

Some Intro:



The book of Lamentations is a fascinating book. If God is close to the brokenhearted—and He is—then one of the places we can see that is in the remarkable structure of this book. Lamentations describes a world that appears to have fallen completely apart, but the book itself is anything but chaotic.

The Structure of Lamentations



22 • 22 • 66 • 22 • 22

There are five chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5 each contain **22 verses**, corresponding to the **22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet**. Chapter 3, which stands in the middle, contains **66 verses—three times 22**.

The first four chapters are alphabetic acrostics. You may be familiar with this from Psalm 119. Each section progresses through the Hebrew Aleph-Bet.

Lamentations 1:1-22

Lam 1:1

אֵיכָה יֹשְׁבָה בְּדָד הָעִיר רַבְּתִי עִם הִיתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה
רַבְּתִי בְּגוֹיִם שְׂרָתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת הִיתָה לִמָּס: ס

Lam 1:2

בָּכּוּ תִבְכֶּה בְּלִילָה וְדָמְעָתָה עַל לַחֲיָהּ אֵין-לָהּ מְנַחֵם
מִכָּל-אַהֲבִיהָ כָּל-רַעֲיָהּ בָּגְדוּ בָּהּ הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֵיבִים: ס

Lam 1:3

גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה מִעֲנִי וּמִרְבַּע עֲבֹדָה הִיא יֹשְׁבָה בְּגוֹיִם לֹא
מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ כָּל-רֹדְפֶיהָ הַשִּׁיגוּהָ בֵּין הַמִּצָּרִים: ס

Lam 1:4

דְּרָכֶי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת מִבְּלִי בָּאִי מוֹעֵד כָּל-שַׁעְרֶיהָ שׁוּמְמִין
כִּהְיִינָה נֶאֱנָחִים בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נוֹגָת וְהִיא מֵרָלָה: ס

In chapter 1, the pattern is easy to see: Aleph begins the first section, Bet the second, Gimel the third, and the pattern continues through the alphabet.

But in chapter 2 something unusual happens.

Lamentations 2:1-22

Lam 2:15

סִפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כְּפִים כָּל-עַבְרֵי דָרְךָ שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֹאשָׁם עַל-בֵּת
יְרוּשָׁלַם הַזֹּאת הָעִיר שִׁיאֲמָרוּ כְּלִילַת יָפִי מָשׁוּשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ: ס

Lam 2:16

פָּצוּ עָלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם כָּל-אוֹיְבֶיךָ שָׁרְקוּ וַיַּחֲרִקוּ-שֵׁן אָמְרוּ בְּלַעְנוּ אֶת
זֶה הַיּוֹם שִׁקְוִינָהוּ מִצָּאֵנוּ רֹאִינוּ: ס

Lam 2:17

עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם בַּעַע אֲמָרְתוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי-קֶדֶם הָרָם
וְלֹא חָמַל וַיִּשְׁמַח עָלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב הָרִים קָרַן צָרֶיךָ: ס

Lam 2:18

צָעַק לִבִּם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי חוֹמַת בֵּית-צִיּוֹן הוֹרִידִי כִנְחָל דָּמְעָה יוֹמָם
וְלִילָה אֶל-תִּתֵּנִי פּוֹגַת לָךְ אֶל-תִּתֵּנִי בֵּת-עֵינֶיךָ: ס

The acrostic continues, but **Peh** (פ) comes before **Ayin** (ע). In Hebrew the letter Peh is the word for **mouth** and Ayin is the word for **eye**. The same unusual order occurs again in chapters 3 and 4.

The rabbis noticed this too and offered a fascinating interpretation.

Sanhedrin 104 b

With regard to the verse: “They have opened their mouths against you” (Lamentations 2:16), Rava says that Rabbi Yoḥanan says: For what reason did the prophet precede the verse beginning with the letter peh (פ) to the verse beginning with the letter ayin (ע) in several chapters of Lamentations? Since peh (פ) means mouth and ayin (ע) means eye, it is for the spies who said with their mouths [בְּפִיהֶם] what they did not see with their eyes [בְּעֵינֵיהֶם].

They connected **Peh before Ayin—mouth before eye—with the spies who spoke with their mouths what they had not truly seen with their eyes**. We won’t go into all of the reasoning why the first chapter could be one order and the other chapters a different order but it is definitely a mystery. The order of the first chapter is correct and the rest seem to have the mouth before the eye. It is a striking rabbinic meditation on speaking before rightly seeing. It is almost as if Jeremiah is seeing rightly, but the state of the rest of the community has not yet been put in right order.

