

THE DESOLATE CITY.

THAT the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar was thorough, and that he drained her to the dregs, cannot be doubted. But when we attempt to estimate how much of the City remained habitable, and how many Jews were left in the land after the successive removals to Babylonia and the migration to Egypt, we encounter difficulties which prevent any near view of a result.

To begin with the people. There are no reliable data for the population of Judah or of Jerusalem before the Babylonian invasion. In 701 Sennacherib claims to have "carried off and counted as spoil" 200,150 Jewish men, women and children. If this means he deported them, it must be an exaggeration, for the number that Sargon took into exile, when he stripped of its inhabitants the larger land of Northern Israel, is stated as only 27,290; who, if we count them as the fighting-men, even then represent little more than a third of Sennacherib's vast figure. The alternative is to interpret the 200,150 as the whole population of the "forty-six walled cities and forts without number," which Sennacherib took captive: that is, practically all Judah outside the walls of Jerusalem. If we add to them a few tens of thousands for the capital, the result is a very reasonable figure for the population of a land of the size and fertility of Judah. An estimate has been made, from official lists of the inhabitants of practically the same extent of territory,¹ in the year 1892. Without Jerusalem or Hebron and its many villages, this amounts to over 170,000 souls,² Adding 40,000 for Jerusalem and the very moderate conjecture of 15,000 for the Hebron district, we get 225,000;

¹ By Baurath Schick in the *Zeitschrift d. deutsch. Palästina Vereins*, xix.

² Not 120,000, as Guthe states in his *Geschichte*, p. 256.

which is very near Sennacherib's figure, increased by an allowance for the population of Jerusalem. As we have seen,¹ Judah must have fully recovered from the disasters of 701 during the long and prosperous reign of Manasseh. We cannot therefore be far from the truth in estimating the Jewish nation in the end of the seventh century as comprising *at least* 250,000 souls. That would make it greater than the present population on the same territory. But this is not unlikely to have been the case.

The Biblical statements of the numbers deported by Nebuchadrezzar are conflicting. The Book of Kings says that in 598-7 Nebuchadrezzar carried to Babylon 8,000 *men*.² Another passage, wanting in the Septuagint and therefore probably a later insertion in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah,³ gives the number for 598-7 B.C. as 3,023 *Jews*; and adds for that of 586 B.C. 832 *souls from Jerusalem*, and for a third deportation in 581 B.C. 745 *souls, Jews*: in all 4,600. Although thus described as *souls* and *Jews* it is probable that according to the Oriental fashion fighting men only are intended. But from the Assyrian bas-reliefs it appears that upon their deportations families were not separated but marched away together; and the accounts of the Babylonian captivity imply that it included the women and children. The 4,600 fighting men will, therefore, on the usual calculation, have to be increased by half that number to represent all the males carried captive; and this sum must be at least doubled so as to include the women and girls. On that basis the Jews deported to Babylonia amounted to at least 14,000, but may have been as many

¹ EXPOSITOR for October, 1905.

² 2 Kings xxiv. 15, 16. The preceding verses which give 10,000 (or *all Jerusalem*) are apparently a later insertion, borrowed (Stade thinks, but without much reason) from an account of the later deportation in 586.

³ lii. 28-30.

as 19,000 or 20,000. But if we prefer to take the datum of the Book of Kings for 598-7, 8,000 fighting men, and add to it another 8,000 for 586 (a generous estimate, for we may reasonably infer that a second gleanings of the manhood and the prosperous classes of Judah was less than the first) we raise (on the method of reckoning adopted above) the total number deported by Nebuchadrezzar to 48,000 or 50,000. While if we put these two estimates together, on the ground that the three deportations, given in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah as 4,600, refer to other occasions than 597 and 586,¹ we get as the very highest figures possible on our data 62,000 or 68,000. There fall to be added the unknown but probably large number of the organized migration into Egypt,² as well as the scattered groups which would probably drift in the same direction.

Even then it is clear, on our estimate of the total population, that a large majority of the Jewish people remained on their land. This conclusion may be startling to us with our generally received notions of the whole nation as exiled. But there are facts which support it. Before the migration to Egypt, the people were themselves confident of a prosperous agriculture; and even after Johanan and his bands had left the country the Babylonians did not find it necessary to introduce colonists from other parts of the empire. It is true that the necessity may have been obviated, without Nebuchadrezzar's interference, by the encroachment of neighbouring tribes upon the territories of the depleted and disorganized people. The Samaritans pushed south into Ajalon and the neighbourhood. The Edomites drew in upon the Negeb. Ammonites and Moabites doubtless took their shares; and the desert nomads, always hovering upon

¹ Ewald would read in Jeremiah lii. 28-30, *17th*, for *7th*, year of Nebuchadrezzar.

