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"VOICES OF ISRAEL"

VOICE ONE:

CONQUEST

VOICE TWO:

Alas!

Lonely sits the city

Once great with people.

She that was great among nations

Is become like a widow.

Bitterly she weeps in the night,

Her cheek wet with tears.

There is none to comfort her.

What can I compare or liken

To you, O Fair Jerusalem?

What can I match with you to console you,

O Fair Maiden Zion?

The gentiles fill the Temple with debauchery and revelry,

As they loll with prostitutes

And have intercourse with women in the sacred courts.

Jerusalem has greatly sinned,

Therefore she is become a mockery.

All who admired her despise her,

For they have seen her disgraced.

Because the Lord has afflicted her

For her many transgressions,

Her infants have gone into captivity

Before the enemy.

VOICE ONE: EXILE

VOICE TWO: By the rivers of Babylon  
there we sat,  
sat and wept  
as we thought of Zion.

VOICE THREE: I scattered them among the nations,  
And they were dispersed throughout the countries.

VOICE FOUR: Judah has gone into exile.  
Gone from Fair Zion are all  
That were her glory.  
When she settled among the nations,  
She found no rest.

VOICE FIVE: You'll be driven from doorways  
Like a dog, like a stray.  
Wherever you pass your day,  
In the night you won't stay.

VOICE SIX: I must teach you  
The terrible chapter "Lekh-lekho".  
We must pick up  
The old wander-staff and go,  
Not knowing what will befall  
Our poor sick bones.  
Whether we'll get somewhere  
And reach a place of rest;  
Or whether like sick birds that fall  
Dead in a field, in a valley somewhere,  
We'll perish on the road.

VOICE SEVEN: Life in exile -  
This precious gift from God's store -  
Belongs only to the Jews, His chosen people.

VOICE EIGHT: A black wagon with mud-smeared, sleeping passengers,  
Like this we wandered long,  
Exhausting ourselves in the search for a resting place,  
But finding none.  
Our wandering drags on and on.

VOICE ONE: PERSECUTION

VOICE TWO: Everyday a Jew in Exile  
Performs the command of Kiddush Hashem.  
The circle of the earth has become a gallows for our necks.

VOICE THREE: We are not as dogs among the gentiles.  
We have become among the goyim ashes and soap - dung for the  
dung heap.  
No matter how brutal the torture a man will suffer  
In a land of the gentiles,  
The maker of comparisons will compare it thus:  
He was tortured like a Jew.  
Whatever the fear, whatever the outrage,  
How deep the loneliness, how harrowing the sorrow -  
No matter how loud the weeping -  
The maker of comparisons will say:  
This is an instance of the Jewish sort.

VOICE FOUR: We are now very pious.  
We observe all the ritual laws:  
We are stabbed and punched with holes like matzahs,  
And have as much bread as on Passover;  
We are beaten like hoshanahs,  
Rattled like Haman;  
We are as green as esrogim;  
We fast as if it were Yom Kippur;  
We are burnt as if it were Hanukkah,  
And our moods are as if it were the Ninth of Av.

VOICE FIVE: Someone cried:  
Hey, beat the Jews with all your might.  
They smashed doors and forced their way

*Excellent  
choice!*

Into closed Jewish homes with raised clubs in their hands -  
They hunted us, they beat us.  
A Jew running down the road,  
Blood dripping from his head.  
An old Jew on fire whirls before me,  
A torah cradled in his arms.  
In the cellars of the town,  
There the virginal daughters of the folk are fouled,  
Seven heathen flung a woman down,  
The daughter in the presence of her mother,  
The mother in the presence of her daughter.  
The sacred bodies struggled underneath  
The bestial breath,  
Stifled their filth, and swallowing their blood.  
The son who was not murdered found  
The spurned cadaver of his father on the ground.  
The rabbi was martyred.  
To this day I see him when I close my eyes -  
Wrapped in his prayer shawl  
His face petrified, blue, streaked with blood,  
Swaying back and forth as he hung there saying his prayers.