Then we come to the middle of the book.

Lamentations 3:1-66

Lam 3:7	גָּדַר בְּעָדֵי וְלֹא אֶצֵּא הַכְּבִיד נַחֲשָׁתִי:	Lam 3:1	אֲנִי הַגִּבֹּר רָאֵה עֲנִי בְּשִׁבְט עֲבָרְתּוֹ:
Lam 3:8	גַּם כִּי אֲזַעַק וְאֲשׁוּעַ שְׁתָּם תַּפְלֹתִי:	Lam 3:2	אוֹתִי נָהַג וַיִּלְךְ חֶשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹר:
Lam 3:9	גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בַּגִּזִּית נְתִיבֹתִי עָוָה: ס	Lam 3:3	אֲדָּ בִּי יֹשֵׁב יִהְיֶה יָדּוֹ כָּל־הַיּוֹם: ס
Lam 3:10	דָּב אֲרֹב הוּא לִי אֲרִיָּה בַּמִּסְתָּרִים:	Lam 3:4	בָּלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹלֵי שֹׁפָר עֲצֻמוֹתִי:
Lam 3:11	דְּרָכִי סוֹרֵר וַיַּפְשִׁחֵנִי שְׁמֵנִי שָׁמֶם:	Lam 3:5	בָּנָה עָלַי וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה:
Lam 3:12	דָּרָךְ קִשְׁתּוֹ וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי כַּמֶּטְרָא לַחֲץ: ס	Lam 3:6	בַּמַּחֲשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי כְּמַתִּי עוֹלָם: ס

Chapter 3 does not weaken the pattern—it **intensifies it**. Instead of one alphabetic section per letter, each Hebrew letter begins **three consecutive verses**: Aleph, Aleph, Aleph; Bet, Bet, Bet; and so on. The structural center of the book becomes the place of the greatest concentration of order. It is as if every thought and meditation is multiplied.

And then something unexpected happens.

Lamentations 5:1-22

Lam 5:1

זָכַר יְהוָה מִהֲהָיָה לָנוּ הַבַּיִת וּרְאָה אֶת־חֲרָפָתָנוּ:

Lam 5:2

נִחַלְתָּנוּ נֶהֱפַכָה לְזָרִים בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכָרִים:

Lam 5:3

יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ אֵין אָב אֲמַתִּינוּ כְּאֶלְמָנוֹת:

Lam 5:4

מִיָּמֵינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שְׁתִּינוּ עֲצֵינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ:

Lam 5:5

עַל צוּאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדְּפָנוּ יִגְעֵנוּ לֹא הוֹנַח לָנוּ:

Lam 5:6

מִצָּרִים נָתַנוּ יָד אֲשׁוּר לְשֹׁבַע לָחֶם:

Lam 5:7

אֲבִיתֵנוּ חָטְאוּ אִינֶם אֲנַחְנוּ עֲוֹנֵיהֶם סָבְלוּנוּ:

Chapter 5 still has **22 verses**, but the visible alphabetic sequence disappears. The number of the alphabet remains, while the orderly acrostic itself is no longer obvious. This is also the first time in the book where the author moves from contemplative thoughts and observations to a communal prayer. But there is still a message behind the first letters that is not fully clear but does give clues.

Lamentations 5:1–22

Recognizable Initial-Letter Words

ז נ י מ ע מ א ע ב ע נ ש ב ז ש נ ע א ל ה כ

unfaithful ones

זנים

Hebrew

people

עמא

Aramaic

thick cloud

עב

Hebrew

punishment

ענש

Heb./Aram.

plunder, prey

בז

Hebrew

Your God

אלהך

Aramaic

And even among those apparently unordered first letters, we find striking Hebrew and Aramaic word clusters connected with **unfaithfulness, the people, punishment, plunder, and “your God.”**

So as you read the book of Lamentations, there is what you are reading and then there is the supernatural order behind it all.

We wanted to ask y’all, who wrote the book of Lamentations? Jeremiah! Now, we have to address that there is some discrepancy, since Lamentations does not explicitly name an author. Some people argue that it is written by some unknown author, others say that it is a collection of lamentations and poems from many different authors. Since the text does not explicitly name an author, we cannot say with 100% certainty that it is Jeremiah, BUT.... we want to provide some evidence as to why we believe that Jeremiah is the most likely author.

