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Expressions of Grief in the Book of Lamentations:
A Journey into the Mourning Process

by
Cindy G. Enger

The biblical Book of Lamentations is a literary work written in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 587 BCE. It is a book about profound loss and devastating pain. In this paper, I first discuss a number of areas in which scholars have engaged in research and interpretation of the Book of Lamentations. Specifically, I examine the following: date of composition, place of composition, authorship, nature of the composition, form, genre, influence and theology. Approaching the biblical text in this way, I situate Lamentations in time and place and demonstrate the complexities of understanding the text as part of the ancient Israelite literary and cultural milieu.

At the center and heart of this paper, however, is the awareness that while Lamentations memorializes a particular moment in time that impacted on a specific culture, it also brings to life timeless and universal responses to loss. As such, the biblical text continues to speak to us today, far removed as we are from either the ancient Israelite cultural and literary milieu or the destruction of the Temple and the devastation of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

In this paper, I propose that Lamentations can serve as a resource to facilitate the process of mourning loss and healing. I discuss the process of mourning ordinary loss as well as the process of recovery from traumatic loss. With regard to both, I explore the expressions of grief contained in the Book of Lamentations. In doing so, I conclude that Lamentations is not a journey *through* the mourning process but, rather, represents a journey *into* the mourning process. In its voice of pain, the text invites us to enter its

world and bear witness to all that was lost with the destruction of Jerusalem. Simultaneously, the biblical text invites the modern reader to enter our own inner worlds. In so doing, it grants permission to feel. That is the path to healing.

And yet, notwithstanding the hopefulness with which I regard the possibility that Lamentations might serve as a resource in the process of mourning loss and healing, I conclude this paper with a note of strong reservation. From a feminist perspective, the possibility of utilizing the biblical text in this way poses serious difficulties. In Lamentations, Jerusalem is personified as a woman in mourning. She is a mother. She is a once married woman who has no means of financial support. She is also a survivor of sexual and domestic violence. The personification of Jerusalem in this way effectively describes the suffering that permeated Jerusalem during and after its destruction. The use of such language, however, raises real concerns and requires that we pause and consider whether Lamentations can provide any assistance in the process of healing from loss. A feminist reading and interpretation of Lamentations, in fact, suggests that the biblical text itself is in need of healing. That healing appears to be our task.

Expressions of Grief in the Book of Lamentations: A Journey into the Mourning Process

by

Cindy G. Enger

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With thanks to Elinor
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INTRODUCTION

The biblical Book of Lamentations is a literary work written in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 587 BCE. It is a book about profound loss and devastating pain.

A great deal has been written recently about the Book of Lamentations. And yet, critical study in no way has been exhausted. Rather, scholarly debate remains in nearly every area of research and interpretation. The existing scholarship has taken various approaches to the study of the text. No one study of Lamentations has the final word on the subject. Depending on one's approach to or focal point of study, different areas or issues will assume greater (and lesser) priority than others.

In this paper, I first discuss a number of areas in which scholars have engaged in research and interpretation of the Book of Lamentations. Specifically, I examine the following: date of composition, place of composition, authorship, nature of the composition, form, genre, influence and theology. Approaching the biblical text in this way, I situate Lamentations in time and place and demonstrate the complexities of understanding the text as part of the ancient Israelite literary and cultural milieu.

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Chapter 1

HISTORY OF RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

A great deal has been written recently about the biblical Book of Lamentations.[1] Studies on the subject, however, have tended to focus on certain questions more than others. W.C. Gwaltney, Jr. comments, "In extensive studies over the past twenty years the text, philology, and theology of Lamentations have received the lion's share of attention."[2] Indeed, in *Faces of a Lamenting City,* Jannie Hunter explains that the Book of Lamentations "has been thoroughly studied and new studies could contribute little to questions about origin, style, authorship and date. The typical historical-critical questions have mostly been addressed in depth by previous writings."[3]

And yet, scholarly study of the Book of Lamentations has not been exhausted. Even with regard to those areas already examined, problems still exist. For example, Hunter acknowledges that:

> The authorship is still open and the date and place of writing are still difficult issues to solve. Also the theology of the book is problematical in the light of some directly opposing views by various scholars.[4]

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[1] For expansive bibliographies on the subject, see, e.g., F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993); Jannie Hunter, *Faces of a Lamenting City: The Development and Coherence of the Book of Lamentations* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996).

[2] W.C. Gwaltney, Jr., "The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Near Eastern Lament Literature," in William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, Leo G. Perdue, (Eds.) *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 191.

[3] Hunter, 43.

[4] Hunter, 43.

Indeed, as the following discussion makes clear, scholarly debate remains on nearly every question. Other matters as well, such as the influence of ancient Near Eastern literature, which is discussed below, remain unanswered.

