

Lamentations 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

Analysis

The verse catalogs Jerusalem's comprehensive ruin: "Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars" (tave'u va'arets she'areha ibed veshikbar beriyheha). Gates represented a city's strength and security. The phrase "sunk into the ground" suggests not just destruction but burial—gates collapsed and covered by debris. The broken bars (beriyheha) that secured gates now offer no protection. The political consequence follows: "her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more" (malkah vesareha vagoyim ein torah). Exile meant losing access to Torah instruction centered in Jerusalem. Without temple, priesthood, and centralized worship, maintaining covenant identity became extremely difficult. Yet Daniel, Ezekiel, and others show that God's word can sustain His people even in pagan lands. Most poignant is the final phrase: "her prophets also find no vision from the LORD" (gam neviyeha lo-mats'u chazon me-YHWH). The silence of heaven intensifies the desolation. In judgment, God sometimes withholds prophetic revelation (1 Samuel 3:1, 28:6, Amos 8:11-12). The absence of divine communication represents spiritual famine worse than physical hunger. Yet Lamentations itself becomes prophetic testimony—honest lament before God is a form of faith that prepares hearts for restoration.

Historical Context

Jerusalem's gates were massive defensive structures. Archaeological excavations reveal gates with multiple chambers, heavy wooden doors reinforced with bronze, and complex locking mechanisms with large bars. The gates served military, judicial, and commercial functions—elders sat in gates to judge disputes (Ruth 4:1-2), business was conducted there, and they were gathering places for news. When Babylon breached the walls, gates became useless. The burning of gates is specifically mentioned in 2 Kings 25:9. Archaeological evidence from this period shows extensive fire damage to gate structures throughout Jerusalem. The phrase "sunk into the ground" may also refer to earthquakes or deliberate demolition that left gates buried in rubble. King Zedekiah and the nobles were taken to Riblah in Syria where Nebuchadnezzar pronounced judgment (2 Kings 25:6-7, Jeremiah 39:5-7). The king's sons were executed, Zedekiah was blinded and bound in chains, and the leadership was deported to Babylon. Without king, princes, priests, or prophets, the covenant structure collapsed. The absence of prophetic vision fulfilled Amos 8:11-12's warning of spiritual famine. Yet in Babylon, God raised up prophets like Daniel and Ezekiel. The written Torah became increasingly important during exile, laying groundwork for the synagogue system and intensive Scripture study that characterized post-exilic Judaism.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What 'gates and bars' of security do we trust instead of relying on God as our ultimate defense and refuge?

2. How does the exile of king and princes to foreign lands illustrate the spiritual exile all humanity experiences outside God's kingdom?
3. What does the absence of prophetic vision teach about the severity of spiritual famine compared to physical deprivation?
4. In what ways has Christ become the 'gate' (John 10:7-9) and given us permanent access to the Father that Jerusalem lost?

Interlinear Text

ברית יְהוָה וְשָׁבָע וְטָבֵעַ אָבֶן שַׁעַר יְהוָה אָבֶן דָּמָן
 are sunk into the ground Her gates he hath destroyed and broken her bars

H2883 H776 H8179 H6 H7665 H1280

גָּם תֹּוך הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיְהוּדִים וְשָׁרֵךְ יְהוָה בְּגָוִים אֵין יְהוָה הַלְוָקָן
 her king and her princes are among the Gentiles H1471 H369 H8451 H1571

מִיהִנָּה: צְדָקָה וְלֹא מִצְאָה וְלֹא גְּבִיאָה יְהוָה
 is no more her prophets H3808 also find H4672 no vision H2377 from the LORD H3068

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 7:26 (Word): Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

Hosea 3:4 (Kingdom): For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

Nehemiah 1:3 (Parallel theme): And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

2 Chronicles 15:3 (Word): Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

Psalms 74:9 (Prophecy): We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

Jeremiah 51:30 (Parallel theme): The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

Deuteronomy 28:36 (Kingdom): The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

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