AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

M I N U T E
P A R T I C U L A R

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Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 24, Issue 2, Fall 1990, pp. 59-63

MINUTE PARTICULARS

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Recent scholarship has demonstrated without a doubt the multiplicity and importance of the biblical allusions in Blake's *Jerusalem*.[1] Scholars have also shown that Blake's assumptions about sublimity have much in common with the ideas of such eighteenth-century poets and literary theorists as John Dennis, Edmund Burke, Edward Young, and Robert Lowth.[2] These lines of scholarly investigation up to this point have yielded a wealth of insights into Blake's thought and artistry, yet for the most part they remain separate areas of study. By linking the two, however, we can enrich our understanding of Blake's prophecy.

One unnoticed outgrowth of this association is the comparison between Blake's and the Bible's version of Jerusalem's lament and its relationship to eighteenth-century commentary on the sublimity of the Bible. Specifically we can compare Jerusalem's lament in chapter four (pls. 78-80) of Blake's prophecy with Jerusalem's lament in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Robert Lowth serves as a late eighteenth-century guide to how Blake's contemporaries understood this biblical passage and its sublimity. The thematic, imagistic, structural, and rhetorical parallels between Blake's poetry and its biblical counterpart, and their correspondence with Lowth's commentary on the sublimity of the lament reveal not only Blake's skill as a visionary aesthetician who both adopts and transmutes the prophetic style of sublime Hebrew poetry, but suggest also the manifold meanings of his term "the Sublime of the Bible" (*Milton* 1).[3]

Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*,[4] written during his tenure as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, was heralded by his contemporaries as a milestone in the literary understanding of the Bible. In the *Lectures* Lowth "put aside the literary assumptions of his age," and approached the Bible "without preconceived notions."[5] Lowth presented the biblical poets as visionaries and seers, a fact which attracted poets turning from the strictures of eighteenth-century poetry to new models. Among these may have been William Blake, who could have known about Lowth's *Lectures*, given their immense popularity, his interest in the Bible, and struggle to create what he calls unfettered poetry (*Jerusalem* 3).

Lowth attributes a significant portion of the sublime effect of the Lamentations of Jeremiah to the personification of the Holy City as a woman wracked by sorrow. Personification, in Lowth's view, is "by far the boldest and most daring" of the various types of figures; it has "uncommon force and expression [and] in no hands whatever is more successful in this respect than in those of the Hebrew writers" (1: 281). Personification achieves its most powerfully sublime effect when objects are denominated as female, or more specifically when "nations, regions, peoples, are brought upon the stage as it were in a female character" (1: 285, 287). The greatest example of this can be found in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, believed by Lowth to be an "extraordinary production" and "the most remarkable [elegy] extant" (2: 130-31). What can be more sublime, he argues, than "the description of that once flourishing city, lately chief among the nations, sitting in the character of a female, solitary, afflicted, in a state of widowhood, deserted by her friends, deserted by her dearest connections, imploring relief, and seeking consolation in vain" (2: 138)? The effect of Jeremiah's presentation of Jerusalem as a suffering widow is "excessive, and predominates in the mind" (2: 138), and characteristic of the affective power of the sublime, the mind "becomes heated to fury and madness" (1: 381), until finally it is carried away "with irresistible violence" (2: 86).

What strikes us most immediately, perhaps, as the clearest and most obvious indications of an affinity between the Lamentations of Jeremiah and Blake's poetry are the personification of the City of God as a woman cast into the depths of suffering, and the focus on her destruction. In the Lamentations the comparison is explicit: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become" (1.1). Blake's personification of Jerusalem is far less literal than that in the Bible and depends on the aggregate of our understanding of Blake's prophecy, his mythopoeic symbols and the Bible as a pretext. The focus of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, according to Lowth, is "the destruction of the holy city and temple, the overthrow of the state, [and] the extermination of the people" (2: 137). Blake asserts a similar focus in the opening lines of Jerusalem's lament::

> Naked Jerusalem lay before the Gates upon Mount Zion
> The Hill of Giants, all her foundations levelld with dust!
>
> Her Twelve Gates thrown down: her children carried into captivity
> Herself in chains (78.21-24)

In the biblical lament Jerusalem declares that her "children are desolate for the enemy has prevailed" (1.16). Blake's Jerusalem also laments the destruction of her children who have been "dashd / Upon Egypts iron floors, & the marble pavements of Assyria" (79.1-2, 78.31).

