



Lamentations of the Orthodox of Ethiopia.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen

“My eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief, until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees.”
(Lamentations of Jeremiah 3: 49-50)

Before all else, to our Orthodox brethren, and to all those who honor all humans for their humanity, may the Grace and Peace of God our Father, and Our Lord Jesus Christ be upon you.

In this present age, no one born in Ethiopia, or raised in the knowledge of Ethiopia, can fail to be concerned about the situation in the country. Whether we were born in the countryside or the city, we were all raised, supported, and educated by Ethiopian mothers and fathers. All of us owe our present situations to them. The Orthodox clergy especially must remain sleepless over the suffering occurring in the country, particularly directed against the Holy Church and her children. If not all of us, most of us are passing sleepless nights over this. Often, we are consoled by reading the teachings and writings of the Holy prophets. Even if it does not measure up to them, we strive to spread this consolation by spreading their teachings. When we read that through the spiritual wealth granted to them, the prophets were able to prophesy that suffering would come, and that to escape this suffering they offered up their tears and wailing to God, we realize that they weep for what they see in Ethiopia. Until such time as God turns his eyes towards Ethiopia, our eyes continue to shed tears, and our voices will continue to be heard.

For those who have attentively read the books of the prophets, they will find what is happening in Ethiopia is a replica of what happened in the age of the prophets in Israel. The Lamentations of Jeremiah are especially apt. This prophet is known as the melancholy or the weeping one. He earned this designation because seeing the defiance of the leaders and the people of that time, he foresaw the suffering it would cause and expressed his grief over it with tears and in his writings. We now realize in our present situation, that the crop sown by the evil Sower over the past forty and fifty years has sprouted and grown, and is now being harvested as a harvest of suffering. What is especially sad though is that although all of us realize the extent of this atrocity, we are unable to emerge from this suffering due to the paralysis of our consciousness. Our hearts are numbed. Rather than spending our time and knowledge on truth we spend them instead on useless and purposeless things, and even worse on damaging things.

At the time that I am writing this, we are seeing and hearing that many horrible atrocities that weigh heavily on our consciences are being committed in this world. The earth that bore a generation that once eagerly anticipated slaughtering animal, now sees them sacrificing Ethiopians in this manner daily. Ethiopians today are being slaughtered by knives, their legs severed by axes, their eyes gouged out, their dead bodies eaten by hyenas. This government sponsored slaughter is worsening by the day.

Not only are we unable to find a leader to halt these horrors, but we are also unable to even find one to express their sorrow for these events. We are instead being told to accept our murder gracefully and be sacrificed in turn. If anyone dares to condemn these atrocities, they are denounced as a criminal, they are then prosecuted and imprisoned. We must weep to our Creator for these people who have been forbidden to cry out by this regime. This is why we have been forced to name this essay “Lamentation of the Orthodox”.

The prophet must indeed have been deeply burdened and became like us to write many verses and call them Lamentations of Jeremiah. We too must borrow his tears and shed them like the floods of the monsoon season, and weep, for we believe our merciful and compassionate God will hear us.



The prophet began his lament by saying the following. In a city full of people “*Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are on her cheeks. Among all those who love her there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies*” (Lamentations 1:2). This lament is indeed that of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. For her own children are devouring each other. How can the church weep and mourn for anything if she cannot do so as she watches brother slaughtering brother as if it is just a game?

How can we name this time as anything other than the Age of Lamentation when the Orthodox are slaughtered wherever they are, and across the land the youth are encouraged to massacre each other by the government. What time could come that is worse than this age when horrific news arrives daily that makes one’s ears ring. Could there be anything worse and more heart-breaking than seeing sacred humanity reduced to being beastly and devouring itself? The prophet could not stop the river of his tears, and so he expressed his grief in writing appropriately. He tells us there is no holiday, the temple is demolished, and the priests are slaughtered. “*The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to her appointed festivals. All her gateways are desolate, her priests groan, her young women grieve, and she is in bitter anguish*” (Lamentations 1:4). There is wailing everywhere. The clergy are oppressed with cries in every direction, there can be no thought of celebrating the holidays. He shows that the doors of the temple are demolished and the faithful spend all their hours awash in their own tears. Again, as the prophet lists the agonies of Jerusalem it appears that he also is thinking of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Suffering is coming down on the clergy and the faithful of the church as if being Orthodox is a curse. The Orthodox Tewahedo Church cannot find neither one to comfort her, nor justice, so she cries out. What the prophet said about ancient Israel we now find to be appropriate for us today. In expressing our suffering today, he says “*This is why I weep, my eyes, my eyes overflow with tears, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed.*” (Lamentations 1:16).

