mystical in nature<sup>19</sup>, using the plain meaning of *peshat* as an initial means by which to explore the text in greater depth<sup>20</sup>. Neither is his wider knowledge and application of the Hebrew language astonishing.

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<sup>18</sup> Dates unknown, and ideas only extant in other commentators' works.

<sup>19</sup> The influence of Greek culture and philosophy played a large part in the search for a symbolic meaning for the text. This symbolic, or esoteric meaning was regarded as *sod*. By this method the text could be *recreated*, and this method came to be regarded as the beginning of the formation of Jewish mysticism.

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of this idea see Irene Lancaster's thesis *Abraham ibn Ezra: Hermeneutics and Torah*, Lancaster, 1995.

If context dictates how we understand the text to the point where a text can be described as legitimate outside of its own time and place, then we have to be prepared to admit that a text is capable of multiple meanings. This is true for both *peshat* and *derash* readings of any works presented to us, particularly when we engage with the Hebrew of the text, where words may be said to coexist rather than interact with each other. For example, the last line of Lam 1:15; גַּת דְּרֹךְ אֲדָנָי לַבְּתוּלַת בֵּית יְהוּדָה is generally translated: *the Lord has trampled as in a winepress the maiden daughter Judah*. While it is straightforward to see what the words say, it is not so straightforward to see what they mean. Rashi argues that the meaning is one of slaughter as in *A wine press I trod alone* (Isa 63:3), and then explains the text literally with the comment, *like one who treads grapes to produce their wine, he trampled the women to extract their blood*. But this then raises the question of *why* God should do this, so again we are required to engage with the text to decipher it. Once we move away from the plain meaning we enter the world of *midrash*, and are participating in Scripture such that Neil Gillman can say, *A midrash is usually understood to be a reading of a text, but in an extended sense, it can also be taken as a reading of the world, of human experience*<sup>21</sup>. Albeit more obvious in a medieval interpretation, this is one of the *functions* of *peshat*: once it has given us the context of the verse, it directs us away from itself in search of a deeper meaning. Sometimes we are rewarded with something more than we can initially perceive, sometimes we are led to another

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<sup>21</sup> Gillman, Neil. "Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew", in *Contemporary Jewish Theology: A Reader*. Dorff, E. N. and Newman, L. E., eds., OUP, 1999, 183.

passage to find some revelation. Wherever we end up, the context of the words interacts with the context of each reader to reveal an ultimate truth. Not the truth, but a truth. This is particularly developed in the work of ibn Ezra, with his emphasis on the use of סוד, or mystical meaning<sup>22</sup>, in the sense of hidden rather than esoteric.

The Talmud argues that *no text can be deprived of its peshat*, and regards this as one method of exegesis, while *derash* is another. However, it also preserves the interaction of one rabbi's opinion with another, so that we end up with commentaries on the commentaries on the text. But this should be seen as a way of keeping the text alive, and authentic from one generation to another. This is described by Peter Ochs as textual reasoning<sup>23</sup>. Alternatively, Scriptural reasoning is defined as interaction with the biblical text, and this is an exercise that is performed, in our case, by the rabbis. When we interact with the biblical text through the commentaries that we have before us, then we are engaged in textual reasoning, or *reasoning stimulated by reading scriptural reading*<sup>24</sup>. Thus Ochs can argue that as scriptural reasoning involves the reading of only one text, it gives us a limited base for interpretation, although the three monotheistic traditions allow for a greater variety of understandings. Textual reasoning, however, interacts with various secondary sources, and so offers a broader exegesis, but orders a narrower tradition. It gains its legitimacy through context, so that the rabbis were engaged in

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<sup>22</sup> See Lancaster, Abraham ibn Ezra, 299.

<sup>23</sup> Ochs, Peter. "B'nei Ezra: An Introduction to Textual Reasoning", in *Contemporary Jewish Theology: A Reader* (ed. Dorff, E. N. & Newman, L. E.; OUP, 1999), pp. 502-511.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p.507.

scriptural reasoning, but Rashi, Kara, and ibn Ezra are occupied with textual reasoning. This leads us back to the idea that our interactions with the text(s) are based on the sociolinguistic variants of time, space and society.

However, this plurality of meanings should not be regarded as a lack of understanding, the result of flawed reasoning, or a weakness, but rather as a strength.

When Yosef Kara admits "...but I do not know what it means", he is acknowledging that although he has wrestled with the text, and the Jewish writings on it, he is unable to find a satisfactory explanation of the biblical verse<sup>25</sup>. That is not to say that he offers no explanation at all, but rather that we are invited to search for our own understanding using those he himself rejects as a starting point. Such is the nature of *peshat* and *derash*.

In his book on Judaic logic, Avi Sion says this: *Two people equally skilled in the art of knowing (or one person at different times) may arrive at different specific conclusions, due to different contexts of knowledge. The content and volume of one's experience – in the largest sense of the term experience, including material and mental perceptions and conceptual insights – has a direct influence on one's logic, affecting one's every rational process*<sup>26</sup>. This invites us to rethink the texts before us. It also invites us to consider the ways in which the rabbis approached the texts before them, why they did not always agree,

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<sup>25</sup> See Ganiel, "Exegetical Method", 91, where he states that when Kara is at a loss as to which explanation is the correct one, he quotes Isa 42:16.

<sup>26</sup> Sion, Avi. *Judaic Logic: A Formal Analysis of Biblical, Talmudic and Rabbinic Logic*. Slatkine, 1997, 19.

and why this enriches the text rather than tempting us to reject out of hand eccentric interpretations and conflicting arguments.

## historical context

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The commentators under discussion were part of a sudden change in the development of Jewish Bible exegesis in the second half of the eleventh century. First of all, there was a sharp rise in the exegetical output of commentators, and secondly, there was a great emphasis placed on the importance of a *peshat*, interpretation. This method of interpretation was separated from the *derash*, or homiletical approach, which had been the usual method of exegesis produced up to this point. *Peshat* was now to be the preferred approach.

This development was begun by Menachem ben Helbo, closely followed by Rashi, Kara and others. Menahem ben Helbo, however, still used *derash* explanations in his commentaries, as did Rashi. It was with Kara, and then Rashbam, that the *peshat* explanation was to be preferred above all else, to the point where Rashbam decried a *derash* interpretation. By the end of the twelfth century, however, this school of thought had faded just as fast as it had begun. It would appear that the reasons for this were three-fold.

The scholars in northern France were influenced by other cultures, borrowing, modifying and creatively using new ideas. The work of the grammarians in Spain were frequently used by Rashi and Kara, Shemaiah and Rashbam, and affected their method of interpretation. Although dictionaries produced by the Spanish-Jewish linguists Menahem ben Saruq and Dunash ibn Labrat were often cited, the French exegetes felt under no obligation to agree with everything they had produced. This new method that embraced philological developments was also a useful tool in Jewish-Christian deliberations.

Jewish-Christian polemics greatly affected the commentaries produced in northern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Begun around the ninth century, these debates became important in this period because senior Jewish figures were concerned that the Jews would be influenced by strong Christian polemics. The new *peshat* method of interpretation allowed Jewish scholars to cause problems for Christian symbolic interpretations, when the Christian scholars regarded their new style as superficial. Although the French exegetes mainly disguised their arguments in the commentaries that they produced to remain more convincing, the polemical elements in their works are clearly noticeable.

The final element in the rapid rise of *peshat* interpretation is the influence of the twelfth century renaissance in Christian Europe. The move towards a more rational approach away from myths and legends, led to the search for a more literal interpretation of Scripture. The twelfth century school in the Monastery of St Victor,

founded by William of Champeaux, was influenced by the literal approach of their Jewish contemporaries whom they quoted. These spiritual contacts led to social and economic contacts, particularly in France and Germany, and it is due to the close intertwining of these three reasons of Spanish-Jewish culture, Jewish-Christian polemic, and the twelfth century renaissance, that the *peshat* interpretation became so influential.

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### the task

The first requirement is to have relevant texts with which to consider *context*. Below are five medieval commentaries on the Book of Lamentations; one by Rashi, two by Kara, and two by ibn Ezra. Each document stands alone, and is presented as a working translation that has been annotated with observations made on the text. The Rashi and ibn Ezra translations are of the Lewin-Epstein edition of the Hebrew text of the Five Megillot found in the Judaica Press edition of *The Books of Lamentations, Ecclesiastes*. The Kara translations are, however, of Solomon Buber's 1899 edition of manuscripts Breslau 104I and Munich 5. As 104I is no longer extant, being lost during World War II, there is no means of verifying parts of the text. However, the Buber edition is a scholarly work that has proved to be a valuable resource when considering the writing of Yosef Kara. The Munich 5 edition that was previously published by Buber, but included in this publication, is translated here for consistency's sake, and because it is the most accessible way to produce a

reading of Kara's commentary in English. It is a much longer text than that of 104I, but contains vast quantities of material found in the shorter work. The translations include a number of transliterated Medieval French words and expressions that have not been easy to read. This is because the French is not the same as that found in a published Rashi wordlist, despite scholarly attempts to produce a system for consistent translation. However, the Medieval French can be translated if northern Medieval French dialects are examined instead of the central French dialect common to Rashi commentaries. Consequently, any translations of the Medieval French references in the Kara editions are tentatively offered, as the system for translation is still in the early stages of construction. This is an ongoing project in consultation with a senior scholar of Medieval French<sup>27</sup>.

In the chapter that follows the five translations, there is a more detailed study of the function of *peshat*, along with a comparison of eight selected verses of the Book of Lamentations. These eight verses were chosen because they throw up interesting textual disputes and dilemmas. These comparisons aim to illustrate the medieval ideas and definitions proposed by Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra to see what insights they have to offer. This is done with the specific intention of identifying the implication of *context*, with respect to the development of interpretation of the text through the use of *peshat* and *derash*. Philological comments also indicate the growing levels of grammatical understanding of the medieval exegetes, and what implications, if any, there are for the meanings of the text. Included in these

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<sup>27</sup> Grateful thanks are offered to Dr Clive Sneddon of the French Department, St Andrews University, for his expertise, interest, and great patience shown when translating parts of these documents. While all work on the transliterated French was a joint exercise, the translations are his.

comparisons are relevant comments on any issues that the text raises by modern commentators. This is important with regard to the development of the understanding of meaning and grammar based on context. Conclusions are then drawn as to the stated aim.

All English translations of verses in Lamentations that follow Hebrew text are printed in bold; all other English translations are printed in italics. Square brackets indicate an addition to the text, whether to aid the sense of the text, or to correct the Hebrew. These are clearly marked. There is no use of speech marks, and inverted commas are used only to indicate a quotation within a translation. This appears to be the most practical way of keeping the text of the translations as easy to read as possible. By using a standard RSV translation of a line of biblical text, the problem arises with the commentary that follows. This is due to the fact that when each exegete interprets a verse the meanings may change. Thus, we have the problem that the translation after the biblical text does not reflect the meaning the exegete wishes to present to the reader. There seems to be no real way around this.

This work aims to do two things: first of all, to present the work of R. Yosef Kara on Lamentations in translation, and in context of the better-known commentators R. Solomon ben Isaac, and R. Abraham ibn Ezra; and secondly, to observe the pattern of development of the use of *peshat* interpretation, and discuss why this is important for the use, and relevance, of the biblical Book of Lamentations.

Although my expertise is in translation of biblical and medieval Hebrew, the development of the *peshat* method of interpretation has led to an active interest in hermeneutics. However, the work presented here on *peshat* interpretation is not exhaustive. Each of the eight verses chosen are broken down and the three commentators' observations are compared. Interpretations from LXX, Targum and Peshitta are also recorded. Then, the ideas of modern commentators are compared and contrasted with those of the medieval exegetes. Conclusions are drawn from these observations regarding *peshat* interpretation and the development of the meaning of words.

By looking at *peshat* as literal meaning, we can go beyond what is written and consider the meaning of what is *not* being said. We are directed towards a meaning that makes sense to us in *our* context. *Peshat*, then, is not just a method of exegesis, it is a function of how exegesis can take place. Sociolinguistics tell us *why* the language changes and develops in meaning; the theory of translatability of cultures indicates how the *function* of *peshat* is developed when the text under examination is translated, and interpreted, by/for a culture other than the original. It retains its authenticity due to its relevance in a communal crisis, because *it knows the score, and if you know the score you've fortified yourself.*

## Commentary of Rashi on the Book of Lamentations

### introduction to Rashi

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R. Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi) was born in Troyes, in northern central France in 1040, into a scholarly family. He was educated in Troyes until travelling to the academies of Mainz and Worms in Germany to study. However, at the age of twenty-five he returned to Troyes, and by the age of thirty had set up his own school. As a scholar with an independent mind, Rashi refused to accept any conclusions unless they were based on reason, and was also ready to reconsider his own judgements if he regarded them as flawed, or was more convinced by a pupil's argument. By maintaining close friendships with his students and encouraging independent thought, his school was able to support creative interpretation, and made him the most influential of the Medieval exegetes. Although Rashi's school attracted many students, and the school rose to prominence, his most outstanding pupils were members of his own family. His four famous grandsons<sup>1</sup>, born to his eldest daughter Jochebed, were to form part of the group of scholars known for setting up the school of *tosafot*.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac (Ribam), Samuel (Rashbam), Solomon, and Jacob (Rabbenu Tam), sons of Jochebed and Meir b. Samuel.

It should also be noted that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries Rashi greatly influenced eminent Christian scholars such as Hugh of St. Victor<sup>2</sup>, Nicholas of Manjacorria, and Nicholas de Lyra<sup>3</sup>, who mentions Rashi by name in his own writings. Although there are no clear references to contemporary issues in the commentaries of Rashi, there are references to Jewish-Christian polemic. These appear in commentary manuscripts, but are often edited out of the editions where there are references to 'Edom', and 'Rome', which are read as references to Christianity. In the book of Psalms the polemic is more marked, and Grossman comments that as Rashi's commentary on the Psalms was written after the First Crusade in 1096, then his comments should be regarded as a reaction to these events<sup>4</sup>.

Rashi probably wrote commentaries on all the biblical books, with his works culminating in the commentary on the Babylonian Talmud. Mostly, these are preserved, but some credited to him are not his, and others indicate additions to the texts not all of which were made by him. Very often his students supplemented his explanations, and while some of these supplements he accepted, others once annotated and added were inserted by copyists. These included arguments offered by his grandsons Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam), and Shemaiah<sup>5</sup>. The third student to be included, and acknowledged, in Rashi's commentaries is his pupil Yosef Kara, whose own first commentary, on the prophet Micah, is almost identical to Rashi's.

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<sup>2</sup> Smalley, B. *The Bible in the Middle Ages*. Blackwell, 1983, 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1563.

<sup>4</sup> Grossman, Avraham, in *HBOT* ½, p340.

<sup>5</sup> The son of his youngest daughter, possibly called Rachel. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1559.

This is an important point when we come to compare commentaries, as Kara later feels able to disagree with his teacher as we see in his Lamentations commentaries, and develops his own new approach to *peshat* interpretation. Buber comments that in a number of commentaries work is credited to one when it is actually composed by the other, for example, the 1486 commentary on Lamentations included in the 1486 Hagiograph<sup>6</sup>. Eventually, however, the identity of the interpolator would often drop out of the commentary and the commentary credited to Rashi. That said, his commentaries were adopted as standard works very quickly after completion, and were widely circulated by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Even though it is difficult to know exactly what Rashi himself wrote, his works today are regularly quoted, so that it is not unusual to find texts translated with a bias towards Rashi's commentaries, just as we find in Rosenberg's commentary<sup>7</sup> from which our Hebrew text is taken.

Rashi's commentaries largely reflect rabbinic sources, but he begins to introduce a developed use of *peshat*, or *literal* meaning, regularly using the phrase, *but I have come to explain the language of Scripture according to its plain meaning*. This implies that his choice of midrashic quotations is far from arbitrary, and yet it is difficult to see why some are included as they do not make any clear sense of the text. However, Rashi's interpretation of plain meaning is not always the same as ours, or in fact of the other exegetes under discussion, but this can be explained by his role as innovator in the development of medieval exegesis. Indeed, his pupils Kara and

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<sup>6</sup> Buber, *Commentary*, introduction, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg, *Commentary*, xvii.

Rashbam were to develop this idea of plain meaning even further, to the point where Rashbam was later to reject *derash*, or applied meanings, for the text completely<sup>8</sup>.

His texts are also strewn with vernacular medieval French words and phrases as he sought to clarify his ideas. These have been collected together in various wordlists and used as standard glosses<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, not all medieval exegetes utilised standard dialects and spellings, so Rashi word lists are not always useful if the author is not Rashi. However, the use of the vernacular adds to the intelligibility that symbolises his work. As a grammarian, Rashi was heavily influenced by the developments in grammar stemming from the Arab-speaking Jewish world, in particular Menahem ben Saruq, and Dunash ibn Labrat. Although guided by these grammarians he felt under no obligation to agree with them, and relied on his own judgement when concerned with understanding the Biblical Hebrew before him. His style was based in Rabbinic and Biblical Hebrew, and shows the use of Aramaic due to the importance he placed on the targums. Again, he feels free to reject the targumic text and propose other ideas of his own indicating his freedom of thought. The influence of central French is also present in Rashi's commentaries, and in some instances, Rashi's use of the French is the sole surviving source for these words as they are not found in French literature. These factors have helped to make Rashi the most popular medieval exegete of Scripture and Talmud.

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<sup>8</sup> Gelles, B. J. *Peshat and Derash in the Exegesis of Rashi*. Leiden: Brill, 1981, 123.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Darmesteter, A. *Les Gloses Francaises de Raschi dans la Bible*. Librairie A. Durlacher, 1909.

Although Rashi explains many biblical words and phrases in his commentary on the Talmud, there is no consistent explanation with regard to the same words and phrases that he examines in his biblical commentaries. While some explanations may be regarded as complementary, no adequate solution to the difficulties this poses has as yet been advanced. That said, Rashi appears to have preferred to continually update his textual interpretations by adding glosses and emendations, rather than writing new commentaries. It is these updated versions that appear to have increased circulation of his work, and the additions appear in MSS Munich 5 and Vienna 23.

Rashi's commentaries on the Bible have had a continuing importance throughout the centuries following their composition. Not only that, they have been influential throughout Jewish culture in both northern Europe and in Spain, and first printed Hebrew book was his commentary on the Bible. Alongside this is the important influence he had in the field of *peshat* exegesis.

It is his style of writing that incorporated both *peshat* and *derash* explanations, that makes his commentaries accessible to all readers and gives rise to their popularity. Since Rashi's work was written in clear language, and included rabbinic interpretation, it was more suited to the spiritual uplifting of the suffering Jewish people in fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe. This contrasts with the more dry, academic exegesis of scholars such as ibn Ezra, where technical linguistic knowledge was needed to understand his work. The virtues of Rashi's

commentaries were also extolled by the Spanish kabbalists in their battle against philosophical tendencies, and by those in Provence and Spain opposed to Jewish philosophy. However, those who supported the rationalist school of thought in Spain preferred the work of ibn Ezra. But Rashi's biblical commentaries still became popular among Spanish Jewry as a side-effect of his excellence as a Talmud scholar, so that by the fifteenth century, R. Isaac Canpanton would establish a School of Talmud study in Spain. Always a modest man, Rashi seems to have been unaware of his influence as a commentator, a fact indicated in letters he wrote in later life.

Below is a translation of Rashi's commentary on the Book of Lamentations based on the Lewin-Epstein edition of the commentary on the Five Megilloth published by Judaica Press<sup>10</sup>. It was chosen because it is a standardised and readily available Hebrew commentary, and included in this commentary digest are those of Abraham ibn Ezra.

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(1) **בְּדָרַד אֵיכָה יִשְׁבָּה בְּדָרַד** *how deserted [the city] lies*. Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations. This is the scroll that Jehoiakim burned upon the brazier that was upon the fire. It contained three alphabetic acrostics: [Chapter 1] How lies; [Chapter 2] How brought darkness; [Chapter 4] How is diminished; [and] he added to it [Chapter 3] I am the man which contains three alphabetic acrostics, as

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<sup>10</sup> Rosenberg, A. J. *The Five Megilloth, Vol. 2: Lamentations, Ecclesiastes – A New Translation*. New York: The Judaica Press, 1992.

it is said *ועוד נוסף עליהם דברים רבים כהמה שלש כנגד שלש* (Jer 36:32; and many similar words were added to them), three corresponding to three<sup>11</sup>. *בדד deserted*, alone of all her inhabitants. *עם רבתי full of people*. The *yod* is superfluous, as in *עם רבת* for her people were many. There are many Aggadic Midrashim, but I have come to explain the language of Scripture according to its plain meaning. *היתה כאלמנה She has become like a widow*, but not [really] a widow; rather, like a woman whose husband went overseas, but intends to return to her<sup>12</sup>.

(2) *בכו תבכה Bitterly she weeps*, twice weeping over the two destructions<sup>13</sup>.

*בלילה in the night*, because the Temple was burned at night, which the master said, *When it was evening, they ignited the fire upon it*<sup>14</sup>. Another explanation: during the night – the night of the weeping of the spies on the ninth of Av caused it to happen to them<sup>15</sup>. Another explanation: in the night – because whoever weeps in the night, the one who hears his voice cries with him<sup>16</sup>. *ודמאתה על והיה and her tears are upon her cheek* from the moment she weeps continually. *כל רעיה all her friends* who were her lovers.

(3) *גלתה יהודה Judah went into exile* from her land. *מעני out of affliction*, because of affliction. *ומרוב עבודה and harsh labour* which the Chaldeans burdened her with. *היא יושבה בגוים she dwelt among the nations*, but in the place where she

<sup>11</sup> Compare with *Lam. Rab.*, Proem 28.

<sup>12</sup> See *b. Sanh.* 104a.

<sup>13</sup> See *b. Sanh.* 104b.

<sup>14</sup> See *b. Ta'an.* 29a.

<sup>15</sup> See *Targum, b. Sanh.* 104b; *b. Ta'an.* 29a.

<sup>16</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 1:24.

- was exiled and settled, *לא מצאה מנוח* *she found no rest*. *בין המצרים* *between the boundaries*, for there is a high place on both sides, and there is no place to escape. *המצרים* *the boundaries* – the boundaries of field and vineyard. The Midrash Aggadah<sup>17</sup> explains between the seventeenth of Tammuz, and the ninth of Av.
- (4) *בא' מועד* [*no-one*] *comes to her appointed feasts* – pilgrims. *נוגות* [*her maidens*] *grieve* is an expression of *גון* *grief*, and there is no radical in the word except the *gimel*<sup>18</sup>.
- (5) *שלו* *at ease*. The inhabitants who were at peace. *הוגה* [*HaShem*] *has afflicted her* refers to the grief, which is an expression of *גון*.
- (6) *לא מצאו מרעה* *like harts, they do not find pasture*. Like harts that do not find pasture, because they have no strength to flee, for their strength has been weakened by hunger. *לפני רודף* *before [the] pursuer*. Every (other) *רודף* that is in Scripture is deficient (a short spelling), but this one is full [*רודף*] because they were pursued by a complete pursuit. Therefore, the liturgy<sup>19</sup> was composed, *I was fully pursued, but the year of my redemption גאולתי is missing*. *The year of my redemption [גאולתי] has come* (Isa 63:4) is written incorrectly (with a short spelling).
- (7) *זכרה ירושלם* *Jerusalem remembers* in her exile. *ימי עניה* *the days of her affliction* – the day of her destruction, which brought my misery to my hand. *ומרודיה* *and her miseries*. It is an expression of anguish as in *על ההרים* *and I go down upon the mountains* (Judges 11:37; I go down upon the mountains), and *אריד בשיחי ואהימה* (Ps 55:3; I

<sup>17</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 1:29.

<sup>18</sup> See Englander on Rashi's grammar, *HUCA II* (1936), 4. Here Rashi is following Menachem (ben Saruq)'s view that a radical may consist of only one or two letters, rather than later grammarians who insist on three.

<sup>19</sup> Selichot for High Holy Days, no. 61. See Rosenberg, *Lamentations*, 4.

*am brought down in my anxiety, and I moan*)<sup>20</sup>. כל מחמדיה *all her treasures*, for she remembered all the good things of her treasures from the days of old. שחקו על משבתיה [they] *mocked at her destruction*. They rejoiced over the ceasing of her joy – her festival, her New Moon, and her Sabbath. But the *Midrash Aggadah* explains it differently – that they were resting in exile on the Sabbaths and feasts, and let the seventh year lie fallow. So, the heathens were laughing at them, and saying, *Fools! In your land you did not let [the seventh year] lie fallow, but now, in exile, you observe it? In your land, you did not keep [the Sabbath], but now, in exile, you keep it?*<sup>21</sup>

(8) לנידה *a wanderer*, an exile, an expression for a nomad, 'esmo(u)rement<sup>22</sup> in the vernacular. ערוותה *her nakedness*, her shame. נאנחה *she [herself] sighed* – in the passive past tense, *sospirer*<sup>23</sup> in the vernacular. *They heard that I am sighing* (v.21), but there the word is *sospirose*<sup>24</sup>.

(9) טומאתה בשוליה *Her uncleanness is in her skirts*. This is an expression of disgrace – her menstrual blood is recognisable on the hems of her garments. That is to say, her sins are multiplied; she committed them openly. לא זכרה אחריתה *she did not consider her future*. When they were sinning, they did not take heed

<sup>20</sup> This verse is not straightforward. מרודיה comes from מרוד, meaning *misery*, or *wandering* – from root רוד *to wander/rove*. In the two texts quoted by Rashi we read וירדה, from Judges 11:37, which appears to be from the root ירד *to come (go) down; diminish*. However, it could possibly come from the root רוד *to wander, go about*. The second quotation which is ' from Psalm 55:3 uses אריד, which translates as *I am brought down*, from the hiphil of the root ירד, but also as *I wail*, from the root ייד. In his translation, Rosenberg suggests that Rashi is reading the root ייד for both examples, to better explain Rashi's comments on the verse. See Saenz-Badillos, A. *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Translated from the Spanish by J. Elwolde. CUP, 1993, 192 – where י becomes י.

<sup>21</sup> See Lam. Rab. 1.7.34.

<sup>22</sup> In Old French 'esmo(u)rement -that which moves on.

<sup>23</sup> In Old French sospirer – to sigh.

<sup>24</sup> That is, a noun instead of the verb.

of what their end might be. Therefore, ותרד פלאים *she fell astonishingly*. Her descent was amazing, bewildering many, for everyone was astonished that it had happened to her, something that did not happen to any other city.

(10) על כל *The enemy stretched out his hand*. Ammon and Moab<sup>25</sup>. הנחמדים *upon all her treasures* - the *Siphrei Torah*, of which it is said מזהב (Ps 19:11; *They are more precious than gold*). All turned to plunder silver and gold, and they turned upon the *Siphrei Torah* in order to burn them, because it is written in them. לא יבא עמוני וגו' (Deut 23:4; *An Ammonite [or a Moabite] will not enter etc*)<sup>26</sup>. אשר צויתיה לא יבאו בקהל לך *whom you commanded not to enter into your assembly*. These are Ammon and Moab.

(12) לא אליכם *Let it not happen to you*. Such a calamity should never again reflect upon those who transgress the law. The Sages said לקובלנא מן התורה *Here we have a Biblical support for the custom of saying: [not to you]*<sup>27</sup>. See what he did to me; be sure and see etc. אשר עולל לי *that was inflicted on me* - which was done to me: אשר הוגה ה' *[with] which HaShem saddened [me]* *on the day of his fierce anger*. Here, גה [הו] is an expression of יגון *grief/distress*.

(13) וירדנה *and he sent it down*. It diminished and broke it [each bone], through punishment and affliction. Therefore, the *nun* is marked with a *dagesh* in order to interpret it as the feminine singular, like יעשנה *he will do it*, יכרסמנה *he will gnaw*

<sup>25</sup> Rashi follows *Lam. Rab.* 1.10.38.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Quoting *b. Sanh.* 104b, קובלנא being a formula to ward off danger (*Jastrow, Dictionary*, 1323).

on it, and ירענה *he will graze on it*, since העצם *bone* is feminine, like it says העצמות היבשות (Ezek 37:4; *the dry bones*). It [the fire] broke each one. Another explanation: וירדנה is like כפיו אל (Judges 14:9; *he scooped out with his hands*). It emptied and removed the marrow from its midst.

(14) נשקד על פשעי בידו *The yoke of my transgressions was marked in his hand.*

This word has no likeness in Scripture, and in the Aramaic language of *Pesikta*<sup>28</sup> it is read as goad, מסקדא *an ox goad*. But I say נשקד is the same as *pointurez*, in the vernacular<sup>29</sup>. My transgressions were dotted, mottled, and marked in the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, as a remembrance. Their number and their reward were not forgotten. ישהרגו *they were interwoven*, they were made into plaits that grew upon my neck. In the language of the *Mishnah*<sup>30</sup>, אין מסרגין את המטות, *You may not girth the bedsteads.*

(15) סלו סלה *[The Lord] has trampled* - he trampled and trod down, as in סלו סלו (Isa 62:10; *build up, build up the highway*). קרא עלי מועד *He has summoned an assembly before me*, an assembly of troops to come against me, and our Rabbis interpreted what they interpreted: Tammuz of that year was a full month<sup>31</sup>, of the second year from their departure from Egypt. Therefore, the return of the spies took place on the night of the ninth of Av, upon which their

<sup>28</sup> See *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana*, p153.

<sup>29</sup> In Medieval French פיינמריני becomes *pointurez*,

<sup>30</sup> In *Mo'ed. Qat.* I,8 we read וּמְסַרְגִּין אֶת הַמַּטּוֹת *you may girth the bedsteads* (during the festival week). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1022. Rashi includes the negative אין.

<sup>31</sup> That is, thirty days. Tammuz is the fourth month in the Hebrew calendar normally lasting 29 days. See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1676.

weeping was firmly fixed for generations<sup>32</sup>. גת דרך [*the Lord*] *has trodden as in a winepress* is an expression of slaughter, like פורה דרכתי לבדי (Isa 63:3; *A winepress I trod alone*). Like one who treads grapes to produce their wine, he trampled the women to extract their blood.

(16) עיני עיני *My eye, my eye*, that is to say, my eye sheds tears continually. The repetition teaches that there is no cessation.

(17) ופרש ידיו בקרבו, *Zion spreads out her hands*. Similarly, (Isa 25:11; *He will spread out his hands in his midst*) as the one who moves his hands back and forth, and shows distress with them. Another explanation is Zion broke – an expression of breaking, like פורש אין להם (Lam 4:4; *no-one breaks it [ie. bread] for them*), and ולא יפרסו להם על אכל לנחמו על מתו (Jer 16:7; *and they will not break (bread) for them in mourning to console him for his dead [kinsman]*)<sup>33</sup>. This is how Menachem articulated it<sup>34</sup>, and in the language of the *Mishnah*<sup>35</sup>, the broken piece פרוסה of bread, is enduring/valid. It indicates that the one who is in distress is like one who clasps his hands and breaks them. I have found an addendum<sup>36</sup>. *HaShem has decreed for Jacob [that] his adversaries shall surround him*. Concerning Jacob, he has commanded that his adversaries would surround him. Even when they were exiled to Babylon and Assyria, Sennacherib banished their enemies, Ammon and Moab, and settled

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<sup>32</sup> Check: *b. Pes.* 77a; *b. Ta'an.* 29a; *b. Sanh.* 104b; *b. Sotah.* 35a.

<sup>33</sup> MT reads לנחמו על מת...

<sup>34</sup> See *Machbereth Menachem*, 146, as cited in Rosenberg, *Lamentations*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> See *b. Ber.* 37a.

<sup>36</sup> It is unclear from the text as to what comment Rashi is referring.

them beside them. They taunted them, as it is stated in *Tractate Kiddushin*<sup>37</sup>: Humania<sup>38</sup> was in Babylon, belonging entirely to the Ammonites. לנדה *as an unclean thing*, for an outcast, and a disgrace.

(19) קראתי למאהבי *I called to my lovers*, to those who make themselves appear as lovers. הםה רמוני *they betrayed me* – for example, the children of Ishmael, who went forth towards the exiles when the captors were leading them on the road nearby, and appeared beside them as if they were compassionate towards them. They produced for them all kinds of salty foods, and inflated skin bottles. So, thinking that it was wine, they ate and became thirsty, and rushed to drink. But when one untied the inflated wine bottle with his teeth, the air entered his intestine, and they died. This is what Scripture says, 'ביער בערב תלינו וגו' (Isa 21:13-14; *in the forest in Arabia you shall pass the night etc. Bring water for the thirsty! Those who dwell in the land of Tema greeted the wanderer with food*)<sup>39</sup>. וישיבו את נפשם *they revived their souls* – so that they *would* revive their souls.

(20) חמרמרו [*my innards*] *burn*, they shrivelled. There is an expression like this in the language of the *Mishnah*<sup>40</sup>: נפלה לאור ונחמר בני מעיה *It fell into the fire, and its intestines were scorched*: בבית כמות *in the house it is like death*. Within the house was fear of demons, harmers and angels of death, and outside the enemy's sword was bereaving [them].

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<sup>37</sup> See *b. Qidd.* 72a.

<sup>38</sup> A town in Babylonia hostile to Jews. See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 338.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Rashi's explanation with that found in *Midrash Psalms* 5:8.

<sup>40</sup> See *b. Hul.* 3:3.

(21) **כי אתה עשית** *that you have done it*. You have caused them to hate me because you set me apart from their food and drink, and from marrying with them. If I had intermarried with them, they would have had compassion on me, and on their daughters' sons. **הבאת יום קראת** *May you bring the day you proclaimed*. Would that you had brought upon them the appointed day that you proclaimed upon me. **ויהיו כמוני** *and let them be like me* - in distress!

(22) **כל רעתם לפניך** *May all their wickedness come before you*. May their sins be remembered and counted before you. **ועולל למו** *and deal with them*, and do with them, just as **גם במעלליו יתנכר אנערע** (Prov 20:11; *Even a youth can be recognised by his deeds*), **וכפרי מעלליו** (Jer 32:19; *and according to the consequences of his deeds*).

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two

(1) **איכה יעיב** *How [the Lord] has brought darkness*. He darkened, as Scripture states: **והשמים התקדרו בעבים** (I Kgs 18:45; *And the heavens had become dark with clouds*). **משמים ארץ** *from heaven to earth*. After he lifted them up as far as the

heavens, he threw them to earth at once, and not gradually, [as] from a high roof to a deep pit<sup>41</sup>. הדרום רגליו *his footstool*. His footstool, this is the Temple.

(2) נאווה יעקב *the dwellings of Jacob*, the houses of Jacob is an expression of נווה *habitation*. הגיע לארץ *He has brought [them] to the ground*, he has humbled them to the ground. חלל ממלכה ושריה *he has treated the kingdom and its princes with contempt*. These are the Israelites who were called ממלכת כהנים (Exod 19:6; *a kingdom of priests*)<sup>42</sup>. ושריה *and its princes*. There is a *Midrash Aggadah*<sup>43</sup> [which says that] these are the heavenly princes [whose names] he changed. The one who had dominion over fire he appointed over water<sup>44</sup>, and he changed all the incumbents because those who possessed the Divine Name were among the wicked of Israel, and were relying on them because they could adjure the heavenly princes to save them from fire, water, and sword. But now, when one entreated the prince of fire by name, he would reply, *This dominion is not in my hands*, and so, all of them.

(3) השיב אחור ימינו *he has withdrawn his right hand*. He withdrew himself as though withdrawing his right hand from waging war on behalf of his children.

(4) דרך קשתו *He has bent his bow*. Since it is the custom of the ones who bend the bow, because they are strong, to place his foot upon them when he bends them. Therefore, it is written as an expression of treading. כאש חמתו *he has*

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<sup>41</sup> מאיגרא רמא לבירא עמיקתא is the equivalent of *pride goes before a fall; from the sublime to the ridiculous*, etc.

<sup>42</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:2.5.

<sup>43</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:2.5.

<sup>44</sup> *Lam. Rab.* says that the names of the angels were changed, so that the one with dominion over water had dominion over fire, and the one with dominion over fire had dominion over iron [the sword]. Cf. Rashi.

*poured out his wrath like fire*. Thus is the association of the words: He poured out his fury, which is *like fire*, since we do not find *pouring out fire* except in conjunction with wrath, as it is written שפוך חמתך אל הגוים (Ps 79:6; *Pour out your wrath upon the nations*).

(5) *he has increased for the daughter of Judah* – he increased for the congregation of Judah<sup>45</sup>. תאניה ואניה *pain and wailing*, suffering and weeping. וירב *and he increased*. The *yod* is vocalised with *small patah* [ie. *segol*], which is an expression of increasing others. וירב העם ויעצמו מאד (Ex 1:20; *and the people multiplied, and became very strong*) is vocalised with *hireq*, which is an expression meaning that he multiplied himself. So, every verb which ends with a *hey*, for example, פנה to turn, זנה to go astray, בכה to weep, functions in this way when the *hey* is missing. When it speaks about itself it is vocalised with *hireq*, for example: ויפן פרעה (Ex 7:23; *and Pharaoh turned*). But when it speaks of others, it is vocalised with *small patah* [ie. *segol*], for example: ויפן זנב אל זנב (Judges 15:4; *and he turned tail to tail*); ויגל יהודה מעל אדמתו (II Kgs 25:21; *and Judah was exiled from its land*), but, ויגל מלך בבל את ישראל אשורה (ibid. 18:11; *and the king of Babylon exiled Israel to Assyria*)<sup>46</sup>.

(6) *he has laid waste* – an expression of cutting off, and so יחמוס כגפן (Job 15:33; *he will cast off like a vine*); נחמוסו עקביך (Jer 13:22; *your steps have been cut off*). שכו *like a garden* – as they cut the vegetables of the garden. שכו *his Tabernacle*, his residence. שכו is written because he appeased his anger against

<sup>45</sup> See *Targum* 2:5.

<sup>46</sup> In other words, the word is vocalised with *hireq* if it is a *qal*, and *segol* if it is in the *hiphil*.

his children with the destruction of his Temple. This is how it is interpreted in the midrash on Lamentations<sup>47</sup>. שחת מועדו *he has destroyed his place of meeting*, the sanctuary of the Holy of Holies where he would meet with his children, as it is said: ונועדתי לך שם (Ex 25:22; *and I will meet with you there*). מלך וכהן *king and priest* - Zedekiah the king, and Seraiah the High Priest<sup>48</sup>.

(7) נאר *he has rejected*, he abolished, and so נארחה ברית עבדך (Ps 89:40; *you have rejected the covenant of your servant*). כיום מועד *as on a day of an appointed feast*, for they were rejoicing and singing in its midst with a loud voice. So the enemies gave a cry of joy when it was destroyed.

(8) להשחית חשב ה' *HaShem determined to destroy*. It is many days since this crossed his mind, as it is written: ... כי על אפי ועל חמתי היתה לי העיר הזאת (Jer 32:31; *this city has so aroused my anger and my wrath...to remove it from my presence*). נטה קו *he stretched out a line* of judgment to punish according to our iniquities. מבלע *from destroying*, from destroying (מהשחית). חל וחומה *rampart and wall* - the large wall and the smaller wall<sup>49</sup>, a low wall opposite a great wall.

(9) טבעו בארץ שעריה *Her gates have sunk into the ground*. The Midrash Aggadah says, because they paid honour to the Ark, as it is written, שאו שערים ראשיכם (Ps 24:9; *Lift up your heads, O gates*)<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, no one had power over them,

<sup>47</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:6.10.

<sup>48</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:6.10.

<sup>49</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:8.12 where שורא ובר שורא is used to explain חל וחומה.

<sup>50</sup> See also *b. Shabb.* 30a.

and they sank into the ground. But our Rabbis<sup>51</sup> said that they were the work of David's hands, therefore, the enemies had no power over them. אין תורה *the law is no more*, there is no authorised instructor among them.

(10) 'ישבו לארץ וגו' [*they*] *sit upon the ground etc* [which is to be understood] according to its meaning. But, the *Midrash Aggadah*<sup>52</sup> says Nebuchadnezzar seated them upon the ground when Zedekiah rebelled against him, and transgressed his oath. He came and took up residence in Daphne of Antioch, and sent for the Sanhedrin, and they came towards him. He saw them as men of stature, seated them in chairs of gold, and said to them, *Expound your Torah to me, chapter by chapter, and translate it for me*. When they arrived at the chapter concerning vows, he said to them, *If he wishes to retract, can he retract?* They said to him, *Let him go to a sage, and he will absolve him*. He said to them, *If that is the case, you absolved Zedekiah of his oath*. He commanded, so they flung them [down from their seats], sat them on the ground, tied the hair of their heads with the tails of horses, and dragged them.

(11) חמרמרו [*my intestines*] *burn, regrizi(l)lerent*, in the vernacular<sup>53</sup>. It is usual for intestines to shrivel and burn when someone throws them into the fire<sup>54</sup>. בעטף *while [infant and suckling] faint, pa(s)mer*, in the vernacular<sup>55</sup>.

(13) מה אעידך ומה אדמה לך *What shall I say for you? What can I liken to you -* to say to you, *What amazes you about your destruction? Did that not also happen to*

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<sup>51</sup> See *b. Sotah* 9a.

<sup>52</sup> *Lam. Rab.* 2:10.14.

<sup>53</sup> In Medieval French רגזילירי becomes *regrizi(l)lerent* - *have shrivelled up*.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. 1:14.

<sup>55</sup> *Pa(s)mer*, to faint/swoon, in Medieval French.

*such and such a nation just like you?* **לך ואנחמך** *To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you.* When trouble befalls a person, others say to him, *This also happened to so and so.* These are consolations for him.

(14) **שוא ותפל** *false and worthless* are words which do not have taste, and in the vernacular, *aflestrimant*<sup>56</sup>. **ולא גלו על עונך** *they did not expose your sin*, to rebuke your way, to your face. **להשיב שבוךך** *to reverse your captivity*, to straighten out your rebelliousness. An expression of **שובבה** (Jer 8:5; *turned away*); **שובבים** (Jer 3:14; *faithless*); and **וילך שובב** (Isa 57:17; *and he continued waywardly*)<sup>57</sup>. **ומדווחים** *misleading* - they led you away from me.

(15) **שרקו** *they hissed*. Blowing with one's mouth; *sibir*, in the vernacular<sup>58</sup>. It is customary for a person to do this when he sees a thing that was once important, but is destroyed. **כלילת יופי** *the perfection of beauty*, all beauty which belonged to her.

(16) **פצו עליך פיהם** [*All your enemies*] *open their mouths wide against you*. Why did Scripture put *pe* before *ayin*? Because they were saying with their mouths (**פֶה**) what they did not see with their eyes (**עֵין**)<sup>59</sup>.

(17) **בצע אמרתו** *he has fulfilled his word*, he has completed his decree, similar to **אשר צוה מימי** (Job 6:9; *he would let loose his hand and cut me off!*).

<sup>56</sup> In Medieval French, *insipidity, sickliness*.

<sup>57</sup> Rashi is using **שובב** (root **שוב**) to explain **השיב** (root **שוב**).

<sup>58</sup> In Medieval French, *to hiss/whistle*.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 2:16.20.

קדם *which he decreed long ago*. That which is written in the Torah: ויספתי  
ליסרה אתכם שבע (Lev 26:18; *then I will continue to punish you sevenfold*)<sup>60</sup>.

(18) ויפג לבו *respite*. *Tresalemant*, in the vernacular<sup>61</sup>. In the same way, ויפג לבו (Gen  
45:26; *but his heart grew faint*). בת עינד *pupil of your eye*. The black part of the  
eye which is called *prunelle*<sup>62</sup>.

(19) אשמרות *the watches* - two parts of the night, because the night is divided into  
three parts, as our Rabbis said in Tractate Berachoth<sup>63</sup>. העמופים *who faint -*  
*pames*, in the vernacular<sup>64</sup>.

(20) עוללי טפוחים *children they have cared for*. Young children who are still  
growing up with their mothers' nourishing. Our Sages expounded on Doeg, son  
of Joseph, whose mother would measure him with handsbreadths every day in  
order to give gold to the Temple according to how much he grew, and in the end  
she devoured him<sup>65</sup>. אם יהרג במקדש ה...כהן ונביא *Will priest and prophet be*  
*slain in the Sanctuary of HaShem?* The Holy Spirit answers them, *Now, was it*  
*fitting on your account that you killed Zechariah, son of Jehoiada?* like it is written in  
[II] Chronicles [24:22] that he reproved them when they came to prostrate  
themselves before Joash, and deified him. ורוח לבשה את זכריה בן יהוידע

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<sup>60</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:17.21.

<sup>61</sup> *Tresalemant*, *respit/let up*.

<sup>62</sup> In Medieval French, *prunelle* is *pupil*.

<sup>63</sup> See *b. Ber.* 3.2.

<sup>64</sup> In Medieval French, Rashi's ] אשפומי" becomes *pames*, *faint/swooning*.

<sup>65</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:20.23; *Midrash Zuta*; *b. Yoma* 38b.

(ibid. verse 20; *And the spirit [of God] covered Zechariah, son of Jehoiada*), and he was a priest and a prophet, and they slew him in the Temple court<sup>66</sup>.

(22) *תקראתה* *You have summoned as on a feast day*, *תקראתה* is like *קראתה*, and it is present tense. *מגורי* *terrors*, my evil neighbours to gather together around me in order to destroy. *אלה אשר טפחתי ורבייתי אויבי כלם* *those I cared for and reared, my enemy has destroyed*. The children whom I nourished and raised, the enemy came and destroyed them.

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### three

(1) *אני הנבר ראה עני* *I am the man who has seen affliction*. Jeremiah complained, saying, *I am the man who has seen affliction*, who has seen affliction more than all the prophets who prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, for the Temple was not destroyed in their days, but in my days. *בשבט עברתו* *by the rod of his wrath*; of the one who chastises and smites, that is, the Holy One, blessed be He.

(3) *אך בי ישוב* *indeed, he has turned [his hand] against me*, I alone am stricken constantly, because the whole repetition of his blows is upon me.

(4) *בלה בשרי* *He has made my flesh waste away*, *בלה* is like *עץ לבול* (Isa 44:19; [shall I bow down] to a block of wood?). Another explanation of *He has made my flesh and skin waste away* is: *והארץ כבגד תבלה* (Isa 51:6; *the earth will wear out like a*

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<sup>66</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 2:20.23 and 1:16.51.

garment). That is to say, both young and old lay on the ground outside with neither cushion nor pillow, and their flesh wore out when they were going into exile.

- (5) ויקף *and surrounded* - he encompassed *me*. ראש ותלאה *gall and hardship*, similarly ראש ולעני (Deut 29:17; *gall and wormwood*). Midrash Aggadah<sup>67</sup> says this ראש is Nebuchadnezzar during the exile of Jehoiachim. תלאה is Nebuzaradan, who completed the defeat in the days of Zedekiah, and he wearied me.
- (7) גדר בעדי *He has walled me in*. He has made a wall opposite me so that I am imprisoned. ולא אצא *that I cannot get out*. He stationed around me camps and troops lying in ambush. הכביד נחשתי *he has made my chains heavy*. He has made heavy fetters for my feet so that I would be unable to walk; *f(i)eryes*, in the vernacular<sup>68</sup>.
- (8) שתם תפלתי *he shuts out my prayer*. He shut (סתם) the windows of heaven against it.
- (9) נתיבותי עוה *he has made my paths crooked*. If I happen to go forth, I do not go forth on paved roads in a straight way, because of the enemies, but I go forth on a crooked way<sup>69</sup>.
- (10) לוי הוא לי *To me he is a bear lying in wait*. The Holy One, blessed be He, turned into a bear lying in wait for me<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 3:5.2.

<sup>68</sup> This translates as *chains* in Medieval French.

<sup>69</sup> ie. indirectly/circuitously.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 3:10.4 where the bear is Nebuchadnezzar or Vespasian, and the lion is Nebuzaradan or Trajan.

- (11) *He scattered thorns on my ways.* סוֹרֵר is an expression of סִירִים, *thorns* (קוצים). סוֹרֵר means *he thorned* them; he scatters thorns on my ways. ויִפְשַׁחְנִי *He has torn me to pieces* - an expression of tearing the feet to pieces. The one who walks on the roads which are not cleared must stride out, and there is an example in the language of the Gemara: האִי מֵאֵן דִּפְשַׁח דִּיקְלָא (He that strips a date palm [cuts shoots off])<sup>71</sup>.
- (12) *he set me up as a target.* He set me up opposite his arrows to shoot at me like a target, *asenayl*, in the vernacular<sup>72</sup>.
- (13) *sons of his quiver* - arrows which are placed within the quiver, which is called *cuyvre*<sup>73</sup>.
- (16) *He made [my teeth] grind,* and he broke, for example: גֵּרְסָה נִפְשִׁי (Ps 119:20; *My soul is crushed*), and also גֵּרַשׁ כֶּרְמֶל (Lev 2:14; *ground new grain*). בַּחֲצִיץ *on gravel*, fine pebbles which were in the midst of the dust, because the exiles would knead their dough in the midst of the pits that they dug in the ground, and the gravel would enter it, just as the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Ezekiel עֲשֵׂה לְךָ כְּלֵי גֹלָה (Ezek 12:3; *Make for yourself implements of exile*) in which to drink, and to knead inside a small griddlecake, so that they should learn and do likewise, as it is stated וְהִי יַחֲזִיקָאֵל לְכֶם לְמוֹפֵת (ibid. 24:24; *Ezekiel will be a sign for you*). But they scorned him, and they did not do so; in the end their teeth were broken<sup>74</sup>. הִכְפִּישָׁנִי *he has pressed me down [in the dust]*, he turned me over in

<sup>71</sup> See *Mo'ed Qat.* 10b.

<sup>72</sup> Medieval French for *target*.

<sup>73</sup> In Medieval French this is a *quiver*.

