
The Hebrew word badad, usually translated "lonely," is often associated with betah "secure," in the Bible, and has a similar meaning. In the opening verse of Lamentations the rendering should be: "The city that was full of people, that dwelt securely, how like a widow has she become." The needs of the acrostic compelled the author to change the order of the elements in the verse. (Hebrew)


After four alphabetic acrostics in Lam. 1 - 4 the 22 verses of ch. 5 appear to be a song awaiting alphabetization. The chapter differs also in other respects, such as length and meter. It can, however, be reconstructed as an acrostic giving a message: zonim 'am 'aib ones buz senahah 'eloheka. Translation: "I scorn the apostates, (namely) the people punishing (them) with disdain, as your God utters a lament." (German)


In contrast to T. F. McDaniel and especially D. Hillers, it is not necessary to emend the consonantal text of Lamentations so radically. If one takes into consideration the use of -y for the third masculine and feminine singular, a variety of nuances for prepositions, dative suffixes, ellipsis, double-duty suffixes, and especially the scripto defectiva, obscure passages in Lamentations take on plausible meanings. This is illustrated in numerous passages throughout the book.


One of the difficulties in teaching or preaching from the book of Lamentations is its apparent lack of logical arrangement. True, the first four chapters form four acrostic poems, but this artificial order only heightens the apparent lack of organization characterizing the individual poems and the book as a whole. Close examination of the book's macrostructure, however, reveals that far from being disorganized, this lament exhibits a literary architecture that is sophisticated, artistic and emotive. The poet employs two schemes of arrangement simultaneously: (1) the so-called qinah or lament pattern of Hebrew poetry and (2) a chiastic structure embracing the book as a whole.


Although all grieving people do not go through the same stages nor do they progress at the same rate, many people do go through such stages as the following: shock, lamentations, withdrawal, frustration, panic, depression,
detachment, adaptation, reinvestment, and growth. There is often an interaction in these stages between stress and physical symptoms, and many grievers report that religion gives a good philosophical arena in which to work through their grief.

GORDIS, ROBERT, COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT OF LAMENTATIONS. Jewish Quarterly Review. 1967, 58(1), 14 - 33.
A careful textual study of the text of Lamentations, chapters 3 ff, with special attention to the kinah form. (Part Two)

Lam 5:22 poses a problem with regard to what is an appropriate close for a poem. Evaluates various proposed translations in light of the structure of the total argument and discusses the probability of this argument making sense to a specific group of people with a distinct frame of mind and ideology. The verse should be translated (pace Gordis) 'even though you had despised us greatly / and were very angry with us.'

The Targum uses "wood ashes" for MT "dust," thus establishing a direct link between the destruction of the Temple and the Akedah, the sacrifice of Isaac. Wood ashes, not dust, brings to mind the ashes of Isaac who was replaced by the ram substitute, symbolic of God's redemption.

Haggadic midrashim are richly interwoven with folk narrative materials. Comparative methods of folklore research have traditionally been applied to the analysis of narratives in midrashic texts to demonstrate the connections and reciprocal influences between Hebrew literature and other cognate, or otherwise relevant, folk literatures. Continues this scholarly tradition with some innovation. The comparison is informed by a wide perspective that views cultural discourses as an ongoing interaction in which historical and existential experiences are transmitted in narrative forms. (Hebrew)

Despite its exilic setting, Lamentations does not focus on the loss of the land. Rather, the greatest suffering results from experiencing God as punishing judge instead of as comforter. Items like land and history come into their own when the relationship with God is fully in order. In such a relationship land is a free gift of God's graciousness.
History is not the only vehicle for God's revelation. Passages in Lamentations demonstrate that references to foxes prowling around Jerusalem or people engaging in cannibalism during a siege may be traditional ways of depicting the severity of suffering. Though Jerusalem's fall was the fulfillment and confirmation of covenantal theology, reassurance came to the nation through the religious experiences of individuals. What individual Israelites had found to be true in their private lives is the basis for confidence and hope at Jerusalem's fall.

