

## 8.

- א Would that I could soar\* to the sphere of heaven;  
I would make the heavens lament with me!  
I would curse the day on which I was twice destroyed.
- ה I would lament, 'Would that my head were [a stream of] water.'<sup>1</sup>
- ב I would contemplate the crying of that night in the wilderness;<sup>2</sup>  
I would differentiate between night and night\*  
and between wilderness and wilderness.\*  
I would inspire all who emerged from the wilderness to cry with me,
- ש as I would roar, 'Would that I were [once again]  
in the Wilderness [of Sinai].'<sup>3</sup>
- ג [I would cry,] 'My limbs are amputated, my fruits are fallen,  
like a beaten olive.'  
I would provoke the entire household\* [to cry] with me;  
I would cause the Master of the Household Himself to say,
- ר 'Would that I allowed Myself [to tread upon Israel's enemies,  
as if they were] thorns and thistles!'<sup>4</sup>
- ד I would cause my whole heart to grow faint  
as I [would struggle to have Him make Himself available [to me].  
Would that I knew the appropriate words  
to encourage Him [to forgive me].  
I would worry, 'Where is the Shepherd?' — but not be able to find Him,
- ק I would lament, 'Would that I be permitted to know,  
so that I might find him.'<sup>5</sup>
- ה I would turn round and round with my words  
like an [ever-spinning] wheel,  
I would speak with Him face to face to bemoan my woes.  
The sun and moon would howl together and refuse to shine upon me,
- ז I would shriek, 'Would that my words [of lamentation]  
be recorded [for posterity].'<sup>6</sup>
- ו The just ways of the pestle-thieves  
I would reveal by [contrasting them with] my greed and treachery.  
Even the constellations were distraught when  
I ripped my [priestly] vestments [at the Temple's destruction],
- פ I would scream, 'Would that He give heed to me!'<sup>7</sup>
- ז We were exiled when the desirous [Temple]\* was ruined,<sup>8</sup>  
I would remember that I was once wed [to the holy Torah],  
I would shed tears that stream forth as from a mountaintop cistern;<sup>9</sup>
- ע I would exclaim, 'Would that I had wings like a dove.'<sup>10</sup>

(1) Jeremiah 8:23, see Targum. (2) Some editions read ליל מדבר, the wailing of the wilderness. (3) Jeremiah 9:1. (4) Cf. Isaiah 27:4. (5) Job 23:3. (6) 19:23. (7) Cf. 31:35. (8) Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:5. (9) Cf. Isaiah 7:3. (10) Psalms 55:7.

a mortar where they would press them with their pestle. Therefore, they were given the appellation pestle-thieves because they would steal the hearts, i.e., deceive the sentries with the pretext of the pestle (Ta'anis 28a).

הַדְּשִׁירָה — The desirous [Temple]. The translation follows Rashi and Ibn Ezra (Ecclesiastes 12:5) who render 'lust for conjugal pleasures.' Some regarded this as a compound word from אב, father or patriarch, and יונה, dove, i.e., Abraham, Isaac

## ח.

- אֲדָהּ \* עַד חוּג שָׁמַיִם,  
אֲלֵהָ אֶתִּי שָׁמַיִם,  
אֲאֹר יוֹם מַחְרִיבִי פַעַמִּים,  
אֲבַחֵן בְּבִכִּי לַיִל מִדְּבָר,<sup>2</sup>  
אֲבַחֵנָה לַיִל מִלֵּיל \* וּמִדְּבָר מִמִּדְּבָר,<sup>3</sup>  
אֲבִכָּה אֶתִּי עוֹלַת מִדְּבָר,  
אֲגִדֵּעַ וְאֲנַשֵּׁל בְּנִקְחָה וְיִתָּה,  
אֲגִדֵּה אֶתִּי כָּל בְּנֵי בֵּית,  
אֲגִדֵּה שְׂוֹאֵמֶר בְּעַל הַבֵּית,  
אֲדֹה בְּכָל לֵב לְהַמְצִיאָהוּ,  
אֲדַעַה מִלֵּין בָּם לְאִמְצָהוּ.  
אֲדַאגַּ אֵיחָ רוּעָה וְלֹא אִמְצָאָהוּ,  
אֲהַפְּכָה וְאֲתַהַפְּכָה כְּאֹפֶן בְּמִלִּי,  
אֲהַגֵּה פָּנִים בְּפָנִים לְתַנּוּת עִמָּלִי,  
אֲהַחֲוֶה חֶרֶס וְסֹהַר מִלְּהִגָּיָה לְמוֹלִי,  
אֲצַרְחַ מִי יִתֵּן אֶפּוֹא וְיִפְתָּבוֹן מִלִּי.<sup>6</sup>  
אֲוֹרַח מִשְׁפָּטִי גוֹנְבִי עָלַי,<sup>\*</sup>  
אֲוִדִיעַ בְּבִצְעִי וּמַעֲלִי,  
אֲוַמְלִלוּ מִזֹּלוֹת בְּקִרְעֵי מַעֲלִי,  
אֲזָדָה כְּהוֹפְרָה הָאֲבִיוָנָה,<sup>8</sup>  
אֲזַכְרָה כִּי הָיִיתִי מְחַתֶּנָּה,  
אֲזִיל פְּלָגִים כְּבִרְכָּה הַעֲלִיוָנָה,<sup>6</sup>  
אֲעִגּוֹר מִי יִתֵּן לִי אֶבֶר בַּיּוֹנָה.<sup>7</sup>