Moreover, it is important to point out that the existing scholarship on Lamentations has taken various approaches to study of the text. Depending on one's approach to or focal point of study, different areas or issues will assume greater (and lesser) priority than others. For example, in *Faces of a Lamenting City,* Hunter explains that his study of Lamentations "especially concentrates on the first 11 verses of the book which are seen as establishing the idea world of the rest of the book."[5] He argues that "the ideas of the first 11 verses of the book seem to have served as an inspiration for the rest of the book in no specific order."[6] Hunter's approach to the study of Lamentations, as well as the way in which he communicates his findings, in other words, is quite different than that of a scholar interested in structure or genre of the text.

On the other hand, Alan Mintz, in *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature*, writes:

> I deal only with the first three out of the five chapters of Lamentations. Chapter 4 is a sustained, eye-witness account of the siege and fall of the city told in the third person. Chapter 5 shifts entirely to the communal "we" to conclude the book in the mode of collective prayer. Together, the concluding chapters represent a relaxing of the rhetorical tension and complexity of the earlier chapters, consolidating their gains and moving them toward a liturgical conclusion.[7]

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[5] Hunter, 39.
[6] Hunter, 39-40.
[7] Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 22.

As will be made clear below, others approach the structure, function and tone of the various chapters quite differently than does Mintz. The point here, however, is that how one approaches the text as well as the decisions one makes in the process of developing that approach influences what in a particular study receives emphasis and what does not.

The following comment by Michael S. Moore in his article, "Human Suffering in Lamentations," is illustrative of this point. He writes:

> Debates over acrostic forms and types of lament-forms are predominantly interested in analyzing the surface structures of this material. A closer reading into the deeper structures reveals a very interesting pattern -- a pattern which explicitly has to do with the way in which the theme of human suffering is interwoven throughout the book.[8]

His intention is to focus on the theme of human suffering in Lamentations from a predominantly non-structuralist literary approach, operating within certain minimal formal guidelines.[9]

Similarly, in this paper the dominant focus is neither a structuralist literary approach nor an historical-critical approach. And yet, prior to exploring the expressions of grief in the Book of Lamentations as a journey into the mourning process, an examination of the history of research and interpretation of Lamentations is necessary.[10] In the pages that follow, I outline and discuss such matters.[11]

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[8] Michael S. Moore, "Human Suffering in Lamentations," *Revue Biblique* 90 (1983) 534, 549.
[9] Moore, 545.
[10] The discussion contained herein is by no means exhaustive. Moreover, the length to which I discuss a particular topic may reflect the complexity of the matter, the volume of material written on the subject, the heatedness of current scholarly debate on the issue, my own personal interest or some combination of the above. For other discussions, see also Hunter, 43-84; Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (transl. by Charles Muenchow) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) 24-85.
[11] In both the structuring of this discussion as well as the content, I have drawn extensively from Hunter's and Westermann's analyses of the history of research and interpretation of Lamentations.

Date of Composition

The songs contained in the Book of Lamentations were written no earlier than the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.[12] There is a "fairly broad consensus placing the origin of Lamentations quite soon after the event of 587 BCE, since the direct impact of that calamity can still be felt in many ways."[13] Most interpreters agree that Lamentations was composed before 538 BCE, when the exiles began to return from Babylon.[14] Westermann places the *terminus ad quem* at approximately 550 BCE, the time when Deutero-Isaiah was active. He explains:

> Judging from the contents of Deutero-Isaiah's message, the latter must be assigned to a time after the various songs of Lamentation had come into being but before the famous Edict of Cyrus (538 BCE). The laments which appear in Deutero-Isaiah's announcement of salvation so closely resemble the material in Lamentations that the latter is almost certainly presupposed in the former.[15]

Thus, the consensus among scholars is that Lamentations was composed shortly after 587 BCE but before 538 BCE.

Westermann, however, distinguishes chapter 3 of Lamentations from the rest of the book. He claims that the original collection comprised chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5. Chapter 3, he argues, was inserted later and presupposes the existence of the rest of the collection. Westermann focuses his argument on verses 29-41 of chapter 3, proposing that they constitute a post-exilic expansion.[16] He writes:

> With this material we are clearly in the presence of a different sort of language and a different type of pathos than we find reflected in chapters one, two, four, and five. Those other chapters see the only possibility of

[12] Westermann, 54, 104.
[13] Westermann, 54.
[14] Westermann, 54.
[15] Westermann, 104.
[16] Westermann, 180.

> rescue lying in a turning to Yahweh in prayer. ... Here in 3:26-41, however, lamentation is disavowed. Now one is supposed to bear in silence the suffering imposed on one, not to engage in lamentation. In the place of lamentation comes self-examination. Here one is called to turn away from one's sins and turn toward Yahweh.
>
> This admonition to turn away from one's own sins and toward Yahweh is one of the chief themes of Deuteronomic parenesis. Such parenesis speaks a language different from that prevalent in the laments which arose in response to the catastrophe of 587 BCE. It is also directed to quite a different situation, a situation far removed from the horror of Jerusalem's destruction. As indicated in vv 34-37, this parenesis is promulgated in a time of steadily increasing hardship. In such a time, the chief issue at hand is simply the ability to carry on, silently and submissively, and to resist the temptation to fall into apostasy. The time for such parenesis is a time when public lamentation over Jerusalem has been restricted to occasions for commemorating the disaster of 587 BCE. Actual worship services focusing on repentance and atonement have by now come into being. *We have here come down to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.*[17]