Although Jerusalem's destruction evokes sublimity because it is horrifying and sad, this effect is heightened by the prophet's description of the ruin of the Holy City "as actually accomplished, and not in the style of prediction merely" (Lowth 2: 137). In this way Jeremiah intensifies her misfor-

tunes and adds to the prevailing mood of solemnity and sorrow. This is also true of Blake's Jerusalem. He presents her destruction not as portent, but as a completed fact. While this in and of itself suggests sublime sadness and horror, its narrative context heightens these feelings to an even greater degree in that the Holy City's destruction marks the culmination of the triumph of evil, a time when the natural world seems to have fallen to the deepest point in Ulro and a return to Eternity seems impossible. Jerusalem's destruction follows Albion's descent into a death-like sleep, Rahab's ascent to "power over the Earth" (78.16), and her conspiracy with her sons to destroy Jesus and "usurp the Throne of God" (78.19).

There are also a number of other striking parallels between the two laments. Besides parallels in subject matter, we can also identify similarities in imagery. Blake's descriptions of the suffering and torments experienced by Jerusalem echo those in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. In the Lamentations, Jerusalem states that the Lord "spread a net for [her] feet" (1.13). Blake, employing similar images of entrapment, describes Jerusalem as "Encompassed by the frozen Net" (80.1), a phenomenon of the fallen world in Blake's mythology, suggesting coldness, death, and fixity, in contrast to the warmth, flexibility, and energy associated with Eden.

Parallel images in *Jerusalem* and the Lamentations of Jeremiah suggest also the obfuscation of Jerusalem's form, the loss of divine light, and her separation from the Lord. Jeremiah describes Jerusalem as having been "set . . . under a cloud" by the Lord, who in his anger "has cast down from heaven to earth the splendour of Israel" (2.1). Likewise, Blake's imagery suggests the eclipsing of Jerusalem's form and her separation from heaven. She appears "Disorganizd; an evanescent shade, scarce seen or heard" (78.28). Lost in darkness, she "seeks for light / In vain" (79.11-12), is closed "into a dark land of pitch and bitumen" (79.61), and lost in an "eternal night of pain" (80.5). And like her counterpart in the Lamentations, she finds that God has forsaken her and she has become "an outcast from the Divine Presence" (78.31, 33).

Finally, Blake, like Jeremiah, presents Jerusalem as having been separated from all that can provide her comfort and security. In the Lamentations, Jerusalem mourns that "among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, / they have become her enemies" (1.2). She grieves about the loss of her comforters:

> my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my courage;
>
> .....
>
> I called to my lovers but they deceived me; My priests and elders perished in the city (1.16, 19)

Blake's Jerusalem also seeks for allies and finds that all have fled from her or have been destroyed:

> I walk to Ephraim. I seek for Shiloh: I walk like a lost sheep
> Among precipices of despair: in Goshen I seek for light
> In vain: and in Gilead for a physician and a comforter.
> Goshen hath followd Philistea: Gilead hath joind with Og!
> They are become narrow places in a little and dark land (79.10-14)

Whereas the biblical passage is literal in its description of Jerusalem's isolation—her comforters, priests, and elders have abandoned her—Blake's poetry resonates with multiple meanings. By imaging Jerusalem's comforters as biblical locales, Blake intensifies her isolation, for she is cut off from not only individual people, but also from entire cities and lands. She is separated from Ephraim and Shiloh, which are associated with the sacred first site of the Tabernacle,[6] divided from Goshen, the area inhabited by the Israelites and known as the "best of the land" in Egypt (Damon 166), and closed off from Gilead, known for its healing balm (Jeremiah 8.22). All of these locales, associated with comfort, priestliness, and healing have become lost, shrunken, and darkened. Moreover, they have become spiritually corrupted in that Goshen and Gilead join with Og and Philistea, places associated with unholiness, Satan, and the Covering Cherub in Blake's mythology (Damon 306, 326).