When the prophet weeps for Israel, as the blood of children who do not know bad from good, or their right from their left, is spilt, he must also have been remotely seeing the recent slaughter of people from infants to the elderly in Arsi. In expressing his deep grief at this he says, “*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 nursing babies swoon in the streets of the city*” (Lamentations 2:11). Surely the prophet must have seen the youth who could not find the peace to farm his land, and yet had managed to sow his fields, only to have his sprouts burned by cruel soldiers, and as if that was not damage enough, to see his these same cruel soldiers gang rape and kill his mother and monastic grandmother, loot his house and leave him desolate. He must also have seen the child in Wollega who sat with his murdered mother’s corpse weeping. “*They say to their mothers, where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom*” (Lamentations 2: 12). May the generations count those Ethiopians who are dying from lack of food and drink, for their mother cannot count them as she too has died. The story of suffering of the Jews of the era Jeremiah has become the story of the millions of mothers, fathers and children of Ethiopia today.

The prophet when prophesying that Jerusalem/Ethiopia would have no consoler or healer says “*What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breakage is great like the sea: who can heal thee?*” (Lamentations 2:13). Just as the prophet said that because of the absence of a healer, the earth is engulfed in a sea of suffering, we too say the same. How can this be too much to say when there are cruel leaders who have willingly sold their ability to judge, who say they have been



broken by those who have broken themselves, who cannot comprehend the suffering caused by the broken world they made, who stand only for their own interests, who condemn society to poverty, who sing on the poor, who jeer at death, who celebrate when they see the poor, who look down on the people who brought them to power, who throw them into the abyss of poverty. Who can challenge us when we say today is the Lamentation of the Orthodox of Ethiopia.

The weeping prophet rouses Jerusalem/Ethiopia from her sleep saying "*Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street*" (Lamentations 2:19). This phrase was labeled as "political" by the powerful of that age as well as those in our country today. Our incredible leaders tell us the same today. For this reason, the Israelites bound Jeremiah, cast him down a well, and made him suffer. The rulers of Ethiopia have taken teachers who are like Jeremiah and cast them into dark prison cells to suffer.

To our rulers who are who have become daring in these times, you have failed to understand that the rulers of that age were exactly how you are now, but sadly despite their lies they could not escape the destruction they feared. To tell you and explain the truth of what we see and what we live is "politics" to you. But Almighty God sees all, and perceives all, and then passes judgement. The rulers in the time of Jeremiah resembled you, and so instead of answering his tears they jeered at him and were resolute in continuing in their cruelty. The persecuted prophet's only weapon was his tears, so he continued to weep. He asks God "*See, O LORD, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring, the children they have cuddled? Should the priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?*" (Lamentations 2: 20). Who else has endures such suffering other than Ethiopia? With such suffering being inflicted, does remaining silent mean suffering has become congenial to us? When mothers in their impoverished state see the children that they raised through hardships being cruelly killed and tossed to be devoured by wild beasts as tribute; when priests are killed in their sanctuaries, can the silence of those of us who shepherds of the flock, and the silence of our children, be healthy?

We Ethiopians and the Orthodox ask the following questions. Has this variety of suffering been inflicted in other countries? Have the defense forces of other lands been seen taking the people it should have protected and shredded their bodies with their bayonets and thrown them away? Are there any historians that might answer this question of mine? Such atrocities should not even be carried out on invading enemies, much less on one's own people. Might this be the first case of massacring people based on their faith in this 21st Century? If one cannot weep over this, what can one weep over?