Five fragments from Qumran Cave IV were seen to belong to a lament over Jerusalem and given the title 4Q179 Lamentations by J. M. Allegro in spite of the fact that this is not a portion of the canonical book. The text contains many biblical allusions, and the text of at least ten canonical books is drawn on to fill lacunae and make sense of the total work. The destruction of Jerusalem which is here lamented may well be that by Antiochus IV Epiphanes spoken of in 1 Macc. 1.

Each of the first two alphabetical songs forms a unity with a beginning, a culmination, and an end. Together they describe the disaster that has befallen the city and the people, and interpret it as God's punishment. The third chapter forms the center of the book and affirms that while the catastrophe was a punishment, it is not the final rejection of the people. Chap. 4, therefore, views the punishment as complete and suggests that the people pray to God with a readiness for repentance. This repentance takes place in chap. 5. Each chapter consists of a "fact half" and an "interpretation half."

Chapter five of Lamentations differs radically from the preceding four chapters. The background of this chapter seems to be the attack on Jerusalem in 168 BC by Antiochus IV. This thesis is born out by an examination of the verses seriatim. The views of single authorship are rejected, and the proposed settings of 586 and 320 BC are similarly rejected.

There are five discernible voices (personae) in Lamentations. Distinguishing these five separable personae does not destroy the unity of the book. On the contrary, the variety of voices sketches the topography of a unique spiritual
consciousness which can realize itself only by projecting its grief in its constituent phases by adopting different personae. This ultimate unity emerges as a single controlling awareness from a detailed examination of the five personae, who are: (1) someone who approaches the city of Jerusalem only to find it deserted and forsaken, (2) Jerusalem herself depicted as the voice of a woman in lamentation, (3) a veteran soldier who has endured hard use in the war, (4) an average citizen who is both amazed and somewhat gratified at the reversal which has reduced his leaders to beggary, and (5) a choral voice composed of the people of Jerusalem as a community.

Lerner, Meron Bialik, "Ha-se'or Sebbahh." Leshonenu, 1989, 53(3/4), 287-290. The phrase, ha-se'or sebbahh appears in a homily on Jer 16:11 in Lamentations Rabba, Proem 2. Since this means "the yeast in it" or "the fermentation in it" editors and commentators have emended it to ha- ma'or sebbahh, "the light in it." However, manuscripts verify the original reading, which means "the fermentative essence of the Torah." An appendix traces the history of this homily. (Hebrew)

McDANIEL, THOMAS F., "THE ALLEGED SUMERIAN INFLUENCE UPON LAMENTATIONS." Vetus Testamentum, 1968, 18(2), 198 - 209. Presents and evaluates the parallel motifs appearing in both Hebrew and Sumerian (early 2nd millenium). Since the suggested parallel motifs discussed have at best only general - and quite natural - similarities, and in light of the difficulties encountered in accounting for the transmission of this literary genre down to mid-sixth century Palestine, it seems best to abandon any claim of literary dependence or influence of the Sumerian lamentations on the biblical Lamentations.

Moore, Michael S., "HUMAN SUFFERING IN LAMENTATIONS." Revue Biblique, 1983, 90(4), 534 - 555. Setting aside the historical problems with Lamentations, we see in a closer reading of the deeper structure of the five chapters a pattern in which the theme of human suffering is interwoven throughout the book. Hermann Wiesmann rejected an external schema in favor of focusing on a mass of internal data on suffering among people arranged by age, sex and social groups. Lamentations provided and still provides the essential element which every survivor, even those of the holocaust, needs to carry on - hope.

Sabar, Yona, "LEL-HUZA: STORY AND HISTORY IN A CYCLE OF LAMENTATIONS FOR THE NINTH OF AB IN THE JEWISH NEO-ARAMAIC DIALECT OF ZAKHO." J of Semitic Studies, 1976, 21(1), 138 - 162. Jewish mothers of Zakho, Kurdistan, passed on a traditional cycle of songs and stories to their daughters. Three themes, dealing with inter-religious conflict, the persecution and salvation(?) of the righteous, and the sacrifice of the innocent, are here presented in neo-Aramaic (Roman script) with literal
translation.

A reconstruction of Lam 1:20 is proposed which makes better sense of the text, is true to Hebrew thought, accounts for the different readings of the MT and the versions, and is congruent with the thought pattern of and poetic structure in Lamentations.