As is typical of Blake's adaptation of traditional sources to fit the thematic demands of his prophecy, this corruption of the holy lands suggests that the distancing of Jerusalem and the natural world from the Divine Vision may be, in the context of Blake's myth, an even greater cause for a feeling of sublimity than the image of Jerusalem as an isolated, grieving person. To put it another way, Jerusalem's destruction necessarily affects the entire natural world, and in this respect the Blakean sublime is evoked not merely by a single object, but by the realization of the metaconnection of all things. As Paley rightly observes, Blake's "appropriation of the language of the Bible in parts of *Jerusalem* goes far beyond mere imitation; it is the product of a remarkable assimulation of biblical texts that can then be recast into new forms of utterance" (*Continuing City* 50).

The structural parallels between the two laments can best be seen by discussing them in the context of Robert Lowth's analysis of the design of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Lowth sees in it a tripartite structure consisting of its outward appearance, internal blocks of ideas (or what he calls the "grand divisions"), and the sentence arrangement (2. 131, 134, 32). In its outward appearance the biblical passage seems spontaneous and unstructured. Bemoaning the destruction of his country, Jeremiah, in the character of a mourner, "pours forth in a kind of spontaneous effusion . . . whatever presented itself to his mind in the midst of desolation and

misery, whatever struck him as particularly wretched and calamitous, whatever the instant sentiment of sorrow dictated" (2: 131-32). Similarly, Blake pours forth details about not only Jerusalem's destruction—"my tents are fall'n! my pillars are in ruins," she states—but also the annihilation of the world. The hills of Judea have fallen into the deepest hell, Mount Zion has become a desolate rock, Albion's hills and valleys are "no more," the fifty-two counties of England cast Jerusalem out, the Euphrates is red with blood, and Druid Temples "overspread all the Earth in patriarchal pomp and cruel pride" (79.15, 20-21, 66-67). Jerusalem's lament resembles a catalogue of destruction.

In his grief Jeremiah "frequently pauses and . . . ruminates upon the same object; frequently varies and illustrates the same thought with different imagery, and a different choice of languages; so that the whole bears rather the appearance of an accumulation of corresponding sentiments (2: 132). In a way that suggests the influence of biblical poetry on his work, Blake repeatedly describes Jeruslaem's exiled state in corresponding images: she walks "like a lost sheep / Among precipices of despair" (79.10-11) and wanders "in the narrow passages / Of the valleys of destruction" (79.60-61); she is "an outcast from the Divine Presence" (78.33) and is closed out from the four-fold world (79.58-60); she "seek[s] for light" (79.11), and is "raisd up in a night / To an eternal night of pain, lost! lost! lost! for ever!" (80.4-5).

Typical of his transformation of traditional sources, Blake produces the effusive quality of his lament by including in it a profusion of place names and rapid shifts from one place and time to the next, all packed tightly onto a single plate of illuminated text. Blake names biblical places (Shiloh, Philistea, Gad, and Goshen), modern countries such as Germany, Poland, Spain, and Italy, and counties and rivers in England, thus creating a continual movement from near to far and ancient to modern. Most of the lament appears on a plate containing very little illustration, so that it seems to be filled with script from top to bottom and margin to margin. In addition, the lettering on this plate differs from that on other plates filled with text, such as 48, 80 and 86, in that the script is smaller and more densely packed and contains none of the spacing between paragraphs that is typical of some of the other full text plates in *Jerusalem*. This textual density is reminiscent of what V. A. DeLuca calls Blake's "wall of words," a plate which contains "bristling ranks of capital letters, verse without syntax, nouns without predication, names without context," all of which combines to create in the reader a feeling something like Kant's sublime of magnitude.[7] In Jerusalem's lament, the temporal and spatial motility, combined with the crowding of the text and the lack of paragraph spacing, contribute to the sense of unrelieved destruction and grief—the sublimity—conveyed by the lament.

