

Reflections on the Causes of the Disastrous Moral and Political Decline of the Kingdom of Judah, Leading to their Conquest by the Babylonians

Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru

*Professor Ph.D.Dr.Habil. 'Timotheus' Brethren Theological Institute of Bucharest; Romania;
PhD Supervisor, "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, Romania
dr_ionicarotaru@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT: This article addresses the causes of the moral and political decline of the Kingdom of Judah, which led to its conquest by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Speaking of the history of the kingdom of Judah in the last days of its existence, the last four kings were very wicked, totally against their father, King Josiah. They did not respect the word of the Lord at all, nor the word of the prophet Jeremiah, without having a vision of their time, going against the current of the time, which led things to a national disaster. Thus in 586 BC, Jerusalem was conquered, the temple was burned and completely destroyed and the people taken into slavery, so for 70 years Jerusalem was a ruin. No one believed it could ever be rebuilt. In the last 20 years of the Kingdom of Judah's existence lived and worked the great prophet Jeremiah, who understood that Babylonian suzerainty was a thing ordained by God, counselling the king and the people to understand this. Unfortunately the prophet's messages were not heeded, and in the end, things went according to the predictions of the prophet Jeremiah.

KEYWORDS: Kingdom of Judah, causes, moral decay, political decay, disaster, conquest, captivity, Babylonians

„The first years of Jehoiakim's reign were filled with warnings of approaching doom. The word of the Lord spoken by the prophets was about to be fulfilled. The Assyrian power to the northward, long supreme, was no longer to rule the nations. Egypt on the south, in whose power the king of Judah was vainly placing his trust, was soon to receive a decided check. All unexpectedly a new world power, the Babylonian Empire, was rising to the eastward and swiftly overshadowing all other nations” (White 2011, 292).

At the end of the Kingdom of Judah, the last king considered good was King Josiah, who was the sixteenth king in the Southern Kingdom, also called the Kingdom of Judah, and ruled in Jerusalem from 638 to 608 BC. He ascended the throne at the age of eight, after a period of more than half a century of moral and spiritual decline under the rule of his father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, two of the Kingdom of Judah's worst kings. Yet, unlike his forebears, Josiah "did what was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:2), even though the social, political and religious environment was against him.

Josiah died at a fairly young age, after being involved in the battle with the Egyptians at Megiddo (608 B.C.) Involvement in that battle was a military-political mistake, because he, who was a pro-Babylonian leader, tried to stand in the way of the Egyptians going into a military confrontation with the Babylonians and unfortunately died too soon. Scripture describes the event: After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his

servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah (2 Chronicles 35: 20-24).

After the death of King Josiah, he was succeeded to the throne by four more kings, three of whom were his sons, and the fourth was one of his nephews. Jehoahaz (Joahaz) (2 Chronicles 36:1-4) is the first to reign for only 3 months, because he was on the same anti-Egyptian policy of his father, but the Egyptians on his return changed him and took him as a slave to Egypt, and in his place became king, his younger brother Jehoiakim (Joiachim) (Doukhan 2013, 19), who reigned 11 years, being the worst and with the greatest negative effects on the people of the Kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles 36:4-5). Jehoiakim was the prophet Jeremiah's greatest opponent, and was on the verge of capturing and killing him, but the prophet Jeremiah escaped only because of divine intervention. He was followed by his son Jehoiachin, who reigned only 3 months and was taken as a slave by the Babylonians and taken into bondage in Babylon and spent most of his life as a slave, only to be rehabilitated in the last years of his life. The last of them was Zedekiah (2 Chronicles 36:10-13.), who reigned for another 11 years until Jerusalem was finally conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

„Within a few short years the king of Babylon was to be used as the instrument of God's wrath upon impenitent Judah. Again and again Jerusalem was to be invested and entered by the besieging armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Company after company—at first a few only, but later on thousands and tens of thousands—were to be taken captive to the land of Shinar, there to dwell in enforced exile. Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah—all these Jewish kings were in turn to become vassals of the Babylonian ruler, and all in turn were to rebel. Severer and yet more severe chastisements were to be inflicted upon the rebellious nation, until at last the entire land was to become a desolation, Jerusalem was to be laid waste and burned with fire, the temple that Solomon had built was to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah was to fall, never again to occupy its former position among the nations of earth” (White 2011, 292).

During this period of about 20 years, in which 4 kings, 3 brothers and a nephew reigned, Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians three times, in 605, 597, 586 BC. Each conquest was well marked by an event that we can remember more easily. In 605 BC Daniel was taken as a hostage, along with a group of young men, who were taken to Babylon, where they entered the Babylonian schools. The bondage at that time was not very severe. For the most part Jerusalem remained the same. The people did not suffer any deportations, only a certain number of hostages were taken from them and they had to pay tribute.

