

Lamentations 3:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Analysis

Intense grief expressed through tears: "**Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.**" The Hebrew palgei-mayim terad eini al-shever bat-ammi (פַּלְגֵי־מַיִם תֵּרַד עֵינִי עַל־שֶׁבֶר בַּת־עַמִּי) uses vivid imagery. Palgei-mayim (פַּלְגֵי־מַיִם) means "streams of water" or "rivulets"—not mere tears but torrents. The verb yarad (יָרַד, "go down, descend") suggests continuous, uncontrollable flow.

The cause is "the destruction of the daughter of my people" (shever bat-ammi, שֶׁבֶר בַּת־עַמִּי). Shever (שֶׁבֶר) means breaking, fracture, ruin—the same term used for broken bones, indicating severity. "Daughter of my people" personalizes the nation as a vulnerable maiden, intensifying the pathos. This isn't distant observation but intimate grief over beloved ones suffering catastrophe.

Theologically, this verse models appropriate response to judgment—not callous indifference but broken-hearted mourning. Jeremiah earned the title "weeping prophet" for this very response (Jeremiah 9:1, 13:17, 14:17). Jesus likewise wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). Paul expressed constant sorrow for unbelieving Israel (Romans 9:2-3). Such grief demonstrates neither rejection of God's justice nor approval of sin, but compassion for those experiencing deserved judgment. It reflects God's own heart—taking no pleasure in judgment (Ezekiel 18:32, 33:11) while nevertheless executing it.

Historical Context

The "destruction of the daughter of my people" refers specifically to Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC and its aftermath. The siege produced horrific conditions—mothers ate their own children due to famine (Lamentations 2:20, 4:10, fulfilling Deuteronomy 28:53-57). When walls were finally breached, systematic slaughter followed. Jeremiah 39:6 and 52:10 record mass executions of nobles. The temple's burning (2 Kings 25:9) represented not just physical but spiritual devastation.

Archaeological evidence confirms the disaster's scope. Excavations throughout Judah reveal destruction layers from this period—collapsed buildings, burnt debris, arrowheads, evidence of violent conquest. Sites like Lachish and Azekah show massive conflagrations. Jerusalem itself was reduced to ruins, with population plummeting from estimated 20,000+ to perhaps a few thousand remaining in the land (2 Kings 25:12, Jeremiah 52:15-16).

The weeping persisted long after 586 BC. Psalm 137 shows exiles weeping by Babylon's rivers. Zechariah 7:3-5 describes commemorative fasts observing Jerusalem's fall decades later. Even after return began in 538 BC, Ezra 3:12-13 records old men who remembered Solomon's temple weeping when the second temple's foundation was laid—its comparative smallness reminding them of former glory lost.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does weeping 'rivers of water' over others' destruction model godly compassion even when judgment is deserved?
2. What is the difference between mourning the consequences of sin versus approving the sin itself?
3. In what ways did Jesus's weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) embody the heart expressed in this verse?
4. How should believers today respond to God's judgment on unrepentant sinners—indifference, schadenfreude, or broken-hearted grief?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|-------|---------------------|
| פְּלִיגִי | מֵי יָם | יִתְּרָה דֹד | עֵינַי י | עַל | שֶׁבֶר |
| with rivers | of water | runneth down | Mine eye | H5921 | for the destruction |
| H6388 | H4325 | H3381 | H5869 | | H7667 |
| בֵּת | עַמִּי: | | | | |
| of the daughter | of my people | | | | |
| H1323 | H5971 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 9:1 (Parallel theme): Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Lamentations 2:11 (Parallel theme): Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

Psalms 119:136 (Parallel theme): Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Jeremiah 13:17 (Parallel theme): But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive.

Jeremiah 9:18 (Parallel theme): And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

Jeremiah 4:19 (Parallel theme): My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

Lamentations 1:16 (Parallel theme): For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

Lamentations 2:18 (Parallel theme): Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.