Although on one level the Lamentations of Jeremiah appears to be "an accumulation of corresponding sentiments," Lowth identifies in it also an ordered arrangement. It consists of five parts or grand divisions, each of which is in turn divided into twenty-two periods or stanzas, with the exception of part three which consists of sixty-six periods. While on one level Blake's version of Jerusalem's lament, like its biblical counterpart, appears to consist of an unstructured profusion of images that dramatize the depth and intensity of her sorrow, we can also identify in it some "grand divisions." Blake has organized the lament into three units, consisting of approximately thirty lines in each. The beginning and end sections feature the torment of the woman and the destruction of the Holy City (78.21-79.21 and 79.53-80.5, respectively), and the middle section offers a portrait of the ideal Jerusalem before her destruction (79.22-52).

The detailed portrait of the Holy City before its ruin marks Blake's divergence from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. His description of the unfallen Jerusalem contrasts sharply with Jeremiah's brief description. The biblical prophet's only references to the ideal Jerusalem are the allusion to her as a princess (1.1) and a single question: "'Is this the city which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?'" (2.15). In contrast, Blake describes Jerusalem in a way that particularizes and makes concrete the vision of her "perfection of beauty." In the center section of the lament, Blake presents a clearer, more determinate vision of Jerusalem's human form, while in the other two sections images of the ruined city predominate. Whereas Jerusalem appears in the fallen world as a "Disorganizd . . . evanescent shade" (78.28), in eternity all the world "discernd [her] countenance with joy!" (79.28). She is not isolated, but involved instead in joyous, loving, human activities: she "pour[s] Joy upon every mountain . . . teach[es] songs to the shepherd & plowman," and embraces the little children (79.37, 25-26). In her Edenic state Jerusalem's world is expansive, not shrunken. Her pillars "reachd from sea to sea" (79.24), and Spain, with its golden hills, served as her "heavenly couch" (79.40). Germany and Poland "found / My gates in all their mountains & my curtains in all their vales," she declares (79.45-46).

This detailed portrait of the ideal Jerusalem suggests Blake's skillful revision of biblical sources to fit the narrative and thematic demands of his prophecy. It functions as a momentary opening of the center, a kind of visionary "stay" against the deepening of the Fall, and serves as a prelude to the apocalyptic vision of regeneration at the end of *Jerusalem*. It signals the end of what Erdman calls the "night of death" (E 357), and heralds the "building up of Jerusalem," the thematic focus of chapter four. Blake's vision of the ideal Jerusalem forms a cohesive core

which seems to bind together the parts of the lament and acts as a preview of the extended, minutely detailed portrait that Blake presents in Los' Song (85.14-86.32) later in chapter four. Consistent with Blake's mythology, the description of the unfallen Jerusalem is placed in the center of the lament—as Eden occupies the center (*Milton* 28.38)—and is associated with images of expansiveness and determinateness.

Lowth analyzes the form of the Lamentations according to three criteria: its outward form, the grand divisions, and the sentence arrangement. As we have seen, the first two criteria indicate clear parallels between the Lamentations and *Jerusalem*. An application of the third criterion to Blake's poetry demonstrates even more vividly his adoption of traditional sources and his complex treatment of them.

