

Lamentations 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?

Analysis

What thing shall I take to witness for thee? (מה א'ידך, mah a'idekh)—The prophet searches for historical precedent or comparison to comfort Jerusalem but finds none. **Thy breach is great like the sea** (פִּיאָדָול קָטָן שִׁבְרֶךָ, ki-gadol kayam shivrekh)—'breach' (shever) means a fracture beyond repair. The sea metaphor suggests immeasurable, unfathomable devastation. **Who can heal thee?** (מי יַרְפָּאךְ, mi yirpa-lakh) is rhetorical, implying human impossibility. Yet the question anticipates divine possibility—only God who wounded can heal (Deuteronomy 32:39; Hosea 6:1).

Historical Context

Part of the chapter 2 acrostic (verse 13 begins with the letter mem). The 'virgin daughter of Zion' refers to Jerusalem's former status as unviolated by foreign conquest since David's time (400+ years prior). The Babylonian destruction was the first successful breach of Jerusalem's walls since the Jebusite era.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When your spiritual condition seems beyond human remedy, do you despair or recognize that impossibility with man is the prerequisite for God's healing work?
2. How does the rhetorical 'who can heal?' point forward to Christ as the only Physician capable of healing sin's ultimate breach?

Interlinear Text

מָה	אָעִיד	מָה	אָלָמָה
for thee what thing	What thing shall I take to witness	for thee what thing	shall I liken
H4100	H5749	H4100	H1819
לְךָ	אֲשִׁירָה	לְךָ	אֲשִׁירָה
daughter	of Jerusalem	for thee what thing	what shall I equal
H1323	H3389	H4100	H7737
לְךָ	כִּי	לְךָ	כִּי
to thee that I may comfort	thee O virgin	daughter	of Zion
H5162	H1330	H1323	H3588
is great			
H1419			
לְךָ	יְרַפֵּא	לְךָ	יְרַפֵּא
like the sea	for thy breach	who can heal	
H3220	H7667	H4310	H7495

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 1:12 (Parallel theme): Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah 14:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

2 Samuel 5:20 (Parallel theme): And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

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