In summary, with the exception of chapter 3, the consensus among scholars is that the songs comprising the Book of Lamentations were written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem.[18]

Place of Composition

With regard to where Lamentations was written, Hunter explains that, because of the vivid descriptions of the destruction and its consequences for the city, scholars mostly believe that the songs were written in Judah and specifically in Jerusalem.[19] Concurring with that assessment, Westermann writes:

> The general assumption that the songs stem from people who actually witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem itself argues for the vicinity of the catastrophe as the place of origin for the songs. There is essentially

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[17] Westermann, 180 (emphasis added).
[18] Westermann, 105. Westermann notes, however, "It is also possible that chapter five is later than chapters one, two, and four." Id.
[19] Hunter, 53.

> nothing that positively argues for an origin outside of Judah, somewhere among the exiles.[20]

Notwithstanding this general consensus that the composition of Lamentations took place in Jerusalem or somewhere else in Judah, Hunter takes a different position. He argues that:

> The book forms a close unity and that it must have been composed from a core proposal poem or sung by people who worked closely together or who have had the editing skills for this kind of work. This could have been done at any place, either in Jerusalem or in exile. To develop this poem, a poet or group of poets need not have been in Jerusalem as so many scholars state, because there is nothing in the poem, except for knowledge about the circumstances in the city that connects the poem with Jerusalem as place of composition.[21]

As stated above, however, the dominant view is that Lamentations was written either in or close to Jerusalem by those who did not go into exile.

Authorship

Westermann explains that there are three possibilities for the authorship of Lamentations: a single author, several authors, or that it is impossible to determine the number of authors of Lamentations. He writes, "These three points of view are defended in approximately equal measure."[22] In addition, while some researchers claim that the author(s) of Lamentations were eyewitnesses to the events of which they wrote, not everyone accepts that position. On the other hand, Westermann writes, "no convincing argument has yet been advanced that these songs could not have come from eyewitnesses."[23]

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[20] Westermann, 105.
[21] Hunter, 91.
[22] Westermann, 56-57.
[23] Westermann, 56.

The traditional view is that the biblical prophet Jeremiah authored Lamentations. This view, however, essentially has been abandoned.[24] Hunter suggests that "the safest opinion regarding the authorship of Lamentations is probably to say that it was anonymously written. At least that is certain, since the book was not attributed to Jeremiah in the Hebrew Bible."[25] And yet, as Hunter explains:

> The close association in language and ideas with the prophets can be taken to indicate that the book could very well have been written by poets with a close connection with the prophets, their style and their thinking. Intertextual connections which are drawn in this study confirm this connection and suggest that the author should be sought in the prophetic circles or their relations.[26]

In my research on the subject, I have not found scholarship which disproves Hunter's theory as a possibility regarding authorship.

Regarding the number of authors, Westermann explains that of those interpreters who defend the view that all the songs have the same author, one gets the impression "that this thesis grows not so much out of the texts themselves as out of those individuals' interpretations of the texts."[27] For Westermann, the assumption of multiple authorship remains the more probable because "the position which advocates the same author for all five songs suffers from the lack of its defenders' ability to point out semantic traits that could support their position."[28]

Finally, the question of authorship also raises the issue of whether there may have been some oral tradition to the songs prior to the time Lamentations was written.

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[24] Westermann, 58.
[25] Hunter, 49.
[26] Hunter, 49.
[27] Westermann, 57.
[28] Westermann, 58.

Westermann writes, "As far as I can tell, no one actively considers the possibility of a phase of oral transmission prior to the time when these songs were written down."[29] He finds that difficult to comprehend because:

> The one who did the actual writing down of the songs by no means played the major role in the creation of Lamentations. These songs are the experiences, the reactions, the insights, and the responses of the remnant. It is the survivors of the catastrophe as a whole, who are speaking in Lamentations. ... The one who wrote down this material transcribed the words, the phrases, the clauses -- the cries, the sighs, and the laments -- as they were spoken and as they were heard.[30]

Thus, Westermann raises, though in no way conclusively answers, the question of oral transmission prior to written authorship of Lamentations.

Composite or Unified Work?

For scholars such as Westermann, who posit that different parts of Lamentations originated at different times, Lamentations is viewed as a composite work.[31] Others assume a single author and consequently understand Lamentations to be a unified work. Stated differently, the argument for various authors at different times (and potentially different places) precludes an acceptance of unity of the book.[32] In his study, however, Hunter proposes a unity in the idea world of the text. He writes that:

> This latter kind of unity does not presuppose a unity in syntax, poetic expression or parallelism. In fact, the study finds that every chapter does have its own descriptive emphases that would suggest various authors. It is, however, clear that these authors seemed to have worked together on the design of the book, and then wrote the various chapters.[33]

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[29] Westermann, 101.
[30] Westermann, 102.
[31] See Westermann, 58.
[32] See Hunter, 54.
[33] Hunter, 70.

