For about two hundred generations, since 587 BCE, at the ninth of the Hebrew month of Ab, which is the traditional date of the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (see 2 Kgs 25:3; compare Jer 52:12; see Tosefta Taanit 4:10), Jews all over the world gather together and recite biblical poems reflecting over the national catastrophe. They lament over the destruction of the political centre of the State of Judah and the destruction of the central sacred place of worship.

Interestingly enough, on the 9th of Ab, the public reading is not the historical biblical accounts that preserve the story of the disaster in an orderly manner, but rather a poetic biblical book, the scroll of Lamentations. Thus, Lamentations, the dirge over the fall of Jerusalem has established the literary tradition of the kinah (lament) over the national disaster, rather than the detailed documentary prosaic account.

We observe that the biblical historiographer preserved for us an account of the destruction, yet the recited literature is not the history but the verse: why poetry and not historiography? The question is why is a poetic imaginative discourse, which does not include a historical report of the circumstances that lead to the disaster (e.g. 2 Kgs 25) the presentation of the historical catastrophe? It appears therefore that the rational, informative and documentary account is less effective than the poetic imaginative poem. Why? Let us look closely at the literary media which convey the nature and impact of the disaster.

2. Literary Media

First, we look at the prosaic account, which records the events as follows. Here follows an outline of the main events:
1. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.
2. In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month
3. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon
4. came with all his army against Jerusalem, and led siege to it.
5. They built siegeworks against it.
6. On the ninth day of the four month
7. The famine became so severe that there was no food.
8. They captured the king.
9. They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes
10. They then put out the eyes of Zedekiah.
11. They bound him and took him to Babylon.
12. In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month
13. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, came to Jerusalem.
14. He burned the house of the Lord, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem.
15. Nebuzaradan carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city.
16. The bronze pillars they carried to Babylon, they took away the pots, the shovels…
17. The captain of guard took the chief priest Seraiah,
18. the second priest Zephaniah…

This is a coherent narrative, which provides in detail the chain of events that led to the exile. There is a chronological framework, and one event leads to another in a coherent order. Each sentence is a sequence of its predecessor. The city of Jerusalem was under a siege, hence there was a famine. Consequently, the king of Jerusalem sought to escape but was captured by the Babylonian troops. As a punishment his sons were slaughtered in front of his eyes and he was blinded to capture the traumatic memory as the last event that he saw. We also have an account of the Temple’s vehicles that were removed to Babylon. It appears that the goal of the prosaic document is to present to its readers the chain of the events in a logical order; every reference is in its proper place, motivating the course of the narrative.1

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