

Editor's Notes for Lamentación Primera del Miércoles Santo

Here we have Eslava's exquisite setting for the First Lamentation for Holy Wednesday. It is the first of a series of nine pieces.

The Book of Lamentations in the Bible forms part of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Holy Week (the week preceding Easter Sunday), and signify the important themes of lament, atonement, and repentance that underlay the Paschal festivities. The Lamentations consist of three sets of three lectures, for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Over time, the tradition moved from morning matins to the night before, so that in some cases the Lamentations are named for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Such is the case for Eslava's Lamentations.

This first lamentation is based on Lamentations 1:1–5. As used in the Catholic liturgy, the text comes from the Latin Vulgate text. But the translators of the Vulgate decided to keep a trace of the original arrangement of the poetry, and kept the Hebrew letter at the beginning of each verse, which is prominently reflected in Eslava's work. Each lecture is ended with the call: Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum (Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God), which actually comes from Hosea 14:1. This too is reflected in Eslava's pieces.

ORIGINAL TEXT:

Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae.

ALEPH. Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo: facta est quasi vidua domina Gentium: princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo.

BETH. Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lacrymæ eius in maxillis eius: non est qui consoletur eam et omnibus charis eius: omnes amici eius spreverunt eam, et facti sunt ei inimici.

GHIMEL. Migravit Iudas propter afflictionem, et multitudinem servitutis: habitavit inter gentes, nec invenit requiem: omnes persecutores eius apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

DALETH. Viæ Sion lugent eo quod non sint qui veniant ad sollemnitatem: omnes portæ eius destructæ: sacerdotes eius gementes: virgines eius squalidæ, et ipsa oppressa amaritudine.

HE. Facti sunt hostes eius in capite, inimici eius locupletati sunt: quia Dominus locutus est super eam propter multitudinem iniquitatum eius: parvuli eius ducti sunt in captivitatem ante faciem tribulantis.

Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Here begins the *Lamentation* of Jeremiah the prophet.

ALEPH: How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.

BETH: Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.

GHIMEL: After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile. She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place. All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

DALETH: 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.

HE: Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease. The Lord has brought her grief because of her many sins. Her children have gone into exile, captive before the foe.

Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.