Clearly, Hunter's proposal regarding the unity of Lamentations differs radically from the conception of a scholar such as Westermann, who understands "the 'book' of Lamentations ... [to be] a collection of separate songs or poems, each of which once stood independently and therefore is first of all to be investigated and understood on its own."[34]

Form

Acrostics

Westermann explains that "the songs of Lamentations exhibit the so-called acrostic form, which is to say that the individual lines of the poems are sequentially introduced by words beginning with letters which follow the order of the Hebrew alphabet."[35] In fact, Lamentations is the "biggest single acrostic collection" in the Hebrew Bible.[36]

Specifically, Chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations are alphabetical acrostics wherein the first line of each stanza begins with the appropriate letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 is also an alphabetical acrostic but "differs from the other three poems in that all three lines of each stanza begin with the appropriate letter of the alphabet."[37] That is, the first three verses of chapter 3, which contains sixty-six verses, all begin with words having *alef* as their first letter; verses four through six begin with *bet*, and so on.

Chapter 5, however, although it has twenty-two verses, the same number as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, is not written in acrostic form. This presents a problem in the consideration of form in Lamentations.[38] Hunter explains that:

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[34] Westermann, 87.
[35] Westermann, 98.
[36] Hunter, 55.
[37] Dobbs-Allsopp, 42-43.
[38] Hunter, 59.

> The generally held opinion about the last chapter of Lamentations is that the prayer present in this chapter necessitated a more immediate and free form. To choose the artificial form of the acrostics for a prayer would not fit the contents.[39]

That is, according to Hunter, a free style, rather than an acrostic form for chapter 5, better emphasizes "both its importance and that it really comes from the heart...."[40]

With regard to why an author would utilize the acrostic form, Hunter writes, "The most generally accepted theory ... is that the poet wishes to express a completeness without forgetting something."[41] At the same time, however, others say that the acrostic is "a way of imposing economy of expression on otherwise boundless grief."[42]

In addition, the acrostic form is frequently used for teaching purposes in order to make memorization easier. Hunter, however, claims that the pedagogical theory for why the acrostic was utilized here "has not been met with enthusiasm by scholars, because the contents of Lamentations would hardly be the kind of material suited for didactic purposes, and because it is not clear that in the case of Lamentations the acrostics would be of mnemonic benefit."[43]

Westermann approaches the matter differently. He recognizes that arranging material according to the alphabet is pedantic and concludes that:

> Therefore it is unlikely that these songs of lament first appeared as acrostics. Only during the course of their transmission will they have acquired this form. That the old songs were re-arranged as acrostics during the time when they were collected and preserved is quite possible, whereas it is difficult to imagine their being decked out in the niceties of

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[39] Hunter, 59.
[40] Hunter, 61.
[41] Hunter, 56.
[42] Hunter, 56, citing N.K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 541.
[43] Hunter, 55. As to why the acrostic would not assist in memorization, he argues firstly that there are four such poems and secondly that in the second, third and fourth poems, the letters, *ayin* and *pey*, are changed around. Hunter, 56.

> alphabetic form immediately upon their coming into existence under the impact of the catastrophe of 587 BCE.[44]

In addition, Westermann sees the acrostic as "a late and artificial form because the usual situation for Hebraic poetry is for the form to be determined by the content."[45] With the acrostic, however, "the alphabet determines the form; the beginning of each line is determined by whatever letter falls to that line."[46] Consequently, the acrostic form had "a considerable influence on the choice and positioning of individual words, as well as upon the ordering of the sentences."[47] In Westermann's opinion, the acrostic led to additions, to transpositions and to insertions in the original songs, all of which make interpretation considerably more difficult.[48]

Meter

Most commentators agree that the *qinah* is the dominant meter of Lamentations.[49] The *qinah* meter "is generally characterised by a longer first part and a shorter second part."[50] Stated slightly differently, *qinah* meter "consists of an unbalanced line of poetry wherein the first colon is full, while the second is shorter than normal."[51]

Genre

In his discussion of genre in *Weep, O Daughter of Zion,* Dobbs-Allsopp explains that "in the sense that a writer draws on previously known literary conventions of one type or another, he or she does not compose a work that is *sui generis.*"[52] As Alastair Fowler

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[44] Westermann, 99.
[45] Westermann, 99.
[46] Westermann, 99.
[47] Westermann, 100.
[48] Westermann, 100.
[49] Hunter, 66; Dobbs-Allsopp, 43.
[50] Hunter, 66.
[51] Dobbs-Allsopp, 43.
[52] Dobbs-Allsopp, 16.

puts it, "in literature there is no creation *ex nihilo*."[53] At least to some extent, any given literary work draws upon that which came before.