<sup>74</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 1:2.22.

the ashes like a vessel turned over on its rim; *adenter*, in the vernacular<sup>75</sup>. There is a similar [word] in the *Mishnah*: כמדה הכפושה מדר (Pishon the camel-driver measured with an inverted measure)<sup>76</sup>.

(18) ואומר אבד נצחתי *So I said, 'Gone is my splendour...'* I said to myself, during my many troubles, *My world and my hope are gone.*

(19) ומרודי *and my misery, compleynt*, in the vernacular<sup>77</sup>.

(20) ותשוח עלי *Remembers well* my soul, my affliction and my misery, *and is bowed down within me.* This is the plain meaning according to the context of the verse. The *Midrash Aggadah* explains: I know that, in the end, you will surely remember what was done to me, but my soul is bowed down within me, waiting until the time of remembrance. Hence, the poet composed: *With this I know that you have to remember, but my soul is bowed down within me until you remember*<sup>78</sup>.

(21) זאת אשיב אל לבי *This I reply to my heart.* After my heart said to me that my hope from HaShem was gone, I will reply this to my heart, and I will continue to hope. Now, what is it that I will reply to my heart?

(22) לא תמנו חסדי ה' כי לא תמנו *The loving-kindnesses of HaShem never cease*, and the whole section as far as *מה יתאוונן וגו' Why should complain etc.* כי לא תמנו is like *האם תמנו כי לא תמנו indeed, they never fail.* Some explain *כי לא תמנו* as *האם תמנו* (Num 17:28; *Are we then given over to die?*). It is because of the loving-

<sup>75</sup> The Old French means *to throw flat on ones face*.

<sup>76</sup> *מדר בכפישוה* ie. he dealt unfairly. See *b.Yev. 107b*; cf. *y.Yev. 13.13c*.

<sup>77</sup> *Wailing*, in Old French.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Kara commentary where he quotes Rabbi Eleazar.

kindnesses of HaShem that we have not ended, that we have not perished because of our iniquities.

(23) *They are new every morning* - your kindnesses are renewed every day. *גדולה אמונתך* *great is your faithfulness*. Great is your assurance, and it is a great thing to believe in you that you will affirm and keep what you have promised us.

(24) *'HaShem is my portion', says my soul*. HaShem is my portion, and it is only correct that I hope in Him.

(26) *It is good that one should wait quietly*. The *vav* of *ויחיל* is superfluous, like the *vav* of *ואיה וענה* (Gen 36:24; *Ayyah and Anah*). It is good that a man waits, remains silent, and hopes for the salvation of HaSHem.

(28) *Let him sit alone*, whoever was befallen by mourning and trouble should sit solitary, and hope for the best. *וידום* - *and wait* - *וידום* is an expression of waiting, like *יאמרו אלינו דומו* (I Sam 14:9; *If they say to us, thus, 'Wait...'*) about Jonathan. *כי נטל עליו* *for he has laid [it] upon him*, for the Lord of decrees has laid this decree upon him.

(31) *For the Lord will not cast [him] off forever*, therefore it is good to wait.

(32) *Though he brings grief*. If a man brings grief upon himself because of his iniquity, afterwards, he (the Lord) will thus have compassion according to the abundance of his loving-kindnesses. *הוונה* and *יגה* are expressions of *הוונה* *grief*.

(33) **לא ענה מלבו ויגה בני איש** *For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the sons of man*, from his heart and from his will, but the iniquity causes [it].

(34) **לדכא תחת רגליו** *To crush beneath his feet*. Returning to, *for he does not willingly bring affliction to crush beneath his feet etc. nor to pervert a man's dispute*. All these things HaShem does not approve of; he did not approve of them, and it did not enter his mind to do so.

(36) **לא ראה** [*the Lord*] *does not approve*. It was not pronounced fit in his eyes<sup>79</sup> that the celestial court should pervert a person's dispute, like **מה ראית כי עשית** (Gen 20:10; *What did you see that you did etc.*)

(37) **מי זה אמר ותהי וגו'** *Who can speak and it come to pass etc.*

(38) **מפי עליון וגו'** *From the mouth of the Most High etc.* If you happen to say that this evil did not come upon me from his hand, that it is chance that it has befallen me, this is not so. For between evil and good, who has spoken this and it come to pass, if HaShem did not command it? From his mouth did he not command both evil and good? But why should a living man complain, **גבר על חטאיו** *a man for his sins*? Every man should complain about his sins, because they bring evil upon him. *From the mouth of the Most High do not [both evil and good] come? Rabbi Jonathan said: From the day that the Holy One, blessed be He, said, לפניך ראה נתתי לך* (Deut 30:15; *See, I have placed before you today life and prosperity etc*) *neither evil nor good has come forth from his mouth, but evil has*

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<sup>79</sup> Like Kara after him, Rashi explains **ראה** as *approve*.

*happened by itself to the one who does evil, and good to the one who does good*<sup>80</sup>.

Therefore, why should he complain, why should a man complain, if not about his sins.

(41) **נשא לבבנו אל כפים** *Let us lift up our hearts to our hands*. When we lift up our hands to heaven, let us also lift up also our hearts with them, in order to return, to bring back our hearts before the Omnipresent, blessed be He. Another explanation of **אל כפים** is to the clouds, to heaven, just as Scripture states, **והנה עולה עב קמנה ככף איש עולה** (I Kgs 18:44; *Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand rising*). Similarly, **על כפים כסה אור** (Job 36:32; *He conceals the lightning with hands*). And [according to] the *Midrash* of our Rabbis: let us lift up our hearts in truth to the Holy One, blessed be He, like one who washes his hands thoroughly, who casts from his hands all impurity, for the one who confesses [his sins] and abandons [them] will find mercy. But the one who confesses [his sins] and does not abandon [them] is like one who immerses himself holding a worm in his hand<sup>81</sup>.

(42) **נחנו פשענו ומרינו** *We have sinned and rebelled*. This is our way, because of an evil inclination. **לא סלחה לך אתה** *you have not forgiven*, but for you, forgiveness is fitting, for so is your way.

(43) **סבותה באף** *You have enveloped yourself in anger*, you have used anger to divide you and us, and you have pursued us with it.

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<sup>80</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 3:39.9. However, while Rashi quotes Rabbi Jonathan, the midrash refers to Rabbi Eleazar.

<sup>81</sup> **טובל שרץ בידו** - *a religious hypocrite*. The reference is to *b. Ta'an* 16a; see also *Lam. Rab.* 3:41.9. Cf. Kara commentary.

(45) כִּיחַו *scum and refuse*. That is נִיעַ in the language of the *Mishnah*<sup>82</sup>. וּמֵאוּם וּנִיעוּ *his phlegm and mucus*, that is brought up from the lungs and emitted from the throat. תְּשִׁימֵנוּ *you make us* - an expression in the present tense.

(47) פַּחַד וּפְחַת *terror and pitfalls*. When we fled because of the terror, we were entrapped [in] a pit (שׁוֹחָה). הַשָּׂאת *desolation* - an expression of שְׂאִיָּה *desolation, ruin* (like הַשָּׂאת<sup>83</sup>).

(49) מֵאֵין הַפְּגוּת *without respite*, without change, or running out.

(51) עֵינַי עוֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מִכָּל בָּנוֹת עִירִי *My eyes bring grief to my soul over all the daughters of my city*. Jeremiah was from a family of priests, and he said, "My eye, with its tears, brings grief, and disgraces my face because of myself, over all the daughters of my city. עוֹלְלָה *brings grief* - an expression of נוֹרַל *to be disfigured, disgraced*, like קִרְנִי בַעֲפָר (Job 15:16; *I have disfigured my countenance with dust*). מִכָּל בָּנוֹת עִירִי *over all the daughters of my city*. My family has more to cry for than all the families of the city because it was chosen for holiness, and the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, out of all of Israel.

(53) צִמְתּוֹ בְּבוֹר חַיִּי *They confined my life in the pit* - in prison. צִמְתּוֹ *they confined* - they bound, like the contracting of the veins<sup>84</sup>: מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתֶּךָ (Song 4:1; *from behind your veil*), *estreytre*<sup>85</sup>. וִידּוֹ אֶבֶן בִּי *they threw a stone over me*, over the mouth of the pit. That is what they did to Daniel, and Jeremiah saw it by the

<sup>82</sup> See *b. B. Qam.* 3b.

<sup>83</sup> These two words are in brackets as they are regarded as an error in *Sifthei Hachamim*. See Rosenberg, *Lamentations*, 44.

<sup>84</sup> See *b. Hul.* 93b - לִיחַ - מִצְמַת צִמְתֵּי לִיחַ *they have the effect of condensing the surface of the flesh* (binding the blood in the veins). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1290.

<sup>85</sup> Old French for *restriction/tightening*.

Holy Spirit. **צמחו בבור חיי** *They confined my life in the pit*, and although *they confined my life in the pit*, so that I am unable to ascend from within it, they did not even pay attention to this until *they threw a stone over me*.

(54) **צפו מים וגו'** *Water flowed etc.* When a man enters water as far as his waist, there is still hope. But if the water flows over his head, then he says, *My hope is gone*. But I do not do this, but **קראתי וגו'** *I called etc.*<sup>86</sup>. **צפו מים** - the heathen.

(57) **קרבתי ביום אקראך** *You came near when I called on you*. Thus you were accustomed, in the early days, to come near to me on the day I called.

(58) **רבת ה' ריבני נפשי** *You championed my cause, HaShem, [you redeemed] my life* in days past.

(59) **ראיתיה ה' עותתי** *You have seen wrong done to me, Hashem*, in this trouble, that my enemies have sinned against me. **שפמה משפמי** *judge my cause* as you have already done.

(65) **אמגנד ישראל** *a weakness of heart*. A broken heart, as Scripture says, **אשר מגן צריך בידך** (Gen 14:20; *who broke your foes in your hand*). Another explanation of **מגנת לב** is the shutting up of the heart, trouble and sighing, which are like a shield against their heart<sup>87</sup>. But whoever explains it as an expression of **הגונה ויגון** *grief*, is in error, because there is no *nun* in it. The *nun* in **יגון** is not a radical, but is like the *nun* of **המון** from the root of **המו גוים**; and like the *nun* of **קלון** from the root **נקלה**; and like the *nun* of

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<sup>86</sup> Verse 55.

<sup>87</sup> Cf *Lam. Rab.* 3:65.9 where there are also two explanations; a quotation in Deut. 33:29 is used to justify the hardness of heart which 'the shield' refers to.

ן from the root ציה; and thus the nun of שברון from the root שבר (and like the nun of שממון שגועון. It appears to me that this is the correct reading, and this is easy to understand). נואלו שרי צוען תאלתך *your curse* – an expression of צוען (Isa 19:13; *the officers of Zoan have become foolish*)<sup>88</sup>.

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four

(1) *איכה יועם זהב* *How the gold has become dim!* This lament was recited about Josiah, as it is stated in the Book of Chronicles, *Is it not written in the Book of Lamentations...*<sup>89</sup>, and with it he joined, in the middle of the lament, with the remainder of the children of Zion. יועם *has become dim, dim/dull* (כהה), just as the Targum<sup>90</sup> translates כהה by עמ"א (*has become dim, tarnished*). זהב *gold*, the appearance of a face shining like gold. ישנא *is changed*, changes its appearance. הכתם *fine gold*. A collection of beautiful gold articles, which are used for ornament, is called כתם. אבני קדש *sacred stones* are children who shine like precious stones. The *Midrash Aggadah*<sup>91</sup> says: Every fourth part [of a log] of blood which came forth from Josiah, with every arrow that they thrust into him,

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<sup>88</sup> The *Targum* identifies Zoan as the Egyptian city of Memphis. Rashi explains נואלו תאלתך using נואלו *they became foolish*. However, *Lam. Rab.*, *Lekach Tov*, ibn Ezra, Redak, and Isaiah da Trani use the root אלה *curse*. LXX and the *Targum* translate תלאתך *your weariness* since there is an apparent metathesis of א and ל. See Levine, *Aramaic*, 161.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. II Chron. 35:25, where the verse reads, "...they are recorded in the laments".

<sup>90</sup> See *Targum* at Lam 4:1.

<sup>91</sup> See *Lam. Rab.* 4:1.1.

Jeremiah buried in its place, and he called out concerning it, *The sacred stones are scattered.*

(2) המסלאים בפז *who are comparable to fine gold* - who were praised and compared with fine gold. Whoever saw them said, *See, their appearance is like a vision of fine gold.* Thus, לא תסולה בכתם אופיר (Job 28:16; *It cannot be compared to the gold of Ophir*); בכתם טהור לא תסילה (ibid. verse 19; *the purest gold cannot be compared to it*); סולו לרוכב בערבות (Ps 68:5; *extol the one who rides in Aravoth*). These are expressions of praise and value<sup>92</sup>. לנבלי חרש *like earthen jugs, clay pitchers in which they place wine, like wine flasks.* ונבליהם ינפצו (Jer 48:12; *and they will smash their pitchers*).

(3) גם תנין *Even the sea-monsters.* Although it is cruel, it pulls out the breast. When it sees its offspring coming from afar, hungry, it pulls out its breast from within its sheath, for it has a covering over its breasts, and it brings them out from inside its breast so that its offspring should not see it covered and retreat. And they suckle their young<sup>93</sup>. בת עמי לאכזר *the daughter of my people has become cruel.* They see their children sobbing for bread, but no one breaks it for them, because their lives come before the lives of their children, because of the heat of (the) hunger.

(5) האמונים עלי תולע *those who were brought up in scarlet* - in coloured garments.

האמונים *they embrace.* An expression like ויהי אומן את הדסה (Esther 2:7; *and he*

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 4:2.2-4, which is concerned with *their precious character.*

<sup>93</sup> Following *Tanh. Behuqqotai* 3 as stated by Rosenberg, *Lamentations*, 50.

brought up Hadassah). אשפתות *dunghills*, heaps of dung; they lie outside on dunghills.

(6) ויגדל עון וגו' *The iniquity of [my people] is greater etc.* Their divine punishment proves about them that their iniquity is greater than that of Sodom. ההפוכה כמו רגע *which was overturned in a moment.* The anguish of Sodom was not prolonged, but it was overturned as in one moment. ולא חלו בה ידיים *but no hands fell upon her* - [that is] the hands of the enemy, but it was overturned by angels. There are *Aggadic Midrashim*, but they do not consider the sequence of the verses<sup>94</sup>.

(7) זכר נזיריה *Her Nazirites were purer* - her princes, like נזר, and כתר, *a crown.* But I say [it means] her real Nazirites, who had long hair, and were most handsome, and *the daughter of my people* is meant. אדמו עצם מפנינים *their appearance was ruddier than coral.* Those who appeared redder than coral, and their forms were like lapis lazuli. Their appearance became darker than soot.

(8) משחור *than soot.* This is soot (פחם). עצם *bone.* This is an expression of appearance, just as ובעצם השמים לטוהר (Ex 24:10; *like the appearance of heaven in purity*); couleur, in the vernacular<sup>95</sup>. צפר *has shrivelled*, shrivelled and joined, and there is no similar word for it<sup>96</sup>.

(9) יזבו מדוקרים וגו' *for they ooze, pierced etc.* The victims of hunger were distended from the smell of the fruits of the field, for the enemies were roasting

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 4:6.9 with *Gen. Rab.* 28:5 where the question, *Why, then, was a remnant of Judah and Benjamin spared and not of Sodom*, is inserted, if the former sinned more grievously?

<sup>95</sup> Old French for *colour/complexion*.

<sup>96</sup> This hapax legomenon is variously translated, but the consensus is *to adhere to*. See *Targum*, which translates אדק *to stick to*, and *ibn Ezra*, *Lekach Tov et al* who are in agreement.

flesh upon the grass outside of the walls. The smell would enter into those who were distended with hunger, and their stomachs would split, and their excrement flowed<sup>97</sup>. Now this is a more disgraceful death than those who were slain by the sword. מדוקרִים *pierced*. Being split, either by distending through hunger, or by being pierced by the sword, is called דקירה *piercing*. מתנובות שדי *the fruits of the field*. Because of the roots and the grasses that they gathered and ate, their excrement increased, and was revolting.

(10) לברות *for food*. For food, like ולא ברה אתם לחם (II Sam 12:17; *and he did not eat food with them*); להברות את דוד (ibid. 3:35; *to serve David [bread]*).

(11) את חמתו ה' את חמתו *HaShem has vented his fury* which consumed for several years. Now he vented it when he was avenged on them.

(13) מחטאת נביאיה *[It was] for the sins of her prophets* of falsehood, this evil has befallen her.

(14) נעו עורים בחוצות *The blind wander in the streets*. When the blind were walking in the street, they staggered, and their feet slipped in the blood of the slain, whom the wicked were slaying in their midst. נגאלו בדם *defiled with blood*. They were soiled with blood, so that those near them were unable to touch their clothes, but they called to them. סורו *Depart!* from us, you unclean ones, who are soiled with blood. כי נצו *for they flee*. An expression of guilt and filthiness, just like מוראתו בנוצתה (Lev 1:16; *its crop with its feathers*), which is

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<sup>97</sup> Cf Lam. Rab. 4:9.12.

translated by the *Targum* as באוכליה *in its entrails*. So Menahem associated it<sup>98</sup>.

גם נעו *and even wander* – they slipped in the blood.

(16) חלקם פני הַחלקם *The anger of HaShem divided them*. The angry face of the Holy One, blessed be He, divided them, and separated them among the heathens, because they did not respect the presence of the priests when they were in tranquility.

(17) עודינו תכלינה עינינו אל עזרתנו הבל *Our eyes still longed for our futile help*.

When evil fell upon us, our eyes still looked forward to the army of Pharaoh, about whom it is said, ומצרים הבל וריק יעזורו (Isa 30:7; *But Egypt helps in vain and to no purpose*). They promised us help, but they did not come, as it is said of them, הנה חיל פרעה היוצא לכם לעזרה שב לארצו מצרימה (Jer 37:7; *Behold, the army of Pharaoh that has come out to assist you, is returning to its land, Egypt*). We find in *Midrash of Lamentations*, that they were coming in ships. The Holy One, blessed be He, made a sign to the sea and floated before them inflated skin bottles like the intestines of a man, moving about in the water. They said to one another, *These flasks are our forefathers, the men of Egypt who were drowned in the sea because of these Jews, and we are going to help them?* And they stopped and turned back<sup>99</sup>.  
צפינו *we watched*, we waited.

(18) צרו צעדינו *They dogged our steps*. Our enemies ambushed our steps, [and prevented us] from walking in our streets, like ואשר לא צדה (Ex 21:13; *but if he did not lie in wait*); ואתה צודה את נפשי (I Sam 24:12; *yet you hunt my soul*).

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<sup>98</sup> I cannot locate this reference.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 4:17.20.

- (20) ויקונן *HaShem's anointed*. That is Josiah, as it says in Chronicles, בשחיתותם בשרמיהו על יאשיהו (II Chron 31:25; and Jeremiah lamented over Josiah). *was caught in their pits*, in the pits which they dug.
- (21) Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom. Jeremiah prophesied about the destruction of the Second Temple, which the Romans would destroy. Rejoice and be glad, for the present. But, your end, which is also upon you, will pass the cup of retribution, and you will become drunk from it. ותתערי and vomit. And vomit, כלה כל (Gen 24:20; and she emptied her pitcher).
- (22) Your punishment is completed, O daughter of Zion. You were stricken on account of all yours sins. לא יוסיף להגלותך He will no longer send you into exile, from the exile of Edom, and further afterwards.

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five

- (4) We pay money to drink our own water, for we were afraid to draw water from the river because of the enemies, so we bought from them with money.
- (5) Upon our necks we are pursued, because of the yoke of hard labour. ולא הונח לנו but we toil, to gather money and possessions. nothing is left for us – the fruit of our labour in our hands, because the enemies

would collect and seize everything in taxes, imposing additional duty, and property tax.

(6) **מצרים נתנו יד** *We stretched out a hand to Egypt*. The custom of a falling man who wishes to stand up, is to extend his hand to someone who is near him, to help him. In this case too, we stretched out a hand to Egypt that they would help us. **ולאשור** *and to Assyria*, that they satisfy us with their bread. **נתנו** *We stretched out*. Like **נתננו**, the *dagesh* in the *nun* is used in place of the second *nun*, and so **כי ממך הכל ומידך נתנו לך** (I Chron 29:14; *For everything is from you, and from your hand we have given to you*); and so **ונתנו את בנותינו לכם** (Gen 34:16; *Then we will give our daughters to you*).

(9) **בנפשנו נביא לחמנו** *With our lives we bring our bread* - in danger of our life. We were endangered when we brought our food from the field, because of the sword of the wilderness.

(10) **נכמרו** [*Our skin*] *is scorched*. They became hot, and so **כי נכמרו רחמיו** (Gen 43:30; *for his compassion had been stirred*), and in the language of Gemara there are many instances of [this word]: **הכומר של ענבים** (Yev. 97a; *a heating vessel of olives*); **מכמר בשרא** (Pes. 58a; *for the heating of the flesh*): **heat of hunger**. Similarly, **ורוח זלעפות** (Ps 11:6; *and a burning wind*) is an expression of burning/fire.

(13) **טחון נשאו** [*Young men*] *carry the millstone*. When the enemies led them in neck-chains, they placed millstones and burdens upon their shoulders, in order to weary them. So, they stumbled with [loads of] wood - their strength weakened.

An expression of failing occurs with the weakening of strength, as it is said in Ezra, *כח הסבל כשל יהודה כש'ל* (Neh 4:4; *Then Judah said, 'The strength of the bearer has failed'*). Similarly, *כחי הכשיל* (Lam 1:14; *He has caused my strength to fail*).

(17) *על זה היה דוה לבנו וגו'* *For this our heart has become faint etc.*, on account of the explanation in the following verse: *על הר ציון ששם אועשועלים הלכו בו* *for Mount Zion, which lies desolate; foxes prowl over it.*

(19) *אתה ה' [Yet] you, HaShem* - we know that you will remain forever. Since this is so...

(20) *למה לנצח תשכחנו* *Why do you always forget us*; have you not sworn to us yourself, in as much as you exist, so your oath exists?

(22) *כי אם מאוס מאסתנו* *For if you had utterly rejected us* because we had sinned, you should not have been so very angry, as you were angry.

(23) *השיבנו ה'* *Restore us, HaShem*. Since he concludes with words of rebuke, he was obliged to repeat the previous verse for a second time, and so it is in Isaiah, the Twelve Prophets, and Qoheleth.

The end of the scroll of Lamentations.

## Commentaries of Yosef Kara on the Book of Lamentations

### introduction to Yosef Kara

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Yosef Kara was born in northern France c.1050, and died c.1140. He appears to have lived mainly in Troyes, France, spent some time in Worms, Germany. He played a significant part in the development of *peshat* exegesis, following on from the work begun by his uncle, R. Menachem b. Helbo. Kara was a pupil of Rashi, and quoted him in many places in his own commentaries, although he did not always agree with him<sup>1</sup>. He also widely quotes Menachem b. Helbo, with whom he studied extensively. Unfortunately, R. Menachem b. Helbo's own commentaries are only extant within the works of others, from which they have, in part, been reconstructed. However, while Menachem b. Helbo, and Rashi after him, still made great use of *derash* interpretations in their commentaries, Kara went further both in developing this new method of exegesis, and eventually, in opposing those who decried it. Although it was Rashbam who took the *peshat* method to its extreme, he mentions Kara in his commentary on *Bereshit* at 37:13, *This I heard from R. Yosef Kara our comrade, and it seems fitting to me*<sup>2</sup>.

While there are various references within Kara's works regarding opposition to his interpretations, it is interesting to note that he was also very active in his discussions

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<sup>1</sup> See Kara's commentary on I Kgs 7:33.

<sup>2</sup> See Buber, Commentary, introduction, 1.

with Christians, indicating a great confidence in his own interpretations of Scripture. However, unlike Rashbam and Joseph Bekhor Shor, Kara's polemical arguments are more covert, although where they are explicit they have been removed from the commentary. This is illustrated by the omission of text in the printed edition of his commentary on Isa 33:13-14, but is to be found in MS Vienna 23<sup>3</sup>. Not only an expert in Bible interpretation, Kara was also a great commentator on the *piyyutim*, or liturgical poetry, and Midrash. Although he probably wrote commentaries on all of the biblical books, not all of which are extant, his commentaries on the *piyyutim* contain many interpretations received from other commentators in northern France, Germany and Rome, including Kalonymus bar Shabbetai. In his commentary on Lamentations he mentions the *paytan* R. Kallir, probably Eleazar, whose poetry was recited in synagogues and widely studied, but which was only of influence in those countries not affected by Arab rule. Consequently, Kallir is not regarded with affection by Ibn Ezra, who prefers to extol the work of Saadia. However, Kallir clearly influences Kara's work, who is widely quoted himself in this area. In the work translated here we also see reference to Solomon the Babylonian, that is the tenth century poet Solomon b. Judah the Babylonian of Rome.

A number of commentaries have recently surfaced in Italian archives indicating that Kara wrote on the Pentateuch and Psalms, although it cannot be said with complete certainty that they are his commentaries. However, the style and literary features,

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<sup>3</sup> This is discussed by Avraham Grossman in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, edited by Magne Sæbo, Part 2, p354.

such as the use of פתרון, or *its explanation*, indicate that the work is since the term is rarely used by other scholars.

One of the problems that arises from the editions of Kara's commentaries, amply illustrated by the two commentaries on Lamentations translated below, is that additions and omissions have been made to his texts. This means that some of his originality of thought has been lost, and the quality of his work diminished, to the point where he does not receive the interest that his ideas deserve.

Although there are a number of extant manuscripts of Kara's commentaries on Lamentations, the two translated here are those found in Buber's 1899 edition of 104I and Munich 5. Unfortunately, 104I is presumed to be no longer extant as it went missing after its removal from the rabbinic library in Breslau, while being transported on a Nazi train. Fortunately, Buber's edition is scholarly, and this publication means that both manuscripts can be studied together in edition form. Buber has also provided extensive commentaries on the manuscripts together with a long introduction explaining where Kara's commentaries are to be found in other publications, with and without author identification. While this information is deeply fascinating, it has not been included in this translation as we are only concerned, in this instance, with what Kara had to say on Lamentations. Consequently, all of Buber's cross-referenced footnotes have also been removed, along with secondary additions, so that the text we have before us is as close to the

manuscript before Buber as we can get, but with the benefit of his scholarly expertise.

Kara writes with his own particular style<sup>4</sup> with much use of the expressions לשעבר/עכשו. This is particularly noticeable in 104I, and although much of 104I is found in the body of Munich 5, this characteristic is not so obvious in the longer commentary. Also, his commentaries display an extensive use of transliterated Medieval French. Unfortunately, the word lists composed to help in the translation of Rashi texts is of limited use, as the dialects are not the same. Although an attempt has been made to create a system for Kara's French quotations, notably by Moshe Ahrend<sup>5</sup>, it appears to be based on a system of Medieval central French, and therefore is not particularly helpful. However, when the text was studied with an expert in Medieval French<sup>6</sup>, it immediately became apparent that Kara was writing transliterated Medieval French in a northern French dialect.

Of itself, recognising the dialectal nature of Kara's French does not immediately enable us to read his French. Reading normally involves recognising words from a language written in its usual script; this script will have its own conventions, which readers will know. In the case of Old French written in Hebrew script, the Old French language has been couched in a script which is not normally used by speakers of Old French, and whose conventions in a French context are today unknown.

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<sup>4</sup> See Drori, "Exegetical Method", 83-166.

<sup>5</sup> See Ahrend, M. M. *Le Commentaire sur Job de Rabbi Yoseph Qara*. Gerstenberg Verlag, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Thanks here to Dr Clive Sneddon of the French Department, University of St Andrews.

Consequently, any attempt to recognise Old French words in Hebrew script has to begin with a certain number of assumptions:

1. both the writer and the writer's envisaged audience would have used Old French as their vernacular language;
2. they found vernacular glosses in a commentary helpful for their own understanding of a Hebrew text;
3. in adapting Hebrew characters to Old French, the writer would respect his own pronunciation norms for both Hebrew and Old French;
4. Old French would reflect the variety of Old French that the writer used every day, e.g. central if in the Paris area, eastern in Reims, or northern in Arras.

It is of course possible that conducting business with non-Jewish neighbours would involve seeing documents in Old French in Roman script, but this will not help determine what conventions writers follow in using Hebrew script.

A procedure for reading Old French in Hebrew script would involve the following steps:

1. establish pronunciation(s) for each Hebrew character;
2. write them in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA);

3. verify whether or not any of the Hebrew consonantal characters have a characteristic choice of vowels in the context in which they occur;
4. identify vowel use from any pointing;
5. on the basis of knowing where the author came from, write down possible Old French spelling for each pronunciation;
6. write parallel IPA and Old French spelling versions of the Hebrew text. At this point it will become apparent if any Old French words can be recognised. If words are recognised they *may* allow sense to be made of surrounding words. If not, which is usual, think of possible homophone words, of which there are many in Old French;
7. when all progress that can be made has been achieved, look at any variants. This, in practice, is often decisive because it confirms what meanings scribes saw in the text;
8. look at the Hebrew context to confirm that the proposed reading makes sense, paying particular attention to the syntax of the Hebrew and any metaphorical uses in the Hebrew which may be reflected in the Old French.

This procedure does not guarantee a successful outcome. Where the result does not make sense in Old French, it is possible that the text is corrupt. If the context suggests a minor correction, this can be made, but if no further evidence is available it would be prudent not to risk further correction.

Applying this procedure to Kara began by looking at the longer sentences, as it was felt that that would provide most information. This has been constructive and two sentences have been identified (3:1 and 4:17). The investigation was not confined to the commentaries 104I and Munich 5. By examining the various spellings found in the alternative editions of Metz, Hamburg, and the Gad edition of Munich 5, it was possible to reconstruct some of the French. A third sentence (3:19) lacked the support of variant spellings from other manuscripts, but can be identified as definitely French; it seems to be relevant to the context of the verse, and may have chiasmic patterning. The translation produced by this work appears in the text, but the task is ongoing.

However, the final word must go to Buber, who says of Kara: *His language is simple and understandable to everyone too, because he did not leave places in his commentaries without clarifying everything as necessary. Therefore, he has reinforced and affirmed his commentaries even for today, despite the many years that have passed, and the different outlook of the ages since the commentaries on the texts were written*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Buber, *Commentary*, 8.

(1) *איכה ישבה בדד העיר רבתי עם* *How she sits in solitude, the city once full of people.* The city that was formerly *עם רבתי full of people.* Its explanation is *מלאה עם*, just like the explanation of *מלאתי משפט* (Isa 1:21; *full of justice*) is *מלאה עם משפט*. So, the explanation of *עם רבתי עם* is *רבח עם*, and similarly, the explanation of *שרתי במדינות* *a princess among the provinces* is *שרת במדינות*<sup>8</sup>.

(2) *בבכו תבכה בלילה ודמעתה על לחייה אין לה מנחם מכל אוהביה* *Bitterly she weeps in the night, and her tears are on her cheek; she has no comforter among all her lovers.* Her weeping is like someone who weeps in the night whose neighbours do not see him and comfort him. For this is the one who weeps during the day - all who know him come, and comfort him, and soothe his tears so that they do not run down his cheeks. <sup>10</sup>(It is they who are the ones who soothe him), but whoever weeps in the night will continually weep until his tears are lying upon his cheeks, for no comforters are found for him. Also, in this case, the weeping of Zion, and the mourning of Jerusalem, resembles a woman who

<sup>8</sup>Kara is concerned here with spelling. The final *yod* does not affect the meaning, and like Rashi, Kara regards it as superfluous.

<sup>9</sup> This has been corrected from *בבכה* in Buber's text to *בכו* as in MT.

<sup>10</sup> Buber comments thus on *הם הם משתקין אותי*. *I have isolated [these words] because they are superfluous, and not in the print in the standard editions.*

weeps in the night (continuously weeps<sup>11</sup>), and from the abundance of her weeping come her tears, which lie upon her cheeks. אין לה מנחם מכל אוהביה *she has no comforter among all her lovers*. Not only were there few who comforted her, but all those who were previously her friends now became her enemies: the Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans - whom she doted upon - exposed her shame, and devastated her Temple. So, too, the Egyptians, who were among her lovers, like the Scripture which says, מצרים שכניך גדלי בשר (Ezek 16:26; *You were licentious with the Egyptians, your neighbours, great of flesh*). They became her enemies, and they participated in the destruction of the Temple.

(3) *Judah has gone into exile because of suffering and great servitude. She dwelt among the nations, but found no rest.* One cannot say that Judah went into exile owing to suffering, and not from great servitude, for they were serving the kings of the earth who did not have riches like the riches of Jerusalem, since Jerusalem is called דלתות העמים (Ezek 26:2; *gateways of the peoples*), and רוכלת העמים<sup>12</sup> (ibid. 27:3; *merchant of the peoples*). But this is its explanation: from the day that Judah and Jerusalem went into exile, and dwelt among the nations, she found no rest owing to suffering and great servitude, because the kingdoms of the nations

<sup>11</sup> הלוך ילך ובכה is masculine, although the subject here is the woman who weeps in the night, and Buber comments: *I have isolated [this] as it is not in the print in the familiar editions, but was inserted in the wrong place from the previous sentence, "מי שכוכה" הלוך ילך ובכה*.

<sup>12</sup> Kara's text reads דלתות העמים ורוכלת הגוים. It has been emended here as it appears that it should read דלתות העמים - ורוכלת העמים is written in Ezek 26:2; ורוכלת העמים is written in Ezek 27:3.

were oppressing her<sup>13</sup>. השיגוה בין המצרים כל רודפיה *All her pursuers overtook her between the boundaries*. Its explanation is בין התחומים *between the borders*, when they wandered and fled to them [the borders], close to their neighbours, because of the enemy's sword. Their neighbours arrive, discover, and betray them, like the Scripture which says concerning Moab, יגורו בך נדחי (Isa 16:4; *Let my refugees live among you, O Moab; be a shelter for them*), and thus סתרי נדחים נודד אל תגלי (ibid. v3; *hide the refugees; do not reveal [the wanderers]*).

(4) כל שעריה שוממין *All her gates are desolate*. All her gates where there was a community, like Jerusalem, Nob, and Gibeon now are desolate. נוגות *[her maidens] grieve*, just like נוגי ממועד (Zeph 3:18; *those who mourn for the appointed feast*) which is similar to יגון *grief*.

(5) היו צרייה לראש *Her adversaries have become master*. Those who were hostile to her were made master. הן ארץ כשדים זה העם לא היה (Isa 23:13; *Behold, this is the land of the Chaldeans, for this nation never used to be [here]*) in order that the one who destroyed Jerusalem was made master. הוגה *[HaShem] has afflicted her*. Like ויגה בני איש (Lam 3:33; *nor afflict man*) explains that he crushed her. צר *[her enemies] are at ease*, just like שלו הייתי (Job 16:12; *I was once serene*). עולליה הלכו שבי לפני *her young children have gone into captivity before the*

<sup>13</sup>The problem with this verse usually revolves around the מ (out offrom) before עני and רוב. However, Kara prefers to reorganise the word order to give his explanation of the verse. Hence, Judah has gone into exile, not because of suffering and great servitude, but has dwelt among the nations and found no rest because of suffering and great servitude.

*enemy*. Its explanation is that her young men went into captivity before their captors.

(6) <sup>14</sup>ויצא מן בת ציון כל הדרה וילכו בלא כח לפני רודף] *Gone forth from daughter Zion is all her splendour...they walked on without strength before the pursuer*. From this one may deduce that she was overcome by the strength of the pursuers against them. <sup>15</sup>אשפתו כקבר פתוח וגוי (Jer 5:16; *their quiver is like an open grave etc.*), אשר חציו שנונים וגוי (Isa 5:28; *his arrows are sharpened etc.*), and אין עייף ואין כושל בו (ibid. v27; *none among him [the enemy] is tired or stumbles*).]

(7) *Jerusalem recalls the days of her suffering and sorrow, all the treasures that were from the days of old*. Now, Jerusalem has recalled, in *the days of her suffering and sorrow, all the treasures that were from the days of old*, because it is a person's habit that he recalls in the days of his suffering, the days of good things for it was well. Similarly, Job says, [וגוי] מי יתנני כירחי קדם (Job 29:2; *if only I could be as in the earlier months [etc]*) כאשר הייתי בימי חורפי בסוד אלוה עלי אהלי (ibid. v4; *when I was in the days of my prime; when God's mystery was above my tent*). Also, in this case, in the days of the suffering and sorrow of Jerusalem, she recalls all the treasures that there were in the days of old<sup>16</sup>. *the* ראוה צרים שחקו על משבתיה.

<sup>14</sup> Buber inserted the commentary on verse 6 because it is in the print in the standard editions, added from *Leqah Tov* by a copyist, as Kara taught nothing about it.

<sup>15</sup> Buber suggests that אשפתו כקבר פתוח in the Kara text should be read as it was said פתוח כקבר [in Jer 5:16]. Consequently, the quote has been corrected here.

<sup>16</sup> Kara explains this text by changing the word order, and supplying ב in. He then paraphrases, and adds some Scriptural parallels in support.

*enemies saw her and mocked at her destruction* – because of the destruction<sup>17</sup>, every good thing has come to an end.

(8) לנידה היתה *She has become a wanderer*. לנוד *to wander/lament*<sup>18</sup> – all her former glories she now shed. כִּי רָאוּ עֲרוּוֹתָהּ *for they have seen her nakedness*. When the nations exposed her nakedness for every deed imaginable for a woman [who is] a prostitute, they condemned her [for committing] the crime of an adulteress (Prov 2:17; *who forsakes the partner of her youth and forgets her sacred covenant*).

(9) לא זכרה אחריתה *Her impurity was on her skirts, she did not consider her end*. The prophets spoke euphemistically – her skirt is the place of her nakedness, and so its explanation is that when she was at ease, her impurity was on her skirts because she was committing fornication against her husband. כִּאֲהַבְתָּ דִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהֵם פּוֹנִים אֶל אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (Hos 3:1; *just as HaShem loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods*). לא זכרה *She did not consider* that she would be bitter at her end. ותרד פלאים *She has deteriorated extraordinarily*, just like וְהִפְלֵא דִּי אֶת מִכּוֹתֶיךָ (Deut 28:59; *then HaShem will make extraordinary*<sup>20</sup> *your blows*). ותרד פלאים – its explanation is that she has descended from her greatness, and she has descended so much that everyone who heard of her descent was astonished that she has fallen. Namely, it

<sup>17</sup>Reading משבת rather than the ששבת printed in the edition, and adding שבתה after משבת to provide a verb. This, however, is purely speculative.

<sup>18</sup>Following the *midrash*, Kara explains נידה *unclean* as נדה *wanderer*.

<sup>19</sup>כמו שנאמר באה בית ה' את יהודה והמה פונים אל אלהים אחרים. Buber found the text here in disarray, and reconstructed it to read כִּאֲהַבְתָּ דִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהֵם פּוֹנִים אֶל אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (Hosea 3:1) which has been translated above.

<sup>20</sup>That is, *severe*.

says that the Holy One, blessed be He, did something inconceivable, since she was brought down from her high rank. **כי הגדיל אויב** *For the enemy became great* - for the enemy did great things.

(10) **כי ראתה גוים באו מקדשה אשר צויתה** *Indeed, she saw nations invade her sanctuary, about whom you commanded, formerly, לא יבואו בקהל לך that they should not enter your congregation;* those who were not fit to enter even the congregation, such as Ammon, Moab, and Edom, up to the third generation entered her sanctuary. Formerly, they were not worthy to enter into the congregation of HaShem, but now, they even entered her sanctuary. For she did not intend the sons of man who were foreigners to be admitted alone<sup>21</sup> to the sanctuary; however, like princes entering the congregation they entered her sanctuary. But, even those who were not like princes entering the congregation, entered her sanctuary.

(11) **כל עמה נאנחים מבקשים לחם נתנו מחמדיהם באוכל להשיב נפש** *All her people are sighing, searching for bread. They give their treasures for food, to restore the soul.* Its explanation is that all the people who were in Zion were sighing and giving everything precious, (due to) their privation, in order to buy food from them with a view to restoring their soul, because they were very hungry. **ראה ד' והביטה כי הייתי זוללה** *See, O HaShem, and consider how worthless I have become.* Its interpretation is that, at present, she cries out and says before the Holy One, blessed be He, "See, O Holy One blessed be He", because the peoples of the world call me worthless. **זוללה** *worthless* is an

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<sup>21</sup>I am unsure what **בלבד** means in this context, so in the light of nothing better, I have translated it as *alone*.

expression of זול to be cheap/to squander; cheapness, that is to say כי הייתי זולות that I have become cheap to the sons of man.

(12) לא<sup>22</sup> אליכם כל עוברי דרך (12) *May it not befall you, all who pass by* – what has touched me in my misery. הביטו וראו אם יש מכאוב כמכאובי אשר עולל לי. *Look and see. Is there any pain like my pain, that was inflicted on me*, which my people has done? How many generations sinned from the day that they arrived in the land? During all of them Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor was our sanctuary desolate, except in our days. אשר הוגה די ביום חרון אפו [with] *which HaShem inflicted in the day of his fierce wrath*, which he שיבר crushed in the day of his fierce wrath.

(13) ממרום שלח אש בעצמותי<sup>23</sup> וירדנה (13) *From on high he sent fire into my bones, and it subdued them*. Its interpretation is that the Holy One, blessed be He, sent fire from heaven against my bones, and it subdued them. The fire dominated within my bones. The explanation of וירדנה *and subdued them* is ושלט *and it dominated*, for it is like די ירד לי בגבורים (Judg 5:13; *HaShem has given me dominion over the strong ones*). פרש רשת לרגלי *he spread a net for my feet*. These were the enemies who came upon me. השיבני אהור *he hurled me backward*. Its interpretation is that the enemies conquered me, and the Holy One, blessed be He, made me retreat.

<sup>22</sup>In Buber's edition this is printed as עליכם.

<sup>23</sup>וירדנה *gal* 3m. sing. impf (ירדה) + 3f. sing. suffix from רדה to have dominion, to rule. Compare with וירד על הכרובים ועל התמרות את הזהב (I Kgs 6:32; *and he hammered the gold onto the cherubim and the palms*).

(14) נשקד עול פשעי בידו *The yoke of my transgressions was bound up in his hand.*

The explanation of נשקד *to be bound*<sup>24</sup> should be considered like the enemy wounding/goads<sup>25</sup> [מסקד] in the same way as the statement in *Vayikra Rabbah*<sup>26</sup>. ועולתה קפצה פיה *the yoke of my transgressions* is just like (Job 5:16; *and iniquity shuts its mouth*). The explanation of נשקד עול פשעי בידו is [that he is] an onlooker who gazes upon all my transgressions, and who commands everything by his strength. ישתרגו *they were knit together*. The transgressions increased, and continued until they were made shoots that grew upon my neck, and he sapped my strength.

(15) סילה כל אבירי [The Lord] *has trampled all my warriors.* <sup>27</sup>He has trampled

by decree<sup>28</sup>, וסר מרע משחולל (Isa 59:15; *and whoever turns from evil is maltreated*), whose explanation is he was crushed<sup>29</sup>, like a highway that everyone tramples on. Also, in this case, the explanation of סלה *he trampled* is he exalted all the warriors, then destroyed them like dust in threshing. עלי מועד קרא *he has proclaimed a fixed time against me*, an assembly of troops to come against me. גת דרך די <sup>30</sup> *a winepress HaShem has trodden*. This is an idea of slaughter and trampling, just like פורה דרכתי לברי (Isa 63:3; *I alone have trodden a winepress*),

<sup>24</sup>Rather than using the niph'al of שקד *to be bound/harnessed*, Kara appears to prefer the passive of סקד *to be cut/slain*. Cf. Kara commentary compiled by Joseph Gad.

<sup>25</sup> Compare Rashi on this verse where מסקד is translated *oxgoad*.

<sup>26</sup>This has been emended from *Bereshit Rabbah* to *Vayikra Rabbah* following Buber, who states that the sentence is secondary, and is missing from the Hamburg manuscript.

<sup>27</sup>סילה מגזרה וסר מרע משחולל, and so it is found in the Hamburg manuscript, but it is absent in the print in the familiar editions. Before us is משחולל, with *shin*, written in the biblical text, but it was seen that before the author were written מסחולל, or משחולל with *sin*.

<sup>28</sup>Reading מגזרה rather than מגזרת.

<sup>29</sup>Reading נדוש *to be crushed, trampled on* rather than נידש as written.

<sup>30</sup>Here, Kara appears to be using a manuscript with יהורה, rather than the אדני of MT.

and similarly, כדורך<sup>31</sup> (ענבים) בגת (Ibid. v2; *like someone treading in a winepress*).  
בת יהודה לבתולה *the maiden daughter Judah*, the people of Judah, who  
resemble a maiden who dwells in security, who לא ניסתה כף רגלה הצג על  
הארץ (Deut 28:56; *who had never tried to set the sole of her foot on the ground*).

(16) על אלה אני בוכיה עיני יורדה מים (16) *Over these I weep; my eye*  
*continuously runs with water*. The expression was repeated, teaching that there  
were no respites.

(17)<sup>32</sup> פירשה ציון בידיה *Zion spreads out her hands*. [She broke] [as in] לחמך  
פרוש לרעב (Isa 58:17; *to divide your bread with the hungry*), because its  
explanation is break off your bread for the hungry. And so, לא יפרשו<sup>33</sup> להם על  
מת לנחמו על מת (Jer 16:7; *No one will extend to them to comfort those who mourn*  
*for the dead*), for its explanation is no one will break [ישברו] for them [bread] to  
strengthen and to comfort those who mourn for their dead.

(19) קראתי למאהבי המה רימוני *I called to my lovers, but they deceived me* [refers  
to] the nations who I clung to for love, such as the Assyrians and the Babylonians,  
just as the prophet said, ואל בני אשור עגבה (Ezek 23:12; *She lusted for the*  
*Assyrians*). And thus it was with the Babylonians – they did more evil to me than  
all the nations.

<sup>31</sup>The word ענבים *grapes* has been added to the text, presumably to help clarify the text.

<sup>32</sup>Edition contains an error here, reading יד rather than the correct verse number יז.

<sup>33</sup>Most mss and editions read *to them*. Kara, however, seems to want to read לחם *bread* along with a few mss. The Hamburg manuscript reads לחם ל indicating that here this could be a misprint.

(20) כְּאוֹתָהּ שֶׁשָׁנִינוּ נִחְמְרוּ בְּנֵי מַעִיָּה *My innards burn!* מעי חמרמרו (20) *as a sign that they taught that my innards are scorched.* Its explanation is *my innards are agitated.*

(21) כָּל אוֹיְבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רַעְתִּי שָׁשׂוּ כִּי אָתָּה עָשִׂיתָ *All my enemies have heard of my plight; they rejoiced that it was you who have done it;* the turn (of events) was from you. On this matter they rejoiced, because the edict was decreed from you. Another version is that *אתָּה עָשִׂיתָ you did it.* It was you who brought it about for me that they hated me because you have set me apart from their food and drink, and from marrying into them; for if I was married into them they would have compassion upon their daughters. הַבֵּאתָ יוֹם קִרְאתָ *You have brought on the day you have proclaimed.* How many years ago was it that a divine voice proclaimed by my hand, for Nebuchadnezzar to come against Jerusalem and destroy it? <sup>35</sup>Rabbi Levi said for eighteen years the divine voice was spread about in the house of this wicked man, saying to him, "O wicked servant, rise up and destroy the Temple of your bitterness, for the children of your bitterness do not listen to HaShem". וַיְהִיו כְּמוֹנִי *and let them be as I am.* Its explanation is that now the Holy One brings upon them this day of payment.

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<sup>34</sup> Buber considers this as a conflation of *b. Hul. 56.a* *אֵלּוֹ טְרֵפוֹת נִפְלָה לְאוּרִן וְנִחְמְדוּ בְּנֵי מַעִיָּה* [*if it fell into the fire, and its internal organs were scorched*], and says that it teaches that they were scorched, regarding *מעֵי חִמְרָמְרוּ my innards* in Lam 2:11.

<sup>35</sup> Compare with *Lam. Rab. 1.1.1*. Buber comments that in the Hamburg manuscript the word *עֲשָׂרָה* was omitted, and was written *שְׁמוֹנֵה שָׁנִים*.

ועולל למו (22) [תבא כל רעתם]<sup>36</sup> *Let all the evil doing of the enemies come before you.* and deal with them; and פועל do to them as פעלת you have done to me.]

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(1) איכה יעיב *How [the Lord] has clouded.* Its explanation is יחשיך *has darkened*, an expression of עבים *clouds*. ולא זכר הדום רגליו *He did not remember his footstool*, the Temple that is his footstool, just as it says in Isaiah מלאים (Isa 6:1; *and the hem of his robe filled the Temple*). The interpreters explain it: he יושב על כסא רם ונשא *He sits upon a throne, high and lofty* (ibid.), and his footstool fills<sup>37</sup> the Temple. That is to say that [he is] exalted so much that in heaven he established his throne, and his footstool reaches to the Temple below. Thus Isaiah says השמים כסאי והארץ הדום רגלי (Isa 66:1; *Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool*).<sup>38</sup> [Targum] Jonathan explains this is the Temple.

(3) ימינך ד' נאדרתי בכח *He drew back his right hand*; that is to say, his right hand that protected Israel from the nations until now, as it is said

<sup>36</sup> תבא כל רעתם. Buber adds this as it is in the print in the standard editions, but acknowledges that it is not in the Hamburg manuscript.

<sup>37</sup> This is the plural form ממלאים rather than the expected singular form referring to *his footstool*.

<sup>38</sup> ותרגם יונתן בית מקדשו זה בית המקדש. Buber comments that it should read בית מקדשו, and thus it has been translated.