Parallelism is the name that Lowth gives to the particular arrangement of sentences which he believes is unique to biblical poetry. He defines parallelism, which depends not on meter, but on the correspondence and balance of sense units, as "the correspondence of one verse, or line, with another. . . . When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction" (2: 32n10). He classifies parallelism according to three types: synonymous, antithetic, and constructive parallelism. The following lines from Jeremiah's lament contain parallelism and remind us of the thematic concerns of Blake's poetry. For example, Jeremiah's descriptions of Jerusalem's sorrow contain synonymous and constructive parallelism:

Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress,
my soul is in tumult,
my heart is wrung within me (1.20)

My eyes are spent with weeping;
my soul is in tumult;
my heart is poured out in grief (2.11)

In six statements containing equivalent images, Jeremiah describes the suffering of Jerusalem. Constructive parallelism, the grouping of sentences with similar grammatical construction is evidenced by the repetition in each statement of the word "my" and verb structure "to be." A similar correspondence of sense units is clearly evident in Blake's description of Jerusalem's suffering and his repetition of the subject-verb structure "I walk" in the lines,

I walk weeping in pangs of a Mothers
torment for her Children:
I walk in affliction (80.2-3)

Blake imbues the entirety of Jerusalem's lament with prosodic cadences reminiscent of those in biblical poetry. Several scholars such as Paley in *The Continuing City*, Tannenbaum in *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies*, and Roston in *Prophet and Poet* have discussed the connection between Blake's poetry, Hebrew verse, and Lowth's commentary on biblical poetry. However, no one, as yet, has analyzed Jerusalem's lament in the context of either Lowth's concept of parallelism or the sentence arrangement in the Lamentations. The following lines, in which Blake's Jerusalem describes her destruction, echo the thematic content of the Lamentations and suggest the influence of biblical parallelism (I have divided these and subsequent lines from *Jerusalem* to highlight the parallelism):

My tents are fall'n!
my pillars are in ruins! (79.1)

My fires are corrupt!
my incense is a cloudy pestilence
of seven disesases! (79.56-57)

In statements containing parallel images and grammmatical structures, Jerusalem mourns her separation from the Divine Vision:

Once a continual cloud of salvation
rose from all my myriads;
once the Four-fold World rejoicd
among/The pillars of Jerusalem
(79.57-59)

Blake describes Jerusalem's isolation in a longer unit of parallelism:

[Albion's] hills & his valleys no more
Receive the feet of Jerusalem:
they have cast me quite away:
And Albion is himself shrunk to a narrow
rock in the midst of the sea!
The plains of Sussex & Surrey, their hills
of flocks & herds/No more seek to
Jerusalem nor to the sound of my
Holy-ones.
The Fifty-two Counties of England are
hardened against me/As if I was not
their Mother,
they despise me & cast me out
(79.15-21)

In this passage, the repeated images of division and contraction which are central to Blake's myth of the Fall underscore the fragmentation of the natural world, and the distancing of it and Jerusalem from the Divine Vision. Isolated, Jerusalem is hated, cast out, and no longer sought. The various spiritual locales shrink and harden against her.

In contrast, in the middle section of the poem containing Blake's portrait of the ideal Jerusalem, the parallel sentences emphasize expansiveness and loving, cooperative human activities rather than contraction and isolation. For example, whereas in the fallen world Albion "is shrunk to a narrow rock in the midst of the sea!" (79.17), in eternity Albion and his emanation, Jerusalem, overspread the earth:

London coverd the whole Earth.
England encompassd the Nations:
And all the Nations of the Earth were
seen in the Cities of Albion:
My pillars reachd from sea to sea:
London beheld me come/From my east
& from my west (79.22-25)

Blake presents images of cooperative human activites in a series of parallel images and grammatical structures:

Turkey & Grecia saw my instr[u]ments of
music, they arose
They seizd the harp: the flute: the
mellow horn of Jerusalems joy
They sounded thanksgiving in my courts
(79.48-50)

Places that were divided by the fall are connected in Eternity:

Thames poured his waters into my
basons and baths:
Medway mingled with Kishon:
Thames recievd the heavenly Jordan
(79.34-35)

By means of these parallel images, Blake is able to dramatize in the middle section of the lament the humanization and restoration of the universal society of nations, events which remind us of the grand vision of regeneration which takes place at the end of the prophecy.