הִנֵּה כְּנָשָׁר — Would that I could soar. The translation of this rare word is based on Targum, Behold! It shall fly as an eagle (Jeremiah 48:40). Alternatively the word is related to אֵיז, which Targum (Job 21:30) renders תְּבִירָא, destruction, and Ibn Ezra explains as a dark cloud.

אֲבַחֵנָה לַיִל מִלֵּיל — I would differentiate between night and night. On that first tragic night of Tishah B'Av in the wilderness, the nation heard the Spies' slanderous reports regarding the Land of Canaan, and they wept. But that was a שֶׁל בְּכִינָה, an uncalled for (or, needless) weeping. The tragic events that occurred on later Tishah B'Avs, however, were the source of true weeping. Thus we distinguish between tonight's weeping and that first night's weeping.

וּמִדְּבָר מִמִּדְּבָר — And between wilderness and

wilderness, i.e., between the Wilderness of Sinai where we ate the heavenly manna, drank from the Well of Miriam and were protected by the Clouds of Glory, and the wilderness of exile where we were starving, thirsty and at the mercy of the elements and both four-legged and two-legged predators.

Once, the foreign overlords of Eretz Yisrael forbade the bringing of bikkurim (first-fruit offerings) to Jerusalem and stationed sentries on the roads to prevent the Jews from doing so. Pious men of that generation arose and placed baskets of bikkurim, covered with dried figs, into large wooden vessels shaped like a pestle, which was used for pressing dried figs into cakes, and carried them on their shoulders to Jerusalem. When the sentries inquired about the contents, the Jews would say that they were taking the dried figs to

- ח Brother [Israel] separated by sinfulness from [Jerusalem]  
the mighty city<sup>1</sup> and exiled to Tyre;  
like a meadow without water,<sup>2</sup>  
because God withheld [rain] in [His] wrath.  
He held [Jerusalem] in His grasp like grain standing to be reaped  
and grapes ready to be harvested;
- ט I would speak, 'Would that I be brought to the fortified city!'<sup>3</sup>  
ט I would pitch my palatial tents<sup>4</sup> in the very shadow of death  
[for life is worthless in exile];  
I would fly off and find rest<sup>5</sup> in Death's Courtyard,  
[where] I would associate with those who wait for death.\*
- י I would whimper, '[Would that I die, for] which man lives on  
[through interminable tragedy] and will never see death?'<sup>6</sup>  
י I seek to witness [the fulfillment of my plea],  
'O my Strength [God], come to my assistance!'<sup>7</sup>  
My awe-inspiring nation proclaims every year,  
'This is the year [of redemption]!'  
[When that time comes I shall announce to everyone,  
so that it will be universally known,<sup>8</sup>  
מ that had the hand of God not wrought all this  
[it could not have happened]]<sup>9</sup>
- כ I shall bow my head to You [in penitence], HASHEM,  
my source of strength;  
I shall bend my knee [in supplication] to You,  
to bandage my exile-wounds.  
I shall crown You with song, with the melodies of my machalas.\*  
I will concentrate [my prayer] to request,  
'Would that You were as a brother to me!'<sup>10</sup>
- כ Do not forget the scream of Ariel [the Beis HaMikdash],<sup>11</sup>  
to assemble to him Judah and Israel.  
The thousands of protective angels<sup>12</sup>  
whom God designated [to guard Jerusalem],  
saying, 'Would that out of Zion shall emerge Israel's salvations!'<sup>13</sup>
- ל [To this request God responds:] 'From the moment Israel ceased  
to follow My ways;  
ז they abandoned Me, so I abandoned them and  
turned My countenance away from them!'  
ז I grumbled and I groaned,\* my innards and my heart  
were spilled out [in grief];  
O how they have thrown my splendor from my head!