First, 2 Chronicles 35:25 says, “Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments.” This was a lament for the death of King Josiah specifically, but it does prove that Jeremiah was known for writing laments, and that these laments were written down, for all Israel to see, in a book of laments.

Second, there are similarities, and almost exact parallels in certain verses in Jeremiah and Lamentations (Lam 1:15, Jer 8:21; Lam 1:2, Jer 30:14, etc)

Third, the book of Lamentations describes the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of the people in graphic detail and deep emotional impact, so it was almost certainly written by an eye witness. Jeremiah spent his whole life prophesying to the people of Jerusalem this very destruction coming upon them, and even laments the coming destruction in the book of Jeremiah itself. With all this evidence, we find the most compelling argument is that Jeremiah is the author of Lamentations. If you still disagree, know that the impact the Lord is bringing through this message does not hinge on the authorship of the book, so do not get lost in endless genealogies and quarreling, stay focused on what God is speaking to our body!

(If we want, here are reliable sources that agree that Jeremiah's authorship is likely: Rashi, Dake, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, and others).

Lamentations is a book that few Christians truly read, and even fewer understand. Knowing the historical context is crucial to understanding what Jeremiah was thinking, feeling, and trying to communicate as he wrote this book. Lamentations was likely written between the years of 586 and 575 B.C., which means it was written around the third and final invasion by Babylon, when the city of Jerusalem was ultimately destroyed. You should remember this slide from our Daniel 1 Foundations teaching.

DO NOT READ

DANIEL'S POLITICAL WORLD

The Political Background to the Book of Daniel (639–586 BC)



Derived from various sources including: "The Coming Prince" by Sir Robert Anderson, and Logos Bible Software Timeline, LCM Daniel Foundations Notes

Jeremiah was alive and prophesying from the reign of King Josiah until even after the destruction of Jerusalem. He would have lived through one of the great revivals of Torah in Israel's history, under Josiah, and then seen the ever increasing depravity of the people and the increasing discipline that came upon the people. Not only this, he would have seen the righteous Josiah, not heed the voice of God, and die fighting King Neco because of it. He would have seen the wickedness of kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Remember this slide:

DO NOT READ

FIVE ROUNDS OF DISCIPLINE

Leviticus 26:14–33 (ESV)

1. Initial Discipline — Panic, disease, fever, futile labor, military defeat (Lev. 26:16–17)
2. Land becomes hostile — heavens like iron, earth like bronze (Lev. 26:18–20)
3. Wild Beasts — Animals kill children, destroy livestock, empty the roads (Lev. 26:21–22)
4. Sword and Siege — Pestilence, famine, ten women baking bread in one oven (Lev. 26:23–26)
5. Scattered among the nations — Cannibalism, destroyed sanctuaries, desolated land (Lev. 26:27–33)

Imagine yourself as Jeremiah: Seeing a great revival of love and obedience to Torah, but also seeing righteous leaders fall, the people running to sexual immorality and idolatry, and then seeing the very city that had previously turned to the Lord burning, with mothers eating their own children, people taken into exile, and the very temple of God torn down and on fire!

Lamentations 1 — His Perspective

We want to share with you our observations from each of these chapters. Chapter 1 written from Jeremiah's perspective, what he sees when he looks at Jerusalem.

It begins:

"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."

Jeremiah looks at Jerusalem and describes what he sees, loneliness, devastation, abandonment, and the consequences of where they have been. But Jeremiah is also a righteous man, so his perspective is Godly. He rightly divides what he is seeing and is able to see clearly how his people got to this place.

Then we get to the verse that corresponds with the letter Tet:

Lamentations 1:9

"Her filthiness clung to her skirts; she did not consider her future. Her fall was astounding; there was none to comfort her."

She did not consider her future.

She didn't consider where the road she was on would eventually lead. She moved forward outside of right order with the Father without considering the consequences.

elaborate:

In our personal studies, this led us to search out the well known acrostic in Psalm 119 and we were encouraged by the connection.

Psalm 119:65–67:

"You are good to Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.
Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.
Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I keep Your word."

There is almost an answer in Psalm 119 to what we see in Lamentations:

Lamentations — she did not consider.
Psalm 119 — teach me good judgment.

