

## Eichah Rabbah Petitha 21

Commentary on Lamentations 1:1

Rabbi Alexandri opened his discourse with the text, *And the leper in whom the plague is* (Lev. 13:45): *The leper is like the Temple; in whom the plague is*, i.e. idolatry which defiles like a plague, as it is said, *And they profaned My sanctuary and defiled it. His clothes shall be rent*, i.e. the priestly vestments; *the hair of his head shall go loose*: and so it is said, *And the covering of Judah was laid bare* (Isa. 22:8) - that which should have been covered He disclosed. *And he shall cover his upper lip*: when Israel was exiled among the nations of the world, not one of them was able to bring a word of Torah out of his mouth. *And shall cry, Unclean, unclean*: i.e. the destruction of the first and second Temples.

Rabbi Jose b. Halafta said: Whoever knows how many years Israel worshipped idols also knows when the son of David (the Messiah) will come; and we have three verses to support this statement. The first is, *Thus will I punish her for the days of the Baalim, on which she brought them offerings* (Hos. 2:15), i.e. according to the number of the days of the [worship of the] Baalim shall the visitation endure. The second is, *Even as He called and they would not listen, "So," said the Lord of Hosts, "let them call and I will not listen* (Zech. 7:13). The third is, *And when they ask, "Because of what did the Lord our God do all these thing?" you shall answer them, "because (i.e., as long as) you forsook Me and served alien gods on your own land, you will have to serve foreigners in a land not your own."* (Jer. 5:19).

Rabbi Johanan and R. Simeon b. Lakish both made a statement on this point. R. Johanan said: [This lesson may be derived from] *Because, even because* (Lev. 26:43) indicating measure for measure. R. Simeon b. Lakish said: [It may be derived from] *Your land, strangers devour it in your presence* (Isa. 1:7): i.e. as against what you have done, strangers devour it. R. Alexandri derived it from this verse, *All the days wherein the plague is in him he shall be unclean. [Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.]* (Lev. 13:46). *Ekah!*