If they remained in this relationship, that is vassals of the Babylonians, subject to them, and paid their tribute to the Babylonians their situation would have been relatively good, but the Jews were not satisfied with this status and in the course of time, King Jehoiakim, stopped paying his tribute, and entered into relations and alliances with the peoples of the west, mainly Egypt and their neighbours, preparing an anti-Babylonian military coalition. Learning of these events, the Babylonians intervened very decisively, and Jerusalem was conquered a second time, in 597 BC, this time suffering a great defeat, a great disaster. First of all, 10,000 men, the most able, the best, the leading men were taken from Israel and taken into slavery in Babylon. They were taken with their families, and among them was taken into captivity the young Ezekiel, who was to take up the priesthood. He was from a priestly family, and we believe he would not have become a priest, having been taken into bondage at the age of 25, and only after that time could he enter the ministry. So, after the Babylonians' second military campaign against Jerusalem, Ezekiel is taken as a slave along with 10,000 of his countrymen and a large part of the Temple vessels. Everything of value, all the gold objects, were taken from the Temple by the Babylonians, leaving only the second-hand objects so that the Temple could still function.

The last (21st) king (ca. 597-586 BC), the third son of King Josiah, to take over the kingdom was Zedekiah, a descendant of the line of David, a king who swore to the king of Babylon that he would remain loyal and faithful, an oath that was made in the name of Yahweh, the God of the Jews, and which was probably made in the Temple of Yahweh itself, because it was a custom of the time for covenants and oaths of loyalty to be made in a temple of one deity and in the name of the same god. His name was changed from Mattaniah to Zedekiah, indicating his vassalage to Babylon (2 Kings 24:17).

The prophet Jeremiah understood that the Babylonian suzerainty was a thing ordained of God (Jeremiah 27; cf. 28:12-14), advising the king to understand this. In 594 BC a revolt took place in Babylon. Knowing that there was also an anti-Babylonian party in Jerusalem, Zedekiah went to Babylon in 593 BC, perhaps even to remove any suspicion of his participation in the plot (Jeremiah 51:59). It is certain that King Zedekiah though he swore by his God, Yahweh, that he would remain faithful to the king of Babylon, it was something he did not keep (2 Chronicles 36:10-13), rebelling against the Babylonian king (2 Kings 24:20), thus breaking his covenant with the Babylonians (Ezekiel 17:12-13).

So after these events followed the third Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BC. So in 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies invaded the Kingdom of Judah and besieged Jerusalem. The siege was interrupted for a time in order for the Babylonian army to confront the approaching Egyptian army (Jeremiah 37:5), but as the prophet Jeremiah predicted (vv. 6-10; 34:21-22), the siege was resumed. The siege lasted some more time until all resources were completely exhausted. When the famine in the city reached its peak, the wall was breached in July, 586 BC and the city fell (2 Kings 25:3-4; Jeremiah 52:6-7). The temple was sacked and burned and the people were exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 25:17-20).

King Zedekiah and his family attempted a nighttime escape from the besieged city, fleeing to Jordan, but pursuers caught them near Jericho and took them to King Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at Riblah. And King Zedekiah met a very tragic end. First he had to witness the murder of his family, to see his three children killed in front of him, to see them screaming, crying out in despair right in front of him, and after witnessing this heartbreaking and terrible tragedy, the king's eyes were gouged out (2 Kings 25:4-7; Jeremiah 52:7-11). The method of gouging out eyes in those days was to have the eyes pricked with a sharp object dipped in fire, a kind of reddened nail. After losing his sight he was bound in chains and taken to Babylon where he also died. Obviously he couldn't last long due to both the physical and soul torment, for the disaster that came upon him and his country, for the torment of losing his family, and for all the mistreatment he suffered, culminating in the gouging out of his eyes, so he ended his life rather quickly. What was most tragic was that this king had a correspondence, a rather close relationship with the prophet Jeremiah. Several times he had personal, even secret, one might say, meetings in which he asked the prophet to tell him what God's will and plan was, and the prophet Jeremiah explained it very clearly, and the last time he told him: There is no point in my telling you, because if I tell you, you will not believe me and you will punish me. He swore, he promised that no harm would come to him, so the prophet told him that if he did not surrender to the Babylonians, disaster would follow for him and for the land. The city of Jerusalem was to be conquered, and he as king would suffer the consequences of a stubborn, defeated king who broke his oath and whom the enemy would punish very severely: "Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand" (Jeremiah 38: 17-18).