² Numerous enough to form several settlements, Jer. xliv.

the borders of cultivation and even encamped in times of peace across its pastures, would take advantage of this crisis as they have done of every similar one to settle down in deserted fields and buildings. Yet the fact persists, that upon a much diminished territory some scores of thousands of Jews remained in Judah through all the period of the exile. They were, as the Biblical narratives testify, *the poorest of the land*, from whom every man of substance and of energy had been sifted; mere groups of peasants, without a leader and without a centre; discouraged, disorganized and depressed; bitten by hunger and compassed by enemies; uneducated and an easy prey to the heathenism by which they were surrounded. We can appreciate the silence which reigns in the Bible regarding them, and which has misled us as to their numbers. They were a negligible quantity in the religious future of Israel: without initiative or any influence except that of a dead weight upon the efforts of the rebuilders of the nation when these at last returned from Babylonia.

We may now consider the position of Jerusalem in this desperate condition of the land. Penetrating the City by a breach in her northern walls, the Babylonians sacked, burned and ruined her. Any treasure that remained and the whole of the costly furniture of the Temple were carried to Babylon.¹ The Temple itself, the Palace, and probably every other conspicuous building with many of the common houses were burned.² What could not be burned was dismantled: *the walls of Jerusalem he brake down round about.*³

The whole fighting force of the City, the men of substance, and the skilled workmen, with their families, were deported

¹ 2 Kings xxv. 13-17, and the fuller text in Jeremiah lii. 20-23.

² 2 Kings xxv. 9. The last clause of this verse, *and every great house burned he with fire*, is probably from the awkward repetition, a later addition. Still that is no reason why we should doubt so probable an assertion.

³ *Ibid.* verse 10.

to Babylon. Some of the baser sort of the people doubtless continued to herd in the ruins ; and among them may have been some priests, for an interesting story (preserved probably by Baruch¹) tells of a band of pilgrims from Shechem, Shilo and Samaria, intent upon still obeying the Deuteronomic behests and passing with every sign of mourning to sacrifice in the ruined house of the Lord. With this exception Jerusalem seems to have been avoided by the remnants of the conquered people. They set up their political centre at Mizpah, and in all their proceedings which follow up to the migration to Egypt their ancient capital and its temple are ignored. This silence is significant. It is as if the shock of the fall of the City had been felt as a curse from heaven. Therefore there is practically no exaggeration in the statement which is so much doubted in that narrative of very mixed value in Jeremiah xlv. : *Ye have seen all the evil I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah : they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein.*² Even the last clause may be accepted with only the slight qualification mentioned above. God's curse had fallen upon His ancient abode, and even the hopes of the people were hunted away from it.

But if the people who remained in the land thus avoided Jerusalem, the hearts of her own exiles continued to haunt her, and in the languor of their banishment still brooded over the scenes of her carnage and ruin. One of these visitants to that awful past has described it to us with a wealth and vividness of detail which justify the conclusions we have reached from the meagre data of the records. The second and fourth chapters of the Book of Lamentations or Dirges are generally, and on the whole rightly, regarded as by an eyewitness of the siege, the famine and the fall of

¹ Jer. xli. 4 ff.

² Verse 2.

Jerusalem. He composes, [it is true, with deliberate art, ranging his verses by their initial letters so as to form two acrostic poems under the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. But this is the only symptom of his work which tempts us to think of him as at a distance from the events he bewails ; and it is overborne not only by the vivid glimpses which we may reasonably suppose only a contemporary or eye-witness would have selected, but by the fervid passion as of one who himself suffered the horrors he paints, by the indignation he feels towards those who, still alive, were responsible for them, and by the unrelieved darkness and grief of both poems. All this implies a date before 561. The tradition that Jeremiah himself was the poet, is due to the Greek version alone and finds no support in the Hebrew, where the work is anonymous. The poetry, grand as it is, is inferior to Jeremiah's own ; the " rhetoric " with which it has not unjustly been charged could never be imputed to him. Nor had he ever that passion for the City or the Temple which these poems reveal. Their fall could not have come upon him with such a shock, unrelieved by hope. The poet writes as if he had been among the dupes of the prophets, whom he bitterly blames. He stands outside both their circle and that of the priests. He was a layman, probably a member of one of the upper and ruling classes of the city, of whom the Book of Jeremiah gives us so much evidence. He is in sympathy with the delicately nurtured. The fall of the monarch and the princes, to whom he imputes no blame, he feels as a desecration. He is pious, but not after the temper of Jeremiah. The fact that, as he puts it, Jahweh could *take post as the foe* of His own people, that the Lord could become *the Enemy*, had startled and shocked him. He comes back to it with amazement even now, when he appreciates the ethical reasons. To a citizen of Jerusalem, then, we owe these poems, a member or client of