ימינך די תרעץ אויב (Exod 15:6; *Your right hand, HaShem, is glorified with strength; your right hand, HaShem, smashed the enemy*). Now her position is the opposite. He drew back his right hand דמי"רשט שמ"ייך in the vernacular<sup>39</sup>. That is to say, he drew back his hand from assisting them just as it used to teach them before.

(4) נצב ימינו כצד *He set his right hand like a foe*, his right hand that served to assist them turned back to become trouble against them.

(5) וירב בבת יהודה *He multiplied within the daughter of Judah*. Its explanation is ויגדל *he increased* within the daughter of Judah. תאניה ואניה *mourning and lamentation* - sorrow and mourning. But it was pointed וירב, and its explanation is ויגדל<sup>40</sup>, just like וירב העם (Exod 1:20; *and the people increased*)<sup>41</sup>.

(6) ויחמוס כגן שכו *He has destroyed his booth like a garden*. ויגל *He has exposed*.

(7) אינדיליידיך *He has disowned his sanctuary*. in the vernacular<sup>43</sup>, like ניארת ברית עבדיך (Ps 89:40; *You have destroyed the covenant of your servant*)<sup>44</sup>.

(8) אומללו *He stretched a line*. He stretched against them divine justice. *they languish* - פסקו *they cease*, and so every expression of אומלל is explained by פסק. Thus, אומלל פרח לבנון (Nahum 1:4; *the flower of Lebanon fades*), it ceases and departs from the making of fruit, just as it has been taught. So, ורבת בנים

<sup>39</sup>Old French – unidentified.

<sup>40</sup>Buber points thus to keep the verbs intransitive, hence the example from Exod 1:20.

<sup>41</sup>The commentary on this verse is virtually identical with that of Munich 5.

<sup>42</sup>Buber compares this with the Metz printed edition, where the version reads כגן סוכו פתרונו ויגלה, but compare with the explanation found in Munich 5.

<sup>43</sup>Old French – unidentified. This is not an identical spelling with that found in Munich 5.

<sup>44</sup>The context is that he rejected and abandoned it.

אומללה (I Sam 2:5; *but she who has many children languishes*) - פסקה *she has ceased* from giving birth, and עמדה *she has ceased* from bearing children.

(9) מלכה ושריה בגוים אין תורה *Her king and her princes are among the nations, there is guidance no more.* That is to say, they are no longer able to engage in study of the Torah in exile because of oppression and an abundance of labour. גם נביאיה לא מצאו חזון מדי *even her prophets obtain no vision from HaShem, from the day that they were exiled.*

(13) מה אשוה לך ואנחמך *To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you that I should be able to say, does it not happen to this or that nation just as it happens to you? For there is not a nation that it happens to for you, that you may see them and be comforted. But who brings all this evil about for you?*

(14) נביאיך *your prophets who envisioned for you vanity and foolishness, just as Ezekiel said אל טחי תפל ויפול (Ezek 13:11; Say to those who smear with plaster that it will collapse!); תפל plaster that is חומר clay, because there is no סיד plaster mixed in it for it does not stick to the wall except the day that it is smeared on the wall, and the next day. [Then] a great wind comes and causes it to fall. Also, in this case, your prophets envisioned for you vanity and foolishness, for they envisioned prophecies for you of the destruction of vanity saying, "You will have peace!" ולא גילו על עוונך they did not expose your iniquity. They did not expose your end because you shall be bitter at your end. להשיב שבותך to restore your fortunes in order that you would turn back in repentance, as it is said ושב די אלהיך את שבותך ורחמך (Deut 30:3; Then, HaShem, your God, will bring*

back your captivity, and have mercy on you) ומרוחים *and the vanities* that caused you to reject the ways of the Omnipresent<sup>45</sup>.

(17) בצע אמרתו אשר צוה מימי קדם *He accomplished his word that he commanded from days of old.* השלים דברתו *He completed his word that he decreed in the days of old, when the edict was decreed in the days of Moses, [as it is said] והשמותי את מקדשיכם (Lev 26:31; I will make your sanctuaries desolate).* את כל מעשהו השלים *he completed, like מעשהו* *he accomplished.* Its explanation is והיה כי יבצע ד' (Isa 10:12; *But it will be that after the Lord completes all his work*).

(18) [צעק לכם אל ד'] *Their heart cried out to the Lord.* In the beginning they did not cry out to him with their heart, but when sorrow and distress came upon them, *their heart cried out to the Lord.* אל תתני פוגת לך<sup>46</sup> *give yourself no respite.* עיני נגרה ולא תדמה *restraint, like תדמה* *respite* is an expression of מאין הפוגות (Lam 3:49; *My eye overflows and will not cease – without respite*).

(19) קומי רוני בלילה<sup>47</sup> *Arise, cry out at night* [בליל] *at night* is written as though to say on the night of the ninth of Av: "Remember me every single year". *cry out*<sup>48</sup>, just as reading "Chant!" when the people raise their voice and pray as they rejoice. Thus, "Chant!" is read when a person offers his voice in weeping, for *chant* is an expression of *המון* *noise*, and is the sound of tumult – whether for joy,

<sup>45</sup>Verses 13 and 14 have virtually identical commentary in both 104I and Munich 5. Also, verses 15 and 16 have been removed as they are secondary – see *Lam. Rab.*, and the commentaries on Lamentations by Rashi and *Leqah Tov*. Buber comments that he added them as they were included in the standard commentaries, but as they are not in Jellinek's Hamburg manuscript I have deleted them.

<sup>46</sup>This corrects the text from reading *התני* to *תתני* as in Munich 5, and MT.

<sup>47</sup>This text here has been corrected to read *רוני* as in MT, and not *רוני*.

<sup>48</sup>*בליל כתיב* etc. Buber has added this because it is in the print of the familiar editions, even though it is also not in the Hamburg manuscript. He comments that it was added by one of the copyists from the commentary by *Leqah Tov* on Eichah.

or for lamentation. As it is written *ויעבור הרנה במחנה*<sup>49</sup> (I Kgs 22:36; *The call went out in the camp*).

(20) *למי עוללת כה* *To whom have you done this*, just as you have done to me?

That is to say, have a people been heard of such that women eat their own offspring inasmuch as compassionate women boiled their children for food for themselves? Or, do you see that priest and prophet are killed in the Sanctuary of HaShem inasmuch as the priests were killed on account of their action/profession?

(22) *תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב* *You invited my enemies from all around as if for a day of festival*. You called a festival in order to destroy the nations because I was for them a terror on every side, like a day of festival that you called against me to break my young men. *אשר טיפחתי* *those I cherished*, those I raised deeply cherishing *ורביתי* *that I brought up*. My enemy came, then destroyed them.

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### three

(1) *אני הגבר ראה עני בשבט עברתו* *I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath*. "I am that man who is great evil or virtue"<sup>50</sup> That is to say, "thus is the land against me". Anyone is able to say: This is *the man who has seen*

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<sup>49</sup> In the commentary is written *והעבור הרינה במחנה*, but it should read *ויעבור הרנה במחנה* (I Kgs 22:36), and has so been corrected and translated.

<sup>50</sup> *אני גרמיני מיל איני ברודי* is transliterated French. Proposed reading is *Jeu sui cil hom ki grant mal ou verdue*.

affliction by the rod of the wrath of the Holy One, blessed be He, more than all the prophets who prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, but for all of them the Temple was not destroyed during their lifetime, but in mine<sup>51</sup>.

(3) *Only against me would He repeatedly turn His hand all day long.* All the nations sin, but there is not a nation the continues in all the world which the Holy One, blessed be He, visits suffering upon, except Israel, of which it is said, *Only against me would He repeatedly turn His hand all day long*<sup>52</sup>.

(4) *He has made my flesh and my skin waste away.* בילה *waste away* is like לבול עץ אסגוד (Isa 44:19 *Shall I bow down to rotton wood?*)<sup>53</sup>.

(5) *He has built up strongholds against me*<sup>54</sup>. ויקף ראש ותלאה *He has encompassed me [with] gall and suffering.* He surrounded me from above. ותלאה *suffering* expresses trouble and fatigue.

(6) *He has made me dwell in darkness like those who are dead forever.* Like dead men - [עולם] (Isa 60:19; *And HaShem will be a (daily) light for you [forever]*)<sup>55</sup>. Although He has made me dwell in darkness, [7] *He has fenced me in so that I cannot get out.* If He made me dwell in darkness, and did not fence me in, it was

<sup>51</sup>Kara is following Rashi here, but does not identify *the man* as Jeremiah like Rashi. Rather, he says it could be anyone living at the time of the destruction of the Temple, which is an explanation offered by ibn Ezra, whom Kara pre-dates.

<sup>52</sup>Kara appears to take the speaker as Israel. Cf. R. Joshua of Siknin in the name of R. Levi, who reads *I am the man* as the community of Israel (*Lam. Rab. 3:1*).

<sup>53</sup>In BDB, בול (n. m. sing.) *produce, outgrowth* is an abbreviation or scribal error for יבול – only in sing. constr. eg. הרים ושאו לו כי בול (Job 40:20; *For the mountains yield food for him*). Kara seems to take בילה as a *piel to rot*, but it is difficult to equate this with Isa 44:19. Rashi refers to לבול עץ as *rotten wood*, but then gives another explanation. *Lam. Rab.* explains *flesh* as the community, and *skin* as Sanhedrin.

<sup>54</sup>Kara expands the text to explain more fully what is understood.

<sup>55</sup>Kara is citing a passage where עולם is used as an adverb, as here.

difficult for me to get out; all the more so because He made me dwell in darkness and fenced me in. Furthermore, although He fenced me in, He made my chain heavy, chains by which I am bound. They are so heavy that I am unable to walk with them, even if He made me dwell with an eternal light all day and even if He had not fenced me in. Perhaps you would think if I seek HaShem from there, I would find Him, for is that not His nature? - one who brings out ממסגר אסיר חשך (Isa 42:7; *the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who dwell in darkness*). For if I shout and cry out from the place where He has made me dwell in darkness and fenced me in, from there He will bring (them) [me] out to the light. The text reads [8] גם כי אזעק ואשוע שהם תפילתו<sup>56</sup> *Even if I shout and cry out, He shuts out my prayer.*

(9) גדר דרכי בגזית *He has walled up my roads with hewn stones* - as if they were hewn stones. How has He walled up my ways? By my paths which He has distorted.

(11) סורר דרכי *he has strewn my paths with thorns*. He has covered my roads with thorns, so that I am unable to find my paths. ויפשחני *and crushed me* - its interpretation is ויבקעני *He split/stripped me* as in אילן שנפשח *if a tree is split/if a tree is stripped*<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>56</sup>Kara text reads תפילתו, but the translation (and Buber) follow MT תפילתי.

<sup>57</sup> אילן שנפשח וכי (b. Shev.4.6; *if a tree is split, you may tie it up in the Sabbatical year, not that it may grow together again, but that it may not split farther*); also, אילן שנפשח ובו פירות, (if a tree is stripped, and on it (on the branch torn off) are fruits). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1245. Compare with Munich 5.

(12) כמטרה לחץ<sup>58</sup> *as a target for the arrow* that every archer wishes to shoot. Thus all the nations rule over us.

(13) הביא בכליותי בני אשפתו *He has caused the sons of His quiver to enter my innards* because he established me as a target for himself, he shoots arrows into me and *He has caused the sons of His quiver to enter my innards*. Who are the sons of the quiver? They are the arrows, for a man puts his arrows in the quiver.

(16) ויגרם בחצץ שיני *He ground my teeth in gravel*. [The same idea as found in ימלא פיהו חצץ (Prov 20:17; *his mouth will be full of gravel*)]<sup>59</sup>. For when they (the Babylonians) were exiling them, they put their food in the dust, and the dust entered between their teeth, and their teeth were broken. הכפישני באפר *He made me cower in ashes* אינ"בולצימי נילפ"ולבי *that we want grains (of wheat) from ashes*<sup>60</sup>.

(17) נשיתי טובה *I have forgotten goodness*, for a man whom they bring into captivity has forsaken goodness entirely.

(20) זכור תזכור *You remember well*<sup>61</sup>. I know that behold! the day is coming that he remembers *my afflictions and my sorrow* עלי נפשי *and my soul is bowed down within me* [until the day comes]. <sup>62</sup>Thus explains Rabbi Eleazar by

<sup>58</sup>Kara text reads כמטרה, but MT reads כמטרא.

<sup>59</sup>כמו ימלא פיהו חצץ. Buber has added this because it is in the print of the standard editions. While it is missing in the Hamburg manuscript, it is to be found in the Munich 5 manuscript by R. Yosef Kara.

<sup>60</sup>Transliterated Medieval French אינ"בולצימי נילפ"ולבי. Following Ahrend, and Rashi glosses, the following is proposed: *en voulceme nielle olbes that we want grains (of wheat) from ashes*.

<sup>61</sup>Alternatively, [My soul] remembers well. Compare with Lam. Rab. 3.20.7.

<sup>62</sup>וכן פתח ר' אלעזר בירי קליר בייסדו כו' וכן פייט or וכן פייט, and it is in the piyut for the interpretation of Remember!

the hand of R. Qallir<sup>63</sup> when he originated it: *by this I know that you have it in you to remember, but my soul bows down until you actually do remember*<sup>64</sup>.

(21) **זאת אשיב אל לבי על כן אוחיל** *This I call to mind; therefore I still hope.*

When my soul was bowed down within me on account of the length of my exile, *this I call to mind, therefore I still hope.* But, what is the thing that I bear in mind?

(22) **חסדי ד' the kindnesses of HaShem** [with] which He has rewarded me. But

what are the kindnesses with which He has rewarded me? **כי לא תמנו** *that we were not annihilated*, because we were not annihilated at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, for he brought this thing about that we should not be annihilated by their hand<sup>65</sup>. **כי לא כלו רחמיו** *for His mercies were not exhausted* – of the Holy One, blessed be He; the Holy One, blessed be He, who rewarded me with His mercies that we were not annihilated before the Babylonian exile. I am confident that His mercies and kindnesses in *this* exile will not be destroyed<sup>66</sup>.

(23) **חדשים לבקרים** *They are new every morning* [refers to] the kindnesses which

he showed us in Babylon, that we were not annihilated. Not in Babylon alone did He show us His loving-kindnesses, but new every morning. With each day the kindnesses renew themselves, for not just one of them stood against us in order to destroy us; rather, in each generation they (all) were standing against us to

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<sup>63</sup>Rabbi Qallir was a paytan – 8th century. See Elbogen, I. *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*. Translated from the German by R. P. Scheindlin; The Jewish Publication Society, 1993, 244.

<sup>64</sup>Quoted in Rashi as being from *the liturgical poet*.

<sup>65</sup>i.e. The kindnesses should not cease at the hand of the Babylonians.

<sup>66</sup>**בגלות זה** refers here to the diaspora in 11/12<sup>th</sup> century Northern France.

destroy us were it not for your loving-kindnesses that saved us from their hand. רבה אמונתך *great is Your faithfulness*. Your faithfulness, which You promised us, is great. בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לבלותם ואף (Lev 26:44; *Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them*). It<sup>67</sup> is what stood for our fathers, and for us, because the kingdoms were unable to destroy us.

(25) טוב ויחיל ודומם *HaShem is good to those who trust in Him*. (26) טוב ויחיל ודומם *It is good to wait patiently*. This is its explanation: because the Holy One, blessed be He, is good to those who trust in Him, a person can wait patiently, and he can watch for *להשועת ה'* *the salvation of HaShem*. The explanation of דומם *to be still* is מצפה *watches* as in דומו עד הגיענו אליכם (1 Sam 14:9; *Hold still [דמו] until we reach you!*)<sup>68</sup>.

(27) טוב לגבר כי ישא עול בנעוריו *It is good for a man that he bear a yoke in his youth*. Behold, he is a victor when he becomes old. Happy is the man who has already paid all his debts, for although it is painful now, he will rejoice at a later time. Happy are those of Israel who have borne already the verdict on account of their iniquities<sup>69</sup>. And woe<sup>70</sup> to the nations who are yet to be stricken on account of all their iniquities. Thus it says תם עוונך בת ציון לא יוסיף להגלותך פקד

<sup>67</sup>i.e. The promise.

<sup>68</sup>Kara is explaining דומם from דמם *to wait, be still*, and comparing it with צפה *to observe, watch, expect*, rather than from דום *to be silent*.

<sup>69</sup>איספוספסין *verdict* [איפוספסין in the commentary], and in the Hamburg manuscript is found איספוספסין, that should read איפוספסין, as it is shown in Greek *verdict* (אורטהיל). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 101.

<sup>70</sup>The translation of אוי follows the Hamburg document; 104I reads ווי.

עוונך בת אדום (Lam 4:22; *Your punishment is complete, O daughter Zion, He will not prolong your exile; He will punish your iniquity, O daughter Edom.*)

(28) **ישב בדרך וידום** *Let him sit solitary and wait.* There is nothing better for a man than that he should sit alone, and be still concerning the decree that is pronounced against him. **נמל עליו כי נמל** *for He has laid [it] upon him*, when HaShem raised against him the value of the edict. Menachem ben Helbo<sup>71</sup> interpreted **וידם** *and wait* as meaning **מחשבה** *thought*, and so he explains, *a man will sit and consider my words.* Surely **תורה המקום**<sup>72</sup> has laid upon him a good reward. **וידום** *and wait* expresses **מחשבה** *thought*, like **[להם] (לכם) לעשות** (Num 33:56; *as I thought to do (to you) [to them]*), but I have interpreted the matter differently.

(31) **כי לא יזנח לעולם די** *For the Lord will not cast [him] off for ever.* If today he bears the yoke of the nations, tomorrow **את עוונם ירצו** (Lev 26:43; *they will accept their punishment*), for thus is the nature of it.

(32) **אם הוגה כי** *For if he causes grief*, if he destroys them but repents, **כרוב** *he will have compassion according to the greatness of his unfailing love.*

(33) **כי לא ענה מלבו ויגה בני איש** *For he does not afflict from his heart, or grieve mankind* for he does not afflict or grieve mankind from his heart, or from his desire. It is neither his desire or pleasure **לדכא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ** (Lam 3:34; *to crush beneath his feet all the captives of the earth*); all those who are punished with suffering. *For He does not afflict from his heart* refers also to *to crush beneath his*

<sup>71</sup>Menachem ben Helbo is Kara's uncle.

<sup>72</sup>Meaning unknown.

feet. Thus, its explanation is that it is not from his heart, or his wish to crush beneath his feet all the captives of the earth, all who are subjugated because of oppression; and not from his heart להטות משפט גבר נגד פני עליון (ibid. v35; to turn aside the justice of a man in the presence of the Most High).

(36) לא ראה *To deprive a man of justice, the Lord does not approve.* The explanation is that it is not thought proper in his eyes to deprive a man of justice, just as in רואה אני את דבריך<sup>73</sup> *I like your opinion*<sup>74</sup>. לא ראה *He does not approve.* נאהי"ד, in the vernacular<sup>75</sup>.

(37) מי זה אמר ותהי די לא ציוה *Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord decreed it?* If someone says to you that this thing will come to pass because it is just in the eyes of the Omnipresent to deprive a man of justice, and to crush beneath his feet all the captives of the earth, do not believe it because HaShem has not decreed thing; and if He did not command it, from where does toil spring from? Whence does it come to those prisoners of the earth who are being crushed? Whence come sufferings to the world, because it is a lawless world, inasmuch as HaShem has not commanded it.

(38) מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב *From the mouth Most High, neither evil or good come,* but from the day that the Holy One, blessed be He, said on Mount Sinai, ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב את המות ואת הרע (Deut

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<sup>73</sup> כמו רואה אני את דבריך. Buber identifies this as a quote, but does not give a reference. It appears to be rabbinic. Cf. *b. Ket.* 13.3; וכי רואה אני את דברי וכי *I like the opinion of Admon etc.* See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1435.

<sup>74</sup> Kara is commenting on the use of ראה as to approve, as opposed to see, or understand, and hence the quote in the note above from *Talmud*.

<sup>75</sup> Unidentified transliterated text.

<sup>76</sup> ראה נתתי לפניך. Compare with *Lam. Rab.* 3.38.9.

30:15; *See, I have placed before you today, life and prosperity, death and evil*), from the mouth of the Most High neither evil or good come, but by itself<sup>77</sup> comes evil things upon those who do evil, and good things upon those who do good. From this we may conclude that man harms himself, and since iniquity causes the bringing of evil upon those who do evil, when torments come upon the man he should not complain (but) to someone about the torments, and about the severe punishment. But, *מה יתאוּנן אדם חי גבר על חטאיו* (Lam 3:39; *Why should a living man complain, a man for his sins?*); because they have brought evil upon him, and so he should confess and say *נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה ונשובה עד ד'* (ibid. v40; *Let us search and examine our ways, and return to HaShem*).

(41) *נשא לבבינו אל כפיים* *Let us lift up our hearts to our hands* [its explanation is *נשא (כפינו עם) לבבינו* together with our hands]. <sup>78</sup>This is its interpretation *נשא לבבינו (כפינו עם) לבבינו* *Let us lift up (our hands together with) our hearts [together with our hands] to God in heaven*. Now, a man should not spread out his hands to heaven and have his heart full of transgressions. A popular saying<sup>79</sup> concerns one who immerses himself while grasping a worm, throws the worm away, and an immersion is credited to him. If he does not throw the worm from his hand, an immersion is not credited to him. Also, here, the one who lifts up his heart together with his hands to HaShem in heaven, his repentance is received; [if] he spreads his hands to heaven, but his heart is *not* prepared for his

<sup>77</sup>*Lam. Rab.* 3.38 quotes from R. Eleazar, whom Kara follows here. Rashi quotes from R. Johanan, also paraphrasing *Lam Rabbah*.

<sup>78</sup>זה פתרונו נשא לבבינו עם כפיים אל אל בשמים. Buber has corrected the text to read as it is found in the Hamburg manuscript. However, in the printed edition it is the same as it is before us.

<sup>79</sup>משלו משל. Cf. Rashi. For the popular saying concerning the worm, see *b. Ta'an* 16a. See also *Lam. Rab.* 3.40.9 where the שרץ is also mentioned.

father who is in heaven, his repentance is not received. That is what Rabbi Solomon, the Babylonian<sup>80</sup>, established as equal the hand throwing out the worm that the immersion would be credited, to a hand placing the offering.

(42) נחננו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת *We have sinned and rebelled: You have not forgiven.* We acted according to our nature, for there is not a man who does not sin. But you have not acted according to your nature, for you are called one who multiplies forgiveness, but you did not forgive. <sup>81</sup>In the Midrash of our Sages *we have sinned and rebelled, [but] you did not forgive.* If we acted without justice, you also did not behave towards us as properly; if we sinned and rebelled it was for you to forgive, but you did not forgive. This is you may conclude from what we learn from the *Mekhilta*: There were three (sons) [prophets]. One looked for the glory of the son, but did not look for the glory of the father. <sup>82</sup>This is Jonah who sought to neglect the glory of the Omnipresent so as not to convict Israel. But he rose up and fled to Tarshish because the Gentile nations were near to repentance. But if he would go to Nineveh by the word of HaShem and they came back in repentance, the Holy One, blessed be He, would turn out to be angry with Israel because he had sent out several prophets to them through whom they could repent, but they did not. And one sought the glory of the father, but not the glory of the son. This is Elijah, who said *די [אלהי צבאות] כי עזבו בריתך בני ישראל* (I Kgs 19:10; *I have been very zealous for HaShem, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant*). And one sought the glory of the son

<sup>80</sup>In *Lam. Rab.* 3.42.9 the Babylonian Rabbis are referred to as the Rabbis from "there", as distinguished from the Palestinian Rabbis who are from "here". No individual Rabbis are named in this instance.

<sup>81</sup>The verse נחננו פשענו is considered in *Lam. Rab.* 3.42.9.

<sup>82</sup>זה יונה. Buber comments that this is in another version of the *Mekhiltah*; also the order is different.

and the glory of the father. This is Jeremiah who said, *We have sinned and rebelled; You did not forgive*<sup>83</sup>.

(45) סחי ומאום *Filth and refuse*. The interpretation of סחי *scum* is טילטול *wandering*, similar to האדמה מעל(פני) (Deut 28:63; *you will be uprooted from the land*), which is (from)[found in] the Targum, but is ותיטלטינין *wanderers*<sup>84</sup>. The interpretation of השמינו *You make us* is you place us – it is in the present tense<sup>85</sup>.

(47) השאת *disaster* is from the decree שאו ערים (Isa 6:11; *until the cities are devastated*), because it is from the decree of שואה ומשואה (Zeph 1:15; *destruction and desolation*).

(51) עיני עוללה לנפשי *My eye brings grief to my soul*. Our iniquities directed these things<sup>86</sup>.

(53) צמתו בבור חיי *They have destroyed my life in the pit*. Although they have subdued my life in the pit, because I am unable to climb up out of it, he did not pay heed even to this until he cast a stone upon me<sup>87</sup>.

(54) צפו מים על ראשי אמרתי נגזרתי *Water flowed over my head; I thought, "I am doomed!"* So when a man enters the water as far as his knees, or his hips, there is still hope. But, if the water flows over his head, then his hope is lost and he says, "My hope is lost!" But I do not do this, for although the water has flowed over

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<sup>83</sup>This is the first indication that Kara regards Jeremiah as the author of Lamentations.

<sup>84</sup>The Targum renders סחי as טילטולין *wanderers*; but in Lam 4:14 איתלטל / איט *to be exiled, to wander*. See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 536.

<sup>85</sup>Kara follows Rashi here.

<sup>86</sup>Kara seems to play on the words עיני and עווינו.

<sup>87</sup>This commentary is taken directly from Rashi, except that the second two instances of "they" have now become "he".



me, bring upon them. This is what you will find at the end of the acrostic [Lam 1:22] which repeats concerning the nations in order to pacify<sup>92</sup> them, and says, "just as you did to me, so do to them".

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**four**

(1) **איך יוחשך איכה יועם זהב** *How the gold has become dim*. Its interpretation is **איך יוחשך** *how it has darkened!* Another explanation is **כל סתום לא עממוך** (Ezek 28:3; *no secret is hidden from you*). Similarly, **ארזים לא עממוהו** (ibid. 31:8; *the cedars could not hide it*), but the explanation of **איכה יועם זהב** is how the beauty and appearance of the people of Zion is darkened, for their countenance had been yellow like gold<sup>93</sup>. **וישנה הכתם הטוב** [*How*] *the pure gold is changed!* How<sup>94</sup> the brilliant countenance of the people of Zion is changed, for it was similar to finest gold, to fine treasure<sup>95</sup>. Every precious stone HaShem<sup>96</sup> calls *fine gold*, and *pure gold*; fine gold is treasure. But why does he call it fine gold, and pure gold? Just as (Elihu) [Job] said **לא תסולה בכתם טהור** (Job 28:19; *with purest gold it cannot be valued*). For if someone treasures his garment, and examines the blue cloth and the embroidery – every garment and article of leather – this is not pure gold. But

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<sup>92</sup>Note that Buber has corrected Munich 5 from **לפיים בהם** *to pacify them*, to **לסיים בהם** *to end them*.

<sup>93</sup>Kara is explaining **יועם** *become dimmed/darkened/obscured* with **יוחשך** *become darkened*.

<sup>94</sup>Kara recognises that **איכה** serves double duty in this sentence.

<sup>95</sup>*Lekach Tov* comments: *How dim the gold has become, that is, how dark the gold has become! This refers to the beauty of the people of Jerusalem, whose complexion resembled gold. See also Lam. Rab. 4.I*

<sup>96</sup>Hebrew is in the wrong word order here.

precious stones and pearls are called pure gold. **השתפכנה אבני קדש** *the holy stones are scattered*. [These are] the priests who were dressed in breastplate and ephod, in which sacred stones were fixed<sup>97</sup>.

(2) **בני ציון היקרים המסולאים בפז** *The precious children of Zion, comparable with fine gold, because their faces shone like the appearance of fine gold*. How their appearance has changed, for **נחשבו לנבלי חרש מעשה ידי יוצר** *they are considered as earthen pitchers, the work of a potter's hands*. From now on<sup>98</sup> it is clearly explained who has caused their appearance [to be darkened], and who has caused them to be changed; their faces being compared with fine gold, who has brought this upon those who *are considered as earthen pitchers, the work of a potter's hands*. He has caused this thing.

(3) **גם תנין חלצו שד הניקו גוריהן** *Even jackals offer the breast [and] suckle their young*. The explanation of **חלצו** *pull out* is **הוציאו** *take out*, as in **את חלצו** (Lev 14:40; *they shall take out the stones*). **תנין** *Jackals*. This is like the one that sees its cubs far off, draws out its breast from its bosom, and shows them in order that they will come and suck. But **בת עמי לאכזר כיענה** *the daughter of my people has become cruel like the ostrich* that is merciless against its young, because their breasts became dry because of the famine.

(4) **רבק לשון יונק אל חכו בצמא עוללים שאלו לחם פורש אין להם** *The tongue of the infant cleaves to its palate for thirst; young children beg for bread, [but] no-*

<sup>97</sup>Kara explains that allegorically speaking, holy stones = priests = pure gold. Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 4.I.

<sup>98</sup>Emending text to read **מכאן ואילך** *from now on, henceforth*, rather than **מוכן ואילך** as written.

*one breaks it for them.* No-one is *slicing*<sup>99</sup> [bread] for them. All of this caused their appearance to be dimmed.

(5) האוכלים למעדנים *Those who used to eat delicacies.* The nobles who were accustomed to eating delicacies בחוצות *are destitute in the streets.* האמונים עלי תולע *those nurtured in crimson.* When trouble and anguish came upon those clad, until now, in crimson yarns, חבקו אשפתות *they embraced dunghills* to warm themselves, because the dunghill was warm. Thus it is explained in *Genesis Rabbah*<sup>100</sup> [that] אמון *multitude/ abundance* means מכוסה *covered/clad* as another explanation of האמונים עלי תולע *those nurtured in crimson.*

(6) ויגדל עון בת עמי מחטאת סדום *The iniquity of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom.* Rabbi Berechiah said<sup>101</sup> that in the tribe of Judah and Benjamin something was done that was not done in Sodom. About Sodom it is written, וחטאתם כי כבדה מאד (Gen 18:20; and *their sin so grave*). About the tribe of Judah and Benjamin it is written, עון בית ישראל ויהודה גדול במאד מאד (Ezek 9:9; *the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great*), and from among them there was no remnant left over. That is to say, of the men of Sodom, whose iniquity was not as great as the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah, no remnant of them survived. But ההפוכה כמו רגע [the one] *which was*

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<sup>99</sup> פורש parallels בוצע.

<sup>100</sup> וכן מפורש בב"ר. Buber comments that this is the beginning of another section/chapter, but in the Hamburg manuscript the words מכוסה אמון מפורש בב"ר are absent.

<sup>101</sup> אמר ר' ברכיה. Buber directs the reader to *Gen. Rab.* 108.5; but comments that in *Lam. Rab.* 4.6.9 is the sentence הוא בסננון אחר, in the name of R. Yoshua bar Nehemiah in the name of R. Aha.

*overthrown in a moment* did not extend their hands to the commandments<sup>102</sup>, for it is written **לֹא חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם** *no hands were laid upon her*. Rabbi Tanhuma<sup>103</sup> said **לֹא חָלַת יָד לְיָד** *You did not fall hand to hand*, meaning the hand of one of them did not place his alms into the hand of the poor. Therefore, **נִהְפְּכָה כְּמוֹ רִגְעָה** *she was overthrown in a moment*. But these<sup>104</sup> [of Judah and Benjamin] extended their hands to the commandments, as it is written **יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת בְּשָׁלוּ** *The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they were their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people* (v. 10). But it is explained in *Midrash Eichah*<sup>105</sup> that they did not boil their children, but because they took cakes from their children's hand and fed their women neighbours (with them) who were mourning, the text rises up against them as though they boiled their children. This is another explanation from the midrash<sup>106</sup>. But its simple meaning is that the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom *which was overthrown in a moment*. The angels, who were sent out to overthrow Sodom, *which was overthrown in a moment*, left no place overthrown. It is the same as **לֹא חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם** *no hands fell upon her*. **חָלָה עַל רֹאשׁ יוֹאָב** [in] **יַחֲלִילוּ** (II Sam 3:29; *May it fall upon the head of Joab*).

<sup>102</sup>Kara is closely following *Lam. Rab.* 4.9 here. *Lam. Rab.* states that it is R. Yoshua bar R. Nehemiah in the name of R. Aha rather than R. Berechiah, who Kara says he is quoting. Although Kara generally quotes with precision, exceptions can be explained by a faulty memory. See Ganiel, Drori. "The Exegetical Method of Rabbi Yosef Kara with regard to the Prophetic Books". Ph.D. diss., University of Wales, 1993, 101.

<sup>103</sup>**א"ר הנחומא**. See *Gen. Rab.* 80:28.5 where the version is **א"ר הנחום**.

<sup>104</sup>Kara returns to the midrash text here.

<sup>105</sup>*Lam. Rab.* 4.7.9.

<sup>106</sup>Kara sets up these explanations to dismiss them in favour of his own interpretation. See Ganiel, "Exegetical Method", 142.

(7) זכו נזיריה משל (7) *Her Nazirites were purer than snow*. As for these Nazirites, the hair<sup>107</sup> of their heads was white like snow from food and drink that whitens a man's hair, and it becomes pure like milk. You know that it is true if someone falls to his bed and is struck down with pain, if the hair of his head was white on the day of his fall, when he gets up and walks about outside, you will see it black. אדמו *her Nazirites, her hairs, like גזי נזרך* (Jer 7:29; *cut off your hair*). *their appearance was redder than coral*. Gold called coral, because they hide it in the countenance. ספיר גזרתם *lapiz lazuli was their form*. Polished like lapiz lazuli.

(8) חשך משחור הארם (8) *their appearance is darker than soot*. Those people who were purer than snow, and whiter than milk, and whose complexion is redder than coral, now their appearance is darker than soot. לא נכרו בחוצות *they are not recognised in the streets*. Those who saw them before do not recognise them thereafter. עזמם על עזמם *their skin is shrivelled on their bones* from brightness<sup>108</sup>, in the vernacular.

(9) טובים היו חללי חרב מחללי רעב (9) *More fortunate were those slain by the sword than those slain by famine*. If he had said, *better off were those slain by the sword than those slain by famine* and was silent, I would have reason to say that the one who dies during the famine prolongs [his] suffering, but the one who dies by the sword dies straightaway. But now, because he said *יזבו מדוקרים*

<sup>107</sup>Kara prefers to understand נזיריה here as *hair*, as he illustrates his point with the quote from Jeremiah. Cf. Rashi, who concludes *Nazirites*.

<sup>108</sup>Kara explains this with דק"ר ט"ד בלע"ז. This can be transliterated into Medieval French as *de karted*, and then to *de klarted*, and finally to *clarte lightness/brightness/clearness*, based on Rashi's Old French.

מתנובות שדי *for they ooze, pierced by the fruits of the field*<sup>109</sup>, reluctantly<sup>110</sup> this is the reason that there is to say, why were those who were slain by the sword better off than those who were slain by famine? It appears that so he considers, in his opinion, namely why is it better for them, for those who died by the sword, than for those who died by famine? Because those who died by famine, when they were savouring the fruits of the field and eating much, their intestines were split open within them, for they were contracted on account of the famine. *מבוקעים* *split open* *for they ooze, pierced*. Its explanation is *מבוקעים* *split open* because of eating the fruits of the field. Their body is disfigured on account of the excrement which emerges outside of their stomach.

(10) בשלו *The hands of compassionate women, formerly, now* ידי נשים רהמניות *boiled their children*. *they have become their food*<sup>111</sup>, in order to give themselves food.

(12) לא האמינו מלכי ארץ וכל יושבי חבל *The kings of the earth did not believe, nor all the inhabitants of the world, previously,* כי יבוא צר ואויב בשערי *that adversary and enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem*. But who caused them to enter? *מחטאת נביאיה עונות כהניה* *the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests* (v.13)

(14) נגואלו *They wandered blindly through the streets* because *they were defiled with blood*, so much so, that others were not able to touch

<sup>109</sup>Grain.

<sup>110</sup> על כרחך has 2m. sing. suffix, but is read as *על כרחו* *against one's will, reluctantly*.

<sup>111</sup>This should be compared with *Lam. Rab.* 4.9.

their garments<sup>112</sup>. For it is written בלא יוכלו יגעו בלבושיהם *none can touch their garments*.

(15) סורו ממא קראו למו סורו סורו אל תנעו כי נצו גם נעו *"Away, unclean!" they called out to them, "Away, away! Do not touch!"* כי נצו גם נעו *that they wandered about, and also staggered*<sup>113</sup> from the commandments of the Holy One, blessed be He. נצו is used similarly in the passage תנו ציץ למואב כי נצא תצא (Jer 48:9; *Give Moab a wing, that she may fly away*), where its explanation is *Give a wing בנהך to Moab for his glory will surely fly away יתעופף יתעופף*<sup>114</sup>. Also in this case, because *they wandered נצו*<sup>115</sup>, *they flew עפף*, since they deviated from the ways of the Omnipresent. גם נעו *they also stagger*, even shake and remove themselves from his commandments<sup>116</sup>. אמרו בגוים *the nations said*. When they went into exile among the nations, the nations said of them, "These people will never return and sojourn in their own land"<sup>117</sup>.

(16) פני ד' חלקם *The anger of HaShem divided them*; he scattered them upon the face of all the earth. [He will no longer divide them.] All these are the words of the nations.

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<sup>112</sup>Cf. Kara's straightforward explanation with that of the midrash, where they are polluted with the blood of Zechariah.

<sup>113</sup>This should be compared with Rashi, who describes נצו as an expression of foulness and filth.

<sup>114</sup>With respect to the note above, it is clear that Kara and Rashi disagree on the root of נצו. Kara illustrates it using Jeremiah 48:9, and the root נצא, and interprets it with the root עפף *to fly away*. Rosenberg follows Rashi, who reasons נצו as being from the root נצה, which although means *to fly (away)/wander*, can also mean *to be destroyed/ruined*.

<sup>115</sup>נצא *to fly (away)/wander*.

<sup>116</sup>Kara interprets the qal נע, with the hiphil of the same root, הניע *to shake/move/disturb*.

<sup>117</sup>Kara is paraphrasing the text here.

(17) *Our eyes failed [waiting] in vain for our help.* Still, we were able to expect the assistance of Egypt, of whom it is written *ומצרים הבל וריק יעזורו* (Isa 30:7; *For Egypt's help is worthless and empty*), but they did not come. Common parlance would be that when a man expects his friend, but his friend does not arrive, he says, "Until now I was able to wait for help in vain." *Our eyes failed [waiting] for our help in vain,* *אני קורא פידר"י ימש מ"ש אמנד"ר אלהפ"י לייא* *in heart there is lightening/thunder, whose daughter I await*<sup>118</sup>, in the vernacular.

(18) *They dogged our steps.* *צדו* *they dogged* is an expression of desolation and ruin. That is to say, *our steps* were made desolate<sup>119</sup> *מלכת* *from walking in our streets.*

(19) *Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens* goes on to explain how swift were the ones who *על ההרים דלקונו* *pursued us upon the mountains.* The way of the pursuer, if he knows that his enemy flees by way of the plain, is to pursue him. But when he knows that he has escaped to the hills, despairing to seek him further, he does not trouble [to pursue] him into the hills. But these people pursue us into the hills. The way of the pursuer is to pursue among the settlements; and since he knows that his enemy flees by way of the wilderness, he ceases from pursuing him. But these [people] even *במדבר ארבו לנו* *ambush us in the wilderness.*

<sup>118</sup> *En cor a foudre don(s)t j' atendr(ai) e la fille* in Old French.

<sup>119</sup> Kara and Leqah Tov agree here – the Aramaic *צדו* *desolation/confusion* corresponding with the Hebrew root *שמם*.

(20) רוח אפינו *The breath of our nostrils*. There are those who explain this as concerning Josiah, and there are those who explain this as concerning Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, who the king of Babylon appointed over them. <sup>120</sup>It appears that it is about Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, [because it says], of whom we said, נחיה בצלו *We will live among the nations in his shadow*. But in the days of Josiah the tribe of Judah and Benjamin had not yet gone into exile<sup>121</sup>.

(21) שישי ושמחי בת אדום *Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Edom*, like the one who sees his friend commit some offence, and says to him, "Commit all the offences which come to your hand", but דע [לך] כי על כל אלה יביאך האלהים במשפט (Qoh 11:9; *know that concerning all these things, God will bring you to judgement*). [Here] too, the prophet reflected upon Edom who had rejoiced at the demise of Israel, and said to her, "Rejoice! Rejoice! Exult! Exult, O daughter of Edom! Exult now over the people of Judah on the day of their destruction. But know yourself that גם עליך תעבר כוס *to you, too, will the cup pass*, which passed to Israel". *you will become drunk and strip yourself bare*. You drank it<sup>122</sup> and exhausted it<sup>123</sup>, and will drink all of the cup until you empty all of the cup. But woe to the nations who have not yet tasted the cup of poison, but are yet preparing to drink it. Happy are Israel who, from the hand of HaShem, has

<sup>120</sup>לפי שהוא אומר is isolated by Buber in 104I as superfluous in this context.

<sup>121</sup>Cf. Rashi who concludes that the verse refers to Josiah, and ibn Ezra who believes that Zedekiah was the subject.

<sup>122</sup>Reading אתו rather than את.

<sup>123</sup>Meaning that *you drained the last drop*.

already drunk the cup of his wrath; the dregs of the cup of poison they will not drink again<sup>124</sup>. That is what is written.

תם עוונך בת ציון לא יוסיף להגלותך פקד עוונך בת אדום גילה על חטאתיך (22)

*Your punishment is complete, O daughter Zion; He will not prolong your exile.*

*He has punished your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he has exposed your sins*

because of the matter which has been covered until now, now he is beginning to

uncover [them], it is fitting to say<sup>125</sup> גילה על חטאתיך *he has exposed your sins,*

just as Isaiah said וגלתה הארץ את דמיה ולא תכסה עוד על הרוגיה (Isa 26:21;

*and the earth will reveal the blood shed upon her, and no longer cover her slain).*

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## five

(1) זכור די מה היה לנו *Remember, HaShem, what has befallen us.*

(4) מימינו בכסף שתינו *We pay money to drink our own water.* She (Jerusalem)

does not say, "The water of strangers", but *we even pay money to drink our own*

*water*; and she does not say, "the wood belonging to others", but even עצינו

*our wood is obtained at a price.*

(5) ולא הונח לנו *we toil, but we are given no rest.* The money for which we

toiled - nations of the world leave none of it for us, but come and take from us.

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<sup>124</sup>This is Kara's interpretation of what follows in v.22.

<sup>125</sup>נופל לומר is an idiom for playing on words. Here it indicates a play on גלה *to reveal/disclose*, and הגלה *to carry into exile/banish*.

- (6) מצרים נתנו יד *We extended a hand to Egypt*. The *dagesh*, which is in the *nun* of נתנו, comes in place of a second *nun*, as if it were said נתננו יד. Namely, להם יד נתנו *we extended a hand to them*, in that we were obeying them, and bowing down to them, that we would escape there for help. [and with] אשור לשבוע להם *Assyria to get enough food*. We even made a pact of friendship with the Assyrians in order to secure enough food from them.
- (7) אבותינו חטאו ואינם עונותיהם סבלנו *Our fathers have sinned, and are no more*. Namely, that although they are no more, because they are already dead, אנחנו *we have borne their iniquities*.
- (10) עורנו כתנור נכמרו *Our skin has become hot like an oven*, the skin tightened, and shrank, shrivelling fast as if it were burnt in a blazing oven. Every thing that was stretched in the beginning, and came back, was bounded<sup>126</sup>, and was gathered together, is known as כומר *being burnt*<sup>127</sup>. This is similar to בושלי<sup>128</sup> *dates ripened through withering*, because they were being gathered as late figs in order to ripen and gather them to one vessel, in order that they would be ripened/matured.
- (17/18) על זה היה דוה לבנו על אלה חשכו עינינו על הר ציון ששמים *For this our heart has become faint. For these things our eyes have grown dim, for Mount Zion, which lies desolate*, laying before him all the above-mentioned disasters which happened to them. For about all of them it does not say, *for this our heart*

<sup>126</sup>Emending the text to read מוצר *bounded* rather than מיצר *grieved*.

<sup>127</sup>כומר from כמר *to become warm/be burnt*, see Alcalay, *Dictionary*, 1035; or, כומר *ripened fruit*, *ibid.*

1035. See also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 647.

<sup>128</sup>במו בושלי כומר *B. Ber.* 40.72. [The Aramaic כומר means *withering*.]

has become faint, but [rather], for Mount Zion which lies desolate, to teach you that the destruction of the Temple was harsher for them than all the other disasters that they experienced<sup>129</sup>.

(18) הילכו בו *foxes prowl over it*; they trampled and trod on it. The explanation of הילכו *they walk* is דשו *they trampled*. In this way the foxes walk over it in order that their action is cleansing. Rabbi Gershom, may his memory be for a blessing, established that foxes trampled over it, and it was ploughed by the ploughs<sup>130</sup>.

(19) אתה די *You, HaShem*. I know that לעולם תשב *you remain forever*, and if that is the case, then...

(20) למה לנצח תשכחנינו *Why do you eternally forget us?* Have you not sworn to us by yourself, and just as you are enduring, so your oath is enduring?

(22) כי אם מאוס מאסתנו *unless you have utterly rejected us* because we have sinned. It was not for you to increase the anger against us with which you were wrathful - ונשובה אליך *Restore us to you, HaShem, that we may be restored*. Since it concludes with words of rebuke, one is obliged to repeat the previous verse [ie. verse 21], as in Qoheleth, Isaiah, and the Twelve (minor prophets).

The Commentary of Lamentations is completed: Praise to the powerful one of the kingdom.

<sup>129</sup>Kara merges these two verses as they anticipate the fall of the Temple later in v.18

<sup>130</sup>Buber comments that this was included because R. Gershom composed a penitential prayer גרוני נחר, of the Fast of Gedaliah [3 Tishri – anniversary of his death]. The *piyut* says דשו בו שועלים, and was first included in Kara's text by Jellinek in his Hamburg commentary.

**Another version according to the manuscript  
found in the treasury of books in Munich Collection 5**

**one**

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(1) *איכה יושבה בדרך העיר רבתי עם* (1) *How she sits in solitude, the city once full of people.* *בדרך* *solitary* is well known, but not because its explanation is *בדודה* *lonely*; rather, a unique expression *שולמיינטיר* in the vernacular<sup>131</sup>, similar to *אני מלאה הלכתי וריקם השיבני* (Ruth 1:21; *I was full when I went away, but [HaShem] has brought me back empty*), since it is also well known. Its explanation is *ווידמינט* in the vernacular<sup>132</sup>. Also here, *how* has this calamity been brought about because *she sits in solitude, the city that was formerly full of people*? But now she is *like a widow* who dwells alone. *רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות היתה למם* *The greatest among nations, the princess among the provinces has become a tributary.* The explanation is the city that was formerly mistress of the nations, and princess of the provinces, because the rest of the provinces were serving her, and paying her tax. Now she serves the nations, and pays tax to them.

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<sup>131</sup> Unidentified transliterated Old French.

<sup>132</sup> Unidentified transliterated Old French

(2) בכה תבכה בלילה *Bitterly she weeps in the night*. Her weeping is like someone who weeps in the night when there is no one there close to him<sup>133</sup>, to comfort him. And he weeps tear after tear until his tears cling to his cheeks, because when he cries during the day, someone comes near to him and distracts and comforts him. However, the one who weeps in the night, weeps until his tears cling to his cheeks; also, she resembles one who weeps in the night. ודמעתה מכל לחיה *her tear is upon her cheek* since there is no one to comfort her מכל אהביה *from all her lovers*. Its explanation is 'from all those nations' that formerly resembled her lovers. כל רעיה בגדו בה היו לה לאויבים *all her neighbours have betrayed her; they have become her enemies*. All the gentiles, who were regarded by her before as brothers and friends in the time of her greatness, now, in the time of her misfortune, betrayed her. It was not enough that they did not assist her, but that they were like enemies to her. During the greatness of Israel אוהב היה חירם לרוד (I Kgs 5:15; *Hiram had always been a friend of David*), and called Solomon his brother, as it is written: מזה הערים האלה אשר נתת לי אחי <sup>134</sup> (I Kgs 9:13; *What are these cities you have given to me my brother*). At their fall, it says על שלשה פשעי צר ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו על הסגירם (Amos 1:9; *For three generations of Tyre, and for four, I will not revoke it – for their delivering a total exile to Edom, not remembering the covenant of brothers*).

<sup>133</sup>Note the change in gender.

<sup>134</sup>נתתה in MT.

<sup>135</sup>שלמה. It is possible that Kara is perhaps using the consonantal text as a play on words with Solomon.

(3) גלתה יהודה מעוני ומרוב עבודה *Judah has gone into exile because of suffering and great servitude*. Its explanation is that from the day that Judah went into exile, and she herself dwelt among the nations, from that day she did not find rest owing to the affliction with which that nations afflicted her, and from the hard labour that they imposed on her. כל רודפיה השיגוה בין המצרים *all her pursuers overtook her between the boundaries*.<sup>136</sup>This is what you find in each place that Israel fled - when they came to distress close to their neighbours, their neighbours came and handed them over. They fled to the west: they came to the Gazaites and they handed them over, as it is written על שלשה פשעי עזה ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו על הגלותם גלות שלמה להסגיר לאדום (Amos 1:6; *For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke it - for their effecting a total exile by handing over [escapees] to Edom*). They fled to the north: the Tyrians handed them over, as is written above; they fled to the south: the Edomites killed them, as it is written: על שלשה פשעי אדום ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו על רדפו בחרב אחיו (Amos 1:11; *For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke it - for their pursuing his brother with the sword and suppressing his mercy; his anger has slaughtered incessantly, and he has kept his fury forever*).