The book of Lamentations as a whole is a qinah, consisting of three chapters, followed by two chapters. The first section falls into a 2:1 pattern on the basis of the types of acrostics; chaps. 1 - 2 are incomplete and chap. 3 is complete. The second section also consists of a 2:1 pattern, in which chap. 4 is made up of couplets of bicolon and chap. 5 of bicolon only. Chaps. 1 - 4 contain acrostics, but not chap. 5. Chap. 5 is a vital part of the whole, essential to its structure.

Examines the variety of exegetical techniques and allusions employed in Rabbinic midrashic tales, using examples from the stories of the lamentations over the Exile, the death of Esau, David's laying foundations of Temple, and the purification of Tiberias.

Proposes a hermeneutical investigation of an aspect of the spirituality of the prophet Jeremiah: his attitude as the praying prophet. Examines texts from the book of Jeremiah dealing with the accounts of his vocation and from the so-called Lamentations. Rejection by his listeners coupled with extraordinary intimacy of life with God characterize this man's image. In his attempts to overcome crisis, the dialogue of Jeremiah with God is transformed into a prayer of a new character. What is the basis of Jeremiah's constancy in prayer and intercession? The leit-motiv of Jeremian theology is established in the word swb = to change the direction of one's way, to return. Jeremiah prays for his people in the hope that they will be converted from their rejection of covenantal ways and return to God. (Italian)

Urbrock, William J., CREATION 1: A PLAY FOR VOICES. Currents in Theology and Mission, 1979, 6(2), 68 - 76.
In making the Sabbath a day of rest, God gave Israel a special way to maintain identity for a life in exile. This drama uses quotations from the priestly creation account, Lamentations, Second Isaiah, Job, Ps. 8, and Enuma Elish to
illustrate how creation theology can arise out of an experience of the absence of God.


The key element in the lament's structure, the transition from suffering to praise, is rooted in the lament's function as an appeal to God who can change the situation. Laments reflecting suffering and praises expressing joy are both essential elements in human existence and relationship to God. Examined are (1) psalms of lament, (2) the major dimensions of lament (complaints against God, society, enemies, self), (3) national laments, (4) individual laments, (5) laments and confessions of guilt or protests of innocence, (6) laments of the mediator. Laments are to be found throughout the OT including historical narratives, Psalms, Lamentations, the sufferings expressed by Jeremiah, Job, and the suffering servant passages that form a transition to Christ's sufferings.


The "Servant of the Lord" in the servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah refers to the cultic-center city of Zion - Jerusalem. Because Zion-Jerusalem is closely identified with the nation Israel, the individualistic interpretation and the corporate interpretation merge. Compares parallels between the images used in the servant songs and statements found in other literature uttering laments over the fall of a cultic-center city. Within the servant songs themselves, the tasks of proclaiming God's judgment (first song), of bringing the exiles home (second song), of offering itself in silence to its oppressors (third song), and of bearing the sins of the people (fourth song) are fulfilled in the destruction and restoration of Zion-Jerusalem.

Wolfers, David, Job: The Third Cycle, Dor Le Dor, 1988, 17(1), 19-25.

Rejects the view that Job 24-27 is a textually corrupt or truncated "third cycle." Chap. 23 deals with the biblical concept of "being cut off." Chap. 24 is a historical document describing the destruction wrought by Sennacherib. It can be compared to the Lamentations of Ipuwer and the Babylonian Theodicy. It is a lament on the vanishing of the compassionate God.

WOLFF, HANS WALTER, DER AUFRUF ZUR VOLKSKLAGE (The Convocation to the Festival of Lamentation), Zeitschrift fur die Alte testamentliche Wissenschaft, 1964, 7, 48 - 56

Although the national lamentations have been variously examined, there is not sufficient clarity on the question of how the national festivals of lamentations came into being. Because they were usually not fixed according to calendar, a definite form of convocation must be assumed. The form of this convocation, with its clear structure and its specific theme, can be
recognized in a multitude of prophetic examples. Where the texts form several stanzas, the summons to a national festival of lamentation make the procedure of the convocation of various groups especially easy to recognize. The abundance of imperative instructions permit a reconstruction of the lamentation festivals themselves. (German)