Dobbs-Allsopp's discussion of genre is instructive.[54] He writes that

> Genre comprises the set of codes and conventions which form a tacit contract between writer and reader and make literary communication possible. The writer begins with a specific genre in mind. He or she may work through its generic conventions, transform or add to them, or even explode them. In other words, these conventions both constrain the writer and are constrained by him or her.[55]

It is important to recall, moreover, that while genre is "typically imagined as a fixed and immutable category whose members share a certain number of characteristic traits ..., upon observation genres turn out to be anything but fixed and immutable."[56] That is, according to Dobbs-Allsopp, genre categorizations are somewhat flexible and allow for a certain amount of variation in both form and content.

In addition, Dobbs-Allsopp explains that:

> Genre is understood as operating at specifically two basic levels of classification. At the most basic level, genre calls attention to resemblances, etc. between texts in a single literary tradition. At a more general level, genre can refer to the resemblances between texts from separate literary traditions. That is, different literary traditions may contain the same genre, and thus these genres may be said to be generically related to one another.[57]

Lamentations has been examined through both of these lenses of genre classification.

At the outset, however, prior to a discussion of the various genres to which Lamentations has been compared and sometimes connected, it is important to

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[53] Dobbs-Allsopp, 16, citing Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982) 156.
[54] For his complete discussion, see Dobbs-Allsopp, 15-22.
[55] Dobbs-Allsopp, 16-17.
[56] Dobbs-Allsopp, 17.
[57] Dobbs-Allsopp, 26.

acknowledge the argument which states that researchers have been too rigid in their work of genre categorization, in particular, with regard to ancient texts. For example, in *The Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,* Paul Wayne Ferris, Jr. suggests that:

> The study of ancient Near Eastern literature in general and Hebrew Bible in particular would seem to benefit significantly if it were to be based on a flexible or adaptable notion of "genre." It will not do to foist either 19th or 20th century notions and categories upon a phenomenon so historically and culturally distant.[58]

Hunter states a related concern. He writes that:

> As a result of new methods of interpretation such genre indications are not viewed with the same importance as in the heyday of historical-critical method of interpretation, especially because of the acknowledgment of the creative input of poets in their written works and because it is not at all certain whether these schemes, which are traditionally indicated as structures of genres, are at all followed closely by poets.[59]

These are both important points to keep in mind when considering into which genre or genres Lamentations as a whole or its various parts "fit" or when placing a value on the concept of genre determination more generally.

The biblical Book of Lamentations is a compilation of laments written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Stated simply, a lament is a poem or song which passionately expresses grief. Among the texts which have been designated laments, however, there are some further differences.

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[58] Paul Wayne Ferris, Jr. *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 7.
[59] Hunter, 64.

Dirge or Lament?

The first distinction to make is between the dirge and the plaintive lament. In 1923, Hedwig Jahnow published her classic study of the *Totenklage* or funeral dirge. A funeral dirge is a "composition whose verbal content indicates that it was composed in honor of a deceased person sometimes eulogizing the individual, sometimes merely bewailing the loss. It was apparently used by either individuals or by groups at funeral observances."[60]

Westermann explains that the motifs characteristic of the dirge are as follows:

> An opening cry of ah!, alas!, or the equivalent; a mournful cry ...; a summons to mourn (sometimes even addressed to inanimate objects); a proclamation that a death has occurred ...; a comparing of the former with the present state of affairs (the contrast motif), including a eulogizing of the deceased; a description of the mourner's pain or of the general state of misery; reference to the effect all this is having on the bystanders; questions expressing bewilderment at what has happened.[61]

All of these motifs are present in Lamentations, and, indeed, Jahnow characterized chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations as modified dirges.[62]

And yet, Westermann argues that Jahnow's thesis cannot be maintained. For one reason, whereas the dirge would take place at someone's funeral, the life-setting for a plaintive lament is a solemn assembly convened in response to a public emergency -- some calamity that had befallen or was about to befall the land or the city.[63] He acknowledges that chapters 1, 2 and 4 do presuppose that "death" has occurred, albeit of a community

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[60] Ferris, Jr., 11.
[61] Westermann, 6-7.
[62] See Westermann, 1, 7-8.
[63] Westermann, 96.

rather than any one individual.[64] In addition, they do contain the aforementioned motifs of the dirge.

Nonetheless, Westermann concludes that Lamentations is dirge-like, in that motifs from the dirge have become associated with the plaintive lament.[65] Interestingly, however, Westermann suggests that the juxtaposition of motifs from the lament and motifs from the dirge gives the impression of having been carried out deliberately. He writes:

> Under the immediate impact of the catastrophe of 587 the collapse of Jerusalem was described in such a way that motifs from the dirge enriched the ... lament. This was because the collapse of the city was experienced as its death.[66]

In other words, rather than identifying Lamentations as a compilation of modified funeral dirges, as did Jahnow, Westermann categorizes Lamentations as lament with added motifs from the dirge.

