

Lamentations 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sightheth, and turneth backward.

Analysis

The verse begins with stark clarity: "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned" (chet chatah Yerushalayim, מְלֹאת־עֲבֹתָה רֹאשׁ). The infinitive absolute construction emphasizes magnitude—"sinning, she has sinned" or "grievously sinned." The verb chata means to miss the mark, to fall short of God's standard. Jerusalem's failure was neither accidental nor minor but deliberate and egregious. The consequence is equally clear: "therefore she is removed" (le-nidah hayetah, לְנִדָּה הָיְתָה). The term nidah refers to ceremonial uncleanness, specifically menstrual impurity (Leviticus 15:19-30). This striking metaphor presents Jerusalem as ritually defiled, unable to approach God's holy presence. What was once the place of God's dwelling is now unclean, removed from covenant fellowship. The final image deepens the humiliation: "all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness." In ancient Near Eastern culture, exposing nakedness was the ultimate shame (Genesis 9:22-23, Ezekiel 16:37). Former admirers who once honored Jerusalem now mock her exposed disgrace. Yet the verse ends with Jerusalem's response: "she sightheth, and turneth backward"—perhaps indicating shame-driven repentance, or more likely, helpless grief. True restoration requires not just sorrow but the repentance God grants (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's "grievous sin" encompassed generations of covenant breaking. Chronicles and Kings detail idolatry under various kings: Manasseh built altars to

Baal in the temple courts, practiced child sacrifice, and consulted mediums (2 Kings 21:1-16). Though Josiah's reforms brought temporary revival (2 Kings 22-23), the people's hearts remained unchanged (Jeremiah 3:10). The prophets catalogued specific sins: social injustice (Isaiah 1:21-23, Micah 3:9-12), false worship (Jeremiah 7:1-15), trusting foreign alliances instead of God (Isaiah 30:1-5), and religious hypocrisy (Jeremiah 7:9-10). Ezekiel 8 records a vision revealing secret idolatry within the temple itself—sun worship, Tammuz cults, and animal idols. The "nakedness" metaphor draws on Ancient Near Eastern warfare practices where conquerors stripped defeated enemies as public humiliation. Assyrian and Babylonian reliefs depict naked captives being led away. For Jerusalem, once-friendly nations like Edom and Moab celebrated her downfall (Psalm 137:7, Ezekiel 25:3), fulfilling the prophecy that those who honored her would despise her when her spiritual adultery was exposed.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the 'infinitive absolute' construction (grievously sinned) challenge our tendency to minimize or excuse sin?
2. What does Jerusalem's treatment as ceremonially unclean teach about the relationship between moral sin and access to God's presence?
3. In what ways does Christ bear our shame and nakedness (Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:18) to restore us to covenant fellowship?
4. How should the public nature of Jerusalem's exposed sin inform Christian accountability and the dangers of secret disobedience?

Interlinear Text

חָסָא	חָסָא	פָּטָאָה	פָּטָאָה	לֹנִידָה	לֹנִידָה
hath grievously	sinned	Jerusalem	H5921	therefore she is removed	H5206
H2399	H2398	H3389			
כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם	כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם	כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם	כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם	כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם	כִּי עַל יְרֵשָׁלָם
כִּי הַזְּלָל וּבָ	כִּי הַזְּלָל וּבָ	מִכְבָּד יְהָ	מִכְבָּד יְהָ	כִּי אַ	כִּי אַ
		H3588	H2107		
H1961	H3605	all that honoured	her despise	her because they have seen	H7200
		H3513			
עֲרֵיתָה	עֲרֵיתָה	הִיא גָּם	הִיא גָּם	אַחֲרָה	אַחֲרָה
her nakedness	H1571	H1931	yea she sigheth	and turneth	backward
H6172			H584	H7725	H268

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 13:22 (Sin): And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.

Jeremiah 13:26 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

Lamentations 1:11 (Parallel theme): All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.