VOICE SIX:

The community was slaughtered,  
The holy books burned,  
The cemetery desecrated.  
There is a wailing and a sadness which hovers in homes;  
And the Angel of Death reigns supreme like a drunken madman;  
And people in rags, heaps of shattered hopes, cower along the  
dark and smokey walls;  
And bodies of old men rot away in doorways or on bare floors,  
Covered with newspapers or with pieces of stone;  
And children shiver and whisper:  
We are starving;

And worn-out women hold up their hands, thin as ribbons,  
In their last barren consumptive prayers;  
And frost and disease close in on dying eyes  
That, in their last agony, crave for a crust of bread.  
My city is dead,  
And those who are not dead are like the dead.

VOICE ONE: GOD

VOICE TWO: PART ONE

VOICE THREE: You are holy and your name is holy and the holy martyrs of Israel have sanctified and will again sanctify your name. They will suffer all manner of death and torture for the sanctification of your name and for the deliverance of the nation of Israel.

There is nothing better than to offer ourselves as a sacrifice. Our souls will depart us in the name of God.

VOICE TWO: PART TWO

VOICE FOUR: The temporary suffering and blows that descend upon the Jew Have a meaning, are not merely oppressions, And do not degrade the Jew.

For a Jew is part of the sacred triad:  
Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He.

Although beneath our feet is death,  
Over our head is God's presence.

The kindness of the Lord has not ended,  
His mercies are not spent.

"The Lord is my portion,"  
I say with full heart;  
Therefore will I hope in Him.

The Lord is good to those who trust in Him,  
To the one who seeks Him;  
It is good to wait patiently  
Till rescue comes from the Lord.

You who have devised all evil against the Hebrews,  
Shall surely not escape the hands of God.

VOICE TWO: PART THREE

VOICE FIVE: I yearn to merge with you in prayer,  
And yet my heart, my lips are moved  
Only to blasphemies and curses.  
Gone is God's pity, His mercies forgotten;  
Cruel now He seems, like my enemy.  
He who once gave me comfort gives me no ear now.  
He hath broken the covenant.  
Thou who hast chosen us from all peoples, and cherished us,  
Why have we, Thy people Israel, come to this degradation and  
shame?  
If such is the portion of those whom Thou lovest,  
Would then that Thou hadst not loved us,  
And hadst not desired us above all other nations.  
Choose another people!  
We are tired of death, tired of corpses.  
We have no more prayers.  
Choose another people!  
We've built you a new ark,  
A black mound, like a blotch.  
Seat yourself upon its buxom roof  
Like an old raven on a dung heap.  
The Mound spatters Mount Sinai's commandments with blood.  
Into your face, the Sovereign Mound spits back the Ten  
Commandments.



VOICE ONE: REDEMPTION

VOICE TWO: God has returned to His people.

VOICE THREE: I am going to take the Israelite people  
From among the nations they have gone to,  
And gather them from every quarter,  
And bring them to their own land.  
I will make them a single nation in the land.  
Then you shall dwell in the land  
Which I gave to your fathers,  
And you shall be My people,  
And I will be your God.

VOICE FOUR: Here, in days of the Hebrew clarification on land of the race  
and the Jerusalemite godhead,  
God lives.  
And I love the breathing stones in my Land: rocks of the mute  
gold of our dead kingdom.  
And gold-my-gold I'll call the sand here; gold-my-gold in the  
Jewish khamsin.  
I savor all the ruins in Zion.  
I'll find my happiness in this struggle in the wilderness.  
When we came here we found parched earth,  
As hands had not touched the land  
Since her children had left her.  
But now she is a fruitful land, thankful to her masters,  
And giving us of her goodness.

VOICE FIVE:

How much better it is to live in the Land of Israel,  
Than outside the Land,  
For the Land of Israel has given us the strength to stand up  
for our lives.  
Never again shall Masada fall!

A superb & sophisticated synthesis of themes and moods  
and rhythms. I would love a copy for my files.

(A)