There are additional reasons for Westermann's analysis. For example, he explains that, while both express human suffering, there are important distinctions between the dirge and the lament. Firstly, petition is not a feature of the dirge. It is, however, an important element of the lament.[67] Secondly, as Westermann explains:

> The decisive difference between the two is that the dirge is profane in nature while the plaintive lament is directed to God. In a plaintive lament the living bemoan their own suffering, while in the dirge the speakers bewail someone else, someone who is deceased. The dirge looks to the past; the plaintive lament looks to the future. Therefore the plaintive lament is a type of prayer, while the dirge is not a prayer at all. The life-

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[64] Westermann, 7, 95.
[65] Westermann, 7. Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, 9-10 (where he classifies Lamentations as a city-lament, "a genre which clearly shares or incorporates some of the motifs and themes common to the funeral dirge...." The city-lament genre is discussed below).
[66] Westermann, 11.
[67] Westermann, 213.

> setting of the dirge is the funeral in all its varying aspects. The life-setting of the plaintive lament is worship of God.[68]

Westermann argues that because the texts in Lamentations include the feature of direct address to God, though often only as a secondary feature, and contain petitionary prayer they are not dirges.[69] Rather, they are "laments which have borrowed motifs from the dirge."[70]

Two elements of the lament are noteworthy. One is the "petition directed against enemies;" the other is the "accusation against God." In Lamentations, we see the "petition directed against enemies" in chapter 1:21-22 and chapter 3:64-66, the concluding verses of these two verses.[71] Clearly, the "petition against enemies" is not a dominant motif in Lamentations. The reason for this may be that "the songs in the Book of Lamentations are strongly marked by an awareness that the actions which the enemies took against Israel were in essence God's punishment upon the people of God."[72]

The phrase, "to pour out one's heart before God" captures the essence of what happens in the "accusation against God."[73] God is either the subject of the discourse or is addressed directly.[74] In the Bible, we encounter the "accusation against God" in those texts where:

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[68] Westermann, 94-5.
[69] Westermann, 97-98.
[70] Westermann, 7-8.
[71] Arguably, chapter 3:33-36 is an implicit petition against enemies, here being those who pervert justice. In addition, while verses 21-22 of chapter 4 indicate that God already has taken note of Edom and will punish them, those verses do not take the form of petition.
[72] Westermann, 207.
[73] Westermann, 91. See Lam. 2:18.
[74] In Lamentations, chapter 5 begins with direct address of God -- "Remember, Yahweh, what happened to us!" In chapters 1, 2 and 4, this would not be possible "since those songs are introduced by the mournful cry." Westermann, 213. Chapters 1 and 2 contain the feature of direct address of God; chapter 4 does not. Chapter 3 concludes with direct address to God.

> An individual, or a community, has been afflicted with such severe suffering that it can no longer be comprehended. Specifically, this means where the pain can no longer be envisioned as resulting from a deliberate act of God. It means where the pain would be incomprehensible as a direct deed on the part of the Deity whom one worships. This extreme sort of situation most clearly forces the question "Why?". To ask "why" under the conditions just stated is the essential feature of the accusation against God. The essence of what we call the "accusation against God" is simply the query, "How could God have allowed this to happen?" -- or, as direct address, "How could you, O God, have allowed this to happen?"[75]

Lamentations certainly depicts extreme pain. The text does not, however, explicitly ask why or how God could have allowed (or caused) such devastation to occur.

In addition, as Westermann explains:

> The petition, as a constitutive element of the lament as a genre, itself has two structural components: a plea that God take notice of the petitioner, and a plea for effective divine intervention. The reason why the petition has this dual structure grows out of the fact that the selection of the lament containing the actual lamentation regularly bemoans God's apparent distance and inattention. Against the background of this motif, effective divine intervention first necessitates that God take notice of the petitioner.[76]

In Lamentations, the emphasis is predominantly on the plea that God simply take notice, "since the petitioners do not yet dare implore God to intervene actively in their behalf."[77]

Individual and Communal Laments

Among laments, a distinction can be made between individual and communal laments. Ferris, Jr. explains that:

> An individual lament is a composition whose verbal content indicates that it was composed to be used by and/or on behalf of an individual to express sorrow and grief over some perceived calamity which had befallen or was about to befall him and to appeal to God for deliverance. Most often the

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[75] Westermann, 92.
[76] Westermann, 97.
[77] Westermann, 97.

> "calamity" of the individual lament was related to some form of harassment of the subject by an enemy.[78]

The consensus among scholars is that most, if not all, of chapter 3 of Lamentations constitutes an individual lament.[79]

In addition, Ferris, Jr. offers the following definition of communal lament:

> A communal lament is a composition whose verbal content indicates that it was composed to be used by and/or on behalf of a community to express both complaint, and sorrow and grief over some perceived calamity, physical or cultural, which had befallen or was about to befall them and to appeal to God for deliverance.[80]

Chapter 5 of Lamentations is a communal lament. Moore calls chapter 5 a "1st-person plural communal lament, a prayer from start to finish...."[81]

City-Lament

Dobbs-Allsopp proposes the existence of a native Israelite city-lament genre and argues that the Hebrew Bible contains evidence of this genre. Specifically, he claims that Lamentations provides the best and "the only full blown" exemplar of an Israelite city-lament in the Hebrew Bible.[82] He discusses the ways in which the Israelite city-lament genre compares to the Mesopotamian city-lament genre and concludes that some evidence suggests that the two genres had some type of contact.[83]