You will have changed my exile-wounds, מְחֻלִּי, my exile-wounds, into my dancing, מְחֻלֵּי, my dancing.

כג — I grumbled and I groaned. The speaker here may be God continuing His lament from the previous two lines, i.e. Israel abandoned Me ... and threw My splendor [Divine crowns

from the prayers of the righteous (see Chagigah 13b with Tosafos)] from My head. Alternatively, the lament may revert to Israel's words: From the time God abandoned me ... the enemy nations have thrown my splendor [the Beis HaMikdash] from my head [Jerusalem].

- אח נפשע מקרית עז אל צור,  
אחו בלי מים באף לעצור,  
אחו קמות לקצור ועוללות לבצור,  
אשיחה מי יובילני עיר מצור.<sup>3</sup>
- אשע אהלי אפדני בצלמות,  
אטוסה ואשכונה עד חצר מות,  
אשפל את המחכים למות,\*
- אנהה מי גבר יחיה ולא יראה מות.<sup>6</sup>  
אילותי לעזרת תרתי חוות,  
אימתי בכל שנה אומרת היא השנה הזאת,  
אידע לכל כי מודעת זאת,\* אם לא כי יד יהוה עשתה זאת.  
אבוף לה ראש יהוה חילי,  
אברע לה ברך לחתל מחלי,  
אבתיך בשיר משירי מחולי,\*  
אל תשכח צעקת אריאל,<sup>11</sup>  
אליו לאגור יהודה וישראל,  
אלפי שנאן<sup>12</sup> אשר מסר אל,  
לאמר מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל.<sup>13</sup>
- ישראל מעת בדרכי לא הלכו,  
עזבוני ועזבתים ופני מהם נהפכו,  
רגנתי והללתי\* ומעי ולבי נשפכו,  
איכה תפארתי מראשיתי השליכו.

(1) Proverbs 18:19; see Nazir 23a. (2) Job 8:11. (3) Psalms 60:11. (4) Cf. Daniel 11:45.

(5) Cf. Psalms 55:7. (6) 89:49. (7) 22:20. (8) Isaiah 12:5. (9) Job 12:9.

(10) Song of Songs 8:1. (11) See commentary to kinnah 37. (12) Psalms 68:18. (13) 53:7.

and Jacob, the Patriarchs of Israel, the nation compared to a dove (see e.g., Song of Songs 2:14). The verse then alludes to the Talmudic teaching, תמי נכחו אבות, the merits of the Patriarchs have ended (Shabbos 55a), and means that since we no longer had the merits of the אבות to protect us, the Temple was destroyed (Matteh Levi).

Death's Courtyard — חצר מות ... המוכנים למות ... those who wait for death. חצרקות, Hazarmaveth, was a seventh-generation descendant of Noah. According to the Midrash, he was the progenitor of a tribe of impoverished people who ate animal fodder, dressed in papyrus reed garments, and eagerly anticipated death

(Bereishis Rabbah 37:8). The paytan compares the plight of exiled Israel to the lives of those unfortunates.

מְחֻלֵּי — My machalas. מְחֻלֵּי, machalas, is a musical instrument used by the Levite orchestra in the Temple (see Psalms 53:1 and 88:1). The word מְחֻלֵּי [and מְחֻלֵּי] can also be cognate with sickness, and refer to Israel's heartache over the Destruction of the two Temples (Rashi to Psalms ibid.). Alternatively, the word may be related to מחול, a circle dance. Accordingly the stitch is based on the verse, You have changed for me my lament into dancing ... (Psalms 30:12), and means that when redemption comes