Lamentations — her fall was astounding.
Psalm 119 — before I was afflicted, I went astray.

The answer to poor discernment isn't simply **trying harder** to make better decisions.

Father, teach me to see correctly.

Teach me good judgment.

Teach me to consider where this road leads according to Your Word.

Chapter 1 — Jeremiah is looking at what happened and how they got here.

Lamentations 1

Jeremiah's Biblical Perspective

“She did not consider her future.”

Lamentations 1:9

He sees what happened — and understands how they got here.

Now Chapter 2 changes the perspective.

It isn't simply what Jeremiah sees anymore.

What has God done?

Lamentations 2:1

“How the Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion with the cloud of His anger! He has hurled down the splendor of Israel from heaven to earth...”

And then the language continues:

2:2 The Lord has swallowed up...& He has torn down..

2:3 He has cut off... & He has withdrawn His right hand...

2:4 He has bent His bow and slain all who were pleasing to the eye

2:7 The Lord has rejected His altar and abandoned his sanctuary...

He recognizes the hand of God in what has happened.

Then we come to the Tet verse:

Lamentations 2:9

“Her gates have sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and broken her bars. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD.”

Chapter 1, Tet:

“She did not consider her future.”

Chapter 2, Tet:

“The law is no more... her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD.”

They didn't consider where they were going, and now they are struggling to hear where to go.

Go back to Psalm 119 — Tet:

66: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.”

And:

68 “You are good and You do good; teach me Your statutes.”

There is something important here:

Good discernment begins with recognizing that God is good.

Chapter two is in order of the alphabet, so Jeremiah is laying out that what the Lord has done is orderly. He recognizes:

God has allowed this.

God is sovereign in this.

God is still speaking through this.

That doesn't mean everything that happened was good.

It means God is still God in the middle of what happened.

Remember how we told you that starting in chapter 2 the order of Ayin and Pey were switched? This naturally draws our attention to verses 16 and 17.

All your enemies open their mouths
wide against you;

they scoff and gnash their teeth
and say, "We have swallowed her up.
This is the day we have waited for;
we have lived to see it."

¹⁷ The LORD has done what he planned;
he has fulfilled his word,
which he decreed long ago.
He has overthrown you without pity,
he has let the enemy gloat over you,
he has exalted the horn^[e] of your foes.

What you are going through may look like chaos, but you can take comfort in the fact that in the midst of people making their own choices, God is still carrying out the Word that He spoke long ago.

Lamentations 2

What God Did According to His Word

The LORD has done what he planned;
he has **fulfilled his word**,
which he decreed long ago.

Lamentations 2:17

This was not outside His sovereignty.
He fulfilled what He had spoken.

Then we come to chapter 3 which is all about how all of this is affecting him:

1: I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light.

It is now personal as he continues:

He has made my skin and flesh grow old

He has walled me in

He has barred my way

He has pierced my heart
He has broken my teeth...

Jeremiah isn't hiding what this has done to him.

He is hurting.

His cry is not heard.

He cannot escape.

As a result of the decisions that others have made...

And eventually he says:

3:17–18

“I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, ‘My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD.’”

He has reached the place where even his hope in the LORD is being affected.

But look at how Scripture is leading us on how we come to the right conclusions:

We started off with personal, biblical observations about the situation around us

We then moved to Biblical conclusions about what God is doing in our midst

And now the prophet is being honest about how he is affected by what’s going on.

The pattern of how we come to right conclusions is forming from the scriptures, Jeremiah is about to make a turn in his own heart because up until this point his words have been exploring the miry pit that he is in, but he will not stay there...

3:21

“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”

Nothing around Jeremiah has changed.

What changes is what Jeremiah chooses to remember. Gods character!

3:22–24

Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed.

His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning.

GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS.

Jeremiah finds hope by remembering that God is Love and we are still here for a reason, the Lord is loving and compassionate. If we are still breathing and on this side of eternity, we need to fight from and over the sun perspective on our circumstances.

Elaborate on no one can stop your calling but you!!

(possibly [Jas 1:17 ESV] "17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." If it is from God, it is by definition GOOD AND PERFECT, whether you think it is or not!)

And then we arrive at the **3 verses** that correspond with the letter tet.

Lamentations 3:25–27

TOV — "The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him."

TOV — "It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD."

TOV — "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young."

TOV. TOV. TOV.

Chapter 3 — This has deeply affected me, but I remember who He is.