With regard to ancient Mesopotamia, S. N. Kramer explains that:

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[78] Ferris, Jr., 10.
[79] Although Westermann acknowledges that "the lament of an individual plays a dominant role," he identifies chapter 3 as a "composite work, one constructed out of several different types of psalms or psalm-fragments." Westermann, 88.
[80] Ferris, Jr., 10.
[81] Moore, 552.
[82] Dobbs-Allsopp, 28, 157..
[83] Dobbs-Allsopp, 159-60. Dobbs-Allsopp does not argue Lamentations' dependence upon the Mesopotamian city-laments. The question of Lamentations' literary dependence on the Mesopotamian city-laments is discussed in the subsequent section on influence.

> Some time about 2000 B.C., a devastating calamity befell Sumer, a disaster that well-nigh ended the existence of Sumer as a political entity. What made this catastrophe particularly tragic, was the poignant fact that it marked the end of a Sumerian renaissance of political and economic power, a period when learning, literature, and music flourished throughout the land.[84]

Laments were invented as a literary response to this calamity suffered by Sumer in the days of Ibbi-Sin, the last of the Third Dynasty rulers of Ur.[85]

Five city-laments have been preserved and form this earliest stage of the lament genre. They are: (1) Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur; (2) Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur; (3) Nippur Lament; (4) Uruk Lament;[86] and (5) Eridu Lament.[87] These city-laments "vividly depict and mournfully lament the destruction of the most important cities in Mesopotamia and their chief shrines."[88]

In support of his argument that there exists an Israelite city-lament genre, Dobbs-Allsopp identifies nine features associated with the Mesopotamian city-lament and shows them to occur in Lamentations as well.[89] These features are: subject and mood; structure and poetic technique; divine abandonment; assignment of responsibility; divine agent of destruction; destruction; weeping goddess; lamentation; and restoration of the city and return of the gods.[90]

Dobbs-Allsopp acknowledges that the similarities in any one of these nine areas may not be fully convincing when examined in isolation. What he finds persuasive,

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[84] Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the *Mater Dolorosa*," Biblical Archaeologist Spring 1983. Vol. 46, No. 2, 69-70.
[85] Gwaltney, 195.
[86] Uruk may also be spelled "Erech." See, e.g., Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 71.
[87] Gwaltney, 195.
[88] Dobbs-Allsopp, 1.
[89] Cf. Gwaltney, 202-3 (where he identifies six underlying themes in common among the five preserved Mesopotamian city-laments).
[90] Dobbs-Allsopp, 30.

however, is the cumulative force of all nine features. He explains that "the probability of classifying Lamentations as a city lament increases with the increasing number of features it shares with the Mesopotamian laments."[91]

Moreover, while Dobbs-Allsopp concludes that Lamentations shares a number of generic features common to the Mesopotamian laments, he also makes clear that:

> Lamentations does not simply mechanically reproduce features from the Mesopotamian genre. Rather at almost every step along the way one is confronted by Israelite literary traditions and imagery. Moreover, the Israelite city-lament features do not conform to their Mesopotamian counterpoints in a simple straightforward manner. Rather, they exhibit a variety of relationships with their corresponding Mesopotamian features.[92]

In other words, there are important differences in the city-lament features as they appear in Lamentations and those of the Mesopotamian laments. An examination of several of the specific features illustrates this point.[93]

Destruction

For example, both Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-laments describe the destruction of cities. Indeed, a significant part of both "consists of a detailed description of the destruction of the city and surrounding area, the city's buildings and roads, inhabitants, economy, and political, social, and religious customs."[94] And yet, the descriptions of destruction are not identical. In Lamentations, more space is devoted to humans and their plight than in the Mesopotamian laments.[95] Gwaltney explains that:

> The description of the horrors of war suffered by the population is in some ways a bit more gruesome in the biblical Lamentations. For example, young and old dying in the streets of thirst and hunger, the lethargic march

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[91] Dobbs-Allsopp, 30.
[92] Dobbs-Allsopp, 95.
[93] For a discussion of all nine of the features, see Dobbs-Allsopp, 31-96.
[94] Dobbs-Allsopp, 66.
[95] Gwaltney, 208.

> of the priests, mothers eating their children, cruel enslavement of one-time nobles, the shame of ridicule and exposure -- all are expressed in poignant detail.[96]

Thus, while Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments both describe the destruction, Lamentations' depictions are not mechanical reproductions of those contained in the earlier Mesopotamian laments.