(4) דרכי ציון אבלות מבלי באי מועד *The roads of Zion mourn for lack of festival pilgrims*. The roads that Israel walked when they were on a pilgrimage; now they lamented over them. מבלי באי מועד *for lack of festival pilgrims*. It was because of the wrath that desolated the Sanctuary that the festival pilgrims were

<sup>136</sup>Compare with the midrash of *Lam. Rab.* 1.3,29.

not on them. כל שעריה *all her gates* that were always open day and night, and were not locked up since Israel entered from all their cities; now they were שוממין *desolate*. כהניה *her priests* - who received from Israel all of the contributions given to the priests - now sigh. בתולותיה נוגות *her maidens are afflicted* is an expression of יגון *sorrow/agonny*, and תוגה *grief/distress*, and now היא מר לה *she herself is embittered*.

(5) היו צרייה לראש *her adversaries have become master*. When Israel accomplished God's wish it is said of them, ונתנך די לראש ולא לזנב (Deut 28:13; *HaShem will place you as a head and not as a tail*); they sinned before him, [so] היו צרייה לראש *her adversaries have become master*. אויביה שלו *her enemies are at ease* is an expression of שלוה *security/well-being*. כי די הוגה *for HaShem has afflicted her* is an expression of שבר *to break/ to ruin* similar to כי אם הוגה ורחם כרוב חסדיו (Lam 3:32; *He first afflicts, then pities, according to his abundant kindness*), and so כי לא ענה מלבו ויגה בני איש (ibid. v33; *For he does not torment capriciously, nor afflict man*). ה עולליה הלכו שבי לפני צר *her young children have gone into captivity before the enemy*. Even though it was not their custom for young children to go<sup>137</sup> into captivity, now they have gone into captivity.

(6) ויצא מן בת ציון כל הדרה *Gone from the daughter of Zion is all her splendour*<sup>138</sup>. They are her kings and princes, her priests and prophets who were the splendour of the Omnipresent. היו שרייה כאילים לא מצאו מרעה *Her*

<sup>137</sup> לילך. An unusual form – here it is read as ללכת *to go*.

<sup>138</sup> Unusually, here Kara is not following מבחן ק.

*princes were like harts that found no pasture.* As this hart, when it does not find pasture, does not have the strength to flee the hunt, so inasmuch as *they found no pasture* **הלכו בלא כח לפני רודף** *they walked on without strength before the pursuer.* So, thus it says **ולא היה לחם לעם**<sup>139</sup> *and there was no food for the people of the land*, **ותבקע העיר**<sup>140</sup> *and the city was penetrated*, **וכל אנשי המלחמה הלילה דרך שער בין החומותים וגו' ורדפו חיל כשדים אחר המלך וגו' (II Kgs 25: 3, 4, 5; on the ninth [day] of the [fourth] month the famine in the city was severe, and there was no food for the people of the land. The city was penetrated, and all the warriors [fled] by night through the gate between the walls etc. The Chaldean army chased after the king etc<sup>141</sup>).**

(7) *Jerusalem recalls the days of her suffering.* Now Jerusalem recalled in the days of her suffering **היו כל מחמדיה אשר היו** *and sorrow all her treasures that were from the days of old.* Such is the way of the world that when someone hopes for good, but with his end he goes down, he recalls in the days of his suffering the good years that were found in the good when he began. **ראוה צרים שחקו על משבתיה** *her enemies saw her and mocked at her destruction.* The enemies that saw her in the days of her greatness, when they saw her now in the days of her disgrace, they laughed at the charming words that discontinued from her. **משבתיה** *her downfall* is an

<sup>139</sup>Buber has emended the text from **כי לא היה לחם** to read **ולא היה לחם** as it is in MT.

<sup>140</sup>Buber has emended the text from **וכל אנשי המלחמה ייצאו לילה דרך החומותים** to read **הלילה** **וכל אנשי המלחמה ייצאו לילה דרך שער בין החומותים** as it is in MT.

<sup>141</sup>Buber has emended **וירדפו חיל כשדים אהריהם** as it is also found in the Prague manuscript to **וירדפו חיל כשדים אחר המלך** following MT. However, it should be noted that as it appears in the Prague manuscript in its incorrect form as well as in Munich 5, just as in the two previous notes above, it is possible that the manuscript was originally written with the textual errors as Kara would have been quoting from memory.

expression of הפסק *the judgement*, like וישבות המן (Josh 5:12; *The manna was depleted*) because it explains that the manna ceased<sup>142</sup>. Thus, יום ולילה לא (Gen 8:22; *day and night shall not cease*); and והשבתי כל משובה (Hosea 2:13; *I will terminate her every rejoicing*).

(8) חטא חטאה ירושלם על כן לנידה היתה *Jerusalem has sinned greatly, therefore she has become a wanderer*<sup>143</sup>. Its explanation is לטלטל *to cause to wander*, just like נע ונד (Gen 4:12; *a vagrant and a wanderer*). כל מכבדיה הזילוה כי ראו *All who once respected her [now] disparage her, for they have seen her nakedness*. Its explanation is that all the nations who respected her before, now disparaged her when they saw her nakedness, when they saw that they ruled [over] them naked in captivity. גם היא נאנחה ותשב אחור *even she herself groans and turns backward*. Its explanation is after she was flogged, she sighed on account of her sins that she has committed, because they caused her to become a wanderer. ותשב אחור *and turns backward*. Its explanation is that if she were able to go back and repent of her sins, now she would go back (and do it). If she had done the later things first, before she was exiled, and before she became a wanderer, when Jerusalem and her cities around her dwelt unharmed, she would not have become an exile.

(9) טומאתה בשוליה *Her impurity was on her skirts*. Its explanation is when she was defiled in her idolatry לא זכרה אחריתה *she was heedless of her end*. She

<sup>142</sup>המן *manna* (Hebrew). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 796 where מן = מנא (Aramaic). Kara uses both spellings here.

<sup>143</sup>This is traditionally translated as *unclean, disgrace* from the Hebrew root נדה. However, Kara is interpreting from the root נוד *to wander; to lament*.

did not pay attention to the reprimand of her prophets that bitter would be her end. ותָרַד פְּלֵאִים *she has descended astonishingly*.<sup>144</sup> Its explanation is that she suffered an amazing degradation, for extraordinary punishments befall her, something that did not occur to every nation and tongue, fulfilling וְהִפְלֵא ה' אֶת מְכוֹתֶיךָ (Deut 28:59; *Then HaShem will make extraordinary your blows*)<sup>145</sup>. אֵין מְנַחֵם *there is no one to comfort her*. Its explanation is that the one coming to comfort her was unable to comfort or delight her with another nation. Even as he<sup>146</sup> did in Nineveh, when prophesying about her disturbances<sup>147</sup>, it says מְנוּא אַמּוֹן הַיְשֵׁבָה בִּיאֻרִים מִיַּם סְבִיב לָהּ אֲשֶׁר חֵיל יָם מִיַּם חוֹמָתָהּ: כּוֹשׁ עֲצָמָהּ וְעַל וּמְצָרִים וְאֵין קֶצֶה פּוֹט וְלוֹבִים הָיוּ בְעִזְרֹתֶיךָ: גַּם הָיָא לְגַלְיָה הַלְכָה בְשָׁבִי גַם עוֹלְלֵיָהּ יִרְמְשׁוּ בְרֹאשׁ כָּל חוֹצוֹת נִכְבְּדֵיהָ יָדוּ גּוֹרֵל וְכָל גְּדוּלְיָהּ רִתְקוּ בְזָקִים: גַּם אֶת תְּשֻׁכְרֵי תְהִי נְעֻלְמָהּ גַּם אֶת תְּבַקְשֵׁי מַעוֹז מְאוּיִב (Nahum 3:8-11; *Are you better than No-Amon [Thebes] that sat by the Nile, with water around her, her rampart a sea, water her wall? Cush was her strength, Egypt too, and that without limit; Put and the Libyans were your helpers. Yet she became an exile, she went into captivity; even her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street; lots were cast for her nobles, all her dignitaries were bound in fetters. You also will be drunken, you will go into hiding; you will seek a refuge from the enemy*). Thus it is when the prophet prophesied on the suffering of Egypt – he comforts her (Zion) and delights her with Assyria, as

<sup>144</sup> Buber emends מופלאה מידה ירדה ופתרונו ירדה מופלאה to read ירדה ירדה מופלאה for it is written correctly in the Prague manuscript.

<sup>145</sup> Buber's manuscript edition does not contain ה' of מכותך ה' אֶת מְכוֹתֶיךָ like MT, therefore it has been emended.

<sup>146</sup> Appears to be a reference to Jonah.

<sup>147</sup> I am unsure of the meaning of בפירענוחה as used in the text. Therefore, the translation follows the reading פרענוחה *disorders/disturbances/riots*, rather than פרענוחה *payment/settling day*.

אל מי דמית בגדלך הנה [אשור] ארזי בלבנון יפה ענף [וחורש מצל] it is written וגבה קומה ובין עבותים היתה צמרתו:מים גדלוהו תהום רוממתהו את נהרותיה (Ezek 31:2b,3,4; *Whom are you like in your greatness? Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon, with fair branches and forest shade, and of great height, its top among thick boughs. The waters nourished it, the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place it was planted, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field*). And, ביום רדתו שאולה (ibid. v15; *On the day it went down to Sheol I caused sorrow; I closed the deep over it, I restrained its rivers, and its mighty waters were checked*); אל מי דמית ככה בכבוד (ibid. v18; *Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and greatness? Now you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden etc.*). You have learned that every nation that has been stricken - its delight is with another nation. As for Zion, is not the comforter able to liken unto her a nation or tongue who was stricken like her? As it says, כי ראה די את עניי כי *Look, HaShem, at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed.*

(10) *The enemy spread out his hand over all her treasures.* This is the Temple, as it was said הנני<sup>149</sup> מחללא את מקדשי גאון עוזכם (Ezek 24:21; *Behold, I am profaning my sanctuary, the pride of your strength, the darling of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul*). כי *Indeed, she saw nations*

<sup>148</sup>Not in MT.

<sup>149</sup>Buber has bracketed a superfluous אַנִּי in Kara's text which is not present in MT.

*invade her sanctuary, about whom you had commanded that they should not enter your congregation.* The day came that she saw nations entering into her sanctuary that, previously, were not permitted to enter even into the congregation. They were Ammon and Moab, because of the biblical verse about them **לא יבוא עמוני ומואבי וגו'** (Deut 23:4; *An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter etc*).

(11) **כל עמה נאנחים מבקשים לחם נתנו מחמדיהם באכל להשיב נפש** *All her people are sighing, searching for bread. They give their treasures for food to restore the soul.* And if you say all the nations also hand over their treasures for food and produce, all the silver and gold that one accumulates he hands over for produce, the reply is the rest of the nations, if they hand over silver and gold, and treasures for food, they buy it in order that their soul be satiated, and for a long time. But Israel handed over their treasures for food that was only enough to restore the soul and to live a short while. **ראה ה' והביטה כי הייתי זולל'** *See, HaShem, and consider how worthless I have become,* for I have become despised and (a) disgrace to the nations.

(12) **לא אליכם כל עוברי דרך** *May it not befall you, all who pass by this road.*

All who pass by the road - these are the generations, just as **הלא שאלתם** **עוברי דרך**<sup>150</sup> (Job 21:29; *did you not inquire of wayfarers?*). Its explanation is [that] what happened to the generation of Zedekiah will not happen to another generation. From the day that Israel went up from Egypt until the generation of Zedekiah, you did not have a generation that did not sin. As it was said **למן היום**

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<sup>150</sup>Buber brackets **כל** in the manuscript edition as it is not in MT.

אשר יצאו אבותיכם מארץ מצרים עד היום הזה ואשלח אליכם את כל עבדי  
 (Jer 7:25,26; *From the day your forefathers left the land of Egypt until this day, I sent to you all my servants, the prophets, daily, rising early and sending forth. But they would not listen to me, and they would not incline their ear*). But in all of them the Temple was not destroyed, only in the generation of Zedekiah. It is as our rabbis said, <sup>151</sup>צדקיהו שתה שמרי כל *Zedekiah drank the dregs of all the generations, אשר עולל לי that was inflicted on me*. Its explanation is 'which was done to me', and you transmit this repents the traitor by your hand every place that you see. <sup>עולל</sup> without *tav* is just like <sup>עולל</sup> *למו כאשר עוללת לי* (Lam 1:22; *and deal with them as you have dealt with me*). Similarly, <sup>עיני עוללה לנפשי</sup> (ibid. 3:51: *My eyes have brought me grief*). It is an expression of action and doing. But if it is written with *tav*, like <sup>אשר</sup> *את אשר התעללתי במצרים* (Exod 10:2; *that I made a mockery of Egypt*); and <sup>אשר</sup> *כאשר* (I Sam 6:6<sup>152</sup>; *when he mocked them*); and <sup>ויתעללו בה</sup> (Judg 19:25; *and they maltreated her*); and also <sup>ודקרונני והתעללו בי</sup> <sup>153</sup>(I Sam 31:4; *and stab me and abuse me*), all of them are an expression of mocking them.

(13) *From on high he sent fire into bones, and it subdued<sup>154</sup> them*. Its explanation is that *from on high he sent fire into my bones* and he made it adhere to my bones, just as *התמורות את הזהב*

<sup>151</sup>הוא שאמרו רבותינו צדקיהו שתה שמרי כל הדורות <sup>151</sup> quote. Buber is unable to identify the source of this

<sup>152</sup>Buber edition reads I Sam 6:7.

<sup>153</sup>Buber edition has ודקרונני.

<sup>154</sup>The root <sup>רדה</sup> here has the meaning *to have dominion, to rule*.

(I Kgs 6:32; *he pressed the gold over the cherubim and the palms*); and so it is in the idiom of the *Mishnah*, *the one who removes bread from the oven*<sup>155</sup> means *the one who pastes bread into the oven*. כל היום דוה *sick throughout the day* is similar to וכל לבב דוי (Isa 1:5; *and each heart afflicted*).

(14) נשקד עול פשעי בידו *The yoke of my transgressions was bound up in his hand*, according to the context, was written *the yoke of my transgressions was sealed in his hand*. In the commentary of Rabbi Solomon, son of Rabbi Isaac, I saw similarly פיי"ינמלי *to be bound* is נשקד <sup>156</sup>. כהדין מסקדונא דמסקד לה לתורתא, נשקד in the vernacular<sup>157</sup>, but there is doubt about the truth of the matter<sup>158</sup>. עול פשעי *the yoke of my transgressions* is like ועולתה קפצה פיה (Job 5:16; *and iniquity shuts its mouth*). ישתרגו *they were knit together*. They were turned into weaving, and its explanation is that the transgressions increased and became great, and were woven together until they grew upon my neck and caused my strength to fail. It is similar (to him) in Ezekiel, צץ המטה פרח הזרון החמם קם למטה רשע (Ezekiel 7:10,11; *the rod has sprouted fruit, wantonness has blossomed. Violence has arisen to become a rod of wickedness*).

(15) כל אבירי די *The Lord has trampled all my warriors*. From the decree וסר מרע משתולל (Isa 59:15; *he who turned away from evil is despoiled*), since its explanation is נידש *he was trampled* and it was made into a highway that everyone

<sup>155</sup>Cf. Judges 14:9. See also Sabb. IV.2 *if a person stuck a loaf to the wall of the oven...* For root רדה see Jastrow p. 1452, and also note 23 above.

<sup>156</sup>ובפתרונת רבינו שלמה ברי יצחק ראיתי דומה נשקד כהדין מסקדונא דמסקד לה לתורתא. Compare this with Kara in 104I, and Rashi concerning the ox goad.

<sup>157</sup>Old French not yet identified.

<sup>158</sup>Compare with the text of 1:14 in 104I where Kara says that it *should be considered like the enemy wounding/goads* [מסקד].

tramples on. Also in this case, their proud one trampled all my heroes, and made them like dust in order to crush them. **קרא עלי מועד** *He has proclaimed a fixed time against me.* Its explanation is *he decreed a set time against me*, as in **כי קרא** *כי קרא* (II Kgs 8:1; *for HaShem has called for a famine*). **גת דרך די לבתולת בת יהודה** *in a winepress the Lord has trodden the maiden daughter of Judah.* For the people of Judah, who resemble a maiden who dwells in security for **לא נסתה** *לא נסתה* (Deut 28:56; *she never tried to set the sole of her foot upon the ground*).

(16) **על אלה אני בוכיה עיני יורדה מים כי רחק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי** *Over these I weep; my eye continuously runs with water for a comforter to restore my soul is far from me*, as though saying all the rebukes above, as if there were someone who was able to comfort me, [I was comforted, but over these I weep for a comforter was far from me, who was as great as my father, because there was no one able to comfort me]<sup>159</sup> in order to restore my soul. Just as it says in the matter of **מה אעידך (ומה) [מה] אדמה לך הבת ירושלם מה אשוה לך אנחמך** *(Lam 2:13; With what shall I bear witness for you? To what can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you that I may comfort you, O maiden daughter of Zion? Your ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you?)*

(17) **פרשה ציון בידיה** *Zion spreads out her hands.* She broke with her hands, similar to **פרוש לרעב לחמך** (Isa 58:7; *to divide your bread with the hungry*),

<sup>159</sup> **לנחמני** etc as far as **לנחמני** was added by Buber because it is in the Prague manuscript. The copyist omitted from **לנחמני** as far as **לנחמני**.

because its explanation is **בצע** *he broke off your bread with the hungry*; and so **מה על** *those who mourn for the dead*)<sup>160</sup>, for its explanation is that they did not break a loaf of bread for them to strengthen the mourner, or to comfort him for the dead.

**צוה די ליעקב סביביו צריו** *HaShem commmanded against Jacob that his enemies should surround him*. Its explanation is that HaShem commmanded against Jacob that all his neighbours who surrounded him should be oppressors to him. **היתה ירושלם לנדה ביניהם** *Jerusalem has become as one unclean in their midst*, being despised and debased by all the peoples, like the impurity of the menstruant.

(18) **צדיק הוא הי כי פיהו מריתי** *HaShem is righteous, for I have disobeyed his command* raising up this lament concerning Israel, speaking in the place of Israel like an envoy who speaks in the place of the one who sent him; and as though Israel was saying he was right about everything he brought against me. For it was as punishment because I disobeyed his command, that these reprimands came upon me.

(19) **קראתי למאהבי המה רמוני** *I called to my lovers, but they deceived me*. Its explanation is the nations to whom she clung for love. They are Egypt and Assyria; Egypt of which it is written **ותזוני אל בני מצרים** (Ezek 16:26; *you were licentious with the Egyptians*), and written **אל בני אשור עגבה** (ibid. 23:12; *She lusted after the Assyrians*). To them I cried to help me, but they deceived me because they did not help me, in as much as it is said in the text **עודנו תכלינה**

<sup>160</sup>In MT **ו** is used rather than the **ש** in the Kara text.



will place his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem etc), when they heard that the edict was decreed from you, in that hour they rejoiced, as it says here: כל פרעה מלך מצרים (Jer 46:17; Pharaoh, the blustery king of Egypt, has let the appointed time go by). But אתה הבאת יום קראת (Lam 1:15; He proclaimed a set time against me to crush my young men). Bring [the day you have proclaimed] and let them be like me. Its explanation is, when the day that you appointed for divine punishment did not pass, just like you have brought the day you proclaimed is written, and so the day that you appointed for divine punishment, כי יום נקם לדי שנת שילומים לריב ציון (Isa 34:8; For it is a day of vengeance for HaShem, a year of retribution for the grievance for Zion). It will come and it will not disappear.

(22) תבא כל רעתם לפניך Let all their evil doing come before you, and their iniquity from before you do not blot out. ועולל למו כאשר עוללת לי על כל פשעי and deal with them as you have dealt with me for all my transgressions,

pain that there is nothing to liken it [with], just as it is written above **הביטו וראו** (Lam 1:12; *Look and see. Is there is any pain like my pain etc.*). So, maltreat them with great pain that they are unable to liken it to any other pain. **כי רבות אנחותי ולבי דוי** *for my groans are many, and my heart is sick.* In the way of the world, a man with pain in one of his limbs, the rest of his limbs do not feel and suffer pain as much, but when the heart is sick, the whole body is sick, for there is no pain like the pain of the heart.

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**two**

(1) **איכה יעיב באפו ד' את בת ציון** *How the Lord, in his anger, has clouded the daughter of Zion.* Its explanation is **יחשיך** *has darkened*, an expression of **עבים** *clouds*. **השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל** *He has cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Israel.* They are the strongholds of the daughter of Judah, and all the dwellings of Jacob, and the kingdom and her rulers, like that explained below; all of these were called the splendour of Israel. **ולא זכר הדרום רגליו ביום אפו** *He did not remember his footstool in the day of his wrath.* Its explanation

is, he did not remember עולמו *his world* in the day of his wrath, because the earth and all her inhabitants were called his footstool, as it is written השמים כסא' והארץ הדרום רגלי (Isa 66:1; *Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool*). But the interpreters explain it: he did not remember his Temple in the day of his wrath, but *the earth is his footstool* (ibid). Targum Jonathan [reads] 'my Temple'.

(3) קרן ישראל גדע בחרי אף כל קרן ישראל *He destroyed, in his burning anger, all the horn of Israel*; <sup>163</sup>the horn of Israel, the horn of the priesthood, the horn of the Levitehood, the horn of the Sabbaths, the horn of the prophets, the horn of the Torah. השיב *He drew back his right hand in the presence of the enemy*, his right hand that, until now, shielded Israel from the nations, like the text which says ימינך די נאדרי בכח ימינך די תרעץ אויב (Exod 15:6; *Your right hand, HaShem, is glorified with strength; your right hand, HaShem, smashes the enemy*). Now, her position is the opposite for it did not save them from the sword of the enemy.

(4) דרך קשתו כאויב נצב ימינו *He bent his bow like an enemy, he set his right hand* to fire the arrow with it, as though like an adversary who takes hold of a bow with his left hand, and fires the arrow with his right, like the text which says קשתך מיד שמאלך וחצידך מיד ימינך אפיל (Ezek 39:3; *I will strike your bow from your left hand, and cast down your arrows from your right hand*).

(5) וירב בבת יהודה תאניה *He multiplied within the daughter of Judah mourning*.

Its explanation is ויגדל *He increased* within the daughter of Judah sorrow and

<sup>163</sup> קרן ישראל כו'. At 2.3.6, *Lam. Rab.* considers that *there are ten horns* etc.

mourning, but if it is pointed נִירָב, its explanation is נִיגְדַל, just like העם נִירָב (Exod 1:20; and the people increased)<sup>164</sup>.

(6/7) וַיַּחַמוּס כַּגֵּן שֶׁבוּ *He has destroyed his booth like a garden*. Its explanation is he exposed Zion which was his booth, as it is written וַיְהִי בְשֵׁלֶם סִכּוֹ וּמִעוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן (Ps 76:3; His tabernacle was in Salem, and his dwelling place in Zion). This is like a garden that stands crushed and exposed after its fruits were gathered. וַיַּחַמוּס *he destroyed* is an expression for גִּלּוּי *exposure*, כַּהֲנִיחַ חֲמָסוֹ תּוֹרָתִי (Ezek 22:26; her priests robbed my Torah) because its explanation is they exposed their faces to the Torah not in accordance with the Halakhah, and so נִגְלוּ שׁוּלְיַךְ נַחְמָסוֹ עֲקֵבֶיךָ (Jer 13:22; your skirts have been revealed, your steps have been exposed). שַׁחַת מוֹעֵדוֹ *he destroyed his place of assembly*. Its explanation is from the day that he stripped his booth like a garden, from that day and beyond he destroyed his place of assembly. וַיִּשְׁכַּח דִּי בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבֹתָ *HaShem has caused the appointed feast and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion* for since the Temple was destroyed, and afterwards, the pilgrims stopped. Thus, from that day, and afterwards זָנַח ה' מִזְבְּחוֹ *the Lord abandoned his altar, disowned his Sanctuary*, rejected אֲשֶׁלִּי יִדְרֵךְ in the vernacular<sup>165</sup>, just like נִאֲרַת בְּרִית עֲבָדְךָ (Ps 89:40; You have destroyed the covenant of your servant). קוֹל נִתְנוּ בְּבֵית דִּי כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד *They raised a clamour in the Temple of HaShem as in the day of a festival*. The enemies raised a clamour in the Temple of HaShem, and singing on the day that

<sup>164</sup>Kara appears to draw a parallel between the intensive form of the verbs רָבָה (*hiphil*) and גָּדַל (*piel*), and the intransitive (*qal*) form. Compare with 104I.

<sup>165</sup>Unidentified Old French – compare with 104I אינריליידיך.

they entered it in order to destroy it as on the day of a festival, for the Levites used to sing in it and made in it the sound of thanksgiving <sup>166</sup>בְּקוֹל רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה (Ps 42:5; *with joyous song and thanks, a celebrating multitude*).

- (8) **חָשַׁב ה' לְהַשְׁחֹתָּהּ** *HaShem determined to destroy*. Its explanation is when he determined to destroy the walls of the daughter of Zion, and decree an edict upon her, he did not regret the evil that he determined to destroy, and he did not turn back his hand from devouring; because we found in many places that the edicts he decrees are repealed, like **וַיִּנָּחֵם דָּי עַל הָרַעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה** (Jonah 3:10; *and HaShem relented concerning the evil he had said he would bring upon them, and did not do it*) of Nineveh. But in this case, when he determined in his heart to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion **נָטָה קוֹן** *he drew a line*. Its explanation is he decreed against her decrees of her destruction, like <sup>167</sup>**וְנָטָה קוֹן עֲלֶיהָ** (Isa 34:11; *and he will draw a line of emptiness against it*); because its explanation is he decreed an edict of **חֹרְבָן** *destruction* against her, and so **וְנָטִיתִי עַל יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת קוֹ שׁוֹמְרוֹן** (II Kgs 21:13; *I will stretch out over Jerusalem the line of Samaria*); because its explanation is he decreed the edict of Samaria upon her. **לֹא הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ מִבְּלֹעַ** *He did not draw back his hand from consuming*. Its explanation is he did not turn back his edict from her. **וַיַּשְׂרֵא וְכָר וַיֵּאֱבֵל חֵיל וְחוֹמָה** <sup>168</sup>*He made rampart and wall mourn* **וַיַּשְׂרֵא וְכָר** *the large wall and the smaller wall*, wall apparently from wall.

<sup>166</sup>Correcting the Hebrew text to follow MT.

<sup>167</sup>**וְנָטָה קוֹן עֲלֶיהָ גִזְרֵי גִזְרֵי גִזְרֵי** של חֲשַׁחְתָּהּ כְּמוֹ. Buber has included this as it is in the Prague manuscript.

<sup>168</sup>**וַיַּשְׂרֵא וְכָר** is interpreted by R. Huna ben R. Aha as the rampart with the smaller wall within it. This is found in *Lam. Rab.* at 2.8.12. See also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1541, and *b. Pesah.* 86a etc.

*they languished together.* Its explanation is פסקו *they ceased*, just like ופרח (Nahum 1:4; *the flower of Lebanon fades*), and רבת בנים אומללה (I Sam 2:5; *but she who has many children languishes*). Its explanation is she has ceased from giving birth.

(9) *Her gates have sunk into the earth;* from the day that her rampart and wall ceased, her gates have sunk into the earth. אבד ושבר בריחיה *He has destroyed and broken her bars* since every city whose walls they destroyed - her gates and her bars are naught; [there is no] one gives thought to them to build them, and themselves they are ruined and broken. מלכה ושריה *her king and her officers are among the nations, there is guidance no more.* Its explanation is from the day that her king and her officers were exiled among the nations, the Torah was not maintained in Israel for from that day all the dependent commandments ceased in the land; also the nations decreed edicts against her to cease the Torah. גם נביאיה לא מצאו חזון *even her prophets could find no vision* because from the days of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, prophecy ceased from Israel.

(10) *They sit on the ground, they are silent.* It is written ויהפשו (II Kgs 25:6; *Then they seized the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they spoke [words of] judgement to him*). Rabbi Menachem bar Helbo the elder<sup>169</sup> explained that when the king of Babylon seized Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, (in) that hour he blinded his eyes in order to bring him to Babylon blind. This fulfils what

<sup>169</sup>R. Menachem bar Helbo was Kara's uncle, his father's brother.

it says: והבאתי אותו בבבלה ארץ כשדים ואותה לא יראה ושם ימות (Ezek 12:13; *then I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he will not see [it], and there he will die*). When he entered Babylon he sent and brought the elders of Jerusalem into his presence; he said, "It is written in your Torah איש כי ידור נדר (Num 30:3; *If a man takes a vow to HaShem etc*), is there a person who is able to cancel the oath to him? They said, "He may not renounce (it), but others may renounce (it) for him." He said to them, "If so, it is you who have renounced for Zedekiah the oath (by) which I made him king and brought him in with an oath that he would not rebel against me. But he despised my oath, and violated my covenant, and rebelled against me." At once he decreed and returned them to the land, and he decreed that they be killed, for it is written *They sit on the ground, the elders of the daughter of Zion are silent*.

(13) *With what shall I bear witness for you? To what can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you that I may comfort you* that I should be able to say, "Is it not so that if it had happened to some other nation as it happened to you, that you would see them and be consoled? And who has caused you all this harm?"

(14) *Your prophets who envisioned for you vanity and foolishness*, just as Ezekiel said אמור אל טחי תפל ויפול (Ezek 13:11; *Say to those who smear with plaster that it will collapse!*); תפל plaster that is חומר clay, because there is no סיד plaster mixed in it for it does not stick to the wall, except the day it is smeared on the wall, and the next day. [Then] heavy rain comes and causes it to fall. Also in this

case, *your prophets envisioned for you vanity and foolishness*, for they envisioned for you the destruction of vanity saying, 'You will have peace!' ולא גילו על עונך *They did not expose your iniquity*. They did not expose your end – that it will be bitter in its end. להשיב שבותך *to bring back your captivity* in order that you would turn back in repentance, like ושב די' אליהך את שבותך ורחמך (Deut 30:3; *Then HaShem, your God, will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you*) ומדוחים *and the temptations* that tempted them from the ways of the Omnipresent.

(15) ספקו עליך כפים כל עוברי דרך (15) *All who pass along the way clap hands at you*. When the Temple was established, not for Jerusalem alone was the reform, but for all the nations, because when the gentile cried out to his gods, they did not answer him, and from his anguish they did not deliver him. Therefore, cursing his king and his gods, he turned to above, and then he entered the Temple and we responded, as it is written וגם אל הנכרי אשר לאמעמך ישראל הוא ובא מארץ רחוקה למען שמך כי (ישמעו) [ישמען] את (שמעך) [שמך] הגדול ואת ירך החזקה וזרועך הנטויה ובא והתפלל אל הבית הזה, (ואתה) [אתה] שמע השמים מכון שבתך ועשית ככל אשר יקרא אליך הנכרי למען ידעון כל עמי וגו' (I Kgs 8:41-43; "*Also a gentile who is not of Your people Israel, but will come from a distant land, for Your Name's sake – for they will hear of Your great Name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm – and will come and pray toward this Temple – may You hear from Heaven, the foundation of your abode, and act according to to all the gentile calls out to you, so that all the peoples of the world may*

*know Your Name, to fear etc*"). Therefore, all the gentiles called out to Jerusalem, "You are a paragon of beauty, joy to all the earth!", and when she was destroyed, all the nations were worried, as it is written **והבית הזה יהיה עליון כל עובר עליו (שם) [ישם] (וישרק) [ושרק] ואמרו על מה עשה ד' ככה לארץ הזאת ולבית הזה** (I Kgs 9:8; *And this Temple, which should be so exalted – all who pass by it shall be appalled and will whistle, and they will say, "Why did HaShem do such a thing to this land and to this Temple?"*). But the enemies, who are the peoples who were living round about the land of Israel were rejoicing, as it is written **פצו עליך פיהם כל אויביך שרקו ויחרקו שן אמרו בלענו אך זה היום שקוינהו מצאנו ראינו** (Lam 2:16; *All your enemies opened their mouths wide against you; they whistle and gnash their teeth. They say, "We have devoured her! Indeed, this is the day we awaited; we have found it, we have seen it!"*).

(17)<sup>170</sup> **עשה ד' אשר זמם** *HaShem has done what he planned*. Although when she was destroyed from high stature<sup>171</sup>, he turned back from the edict he had decreed, now *he did as he had planned*. **בצע אמרתו אשר צוה מימי קדם** *he accomplished his word that he commanded from days of old*. **השלים דברתו** *He completed his word that he decreed in the days of old*, when the edict was decreed in the days of Moses, as it is said **והשמותי את מקדשיכם** (Lev 26:31; *I will make your sanctuaries desolate*). **בצע** *he accomplished*. Its explanation is **השלים** *he completed*, like

<sup>170</sup>This verse has been moved from the end of verse 15 where Buber left it, only to make the verse easier to distinguish from the surrounding text.

<sup>171</sup>**אעפ"י שבחרבה מקומות** is a difficult text and I am unsure what to do with it. This translation is, therefore, tentatively offered.

והיה כי יבצע די את כל מעשהו (Isa 10:12; *But it will be that after the Lord completes all his work*).

(18) **צעק לבם אל די** *Their heart cried out to the Lord*. Now, in their exile, their heart cried out to the Lord; if only their heart had cried out to him while they lived upon their land in peace before they were exiled, they would not have been exiled, and would not need to cry out in their exile. **אל תתני פוגת לך** *give yourself no respite*. Its explanation is give yourself no **מעצור** *restraint*, like **עיני נגרה ולא תדמה מאין הפוגות** (Lam 3:49; *My eye overflows and will not cease - without respite*).

(19) **קומי רוני בלילה** *Arise, cry aloud in the night*. Its explanation is: **צעקי** *cry out* in the night, just as reading *chant!* when people raised their voice and chanted as they rejoiced. Thus *chant!* is read when a person offered his voice in weeping, for **רון** *chant* is an expression of **צעקה** *outcry* whether for joy or for lament. And from another explanation, **אל הרנה ואל התפלה** (I Kgs 8:28; *to hear the cry and the prayer*), since its explanation is to hear to the **הצעקה** *cry* and the prayer, and thus **הרנה במחנה** (ויעבור) (והעבור) (I Kgs 22:36; *The call went out in the camp*).

(20) **ראה די והביטה למי עוללת כה** *See, O HaShem, and behold to whom you have done this*, just as you have done to me. **[אם האכלנה]** *Should (women) eat their own offspring?* Have a people been heard of<sup>172</sup> such that women eat their own offspring, or see that priest and prophet are killed in the Sanctuary, in as much as

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<sup>172</sup>Reading **עם** *שמע* as in 104I, rather than **השמע** *עם* as is found here in the text of Munich 5.

the priests were killed on account of their action/profession? עוללי טפוחים  
*offspring of their nursing*. Its explanation is, offspring of (their) גידולים *raising*.

(22) תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב *You invited, as on a festival day, my terrors round about*. Its explanation is, you called a festival in order to destroy the [nations] that were for me a terror on every side<sup>173</sup>, like the day of a festival that you called against me to break my young men. אשר טיפחתי ורבייתי *Those I cherished and brought up* - the two of them are one expression, like בניים *children* (Isa 1:2; "*Children I have reared and raised*"), because they are both one expression.

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### three

(1) אני הגבר ראה עני *I am the man who has seen affliction*. Its explanation is, It is I who am the man who was beaten by the rod of his wrath with the punishments of anger, and not the punishments of love; by the rod that is the destroyer of skin and flesh, that breaks the bone as it is explained below בלה בשרי ועורי שבר *He has worn away my flesh and skin; he has broken my bones* (Lam 3:4; *He has worn away my flesh and skin; he has broken my bones*). But [it is] not with the rod that a man punishes his son. I am the man who has seen affliction, <sup>174</sup>אני שוי ציל אום קי גרנט מאל אה באו *I am that man who is great evil*

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<sup>173</sup> Compare this reading with that of 104I where *the nations* (introduced into this commentary by Buber) are not the terror!

<sup>174</sup> *Jeu sui cil hom ki grant mal ou verdue* in Old French.

or virtue. Thus Jeremiah said everyone can say about me, " This is the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the wrath of the Holy One, blessed be He, more than the prophets who prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, for concerning all of them, the Temple was not destroyed in their days, but in my days."

- (2) אֹתִי נָהַג וַיּוֹלֶךְ חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא אֹרֶךְ *He has driven me and led me into darkness and not light.* For every darkness there is an end; you have no night because you did not shine light upon it at the end of the last watch (of the night) when dawn was about to break. But, *he has driven me and led me into darkness and not light* - it was written about Egypt who was exiled מִצְרַיִם אֶת אֶקְבֵץ שָׁנָה אֶקְבֵץ אֶת מִצְרַיִם (Ezek 29:13; *At the end of forty years I will gather Egypt*), and so every nation who went into exile from its location in the end returned. But Israel - how many days that they have been exiled, and even today they are in their exile.
- (3) אֵךְ בִּי יֵשֶׁב יְהִפֵּךְ יָדוֹ *Only against me would he repeatedly turn his hand.* All the nations sin, but there is not a nation that continues that the Holy One, blessed be He, visits suffering upon, but against me, of whom it is said, *Only against me did he turn his hand all day long.*
- (4) בָּלָה בְּשָׂרִי וּבְעוֹרִי *He has made my flesh and skin waste away.* בָּלָה *waste away* is like לְבֹל עֵץ אֲסָגוֹד (Isa 44:19; *Shall I bow down to rotten wood?*). At first he cried out because he was beaten with the rod of wrath, and when his words were completed, then he did not explain what the rod of wrath was. Now, he explains that this is the rod that destroys the flesh and the skin, and breaks the bones.

(5) **בנה עלי ויקף ראש ותלאה** *He has built over me and encircled [me] with bitterness and hardship.* This text is meant for the text above that says, *He has driven me and led me into darkness and not light* (Lam 3:2). For if she says there is still hope in the matter for a person who walks in darkness and settles in dark alleys, walking and feeling until emerging into light, therefore, it says *He has built over me and encircled [me] with bitterness and hardship.* Its explanation is that although I was imprisoned and restrained [in] darkness, so that even if the prison was open, I was unable to go out because of the darkness. Furthermore, he has built a building over me, and they have encompassed [me], and with a wall they have surrounded me. Perhaps she says I am able to jump and to leap over it, and to go out. Therefore, it says *bitterness and hardship.* Its explanation is **הבניה** *he raises up*<sup>175</sup> the construction around me above my head. **ותלאה** *and hardship* - its explanation is **והלאה** *and beyond*, and thus explains Rabbi Saadiah, but exegetes explain it as *he has besieged me and encircled me with bitterness and hardship*, he encompassed me more than gall, and bitterness, and hardship. **תלאה** *suffering* is an expression of troubles and weariness.

(6) **במחשכים הושיבני** *He has made me to dwell in darkness* but not like the same darkness of which [it says], **לפניהם לאור** [אשים מחשך] (Isa 42:16; [I will turn darkness] into light before them). But, like the dead whose darkness is eternal darkness.

(7) **גדר בעדי ולא אצא הכביד נחשתי** *He has fenced me in so I cannot escape; He has made my chain heavy.* Its explanation is if he made me dwell in darkness

<sup>175</sup>Reading **הבניה** rather than **הנביה** which is found in the commentary.

and did not fence me in, it would not be possible to get out because of the darkness, and in addition he has fenced me in. Furthermore, although he has walled me in, he has made my chain heavy. Its explanation is נחשתים *chains* that I was bound<sup>176</sup> with were heavy, so much so that I was not able to escape them even if I were sitting in the light of day, and even if he had not fenced me in.

(8) **גם כי אזעק ואשוע** *Though I would cry out and plead*, that perhaps you would say there is hope for me yet; that if I would cry out before him he would be found for me, that behold, from his edict **להוציא ממסגר אסיר ומבית כלא יושבי חשך** (Isa 42:7; *to bring forth a prisoner from confinement, and dwellers of darkness from prison*). But if I cry out and plead from a place that he has caused me to sit in darkness, and has walled me in; from there will he bring me out into light? It teaches us that *even though I would cry out and plead, he shuts out my prayer*.

(9) **גדר דרכי בגזית** *He has walled up my roads with hewn stones*, as if with **אבני גזית** *hewn stones*. How has he has walled up my roads? With my paths that he has distorted, for I do not know how to grasp a straight road, that I may return to my place on it. <sup>177</sup>One who was [see Midrash Eichah].

(10) **דוב אורב הוא לי** *He is a lurking bear to me*. Its explanation is that although the road is so distorted and crooked that there is no one able to leave on it to the straight path, *he is a lurking bear to me*. For if I go outside of the prison he lurks in order to prey upon me like a bear that lurks to prey upon its prey.

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<sup>176</sup>The text here is barely legible, and I have reconstructed to read **שאני אסור** *that I was bound (with)*, following 104I..

<sup>177</sup> Compare with 104I..

- (11) דרכי סורר *He has strewn my paths with thorns.* He has covered my roads with thorns so that I am unable to find my paths. ויפשחני *and torn me to shreds.* Its explanation is ויבקעני *and he has split/stripped me,*<sup>178</sup>like אילן שנפשח *if a tree is split/ if a tree is stripped.*
- (12) דרך קשתו ויציבני כמטרא לחץ *He bent his bow and set me up as a target for the arrow,* that every archer wants to shoot, and constraint is abandoned. Thus Israel is abandoned to all the nations.
- (13) הביא בכליותי בני אשפתו *He caused the sons of his quiver to enter my innards,* because he established me as a target he shot arrows into me, and caused arrows, sons of the quiver, to enter into my innards; for a person lays their arrows in the quiver.
- (14) הייתי שחוק לכל עמי *I have become a laughingstock to all my people* resembling a neighbour. Its explanation is to every people.
- (16) ויגרס בחצץ שיני *He ground my teeth on gravel.* Its explanation is he has broken my teeth with gravel because when they (the Babylonians) were exiling them, they (the Judeans) kneaded their flour with dust, the dust entered between their teeth, and their teeth were broken. Gravel is sand, just like ואחר ימלא פיהו *and afterwards his mouth will be filled with gravel*. הכפישני באפר *He made me cower in ashes,* for they lay down upon dust and ashes.
- (17) נשיתי טובה *I have forgotten goodness,* for a man they bring into captivity has forgotten goodness entirely.

<sup>178</sup> כמו אילן שנפשח. *B. Shev. 4.6 if a tree is split; b. Hul. 127<sup>B</sup>; if a tree is stripped.* Compare with 104I.

(18/19) ואמר אבד נצחתי ותוחלתי מהי זכר עניי ומרודי לענה וראש *And I said,*

*"Lost is my strength and my expectation from HaShem. Remember my afflictions and my sorrow, the wormwood and the bitterness.* These two verses are combined by phraseology, and the explanation is one. Thus, their explanation is that although I was able to say my hope and my expectation from HaShem was lost, for what hope is there for someone who is imprisoned in a dark place, and a prison built with hewn stones, and walled in for his sake? He is bound with heavy chains, and locked up in prison from all sides, so that no one would hear his voice from outside when he cries out. He twisted his paths from outside to the prison, so that even if he pulled down the wall of the prison, it would be impossible for him to return the way that he had walked and there is nothing for it but that *he is a lurking bear to me.* From now on, my hope to get out is lost, and in vain *I cry out and plead* for behold, *he shut out my prayer.* Even so, I was not silent from crying out and asking him for mercy, and to beg from him, and say to him, *Remember my afflictions and my sorrow, the wormwood and the bitterness.* <sup>179</sup>זכר עניי ומרודי לענה וראש for it resembles *the wormwood and the bitterness.* ועניי מרודים *and my sorrow,* like <sup>180</sup>פורטנט תביא בית (Isa 58:7; *and bring the homeless [into the] house*).

קייא פוברייא אורא דירא סצישטא אשפרנינא אישט מא פרדוטא קייא דינישטא

<sup>179</sup>The repeated phrase זכר עניי ומרודי may be dittography, or deliberate repetition. However, it is also found in the Gad edition of Munich 5.

<sup>180</sup>This appears to be a quotation from a piece of Old French poetry for which, as yet, there is no translation. The present transcription reads: PO(U)RT[A]NT QUI A FORVEIIE AOR[R]A (or A ORE) DIRA SESZISTE (unattested combination of sezisme and siste) A S[A] (or ASTE) FR[E]NINE IEST MA FR[OI]DURE (or PR[O]DOME) QUI A DIGNESTE (or DE[S]NICHIE) GERKE (or GERLE) DIEU MES (or MIE) CH[E] GESIR (or IE[IS]SIR) FOR[S] (or POR) [A]H[A]NT (or EANT) N[U]LERIE JO QUIEU (for CUI?) N[E] DI FR[A]YEUR A DIEU. [Dr Clive Sneddon]

יירקלא דיין מייש אישיר פורענט נליריי יו קייו נדייאה פרייאור אדוי.

(20) זכר תזכור *You remember well*. This is not a prayer, but these two words serve for the future, and so its explanation is, "I know that, behold!, the day is coming that he remembers *my afflictions and my sorrow*, but until the time comes my soul is bowed down within me". The explanation of תשוּח *is bowed down* is התמרמר <sup>181</sup>*to become embittered*, just as וישחך בקרבך (Micah 6:14; *you will bow down [because of sickness] in your innards*). <sup>182</sup>Rabbi Eliezer Qallir supports this explanation, which he originated: *by this I know that you have it in you to remember, but my soul is bowed down until you actually do remember*.

(21) זאת אשיב אל לבי על בן אוחיל *This I call to mind; therefore, I still hope*. [When my soul was bowed down within me on account of the length of my exile, *this I call to mind, therefore I still hope*]<sup>183</sup>. What is the thing that I bear in mind?

(22) The kindnesses of HaShem [kindnesses] with which we were rewarded. But what are these kindnesses with which we were rewarded? *כי לא תמנו that we were not annihilated*, for we were not annihilated, and we were not destroyed by the hand of the nations. In each generation they stood against us in order to destroy us, ארמי אובר אבי (Deut 26:5; *An Aramean tried to destroy my father*); Pharoah said כל הבן הילוד (Exod 1:22; *Every son born*); Sennacherib: להשמיד בלבבו ולהברית גוים לא מעמ (Isa 10:7; *so his heart is set to destroy, and to cut off not a few nations*); and so Nebuchadnezzar, and so Haman להשמיד

<sup>181</sup>Emending Buber's text from התמרמר to התמרמר.

<sup>182</sup>וּרִי אֱלִיעֶזֶר קִלִּיר מְסִיעֵ לַפְתָּרוֹן זֶה שִׁסְד etc. is also found in 104I.

<sup>183</sup>Buber has added שחך etc. from אוחיל as far as אוחיל because it is in the Prague manuscript. It is also to be found in 104I.

להרוג ולאבד (Esther 3:13; *to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate*). But we were not annihilated, and not destroyed by the hand of any of them. What brought about the thing that we were not ended by their hand? This thing was brought about *כי לא כלו רחמיו* *for his mercies were not exhausted*.

(23) *חדשים לבקרים* *They are new every morning* - the kindnesses that demonstrate that we were not annihilated by the hand of the nations. With each day the kindnesses renewed themselves, for not just one of them stood against us in order to destroy us; rather, in each generation they (all) were standing against us to destroy us, were it not for your kindnesses that saved us from their hand. *רבה אמונתך* *great is your faithfulness* - your faithfulness that is great because you made us secure. *ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתיים וגו'* (Lev 26:44; *Yet in spite of this, while they are in the land of their enemies I will not reject them etc*). It is what stood for our fathers, and for us, because the kingdoms were unable to destroy us.

(24) *חלקי הי אמרה נפשי* *"HaShem is my portion," says my soul*. This verse also is meant to be with the verse mentioned above, *this I call to mind; therefore, I still hope*. It is a gift of understanding to him, and thus its explanation is *therefore, I still hope* on the Holy One, blessed be He, because I have chosen him as my portion to be my God. *Therefore, I still hope* on him because he will deliver me from the darkness, and from prison, and from the heaviness of the chains.

(25/26) *טוב ויחיל ודומם* *טוב הי לקויו* *HaShem is good to those who trust in him*. *It is good to wait patiently*. This is its explanation: because the Holy One, blessed be He, is good to those who trust in him, a person can wait patiently, and



(31) **כי לא יזנח לעולם ה'** *For the Lord does not reject forever*, but now he gives understanding to all that is said above owing to why it is good for a man that he bear a yoke in his youth, and there is nothing better in a man than when he sits alone and waits concerning everything which the Holy One, blessed be He, lays upon him, *Let him put his mouth to the dust<sup>190</sup>, Let him offer his cheek to the smiter<sup>191</sup>, for the Lord does not reject forever* if today they carry the yoke of the nations, tomorrow their iniquity will be pardoned..

(32) **וכי אם הוגה וריחם כרוב חסדיו** *For if he causes grief* such is the measure: whether he causes grief, or he destroys them, and repents **וריחם כרוב חסדיו** *then [he] pities according to his abundant loving-kindness.*

(33) **כי לא ענה מלבו ויגה בני איש** *For he does not afflict from his heart, or grieve mankind*, for he does not afflict or grieve mankind from his heart, or from his desire.

(34) **לדכא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ** *To crush beneath his feet all the prisoners of the earth.* It is not his desire or his wish *to crush beneath his feet all those punished with punishments*, for he does not afflict from the heart, turning aside so as to crush beneath his feet. Thus, its explanation is that it is not his desire or wish *to crush beneath his feet all the prisoners of the earth*, all those being humbled with work and labour; and it is not his desire **להמות משפט גדר נגד פני עליון** *to deprive a man of justice in the presence of the Most High.*

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<sup>190</sup>Verse 29.