Great is YOUR faithfulness. Not my faithfulness, not their faithfulness but God's faithfulness

And when I remember who He is, I can finally see clearly again:

Now let's go back to Psalm 119 TET.

In these eight verses, the Hebrew word TOV meaning good appears six times.

Let's look at just a couple:

Psalm 119:68

“You are good, and what You do is good; teach me Your decrees.”

YOU are good.

What YOU do is good.

Then:

Psalm 119:71

“It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn Your decrees.”

Notice what he does not say.

He doesn't say affliction feels good.

He doesn't say everything that happened was good.

He says:

“It was good FOR ME...”

Because God used the affliction to teach me something I wasn't learning before.

That takes us all the way back to Chapter 1:

“She did not consider her future.”

Psalm 119:

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge.”

And now:

“It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn...”

What I would not learn while going my own way, God can teach me under the yoke.

Lamentations 3

How This Is Affecting Jeremiah

I have been deprived of peace...
all that I had hoped from the LORD is gone.

Lamentations 3:17-18

Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope.

Lamentations 3:21

He is honest about what this has done to him —
but he does not stay there.

Chapter 4 widens the lens again:

How have they been affected?

Jeremiah looks across the entire community:

4:1 The gold has lost its luster...

4:4 The children beg for bread...

4:5 Those who ate delicacies are destitute...

4:7 The princes are no longer recognized...

4:13 The prophets have sinned... & The priests have shed righteous blood...

Everyone has been affected.

Jeremiah's language in chapter 4 has been focused on the effects that all of this is having on the community... he is using words like they/them, but something is about to switch in him.

4:17

"Moreover, **our** eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from **our** towers we watched for a nation that could not save **us**."

Lamentations 4

How This Is Affecting Them... and Us

The gold has lost its luster...
The children beg for bread...
Those who ate delicacies are destitute...

OUR eyes failed,
looking in vain for help...

Lamentations 4:17

He stops only describing **THEM**
and begins speaking as **US**.

Although all has not been resolved, Jeremiah moves from an individual perspective to a communal one. His language becomes our we us. This is so key because he stops standing at a distance and commenting and observing and enters into the situation with the rest of the community. This is key to the final place the book has been leading to.

And that brings us to Chapter 5.

Lamentations 5 — How Do We Respond Together?

Chapter 5 pulls everything together, now it becomes corporate prayer.

5:1

“Remember, LORD, what has happened to **us**; look, and see **our** disgrace.”

The language changes:

Our inheritance...
Our homes...
Our fathers...
Our children...
Our hearts...
Our eyes...

This isn't **their** problem anymore.

It isn't just **Jeremiah's** problem.

This is us, and we need to come before the Lord together.

5:16

“Woe to us, for we have sinned!”

Sounds a lot like Daniel's prayer, And where does all of this finally lead?

5:21–22

“Restore us to Yourself, LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.”

The entire book ends with a communal petition before God.

Restore us!

We don't get stuck in endless observations, discussions, searchings of heart, looking for more information, but rather a communal prayer lifting up our requests to the Lord.

Lamentations 5

How WE Respond

Remember, LORD, what has happened to **US**.

Lamentations 5:1



Woe to **US**, for **WE** have sinned!

Lamentations 5:16



Restore **US** to Yourself, LORD,
that **WE** may return.

Lamentations 5:21

RESTORE US

Coming to Right Conclusions

It starts with an **INDIVIDUAL** making biblical observations about what has transpired.



It moves to what **GOD** is doing according to His Word.



It then moves to how the **MAN** is affected by what has happened, with a turn to hope in the Lord's character.



It then moves to observing what is happening in the **PEOPLE**, with a turn to include himself as part of the community.



It then results in a **COMMUNAL PRAYER**, lifting up our requests to God.

Our Title Slide is



And it is meant to picture Jeremiah coming to the right conclusions, regardless of his circumstances. But Jeremiah does not end alone, this would be a more accurate image of what Lamentations 5 depicts and what we, as a body are aiming for!



Lord for YOUR GLORY...RESTORE US...

It starts with an individual making biblical observations about what has transpired.

It moves to what God is doing according to His Word

It then moves to how the man is affected by what has happened, along with a turn, putting his hope in the Lord's character

It then moves to observing what is happening in the people, with a turn to include himself as part of the community

It then results in a communal prayer, lifting up our requests to God