The prophet using his gift of prophesy seeing today's Ethiopia could not find any hope. The leaders are not obedient to God. Those who carry out their will are gaining strength in their arrogance. That is why the prophet said, "*Young and old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword; you have slain them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered and not pitied*" (Lamentations 2:21). For those who contemplate what is happening closely, it does not seem that humanity can survive. The weapons of mass destruction that they use to target poor farmers and which they show us with such pride, tell us that human life is not intended to survive on Ethiopian soil. It has now been seven years since we began to see generals who appear in the window of our television screens and proudly boast of the killing of their compatriots. If we added up the vast numbers of dead that they tell us about, they should be ashamed rather than prideful, and they should be prosecuted as war criminals because of them. They kill the children of the poor and feed their bodies to wild beasts, while spending millions of Birr on the lavish weddings of their own children. If not for the mercy of God, who would survive their cruelty, their boasting and their intentions?



Like the religious leaders of our times, in the era of Jeremiah there were also prophets who cooperated against their murdered people. While Jeremiah turned back to God and was crying out that horrors were coming, they were saying “no we are achieving victory, prosperity is here”. Even now, on our soil those who call themselves “Evangelicals” of these times are saying with the Orthodox are killed “they deserve it, they used to pursue us” and “this time is a time of death for them, so the killing of the Orthodox is not our business, because their time of being slaughtered and exiled is our time of expansion”. We are seeing such vicious people disguised as faithful believers and who in the name of the Gospel cooperate in murder. The way they explain their level of cruelty is fearsome indeed. We are seeing with the iron of our own eyes the viciousness of those who say we should have compassion for all mankind except for Orthodox believers. Farmers cannot farm because they are being killed by drones. Merchants cannot trade because not only are the roads closed, but they are forced to pay what they have not earned. Schools have become military camps, and hospitals have become fortresses. Up to now there have been twenty proclamations ordering the elimination of Ethiopians. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and have been sacrificed for their faith. Millions are being flogged by the whip of hunger and are struggling with death. Others are displaced and have become homeless. In one word, the land has become hell. Amidst all this the leaders and their celebrators are saying we are at the peak of greatness. I don’t think we can find a word to express this level of cruelty in any dictionary.

However, amid all this, there is still God’s mercy. If not for His benevolence, their cruelty would have eliminated humanity. God has not denied his mercy to this people. The weeping prophet Jeremiah saw God’s mercy during his time of crying out. In explaining His mercy, Jeremiah said that without it we would be like Sodom and Gomorrah. He explains this by saying *“Through the LORD’s mercies we are not destroyed, because His compassion fails not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul, therefore I hope in Him! The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him”* (Lamentations 3: 22-25). When he relates the endless mercy of God in this way, it provides us with hope. The mercy of God exists. So even if the earth is held and filled by the cruel, they will not go as far as they wish. Both the Holy Book and history teach us this.

We hereby advise the following. We ask that those who call themselves the armed forces of the country, and who live comfortable lives off the taxes paid by the poor, to examine their consciences. If you are people turn around and examine what you have done. You have spent seven years massacring your own people. What have you gained? Do you not have families? When you gang rape our sisters, or allow it to happen do you not feel shame? Do you not have daughters? Are you not born of women? Were you not created with a conscience? Count the population that you have massacred over the past seven years. What are you doing? What have you gained?

Even if you say we will finish them and kill them all, the day of judgment will come, and you will not survive it. You need to know this truth. You cannot kill all the people. Your crimes will expose you to the world. If you will listen to me, let me tell you this. The time for regret and penance is now. Come back before darkness falls upon you. Similarly, you who arrange for your sisters, your mothers and your aunts to be raped for the payment of five thousand birr, and generally let your people be killed, God has given you this time of repentance. Come back to Him. The bread that you eat will choke you. The victory of the cries of the poor is approaching. If you refuse though, judgement will come. We will also cry out to God, and we will weep. He will hear us and we will say *“Remember, O LORD, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, And our houses to foreigners. We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows. We pay for the water we drink, and our wood comes at a price. They that pursue us are at our necks; we labor and have no rest”* (Lamentations 5: 1-6). In the end we cry out to the Lord and say *“Have mercy on us, O LORD,*



have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud.” (Psalms 122 (123))

For this hear our prayer.

May the Lord grant those Ethiopians who have died, those Orthodox who have been sacrificed, the Kingdom of Heaven and Paradise. May he console our compatriots who have been grieved, may the cure-giver Jesus Christ cure our wounded children. Oh Ethiopia may God comfort you! Oh Orthodox Tewahedo may He grant you Fathers and Children who will struggle for you!

May God bless our country Ethiopia, and protect our church



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Abba Pateros

Archbishop of The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
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