<sup>191</sup>Verse 30.

(36) לעות אדם בריבו די לא ראה *To deprive a man of justice, the Lord does not approve.* Its explanation is: he does not choose, like השמר לך פן תעלה עולותיך (Deut 12:13; *Be careful lest you offer up your burnt offerings in any place that you see*), whose explanation is 'that you choose'. For from the text which says after it אשר יבחר [מקום] (אל המקום) כי אם (ibid.v14; *Rather, only in the place that [HaShem] chooses*), I learn that הראה *you see*, is that תבחר *you choose*.

(37) מי זה אמר ותהי *Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass.* If someone says to you that this thing will come to pass because it is just in the eyes of the Omnipresent, that *to deprive a man of justice, and to crush beneath his feet all the prisoners of the earth*, do not believe it, because HaShem did not command this thing; or, if you say, if He did not command it, from where does it come to those prisoners of the earth who are being crushed? From where do punishments come into the world and that the world is lawless, inasmuch as HaShem did not command it. A reply is to say,

(38) מפּי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב *From the mouth of the Most High neither evil nor good come.* But observing that the Holy One, blessed be He, said הטוב ראה נחתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת (Deut 30:15; *See, I have placed before you today life and prosperity*). *From the mouth of the Most High neither evil nor good come, only by itself come evil things upon those who do evil deeds, and good things upon those who do good deeds.* From this we may conclude that it is man bringing evil to himself, and bringing good to himself.

(39) **מה יתאוונן אדם חי גבר על חטאיו** *Of what shall a living man complain? A man concerning his sins!* Since the sin is causing to bring evil upon the evildoers, when punishments come upon the man, it is not for him to complain about the punishments, or about the measure of calamity. But *of what should a living man complain? A man concerning his sins!* For they caused him to bring evil upon himself. Thus, he confesses and says,

(40) **נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה** *Let us search and examine our ways,* for which sin punishments come upon me, **ונשובה עד די** *and return to HaShem.*

(41) **נשא לבבינו אל כפים אל אל בשמים** *Let us lift up our hearts to our hands to God in heaven.* Its explanation is **עם** *with our hands.* Thus its explanation is: *Let us lift up our hand together with our hearts to God in heaven,* and not that he should spread his hand to heaven and have his heart full of transgressions. This is what Rabbi Solomon the Babylonian established as equal, the hand throwing out the worm that the immersion would be credited, to a hand placing the offering<sup>192</sup>.

(42) **נחנו פשענו ומרינו** *We have sinned and rebelled.* We have acted according to our nature, for there is not a man who does not sin. It was for you to forgive, for you are called one who multiplies forgiveness, as it is written **אל אלהיני כי ירבה לסלוח** (Isa 55:7; *to our God, for he will abundantly forgive*). But, we have so greatly sinned that you have not forgiven, as it is written **ולא אבה די לסלוח** (II Kgs 24:4; *and HaShem did not want to forgive*).

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<sup>192</sup> This saying is more fully considered by Kara in the commentary of 104I.

(43) סכוחה באף וחרדפנו *You have covered [yourself] with anger and pursued us;*  
you have covered your face with your anger for you have hidden your face from  
us.

(45) סחי ומאום תשימנו *You have made us filth and refuse.* Its explanation is, you  
make us filth and refuse בקרב העמים *among the peoples.* סחי *filth* - its  
explanation is טילטול *wandering*<sup>193</sup>, just like האדמה מעל הנסחתם (Deut 28:63;  
*you will be uprooted from the land*).

(47) פחד ופחת היה לנו *Panic and pitfall were ours.* Behold, from the sound of  
panic he will fall into the pit; and what are the panic and the pit? They are השאת  
והשבר *disaster and destruction.* השאת is from the same source as שאו ערים (Isa  
6:11; *cities are devastated*); שואה ומשואה (Zeph 1:15; *destruction and desolation*).

(49) עיני נגרה ולא תדמה *My eye pours down and will not cease.* Its explanation is  
they shed tears, like המים הניגרים ארצה (II Sam 14:14; *water flowing along the  
ground*); and אל תתני פוגת לך (Lam 2:18; *give yourself no respite*).

(50) עד ישקיף וירא *Until [HaShem] looks down and notices.* I will not cease from  
weeping until *he looks down and notices.*

(51) עיני עוללה לנפשי *My eye brings grief to my soul.* My iniquities directed these  
things. מכל בנות עירי *because of all the daughters of my city.* Its explanation is  
because of all the nations, because were it not for my iniquities, the nations would  
not have overcome me, for in the time that Israel was doing God's will, there was  
no nation or tongue ruling them.

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<sup>193</sup>Compare with the *Targum*, and Lam 4:14.

(52) צוד צדוני כצפור אויבי חנם *My enemies have constantly hunted me like a bird, without cause.* Its explanation is those who were my enemies without reason for I did not sin against them.

(53) צמתו בכור חיי *They have destroyed my life in a pit.* There is not an expression צמתו בכור חיי which happens to say about a man whom they throw into a pit that is not deep, so that he is able to get up out of it; rather it is about a man whom they throw into a pit that is deep, so that he is not able to get up out of it, for that throwing is a permanent<sup>194</sup> throwing to him, so that he can never get up out of it. And if they had only *destroyed my life in a pit*, and they had not *cast a stone on me*, I would not have been able to get up out of it because of its depth. But even though it was deep *they cast a stone on me.*

(54) על ראשי צפו מים *Waters flowed over my head.* If the pit were empty and there were no water in it, it would have been enough for me because of its depth, and because of the stones that were thrown upon the man who was inside it for he was cut off in the pit forever. Only although they have cut off my life in a pit, and *they cast a stone on me*, even more, in this pit that they threw me into, there is water that flowed over my head. אמרת נגזרת *I said, "I am doomed!"* Its explanation is that although I was able to say, "My hope is lost, I am doomed!" - how? One, because the pit was deep; two, that *they cast a stone on me*; three, because waters flowed over my head, when someone came into the water as far as his knees, or as far as his waist, there is still hope. But, when the waters flow over his head then his hope is lost, and he says, "My hope is lost!" - But I do not

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<sup>194</sup>Note the pun on צמתו *they destroyed* and צמיתות *permanence, irrevocability.*

do this, for although the water has flowed over my head, am I able to say, *I am doomed!* Heaven forbid I lose my hope in my Creator<sup>195</sup>, but:

(55) קראתי שמך ה' מבור תחתיות *I called on your name, HaShem, from the depths of the pit*, from the deep pit that I was in the middle of, which is Babylon, for the land of Babylon is the deepest<sup>196</sup>.

(56) קולי שמעת *You heard my voice*. It was you who heard my voice long ago when we were enslaved<sup>197</sup> in Egypt. *Do not close your ear* to my comfort in the exile of Babylon. קולי שמעת *You heard my voice* - it was usual to hear my voice every time that I called out, and just as you heard my voice [previously] with every sorrow that I called out to you, even now *do not close your ear to my comfort, to my cry for help*.

(57) קרבת ביום אקראך אמרת אל תירא *You came near when I called you; you said, "Do not fear!"* Every time that I called on you you used to come near me and say to me, "Do not be afraid!", just as in Egypt for I called to you and you answered me<sup>198</sup>, as it is written ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה וגו' (Exod 2:23; *The Israelites groaned because of the work etc*).

(58) רבת ה' ריבי נפשי גאלת חיי *You have taken up my cause, HaShem, you have redeemed my life*. Its explanation is that you *used* to take up my cause every time. וגאלתי אתכם *you have redemed my life*, just as in Egypt for it is said בורע נטויה וגו' (Exod 6:6; *I will redeem you with an outstretched arm etc*).

<sup>195</sup>אנא מאבד סברי מבוראי is an Aramaic phrase. It is also found in 104I.

<sup>196</sup>The commentary on verses 55 and 56 here refers to Babylon, but in 104I it talks of Edom, or Rome. Kara has made the text relevant to a later historical date than the one which originally brought comment.

<sup>197</sup>Buber corrects the manuscript here from כשנשתעבדנו to כשנשתעבדכו as found in 104I.

<sup>198</sup>Buber corrects the text here from ועניתי to ועניתי כי.

(59) רָאִיתָ ה' עוֹתוֹתַי שְׁפֹטָה מִשְׁפָּטַי<sup>199</sup> *You have seen, O HaShem, the wrong done to me; judge my cause.* Its explanation is you who have seen the injustices that have been done to me; שְׁפֹטָה מִשְׁפָּטַי *judge my cause*<sup>200</sup>.

(63) שְׁבַתְּם וְקִיַּמְתֶּם הַבֵּיטָה אֲנִי מִנְגִּינֶתֶם *Whether they sit or rise - look, I am their laughingstock!* This is a reversed phrase, and so its explanation is: "Look! for I am their laughingstock whenever they sit or rise."

(65) תַּחַן לָהֶם מִגִּינַת לֵב *Give to them deep sorrow.* Its explanation is heart-break.

תְּלַאֲחֶךָ *Your curse be on them* is like תְּלַאֲחֶךָ *your trouble*; that is to say, all of the troubles that you have brought upon me, bring upon them. This is what you will find in every acrostic that repeats concerning the nations in order to end with them, and saying, "in the same way, just as you have done to me, so do to them."<sup>201</sup>

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#### four

(1) אֵיכָּה יוֹעֵם זָהָב *How the gold has become dim.* At first he has concealed his words and does not explain, for he says, "*How the gold has become dim*". But, its explanation is the appearance of pure gold has become obscured, like כָּל סִתּוּם לֹא עִמְמוּךָ (Ezek 28:3; *no secret is hidden from you*), for its explanation is no secret

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<sup>199</sup>Buber follows רָאִיתָ in the manuscript whereas MT reads רָאִיתָהּ, as does 104I.

<sup>200</sup>Cf. with the almost identical commentary in 104I.

<sup>201</sup>Cf. the end of the commentary on this verse with that of 104I, which has only small differences.

has become obscured from you<sup>202</sup>. **ישנא הכתם הטוב** *the pure gold is changed*. It is impossible for the appearance of pure gold to become obscured, and for valuable treasure to be changed from what it was. **בראש כל הוצות** *at the head of every street*. It is not the way of humankind to cast out holy stones – that is the stones of the Ephod and the stones of the breastplate – at the head of all the streets, and beside it is explained about who the endorsee of the matter is.

(2) **בני ציון היקרים** *The precious children of Zion*. When they were living upon their land eating to satisfaction, and dwelling at ease, and their appearances were like ruddy gold the gold and precious gold, how their appearance was changed when they were leading them into exile hungry. Their appearance was like **לנבלי חרש מעשה ידי יוצר** *earthen pots, the work of a potter's hand*. The priests who wore the breastplate and Ephod into which the holy stones were fixed, how their blood was poured out *at the head of every street*. (**יועם** *has become dim* is an expression of **חשך** *has become dark/obscured, like no secret is hidden from you, for its explanation is no secret has become obscured from you*)<sup>203</sup>.

(3/4) **גם תנין חלצו שד** *Even jackals offer the breast*. Even a jackal that is called cruel, as it is written **ראש פתנים אכזר** (Deut 32:33; *the cruel venom of asps*). Nevertheless, when it sees its offspring **חלצו** *they offer* the breast – its explanation is **הוציאו** *take out*, as in **וחלצו את האבנים** (Lev 14:40; *they shall take out the stones*). **תנין** *Jackals*. This is like the one that sees its cubs, and draws out

<sup>202</sup>Buber has added **כמו כל סתום** etc. as far as **ממך** because it is in the Prague manuscript. Before us it is at the end of the verse [ie. verse 2], and is out of place.

<sup>203</sup>Buber has isolated **לשון חשך** etc., and inserted it into the beginning of the verse [ie. verse 1], to which it clearly refers.

its breasts from its bosom, and shows them in order that they will come and suck. But, **בת עמי לאכזר** *the daughter of my people has become cruel* like the ostrich that is merciless against its young, because their breasts became dry<sup>204</sup>. Therefore, **אל חכו בצמא דבק לשון יונק אל חכו בצמא** *the tongue of the infant sticks to its palate for thirst. no one is breaking [bread] for them.* No one is *slicing* <sup>205</sup>[bread] for them; all of this caused their appearance to be dimmed.

(5) **האובלים למעדנים** *Those who used to eat delicacies.* The nobles who were accustomed to eating delicacies now **נשמו בחוצות** *are destitute in the streets.* **האמונים עלי תולע** *those nurtured in crimson.* When trouble and anguish came upon those clad, until now, in crimson yarns, **חיבקו אשפתות** *they embraced dunghills* to warm themselves. Thus it is explained in Bereshit Rabbah<sup>206</sup> [that] **אמון** *multitude/abundance* means **מכוסה** *covered/ clad* as another explanation of **האמונים עלי תולע** *those nurtured in crimson.* *They embraced dunghills* to warm themselves, because the dunghill was warm.

(6) **ויגדל עון בת עמי מחטאת סדום** *The iniquity of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom,* for Sodom was overthrown very quickly **ולא חלו בה ידים** *though no hands were laid upon her.* Its explanation is no hands of flesh and blood were laid upon her, for he did not bring them to account by hands of flesh and blood. But they were overthrown very quickly by the hands of angels, and they reached

<sup>204</sup>From **חלצו** as far as **שדיהן** the commentary on this verse is almost identical to that in 104I.

<sup>205</sup>**פורש בוצע** parallels **פורש**.

<sup>206</sup>Buber states that **וכן מפרש בב"ר** – it is in verse/chapter 1. From **וכן מפרש בהם** up to **להתחמם בהם** is omitted in the Prague manuscript because the copyist left out from **להתחמם בהם** as far as **להתחמם בהם** (understandable haplography). However, in 104I the word order is different in that **חיבקו אשפתות** appears only once with comments **להתחמם בהם לפי שאשפה חמה היא**, and this comes before the explanation from *Gen. Rab.*

their own verdict concerning their sins very quickly. Only the sin of my people is so much greater than theirs that the Holy One, blessed be He, judged them with hunger so that they would be long afflictions. <sup>207</sup> לא חלו בה ידיים *no hands were laid upon her*. Its explanation is the hands of human beings did not attack them to destroy them.

(7) זכו נזיריה משלג *Her Nazirites were purer than snow*. Its explanation is the daughter of my people whose hair is purer than snow. צחו מחלב *whiter than milk*. This is repetition, and its explanation is they were whiter than milk. אדמו עצם מפנינים *their appearance was redder than coral*; their appearance was redder than gold. ספיר גזרתם *lapiz lazuli was their form*, their appearance resembles lapiz lazuli. גזי נזרך *her Nazirites, her hairs like* (Jer 7:29; *cut off your hair*). צחו *bright* is an expression of לבן *white*, just like צח ואדום (Song of Songs 5:10; *my beloved is white and ruddy*). עצם *appearance* is an expression of מראה *semblance*, like וכעצם השמים לטהר (Ex 24:10; *like the appearance of heaven for clearness*). ספיר גזרתם *lapiz lazuli was their form* - their faces shone like lapiz lazuli.

(8) חשך משחור תארם *Their appearance is darker than soot*. Those who formerly were her Nazirites purer than snow, whiter than milk because they were satisfied, now, when the famine was hard upon them their appearance became darker than soot. לא נכרו בחוצות <sup>208</sup> לא ידרמינט *soot* is <sup>208</sup>Unidentified transliterated Old French.

<sup>207</sup>Buber comments that לא חלו בה ידיים. פתרונו לא פשטו במ ידי הבריות להשחיתם is not in the Prague manuscript, and already appears above in the explanation of the text as לא חלו בה ידי בשר ודם.

<sup>208</sup>Unidentified transliterated Old French.

*they are not recognised in the streets.* People who saw them previously when they were good-looking do not recognise them now. *צפד עורם על עצמם* *their skin has shrivelled on their bones* דִּקְרָטִיד in the vernacular<sup>209</sup>.

(9) *More fortunate were those slain by the sword than those slain by famine.* If it said, "*More fortunate were those slain by the sword than those slain by the famine*" and was silent, I would have made sense of the matter, because the one who dies during the famine prolongs [his] suffering, but the one who dies by the sword dies straightaway. But now, because it says *שהם יזובו מדוקרים מתנובות שדי* *for they ooze, pierced by the fruits of the field*, perforce you must make sense of the matter as, "Why were those who were slain by the sword more fortunate than those who were slain by famine?" because those who died by famine when they were tasting the fruits of the field and eating much their intestines split open within them for they were contracted on account of the famine. *ויזובו מדוקרים* *for they ooze, pierced.* Its explanation is *מבוקעים* *split open* because of eating the fruits of the field. Their body is disfigured on account of the excrement which emerges outside of their stomach<sup>210</sup>.

(10) *The hands of compassionate women, formerly, now בשלו* *boiled their children.* *היו לברות למו* *they have become their food* in order to give themselves food<sup>211</sup>.

<sup>209</sup>Unidentified transliterated Old French.

<sup>210</sup>The commentary on this verse is almost identical with that found in 104I.

<sup>211</sup>Again, this commentary is found in 104I.

(11) *HaShem vented his fury for he poured out over them his burning anger.* Similar to this is *חצי אכלה בם* (Deut 32:23; *My arrows I shall use up against them*<sup>212</sup>); and so *וכיליתי חמתי בם* (Ezek 6:12; *I will vent my fury upon them*).

(12/13) *The kings of the earth did not believe.* Previously, they did not believe *כי יבוא צר ואויב בשערי ירושלם* *that adversary and enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.* And who caused them to enter? *מחטאת נביאיה עונות כהניה* *the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests*<sup>213</sup>.

(14) *They wandered blindly through the streets* because *נגואלו* *they are defiled with blood.* For whoever is injured in the head, the blood flows into his eyes, and he is unable to see as though he were blind. *בלא יוכלון* *none can touch:* they are so defiled with blood that others were not able to touch their garments.

(15) *"Away, unclean!" they shouted at them.* So much nothingness came to them *נעו גם נצו* *that they wandered about and also staggered.* *they wandered* is like *נאצו* *they spurned*, and its explanation is that they spurned the Holy One, blessed be He. Therefore, he sent them into exile, just as it explains *נעו גם* *they staggered.* *The nations said, "They will no longer sojourn."* When they went into exile among the

<sup>212</sup>Reading this along with verse 24 gives a complete account of HaShem's unleashed fury.

<sup>213</sup>This is virtually identical with 104I.

nations of the world, the nations said of them, "These people will never return and sojourn in their own land."<sup>214</sup>

(16) פני ד' חלקם *The anger of HaShem divided them*. He has scattered them upon the face of the whole earth. לא יוסיף להביטם *no longer watching over them*. All these are the words of the nations. Why did he make this thing happen to them? Because פני כהנים לא נשאו וזקנים לא חננו *they showed no regard for the priests, and were not gracious to the elders*.<sup>215</sup>

(17) עורדינו תבלינה עינינו אל עזרתינו הבל<sup>216</sup> *Our eyes failed [waiting] in vain for our help*. Still, we were able to expect the assistance of Egypt, of whom it is written ומצרים הבל וריק יעזורו (Isa 30:7; *for Egypt's help is worthless and empty*), but they did not come. Common parlance would be that when a man expects his friend, but his friend does not come, he says, "Until now I was able to wait for help in vain."<sup>217</sup>

(18) צדו צעדנו *They dogged our steps*. Its explanation is the enemies dogged our steps מלכת ברחובותינו *so we could not walk in our streets*, even in the streets that belonged to us.

(19) קלים היו רודפינו *Our pursuers were swifter* goes on to explain how swift were the ones (who) על ההרים דלקונו *pursued us upon the mountains*. The way of the pursuer, if he knows that his enemy flees by way of the plain, is to pursue him. But when he knows that he has escaped to the mountains, despairing to

<sup>214</sup>The last sentence is found in the commentary of 104I.

<sup>215</sup>This verse is the same as that found in 104I but with additional commentary.

<sup>216</sup>Correcting the spelling in the text from עורדנו to עורדינו as in MT.

<sup>217</sup>104I includes this, but the commentary continues further.

pursue him<sup>218</sup>, he does not trouble [to pursue] him into the mountains. But these [people] pursued us upon the mountains. The way of the pursuer is to pursue among the settlements, and since he knows that his enemy flees by way of the wilderness, ceases from pursuing him. But these [people] even **במדבר ארבו לנו** *ambush us in the wilderness*.

(20) **רוח אפנו משיח די** *the breath of our nostrils, Hashem's anointed*. This is Zedekiah, as it is written **ויתפשו את צדקיהו בערבות יריחו** (Cf. II Kgs 25:5; and *they siezed Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho*).

(21) **שישי ושמחי בת אדום** *Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Edom* like the one who sees his friend commit some offence and says to him, "Commit all offences that come to your hand, but **דע לך כי על כל אלה יביאך אלהים במשפט** (Qoh 11:9; *know that concerning all these things, God will bring you to judgement*)."<sup>219</sup> Here, [too], the prophet reflected upon Edom who had rejoiced at the demise of Israel. He said to her, "Rejoice! Rejoice! Exult! Exult, O daughter of Edom! Exult<sup>219</sup> now over the people of Judah on the day of their destruction. But, know yourself that **תשכרי גם עליך תעבר כוס** *to you, too, will the cup pass* that passed to Israel." **ותתערי** *You will become drunk and and expose your nakedness*. You drank it and exposed your nakedness, and will drink (all of the cup) until you empty all of the cup. But woe to the nations who have not yet tasted the cup of his anger, and the dregs of the cup of poison, but are yet preparing to drink it. Happy are Israel

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<sup>218</sup>With the exception of a shortened text at the beginning of the commentary to this verse, the only difference in the commentary here between Munich 5 and 1041 is at this point, where **לרדוף** *to chase* replaces **עוד לבקשנו** *seek him further*.

<sup>219</sup>This is the masculine form **שמח**, although the previous references are to **שמחי**.

who, from the hand of HaShem, has already drunk from the cup of his wrath; the dregs of the cup of poison they will not drink again. That is what is written:

(22) *Your punishment is complete, O daughter*

*Zion: He will not prolong your exile.* In the matter which has been covered until

now, [now] he is beginning to uncover [it], it is fitting to say *גילה על חטאתוך* *he*

*has exposed your sins* – it is fitting to say of the punishment of the iniquity that *he*

*has exposed*, just as Isaiah said *וגלתה הארץ את דמיה ולא תכסה עוד על*

*הרוגיה* (Isa 26:21; *and the earth will reveal the blood shed upon her, and no longer cover*

*her slain*)<sup>220</sup>.

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(1) *Remember, O HaShem, what has befallen us*, how great the sorrows of our suffering.

(2) *Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers.* As it

was written *ויבא מלך אשור מבבל ומכותה (ומעזה) [ומעוה] ומחמת וספרוים*

(II Kgs 17:24; *The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and*

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<sup>220</sup>The last two verses are almost identical in Munich 5 and 104I.

*Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took Samaria, and settled in its cities).*

- (3) יתומים היינו ואין אב *We have become orphans, fatherless.* Its explanation is we have become orphans, but not because we do not have a father, for behold, we have a father; only because the father is unable to help the son, and the son is unable to help the father. We are regarded as orphans for they do not have a father, and Scripture demonstrates this explanation as it says **אמותנו כאלמנות** *our mothers are like widows.* It does not say **אלמנות** *widows*, but **כאלמנות** *like widows*, because the husbands were living but were unable to support them.
- (4) מימינו בכסף שתינו עצינו במחיר יבואו *We pay money to drink our own water, obtain our wood at a price,* even things that are free. They are water and wood, for everyone who brings his pitcher to the spring, brings (away) water and drinks. Every [one] goes to the forest to chop wood, but, we because of great fear of the enemies, that they should not meet us, because it was they who *dogged our steps*, for we were unable to walk even *in our own streets*, we hired others to bring us water and wood.
- (5) צוארינו נרדפנו *Upon our necks we were driven* for they (took) [put the world] upon our necks, and lifted up our oppressors, which explains **ולא הונח לנו** *we toil, but we are given no rest.* The money for which we have toiled, the nations of the world leave none of it for us, but come and take it from us. But if the *nun* was pointed, for in the word **הונח** it is pronounced without a *dagesh*, then its explanation is "there is no rest for us". Now that it is pronounced with a

*dagesh*, its explanation is "we were worn out" and the nations of the world leave none of it, but come and take it [from us]<sup>221</sup>.

(6) נתננו יד מצרים <sup>222</sup> *We extended a hand to Egypt*. The *dagesh*, which is in the *nun* of נתננו, comes in place of a second *nun*, as if it were said נתננו. Namely, נתננו *we extended a hand to them*, in that we were obeying them<sup>223</sup>, and also *Assyria to get enough food*. Therefore, we find it said in Jeremiah אם שוב תשבו בארץ הזאת ובניתי אתכם ולא אהרום ונטעתי אתכם (Jer 42:10; *If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you*); and they answer him לא כי ארץ מצרים נבוא אשר לא נראה מלחמה וקול לאמר לא כי ארץ מצרים נבוא אשר לא נראה מלחמה וקול שופר לא נשמע וללחם לא נרעב ושם נשב (ibid. v14; *saying, "No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and there we will stay."*)

(7) אבותינו חטאו אינם <sup>224</sup> *Our fathers have sinned, and are no more*. Namely, that although they are no more, because they are already dead, אנחנו עונותיהם *we have borne their iniquities*<sup>225</sup>, for not for our sins alone were we exiled from our land, and the Temple destroyed in our days. But upon our generation

<sup>221</sup>Kara is drawing a distinction between הוֹנַח referring to *rest*, and הִנִּיחַ to *put, leave*.

<sup>222</sup> The text has been corrected here to follow MT. Buber's text reads נתנו.

<sup>223</sup>Up to this point the verse reads the same as 104I.

<sup>224</sup>The spelling in the text is corrected here from אבותינו to אבותינו.]

<sup>225</sup>The text to this point repeats that found in 104I.

was visited the iniquity of all the generations, <sup>226</sup>and so our rabbis taught, *Zedekiah drank the dregs of all the generations.*

(8) עבדים משלו בנו *Slaves rule over us.* The slavery of a servant when he rules over a people does not resemble the slavery of a free man when he rules over a people. For it is when the servant rules over a people of his bondage that he imposes upon them more severely than the slavery of a free man, and so in good measure it says ויפדך מבית עבדים (Deut 7:8; and [he] *redeemed you from the house of slavery*), to the extent that the slavery of the servant was more severe when he ruled over the people than the slavery of the free man.

(9) נביא לחמינו *We get our bread at the peril of our lives,* like a man who puts his life in his hand and throws it away. Thus we get our bread because of the sword of the enemies who ambush us in the wilderness, just like it says above במדבר ארבו לנו (Lam 4:19; *they ambush us in the wilderness*).

(10) עורנו כתנור נכמרו *Our skin has become hot like an oven,* the skin tightened, and shrank, shriveling fast as if it were burnt in a blazing oven. Every thing that was stretched in the beginning, and came back, and was bounded, and was gathered together is known as כומר *being burnt.* <sup>227</sup>This is similar to בושלי כמרא *dates ripened through withering,* because of gathering late figs in order to ripen and gather them to one vessel in order that they would be ripened/matured; נכמרו *to become hot, dried/ to be hidden, buried,* רִקְרָטִיר in the vernacular<sup>228</sup>.

<sup>226</sup>וכן שנו רבותינו צדקיהו שתה שמרי דכולהו דרי. This is also included above at 1:12. The source is unidentified.

<sup>227</sup>כמו בושלי כמרא. B. Ber. 40b.

<sup>228</sup>Unidentified transliterated Old French.

- (11) נשים בציון עינו *Women are raped in Zion*. Its explanation is women and maidens in Zion were raped, and so were women and maidens in the cities of Judah.
- (13) בחורים טחון נשאו <sup>229</sup>*Youths endure the millstone*. The enemies load them (with) the millstones of the millers. Boys are loaded with a burden of wood.
- (14) זקנים משער שבחו *The elders have deserted the gateway*. The one ceased from his rule, and the other ceased from his rule<sup>230</sup>.
- (16) ווי נא לנו כי חטאנו *Woe to us, for we have sinned!* The woe that happened to us because we sinned.
- (17) על זה היה דוה לבנו *For this our heart has become faint*<sup>231</sup>.
- (18) על הר ציון ששמו *For Mount Zion which lies desolate*. It appears that this is its explanation: considering everything with which we were stricken, it was not something to be too grieved over, because he did not bring us to account except according to justice, just as it is explained, *Woe to us, for we have sinned!* But concerning Mount Zion which did not sin, but which lies desolate, about this we are sorry. שועלים הלכו בו *Foxes prowl over it; they trampled and trod on it*.<sup>232</sup>[The explanation of הילכו *they walk* is דשו *they trampled*. In this way the foxes walk over it to the extent of their action is not subject to levitical uncleanness. Rabbi Gershom established that foxes trampled over it, and it was ploughed by the ploughs].

<sup>229</sup>The text labels this verse as verse 12; it has been corrected here to verse 13.

<sup>230</sup>Kara appears to be saying that each elder neglected his responsibility, and ceased to fulfil his role.

<sup>231</sup>The text just stops here, with no commentary on the verse. However, see the commentary on verse 18.

<sup>232</sup>Buber has added פתרונו דשו etc. as it is in the Prague manuscript, in 104I, and in the Hamburg manuscript.

(19) **אתה די לעולם תשב** *But you, O HaShem, reign forever.* Its explanation is that even if Mount Zion lies desolate, you, O HaShem, reign forever.

(20) **למה לנצח תשכחנו וגוי** *Why do you completely forget us, etc?*<sup>233</sup>

(21) **השיבנו די אליך ונשובה** *Restore us to yourself, O HaShem, that we may be restored.* It is customary in the world for a servant who rebels against his master, and his master punishes him, that the servant feels remorse and his master accepts him. But you, why do you completely forget us? **השיבנו די אליך ונשובה** *Restore us to yourself that we may be restored.* After we desire to repent, receive us in repentance. **חדש ימינו כקדם** *renew our days as of old*, like the days when Israel were living on their own land, and Jerusalem and her surrounding cities lived securely. **השיבנו די אליך ונשובה** *Restore us to yourself, O HaShem, that we may be restored.* If Jerusalem was your throne below before it was destroyed, **חדש ימינו כקדם** *renew our days as of old*, like those days when you chose Jerusalem for your throne. As it was said **זאת מנוחתי עדי עד פה אשב כי אותיה** (Ps 132:14; *This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it*); and **בנה [בניתי]** *I have built for you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell forever* (I Kgs 8:13; *I have built for you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell forever*). Thus it is.

The Commentary of Lamentations is completed: Praise to the powerful one of the kingdom.

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<sup>233</sup>The commentary on this verse is included in that of verse 21.

## Commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra on the Book of Lamentations

### Introduction to ibn Ezra

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Abraham ibn Ezra, ca. 1092 -1167, was born in Tudela (Navarre), Spain and spent much of his life wandering from place to place teaching and writing. He is known as a philologist and translator; the composer of many sacred and secular poems, as well as various biblical commentaries; as astronomer and astrologer; and as mathematician and philosopher. While he is recorded as conversing with Christians, he was in dispute with Karaites, and preferred to use creativity of thinking based on sound grammatical principles to elucidate meaning. With this in mind, his commentaries are composed with a strong emphasis on *peshat*, and although there is little recourse to *midrash*, it is not entirely dismissed as he attempts to emphasise the legitimacy of tradition without being strangled by it.

At the age of about fifty, he left Spain *because of the oppressors*, whom he mentions at the beginning of Commentary A, and travelled to Italy. He travelled as far afield as North Africa, Britain, as well as Greece, France and Italy. It appears that it is in Rome that he wrote his commentary, here designated A, on Lamentations. We are in no doubt as to the author of this commentary for he identifies himself as Abraham, Son of Meir in the introduction. However, while it was not uncommon for ibn Ezra to compose more than one commentary on a biblical book, as he did on

Genesis, Exodus, Song of Songs, Esther, Daniel, the Minor Prophets, and Psalms, Lamentations is not found among those recorded by Uriel Simon<sup>1</sup>. Simon accounts for the composition of more than one commentary on a biblical book by arguing that they were written for a number of different reasons including that of different mentors, or audiences, or to improve on the original. Whatever the motivation, they were never meant to be read side by side, although we can now take advantage of that.

Ibn Ezra's commentaries are characterised by his search for a philological interpretation based on context, and while he will not correct a text believing it to be sacred, he exercises great freedom in his search for exegetical enlightenment. Consequently, rational judgement is the means by which the text can be illuminated. However, as Talmudic tradition is binding, and the written law was never meant to stand alone, ibn Ezra draws a distinct line between what is to be regarded as 'received tradition' and what is not. He therefore argues that the explanations of the Sages are not to be seen as 'received tradition' as they are only their own efforts to find a proof text for a received custom, or their own creativity. Ibn Ezra is thus able to distinguish between a Divine revelation and the Sages own comments. Following Saadiah Gaon, and developing the idea further, ibn Ezra concludes that those who comment on Scripture should project as little as possible onto it for Scripture was given to all, not just academics.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, U. *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham ibn Ezra*. SUNY Press, 1991, 145-6.

Ibn Ezra makes no attempt to emend texts that he regards as sacred, and considers anomalies in the text as problems to be solved by exegesis. His approach is to find a middle course, harmonising extremes of exegesis and incorporating sound ideas into his own works so that the faith of no one should suffer. All of his surviving books are in Hebrew as he ceased writing in Arabic after leaving Spain.

In both the Bomberg Bibles (1517/18 and 1524/25) and in the commentary collection included in Rosenberg's commentary on Lamentations and Ecclesiastes, there are two commentaries by ibn Ezra. Although a number of commentaries credited to him in the 1525 Bomberg Bible are now thought not to be his compositions, there is still enough scholarly opinion to believe that this other commentary is actually his<sup>2</sup>. This second commentary, here designated B, is much shorter than A, and is written in a different style. It also exhibits very little interest in the grammatical problems that so engage ibn Ezra in commentary A, preferring to offer an understanding more in tune with the sense of the text. If the reasons for composing more than one style of writing can be variously explained as Simon does above, then it is useful to translate commentary B here. As it is traditionally credited to him, as illustrated in its inclusion in Vermigli's commentary on Lamentations, as well as appearing in the Lewin-Epstein edition, it thus adds balance to the comparison of texts.

The commentaries of ibn Ezra translated here, are taken from the Hebrew commentaries found in Rosenberg's commentary on Lamentations that are found in

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<sup>2</sup> Vermigli, Peter Martyr. "Commentary on the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah". Shute, D., ed. in *The Peter Martyr Library, Vol. 6*, Truman State University Press, 2002, xxvii.

the Hebrew text of the Lewin-Epstein edition of the Five Megilloth. A note of worth is that in the text followed here, there are five chapters of commentary from ibn Ezra A, and only four of B. However, the fifth chapter of commentary A is located in Vermigli's translation of commentary B. As the commentary on this chapter makes references to grammatical issues, and in the main, like commentary A, begins each verse with a piece of text, chapter five would appear to belong here as it is found in the Lewin-Epstein edition.

### Commentary A of ibn Ezra

Men of truth understand the *midrash* of our righteous ancients, since they were established upon truth, and in **וביציקת** *the pouring out of* **יצוקים** *mortal knowledge*. All their words are like gold and silver since refined seven times, yet their *midrashim* differed concerning many things.

What are they [but] riddles, secrets, and exalted allegory instead of rules/boundaries, and what are they [but] in order to emit a pleasing scent [to] wearied hearts in profound lessons? What are they [but] to encourage those who stumble, and to fill those who are empty. Therefore, the meanings of the verses resemble bodies. The *midrashim* are like garments clinging to a body like fine silk, but [also] darkness like sackcloth. But the way of the plain meaning (*peshat*) is the

body in the choice words, and in rules. Thus they say that the text is like its plain meaning, but the words are ancient.

But I, Abraham, son of Meir, am from a distant country. You [God?] have brought me forth from Spain because of the oppressors. These are my books [*midrashim?*] in of my exile; they were in the hands of those claiming possession/who were seized. They instructed/taught me to clarify books with understanding cleansed of pleasantries, so I will explain this scroll according to the grammar.

Now this scroll is not the one burned by the hand of Jehoiakim because other (גנ) sayings of HaShem were not found inscribed in the book of Jeremiah. So, it is written: *take for yourself a scroll of the book, and write upon it all the things which I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations*<sup>3</sup>; and a further passage: *Why did you write in it saying, "The king of Babylon will surely come and destroy this land?"*<sup>4</sup>, but in the scroll of the Book of Lamentations he did not mention Babylon or her king.

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<sup>3</sup> Jer 36:2.

<sup>4</sup> Jer 36:29.

- (1) **בָּדָד** *lonely*. It occurs as masculine (m.) and feminine (f.), with or without a *lamed*, like the word **בַּמָּטָה**<sup>5</sup>. **רַבְתִּי** *Great*. **שָׂרָתִי** *A princess*. The *מַלְעִיל* (penultimate accent) is to distinguish between the additional *yod* and the *yods* of the sign of the first person singular, as in **לָדוּשׁ** *אהבתי לְדוּשׁ<sup>6</sup> (Hosea 10:11; *that preferred to thresh*), and **יּוֹם** *גְּנוּבָתִי* (Gen 31:39; *whether it was stolen by day*) has the *מַלְרַע* (ultimate accent) on account of the change of the *bet*<sup>7</sup>. **רַבְתִּי בְּגוֹיִם** *Great among the nations*. It is not like the first (*רַבְתִּי*) except in an expression of greatness such as **וְרַבֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ** (Jer 41:1; *commanders of the king*), and **עַל כָּל רַב בֵּיתוֹ** (Esther 1:8; *for every officer of his house*). The *lamed* of **לְמַם** has *patakh* to indicate the missing *he*<sup>8</sup>, but the *mem* has no *dagesh* to reduce/ease the expression.*
- (2) The *lamed* in **בָּכוּ** is replaced by *he* because the letters **אָהוּ** are interchangeable. For instance, **עָשׂוּ** *הַסְכַּלְתָּ* (Gen 31:28; *now you have acted foolishly*).
- (3) **יְהוּדָה** *Judah*. (m) or (f) like Israel and Egypt. For example, **וְתַחֲזֹק מִצְרַיִם** (Exod 12:33; *Egypt (m) was severe*). But, **אֲבָדָה מִצְרַיִם** Ex 10:7; *Egypt (f) was lost*). There are explanations concerning **הַמִּצְרַיִם** from the words of the ancients of the law, of

<sup>5</sup>For example I Kings 5:5 where **בַּמָּטָה** is constructed with a *lamed*; and Deut 12:10 where it is not.

<sup>6</sup>The spelling has been corrected here from **אוֹיְבָתִי** to keep in line with MT.

<sup>7</sup>Ibn Ezra is distinguishing between the superfluous *yod* of the adjectival form where the accent is on the penultimate syllable, and the accent on the final syllable of the first person singular pronominal suffix.

<sup>8</sup>That is, the sign of the definite article.

blessed memory, from the word מְצַר<sup>9</sup>. But the correct reading, in my opinion, is from הַמְצַר (root צַרַר to be hostile towards/to be in distress), however it is a little anomalous that the ך should be designated for the *dagesh*<sup>10</sup>.

(4) We find דַרְך as (m) and (f) just like בֵית and מְקוֹם<sup>11</sup>. בָּאֵי מוֹעֵד<sup>12</sup> (*No one comes to the appointed season*). Those who used to come to the festivals; but better understood, in my opinion, is the Sanctuary. It is called מוֹעֵד in that all Israel appears there, so בְּקֶרֶב מוֹעֲדֶיךָ (Ps 74:4; *in the midst of your meeting*) סֵרְפוֹ בָאֲרֶז כָּל מוֹעֲדֵי אֱלֹהִים בָּאֲרֶז (ibid. v8; *they have burned all the meeting places of God in the land*). קַח לְךָ חֲטִיִן *Are desolate*. The *nun* is instead of a *mem*, and thus קַח לְךָ חֲטִיִן (Ezek 4:9; *take for yourself wheat*); לִקְצֵן הַיָּמִין (Dan 12:13; *at the End of Days*), because the *nun* and the *mem* serve at the end of the word as the signs of the (m.) and (f.) plurals. נוֹגֵי מוֹעֵד (Zeph 3:18; *those who have mourned for the appointed time*) which are related to הוֹנֵה to *grieve* and יָגוֹן *grief*. The *tav* and the *nun* are additional letters.

(5) שׁוֹר הֵיוּ צָרִיָּה *Her adversaries were*. Each one has become the head<sup>13</sup>, and so שׁוֹר עָלֶיךָ בְּנוֹת צַעֲדָה (Gen 49:22; *each of the girls climbed (f.s.) heights to gaze*), every one of them. שְׁלוֹ *Are at ease*. From a form of שְׁלוּה *calmness, tranquility*. הוֹנֵה *he has*

<sup>9</sup>From *Lam. Rab.* 1.3.29 we read כַּהֵיְאֵר דְּתַנְּן דְּבַרֵּי בִן נָנִס בְּסִימְנֵי וּבְמִצְרֵי *As we learnt in the Mishnah: these are the words of Ben Nannus; within its marks and its boundaries*. The *Mishnah* reference is found in *m. B. Bat* 106a: בְּסִימְנֵי וּבְמִצְרֵי where *strait* (מִצְר) and *boundary* (מְצַר) are explained as equal.

<sup>10</sup>That is, that the *resh* should be doubled.

<sup>11</sup>For example, מְקוֹם as (m.) see Exod 21:13; and as (f.) see Judg 19:13.

<sup>12</sup>Note that the text starts verse 4 here, rather than with דַרְך.

<sup>13</sup>Here, *ibn Ezra* is trying to explain why שׁוֹר is singular.

- afflicted her*. From the heavy conjugation<sup>14</sup> comes the idea of יגון *pain, grief* and so, תוגיון נפשי (Job 19:2; *will you sadden my spirit*). הלכו שבי *They went into captivity*. With a missing ב<sup>15</sup>, like יהוה בית הנמצא (II Kgs 12:11; *that was found in the Temple of HaShem*).
- (6) There is a suppressed אשר after כאילים as in כמים לים מכסים (Isa 11:9; *as water [that] covers the sea bed*).
- (7) [In] her days of poverty. Like כי ששת ימים עשה ה' (Ex 20:11; 31:17; *for in six days HaShem made the heavens*). And her miseries in exile; the mem is a root letter.
- (8) A wanderer.<sup>16</sup> ללעג to mock, like מנוד ראש (Psa 44:15; *shaking of the head*), and ניד שפתי (Job 16:5; *the movement of my lips*). It has the same meaning as the phrase נע ונד (Gen 4:12, 14; *a restless wanderer*). הזילוה *They despised her*. The opposite of respect, like להוציא יקר מזולל (Jer 15:19; *to bring forth an honourable person from a glutton*), only it is from another root. Or, its sense is they brought [her] down, or they made her tears overflow.
- (9) Astonishingly. She fell greatly (lit; she fell a fall).
- (10) For she saw nations. Concerning Jerusalem, for [they were] in her.
- (11) Worthless. Like זולל וסוּבא (Deut 21:20; *he is worthless and a drunkard*)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14</sup>This appears to refer to any conjugation in which the middle radical is doubled ie *piel, pual* and *hitpael*. However, תוגיון is *hiphil*, and יגון is from the *hiphil*.

<sup>15</sup>Here ibn Ezra wants to the expression הלך בשבי instead of הלך בשבי.

<sup>16</sup>RSV translates this as an *unclean thing* נִקְהָה, rather than from נָדַד to wander.

<sup>17</sup>זולל (ה) is sometimes translated alternatively as *glutton*.

- (12) **לֹא** *Not*. Some say that it is from **אָלָה**, but we do not find it without [the initial] *aleph*. So, its sense is: do not let happen to you what has happened to me. **עוֹלָל** *Was inflicted*. **נַעֲשָׂה** (It was) *done to me*. It is from the *po'al*<sup>18</sup> since it is not read as its verbal noun, because it does not have a *sere* like **כּוֹנֵן אֲסוּרֵי** (Ps 40:3; *firmly establishing my steps*). **הִוְגָה** *He afflicted* is like **חָרָה** *he was grieved*<sup>19</sup>.
- (13) **וַיִּרְדְּנָה** *And it broke them*. It refers to the fire because it is found in the (m.), as **תֹּאכַלְנוּ אֵשׁ לֹא נוֹפֵחַ** (Job 20:26; *an unfanned fire will consume him*). Its sense is like **לֹא יִרְדְּנוּ בַּפְּרֶךְ** (Lev 25:53; *he shall not subjugate him through hard labour*)<sup>21</sup>.
- (14) The word **נִשְׁקָר** is a *hapax legomenon*<sup>22</sup>; its sense is like **נִמְשָׁךְ** *to be prolonged*, (and) like **נִמְהָר** *to be in haste*. **יִשְׁתַּרְגּוּ** *they have become interwoven*<sup>23</sup>. A *hithpael* from the same group [of words] as **הַשְּׂרִיגִים** *branches*. **הִבְשִׁיל** *It caused to fail* refers to *the yoke of my transgressions*; but **אֲשֶׁר** *whom* is lacking after **בְּיָדֵי** *into the hands of*, (and) also after **קוּם** *stand* either **עִמּוֹ** *with him*, or **מִפְּנֵיו** *because of him*.
- (15) **סָלָה** [*The Lord*] *trampled*. Related to **מַסְלָה** *road/way*, and so the text goes on **גַּת דֶּרֶךְ ה'** *HaShem has trodden [as in] a winepress* which is from the verb **דָּרַךְ**, only **סָלָה** is another root. **גַּת** *Winepress*. **יִקֵּב** *winepress* (biblical), *large basket/tank* [of the press] (talmudic). **בְּתוּלָה** *maiden*. [It is] in construct with **בַּת** *daughter*; and the *daughter Judah* is the whole tribe, and the *maiden* is Jerusalem.

<sup>18</sup> Literally, *heavy conjugation*, that is, the middle radical is doubled.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Ezra appears to say that **הִוְגָה** refers to HaShem's burning anger rather than what he has afflicted on Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup> MT reads **תֹּאכַלְהוּ**

<sup>21</sup> In other words, the bones will be crushed (**יִרְד**).

<sup>22</sup> Literally, *it has no predecessor*.

<sup>23</sup> This is preceded by **וְהָיָה**, which has been deleted as a corruption as it makes no sense.

- (16) **עֵינַי עֵינַי יוֹרְדָה מַיִם** *My eye continuously runs with water*. Like **פְּרוּרִיָּה** (Ps 128:3; *fruitful*)<sup>24</sup>. The human eye resembles a fountain of water, and the eye overflows. So also, **יִזְלוּ מַיִם** (Jer 9:17; *they flow with water*); both are intransitive verbs.
- (17) **פָּרְשָׁה** *She spreads out*. The *bet* in **בִּידִיָּה** is additional (ie. unnecessary), like **וַתִּשְׁקַמוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ** (Ps 80:6; *You made them drink copious tears*).
- (18) Every instance of **נָא** means **עַתָּה** *now*, and so **נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ** (Lam 5:16b; *now woe to us for we have sinned*), just as **נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ** (Num 12:13; *Please, God, heal her now*). Therefore, HaShem answered, **הֲלֹא תְּכַלֵּם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים** (ibid. v14; *would she not be humiliated for seven days?*)<sup>25</sup>. **רַעַי יוֹמָתָה נָא** (Jer 38:4; *let be put to death, now*); **נָא דַבֵּר נָא** (Exod 11:2; *Speak, now*); **נָא שְׁמַע נָא** (I Sam 22:12, 28:22; *Listen, now*). With the addition of the *aleph* (ie. **אָנָּא**), the expression is one of entreaty, but in the language of Ishmael (Arabic) it reverts, and is like **עַתָּה**.
- (19) **לְמֵאֲהָבַי** *To my lovers*. They are not **אֲוֵהָבַי** *my love(r)s*, but the sense is *to those who desire that I should love them*.
- (20) **חָמְרָמוּ** *They burn*. The second (*ayin*) and third (*lamed*) root letters are doubled, so its meaning is like **עֲבוּרִים** *troubled*. Thus, **פְּנֵי חָמְרָמוּ** (Job 16:16; *my face burns [from weeping]*) which is related to **חֹמֶר** *frothing*, for the weeping is like water, and the frothing [is like] wine.
- (21) **לֹא קִרְאתָ יוֹם הַבָּאָתָה** *You brought the day you proclaimed*. The particle **לֹא** is absent

<sup>24</sup>Ibn Ezra appears to be commenting on the form of the verbs **בָּכָה** and **פָּרָה**, both being *qal f. sing. ptc. of lamed-he* roots.

<sup>25</sup>The seven days is a temporal response to the entreaty **נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ**.

before **חבאת**, as if it was desirable [ie. that you *did* bring the day you proclaimed<sup>26</sup>]. It is possible that this is something like its meaning.

(22) **ועולל** *And deal*. **עשה** *to do*. It is related to **עלילותיו** *his deeds*, and the true meaning is like **סבה** *her ancestor[s deeds]*. So, **ולו נתכנו עלילות** (I Sam 2:3; and [men's] deeds are accounted by Him).

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(1) **איכה יעיב** *How He has clouded*. Some say that **יעיב** is from the same root as **עב** *darkness*, like **יחשיך** (Jer 13:16; *it gets dark*). But the correct meaning is *he raises as high as a cloud*. **הדרום** *stool*. The form of a small stool for the feet.

(2) The *aleph* of **נאות** is in place of *vav*, like **נות רועים** (cf. Amos 1:2; *the pastures of the shepherds* – which contains an *aleph*; and Zeph 2:6; *a dwelling place for shepherds* – without *aleph*)<sup>27</sup>. Thus, **תתאו לכם** (Num 34:7; *you shall draw a line*)<sup>28</sup>.