one of the governing families ; and he sang of what he had seen, and had been stunned by, but now he is roused to the blame and the bitterness of it all. Some who acknowledge the original experience of the writer have thought of him as the victim with his City of one of her subsequent disasters. But it is plainly of Nebuchadrezzar's overthrow that he writes ; of a destruction of City and Temple which was never repeated except by Titus ; and of the flight and capture of Zedekiah.¹

A few words are necessary as to the rhythm. This is the now familiar elegiac measure, of which Professor Budde first made us aware. It is gradually become probable that the dominant factor in the rhythm or metre of Hebrew poetry was accent or stress, and not the quality or the number of the syllables. The basis of the elegiac measure is a couplet, of which the first line with a rising cadence has three accented syllables ; the second, with a falling cadence, two. In chapter ii. three of these couplets go to one acrostic verse : in chapter iv. two. The Hebrew text has passed to us through a succession of editors who were aware of the strophes but not of the structure of the lines. Therefore the text of these has to be amended ; some lines as they stand are too short, some too long. But we must take care not to apply the principle of the metre too rigorously to the text. Oriental artists have always avoided an absolute symmetry : and it may be that some of the irregularities, which we are inclined to get rid of as editorial additions, belonged to the original forms of the poems. The following translation aims at reproducing the cardinal features of the rhythm—alternate lines of three and two accents or stresses. I have had to admit three accents to some of the shorter lines, in which the epithet *daughter of Sion* occurs. For while the Hebrew for that has only one accent, the English has two. But, as

¹ iv. 21.

I am convinced, for the reasons given above, that Hebrew poets were not averse to admitting irregularities to their rhythms, I have no bad conscience about such inevitable exceptions in my translation. In order to avoid similar ones in other lines, I have sometimes rendered *daughter of my people* simply by *my people*. And occasionally I have reversed the position of two lines for the sake of the English rhythm or for the sake of a better climax. Otherwise the translation follows the original line by line. Where it is not literal, this has been indicated in the notes. Words that have been supplied are in italics.

LAMENTATIONS II.

Circa 570 B.C.

1. ✠

How the Lord beclouds with his wrath
 The daughter of Sion.¹
 From heaven to earth hath he hurled
 The pomp of Israël.
 He hath not remembered his Footstool
 In the day of his wrath.

2. 2

The Lord hath engulfed without pity
 The homesteads of Jacob.
 He ruined [*and . . .*] in his wrath
 The strongholds of Judah.
 He smote to the earth, he profaned
 The realm and its princes.

3. 2

In the glow of his wrath he hath hewn
 Every horn of Israël.
 He allowed his right hand to retreat
 From the face of the foe.
 He hath burned in Jacob like fire,
 All round he devoured.

¹ *Or, How the cloud of the wrath of the Lord
 Enshrouds the daughter of Sion.*

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4. 7

He hath bent his bow like a foe,
 He stands¹ an assailant.
 He hath slain each desire of the eye,
 In the tent of the daughter of Sion
 He hath poured out his fury like fire.
 * * * * *

5. 11

The Lord is become as a foe
 To swallow Israel,
 Engulfing her palaces all,
 And razing her strongholds.
 On the daughter of Judah he lavished
 Lamentation and woe.

6. 1

He hath torn from his Garden his Booth,³
 Demolished his Temple,⁴
 Jah hath forgotten in Sion
 Assembly and Sabbath,
 And spurned with the curse of his wrath
 Monarch and priest.

7. 1

The Lord hath discarded his Altar,
 His Holy Place scorned,
 Hath locked in the grasp of the foe
 Its fortifications.⁵
 How they shout through the house of the Lord
 Like a day of assembly!

8. 11

Of purpose did Jahweh destroy
 The wall of the daughter of Sion.

¹ Delete *his right hand* as too long for the rhythm and unnecessary.

² Line wanting.

³ Read יִצְחָק. The Garden, of course, is the Land, the Booth the Temple.

