

Lamentations Outline

Introduction: The book of Lamentations has been traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah, however there is really no Biblical basis for this. Lamentations is series of five poems all describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. The Hebrew title for the book is *Ekah*, which means “How” in Hebrew. This is really the best way to understand these poems- all of them trying to understand how such destruction could happen, and how faith might survive in the face of it.

Stylistically, the poems in the book of Lamentations are fascinating. The book is written largely in what is known as the Qinah meter, where a longer line of three beats is followed by a shorter line of two beats. This meter is used exclusively in lament poetry. Further, the majority of the book, Chapters 1-4 are written as alphabetical acrostics. This means that each line begins with a different letter of the alphabet starting with *Aleph*, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and ending in *Tav*, the last letter. While this exists in the Psalms, this device marks Lamentations. It is as if the author of the book is so caught up in grief, the structure is needed to provide enough form to keep the pain from being overwhelming.

Chapter 1: The city like a lonely widow; Jerusalem trampled as if in a wine press

Chapter 2: The Lord has become like an enemy; the prophets saw deceptive visions

Chapter 3: A first person account; destruction but also hope

Chapter 4: No one believed this could happen in Jerusalem- the priests and prophets misled
The people

Chapter 5: Help! Don't forget us forever

Texts to know: “How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations.” (Lamentations 1:1)