(3) **ויבער** *And he has burned*. An intransitive verb, but **אף** *anger* is missing for it certainly refers to **בחרתי אף** *in fierce anger*.

(4) **נצב ימינו** *standing [with] his right hand*. A *niphal* stem, and **ימין** is masculine<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>This compares with Rashi's comment on this verse: *If only you had brought upon them the appointed day that you proclaimed upon me.*

<sup>27</sup>Both are from the expression **נות**, of which the construct is **נות**. The **נ** then becomes superfluous. Cf. Rashi.

<sup>28</sup>Ibn Ezra seems to be saying that the root appears as both **תתאו** and **תתאו** *to mark (out)*. Cf. Davidson and BDB lexicons. Also, Koehler, L. and Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol 4. Leiden: Brill, 1999, 1673, where both the forms **תתאו** and **תתאו** appear.

<sup>29</sup>Normally found in the feminine.

as in נִאֲדָרְיָ בַכַּח (Ex 15:6; [Your right hand, HaShem,] is glorified with strength).

- (5) **וַיִּרְבֵּה** *And He has increased*. A *segol* is beneath the *yod* because of the added *hiphal*<sup>30</sup> stem. הַאֲנִיָּהּ The *tav* is additional<sup>31</sup>. [It is] from the same root as וָאָנָּו in the phrase וָאָנָּו וָאָבְלוּ (Isa 3:26; [Her doorways] will mourn and lament).
- (6) **וַיַּחַמְסֵם** *He has destroyed*. חָשַׁף *to strip off, lay bare*, like עִקְבֵיךָ נִחְמְסוּ (Jer 13:22; *your steps were laid bare*). סִכּוֹ *His booth* and סִכְתּוֹ are like חֻקְתּוֹ and חֻקּוֹ *his law*<sup>32</sup>. מוֹעֵדוֹ *His meeting-place*. Similarly, בָּאֵי מוֹעֵד (Lam 1:4; [no-one] comes to the appointed festival)<sup>33</sup>.
- (7) **נִאֲרָה** *He has abolished*. The *nun* is a root letter; נִאֲרַתְ[הָ] בְּרִית עִבְרֶךָ (Ps 89:40; *You have destroyed the covenant of Your servant*), like עָזַב *to forsake, abandon* or שָׂנֵא *to detest*.
- (8) **קוֹ נִמָּה** *He stretched out a line*. As in תְּהוּ (cf. Isa 34:11; [a line of] emptiness). חָלַל *rampart* as in וַתַּעֲמֹד בְּחָלַל (II Sam 20:15; *it stood even with the rampart*); it is the place surrounding the wall.
- (9) **וַיִּשְׁבֵּר וַיִּשְׁבַּר** *He has ruined and broken* refers to HaShem written in the previous verse.
- (10) **וַיִּשְׂאֵן** *Their heads*. The hair of their heads, or according to the literal meaning.
- (11) **וַיִּחַמְדְּמוּ** (*My innards*) *burn*. As previously [in 1:20; like עִבּוּרִים *troubled*].
- וַיִּלְוֵהוּ** *While (babe and suckling) languish*. The *he* is missing from the *niphal*

<sup>30</sup> Literally, *heavy conjugation*.

<sup>31</sup> i.e. The ׀ is a nominal prefix.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Ezra is making the point that the forms with and without a *he* do exist: חֻקְתּוֹ/חֻקּוֹ, חֻקְתּוֹ/חֻקּוֹ. Similarly, therefore, we find סִכּוֹ (m.) and סִכְתּוֹ (f.).

<sup>33</sup> HaShem has laid waste His מוֹעֵד, and has caused the מוֹעֵד to be abandoned.

- conjugation, as in בהרג הרג<sup>34</sup> (Ezek 26:15; *with the groan of the slain*).
- (12) The *shin* in השתפך *while (their soul) ebbs away* precedes the *tav*; a *hithpael*, as in וישתמר (Mic 6:16; *are preserved*).
- (13) אעידך (What) shall I testify for you. Of the same verbal classification as עדות (evidence, testimony).
- (14) והפל *senseless*. Like שוא *false*, and so היאכל הפל (Job 6:6; *tasteless food*) since it does not have a sense/flavour of the right way<sup>35</sup>; and so לא נתן הפלה (Job 1:22; *he did not ascribe unsavouriness*). משאות *oracles*. Prophecies, as in דמשק משא (Isa 17:1; *A prophecy concerning Damascus*). ומדוחים *and deception*, because they led astray from the right way.
- (15) כלילת יופי *the perfection of beauty*. Of the same verbal classification as כל [ie. כלל].
- (16) פצו *They open wide*. פחתו *they open*; [a similar example is] יפצה פיהו (Job 35:16; *(Job) opens his mouth*).
- (17) בצע *He has carried out*. He has completed; and so וידיי תבצענה (Zech 4:9; *and his hands will carry it out*).
- (18) פוגת *respite*. The construct [although followed by *lamed*], and the sense is *respite for the eye*. It is from the same source as ויפג in the phrase ויפג לבו (Gen 45:26; *but his heart grew faint it*)<sup>36</sup>.
- (19) ותעבר הרנה הכרוו *cry out*. The raising of noise in song or lament. Thus, ותעבר הרנה הכרוו

<sup>34</sup> I.e. בהרג *niphal inf.*

<sup>35</sup> See Schoenfelder p12, note3 where he comments that מדרך ישרה used to explain מדוחים *oracles* is incorrect. The mistake follows the reprint of the Bomberg Bible, 1547.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Rashi who uses the same quote from Genesis.

(I Kgs 22:36; *a cry[a proclamation] went through*)<sup>37</sup>.

(20) טפוחים children that are dandled is from the same source as טפח, as is the custom of women with their small children who sleep<sup>38</sup>.

(21) שכבו [they] *lie* has the same meaning as שכב in עם אבותי (Gen 47:30; *For I will lie down with my fathers*).

(22) מגורי *my terrors*. From the same root as גורו לכם מפני חרב נגורו (Job 19:29; *You should fear the sword*). Some say that it refers to אנשי מגורי neighbours [ie. root גור dwell]<sup>39</sup>.

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three

(1) אני הגבר *I am the man*. Our forefathers, of blessed memory, said that this is the scroll that Jeremiah wrote. If this is so, it is he who says *I am the man*, or it is anyone from Israel. עני *affliction*. In construct, but the noun with which it is in construct, either השבות *the captivity* or הגלות *the exile*, is missing. ראה is instead of ראיתי like a similar anomaly in ונשאר אני (Ezek 9:8; *I remained*). בעברתו *of his*

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<sup>37</sup> In other words, *a ringing shout went out...*

<sup>38</sup> Emending שישנו from root שנה *to teach*, to שיישנו from root שן *to sleep*. Cf. Schoenfelder.

<sup>39</sup> In other words, the two roots of גור *to fear/be afraid*, and *to dwell/crowd together*. Cf. Rashi.

- anger*. It refers back to *my enemy destroyed* (2:22). Some say that it refers to HaShem's anger, but they are not correct, in my opinion. It is the lamenter who said that the adversary was afflicting him with the rod of his anger.
- (2) וַנְהַג *and he led* me from my place into a place of darkness.
- (3) The one who explains that the ו in עֲבַרְתָּו concerns HaShem, should interpret *His hand as His strike* as in הִנֵּה יַד יְהוָה הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנֶךָ (Ex 9:3; *Behold, the hand of HaShem is upon your livestock*) - the strike with the hand.
- (4) The flesh and the skin, which have feeling, wither. But the bones, which do not have feeling, are broken.
- (5) וַיִּקְףָּ רֹאשׁ *He has encompassed [me with] gall*. With anguish and hardship, or it may be like וְעַמִּי תְלוּאִים (in Hosea 11:7; *yet my people persist*<sup>40</sup>). רֹאשׁ is f., but the *he* is concealed like the *he* in וְשַׁעְרָהּ לֹא הִפְךָ לָבָן (in Lev 13:4; *and the hair has not turned white*)<sup>41</sup>.
- (6) בְּמִחְשְׁכִים *In darkness: darkness in the middle of darkness*.
- (7) נַחֲשֹׁתַי *My chains: fetters*.
- (8) שָׁחַ *He shuts out*. With a *shin* acting as a *sameq*, thus הִשִּׁירוּ וְלֹא מִמֶּנִּי (cf. Hosea 8:4; *they made princes [but not through me]*)<sup>42</sup>.
- (9) The paths [which] are known.

<sup>40</sup> The meaning of this verse from Hosea is uncertain, and the translation here reflects the context of the surrounding text in Hosea. However, in *Lam. Rab.* on 3.65 there is a play on תְּלוּאִים which ibn Ezra translates as *your curse*. In the midrash it is rendered as *force* (תְּלוּ lit. *suspend*) *them through suffering, and bring upon them all the curses*. See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1671. So, ibn Ezra offers *anguish and hardship* as a translation for *[he encompassed me with] gall*, or he seems to say that it may be understood in the light of the wordplay.

<sup>41</sup> Since וְשַׁעְרָהּ is f., then the verb הִפְךָ should read הִפְכָּה.

<sup>42</sup> The comment is on the interchangeability of ש and ס, but the quote from Hosea to illustrate his point is incorrect, with MT reading הִשִּׁירוּ וְלֹא מִמֶּנִּי הִשִּׁירוּ. This blends two parts of the sentence. However, ibn Ezra's meaning is clear.

- (10) Some say that the bear is accustomed to call aloud, concerning the lion when he is (still) far away.
- (11) Some say סורר *he made me depart* is from the same source as סירים *thorns*<sup>43</sup>, and thus בסירים את דרכך (Hosea 2:8; *I will block her path with thorn bushes*). But in my opinion, it is a verb in the past tense from the same source as כפרה סוררה (Hosea 4:16; *like a stubborn heifer*)<sup>44</sup>.
- (12) כמטרה *as a target*. An *aleph* is in place of the *hey* of the f., and it is from the same source as נוטר (Nahum 1:2; *vengeful*).
- (13) He compares the quiver to the belly of the pregnant woman.
- (14) לכל עמי *of all my people*, while my people were laughing at me; or, of all the people who were under my hand, like את עמלק ואת עמו (Ex 17:13; [*Joshua mowed down*] *Amalek and his people*)<sup>45</sup>. Alternatively, the *yod* is additional and should not exist, like ותפלטני מריבי עמי (2 Sam 22:44; *You have delivered me from strife with the peoples*), where עמי is used like עמים. It was alluding to Saul, and so it said at the beginning of the song: ומכף שאול (ibid. v1: *from the hand of Saul*).
- (15) The *bet* of במרורים is superfluous as in בדמעות שלי (Ps 80:6; [*You have made them drink*] *tears in full measure*).
- (16) גרסה נפשי *He has ground*, as in וישבר וישבר *he has crushed*. For example, גרסה נפשי (Ps 119:20; *My soul is crushed*). גרסה נפשי is a *hapax legomenon*<sup>46</sup>, but the sense is גרסה נפשי *he defiled me*.

<sup>43</sup>Rashi translates סורר as *thorns*. Ibn Ezra disagrees with this interpretation.

<sup>44</sup>In other words סוררה is from the root סרר *to be stubborn*.

<sup>45</sup>i.e. *His people* are those under him [Amalek].

<sup>46</sup>Literally, it reads *it has no fellow...*

- (17) יתזנח [My soul] *is far removed* is like ותמאס [My soul] *is despised*.
- (18) נצחתי *my existence*. My situation because of the existence that I have, like ויז נצחם על בגדי וכל מלבושי אנאלתי (Isa 63:3; *their blood is enduring upon my garments, I have stained all my raiment*). On account of the blood that is in him, the living will continue his existence.
- (20) זכור *remembers*. A verbal noun (infinitive), like בזכור בניהם (Jer 17:2; *When their children remember* [MT 'כז']); or in the sense of a request to HaShem<sup>48</sup>. When my soul remembers, this calamity will humble me.
- (21) זאת *this is the hope*<sup>49</sup>.
- (22) תמנו *they (never) cease*. Just as its plain meaning<sup>50</sup>, or the *nun* is in place of the double *mem*<sup>51</sup>.
- (23) חדשים *they are new*. They are the kindnesses. לבקרים *to the mornings*. With each day, like לבקרים אצמית (Ps 101:8; *Morning by morning I will destroy*). רבה *great*, or like its plain meaning<sup>52</sup>.
- (24) אמרה *my soul says* to me.
- (25) תדרשנו (*that seeks him*) in truth.
- (26) The *vav* in ויחיל is like the undageshed *pe*<sup>53</sup> in Arabic.

<sup>47</sup> נצחם, from Isa 63:3, is a *hapax legomenon* from נצח *to sprinkle*, rather than נצח *to be pre-eminent, enduring* which is the root found in Lam 3:18. However, this is the root that ibn Ezra uses to explain the text.

<sup>48</sup>Therefore, it is an imperative: *You (will) remember well that my soul is humbled within me.*

<sup>49</sup>This (i.e. my soul is humbled) is the hope.

<sup>50</sup>*For we have not ended..*

<sup>51</sup>ie. From the root תמם. Cf. Rashi.

<sup>52</sup>ie. *Abundant.*

<sup>53</sup>This is a conjunction in Arabic. It is principally employed in conjunctive sentences as a prefixed particle of inference and sequence, and not to be translated (see Penrice, John. *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran*. Curzon Press, 1971,106). Cf. Rashi who says that the *vav* is superfluous.

(27) עול *a yoke*. A fetter.

(28) נטל עליו *for he has laid upon him* the yoke.

(29) He bows down to his maker until the dust enters his mouth.

(30) The *bet* of בחרפה *with shame* is superfluous, like the *bet* in השביעני במרורים (v. 15; *He has filled me with bitterness*).

(31) יזנח *He will [not] cast off*. He will [not] reject.

(32) ורחם *He will have compassion*. Like ירחם, and thus is the way of the expression: והיה ה' לי לאלהים (Gen 28:21; *then HaShem will be my God*)<sup>54</sup>.

(33) מלבו *from his heart*. From his desire<sup>55</sup>. ויגא *He [does not] grieve*. Alef instead of *he*<sup>56</sup>, and it is from the additional heavy conjugation<sup>57</sup> as in the phrase אתך היצא (Gen 8:17; *Bring out with you*).

(34) לדכא *in order to crush*. The *alef* of לדכא is a root letter.

(35) The word הטח *to divert* with משפט *justice* is like עוות *injustice/perversion*.

(36) לא ראה [HaShem] *does not approve* [it], in His wisdom, to be so<sup>58</sup>.

(39) יתאוונן [Why] *should complain* – from the same root as און *sorrow*.

(40) נחפשה *Let us search* – from the *qal*<sup>59</sup>.

(41) נשא לבבנו *Let us lift up our hearts* has the same basic sense as נישא משאת (Gen 43:34; *When portions were served*).

(42) The *aleph* of אנחנו *we* is superfluous<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>54</sup>In other words, it is a *vav* consecutive

<sup>55</sup>ie. *willingly*.

<sup>56</sup>Ibn Ezra has ויגא which he seems to regard as the correct spelling, while MT has ויגה.

<sup>57</sup>This is a reference to the *hiphil* form of the verb in Gen 8:17

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Rashi.

<sup>59</sup>Ibn Ezra is commenting that *pe* has a *dagesh lene*, rather than a *dagesh forte*.

(43) סכוּתָהּ *You have concealed yourself* – from the ע"ע verb [סכך] *to cover, conceal oneself*].

(45) סחי *scum* – after the phrase וסחית עפרה (Ezek 26:4; *I will scrape off her soil*), in the sense of מלטול *motion*.

(46) פצוּ *They opened* – פתחוּ *they opened*.

(47) השאת *devastation* – just like השואה *destruction*, it is appropriate to show the aleph.

(48) They are rivers and streams.

(49) תרמה *[it is not] silent*. The sense is that neither eye is quieted, for it is beyond solace<sup>61</sup>. The *he* of הפוגי' *respite* is like the *tav* of תרומי' *offerings*<sup>62</sup>.

(50) ישקוף *[HaShem] looks down*. As though there is a window to the heavens that He looks down from.

(51) Some say עיני עוללה האחרון *my eye affects* what follows, and explain עוללה<sup>63</sup> as in בעוללות בציר (Mic 7:1; *when the vintage has been gleaned*). But in my opinion, the correct answer is ועולל למו (Lam 1:22; *and deal with them*)<sup>64</sup>.

(52) חנם *without cause* refers to אויבי *my enemies*.

(54) צפו *[Water] flowed [over]* as in שחוּ *they swam*, similar to אשר הציף (Deut 11:4; *which He made overflow*).

(55) תחתיות *depths* – from the depths of the deep.

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<sup>60</sup>MT here reads נחנו. This abbreviated form is found in five other places: Gen 42:11; Ex 16:7,8; Num 32:32; & 2 Sam 17:12. Ibn Ezra regards alef in אנחנו as unnecessary.

<sup>61</sup>Literally *beyond reach*. Compare Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1465.

<sup>62</sup>That is to say they are both nominal prefixes, not root letters.

<sup>63</sup>From עולל (עלל) *to glean*.

<sup>64</sup>From עלל *to attend/do*.

- (56) לרוחתי *from my sighing*, because you may provide relief for me; or, (You heard) my sighing and my crying at that time<sup>65</sup>.
- (57) I found you close by.
- (58) Whatever I was pleading, you plead my cause, HaShem.
- (59) עוונתי *wrong done to me* – the injustice that they were doing to me.
- (60) נקמתם *their acts of vengeance* with openness<sup>66</sup>.
- (61) וחרפתם *their insults* in public/broad daylight.
- (62) עלי *against me* – to my hurt.
- (63) מנגינתם *their song* as in נגינתם (Job 30:9; [And now I have become] their song), but the *mem* is an additional letter.
- (64) גמול *recompense* equally [can be taken] as a construct, [or] as an absolute.
- (65) מגנת *weakness*. Some say that the *dagesh* in the *nun* is additional, and is from the same source as מגן צריך (Gen 14:20; [who] has delivered your enemies) because of the form of אכילה *eating*. But the correct form, in my opinion, is from נון והציל (Isa 31:5; protect and deliver it). תאלתך *may your curse be* is from אלה *curse*, but the *tav* is superfluous, as in ישיבנה מי תאנתה מי (Jer 2:24; in her heat who can restrain her?).
- (66) ואל משה *The heavens of HaShem*. That is to say, *Your heavens*, as in ואל משה (Exod 24:1; And He said to Moses, Come up to HaShem)<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. the *Targum*: You heard my cry at that time.

<sup>66</sup>Here, ibn Ezra appears to have transliterated the Greek παρρησία *outspokenness, frankness* into בפהרסיא. See Schoenfelder p20.

<sup>67</sup>Following on from v.65, God is being addressed. Therefore, ibn Ezra puts שמי השם into the third person.

- (1) **יועם** *How [the gold] has become dim*. Some say that **יועם** is like **חשך** to become dark. The Targum [explains **יועם** *dim*] as in **והנה כהה הנגע** (Lev 13:6; and if the diseased spot is dim), with **עמיה מכתשא** the wound is dim. But in my opinion, it is like **לא עממוהו** (Ezek 31:8; [they] could not rival it), and its significance is **לחם יודק** (Isa 28:28; bread [grain] is ground)<sup>68</sup>. **ישנא** is changed is from the same source as **שנים** two.
- (2) The *alef* in **המסולאים** [they] who were weighed replaces the *he* of the root, because the concealed *he* is not found in the middle of the word<sup>69</sup>.
- (3) **חלצו** [the jackals] offer is like **והלצה נעלו** (Deut 25:9; and she pulls off his sandal).
- (4) **לשון**<sup>70</sup> tongue is both m. and f. **פורש** [no-one] breaks is like **פרוס לרעב** (Isa 58:7; Is it not to share your bread with the hungry). It is a crumb of bread – **פתוחה**<sup>71</sup>.
- (5) **האובלים** Those who used to eat are those who indulged in luxury. **תולע** crimson

<sup>68</sup>**יועם** is a *hapax legomenon* variously defined. Ibn Ezra mentions it as **חשך** it became dark, and comments that the Targum renders **כהה** dull, from Lev 13:6, as **עמיה** *dim*. However, he prefers the root **עמם** in the *hophal* to become dark, black, and compares it with the *hophal* of **דקק** to be crushed fine. In the context of Isa 28:28, which he quotes, this implies that the gold has become useless.

<sup>69</sup>In BDB, 698b, the root **סלא** to weigh in the *pual* is taken as the correct reading. This can be compared with **סלה** to weigh, balance, a form of **סלא** (see BDB, 699a).

<sup>70</sup>In the commentary **לשון** appears in v.3. The editor's mistake has been corrected here, so that it now appears in v.4 where it belongs.

<sup>71</sup>Schoenfelder reads the infinitive **פתוחה** as **פתוח**, as in **פתוח אחה פתים** (Lev 2:6; You shall break it into pieces). However, compare with **לחם** ובפתוחי (Ezek 13:19; and for crumbs of bread). See BDB, 837b.

like (1) תולעת שני (Exod 28:6; *crimson yarn*)<sup>72</sup>.

(6) חלו [no hands] *fell* is from the same root as חיל *strength*, but others say it is like

על ראש רשעים יחול (Jer 23:19; 30:23; *it will swirl down on the heads of the wicked*)<sup>73</sup>.

(7) משלג ומחלם [purer] *than snow*, [whiter] *than milk* is a parallel expression, and

so ספיר *lapiz lazuli* is like מפנינים *corals*<sup>74</sup>. So the sense of the *mem* of מפנינים, is

that it [*mem*] extends beyond itself, [to ספיר], like the *mem* in מאל אביך (Gen

49:25; *By God your father[...and by the Almighty..]*), as though they [the Nazirites]

were cut better than lapiz lazuli; and the pavement was like lapiz lazuli, and it is

the evidence, as it were, and in another place it was stone<sup>75</sup>.

(8) משחור *than soot*. More than blackness; and it is a noun. צפר *shrivelled* is like

דבק *cling* - this is the only occurrence.

(9) שזם יזובו *because they ooze* - and they were pierced.

(10) לברות *food* is from the same stem as להברות את דוד (2 Sam 3:35; *to persuade*

*David to eat bread*), but they are two [different] conjugations.

(11) The anger is likened to fire.

(12) תבל *world* is the place of habitation.

(13) דם צדיקים *blood of the righteous*. The blood of every righteous man, and

similarly [in the expression] "in the heart of the wise man"<sup>76</sup>.

(14) עורים *the blind* is like the blind, just as אש אוכלת הוא (Deut 4:24; [*HaShem your*

<sup>72</sup>In other words, those who lived in luxury, who ate food for enjoyment rather than out of necessity, and who were clothed in colourful garments of rich cloth. Cf. Rashi.

<sup>73</sup>Ibn Ezra is expressing his preference for חיל *strength* over חול *to tremble*, as the root for חלו.

<sup>74</sup>i.e. a comparison of precious stones.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. Exod 24:10; under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapiz lazuli. It appears that ibn Ezra is drawing his comments from this text.

<sup>76</sup>i.e. "In the heart of every wise man".

- God] is a devouring fire)<sup>77</sup>. נִגְאָלוּ *they are defiled*. A word composed from the *niphal* conjugation, but a different conjugation is read [for] its verbal noun<sup>78</sup>.
- (15) סוּרוּ *Depart* – an unclean nation. נָצוּ *they wander*. They have feathers like a bird, and so נָצָא הָצֵא (Jer 48:9; *for she would fly away*)<sup>79</sup>.
- (16) פְּנֵי הַשֵּׁם *The face of HaShem*. Wrath, because it was seen in the face, just as in וּפְנֵיהָ לֹא הָיוּ לָהּ עוֹד (1 Sam 1:18; *and her countenance was no longer [sad]*).
- (17) בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ *in our expectations*. It has no significance<sup>80</sup>.
- (18) As if they dogged our steps.
- (19) And so it is said דָּלְקָנוּ *they chased us*, just like כִּי דָלְקַת אַחֲרַי (Gen 31:36; *that you pursued me*)<sup>81</sup>.
- (20) בְּשַׁחֲתוֹתָם *in their pits* is like בְּשַׁחֲתָם נִתְפַּשׂ (Ezek 19:8; *he was taken in their pit*)<sup>82</sup>.
- (21) עוּץ *Uz*. There are two references, and they are (to) Arameans<sup>83</sup>.
- (22) לֹא יוֹסִיף *He will not prolong*. It refers to עוֹנֶיךָ *your iniquity*, and פָּקַד *He has punished*<sup>84</sup> refers to it (i.e. עוֹנֶיךָ), or it refers to HaShem who is mentioned in the

<sup>77</sup>In other words, "He is like a devouring fire".

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Schoenfelder considers this as a form mixed from the *niphal* and *pual* conjugations, that is, it is not vocalized as a typical *niphal*. However, נִגְאָלוּ, נִגְאָל, to be defiled, stained are the *niphal* forms of נִגְאָל.

<sup>79</sup>Ibn Ezra is commenting that this unclean nation will be desolate like Moab.

<sup>80</sup>Schoenfelder comments that בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ has no analogous form.

<sup>81</sup>In other words, this may be taken literally – *they chased us like you pursued me*.

<sup>82</sup>In Ezek 19:8, Israel, who was once great, is now trapped by the surrounding nations. In Ezekiel's allegory, the two cubs are the Kings Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim whose policies caused the surrounding nations to rise up against them, and leave Israel beaten and defenceless. Ibn Ezra is drawing on the lamentation in Ezekiel to explain the idea in v20.

<sup>83</sup> Gen 10:23 ומִשׁ וּמִשׁ וּמִשׁ וּמִשׁ *the sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash*; and 36:28 אֵלֶּה

בְּנֵי דִישָׁן עוּץ וְאַרָן *These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran*.

<sup>84</sup>In other words, *the punishment for your iniquity will not be prolonged*.

*breath of our nostrils* (v20)<sup>85</sup>.

- (1) זכור *Recall*. The recollection in the heart, and the glance with the eye. It means all of the misfortune that befell us prior to the exile, and the disgrace that we were in.
- (2) נחלתנו *Our inheritance*. Fields and vineyards are sold to strangers because they (the strangers) are in our land.
- (3) יתומים *orphans*. Moreover, we are humiliated by the strangers, as though we were orphans, without a known father, for it is the custom of the family of the father to support the orphans.
- (4) מיםינו *Our water*. Even the water and the wood, which are not in control of a man (ie. ownerless), we purchased at great cost, because the city sits under siege by the enemy.
- (5) על *Upon*. Now, if we bring the water or the wood *upon our necks, we are pursued*. The enemy pursues us and we labour in vain, because we are not allowed (to keep) what we bring.
- (6) נתנו יד *We offered our hand to Egypt*. The *dagesh* in the word נתנו replaces the *nun* of the root, because this *nun* is the sign of the ones speaking. The

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<sup>85</sup> In other words, your iniquity will not be prolonged, about which it says "He has punished"; or, HaShem, referred to in v20, will not prolong your iniquity.

giving of the hand is a vow – וְהָנָה נֶתֶן יָדוֹ (Ezek 17:18; *because he gave his hand*)<sup>86</sup>.

The sense is that of a handshake, because they made an oath with Egypt and Assyria, that perhaps they would receive enough.

(7) **אבותינו** *Our fathers*. This is the misfortune that has come upon us because of our iniquities. They are associated with the sins of our fathers; they escaped, but not us, in the sense פּוֹקֵד עוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל בְּנֵיהֶם (Deut 5:9; Num 14:18; *punishing the children for the fathers' sin*).

(8) **עבדים** *Slaves*. Our slaves who, like Edom, were paying us tribute, rule over us. פּוֹרֵק *a rescuer* is synonymous with מַצִּיל *life saver*, as in וַיִּפְרְקֵנוּ מִצְרֵינוּ (Ps 136:24; *and freed us from our enemies*). Both are from the same root found in מִפְרָק הָרִים (1 Kgs 19:11; *rent the mountains*)<sup>87</sup>.

(9) **בנפשנו** *With our lives*. At first, our servants brought our food, but now, we bring it ourselves. But correct, in my opinion, is the sense "in danger of our lives"<sup>88</sup> as in כִּי בִנְפֻשׁוֹתֵם הִבִּיאוּם (1 Chron 11:19; *for at the risk of their lives they brought it*).

(10) **עורנו** *Our skin*. For if we had not endangered ourselves to bring food, we would have died of hunger. נִכְמְרוּ *is parched* is like יִבְעֵרוּ *burns*, and יִקְרוּ *burns*; and וְנִכְמְרוּ (has a similar meaning to) כִּי נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו (Gen 43:30; *for his compassion was stirred*)<sup>89</sup>. זֶלְעָפוֹת *raging heat* is like וְרוּחַ זֶלְעָפוֹת (Ps 11:6; *scorching wind*), similar to the meaning of סְעָרָה *storm*.

<sup>86</sup>This reference concerns a vow not honoured, although a hand was offered in pledge.

<sup>87</sup>i.e. Both פּוֹרֵק and וַיִּפְרְקֵנוּ are from the same root as מִפְרָק – פָּרַק to *deliver, set free*.

<sup>88</sup>Cf. Rashi.

<sup>89</sup>נִכְמְרוּ means *to become hot, dried up*; from כָּמַר to *be(come) warm, burnt, moved*.

- (11) נשים *women*. Not only the distress of hunger, but the slaves violated our women, and all intercourse is by force, and such things are called ענני *humiliation*<sup>90</sup>.
- (12) שרים *princes*. We had no princes who could deliver our women, because they were hanged by their arms. Some say that בידם *at their hands* refers to the hands of the slaves mentioned previously.
- (13) נשאן The young men *carried* for the miller. טחון *grinding* is a verbal noun (infinitive) as in נלאיתי נשוא (Isa 1:14; *I am weary of bearing them*). The strength of the young men weakened when they were moving the wood of the mill. Some say that it is according to its literal meaning, and its sense is that each camp must have a mill and wood.
- (14) זקנים *elders*. It was their custom to sit at the gates of Jerusalem.
- (15) שבת *has ceased* concerns the offerings that were cut off; and ומחולנו *and our dancing* (concerns) those who dance and those who sing.
- (16) נפלה [The crown of our head] *has fallen* [refers to] the Temple which is the dwelling-place of the Shekinah<sup>91</sup>.
- (17) על זה היה דוה לבנו *Because of this our heart has become faint* and the eye has grown dim from much weeping.
- (18) על הר ציון ששם *because of Mount Zion that has become desolate*. A verb in

<sup>90</sup>Here, ibn Ezra is explaining the meaning of ענה in the *piel*, which is *rape* in BH.

<sup>91</sup>שכינה and כבוד are interchangeable. They are terms used to denote the divine immanence in the world. If the Temple has gone, then there is no dwelling place for God. Not only have the sacrifices ceased, but there is nowhere to worship.

the past tense, like **כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהַב** (Gen 27:9, 14; *such as he loved*)<sup>92</sup>. **הֵלְכוּ בוֹ** [*they*] *wander over it* - those who wander, like **וַיִּחַנְטוּ אוֹתוֹ** (Gen 50:26; *and they embalmed him*)<sup>93</sup>. But **הֵלְכוּ** has the sense of **הֵלִיכָה** *to go about* from the *piel*, and it is intransitive, and because I have found **עָרוֹם הֵלְכוּ** (Job 24:10; *they go about*<sup>94</sup> *naked*), I am first obliged to be precise. But it is the habit of foxes to be in the ruins.

(19) **אַתָּה הוּא** *You, HaShem*. We know that your reign will not pass away; forever you will sit on the throne of the Kingdom.

(20) **לִמָּדָה לָמָּדָה** *Why*. Because you remain forever, why do you forget us? *Selah*.

(21) **הַשִּׁיבֵנו** *Restore us* to the city that is the dwelling place of your name, and we will return to serve you as in the days of old.

(22) **כִּי** *For...* Restore us - quickly. But if you have rejected us already because of our sins, you are very angry with us. But in my opinion, its true meaning is that if you have rejected us because of our sins, you were already more angry with us than was necessary. But as for him, in his mercy he will have compassion on us, and all the wretched, and he will comfort the mourners. He will appoint his prince, Michael<sup>95</sup>, to negotiate good things for Israel, and he will come as redeemer to Zion.

### The end of the scroll of Lamentations.

<sup>92</sup>Both **שָׁמַח** and **אָהַב** are *qal* 3m. sing. perf. statives **שָׁמַח** is preceded by *shin*, a prefix used to replace **אֲשֶׁר**.

<sup>93</sup>As neither sentence has a preceding subject, *ibn Ezra* appears to be commenting on an implied passive with an assumed subject, as illustrated in *Job*. The verse would then mean something like, "On Mount Zion there are foxes. People wander over it."

<sup>94</sup>The verb here is in the *piel*.

<sup>95</sup>Michael is the angelic guardian of Israel. See *Dan* 10:13, 21.

## Commentary B of ibn Ezra

one

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- (1) Not only does she sit alone, (when) her children having died, after being full of people, while she is like a widow without a husband, and she is despairing of having children at all.
- (2) Every mourner sleeps in the night, but she weeps continually; and not only does she have no comforter among her friends, but they also become her enemies.
- (3) When she was unable to endure the oppression of the kingdom, and the harsh labour by which she served, she went into exile from her land. Also, she could find no rest in the place where she went, and she went [only] to be driven back. So, they chased her, and overtook her in a hostile place.
- (4) Her gates, where the elders of Israel came and gathered, are desolate; the priests lament for there are no first fruits or tithes; and the maidens are anxious because it is their custom to dance in the dances at each festival.
- (5) Her enemies are in comfort, and she is alone in her grief. The children, who have no guilt, are captured because of the multitude of her sins.
- (6) It mentions in the previous verse that her enemies are superior; and כל הדרה *all her splendour* has gone from Zion, that is the kingdom.
- (7) Whether she came to remember in her exile, when her people fell into the hand of the adversary, or, all her former treasures, her adversaries laughed that she

was taken captive because of her deeds – she did not have what she toiled for.

(8) When they saw her nakedness she mourned, and she hid her face<sup>96</sup> because of the disgrace.

(9) At first, when menstrual blood was seen on her skirts, she was not alarmed to perhaps consider [that] her nakedness would be seen in the end, and she would be uncovered. She descended below, she did not see. ראה ה' כי הגדיל אויב See *HaShem...for the enemy has magnified himself* in order to act or to speak. Another explanation of ותהרד פלאים *she fell astonishingly* is ותספור *and she mourned*. In context [this is like] וירדתי על ההרים (Judg 11:37; *that I may go down upon the mountains*); נהי על המון מצרים והורידוהו (Ezek 32:18; *Wail over the hordes of Egypt, and send them down*). Also, אריד בשיחי (Ps 55:3; *I am troubled in my complaint*); and all of them are from the two roots *dry to go down* and ריד *to cry/moan*<sup>97</sup>.

(10) When she realised that Ammon and Moab, who had not welcomed them with bread and water when they departed from Egypt because of their heart's great cruelty, had entered her sanctuary, it was necessary for her to give them all her precious things.

(11) The famished are not a few, but *all* of her people; and after she gave away every precious thing for food, she resembles a glutton<sup>98</sup> because she gave everything that was demanded from her to fulfil her craving.

<sup>96</sup>Lit. *she turned her face backwards*.

<sup>97</sup>The context indicates that ibn Ezra understands these references as *to mourn*.

<sup>98</sup>זוללה *a glutton; worthless, despised*.

(12) Pray that what has come upon me, does not come upon you. They<sup>99</sup> told me that I would repent if there was pain like my pain, and I was consoled.

(13) She compares the heat of his anger to a fire which comes down from heaven, and reaches as far as the bone. But she is unable to flee from before the fire because a net is spread, so she turns back. So, the fire sets her alight as she sits, desolate. Some [who are] sad are content from time to time, but this is כל היום כל היום *sad all day long*.

(14) She likens the troubles to the shoots of the vine, whose instinct is to grasp each tall tree and be lifted up. The word נתנני *he delivered me* is like עזבני *he abandoned me*; similarly, על כן לא נתתיך (Gen 20:6; *therefore, I did not let you*), and the sense is *into the hand of the troubles*. But, it is possible [that it is] *into the hand of the enemy*, on account of the sins.

(15) סלה [The Lord] *trampled*. She was given<sup>100</sup> into the enemy's hand, because האל trampled her mighty men, her men of war, on the road, and they were in her midst. Similarly, הקדיש קרואים (Zeph 1:7; *he has consecrated those he has invited*)<sup>101</sup>, in order to come and kill the young men, the possessors of strength. Their blood was spilled like the juice of the grape in the winepress.

(16) Jerusalem says that she is the maiden daughter of Judah: on account of the wickedness I bring to mind, אני בוכה *I weep*. Time after time<sup>102</sup> my eye sheds tears, and I have no comforter. בני *My children*, who have gone into exile,

<sup>99</sup>They – all who passed by; her friends etc.

<sup>100</sup>Reading נתנה *niphal* 3 f. sing.; but, an equally possible reading is *he gave her*, *qal* 3m. sing. + f. sing. suffix.

<sup>101</sup>In context, *HaShem has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited*.

<sup>102</sup>This is ibn Ezra's explanation of עיני עיני, but cf. Rashi.

בְּיָמַי אֵינִי מְנַחֵם כִּי גִבֹר אֹיֵב *are desolate for the enemy has prevailed*, the adversary against me.

(17) Even Zion, the royal city, seeks a comforter, but there are none because HaShem decreed against Jacob, and commanded his enemies from all around<sup>103</sup>. And they defiled Jerusalem, and she became unclean<sup>104</sup>.

(18) She vindicates the judgement, and says כָּל הָעַמִּים שָׁמְעוּ נָא *Hear, now, all peoples* who have seen my maidens and my youths in captivity, for because of my sins they were taken prisoner.

(19) I called out to foreign lands, my neighbours, that they would give me council, but הֵמָּה רָמוּנִי *they deceived me*, for all my advisors died from hunger - the priests who prayed for me, and the elders [who were] my counsellors. Only some of my youths and maidens survived, because they had the strength to endure, even though they were taken captive.

(20) And I cried out to HaShem, and confessed when I saw the enemy's sword bereaving in the street; and inside the house, hunger was like death.

(21) My friends heard the aforementioned, but there was not a comforter among them. The enemies heard my cries, and they were glad for you made them rejoice. But you will bring the day nearer that you have proclaimed [upon] them, and they will come under your commandment until they will be like me. It is possible that its explanation is to be in the future: May the day come<sup>105</sup> that you have proclaimed through the prophets, that it will happen to them as it has

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<sup>103</sup>Cf. Rashi.

<sup>104</sup>Lit. *Like a menstruant*.

<sup>105</sup>The text reads לְבוֹא תְבוֹא הַיּוֹם; but, this seems to be a combination of לְבוֹא הַיּוֹם and תְבוֹא הַיּוֹם, so they have not been read together.

happened to me.

(22) Do to them because of their wickedness, as you have done to me because of my transgressions. For my heart is sad until they will be like me, as they, too, have sinned against you.

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two

- (1) **אֵיכָה יַעִיב** *How he has clouded.* HaShem only exalted Zion out of anger, in order to bring her down<sup>106</sup>.
- (2) He has made her strongholds low, and has profaned her king for they<sup>107</sup> used to dwell in the tower and castle.
- (3) **קָרַן יִשְׂרָאֵל** *He has cut down all the strength of Israel* from both kingdoms.
- (4) Not only did he not wage war with the enemy, but he has withdrawn his right hand, so that it has no power, until he returns like the enemy. The sense of **בְּאֹהֶל** *in the tent* is that if the fire falls on it, everything will be consumed immediately<sup>108</sup>.
- (5) He destroyed Israel during the exile of Samaria; Judah was in lament after the exile of the tribes.

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<sup>106</sup>Lit. *HaShem only exalted Zion in his anger in order to send her from a lofty dwelling place.*

<sup>107</sup> Presumably her king and princes.

<sup>108</sup> Consider also the reading of **הַכֹּל** as *the All*. Therefore, the text would read...*the All will consume immediately*. This reading would be more in keeping with ibn Ezra's search for the mystical meaning as considered by Irene Lancaster.

- (6) And afterwards, he removed שבו *his booth* because it was the place of the Holy of Holies. Now the meaning is כגן *like a garden* that they seized; the meaning of מלך וכהן *king and priest* is that the priest teaches the commandments, and the king guards the Torah with his power, and he gave Torah to both of them.
- (7) [What happened] to חומת ארמנותיה *the walls of her palaces* was repeated at the sanctuary. וקול נתנו [הצרים] בבית ה' [The adversaries] *gave voice in the House of HaShem* because of the abundance of their joy, as Israel used to do during their festival.
- (8) The Temple was seized because the wall of the city fell, and she was breached.
- (9) When the gates sank the king went into exile, and he survived without Mishneh Torah. And as for the prophets, their prophecy was cut off in a foreign land.
- (10) As the loftiness of Zion had fallen, the elders sat in the dust during the exile, and the maidens did not celebrate their marriages.
- (11) And each of the elders said, כלו בדמעות עיני *My eyes are spent with tears*, when he remembered the days of the famine in Zion.
- (12) The mother is the one who nurses, therefore he remembers the mothers, but not the fathers.
- (13) Who can witness that it happened to them also?<sup>109</sup> If the disaster is גדול כים *vast as the sea*, a dresser will not find a bandage for it.
- (14) All of this came upon you because of your prophets, and not the prophets of HaShem.

<sup>109</sup>Cf. Rashi: if there is no one with a similar experience, then you cannot find comfort from their suffering. In this case, the damage is so bad it cannot be healed.

- (15) There was sighing over you when you were desolate, and there were those shaking their head and mocking.
- (16) All the enemies have widened the[ir] mouth,
- (17) For HaShem has fulfilled that which he promised by the hand of his servants, the early prophets.
- (18) The heart of your enemies cried out; and its meaning is that they made cries against HaShem, and they said to the wall of the daughter of Zion that she would weep.
- (19) She protests about her children, and those dying from hunger, and she says thus:
- (20) the women are eating their own children, and the prophets and priests are killed in the sanctuary. The explanation, referring to Zechariah<sup>110</sup>, speaks through exposition.
- (21) The youths and elders, maidens and youths, are dead.
- (22) It is as if you have summoned all my fears, and gathered them around me; and **אֲשֶׁר מִפְּחַתִּי** *those whom I dandled* are the smallest ones, and **אֲשֶׁר רִבִּיתִי** *those whom I reared* are the adult ones, like **וְרֵבִי מֶלֶךְ** (Jer 41:1; *the king's captains*).  
One of the enemy was able to destroy all of them.

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<sup>110</sup>Cf. Rashi from *Lam. Rab.* 2.20.23 (& 1.16.51); *Lekach Tov*.

- (1) **אני הגבר** *I am the man*. The mourner recounts that it<sup>111</sup> was the enemy who dealt him a heavy blow **בשבט עברה** *with the rod of [his] wrath*<sup>112</sup>;
- (2) and led him into captivity, into darkness, and he did not hope for light.
- (3) At every hour his hand turned and struck him;
- (4) and because of the abundance of blows, his flesh and skin wasted away, and his bones were broken.
- (5) After this, he constructed a building about him, and encircled his head,
- (6) and he sat in darkness.
- (7) There he fenced him in and his feet were in chains.
- (8) Even though he cried out, his cry was not heard.
- (9) And there he fenced him about because he was despairing, and he [the enemy] made crooked the paths that he knew.
- (10) More misfortune in a different manner, because a bear comes against him, and enters from a path he does not recognise.
- (11) **ויפּשחני** *he has torn me to pieces* is [translated by the] *Targum* [just as] **וישסף** *and he crushed*<sup>113</sup>. **שומם** (I Sam 15:33; *Samuel tore to pieces*), and **ופּשח** *and he crushed*<sup>113</sup>. **שומם** *desolate*, because each one he sees is desolate, just as **שקוץ משומם** (Dan 11:31; *the abomination that causes desolation*); and in another place **שומם** (Dan 12:11;

<sup>111</sup> The text reads **שדני**; it should be emended to **שדני**.

<sup>112</sup> Here Ibn Ezra disagrees with the usual understanding of **HaShem** as antecedent.

<sup>113</sup> The hapax legomenon **ויפּשחני**, is translated in the *Targum* as *and he has rent me*. This is also found in the *Peshitta*. Ibn Ezra follows this translation, and includes the midrashic interpretation of **ויפּשחני** *split in pieces* from the same root **פּשח**.

*desolation*).

(12) Moving the oppressor far away, he fires an arrow against him.

(13) The arrows went into his innards, which were hidden in<sup>114</sup> fat.

(14) He became<sup>115</sup> a laughing stock.

(15) Beside bread and water were bitter herbs and wormwood.

(16) His teeth were broken with stones, and he was unable to eat. The enemy filled

his mouth with ashes, which is similar to אפר כלחם (Psa 102:10; *ashes like bread*).

(17) [It was] as though he did not notice, and had forgotten good.

(18) He had no hope that he would see good again.

(19) For he would continually recall his affliction, because the adversary would answer him with wormwood and gall; for they embittered a place of war.

(20) Some say that זכור תזכור *you remember well*<sup>116</sup>.

(21) This comfort I reply to my heart when my soul is bowed down,

(22) because there is no end to the loving kindness(es) of HaShem<sup>117</sup>.

(23) Perhaps they are new on account of his mercies, for רבה אמונתך *abundant is*

*your faithfulness*, great [גדולה] like על כל רב ביתו (Esther 1:8; *for every officer*<sup>118</sup> *of his house*); or, an expression of רבים *much/many*.

(24) More than all [other] gods, he was my inheritance from the days of old.

(25) I know that he accomplishes good things for those who trust him.

(26) It is good that the one who seeks HaShem should endure and wait, and sit

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<sup>114</sup> Reading the preposition כ *bet* rather than the כ *kaf* in the text.

<sup>115</sup> Reading כש with the extended MT meaning of *to turn into, to become* rather than *to return/turnback*.

<sup>116</sup> This contrasts with the standard translation offered by Rashi, and is to be preferred in the context of the verse.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn Ezra squarely blames the enemy for the mourner's complaints.

<sup>118</sup> That is רב, *one with importance/authority*.

quietly for HaShem's salvation. Similarly, דוּם לְהוֹי וְהַתְּחוּלָל לוֹ (Ps 37:7; *Wait patiently for HaShem, and wait longingly for him*), just as in דוּמוֹ עַד הַגִּיעֵנוּ (I Sam 14:9; *Wait patiently until we come!*).

(27) בְּנַעֲוָרָיו *in his youth*: perhaps the mourner was a young man when he was taken prisoner; or, he sustained the heart of the young men.

(28) כִּי נָטַל *for he has laid* refers back to the yoke which was spoken of earlier.

(29) He will yield to the dust.

(30) He offered [it] willingly.

(31) Some say יִזְנַח *he will abandon*, just like יִשְׁנַח *he will forsake/forget*. That is correct, and the evidence is וְתִזְנַח מִשְׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי (Lam 3:17; *my soul is bereft of peace*).

(32) Surely הוֹגְגָה וְרַחֵם *he causes grief, but has compassion*.

(33) מִלְּבוֹ *from his heart*<sup>119</sup>: it does not occur to him.

(34) It compares HaShem, who dwells in heaven, to human beings, [who are like] prisoners on earth, locked up in the enclosed space of the wheel<sup>120</sup>.

(35) To turn aside the verdict, on account of his being the Most High, and his will acts on those who dwell below.

(36) These three verses belong together, for the sense of לֹא רָאָה *he does not approve* is like the sense of לֹא הָיָה *it does not happen*, for HaShem sees everything.

(37) If so, who decides the decree against humankind, for HaShem does not

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<sup>119</sup> i.e. *willingly*.

<sup>120</sup> In other words, HaShem is in the vast expanse of the heavens, and man is confined to the earth.

- command [it]? Its meaning is **לֹא גָזַר** *he does not ordain [it]*; and so **כִּי הוּא צִוָּה** *for he commanded and they were created* (Ps 148:5; *for he commanded and they were created*).
- (38) HaShem does not decide the good or evil of the deeds, they are only in the control of humankind.
- (39) If so, why is **יִתְאָוֶנֶן** *complain* in the speech? Similarly, **כַּמְתְּאוֹנְנִים** *when [the people] complained*, and the evidence is **וַיִּשְׁמַע ה'** *HaShem heard* (Num 11:1).
- (40) Only man should search his ways.
- (41) He gives his heart as a gift in his hands; or, his heart was lifted up in his hands<sup>121</sup>.
- (42) Israel admits that they did not return to HaShem, therefore, he did not forgive.
- (43) You placed a cover of anger over us so that we would not see where we would flee, then you pursued us.
- (44) For example, as the cloud separates between prayer and HaShem<sup>122</sup>.
- (45) A wandering, contemptible people.
- (46) **פָּצוּ עַל יָנוּ פִּיהֶם** *They have opened their mouth against us* out of derision.
- (47) When the soul fears, and the pit is before the body, it falls in an instant; and behold, the devastation of the soul comes, and the body is destroyed in the pit.
- (48) Words of the mourner.
- (49) Continually weeping.
- (50) Until HaShem sees streams of water which run down from my eyes.
- (51) My eye has done more weeping for my soul than all the daughters of my city,

<sup>121</sup>Here ibn Ezra translates **אֵל** as *in*. This can be compared with Gen 8:21, where HaShem said in his heart (**אֵל לְבוֹ**). He thus interprets this verse contextually, and symbolically, and not literally. But, this is still **פֶּשֶׁט**.

<sup>122</sup>There is no communication between man and HaShem.

because it is the custom of the women to weep.

(52) All of this weeping because I am captured like a bird.

(53) I was placed in the pit, and they laid a great stone over the mouth of the pit; or, they threw a stone at me to see if I was alive.

(54) And the pit was not empty, but full of water.

(55) And if the pit was near<sup>123</sup>, I would have been comforted, only it was in the depths<sup>124</sup>.

(56) I know that you, HaShem, have heard my voice, even though I am in the depths.