⁴ The parallel line and the verb used in this line show that מִבְּיָמֵינוּ means here the *house of assembly*. In the fourth line it means *the assembly* or *congress* itself.

⁵ The sense is plain, the exact reading uncertain.

He stretched out the line nor withdrew
 His hand from th' engulfing.
 Fortress and rampart he wrung,
 Together they tottered.

9. D

Sunk in the earth are her gates,
 Her bars he hath shattered.
 Her king and her princes are exiles.¹
 The Torah is ceased !
 Even her prophets obtain not
 Vision from Jahweh.

10. '

They sit on the ground and are dumb,
 The elders of Sion ;
 They lift up the dust on their heads,
 They gird them with sackcloth.
 And low on the ground are the heads
 Of Jerusalem's maidens.

11. 3

Mine eyes are wasted with tears,
 My bowels are troubled,
 My heart² is poured out on the ground
 For the wreck of my people,
 For the infants and sucklings that perish
 On the streets of the city.

12. 5

They are saying to their mothers, Ah where
 Are the corn and the wine ?
 As like one that is wounded they swoon
 On the streets of the city,
 As they pour out their lives [*to the death ?*]³
 On the laps of their mothers.

¹ Literally : *are among the Gentiles.*

² Literally : *my liver.*

³ Another accented word is needed for this line.

13. ם

How shall I rank,¹ how compare thee,
 Daughter of Jerusalem ?
 How shall I liken, how comfort thee,
 Virgin of Sion ?
 Vast as the sea is thy ruin ;
 Who will repair thee ?

14 ם

Thy prophets ? They dreamt ² for thee
 Falsehood and flattery.
 They exposed not thy guiltiness
 To turn thy captivity,
 But they dreamt ² for thee oracles
 That lied and misled.³

15. ם

They were clapping their hands at thee
 All who passed by.
 They were hissing and wagging their heads
 At the daughter of Jerusalem:—
 “ Did they call thee perfection of beauty,
 Joy of the earth ! ”

16. ם

Against thee they opened their mouths
 Thine enemies all,
 Hissing and gnashing their teeth ⁴ :
 “ We have swallowed her up !
 Just this is the day we have looked for !
 We meet it, we see it ! ”

¹ Read with Meinhold (quoted by Budde) קִרְוֵי (Isa. xl. 18); or at least with the Qeri קִרְוֵי: *I take thee as a parable or warning.*

² Literally: *saw in vision*; used of prophetic vision, but here in a bad sense.

³ Budde: *expulsion.*

⁴ Omit וְהִשָּׁרְוּ, *they said*, which is unnecessary to the meaning, having probably been inserted by a commentator to mark what follows as a quotation; and makes an accent too many for the rhythm.

17. י

Jahweh hath done what he planned,
 Discharging his word.
 As in days long ago he decreed,
 Ruthless he ruins.
 He hath given thee up to their joy,
 Exalted¹ thy foes.

18. י

Let thy heart cry aloud to the Lord,²
 Clamour,³ O daughter of Sion,
 Let thy tears run down like a stream
 By day and by night.
 Give to thyself no respite,
 No rest to thine eye.

19. ק

Get thee up, sing out in the night
 At the start of the watches !
 Pour out like the waters thy heart
 In the face of the Lord !
 Lift up *now* before him thy hands
 For the life of thy children.⁴

20. ר

“ Behold, O our God, and consider
 Whom thou maltreatest.
 Shall women devour their offspring,
 The infants they fondle ?
 Or the Lord in the sanctuary slay
 The priest with the prophet ?

¹ Omit יָרָם, *horn*, for the reasons given in the previous note.

² This line as it stands in the Hebrew gives no sense. Sion is addressed, and an imperative is necessary for the verb. Read מַעֲשֵׂי לַבָּרָהּ with Ewald *et al.*

³ Reading with Budde מַעֲשֵׂי for the meaningless מַעֲשֵׂי הַיָּתֵד, *wall*.

⁴ To this verse a fourth couplet is added :—

They that have fainted for hunger
 At the top of all the streets.

21. ו

“They are strewn on the face of the streets
 Young men and old,
 My youths and my virgins are fallen
 At the edge of the sword.
 In the day of thy wrath thou hast slaughtered,
 And ruthlessly butchered.

22. ז

“Thou summonest as to a congress
 Terrors around.
 Not one did escape or was left
 In the day of his wrath.
 Those whom I nursed and brought up
 My foes have destroyed.”

LAMENTATIONS IV.