For a religious man, for a man who asked God, but did not respect what God told him, but went against God's advice, at the moment when all the prophesied misfortunes were

fulfilled, the king suffered another trauma, the moral one, that of guilt, of disobedience, which often weighs on a man's conscience, much heavier than any other affliction. These things happened at the end of Judah's reign in the right of King Zedekiah.

Causes leading to this Kingdom of Judah national disaster

The logical question arises as to the causes, the reason why God left His people at that time, leaving them in the hands of men. The explanation can only be that those people did not let themselves be led by the word of God by the spirit of prophecy. They had prophets in their midst. They had the prophetess Huldah, who spoke to Josiah and told him what would happen.

Through the prophetess Huldah the Lord sent King Josiah a word telling him that the destruction of Jerusalem could not be avoided. Even if they humbled themselves before God, the people could not escape punishment. So hardened were their souls by their wickedness that if judgment did not come upon them, they would soon return to the same sinful life. "Tell the man who sent you to me," says the prophetess: "And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again" (2 Kings 22: 15-20).

King Josiah told his children about what was going to happen in their time and told them to do something to push the evil forward. They did nothing. Perhaps if they had followed their father's way, the situation might have been different, the misfortune might have come much later or not at all.

Another cause of the decline was that King Josiah's reform was only an outward, surface reform. The reform was only external and because it was done from the top down, under royal decree, the reform did not penetrate the souls of the people and did not convince them. So people ended up being correct, principled, but out of fear, but only outwardly, not out of conviction, from within. This was one of the causes of the disaster that came upon the kingdom of Judah. How the king died, how his decrees were no longer valid, and the people brought their idols out of hiding, because they did not destroy them all, only those that were discovered by the king's authorities. Thus they failed to destroy them all. After the death of King Josiah, the people took out the idols again, rebuilt the altars, and within a year idolatry was flourishing again in the Kingdom of Judah. That's why there's no point in forced outward reform, just rules: no this, no that. The no-go must be replaced by something else that can be done. The prophet said: The Lord does not like this, but let us do what pleases the Lord, what is moral, noble and beautiful. Man must be motivated so that he himself is convinced of the need for a reform that he should make starting first from his heart.

The fact that the people did not listen to the prophets of that time: Huldah, Jeremiah, was another cause of their decline. The prophets Habakkuk and Zephaniah also lived and worked at that time. We don't know much about their involvement in the issues of that time, but they had pretty clear solos. Jeremiah, however, was the prophet who from the beginning to the end was present in the marketplace, at the temple, at the temple gates with his very clear

messages. But what Jeremiah records, as a sad conclusion and as a cause of all this was that: "...for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jeremiah 8:10).

Something morally frightening was going on, namely the prophets were prophesying lies (Jeremiah 14:14), and the people liked it that way. A monstrous coalition had been formed between the prophets, the priests and the people. There were a few people led by Jeremiah, Baruch, who realized that this was not good, but this group was slowly, slowly silenced, having no influence among them.

In order for this to happen there was something else, namely a wrong theology, called Temple Theology, against which the prophet stood up with all his might. In the second sermon he presents to them: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these" (Jeremiah 7: 1-4).

The Lord said to them by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, "It is no use for you to say, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.' It is no use looking upon it as a miracle worker, for it is true that in the time of King Hezekiah Jerusalem could not be conquered. But then the people went to the temple, brought the letter and laid it before the Lord, prayed for help, and worshipped (Isaiah 37:1-38).

The Jews believed that the same would happen this time. Jeremiah made it clear to them that if they did not mend their ways and their deeds, if they did not do justice in society, if they did not remove all idolatry, the Lord's temple in Jerusalem would end up like Silo, destroyed and burned: "For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel" (Jeremiah 7: 5-14).

This made them very angry and made them rise up against the prophet Jeremiah, ready, ready to kill him, if only a few chiefs had not intervened to save him. How is it possible to have a good, correct theology, a good faith in God, and then to be harsh, to be violent, very critical of your neighbor, even if he is wrong? A correct theology makes you a good man, makes you patient, makes you trust God. This wrong theology was another major cause of the disaster that came upon them as a people.

Another important element was that they didn't understand the times and times in which they lived. We have the example of the sons of Issachar, who came to David all the way from the north of the land and obeyed him and voted for his election as king, because the Bible says they understood the times and the times (1 Chronicles 12:32) and they knew what Israel should do in those times. God gives man a certain wisdom to be able to understand the times, sometimes you have to humble yourself, and sometimes you have to be resolute and tough, sometimes you have to take action, as King Josiah did, who purged idolatry, sometimes you have to worship and pray to the Lord. It takes a certain wisdom to know how to behave in every situation. This requires trust in the Lord's prophets, who convey His will.