Clearly then, the profusion of parallel lines in Jerusalem's lament suggests an affinity with the Lamentations and highlights Blake's rejection of eighteenth-century metrical patterns, the manifestations, he believed, of "the modern bondage of Rhyming" (*Jerusalem* 3). Whether or not Jerusalem's lament is the result of his knowledge of Lowth's ideas or simply his deep familiarity with the Bible and belief that the "Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art" (Laocoon, E 273), it is clear that the subject matter, structure, and cadences of the Lamentations of Jeremiah are present in Blake's version of lament. As Roston explains in his study of the impact of the Bible on the romantic movement, "the Bible, including the Old Testament, was the noblest and most inspired literature in the world, and the spirit of Hebrew prophecy permeated not merely Blake's verse but even his daily life" (160). Blake was able to transmute his understanding of biblical poetry into the uniquely Blakean thematic, imagistic, structural, and rhetorical features of his prophecy. And this, combined with his rejection of eighteenth-century aesthetics and his search for alternative poetics, enabled him to effect in Jerusalem's lament the prophetic resonances of Hebrew poetry and the "sublime of the Bible" (*Milton* 1).

[1] See for example Morton Paley, *The Continuing City: William Blake's* Jerusalem (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1983); Murray Roston, *Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* (Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1965); Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962).

[2] See Anne Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974); David B. Morris, *The Religious Sublime* (Kentucky: UP of Kentucky, 1972); Paley, *The Continuing City* (1983) and *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1970); Roston, *Prophet and Poet* (1965); Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

[3] David V. Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. ed., with a Commentary by Harold Bloom (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1982). *Jerusalem* and *Milton* are cited by plate and line number. All unetched works and Bloom's Commentary are cited as E, followed by the page number.

[4] Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 2 vols. (Latin ed. 1753; English trans. 1787; Germany: Georg Olms Verlag, Hildersheim, 1969). All subsequent references appear in the text.

[5] Roston 21.

[6] S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1988) 127.

[7] V. A. DeLuca, "A Wall of Words: The Sublime as Text," *Unnam'd Forms: Blake and Textuality*, ed. Nelson Hilton and Thomas A. Vogler (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) 231-34.

A Swedenborgian Bible

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Among the articles of faith of the New Jerusalem Church was that "the Books of the Word are all those which have the internal Sense" as defined by Emanuel Swedenborg.[1] The list of exclusions from the Swedenborgian Bible is formidable: Thirty-two books, about a fourth of the bulk of the Protestant canon, including Job, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Acts, and all the New Testament Epistles.

Presumably the followers of the New Jerusalem Church, such as William Blake, his friend John Flaxman, the New Church printer Robert Hindmarsh, and Blake's friend C. A. Tulk acted on the basis of the Swedenborgian canon. We know that Blake did, for in his *Jerusalem* (1804-?20) the Divine Lord builds a tomb for the dead Albion ornamented "with emblems & written verse, Spiritual Verse, order'd & measur'd" (48.6-7) which contains exactly the canon of the Bible established by Swedenborg and endorsed by Blake and others at the 1789 New Church meeting.

Since the canon of the New Church Bible is so different from that of all other Protestants, one might have expected Robert Hindmarsh, the Society's printer, to print a Bible for their use. However, the only Bible text for Swedenborgians recorded in the standard bibliography of the Bible in English is for Genesis only, and it did not appear until 1912.[2]

However, there *was* a Swedenborgian Bible issued in Blake's time, and it was available just when he was issuing his *Milton* and working on his *Jerusalem*. It is a bibliographically curious work entitled