(57) For from ancient days I found you near when I cried out to you.

(58) Several times you have pled my case.

(59) When you have seen the injustices that they have done, take up my cause.

(60) What there is in their heart; you will also hear their words.

(63) When they sit, and when they stand up, they continually make music about my misfortune.

(64) According to their deeds do to them, for they put me in the pit.

(65) *מגנת לב* *a weakness of heart* - a hiding place in the heart, so that they do not see the curse that you will bring upon them.

(66) Pursue them in your anger, that you will overtake and *והשמידם* *annihilate them*.

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<sup>123</sup> i.e. *shallow*.

<sup>124</sup> i.e. *deep*.

- (1) **איכה יועם** *How it has become dim*. How the gold is despised, and it is likened to other things that are coals<sup>125</sup>. **הכתם הטוב** *Fine gold jewellery* is a circular necklace, but this is like the sentence that follows.
- (2) **בפז** *Fine gold*: a precious stone. Some say that it is silver and gold; gilded, it deceives them.
- (3) It was the males who took the breast of the women<sup>126</sup>, and suckled the young of the females, but the daughter of my people did not do so. Some say **גם תנין ויניקו נוריהן** *even the jackals will offer the breast, females of the flock, and suckle their young*.
- (4) The milk for the suckling is in place of bread and water. But, the young children are older than those that suckle, like the image of young [grapes] of the vine.
- (5) **נשמו** *They perish*: all who saw were openly desolate; deserted, **חבקו אשפתות** *they clasp the dunghills*. For they were thrown down like dung, without burying.
- (6) There is sin [offering] and a guilt [offering] in a sacrifice, seeing that its sense is [found] in the *consequence* of the iniquity and the sin, and it is the evil reward, and

<sup>125</sup> The meaning of **ששה** is unclear, but there is a reference to coals in *Lam. Rab.* 4.1 with respect to Lev 16:12 when discussing the meaning of **יועם**; see Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1089, where there is a reference to *Lev. Rab.* s.26 in reference to Ezek 10:2: **ע'...בירו וכ' ששה...גחלים** *for six years these coals were kept quenched in Gabriel's hand*.

<sup>126</sup> Presumably because the women did not feed their young.

is called evil luck<sup>127</sup>. Similarly, *כי לא שלם עון האמורי* (Gen 15:16; *for the iniquity of the Amorite will not be full until then*); *אם יקרך עון בדבר הזה* (I Sam 28:10; *this thing will not be held against you as an iniquity*); *גדול עוני מנשוא* (Gen 4:13; *My punishment is greater than I can bear*), and the previous verse is evidence of this. The sense is that the misfortune that comes upon Israel is greater than the misfortune of Sodom, because it [Sodom] was destroyed *כמו רגע instantly*. But the hands did not always remain in power, for they had no force. Or, its meaning is that *לא חלו בה ידיים no hands fell upon her*, just like *יחולו על ראש יואב* (II Sam 3:29; *May it fall upon the head of Joab*).

- (7) *זכו נזיריה Her Nazirites were purer*, in the days of plenty.
- (8) Their appearance has become darker because of hunger.
- (9) The pierced ones whose blood flows *מתנובות שדי from the fruits of the field*, because they were full. They were better off than the victims of hunger.
- (10) The compassionate women have been turned to heartless women because of the severity of the famine.
- (11) The hunger in the body is likened to fire because it burns and smites as far as the foundation of the bone.
- (12) On account of the famine, the enemy entered Jerusalem.
- (13) For the sins of the prophets of Baal, and the priests of the high places, the pious were murdered, as in the words of Asaph<sup>128</sup>.
- (14) The living stagger through the streets [like] the blind and make themselves

<sup>127</sup>Here, ibn Ezra comments that an offering does not put right the sin; the guilt offering does not assuage the guilt! However, this may be contrasted with Isa 53:10, where, *if he made himself an offering for guilt, he may be vindicated and have long life, and that through him HaShem's purpose might prosper*.

<sup>128</sup>See Ps 79:1-3.

defiled in the blood of the fallen, until those who touch cannot, because they have touched their garments. One verb follows another, and the meaning of יוכלו *they could* [not be touched] is because יגעו *they touched* [dead bodies], just like נדעה נרדפה (Hosea 6:3; *Let us know, let us seek [to know]*).

(15) They were calling out about themselves, סורו [ב]טמא *Depart [as] unclean*; and the first is correct, but the place of the ones who call is absent<sup>129</sup>, for they said among the nations that no longer יוסיפו *would they continue* to return to their land to dwell as they had been.

(16) For HaShem's anger distributed them among the countries, and he would no longer look upon them, so ויזעקו (Neh 9:28; *they cried to you*). Therefore, they did not fear to exact vengeance upon the elders and priests.

(17) Yet still we hoped that Egypt and Assyria would come to our aid.

(18) But they did not come, except to hunt us, for they hunted us in our streets. קרב קצנו *Our end drew near* for מלאו ימינו *our days were numbered* because of our prosperity. Then came the end – our exile;

(19) and we were unable to flee.

(20) Some say that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and [there is] evidence to speak of: והנם כתיבים על הקינות (II Chron 35:25; *and behold, they are written in the Laments*). But this is not correct, because the sufferings came after the death of Josiah, and he says here תם עונך (Lam 4:22; *Your iniquity is complete*). The correct reading, in my opinion, is that he speaks about Zedekiah, because the king of

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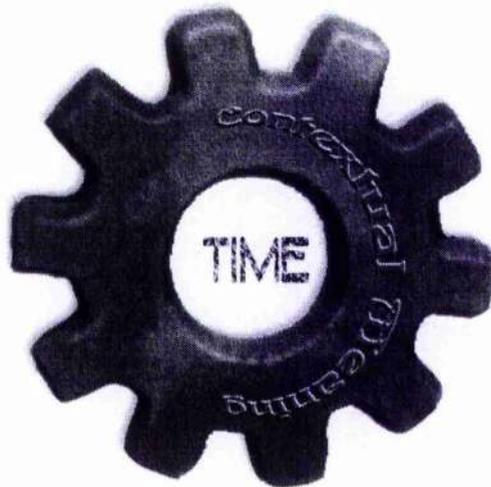
<sup>129</sup> This verse is difficult as the antecedent is unclear.



## The Comparison

### Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra compared

When we examine the commentaries of Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra on the Book of Lamentations it becomes apparent that there is a growing concern to provide the primary meaning of the text by use of *peshat* interpretation. However, it is also apparent that the programmatic approach of each exegete indicates a different agenda, and a different interpretation of the means by which a closer understanding of the text might be obtained. It is perhaps a good idea to observe that our linguistic choices are influenced in a variety of ways. The different social, or non-linguistic, factors can be demonstrated by taking a closer look at our right hand cog<sup>1</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> Image prepared and created by Missy Boling, used with permission.

At the core of everything is time, and as time changes, contexts change. In fact, context changes even when we change social groups, not just cultures, across time, and this not only affects the spoken, but also the written, word. But in what ways are our linguistic choices influenced? Janet Holmes summarises these influences as combinations of one or more of the following:

1. *The participants: who is speaking and who are they speaking to?*
2. *The setting or social context of the interaction: where are they speaking?*
3. *The topic: what is being talked about?*
4. *The function: why are they speaking?*<sup>2</sup>

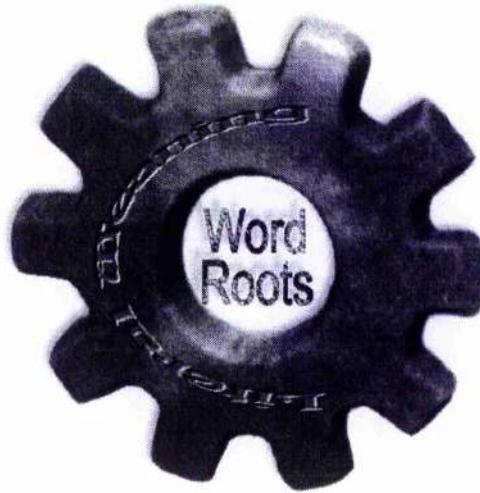
With specific regard to our translations we can identify that in element (1) Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra act as the participants in conversation with the text, their students, their mentors, with other commentators' works, and sometimes in dialogue with each other. Their setting, or social context (2), may be in France, or Germany, or Spain, or in an academy in one or other of these contexts. Their topic (3) is the Book of Lamentations, and they are speaking (4) in an attempt to offer ideas and explanations in order to elucidate a biblical text. All these factors are illustrated, and represented, by our right-hand cog.

Our left-hand cog<sup>3</sup> can be used to represent the various grammatical forms and dialects that affect our choices.

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<sup>2</sup> Holmes, *Introduction*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Image prepared and created by Missy Boling, used with permission.



This cog portrays the words we use, the sentences we use them to construct, the grammar that dictates their construction, and the dialects and languages with which we speak them. With regard to our exegetes, we have here a diagrammatic interpretation of *peshat*, or literal meaning, which acts, not only as a definition, but as a *function*. When our left-hand cog interacts with our right-hand cog, then the *function* of the left-hand cog is to operate as a means by which we *apply* the *content and volume of our experience* to reach a specific conclusion at this specific time in this specific context. While the definition of *peshat* may change, its function has, and does, not. This is why we have such rich and diverse opinions before us.

Rashi is credited with being the first Ashkenazi Jewish scholar to introduce a *peshat* approach to Scripture with the intent of reaching a clearer understanding of the text. That is not to say that he abandoned the traditional rabbinic approach of midrash as explanation, but what he did succeed in was developing a more rational system of interpretation. This new method was based on the grammatical, and philosophical approach of the Arabic-speaking Jews of the previous century, and he was thus able to exploit the work initially begun by Saadiah Gaon (882-942). Rashi widely used Menahem ben Saruq's dictionary, *Machbereth Menahem*<sup>4</sup> (960) which had been translated into Hebrew, and contained critical comments by Dunash ibn Labrat. However, he felt under no obligation to follow them blindly. His idea of *peshat* was closely linked to grammar to provide a simple meaning of the text. The value of this meaning is that he endeavoured to use this approach to replace those ideas that he regarded as irrational.

Rashi's philological comments can be further illustrated by his widening use of the verb **ישב**. In rabbinic literature **ישב** in the *piel* is used to explain the meaning of a text, for instance **ישבו של מקרא הוא** *the settlement of the verse is*<sup>5</sup>... Rashi, however, expands this to provide a permanent meaning for the text so that it is no longer ambiguous. This is illustrated at Lam 4:6 where he gives his own interpretation of

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<sup>4</sup> For example see: *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1564.

<sup>5</sup> See *Tanh. Bereshit* on Gen 1:1. This is explained at length by Gelles, p15. See also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, on **ישב**, p599.

the verse followed by the comment **ויש מדרשי אגדה ואינו מיושב על סדר המקראות** *There are also Aggadic midrashim but they do not settle the sequence of the verses.* He is thus able to adopt critical reasoning to develop a complete explanation of a phrase or verse, offering his own comments of a traditional interpretation with the expression **ואני באתי לפרש לשון המקרא כמשמעו** *but as for myself, I have come to explain the language of Scripture according to its ordinary sense,* found at Lam 1:1. Other terminology includes the use of **פשוטו של מקרא** first seen in the Talmud<sup>6</sup>.

It is thus Rashi's intention to comment on the philology, context or content to clarify meaning. Although he wanted to explore the meaning of the text, he was confined by his own definition of plain meaning, which was hampered by the term **פשוטו** in combination with the standard line by line approach of the rabbis which he had inherited. However, this exploration developed a wider search within the text, and broke free from the old boundaries.

Yosef Kara, however, was not as limited. As a contemporary, and pupil, of Rashi he was able to draw on Rashi's innovations and then expand them. For him the *peshat* interpretation was not confined to a line by line approach, but included each linguistic element under consideration as part of the whole text. This did not just include the context of the verse in which it appeared, but also, if necessary, referred back to later references. Kara himself comments **כך פתרתי אחר הילוך המקראות**

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, *Yevam. 24a.*

וענ"ם so I have explained after the way of the texts and contexts<sup>7</sup>. However, he does take over Rashi's use of פשוטו של מקרא and ישב, but employs them in his contextual approach. On the subject of *derash*, Kara comments that midrash is להגדיל תורה ויאדיר to expand and glorify Torah<sup>8</sup>, but indicates the inadequacies of a *derash* approach with comments such as, *But the Aggadah explains this difficulty in a manner which is not satisfying; so I will abstain to avoid ink being spilt...*<sup>9</sup>. His work contains the root פתר in the form of פתרונו in preference to פרש, and his comments are supplemented with vernacular Old French to help the understanding of his students. Unfortunately, these rarely correspond with those utilised by Rashi. However, he quotes extensively from Scripture, offering parallel texts to elucidate word forms, and weaving the biblical text into his own work to give a comprehensive explanation.

Ibn Ezra writes from the advantageous position of being a direct beneficiary of the Arabic love of grammar and philosophy. His ability to think independently gives rise to the development of the theory of *peshat*<sup>10</sup> as the *surface* meaning of the text which acts as a channel to a deeper understanding. This is its *sod*, or esoteric meaning. Unlike Kara, and indeed Rashbam after him, ibn Ezra's motivation is to produce a synthesis of *peshat* and *derash* for he believes that the knowledge of the Sages is *broader than ours*<sup>11</sup>. But if they do not adhere to strict grammatical

<sup>7</sup> See commentary on II Sam 21:4.

<sup>8</sup> See commentary on Isa 42:21.

<sup>9</sup> See commentary on II Sam 12:30.

<sup>10</sup> See Lancaster, Irene. "Abraham ibn Ezra – Hermeneutics and Torah". Ph.D. diss., Lancaster University, 1995, 303.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobs, Louis. *Jewish biblical Exegesis*, Behrman House, Inc., 1973, 9.

principles, he feels able to question their understanding. In his introduction to his commentary A on the Book of Lamentations, ibn Ezra comments that in his exile he is instructed to clarify his books by use of grammar, such that as grammar and abstract thinking develops, so does the interpretation of the biblical texts. Although he emphasises the use of grammar to obtain this *surface* meaning, this was done creatively. By the integration of *peshat* and *derash* in exegesis it is possible to defend the rabbis of the Oral Torah while still offering a more reasoned argument. A *peshat* approach for ibn Ezra included both the grammar and the context as the *essence* of the text, *truth in all its simplicity*<sup>12</sup>.

It now becomes more apparent that the meaning of *peshat* has changed in line with one or more of Holmes' listed factors. Each exegete has *redefined* the term because of **who** is speaking and **who** they are speaking to, the **social context of the interaction**, **what** they are talking about - Scripture, and **why**. Rashi has completed his commentary on the Talmud and adapted, in line with increased grammatical knowledge, the use of the plain meaning, in whatever form; Kara, in discourse with Christians, has developed a contextual approach in conversational style for his students; and ibn Ezra has developed a creative means of using both *peshat* and *derash* as a means to access deeper meaning in the text. As in the Talmud, at no point does a text lose its *peshat*<sup>13</sup>, but neither is it confined to it. What appears to have happened is the development of an innovative use of the term *peshat* in a relatively short time, based on the *social context* of the speakers. This has led to the

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<sup>12</sup> Lancaster, "Abraham ibn Ezra", 303.

<sup>13</sup> See *b. Yevam.* 24a.

expansion of a reading of the verse in the *context* of the whole passage of which it is a part.

Below are comparisons of exegetical comments made by Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra on eight verses from the Book of Lamentations. These aim to show the development of the definition and the function of *peshat*, and how this was shaped by social factors.

It is not helpful here to distinguish between a *literal* meaning of a word or phrase, a *contextual* meaning, or a *surface* meaning. When the exegesis of chosen passages is compared, the *primary* meaning as *each commentator presents it*, is the aim. From this it should be possible to determine the *context* of the exegete as much as that of the verse under consideration. This will then show where the ideas of each fit into the expansion of the term *peshat*, and why.

איכה

ישבה בדרך העיר רבתי עם

היתה כאלמנה רבתי בגוים

שרתי במדינות היתה למס

Both the texts of Lamentations in LXX and Vulgate begin with superscriptions not found in the Hebrew MSS, or in fact, the Syriac Peshitta. These identify the prophet Jeremiah as the author, and the one who lamented the captivity of Israel and the desertion of Jerusalem. Similarly, the paraphrase of the Targum begins: *Jeremiah, the Prophet and High Priest, told how it was decreed against Jerusalem and her people...*; indeed, Midrash Rabbah declares: *Jeremiah said, 'How doth the city sit solitary!'*, while the Talmud indicates that the idea of Jeremiah as author of Lamentations is a strong tradition: *Jeremiah wrote the book which bears his name, the Book of Kings, and Lamentations*<sup>14</sup>. Although there is little doubt that Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra were in receipt of this tradition, they vary in their apparent acceptance of it.

Rashi begins his commentary with the words: *Jeremiah wrote the book of Laments ספר קינות*. It becomes apparent as we read his commentary that for him, this term is synonymous with the designation **איכה** of the Hebrew MSS. In the Talmud, the

<sup>14</sup> See *B. Bat.* 15a; also, *Mo'ed Qat.* 26a, and *Lam. Rab.*, Proem 28, 3:1 where it states: *Then Jeremiah took another scroll...* (Jer 36:32)

Book of Lamentations is referred to as קִינּוּת<sup>15</sup>, while Jerome refers to the book with the transliterated *Chinoth*<sup>16</sup>. In LXX and Vulgate, the title used is the latin *Threni*, with the English translations following with the derivative *Lamentations*. However, it should be noted that the Targum refers to *Lamentations* as אִיכָה as found in the Hebrew MSS. Neither Kara nor ibn Ezra makes any comment here about authorship.

Rashi is also the only exegete to make any comment at all on the acrostic structure of the text. However, this is confined to the mention of three alphabetic acrostics at chapters 1, 2 and 4, to which Jeremiah added chapter 3 containing three alphabetic acrostics, *three corresponding to three*<sup>17</sup>. This probably reflects the lack of interest shown in midrash, comment on which he heavily relies, or the *Targum* where the acrostic pattern is not visible in the paraphrastic translation. However, the Talmud does comment that Israel was smitten with אִיכָה<sup>18</sup> *because they transgressed the thirty six*<sup>19</sup> *injunctions of the Torah which are punished by extinction...Why were they smitten with an alphabet(ical dirge)? Because they violated the Torah, which was given by means of the alphabet*<sup>20</sup>.

All three commentators are concerned with the term בָּדֵד. Rashi defines it as *solitary* in that the city *is devoid of her inhabitants*. In 104I Kara makes no comment on the

<sup>15</sup> *B. Bat.* 14b: The order of the writings is Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations קִינּוּת, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther.

<sup>16</sup> *Prologus Galeatus*.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Lam. Rab.*, *Proem* 28.

<sup>18</sup> A dirge.

<sup>19</sup> The numerical value of אִיכָה is thirty six.

<sup>20</sup> *B.Sanh.* 104a.

term, but in Munich 5 he says that בַּדָּד is well known, not because it means *lonely*, but is a rather unique expression in the vernacular, drawing a distinction between being *solitary*, and being *lonely*. This is similar, he says, to the well known verse in Ruth<sup>21</sup> *I was full when I went away, but [HaShem] has brought me back empty*, which is explained with another term in the vernacular. The implication here is that בַּדָּד is not m. sing. adj., but is used adverbially like רִיקָם *empty*. He also asks *how* she, who was once full of people, now sits in solitude. In commentary A of ibn Ezra, he is concerned with the grammatical point that בַּדָּד can occur as both masculine and feminine, and with or without a *lamed*. He compares this structure with the word אֶמֶת that occurs with the *lamed* at I Kgs 5:5, but without it at Deut 12:10. However, in his second commentary, while the explanation is more brief, his comment clarifies his belief that as she is like a widow without a husband, who is desperate for her children, the text implies that she is not just alone, but empty. In this, Rashi and ibn Ezra are in agreement with Kara's plainly stated exegesis of בַּדָּד. Although the targeted comments of these three are in stark contrast to the voluble explanations of the Targum, which states that *because of her many sins within her, she will dwell alone, as a man whose body is stricken with leprosy dwells alone*, the Targum also states that the city that thronged with people is now אֶתְרוּקִינָה *empty*. Thus the explanation of בַּדָּד by Kara is reinforced as a statement of condition, *empty*, rather than as an expression of emotion, *lonely*. *Midrash Rabbah*, overwhelmed with homiletical matter, remains only of token value here in that it gives no elucidation of grammatical interest.

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth 1:21.

All three exegetes comment on the paragogic *yod* in the phrase **רבתִי עם**. Rashi argues that the *yod* is superfluous and the sense is the same as **רבת עם**, for he says *her people were numerous*. He alludes to the extremes to which midrash may go with such a phrase, and comments that he has come to explain the language of Scripture according to its plain sense **כמשמעו**. This is in contrast to his use of midrashim when introducing 1:1. In 104I Kara agrees that the *yod* is superfluous and means the same as **רבת עם**, but gives two further examples of where an extra *yod* occurs - **מלאתי משפט** (Isa 1:21; *full of justice*), and **שרתי במדינות** (Lam 1:1; *a princess among the provinces*). He comments thus that while she was formerly full, Jerusalem is now empty, so that the situation *then* is balanced against the situation *now*. In Munich 5, Kara is more concerned with meaning than grammar, so makes no direct comment on **רבתִי עם**; similarly, ibn Ezra makes no grammatical comment in his commentary B. However, in his commentary A, ibn Ezra takes both **רבתִי** and **שרתי** together, and considers that they have penultimate accents to distinguish between the extra *yod*, and the *yod* as the sign of speech, for example in **אהבתי לדוש** (Hosea 10:11; *that preferred to thresh*), and the expression **גנובתי יום** (Gen 31:39; *whether it was stolen by day*) where the accent is on the final syllable because of the paragogic *yod*, rather than on the final syllable, or the *bet*, of the participle **גנובה**. He continues by pointing out that the **רבתִי** of the term **רבתִי בגוים** is not like the first instance of **רבתִי** except as an expression of greatness such as **ורבי המלך** (Jer 41:1; *commanders of the kings*), and **על כל רב ביתו** (Esther 1:8; *for every officer of his house*).

In part, ibn Ezra is supported in this by T. F. McDaniel's comments on the influences of Ugaritic grammar illustrated in Lamentations. Ibn Ezra argues that the second instance of רבתי is an expression of greatness, but as in the *title* of commander or officer. In this way only is it like the first רבתי, and שרתי before it; in other words, the three words found in chiasmic parallelism should be translated as *Mistress of the people...Mistress among the nations... Princess among the provinces*<sup>22</sup>. McDaniel uses examples from the Ugaritic such as *bilt 'nt, the Virgin Anat*, and *rbt atrt ym, the Lady Atirat Yam*<sup>23</sup>, with the same constructions found in the Hebrew text, for instance at Lam 1:15, בתולת בת יהודה. Similarly, when the masculine רב *officer*, and שר *prince*, are interchanged in the Book of Daniel<sup>24</sup>, the feminine counterparts רבתי and שרתי imply comparable titles when used together. In his 1978 commentary on Lamentations<sup>25</sup> Hans Gottlieb agrees with this interpretation. However, D. R. Hillers<sup>26</sup>, while finding this proposal attractive, is not convinced by McDaniel's proposal, and argues that the first use of רבתי should be translated as *full of people* to maintain the contrast with בדרד. He then proceeds to translate the second רבתי, and שרתי as non-appellatives. Iain Provan<sup>27</sup> is also not in total agreement with this interpretation, arguing that although רבתי makes better sense as *Mistress* in its second use, it is better translated as *full of people* in the first. They should thus be

<sup>22</sup> Cf. McDaniel, T. F. "Philological Studies in Lamentations 1" in *Biblica* 49. 1968, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 31; see Dan 1:3 in context of Dan 1:1-11.

<sup>25</sup> Gottlieb, H. *A study on the Text of Lamentations*. ACTA JUTLANDICA XLVIII, Theology Series 12, Arhus, 1978.

<sup>26</sup> Hillers, D. H. *Lamentations*. The Anchor Bible. Doubleday, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> Provan, I. *Lamentations*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Marshall Pickering, 1991.

better explained as meaning the same thing and opts for the second interpretation. Ibn Ezra appears not to agree with this understanding.

Rashi is concerned that *like a widow* should not be misinterpreted, and again resorts to midrash to explain the text. Much emphasis is laid on a correct understanding of this phrase in *Midrash Rabbah*, where it says: *It is not written here 'she is become a widow' but 'as a widow' – she is like a woman whose husband went to a distant country but with the intention of returning to her*<sup>28</sup>. Similarly, in the *Talmud* Rab Judah says in Rab's name: *As a widow, yet not a widow in fact: as a woman whose husband had gone overseas, but intends returning to her*<sup>29</sup>.

His concern here is one of restoration, favouring the interpretation of Jerusalem punished, not abandoned, an important point in Talmudic literature and the *Targum*. Rashi's comment follows the *Talmud*. This emphasises the point that Jerusalem's husband is none other than God, who despite the calamities that Jerusalem has experienced, has not abandoned her. Kara merely comments that the city is now like a widow who dwells alone, she who was previously full of people<sup>30</sup>. In commentary B, ibn Ezra is content to give a short overall meaning of the verse, concluding that Jerusalem *is like a widow without a husband, who is desperate for all her children*. Knowing that she is not abandoned, Jerusalem can weep for her children rather than for herself. She has been alone so long that her children occupy her thoughts – in other words, Jerusalem is not a widow, but *like* a widow and totally

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<sup>28</sup> *Lam. Rab.* 1.1.3.

<sup>29</sup> *B.Sanh.* 104a.

<sup>30</sup> *Munich* 5, 1:1.

bereft. However, in commentary A he draws attention to the unusual expression לַמֶּמֶם saying: *the 'lamed' of לַמֶּמֶם has 'patakh'<sup>31</sup> to indicate the missing definite article, but the 'mem' has no dagesh to reduce the expression.* In Munich 5, Kara comments on how *the city that was princess among the provinces has become a tributary.* Like the Targum, he offers the explanation that formerly the one who received taxes from the nations, now served the nations and paid them taxes.

All three commentators demonstrate a considerable shift away from the text of the midrash. Rashi is the only exegete to consider the author and acrostic structure of the text. He states that he is concerned to give an account of the language of Scripture according to its basic sense, just as ibn Ezra states in his introduction to commentary A his intentions to offer a straightforward understanding with specific reference to the grammar of the scroll. In this he is far more erudite in his handling of the grammar and form than in the exegesis he offers in his commentary B. He thus appears to be able to offer an alternative understanding of שֶׁרַחֲתִי/רַבְתִּי/רַבְתִּי. In 104I Kara is more concise in his handling of the verse and is only interested in problems of grammar. However, in the Munich 5 manuscript he is more interested in explaining the meaning of the text before him, introducing Old French where he believes that it will elucidate a difficult matter. Kara interprets the final three cola of verse one as a unit, using ideas presented in the Targum: *the city that was formerly great among the nations, and princess among the provinces is so because the rest of the*

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<sup>31</sup> He means *games*.

provinces were serving her and paying taxes to her. Now she was serving the nations, and paying tax to them.

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**lamentations 1:16**

על אלה אני בוכיה עיני עיני ירדה מים  
כי רחק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי  
היו בני שוממים כי גבר אויב

This verse contains the double עיני in MT, which is of interest. Rashi confines his only comment on the verse to this phrase. He comments thus: *my eye constantly sheds tears. The double expression indicates that there was no let-up. Lam. Rab. makes the comment that Israel is called the eye of the Holy One, blessed be he, supported by Zech 9:1, for HaShem's is the eye of man and all the tribes of Israel. R. Levi, therefore, comments that if it is possible to say it, My eye weeps for my other eye [ie. Israel]. But, the midrash on this verse seems to be avoided by each exegete. Kara prefers to agree with Rashi in 104I with the comment that the expression was repeated, teaching that there were no respites, indicating no movement in thought here. LXX, however, is different. The first bicolon, over these things do I weep, has been displaced and is now found at the end of verse 15. It now refers to the destruction of the people, rather than to the lack of a comforter to restore Jerusalem's soul in the latter part of verse*

16. The problem of the double עיני has also been removed as the verse now reads, Ο οφθαλμος μου κατηγαγεν υδωρ *my eye has poured out water*. The Syriac reads only one עיני, but has pointed it as a plural, and thus agrees with LXX. This indicates that the double עיני may not have been in the Hebrew manuscripts before the translators. However, the *Targum* translates עיניי *my eyes* instead of *my eye* twice, and as it is often the case that the *Targum* will translate the singular as plural, it is difficult to decide if there was a single עיני in the manuscript before the translator, as apparently in LXX and *Peshitta*, or if he was dealing with a double עיני in his own style. Either way, it is a doubled עיני that is before the medieval commentators.

Ibn Ezra is a little different from both Rashi and Kara. He explains עיני עיני by *time after time my eye sheds tears* in the shorter commentary B. However, in commentary A, he interprets עיני עיני as *the human eye resembles a fountain of water, and the eye overflows*. This is very similar to the *Targum* which translates, *my eyes pour tears like a spring of waters*, and is much more interesting. Now, instead of *my eye, my eye*, something more imaginative is happening to the interpretation of the text. עין means both *eye* and *fountain* in Hebrew, so ibn Ezra's commentary seems to be looking beyond the obvious by considering the possibility that although both words look alike, they may not actually be required to be translated alike. *Targum* also follows this line of thought, but there is still an unwillingness to alter the text. However, by simply deleting the *yod* to produce עין עיני we have *the fountain of my*

eye. Dahood proposed this reconstruction based on parallels with Ugaritic and biblical text<sup>32</sup>, and along with the extensive use of word play generally in the Hebrew text, McDaniel concludes that this is probably a correct reading. Therefore, we are looking not at dittography in MT, but haplography in other texts. However, this is not a universally accepted interpretation of the problem that the text presents. Hillers argues that it is simply a case of dittography, as LXX and Peshitta translate only one עיני. Albrektson<sup>33</sup> is also of this opinion, noting that the Greek translator would have translated עיני עיני if it had appeared in the Hebrew manuscript before him. For Gottlieb<sup>34</sup>, however, the double עיני is a difficult reading that he prefers to understand as a way of adding greater emphasis, and he cites examples such as צדק צדק תרדף (Deut 16:20; *Justice, justice shall you pursue*), and more decisively אבי אבי רכב ישראל ופרשיו (II Kgs 2:12; 13:14; *Father, father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!*) and אלי אלי למה עזבתני (Ps 22:1; *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*). This brings him into full agreement with both Rashi and Kara. However, Provan<sup>35</sup> is reluctant to follow any of these explanations, and he prefers to read *my eyes flow with tears*, just like the Targum. Ibn Ezra and the Targum offer two alternative explanations that differ from the interpretation of Rashi and Kara, but modern commentators are also divided on the correct reading of the phrase.

<sup>32</sup> See McDaniel, *Philological Studies* 32, where Jer 8:23 is paralleled with UT 125 by H. L. Ginsberg. Dahood notes the semantically identical Hebrew עין עיני *the fount of my eyes* of Lam 1:16a, with the Ugaritic *qr 'nk the fount of your eyes*.

<sup>33</sup> Albrektson, B. *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*. Studia Theologica Lundensia 21. CWK. Gleerup, 1963, 76-77.

<sup>34</sup> Gottlieb, *Study*, 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 52,

In commentary A, ibn Ezra is concerned with grammar as much as meaning. He begins his commentary on this verse with *בוכיה* *weep* that he compares with *פוריה* *fruitful*, in that both are *lamed-he* roots. He is also interested in the verb *יורדה* in this semi-stich by comparing it with *יזלו מים* *they flow with water*, saying that they are both intransitive. These are the only grammatical comments he makes in either commentary, but in commentary B he is concerned to clarify that *בני* are desolate because they have gone into exile, and the enemy has prevailed.

Kara, however, is concerned with *מנחם*. He is reading the text much like LXX, which says, *he that should comfort me, that should restore my soul, has been removed far from me*, and he compares this with Lam 2:13, *who can heal you?* It should be noted that in b.Sanh. 98b in answer to the question: *What is his [the Messiah's] name?* one reply is that *His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, "Because Menahem [the 'comforter'], that would relieve my soul, is far"*, and this idea seems to be reflected in the Targum. Similarly, Lam Rabbah is also a source of this development, but these ideas are not pursued by the medieval exegetes.

Verse 16, therefore, appears to be full of evidence that things are not quite what they seem. Although the exegetes are careful not to alter the text, we can observe a shift in the interpretation of the passage. The motif of the first stich has been expanded from the literal *my eye, my eye sheds tears* to one primary meaning of *my eyes shed tears*, to another of *the fountain of my eye sheds tears*, based solely on a play on *עין*. Both of these interpretations are based on the paraphrase of the Targum on this

stich, and depend on the context of the reader for their meaning. Rashi treats the obviously unusual construction in the verse in a very simple fashion, and Kara is content to follow him. Ibn Ezra, however, addresses the problem in an alternative manner, which yields different results. Although he does comment on the meaning of מנחם, Kara is not following *Talmud* or midrash. It appears, therefore, that the most creative comments from our medieval commentators on this verse are to be found in the remarks of ibn Ezra.

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## Lamentations 2:6

ויחמס כגן שכו שחת מועדו  
שכח יהוה בציון מועד ושבת  
וינאץ בזעם אפו מלך וכהן

The traditional interpretation of the initial semi-stich of this verse is not satisfactory, and demands further exploration. It appears to read, *he has destroyed his booth like a garden*, and each commentator is concerned to write an explanation of the clause. In

both 104I and Munich 5, Kara initially considers the semi-stich in context, and explains the meaning of *he has destroyed his booth* with ויגל *he has exposed* in 104I; in Munich 5 he proposes that *he exposed Zion which was his booth*, defining וחמום as an expression of גילוי *exposure*. This, he argues, is similar to Ezek 22:26, *her priests have laid bare/violated my Torah*, because they exposed their faces to the Torah, not in accordance with the halakhah. Therefore, *your skirts were revealed, your steps were laid bare* (Jer 13:22). Rashi considers וחמום in isolation, and offers *he will cast off (וחמום) like a vine* from Job 15:33, and from Jer 13:22 *your steps were cut off/ exposed* to explain the meaning of the word. Ibn Ezra prefers חשף *to strip off, lay bare* to clarify וחמום, but again uses Jer 13:22 *your steps were laid bare/ exposed* to give an example of how the text should be understood. He makes no parallel comment in commentary B. So, each exegete agrees that וחמום should be interpreted as *exposed*.

Modern commentators have a slightly different view. Hillers makes no mention of וחמום, but according to Gottlieb's summary<sup>36</sup>, וחמום causes difficulties for interpreters because they are reluctant to associate an unlawful act of violence with HaShem. However, based on LXX and Peshitta it is unlikely, he comments, that MSS originally read otherwise. Provan<sup>37</sup> prefers to treat וחמום in the context of the semi-stich, as stated below.

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<sup>36</sup> Gottlieb, *Study*, 27-29.

<sup>37</sup> Provan, *New Century*, 65.

כִּגְן, according to Rashi, should be read as *they cut off the vegetables of a garden*, reverting to his first quote from Job<sup>38</sup>, *he will cast off like a vine*, by way of explanation. LXX displays *ὡς ἀμπελον* as *a vine*, possibly influenced by parallel passages, instead of MT's כִּגְן, which Peshitta supports. In Munich 5, Kara likens his booth to a garden that is crushed and exposed after its fruits are gathered. Similarly, in ibn Ezra's commentary A it is likened to a garden that they seized. But it is with שִׁכּוֹ/סִכּוֹ that the explanations become interesting. It is an issue that concerns both Rashi and ibn Ezra, whereas Kara retains a primary interest in the contextual meaning of the verse, and says only that Zion was God's booth, and he exposed it in the same way as a garden is destroyed after harvest.

Rashi begins with a definition of שִׁכּוֹ as *his habitation*, arguing that the root is שָׁכַךְ *to calm down, assuage* in that he calmed his anger against his children with the destruction of his house, just as, he says, *Lam. Rab.*<sup>39</sup> explains it. In commentary A, ibn Ezra makes the point that both the forms סִכּוֹ (m), and סִכּוֹה (f) do exist, and although he makes no attempt to discuss the meaning, at least he makes it quite clear that we are dealing with שִׁ/שׁ and not שָׁ. McDaniel argues that שִׁכּוֹ should not be read as שָׁכַךְ or שִׁכַּךְ, but either as שִׁוֶּךְ *branch*, as in שִׁוְכָהּ *his branch* (Judg 9:49). In pre-exilic Hebrew orthography the 3 m. sing. suf. is written as וֶ (as in Judg 9:49), and *vav* must be a vowel וּ or the consonant (i.e. diphthong) *aw* or וּ . In this case, McDaniel can read it as the plural noun with 3 m. sing. suf. with a non-plene

<sup>38</sup> Job 15:33.

<sup>39</sup> Lam. Rab. 2.6.10: R. Abbahu said: The word for 'tabernacle' (*sukko*) is written so that it can be read as *shukko*, i.e. when Israel was exiled the wrath of the Holy One, blessed be He, was assuaged (*shakekah*).

spelling, שָׁכוֹ (*aw* diphthong) *his branches*. This interpretation sits well with LXX's reference to the scattering of his tabernacle ἀμπελον *as a vine*, but requires the Hebrew text to read as גִּפְּן *vine* instead of גַּן *garden*. Peshitta follows MT. While it is not unlikely that *pe* suffered haplography, particularly as the letters *pe* and *nun* are similar in paleo-Hebrew script, it is not surprising to see that not one of the Medieval exegetes moves away from the traditional understanding of the phrase, particularly as the Hebrew makes grammatical sense as it stands. However, it is also possible that since *bet* and *kap* are regularly confused in square script, and that *bet* and *min* are interchangeable in meaning<sup>40</sup>, then it is possible to read וַיִּחְמוֹס בְּגִפְּן שָׁכוֹ *and he has stripped from the vine its branches* with only minor alterations to the text. It is interesting to note that ibn Ezra was one of the medieval exegetes to formulate this interchange<sup>41</sup>, but makes no use of it in this passage, although it would make better sense even with no emendation to the text. While Provan regards McDaniels's hypothesis as conceivable, he does not think that sufficient regard has been paid to the context of וַיִּחְמוֹס in Job 15:33, *he will shake off, like a vine, his unripe grapes*<sup>42</sup>. He thus prefers to read *he has cut off, like a vine, his branch*. For his part, Hillers regards the accuracy of the Hebrew text as doubtful, but remains unconvinced by any of the suggestions offered. Consequently, he prefers to translate the first line as literally as possible, and then interpret the meaning with respect to other biblical verses where the ruin of a people is likened to the ruin of a

<sup>40</sup> See McDaniel, "Philological Studies", 199-200.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p199.

<sup>42</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 65.

vineyard, along with the use of the root שָׁחַת<sup>43</sup>. He still finds the explanation unsatisfactory, but regards it as useful in the light of nothing better. He is in a minority by choosing not to read גִּפְּן rather than גִּן.

All three exegetes then examine מוֹעֵדוֹ. When Rashi turns his attention to מוֹעֵדוֹ *his meeting place*, he defines it as *the Holy of Holies, where he would meet with his children*, as in Exod 25:22, *and I will meet you וְנִוְעַדְתִּי there*. Kara is also concerned to offer an explanation in keeping with the context of the verse: *from the day that he stripped his booth like a garden, from that day and beyond "he destroyed his place of assembly"*. Like Rashi, in commentary A, ibn Ezra comments only on מוֹעֵדוֹ likening it to Lam 1:4, *[no-one] comes to the appointed festival*, thus he has laid waste to his מוֹעֵד, a designated *place*, and caused the מוֹעֵד to be abandoned, a designated *time*. Provan, however, is more inclined to translate מוֹעֵד the same way in both instances as *festival, or, appointed feasts*, just as LXX uses εορτή, and Peshitta uses ܘܒܘܥܘܬܐ . The Targum reads מוֹעֵד as a reference to the Temple and translates בֵּית מִקְדָּשִׁיהּ, as is understood by Rashi.

Rashi and ibn Ezra then comment on מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן, but whereas Rashi follows Lam Rabbah in identifying king and priest as Zedekiah and Seraiah respectively, ibn Ezra's commentary B seems more concerned in the role of the king and priest to justify their mention: the priest, he argues, disobeys the commandments, while the

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<sup>43</sup> Jer 5:10; 12:10.

king dilutes them with his power, but both are given Torah. The Targum, like Lam Rabbah identifies the priest, this time as כהנא רבא High Priest; Peshitta translates both king and priest in the plural.

The medieval commentators again seem to have much different agendas when they attempt to unravel the text to provide an understanding of the verse. Rashi operates on a word by word analysis and makes great use of tradition, while Kara is interested in offering a complete and contextual reading of the verse with no recourse to midrash. Ibn Ezra is keen to make comment on the meaning of a number of phrases in commentary B, but in A, offers philological observations. Modern commentators also use varying approaches in reaching their own understandings, but are more willing to emend the text, especially with respect to ideas that first entered the text with LXX.

צעק לבם אל אדני חומת בת ציון  
 חורירי בנחל דמעה יומם ולילה  
 אל תתני פוגת לך אל תדם בת עינך

The opening line of this verse is generally regarded as corrupt. Several attempts have been made to emend it, but the least intrusive upon the text is that proposed by T. F. McDaniel<sup>44</sup>. He proposes that Ewald's generally accepted emendation of the first word *צעק* to *צעקי* should stand, considering the imperatives *חורירי* and *אל תתני לבם* that follow. However, the real problem is that of how to read *לבם*. McDaniel proposes that *לבם* be read with a final adverbial *mem*. This means that *צעקי לבם* would read as the prepositional adverbial modifier as found in Hos 7:14, *ולא זעקו אלי בלבם* *they do not cry out to me from their heart*, but with the adverbial *mem* acting as the adverbial accusative as in Ps 142:2, *קולי אל יהוה אזעק* *I cry with my voice to Hashem*. This gives the reading of the first colon as *cry out to the Lord (from) the heart*. But there is a further problem with *חומת בת ציון* *wall of daughter Zion* as the imagery does not readily sit well in the verse. Here, McDaniel offers the simple change of *חומת* fem. part. of *המה* *to be tumultuous* for *חומת* constr. fem. of *חומה* *wall*. With the minimum of alteration, the first stich of Lam 2:18 thus reads *cry*

<sup>44</sup> McDaniel. "Philological Studies", 203-4.

out to the Lord (from) the heart, O tumultuous one, daughter Zion. This not only better fits the verse, but also the surrounding text.

Gottlieb is in general agreement with Ewald's emendation of צעק to צעקי<sup>45</sup>, as noted by McDaniel above, but other than summarising Albrektson's reconstruction of לבם as לבתם, only observes that the noun לב is the probable starting point for a correct reading. He also considers the possibility that חומת בת ציון is a mixture of הבת ציון and חומת ציון, but suggests that the textual corruptions are such that we cannot know whether they are copyist error, or marginal gloss. Hillers, however, not only regards Ewald as correct, but agrees with McDaniel on לבם as לב with enclitic or adverbial *mem*<sup>46</sup>. On חומת he prefers to read the niphel fem. part. of נחם, חמת (נ) *repentant*, and justifies this supposition with the comment that the original text was unduly influenced by Lam 2:8, presumably a reference to חומת בת ציון. Verses 18 and 19 are treated together by Provan<sup>47</sup>, who offers no grammatical explanations of the text other than to say it is emended because it is corrupt. He prefers to offer a more theological explanation of the verses, and makes no comment on McDaniel's proposals.

However, the medieval exegetes were not courageous enough to alter the text, although ibn Ezra comes close, so each interpretation relies solely on what they find written before them.

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<sup>45</sup> Gottlieb, *Study*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Hillers, *Lamentations*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 75-76.

Kara is consistent in both 104I and Munich 5 with his explanation of the beginning of this verse. He reads the verse as *their heart cried out to the Lord*, and argues in 104I that they only cried out when they were in sorrow and distress. Munich 5 adds that if they had cried out when they lived in peace, then there would be no need to cry out in exile for they would not have been exiled. In his shorter commentary B, ibn Ezra disagrees with Kara on the identity of the one(s) crying out to the Lord. He interprets the line with *the heart of your enemies cried out* to mean that cries were made against HaShem, and they said that the *wall of daughter Zion* would weep. He makes no comment on what the *wall of daughter Zion* might mean. The Targum paraphrases the whole verse beginning *the heart of Israel cried out before HaShem that he have pity on them*. חומת בת ציון now becomes *O wall of Zion the city, shed tears like a torrent day and night*. The *wall* of Zion becomes *walls* in both LXX and Peshitta, which read *their heart cried to the Lord of the walls of the daughter of Zion*. LXX again reads the plural of הורידו with καταγαγετε, while Targum and Peshitta retain the singular as in MT, although Targum does have the plural דמעיו *tears*, rather than the singular דמעה *tear*.

Although the Hebrew text is difficult with regard to its meaning, Rashi has very little to say about this verse, and confines himself to comments on the last stich, expanding his understanding by the use of Old French. The first word to hold his attention is פוגה *respice*. He defines this as an expression of *letting up*, or *tresalemant respice*, *let-up* in Old French and follows it with an example from Gen 45:26, ויפג לבו

and his heart grew faint/numb. Kara is also concerned with this word, and explains פֹּגַת with an alternative word מַעְצוֹר *restraint*, along with the illustration from Lam 3:49 *my eye flows down and will not cease - without respite* מֵאֵין הַפּוֹגַת in both the 104I and Munich 5 commentaries. It is the grammatical element of פֹּגַת that is of interest to ibn Ezra. He suggests that this is the construct state with the sense of *respite for the eye*, that is, the construct state is understood. It is from the same source as וַיִּפַּג in the phrase וַיִּפַּג לִבּוֹ from Gen 45:26 *but his heart grew faint/numb* as used by Rashi. In his proposal of the emendation of חוֹמַת to הוֹמַת, McDaniel suggests that this is the feminine participle of הִמָּה with the original feminine ending *-at*, as found in פֹּגַת later in the verse. This makes ibn Ezra's observation unnecessary, but shows a greater willingness to explore grammatical problems in the text to better understand meaning.

Rashi is the only commentator to explain בַּת עֵינַן as the black area of the eye, or *prunelle pupil* in Old French. The Syriac also reads *the pupil of your eye*, while LXX carries *apple of your eye*, and the Targum prefers to simply translate as *your eye*.

Although each exegete deals directly with the text before him, again it is apparent that their understanding is slightly different. Rashi sees nothing worthy of comment until the final stich where פֹּגַת is said to be from the same root meaning as וַיִּפַּג. This expression vexes each commentator, but Kara demonstrates no need to go outside of the text to interpret the word, using Lam 3:49 as an example of the

same root. He does further clarify his comment by leaving no doubt about the meaning with the use of another word to explain his reasoning - *מַעְצוֹר* *restraint*. Ibn Ezra uses the same quote from Genesis as Rashi, but makes the grammatical comment about the understood construct use of *פּוֹגֵה*. Lam Rabbah is unusually quiet on this verse, which usually means that either it is self-explanatory, or more likely, it is not prepared to deal with the text. Only ibn Ezra offers an alternative view on the antecedent of the heart with the heart of the enemies crying out. The context of this explanation is based on the text of the surrounding verses in which the enemy taunts Zion, and if the text is to be taken at face value, then this is the most correct explanation. However, if McDaniel's study is correct, and other modern exegetes appear to agree with him only in part, the textual difficulties encountered are resolved with only minor emendations, and an alternative reading of the Hebrew based on Ugaritic construction, and original Hebrew endings, renders the greatest sense of the verse. Unfortunately, the Medieval exegetes were not privy to this information, but each attempted to resolve different problems as they saw them.

אני הגבר ראה עני בשבת עברתו

This verse proves to be interesting with regard to the identity of *the man who has seen affliction*. Rashi has no doubts and boldly asserts that *Jeremiah lamented, "I am the man who has seen affliction", who has seen affliction more than all the prophets who prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, for the Temple was not destroyed in their days, but in my days*. However, this is not a universal view.

In 104I, Kara makes no attempt to establish Jeremiah as the one lamenting. Although he follows Rashi's explanation of *more than all the prophets who prophesied*, he proposes that *anyone* may identify with *the man who has seen affliction*. This implies that the **אני** may not only be a reference to members of the community of Israel, but can be regarded as universal. However, in Munich 5 Kara says that *Jeremiah said everyone can say about me, "This is the man who has seen affliction..."*. Again he follows Rashi's explanation, and in both of his commentaries, like Rashi before him, he identifies *the Holy One, blessed be He* as the antecedent.

Ibn Ezra is totally consistent in his explanation of this verse, and stands alone on the identity of the one who metes out punishment. In commentary A he says, *Our forefathers, of blessed memory, said that this is the scroll that Jeremiah wrote. If this is so, it is he who says I am the man; or, it is anyone from Israel*. Ibn Ezra thus states that

Jeremiah may be the lamenter, or may not be, and so agrees with Kara in 104I. In the other commentary he is more explicit: *The mourner recounts that it was the enemy who dealt him a blow with the rod of wrath.* He thus disagrees with the traditional understanding of HaShem as antecedent, and introduces the idea of the enemy as destroyer.

In *Midrash Rabbah*, however, R. Joshua b. Levi regards the one lamenting his adversity as Job, for *What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water* (Job 34:7). Similarly, R. Joshua of Siknin in the name of R. Levi, comments that the *Community of Israel* is lamenting their destruction and exile. This idea of corporate personality is one that is discussed by Albrektson<sup>48</sup>, in support of O. Eissfeldt, based on other biblical references<sup>49</sup> where Israel is referred to as an individual when referring to the people as a whole. This is against the majority of scholars who argue for an individual lament. While Gottlieb and Hillers are silent, Provan<sup>50</sup> proposes that a collective interpretation is rendered implausible by the content and context of the verse. He states that as Zion is female in chapters 1 and 2, *the man* cannot be a reference to her, although Albrektson states that this may mean the difference between a reference to Israel (m.) rather than Zion (f.) in the mind of the poet; and as chapter 3 was never meant to be read without chapter 2, the reference to *his wrath* must refer to HaShem whose anger is stated in Lam 2:22. Both Targum and LXX translate as *I am the man*, Targum adding no other reference to possible identity.