The last message to the people from Jeremiah

Speaking of the history of the kingdom of Judah in the last days of its existence, as mentioned the last four kings were very wicked, totally against their father King Josiah. They did not respect the word of the Lord at all, nor the word of the prophet Jeremiah, not having a vision of their time, going against the current of the time, which led things to disaster. Thus in 586 BC. Jerusalem was conquered, the temple was burned and completely destroyed and the people taken into slavery, so for 70 years Jerusalem was a ruin. No one believed it could ever be rebuilt. During the last 20 years of the Kingdom of Judah's existence, the great prophet Jeremiah lived and worked. We will follow the aspects of his work, how he was received by the people and see to what extent his words, his prophecies were right.

Jeremiah was presented by commentators as a counsellor, as a priest, as a confessor, who had to stand by the bedside of a dying or condemned man and prepare him for the moment of burial, without being able to present him with messages of hope that he would live, when he knew that in a few hours he would close his eyes. Jeremiah's mission was similar to the situation described, an extremely difficult and unpleasant mission. He can be compared to a doctor who does his best to treat a patient and make him well, but the patient doesn't cooperate, doesn't want to take his medicine, does not want to eat, does not want to do anything the doctor tells him. The doctor will tell him that if he doesn't listen to him death is certain to await him, but the patient holds his ground and in the end loses his life.

The prophet Jeremiah was thus in the situation of a visionary, who announced to the people that a great abyss lay before them, and the people did not heed his words and they all fell into the abyss, and he witnessed that evil experience. Jeremiah, as a man with a soul, suffered and still suffered twice because those people were dying and going through a terrible misfortune and he also suffered because he was not listened to by them as a people.

“Yet amid the general ruin into which the nation was rapidly passing, Jeremiah was often permitted to look beyond the distressing scenes of the present to the glorious prospects of the future, when God's people should be ransomed from the land of the enemy and planted again in Zion. He foresaw the time when the Lord would renew His covenant relationship with them. "Their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Jeremiah 31:12” (White 2011, 283).

Jeremiah was a priest living very close to Jerusalem, about 5 km away at Anathoth, and his first experience takes place at his workplace. As a rule when he went to the Temple, he would say the words passed on to him by the Lord. His classic expression was: Behold, I have spoken to you this morning. Go to the gate of the Lord's house and tell them. Either he spoke at the gate of the Lord's house or he spoke at the gates of Jerusalem, for God sent him through all the gates, for the people from the south entered through one gate and the people from the north entered through the sheep gate. The prophet was going through all the gates with the message from the Lord, so that all the people who came to the Temple and believed in God and worshipped Him could hear His message.

One of the messages is found in the experience in which Jeremiah went to the potter's house, where in the presence of several witnesses (leading men, chiefs of the people) he bought a vessel with which he came into the temple courts, fulfilling the Lord's command: “Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury” (Jeremiah 19: 10-11).

The prophet's message could not have pleased the people, because he had to tell them: “And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged

this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them” (Jeremiah 19: 3-9).

Through that practical illustration, with the breaking of the vessel, Jeremiah tells them that what happened to that vessel would also happen to them as a people as a result of their fallen moral state: “And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet: And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words” (Jeremiah 19: 11-13,15).

The first reaction was that of Pashur, who was the supervising priest, i.e. a leader of them, he was also Jeremiah's hierarchical head. Pashur arrested him, beat Jeremiah and put him in the stocks: “Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD” (Jeremiah 20: 1-2).

In this conflict between Jeremiah and his boss, Jeremiah suffers physically, but it is possible that Pashur, had some pangs of conscience, because the next day he brought Jeremiah out of the dungeon, who gave him and his people a message of judgment: “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies” (Jeremiah 20: 3-6).

Interestingly, when King Nebuchadnezzar came, he took all the imperial chiefs, the palace chiefs, the priests and killed them, and Pashur also suffered this very harsh punishment of being taken as a slave and taken to Babylon. The torment experienced by the Jewish exiles, however, involves more than personal discomfort: the end of Judah actually means the demise of the last Israelites" (Doukhan 2013, 19).

As a conclusion, about the situation of the Kingdom of Judah at that time, the American author Ellen G. White wrote the following: „But now Zion was utterly destroyed; the people of God were in their captivity. Overwhelmed with grief, the prophet exclaimed: "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. "Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy."” (White 2011, 318).

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