1. ח

How bedimmed is the gold, how changed
 The finest of gold,
 Down every street they have poured
 The stones of the Temple.¹

2. ט

The children of Sion, the priceless,
 Weighed against gold,²
 Are reckoned as earthenware pitchers,
 The work of the potter.

3. י

The monsters³ draw out the breast
 And suckle their whelps,
But the daughters⁴ of my people are cruel
 As ostriches wild.

4. יא

Cleaves to the palate for thirst
 Tongue of the nursling.
 The children are begging for bread,
 None to dispense.

¹ Budde alters the reading to: *the precious stones*.

² As we say: “worth their weight in gold.”

³ Others: *jackals*.

⁴ So Bickell, reading בָּנֹת for בָּת.

5. 7

They that were fed upon dainties
 Rot on the streets ;
 They who were nourished in scarlet
 Cling to the ashheaps.

6. 7

The guilt of my people¹ exceeded
 The sins of Sédôm,²
 Whose overthrow came in a flash
 Ere a hand could be wrung.³

7. 7

Thy Nezīrīm were whiter than milk,
 More radiant than snow.⁴
 Ruddier than coral itself,
 And veined with the sapphire.⁵

8. 7

Now darker than blackness their visage,
 Unknown as they pass,⁶
 Their skin drawn tight on their bones,
 Dry as a stick.

9. 7

For the wounds of the sword are more kind
 Than the wounds of starvation,⁷
 They fester away who are stabbed
 By the dearth of the harvest.

¹ *Of the daughter of my people.*

² The Hebrew for Sodom.

³ Omit *אֵל*.

⁴ In the original these two lines are reversed.

⁵ Literally: *sapphire their threading or filaments.*

⁶ Literally: *They are not recognized in the streets.*

⁷ Literally: *better are they who are stabbed with the sword than they who are stabbed by famine.*

10. ׳

The hands of the delicate women
 Have sodden their children,
 And these are come to be food,
 In the wreck of my people.

11. ך

God hath accomplished his fury,
 Exhausted his wrath,¹
 He kindled in Sion a fire
 That sapped her foundations.

12. ל

No kings of the earth had believed,
 No man in the world
 That foe or besieger could enter
 Jerusalem's gates.

13. ם

For the sins of her prophets *it was*,²
 For the crimes of her priests,
 They who had shed in her midst
 Blood of the just.

14. ן

They straggle like the blind in the streets,
 Polluted with blood.
 What they could not endure, they must *now*
 Sweep with their robes.

15. ס

"Bear off, ye unclean," men adjure them,
 "Bear off³ and avoid!"
 So they stagger and straggle about
 Homeless for ever!⁴

¹ Budde omits מַרְוֶן as too long for the line, but in the construct before אֶפְסֵי it has no accent, and therefore suits the Hebrew cadence. In the English, however, we must omit it.

² The Hebrew needs a third accented word.

³ Delete the second סִוְרֵי and אֶמְרֵי בְנוֹיִם, which are too many for the lines. The latter, as Budde remarks, is senseless.

⁴ Literally: *They will no more become guests.*

16. ה

Jahweh himself hath dispersed them
 Out of his heeding,
 None to pay homage to the priests
 Nor court to the elders.

17. י

We were straining, were training¹ our eyes
 Our help was a dream.
 While we looked for, we looked for a people
 That brought no relief.²

18. י

They hunted our steps till we could not³
 Roam our own streets.
 Our days were cut short and completed,⁴
 Our end was come.

19. ק

Swifter were they that pursued us
 Than eagles of heaven.
 They hunted us over the mountains,
 They ambushed the desert.

20. ג

The breath of our life,⁵ God's anointed
 Was trapped in their toils,
 Of whom we had said, we shall live
 On in his shadow.⁶

21. ש

Be glad and rejoice, O daughter of Edom,
 With a land to inhabit.
 To thee, too, the cup must pass round *till*
 Thou'rt drunk and dishevelled.

¹ There is a repetition here of the musical syllable ênu. "Odhênu tikhlenah 'enênu."

² The allusion is plainly to the failure of Egypt to bring relief.

³ Probably we should supply יר or ירי in the Hebrew of this line.

⁴ Omit יק as both obscure and superfluous for the rhythm.

⁵ Literally: *the breath of our nostrils*.

⁶ The Hebrew adds, *among the Gentiles*. The allusion in this verse is of course to the capture of Zedekiah.

22. ♪

Daughter of Sion, thy guilt is exhausted,

No more shall he banish !

Daughter of Edom, he hath summed up thy guilt,

Thy sins are laid bare.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.