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<sup>48</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 126-8.

<sup>49</sup> Albrektson suggests Ps 129, Isa 1:5f; 52:23, and various passages in Deuteronomy.

<sup>50</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 80.

Peshitta is a little odd in that it translates *mighty God, see my oppression* that may possibly be the result of an unclear Hebrew text.

With regard to the rod of his wrath, there is again disagreement. Rashi clearly states that the one who chastises and smites is the *Holy One, blessed be He*. But, says Kara in Munich 5, it is not with *the punishments of love* that he smites, but rather with *the punishments of anger*. This is not the same as the rod with which a father punishes his son, but the one that is referred to in Lam 3:4 – *He has worn away my flesh and skin; he has broken my bones*. He explains this further using the vernacular<sup>51</sup>. In 104I he simply states that *I am the man who has known the administering of evil*, again clarified with the vernacular<sup>52</sup>. In other words, *thus is the land against me*.

Albrektson argues that this reference, similarly stated in Isa 10:5 where Assyria is referred to as *the rod of my wrath*, may support the idea of a collective Israel as the identity of *the man* in the preceding semi-stich. Our other modern commentators make no further observations.

The word עני also attracts attention. In his commentary A, ibn Ezra makes a grammatical observation saying that the word *affliction* is written as in a construct relationship, but since the noun is missing it could refer to either the exile, or the return. He also observes that, like the anomaly at Ezek 9:8 where we find ונשאר אני *I remained*, in this verse we read ונשאר instead of ונשארתי. In *Midrash Rabbah* there is a

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<sup>51</sup> Old French: *I am that man who is great evil or virtue*.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

comment on עני which should be mentioned. R. Samuel b. Nahman opines *that The Community of Israel declared: Because he held me poor [עני] in the performance of the precepts and in good deeds, He has brought upon me the rod of his wrath.* This confirms the previous homily in which the Holy One, blessed be he, says to Israel: *You are acting impudently. They replied: Lord of the universe, so is it seemly and right and proper for us to do, seeing that no other nation accepted your Torah....* Yalkut adds: *how many noble acts did I do before you! I sanctified your name at the Red Sea, I uttered song to you, I joyfully accepted your Torah which the other nations rejected (see Deut 33:2); yet after all these praiseworthy deeds, I am the man who has seen affliction*<sup>53</sup>. This idea is reflected in LXX where the translation of the verse reads: *I am the man who sees poverty, through the rod of his wrath upon me.* LXX thus picks up on the idea of poverty that we also find later expounded in the midrash, but does not indicate a difference between the *spiritual* poverty of *Lam. Rab.* and the *physical* poverty with its associated pain demonstrated in the text by *affliction*. Spiritual poverty would suggest that the antecedent must indeed be HaShem, but ibn Ezra is unique in his assertion that *his anger* refers to *my enemy destroyed* at the end of the previous chapter (2:22). He continues, *Some say that it refers to HaShem's anger, but they are not correct, in my opinion.* This clearly illustrates his independence of thought.

Although like Kara, ibn Ezra is clarifying the verse within the context of the surrounding text, unlike Kara he is consistent in his understanding of the verse. Kara makes good use of other verses to explain the meaning of *I am the man who has*

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<sup>53</sup> *Lam. Rab.* 3.1.1., 189.

seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, but just by omitting *Thus Jeremiah said...about me* from the 104I commentary, the whole nature of the meaning changes, and he offers an explanation that is later found in ibn Ezra's work. Whether this is a deliberate change of emphasis, an example of an abbreviated text, or a later addition, there is no doubt that the longer Munich 5 edition reflects an alternative rendition of the commentary than that of the shorter commentary of 104I. While he may include Rashi's argument, he does not follow Rashi's method of line-by-line exegesis, and this indicates a more innovative style. However, innovative interpretation is most obvious in the work of ibn Ezra.

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### lamentations 3:11

דרכי סורר ויפשחני שמני שמם

This is a difficult verse that is dealt with variously by the commentators. The initial problem of דרכי is thrown up by LXX which begins its translation with *he has pursued me* καταδιώξεν, offering an alternative reading to the plural noun with suffix of MT, and pointing as a verb. The closest that we can get to this, suggests Albrektson<sup>54</sup>, is the Aramaic דַּרְךְ to overtake, rather than Hebrew דַּרְךְ to tread, and

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<sup>54</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 11-13.

this would explain the Greek translation of *pursue*. All three exegetes have comment to make on דרכי סורר.

The real problem in this clause is סורר, with Rashi regarding it as an expression of סיריִם meaning *thorns*. Therefore, he *thorned* them, casting *thorns* קוצים on my ways. Kara agrees with this explanation, but adds *for I was able to find my way* (Munich 5); or, *so that I am unable to find my way* (104I). Either way, the thorns were put there to make life difficult. In commentary A of ibn Ezra we have a philological comment that disagrees with the conclusion drawn by Rashi and Kara. He argues that although some say that סורר is from the same root as סיריִם *thorns*, as in Hosea 2:8, *I will block her path with thorn bushes*, he prefers a different explanation. For ibn Ezra סורר is from the same root as סרר *to be stubborn, to disobey*, and he uses the example of Hosea 4:16, *like a stubborn heifer*. It appears that LXX reads a similar idea with *I departed* ἀφεστηκοτα, since ἀφιστημι can also mean *to induce to revolt*, which is similar in meaning to סרר. Midrash Rabbah offers an alternative explanation saying that *he has turned aside my ways*, thus reading the *pilel* of סור *to turn aside*, a common interpretation. Targum, on the other hand renders the Hebrew as סראב אורחי *he made my way(s) obstinate*, an idea that is further reflected in ibn Ezra's interpretation. While the commentaries appear to be in some agreement before, and after them, Rashi and Kara offer the least convincing analysis. The modern commentators have nothing new to add to the elucidation of this perplexing verse.

The *hapax legomenon* וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי attracts attention from each commentator, but not in exactly the same way. Rashi follows an example in Gemara, *the one who pruned the date palm*, that is, the branches were separated from the trunk. This is reflected in his comment that on roads that are not cleared one must widen one's stride. Kara prefers to offer an alternative word, וַיִּבְקַעֲנִי *he split/stripped me*, but again offers a quote from the Talmud to strengthen his idea - אֵילִן שֶׁנִּפְשַׁח - *if a tree is split/if a tree is stripped*<sup>55</sup>. Again, he offers the same commentary on this verse in both 104I and Munich 5. Interestingly enough, ibn Ezra does not offer any comment on וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי in commentary A where he is usually concerned with linguistic issues. Only in commentary B do we find any mention of it, and he uses the Targum, *he has rent me* which, he says, is just as I Sam 15:33, *Samuel tore to pieces*, and as in וַיִּפְשַׁח *and he crushed*, to clarify the verb. Unusually, he follows the explanation from Lam Rabbah to elucidate פָּשַׁח *split in pieces* as in *if a tree is split*, like Kara does. This is unexpected, and of note. LXX again is interesting in that it uses the verb κατεπαυσε *he brought [me] to a stand*, from the verb κατεπαυω *to cause to rest* to translate וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי. Albrektson comments that this may be closer to the original Hebrew meaning<sup>56</sup>, but this is unclear. Peshitta reads אֵילִן שֶׁנִּפְשַׁח - *he tore me to pieces* rendering a similar meaning to the Targum.

<sup>55</sup> See *b. Shev. 4. 6: if a tree is split; b. Hul. 128<sup>b</sup>; if a tree is stripped*. Cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1245.

<sup>56</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 136.

Only ibn Ezra's shorter commentary B regards it necessary to comment on שׁוּמָם *desolate*, but just by way of extending the comment to include the idea that each one who sees him is left desolate, and he gives two substantiating references from Daniel<sup>57</sup>. This is in keeping with the nature of commentary B.

The various comments on this verse indicate that not only is the language difficult to interpret, but that the concerns of the exegetes are different, some being linguistic and some being contextual in nature; and that they are not always satisfied with traditional explanations, even when their own are less attractive. That ibn Ezra makes a philological comment in commentary B, rather than in commentary A, is interesting, and that he then follows Lam Rabbah at all is also notable. As the commentaries illustrate, this is not his usual style, and although he still has respect for the Rabbis' opinions even when he disagrees with them, it would have been more usual to find this observation in commentary A.

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<sup>57</sup> See Dan 11:31, *the abomination that causes desolation* שׁוּמָם; and Dan 12:11, *desolation* שׁוּמָם.

טוב ויחיל ודומם לתשועת יהוה

There are two problems in this verse, centring on ויחיל and ודומם. Rashi is concerned with both and explains them together. The *vav* of ויחיל is, he says, superfluous just as we find in Gen 36:24, ואיה *Aiah* and *Anah*. He then replaces this superfluous *vav* with a *shin*, to better explain the phrase, and then he substitutes וידום for the ודומם of MT thus altering the root. He can thus read the phrase as, *it is good that a man wait and remain silent*. Kara prefers to read verses 25 and 26 together, and offers the same explanation in each commentary. Kara states that the explanation is that the Holy One, blessed be He, is good to those who trust in him for a person can hope and be silent, and look forward to the salvation of HaShem. In this he is in tune with both Rashi and midrash. However, he uses מצפה *to look forward/hope, anticipate* to explain דומם, not offering it as an alternative word, but more as a means to understand what is happening. In other words, it means: to be patient, as in דומו עד הגיענו אליכם *hold still until we reach you* (I Sam 14:9).

In commentary A of ibn Ezra, we find a grammatical comment where he observes that the *vav* in ויחיל operates like an undageshed *pe* in Arabic. That is to say, it acts

as an Arabic conjunction, a prefixed particle of inference and sequence<sup>58</sup>. In commentary B ibn Ezra responds to the text much like Kara before him commenting that *it is good that the one who seeks HaShem should endure, wait and sit quietly for HaShem's salvation*. In this instance he compares ויחיל ודומם with דום לה' ויהתחולל לו *wait silently for HaShem, and wait longingly for him*, from Ps 37:7, and then again, like Kara, he utilises I Sam 14:9. Again, the root understood is altered from דמם to דום. This removes any ambiguity of the correct way to read דמם in this instance. If, based on examples from Akkadian and Ugaritic literature<sup>59</sup>, דמם may be translated as *to mutter, moan* and the root דום alone means *to be silent, at rest*, then this example from Psalms is justified, and confirms the meaning of the text.

LXX translates verses 25 and 26 together as one. It is constructed thus, (25b)...*the soul which shall seek him* (26a) *is good, and shall wait for, and quietly expect...*, and Albrektson comments that while there may have been an alternative text before the translator, it is just as likely that this was an attempt to make sense of a difficult Hebrew construction. Vulgate translates *in silence*, whereas Peshitta reads כבסגצא *in truth*, which, Albrektson argues<sup>60</sup>, appears to be a scribal error for כבסגצא *in silence*. This emendation uses all the same letters, but changes the

<sup>58</sup> See Penrice, *Dictionary*, 106.

<sup>59</sup> See McDaniel, "Philological Studies", 39, for examples from the work of Friedrich Delitzsch, George Schick and Mitchell Dahood on this point.

<sup>60</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 148.

order: *bqwst'* for *bswtq'*<sup>61</sup>. The Targum, however, offers *it is good to wait and be silent*, retaining the traditional meaning of the Hebrew roots יחל and דום/דומם<sup>62</sup>. However, like LXX, it paraphrases to give a greater sense of the Hebrew text.

Of all the suggestions put forward to help to clarify the meaning of this difficult verse, the least obtrusive, and most obvious is that of McDaniel. Quite simply, he argues that דומם ויחיל should be redivided to read ויחילו דומם. This means that the *hiphil* of יחל *to hope, to wait for* would now be in the plural with the subject of 3:25a, קון *those who wait for him*; and דומם could either be read as דומם (*domem*) *polel* infinitive, or as דומם *qal* infinitive with enclitic *mem*. Here again, the root should be דום which he defines as *to stay, to wait*, rather than דומם *to mutter, to moan*. This allows for the translation of the verse to read, *it is good that they have hope awaiting the salvation of HaShem*.

Hillers<sup>63</sup>, however, offers the possibility of an original טוב [כין] יוחיל דומם, to give a better understanding of the text, supplying the כין missing due to haplography. Aware of these alternative explanations, Gottlieb questions the need to emend the text as it is more reasonable to regard HaShem as the subject of טוב as a continuation of verse 25. The semi-stich would thus read: *good is he, when one waits in silence...*<sup>64</sup>. Provan prefers to summarise the possibilities and then offers the

<sup>61</sup> See footnote in BHS for Lam 3:26.

<sup>62</sup> See Levine, E. *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (Hermon Press, New York, 1976), 139.

<sup>63</sup> Hillers, *Lamentations*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> See Gottlieb, *Study*, 47.

possible rendition, *it is good that one should endure without complaint...*, but also supports Gottlieb based on the Syriac, where טוב is deemed as a reference to HaShem, *good is he, when one endures without complaint...*<sup>65</sup>.

Although none of our medieval exegetes are willing to suggest an emendation of the written text, Rashi explains away the offending *vav* of ויחיל altogether, and explains ורומם as וידום. In this interpretation he thus emends the text by stealth. Kara prefers to read verses 25 and 26 together, as does LXX, thus interpreting in context, but is still sufficiently concerned about רומם to mention it. Ibn Ezra appears to read the root רמם as רום to properly explain the meaning of the verse in commentary B. In A he is more concerned with the *vav* of ויחיל, but unlike Rashi gives an explanation of its presence in the text. Although the modern commentators offer alternative suggestions, there is no way of knowing whether Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra would consider, accept, or reject any of them.

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<sup>65</sup> See Provan, *Lamentations*, 95.

**איכה**

**יועם זהב ישנא הכתם הטוב**

**תשתפכנה אבני קדש בראש כל חוצות**

In this verse each exegete carefully breaks down the text to explain its non-literal meaning. With regard to the first cola **איכה יועם זהב ישנא** *how the gold has become dim*, Rashi is very close to the explanation offered by the midrash when he comments that the elegy refers to Josiah. However, he appears to join two different comments so that the gold that has become dim also refers to the children of Zion, as commented upon in verse 2: *the precious children of Zion*. Rashi defends his exegesis with the support of II Chron 35:25, but instead of reading: *and behold they were written in the laments*, Rashi refers to the **ספר הקינות** *book of the laments*. In the discussion of the commentaries on Lamentations 1:1, it can be seen that for him the term **קינה** was synonymous with **איכה**, and, therefore, a reference to the Book of Lamentations. The Hebrew *hapax legomenon* **יועם** is treated by Rashi with a comparison of Lev 13:6 where we find **כהה** *to fade, become dim*, which he then compares with the Targum's translation of **עמיא** *tarnished*. LXX supports this use as it renders **יועם** as *αμαυρωθησεται will become dark, dim*, while the Peshitta translates

נִסְתַּוֵּן *rejected, thrown away*<sup>66</sup> which may mean that here the verb was not recognised by the translator. The Targum also adds the gold of *the Temple* by way of explanation. According to Rashi, זָהָב is a reference to *the appearance of a face that shines like gold*, gold that Lam Rabbah regards as *changed*. R. Samuel comments that the gold has become covered over (gold, but not recognised as gold), just as in Ezek 28:3, *no secret is hidden from you* עֲמֹמֹךָ<sup>67</sup>. While LXX follows MT translating χρυσος *gold* for זָהָב, the Syriac adds an adjective, possibly to balance the line with the הַטֹּב הַכֹּתֵם הַטֹּב of the following stich<sup>68</sup>.

Kara appears to follow the idea of R. Samuel. In Munich 5, he comments that at first the words were concealed and not explained, hence *the gold has become dim*, or as Kara explains, become obscured. Again, Ezek 28:3 is offered as a solution so that the root עֲמֹ is compared with יִחְשֵׁיךָ *to be clouded, darkened*. This comment is also made in 104I, but here an alternative explanation of the text is also offered, with the example from Ezek 28:3 expanded with another quote from Ezek 31:8, the cedars could not עֲמֹמֹהוּ *hide/obscure it*. However, the interpretation of the cola is *how the beauty and appearance of the people of Zion is darkened/obscured, for their countenance had been yellow like gold*, and in this idea of the gold/people of Zion parallel he is following midrash. Ibn Ezra is not so convinced. He refers to the gold as *despised* in the shorter commentary B, but dismisses the arguments for the gold as חָשֵׁךְ *become*

<sup>66</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 172.

<sup>67</sup> עֲמֹ *to hide, conceal*; see Ezek 31:8 & 28:3. Read as the same verb as the *hophal* יִעֲמֹ in Lam 4:1.

<sup>68</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 173.

dark, or as כהה to be dim, dull as in the Targum. Instead, he offers his own opinion. He argues that יועם is like לא עממוהו, again quoting Ezek 31:8, but in this case it is best interpreted as [they] could not compare with it; in context, the cedars could not dim/rival the greatness of Assyria. In this understanding, Kara's use of Ezek 28:3 would read: *in no hidden matter can anyone compare to you*. Ibn Ezra regards the significance of this quote to be found in that of Isa 28:28, *bread [grain] is ground* - in other words, it has a value.

Other than to comment that both the gold and holy stones refer to the children of Zion, Gottlieb has little to say on this image. Hillers<sup>69</sup>, however, has decided to emend the phrase to read *How gold is despised! Good gold is hated!* based on יועם becoming יועב, and ישנא being repointed to ישנא. This, he maintains, is more appropriate with regard to the imagery of the first two verses where it is not so much the brightness of the gold that is being questioned as much as its value. This requires minimal changes to the consonantal text. Provan<sup>70</sup>, however, does not find this argument compelling, and suggests that if the gold is scattered with the holy stones then the image of a tarnished appearance is in keeping with the reference to the gold's value in the following verse.

In the second stich, Rashi continues by explaining ישנא as *changes its appearance*, and is thus in agreement with the midrash. Although ibn Ezra's previous explanation implies that while the gold does not appear to be gold, it is still gold, his only other

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<sup>69</sup> Hillers, *Lamentations*, 78.

<sup>70</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 110-111.

words on שְׁנַיִם are that שְׁנַיִם is from the same source as שְׁנַיִם meaning *two*. Rashi considers הַכְתָּם as a collection of beautiful gold articles used as ornamentation; a circular necklace, according to ibn Ezra, of similar form as that found in verse 2, כֶּפֶז *in fine gold*. It is interesting to note that LXX renders הַכְתָּם הַטּוֹב as το ἀργυριον το αγαθον *fine silver*. This presupposes הַכְסֵי the *silver* instead of הַכְתָּם the *gold*, and may just be a translator's error. However, there is evidence to suggest that the variant is due to a preference over a correct translation. Albrektson<sup>71</sup> points out that in Job 31:24 the same parallels are used as in Lam 4:1, זָהָב and כְּתָם. Again, זָהָב is translated χρυσιον *gold*, but כְּתָם is translated as λιθος πολυτελης *precious stone*. Similarly, in the Syriac there is found written *beautiful dye - beautiful* possibly because the direct translation for good has already appeared in the previous stich, and *dye* to provide a variant as there is no direct parallel, Syriac only having one word for gold. On שְׁנַיִם הַכְתָּם הַטּוֹב Kara is still concerned with the change in appearance of the people of Zion who are like finest gold and treasure. In Munich 5 he argues that it is not possible for pure gold to become obscured, or for valuable treasure to be changed from what it is. In 104I he becomes a little more unclear, but appears to be saying that HaShem calls the children of Zion fine gold and pure gold because they cannot be valued. However, if garments of blue cloth, finely embroidered, and articles of leather are treasured, these are not pure gold. They are manufactured like the work of the potter's hands (verse 2), and carry a price. Consequently, although the people of Zion are beyond price and still belong to HaShem, it is difficult to see this in their present circumstances. Thus are they pure

<sup>71</sup> See Albrektson, *Studies*, 173.

gold, but appear to be changed. In effect, Kara is, therefore, arguing in a similar vein to ibn Ezra with regard to the gold, which was once unrivalled but is now despised.

קדש אבני' elicits comment from both Rashi and Kara, but ibn Ezra seems unconcerned with this part of the text. Rashi describes the *holy stones* as *children who shine like precious stones*, and then quotes Lam Rabbah regarding every fourth-part of a log of blood that came out of Josiah with each arrow that was thrust into him. It is this that Jeremiah collected and buried. Although this is offered as a secondary reading of the text, along with his use of II Chron 35:25 it confirms his belief in Lam 1:1 that Josiah and Jeremiah are inextricably linked with Lamentations. The Targum translates קדש אבני' as the *stones of the sanctuary*, as in *lapides sanctuarii* that is found in the Vulgate, rather than *holy stones*. The Syriac appears to follow MT like LXX, but this is not undisputed and some regard it as conveying a similar meaning to the Vulgate. Kara understands the *holy stones* in 104I to be the priests dressed in breastplate and ephod in which sacred stones were fixed. This argument implies that he is mixing the literal and the metaphorical, as the stones represent the priests, and the stones in breastplate and ephod. In Munich 5 however, he comments that it is not the way of humankind to cast out the holy stones of breastplate and ephod at the head of all the streets, but again, it is not clear whether this could, or does, refer to the priests even if we look at verse 2. The blood of the priests here, who wear the breastplate and ephod into which the holy stones are fixed, was poured out at the

head of every street, Kara informs us. If a decision is required over which is the real subject, then in true Kara style, the reader is expected to make that decision.

Hillers comments that the *אבני קדש* may be explained as *jewels* or *ornaments* following Emerton<sup>72</sup>, and based on references to Aramaic, Arabic and Akkadian cognates. This is proposed as one possible reading of the text by Provan in his commentary, along with the usual interpretation of holy stones being a reference to the stones of the Temple, or temple treasure, and *holy* as a description of the status of God's people.

Each exegete, therefore, appears to have a different agenda. Rashi treats each section of the verse in isolation; his heavy reliance on tradition allows the emphasis of historical links, as his reference to Lam Rabbah indicates. Kara, however, takes a different approach. He displays no need for, or places any value on, a midrashic element in his commentary, although one midrashic interpretation does read, *should anybody tell you that the verse does not allude to the men of Jerusalem, answer that the next verse mentions the precious children of Zion*<sup>73</sup>. To reach the true meaning of the verse, he looks further into the text surrounding it in an attempt to identify the *subject* of the verse, so that verses 1 and 2 are linked particularly in Munich 5. Ibn Ezra confines himself to brief comments on the *condition* of the subject, rather than the subject itself. He offers his opinion on the meaning of the word *יועם* and how it should be understood in this context, and apart from grammatical comments he

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<sup>72</sup> See Hillers, *Lamentations*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> See *Lam. Rab.*, 216.

seems only interested in a non-specific interpretation of the verse. As each exegete is doing something different with the text, it becomes apparent that as their own personal context changes, so does the meaning of the verse.

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### **the outcome**

A number of observations can be immediately made without a close examination of the text. For instance, McDaniel proposes readings based on parallels found in Akkadian and Ugaritic documents that may shed a greater light on the construction and/or the possible meaning of parts of the Book of Lamentations. If he is correct, even in part, then we are able to identify the development of elements of the Hebrew language in its varying contexts of meaning. Also, there is no evidence to suggest any consideration of the ideas and insights of medieval Jewish commentators by the modern exegetes on Lamentations quoted here. With regard to the medieval commentators under discussion here, it is plain to see that Rashi operates on a line-by-line basis and leans heavily on midrashic explanations; Kara considers the text with respect to the surrounding verses and tries to avoid using midrash unless it is deemed to be the most perceptive; and ibn Ezra prefers to reach a contextual meaning via grammar and without recourse to midrash, attempting a synthesis if necessary to avoid contradicting the rabbis' judgements before him.

But does anything else of note become apparent when we apply the theory illustrated by the cog diagram? The comparison of each verse considered will be examined a little more closely.

Rashi believes that Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations, but Kara and ibn Ezra do not commit themselves here, and so appear to be less confined by tradition from the start. It is not until Lam 3:1 that Kara states that Jeremiah was the author, and then only in Munich 5. In 104I he argues for a communal and universal referent, rather than an individual, and this difference of interpretation appears throughout all the commentaries, both medieval and modern. So, as Avi Sion says, we may *arrive at different specific conclusions, due to different contexts of knowledge*, at different times of our existence. Based on the differences in opinion illustrated in the earlier material, it is also impossible to say which opinion predates the other. However, stating that Jeremiah may be identified as the individual in Lam 3:1 does not commit Kara to Jeremian authorship, but a more universal outlook may have been the result of conversation with Christian scholars. It is also necessary to consider the person for whom the commentary was written. Unfortunately, we cannot be confident of the context that dictated each work, but what we do know is that while his earlier work was influenced greatly by his teacher, Rashi, his later work was not.

With regard to the nature of the commentaries displayed in Lam 1:1, it becomes apparent that a number of different approaches are in operation, although all three show a significant shift away from midrash. Both Kara in 104I, and ibn Ezra in

commentary A, are specifically interested in problems of grammar. In Munich 5 and commentary B, they are more interested in providing an explanation of the text before them. Rashi, however, states that he is attempting to provide an account of the language of Scripture according to its plain sense. Consequently, in the first verse of Lamentations we have a number of different stated contexts in which the exegetes are working, so that even if they are asking the same questions, they will not necessarily reach the same conclusions.

Simply put, if we apply the left hand cog representing the *literal* meaning based on grammatical forms, word roots and so on, its constant *function* is to interact with the context of the right hand cog to produce meaning for the words in use. It is the variables of this right hand cog that dictate the meaning of the left hand cog, or its *peshat*. For this reason, the meaning of *peshat* changes with each exegete, while its purpose does not.

In Lam 1:16 there is general interest expressed in the double ע"נ" found in MT, although all three medieval exegetes ignore the midrash. Both Kara and Rashi regard the doubling as an expression of emphasis in that the weeping did not cease. Ibn Ezra, however, considers ע"נ" defined as both *fountain* and *eye*, and constructs a meaning similar to the Targum which also likens the tearful eye to a *spring of waters*. In this instance, Kara and Rashi look at the literal words before them, and then try and explain their presence, whereas ibn Ezra looks at the words before him and makes sense of them by considering the alternative definitions of ע"נ". Here, while

he is prepared to read between the words and confirm an unspoken meaning, it is not obvious that he would accept an emendation that would literally state it, as offered by some modern exegetes. For ibn Ezra, this is unnecessary. Again, we have an example of *peshat* in operation – Rashi and Kara identify an anomaly and explain it away, whereas ibn Ezra uses the anomaly to reach a meaning that is not explicitly written, but a meaning that is available because of the grammatical form and word root. In other words, *peshat* is operating as a function that leads beyond the literal. A *peshat*, or *literal*, reading, therefore, can lead to a number of alternative meanings for this expression, even though there is no change in the literal meaning itself.

The semi-stich וַיַּחַמֵּם כַּגֵּן שָׂכוֹ of 2:6 also provides us with a rich diversity of interpretation. Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra are all agreed that וַיַּחַמֵּם should be understood as *exposed*. The modern commentators, do not agree on the meaning of וַיַּחַמֵּם, and offer various suggestions as to a credible reading of the text. Most prefer to read גֵּן as גִּפְן so that the text follows LXX, with the possibility of שָׂכוֹ as *his branch* rather than *his booth*. While all commentators agree that the text is difficult, only Hillers from among the modern exegetes prefers to give as literal a translation as possible, and then explores what the meaning might be in the light of other biblical verses. As the sense of the semi-stich is unclear when rendered literally, we are required to think laterally in order to reach an explanation, thus directing us away in search of meaning. It is our own context that allows to decide how we wish to read the text, and while no medieval Jewish exegete is willing to

alter the Hebrew text before him, modern commentators often have no such qualms. This reflects the idea that to alter the text is to directly affect the culture that it supports, and this is unacceptable, undesirable and unnecessary. As Heaney comments, *it is the means of fortification of the self by which to deal with the present*. It is this idea that is reflected in Rashi's commentary where he is not willing to abandon the safety of the midrashic explanations, when offering his own interpretation. Kara, however, does not feel so compelled and provides a complete and contextual reading of the verse without recourse to midrash. Ibn Ezra offers meanings based on both context and philological observations, but all three are bound only by their own contexts - social, spatial, and in time - when producing a primary meaning for the Hebrew text.

Although the opening line of Lam 2:18 is generally regarded as corrupt, it generates some interesting comments. Kara consistently reads the first semi-stich as *their heart cried out to the Lord*, arguing in 104I that they only cried out in distress, and then in Munich 5 that if they had cried out when they lived in peace, then they would not have been exiled. In commentary B, however, ibn Ezra identifies *their heart* as the heart of the enemies. So, while each exegete employs *peshat*, the resulting interpretations are different. The modern exegetes offer alternatives. McDaniel and Gottlieb accept Ewald's proposal that the first word of the verse should read *צעקי* rather than *צעק*, and Hillers accepts McDaniel's suggestion of reading *לבם* as *לב* with final adverbial *mem*. The first colon would then read *cry out to the Lord (from) the heart*. By offering grammatical changes in reading the semi-stich, a new context

is created in which to consider the meaning of the text. Concerning חֲרוֹמַת בַּת צִיּוֹן, McDaniel advocates the simple change from חֲרוֹמַת constr. fem. of חֲרוֹמָה to חֲרוֹמַת fem. part. of חָרַמָה *to be tumultuous*, and so the first line would read *cry out to the Lord (from) the heart, O tumultuous one, daughter Zion*. Simple and effective, if the only thing at stake is the meaning of the verse. For our Jewish exegetes it is not so straightforward, as the context of the text containing the verse under discussion also has to be considered.

A further example is פִּוְגַת. Rashi's first observation on this verse concerns the definition *respite, let-up* in Medieval French, followed by an example from Gen 45:26 to illustrate his point. The fact that he chooses to use the vernacular to explain the Hebrew means that the text is being translated across a cultural boundary to give it meaning in the context of Rashi's situation. Kara prefers to explain פִּוְגַת with an alternative Hebrew word, מַעְצוֹר *restraint*, and uses Lamentations 3:49 to support his argument in both commentaries. But, for ibn Ezra it is a grammatical point that provides the context for interpretation. He suggests that פִּוְגַת is to be understood as a construct state, with the unwritten sense of *respite for the eye*.

Another example of the search for primary meaning is found in 3:1. The question revolves around אֲנִי and the identity of the man who has seen affliction. For Rashi there are no doubts - it is Jeremiah; just as in 1:1, Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations, and Jeremiah lamented *I am the man who has seen affliction*. Moreover,

it is HaShem who is delivering the blows to smite Israel. Kara is not so convinced – it might be Jeremiah, but there again, it might not, depending on which commentary is read. In contrast to Rashi, he states that HaShem punishes with love and not anger. What they do agree on is that HaShem is the one meting out the punishment. Ibn Ezra approaches the line differently. If the rabbis say that it is Jeremiah, then that may be so, but it is also to be understood as anyone else from Israel. He thus synthesises tradition with a more open view. His opinion then coincides with Kara's. But as to the identity of the one wielding the rod of wrath, he disagrees with both Rashi and Kara. For him, it is the enemy who deals Israel the blow, not HaShem.

Modern commentators are divided over whether **אֲנִי** refers to an individual or a community, insisting in the main that it must be one or the other. The medieval exegetes do not appear to feel so tied to this approach. If Heaney is correct, and poetry is a means by which *people want something said for them* in moments of communal crisis, then it seems odd to argue that **אֲנִי** must be restricted only as a reference to an individual. Context dictates how the text is received and valued rather than the literal meaning. Here we are looking at what the text does not articulate as much as what it does. *Peshat* gives us a plain sense and then directs us towards another reasoning. We can see this in operation again in this verse with the word **אֲנִי**.

Ibn Ezra begins his application of *peshat* by observing that the word עֲנִי is presented in a construct relationship, but without the noun. This, he asserts, means that it could refer to either the exile, or the return. He then likens the form to an anomaly found at Ezek 9:8. To begin to understand what the verse might be saying to him he first of all has to find a context for it. In commentary A, the context is grammatical and it affects the subject, although the subject is not stated. But *peshat* allows him to go further. In *Midrash Rabbah* עֲנִי is defined as *poor* [עֲנִיָּה], and in LXX as *poverty*. However, there is no difference indicated between the spiritual poverty of the midrash, and the physical poverty associated with affliction, until ibn Ezra asserts that, in his opinion, *his anger* must refer to the enemy mentioned at the end of 2:22 which indicates a physical poverty. In this he is unique. By putting the verse in a different context, the function of *peshat* can be seen to operate to give an alternative, yet still plain, meaning to the verse.

Lamentations 3:11 is another difficult verse, and is dealt with philologically by all three medieval exegetes. The initial problem concerns the meaning of the word סוֹרֵר. Rashi and Kara explain it as an expression of סִרְיָם *thorns*, so that the text reveals the sense of *he cast thorns on my ways*. Ibn Ezra, however, is not content to adopt this idea from the semi-stich, and decides that סוֹרֵר is from the root סָרַר *to be stubborn, to disobey* with biblical support from Hosea 4:16. The same understanding can be gleaned from LXX, while *Midrash Rabbah* suggests a more common reading from סוֹר *to turn aside*. The Targum, however, renders the Hebrew as *he made my way(s) obstinate*, indicating that while ibn Ezra's preference for סָרַר is not new,

neither is it a universal choice. That said, things are a little different with the *hapax legomenon* וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי.

In this case, all three exegetes follow the same direction of thought from the context of grammar. They all reiterate explanations from the Targum and Talmud to indicate the idea of splitting, pruning and crushing, yet each then interprets this language slightly differently - Rashi explains the idea of splitting as a need to widen the stride on a littered road; Kara offers an alternative word וַיִּבְקַעֲנִי *he split/stripped me* to help explain the quote he has chosen from the Talmud; and ibn Ezra follows the Targum with its idea *he has rent me*. It is in both of these difficult examples from the Hebrew that the grammar has been the medium for the context of each reading, and yet none of the results are interpreted in the same way. By applying the literal meaning, or *peshat*, of the 'left-hand cog' [a context for a reading of the text is created], and then by applying the context(s) of the 'right-hand cog' - our who, where, why and what - it is possible to understand the text in new and personal ways. In each case, it is the engagement of the reader with the text that creates its meaning. This verse illustrates the concept that sometimes tradition cannot offer a satisfactory meaning for the reader, and an alternative is sought and put forward, even when it is less attractive than the one it replaces. This is how the context(s) of the interpreter affects the frame of reference to effect elucidation.

In Lam 3:26 we have the interesting problem of טוב ויחיל ורומם. Rashi and ibn Ezra are concerned with the initial *vav* of ויחיל, but are not unanimous in their

interpretation of it. Rashi argues that it is superfluous and gives a supporting example from Gen 36:24, but ibn Ezra suggests that it is operating in the same way as an undageshed *pe* in Arabic. So, one removes it from the equation altogether when reading, and the other gives it an operational function based on a grammatical understanding of another Semitic language, but neither alter the root meaning of *to wait*. However, **וַיִּשְׁמַע** is a different matter. All three medieval commentators alter the meaning of the root from **שָׁמַע** to **שָׁמַע** in their interpretation of the word by comparing the meaning with other Scriptural illustrations. We are left in no doubt about the meaning of the phrase: *it is good that the one who seeks HaShem should endure, wait and sit quietly [for HaShem's salvation]*. Traditional texts also offer versions of this reading, so we might ask why the need was felt to explain **וַיִּשְׁמַע**. According to modern commentators the original root **שָׁמַע** meant *to mutter, to moan*, while **שָׁמַע** should be defined as *to stay or wait*. As each exegete is at pains to read **וַיִּשְׁמַע** as *to be patient*, then the root **שָׁמַע** as used in the biblical examples that they quote seems to be appropriate. Interestingly, Jastrow defines **שָׁמַע** as *to speak in a low voice*<sup>74</sup>; *to suspect*, and **שָׁמַע** as *to be silent, dumb, at rest; to leave off*<sup>75</sup> in his dictionary of Rabbinic literature, yet the meaning adopted is an extension of these. Also, in a modern Hebrew dictionary **שָׁמַע** and **שָׁמַע** are interchangeable with **שָׁמַע** retaining its medieval definition as *to be silent, to stand still*<sup>76</sup>, and **שָׁמַע** becoming *to be silent*<sup>77</sup>. The understanding of the medieval commentators would give greater credence to

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<sup>74</sup> Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 286.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 314.

<sup>76</sup> Alcalay, R. *The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary, Vol. I.* Chemed Books, Yedioth Ahronoth, 1996, 452.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 417.

the argument for the original proposed roots, based on Northwest Semitic usage found in Akkadian and Ugaritic texts, to be read as *to mutter, moan* and *to wait, be still* rather than *to be silent*. Even if the roots were only found in related languages, then there is still the example of developing word use to be identified.

Our final sample verse, Lam 4:1, is carefully analysed by Rashi, Kara and ibn Ezra using completely different methods. Rashi begins his exegesis of the verse employing his line-by-line approach, deciding to follow ideas first presented in midrash and Targum, so that the elegy refers to Josiah, and the *hapax legomenon* יועם, supported by כהה *to fade, become dim* in Lev 13:6, is comparable with the Aramaic עמיא *tarnished*. Kara appears to follow an idea credited to R. Samuel on זרה, so that the gold has become *covered over* or *obscured*, and with supporting evidence from Ezek 28:3 and 31:8, he renders the cola as *how the beauty and appearance of the people of Zion is darkened/obscured, for their countenance had been yellow like gold*. The parallel of the gold with the people of Zion agrees with midrash. Ibn Ezra, however, suggests that יועם is best translated as [they] *could not compare with it*. Like Kara he utilises Ezek 31:8, but reads *compare* rather than *obscure*. He dismisses the Targum's suggestion that the gold has become dull preferring to call it *despised*, and thus seems to place an emphasis on the gold's value, rather than a change of state. The modern commentator Hillers also argues this point, but wants to emend the text and read *How the gold is despised! Good gold is hated!* Ibn Ezra would agree with the result, but not with the alteration in the text to get there.

The second stich also draws comment from all three exegetes. Rashi argues for שֵׁנִי meaning *changes its appearance*, and thus agrees with the midrash. Ibn Ezra only comments that it comes from the same source as שְׁנַיִם or *two*, but they both agree on the interpretation of הִכְתֵּם as ornamentation, or jewellery. Kara is particularly longwinded on the meaning of this line of text. He still seems concerned with the apparent change in appearance of the people of Zion, but then continues that they are not so much created and, therefore, can be valued, so much as belonging to Hashem and beyond price. The problem is that no one can recognise this because they are so despised. In this he may be offering a similar argument to ibn Ezra. Both Rashi and Kara interpret אֲבָנֵי קֹדֶשׁ, Rashi as *children who shine like precious stones*, and Kara, in 104I, as the priests in breastplate and ephod. In Munich 5, it is not clear what the subject is, and we appear to be expected to decide for ourselves.

This verse illustrates the different contexts of the commentators, and how they subsequently interpret the verse. Rashi's heavy reliance on tradition leaves us with an historical tie with the past. Kara is more interested in producing an explanation with the context of the surrounding text, rather than relying on external material, while ibn Ezra is more concerned with grammatical matters. This shows that Kara feels more able to explore the text, possibly from the basis of the work that he began with his teacher, Rashi. As Rashi began a move away from traditional interpretation, and encouraged by the work of his uncle, Menachem ben Helbo, whom he frequently quotes throughout his own works, Kara was given a greater confidence to develop a new approach to understanding Scripture. Tradition was

not dead, but it was not to be followed blindly either. There was room for an alternative reading. Ibn Ezra, by his own admission, was more concerned with grammatical issues in an attempt to better clarify the biblical text. This was fuelled by his exposure to the Arabic love of grammar, and its effect on the development of a growing awareness and understanding of the Hebrew language. In each case it is the context of the exegete that affects the approach to a reading of the text.

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### to summarise

There is a conscious move away from the traditional approach of Rashi and his use of midrash in the identification of Jeremiah as author of Lamentations. On this issue in 1:1 there is silence from both Kara and ibn Ezra, but in 3:1 there is some acknowledgement from Kara that Jeremiah is the author, but there again, it could be anyone from Israel. On this verse, ibn Ezra comments that אֲנִי הַגִּבּוֹר may refer to Jeremiah, but there again, it could equally refer to anyone from Israel. He is also alone in his identification of the one who metes out the punishments as the enemy, rather than the commonly assumed HaShem. This fits well with Heaney's comments on the need for communal identity in times of crisis, here with the individual. We can also see this trend in the double עֵינַי of 1:16. Rather than an expression of emphasis in that the weeping did not cease, unlike Kara and Rashi, ibn Ezra regards the unspoken meaning as making the best sense and prefers to interpret as the simile *like a spring of waters*, based on the alternative meanings of עֵינַי.

Similarly, סורר, from 3:11, is interpreted as *thorned* by Rashi and Kara, but ibn Ezra explains it as סרר *to be stubborn* as found in the parallel passage in Hosea, LXX and Targum, as this makes more sense of the text. These examples serve to illustrate the development of the use of word roots and their subsequent meanings.

In 2:18, Rashi defines פונגת with the Old French expression *tresalemant* or *respite* which introduces another layer of context to further his own, and his audience's, understanding. While ibn Ezra prefers to manipulate the Hebrew language by arguing that פונגת is a word in construct state, to make sense of it, Rashi explains a difficult concept simply by applying his native tongue.

At this point we can sum up the results of the comparison of verses by our medieval exegetes on Lamentations. Rashi, true to style, makes great use of midrash as a means of producing a meaning for the text, while Kara uses the context of the surrounding verses to support his understanding of the text. Ibn Ezra, however, explicitly states that he uses grammar to provide context. All three use parallel passages to support their arguments, to a greater or lesser degree. Rashi and Kara also make use of vernacular Old French, although not the same Old French, to explain a point more fully. This appears to be directed towards students. Each commentator also engages in grammatical observations on the text to explain what its primary meaning might be.

We have previously stated that the constant function of *literal* meaning is to interact with context to produce a primary understanding of the text in question. *Peshat* is, therefore, not so much a meaning in itself as a process by which meaning is achieved. We can observe this in the development and subsequent use of פשוט/פשוט, by considering what the roots appear to have originally meant in an ancient West Semitic setting, how they were used in medieval literature and explained by our exegetes, and how they are used today.

The function of this literal reading is to direct the reader to its meaning in a particular time and place. So, the Talmud can say that *no text can be deprived of its peshat*, but its literal meaning is not necessarily its primary reading, for that is influenced by other factors. Hence, all three exegetes can say with Kara, *the Aggadah (or other texts) explains this difficulty in a manner which is not satisfying*<sup>78</sup>, and therefore feel free to reinterpret it.

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<sup>78</sup> See Kara's commentary on II Sam 12:30.

There are two parts to this thesis which can stand alone. The first section presents five commentaries on the Book of Lamentations written by three contemporary medieval exegetes.

- The editions of Yosef Kara are presented for the first time in English.
- The translations of Rashi and ibn Ezra were chosen to provide context for Kara's work, while providing comparisons for grammatical and contextual developments.
- Through the use of Medieval French dialects in the commentaries by Rashi and Kara, we are in the ongoing process of developing a system to provide a satisfactory method of translating the transliterated northern dialects of Kara's Medieval French.

The second part of the thesis concerns the development of the use of *peshat*.

- We have redefined the term *peshat* to include meaning *and* its function.
- We have also offered a sociolinguistic and literary theory to show the strength and relevance of context, in this case, through the communal laments of the Book of Lamentations.
- We applied the theory to the context of the three medieval exegetes in comparison, to better explain their translations of the text.

The commentaries chosen are written in relatively quick succession, and are composed by French and Spanish exegetes. Rashi uses Old French to clarify

Hebrew words throughout his commentaries, and Kara follows this pattern. However, Rashi uses central French dialects, whereas Kara appears to use those from northern France. By considering Kara's French glosses in this way, it has been possible to attempt the beginning of a method of understanding his transliterated French comments, some of which are tentatively offered here. Kara is chosen as an extension to Rashi, geographically speaking, while ibn Ezra is used as a comparison from a culturally rich, Arabic influenced environment. The results are not surprising in that the commentaries here substantiate observations already made on the style and influence of these three commentators. Yet, there is more information to be gleaned than these previous examinations have revealed.

Rashi is said to bring literal meaning to the text, and is credited with the beginning of the innovative move away from midrash. However, he still relies heavily on tradition and historical ties to explain the text, and sometimes proposes explanations of the text as simple readings that are far from straightforward. Despite this, he is generally regarded as the instigator of a *peshat* interpretation. Kara is also a *peshat* interpreter, yet he is more concerned with using the verses surrounding the line in question to reach a constructive meaning for the text. He is thus regarded as a creator of contextual meaning, and the first true methodical interpreter<sup>1</sup>. In this he is considered to fill a gap between Rashi, his teacher, and Rashbam, Rashi's grandson, who rejected *derash* outright. His position here is, therefore, important. In his shorter commentary B, ibn Ezra is

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<sup>1</sup> See Ganiel, "Exegetical Method", 12.

more interested in offering a meaning with little recourse to grammatical issues, and concentrates almost solely on giving the sense of the text. Whether he actually composed this commentary seems to be a matter of academic enquiry, but it is useful here nevertheless as the disagreement is not resolved<sup>2</sup>. However, he is concerned with grammatical problems in his longer commentary A, and for ibn Ezra this grammatical approach is *peshat*. His love of grammar and philosophy develops into a search for *truth in all its simplicity*<sup>3</sup> through the power of the creative imagination. It is this that allows Lancaster to comment that as *peshat* is linked to the mystical meaning of *sod*, it is no longer merely an interpretative device, but is imbued with divinity<sup>4</sup>. It is this function of *peshat* that is under discussion here, although to argue that he is the only medieval exegete of note not to regard a *peshat* approach as the *literal* meaning is not substantiated by the comparison of the commentaries on Lamentations here. Each exegete approaches the literal reading of the text and, influenced by his own unique context, interacts with the text as reader to produce a valid meaning. As Holmes points out, we must ask questions about the participants, their setting, the topic, and the function of their linguistic choices in an attempt to understand each point of view. All of these contextual issues are governed by time and represented by our right hand cog. The left hand cog, designated as *peshat*, or *literal* reading and representing grammar, dialect and language, then interacts with this right hand cog to produce a specific meaning at a specific time by a specific person, and any

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<sup>2</sup> See Vermigli, *Lamentations*, xxv.

<sup>3</sup> See Lancaster, "Abraham ibn Ezra", 303.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

one of these can change with time. Consequently, the definition of *peshat* may change, but its function does not.

When M. P. Weitzman comments that *the verb פִּשַׁת and the noun פִּשְׁטָא are already applied in the Talmud to biblical exegesis, but they seem primarily to denote interpretation recognised as obviously authoritative rather than simple interpretation*<sup>5</sup>, he is referring to Raphael Loewe's comment: *Peshat, therefore, means authoritative teaching in two possible senses. Either (as in the case of the verb), teaching propounded by an authoritative teacher, or teaching recognised by the public as obviously authoritative, since familiar and traditional*<sup>6</sup>. However, it appears that Halivni is right to question this explanation of *peshat* when he says, *there is no need for alternative meanings...peshat means extension, continuation, and derivatively, context*<sup>7</sup>. When the Talmud suggests that *no text can be deprived of its peshat*, it is exactly right. If *peshat* is the *literal* meaning (left hand cog) that directs us away to find a personal understanding of the text in question, wherever we end up, that literal meaning has not altered, the words are still the same on the page. However, what if *nice* no longer means *nice*, or *dice dice*, or *bling* anything at all? Well, then we are obliged to reinterpret to gain, or maintain, Heaney's *fortification of the self*. This is partly illustrated by the medieval exegetes unwillingness to emend a text, as for them there is the natural consequence of a direct effect on the culture that the text supports by which they are able *to deal with the present*.

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<sup>5</sup> See Weitzman, M. P. *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction*. CUP, 1999, 3.

<sup>6</sup> See Loewe, Raphael. "The 'Plain' Meaning of Scripture in Early Jewish Exegesis", *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London*. Weiss, J. G. ed., Jerusalem, 1964, 181.

<sup>7</sup> Halivni, *Peshat*, 54.

By closely examining eight verses of Lamentations in the previous chapter, it has become apparent that *context* (the right hand cog) has played a great part in the various interpretations of the text. Not just the context of each exegete, but also the context of the line of Scripture within the body of the text, and the context of the meanings of the words with which the text is constructed. Not only have we seen a development in the use and understanding of grammar, but a willingness to seek new approaches to the text to clarify meanings in new contexts. There is also the example of מַדְרַשׁ/מִדְרַשׁ to illustrate the ways in which the meanings of words develop and change with time and culture, just like our *nice* example! We must also acknowledge the use of one language to more fully elucidate the use of another in an attempt to further understand and apply this understanding as a means to expand and cultivate a deeper sense of textual significance. Ibn Ezra is able to excel in this search for a deeper understanding because of his grammatical insight and confidence to explore these issues.

A *derash* approach to the text leads to midrash; a *peshat* approach to the text leads to ...*peshat*. This *peshat* approach to the text is one that takes a literal meaning and directs us elsewhere. *Peshat*, then, interacts with the context of the reader to give an authoritative meaning, a plain meaning, a contextual meaning, a surface meaning, and so on. They are all correct, providing that they are qualified by the context of the reader, because *peshat* is not just a meaning in itself, it is a way to find meaning. The rabbis recognised this when they said that no text can be

deprived of its *peshat*, and as Qohelet said, *There is nothing new beneath the sun*<sup>8</sup> – only the definitions change.

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<sup>8</sup> Qoh 1:9.

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