

A Journey through Lamentations

Why read Lamentations?

Lamentations and Jeremiah

How to use the book?

A book to perform

A book to study

A book about Jesus

Lamentations among the Prophets

A book about living wisely

Lamentations among the Writings

Lamentations among Christ's people

Structure and interpretation

Poem 1:	
Poem 2:	
Poem 3:	
Poem 4:	
Poem 5:	

Outlines

Lamentations 1

1. Zion's grief (1:1–6)
THE WITNESS (SUGGEST MALE): 1:1–6 (addressing us);
2. Jerusalem's shame (1:7–11)
THE WITNESS: 1:7–11 (turning to Daughter Zion, interrupted twice)
3. Consider the sufferer (1:12–18)
DAUGHTER ZION: 1:9c, 11c (two interjections addressed to God);
DAUGHTER ZION: 1:12–16 (addressing passers-by);
THE WITNESS: 1:17 (addressing us)
4. Consider the suffering (1:18–19)
DAUGHTER ZION: 1:18–19 (addressing us);
5. A direct appeal (1:20–22)
DAUGHTER ZION: 1:20–22 (addressing God)

Lamentations 2

1. The Lord is like an enemy (2:1–6)
2. The Lord leaves behind a wasteland (2:6–10)
3. Weeping in the streets (2:11–12)
THE WITNESS: 2:1–12 (addressing us);
4. Zion's incomparable loss (2:13–19)
THE WITNESS: 1:13–19 (addressing Daughter Zion)
5. Enough is enough (2:20–22)
DAUGHTER ZION: 2:20–22 (addressing God)

Lamentations 3

1. The afflictions of the people's champion (3:1–18)
THE CHAMPION (MALE): 3:1–18 (addressing us);
2. What the champion remembers (3:19–24)
THE CHAMPION : 3:19–24 (a soliloquy)
3. The art of waiting (3:25–39)
THE SAGE (SUGGEST FEMALE): 3:25–39 (addressing us)
4. We have sinned and you have not forgiven (3:40–51)
THE CHAMPION: 3:40–51 (leading us in prayer);
5. The champion's lament (3:52–66)
THE CHAMPION: 3:52–66 (addressing God)

Lamentations 4

1. We let our children die (4:1–6)
2. We are dying too (4:7–11)
A PROPHET: 4:1–11 (speaking to us about his/her companions)
3. Why now? (4:12–16)
THE WITNESS: 4:12–16 (addressing us)
4. The captured king (4:17–20)
THE PROPHET, THE WITNESS, AND A CITIZEN IN CHORUS: 4:17–20 (addressing one another)
5. Retribution for Edom (4:20–22)
THE PROPHET: 4:21–22 (speaking in the direction of Edom and then to his/her companions)

Lamentations 5: A communal lament

1. Remember, Lord! (5:1)
ALL: 5:1
2. Homeless, weak, and weary (5:2–6)
MEN: 5:2–3
WOMEN: 5:4–6
3. Inherited punishment has destroyed them (5:7–14)
4. Woe to us, for we have sinned! (5:15–16)
5. The void at the centre (5:17–18)
MEN: 5:7–11
WOMEN: 5:12–18
6. Restore us! (5:19–22)
ALL: 5:19–22

Lamentations 1

I

- 1 **A**h! How she squats there alone,
the city, great with people.
She has become like a widow, she
was great among the nations ;
a princess among the provinces
become – ah! – a drudge.
- 2 **B**itterly she weeps at night,
tears black her cheek.
No-one is there to bring her balm,
none of her lovers ;
all her friends have broken faith,
become her bitter foes.
- 3 **C**aught into exile is Judah, from trial
and from cruel labour ;
she (yes she!) is camped among
nations,
coming never to rest.
All who chased have caught her up
in cruel straits.
- 4 **D**oleful paths to Zion, devoid
of festival guests.
All her doors are desolate,
her priests groan,
her young girls stricken. As for her
it is bitter dole.
- 5 **E**nemies have taken charge,
her foes at ease :
because the LORD has stricken her
for her egregious crimes.
Her small children walk to captivity
before the enemy.
- 6 **F**anfare, all splendour, fled away
from daughter Zion.
Her princes had become like stags
that find no forage,
who then in failing strength take
flight
before the chase.
- II
- 7 **G**rim days of Jerusalem's wandering :
she remembers
all her gorgeous things she had
from days gone by,
as her folk fell into enemy hands
with none to help.
Her enemies gaped at her and
gloated
over her downfall.
- 8 **H**einous the sin, the sin of Jerusalem ;
she's therefore become hideous.
All who honoured her abhor her
as they see her stripped.
As for her, she moans in hurt
and turns away.

9 **I**gnominy clings to her skirts,
she did not imagine it would end
this way;
inconceivably she fell,
no one comforted her.
*Look, Lord, upon my ills :
the invader is Jubilant!*

10 **K**ite-like, enemy hands hover
over her treasured keepsakes.
She has seen her sacred place
penetrated
by kingdoms you decreed must not
enter your gathering.

11 **L**aboured groans from all her people
punctuate their search for bread ;
lustrous treasures traded for scraps
to stay alive.
*Look, Lord, mark well
how loathed I am become!*

III

12 **M**ay it never be you, all you
*who pass! Mark well and see
if any misery is like my misery
with which he wrenched me,
meted out by the LORD on the day
of his menacing wrath.*

13 **N**aked flames he hurls from on high,
*forced them into my bones.
He has spread a net for my feet,
and shoved me backwards.
He has made me a desolate horror,
nauseous day and night.*

14 **O**ppressive: the yoke of my offences
*fastened by his hand .
It straddles across my poor neck ;
he saps my strength.
God has offered me to oppressors
whose onslaught I cannot
oppose.*

15 **P**roud warriors are all spurned
*by God within my walls,
who presses hordes against me
to snap my men in their prime.
Like so much wine the Lord has
trampled
pristine daughter Judah.*

16 **Q**uestioning these things I weep,
*my eyes, my eyes, tears
unquenched!
Too far from me is quiet comfort
to hope to quicken my life.
My children are a barren quagmire;
the enemy shows no quarter.*

17 **R**eaching out her hands, Zion
finds none to reassure her.
GOD has made a ruling
against Jacob :
his neighbours shall be his
rivals ;

among them Jerusalem is
become
an object of revulsion.

IV

18 **S**quarely in the right is God
*for I've spurned his
instructions.
Hear now, all peoples
and see my suffering ;
my schoolgirls and my strong young
men
are sent into subjection.*

19 **T**o my lovers I have called ;
*they turned me in.
Priests of mine and tribal elders
perished in the town
even as they scrounged for food
to stay alive.*

20 **U**nderstand, LORD, I'm undone,
*my bowels unseated,
my heart upturned inside me, for
I've been utterly rebellious.
In the street a blade bereaves ;
in the house, death is
unsheathed.*

21 **V**exful moans – it's me they hear,
*hoping in vain for a comforter.
All my avengers hear of my vice,
they gloat that you have done it.
You have brought on the day you
vowed –
so may they be as I.*

22 **W**on't you let their wickedness come
*before you? And wrench them
in the same way you wrenched me
because of my wantonness.
For very many are my wailings
and I am weary at heart.*