Divine Agent of Destruction

In addition, the agent of destruction in both the Mesopotamian laments and biblical Lamentations is divine in nature. The Mesopotamian laments characteristically assign responsibility for the destruction of the cities to the decision of the divine assembly.[97] More than any other god, Enlil is the chief antagonist and "shoulders much of the responsibility for the divine assembly's decision...."[98] Enlil also has the task of carrying out the council's decisions by invoking the "evil storm" and sending an invasion.[99] In addition, Dobbs-Allsopp explains that:

> An enemy invasion constitutes the other principal means of destruction in the city laments. Enlil sends various enemies against Sumer.... Whatever one may deduce about the historicity of these enemies in the laments, their invasion is indisputably a literary motif analogous to that of the evil storm, symbolizing the destruction of Sumer. As such, storm and invasion imagery become mixed, and the storm sometimes seems to serve as the chief metaphor for the foreign invasion initiated by Enlil.[100]

Thus, more than any of the other gods, it is Enlil who bears responsibility for the destruction.

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[96] Gwaltney, 208.
[97] Dobbs-Allsopp, 52.
[98] Dobbs-Allsopp, 56.
[99] Dobbs-Allsopp, 56.
[100] Dobbs-Allsopp, 57.

In Lamentations, Yahweh fulfills many of the same roles associated with Enlil in the Mesopotamian laments. For example, "Lamentations identifies Yahweh, like Enlil in the Mesopotamian laments, as the one who caused the destruction...."[101] In addition, analogous to the active role played by Enlil in the Mesopotamian divine assembly, in the Hebrew Bible it is Yahweh who presides over the divine assembly of heavenly hosts.[102]

Moreover, in Lamentations, as in the Mesopotamian city-laments, foreign enemies constitute one means of destruction of the city. For example, we read, "Her adversaries came out on top; her enemies have it easy." (Lam. 1:5).[103] Nonetheless, it was Yahweh who sent the enemy to destroy. It was Yahweh who "delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of [Jerusalem's] citadels..." (Lam. 2:7). It was Yahweh who caused the enemy to rejoice over Zion. (Lam. 2:17).

Assignment of Responsibility

In the Mesopotamian city-laments, destruction is not understood to be punishment for sin. Dobbs-Allsopp writes, "Typically, no fault is found with the city, its inhabitants, or its gods. The divine act is arbitrary."[104] With regard to the "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," Mintz comments that:

> Ur's fall, we are instructed, is part of the nature of things. The city's fate is not governed by questions of sin or corruption; Ur is portrayed throughout the poem as a society faithful in its obligations to man and to the gods. It is rather that the sphere of divine intention turns on a different axis from the sphere of human action. Kingship passes from state to state; it is a trust which the gods do not grant in perpetuity, and no amount of intercession can now alter its removal. Simply, Ur's time has come.[105]

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[101] Dobbs-Allsopp, 65.
[102] Dobbs-Allsopp, 60. See also 1 Kings 22:19-23; Psalm 82; Isaiah 6:1-12.
[103] Other mention of the enemy causing destruction can be found in Lamentations 1:7, 1:9-10, 2:16, 4:12.
[104] Dobbs-Allsopp, 53.
[105] Mintz, 18.

The Mesopotamian poets, in other words, did not assign responsibility for the destruction to the inhabitants of the affected cities.

Lamentations is different in this regard. The poet(s) assign responsibility for the destruction to the people of Zion. In chapter 1, personified Jerusalem acknowledges her transgressions and rebellion and sees them as cause for Yahweh's actions against her. (Lam. 1:14, 1:18, 1:21). Verse 20 of chapter 2 refers directly to Yahweh's punishment. The man who speaks in chapter 3 claims, "My way is rebellious so [God] tore me in pieces..." (Lam. 3:11). The poet blames the destruction on the sins of the prophets, the iniquities of the priests and the iniquity of the people, whose sins are deemed worse than that of Sodom. (Lam. 4:6, 4:13). Indeed, we read, "Woe to us for we have sinned!" (Lam. 5:16).

And yet, notwithstanding Lamentations' various acknowledgments of sin, the poet is not entirely wholehearted in such assignments of responsibility. Dobbs-Allsopp suggests that:

> From a reading of Lamentations, one could even gain the impression that the sin motif is almost perfunctory in nature. There is never any great specificity as to the nature of the sin involved. This is in marked contrast to the great detail in which the destruction of the city and the suffering of the people is depicted.[106]

Thus, while adhering to the orthodox deuteronomic theology, the poet questions the appropriateness and degree of Yahweh's punishment.[107] Dobbs-Allsopp concludes that this suggests a "not very repentant point of view" and that presentation of the orthodox

[106] Dobbs-Allsopp, 54-5.
[107] See Dobbs-Allsopp, 55.

theology serves "as a sort of foil to point up the injustice of the situation no matter what the cause."[108]

Weeping Goddess

In his article, "The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the *Mater Dolorosa*," Kramer outlines the development of the figure of the "weeping goddess," whom he describes as "sorrowful, tender and compassionate."[109] Kramer writes that the Sumerian poets created the figure of the "weeping goddess" in the course of composing the city-laments and that:

> In the course of the centuries that followed, the "weeping goddess" image became a current motif in the dirges and laments that abound in the Sumerian literary repertoire. She appears in numerous and diverse guises: as the divine queen bemoaning the destruction of her city and temple, the suppression of her cult, the suffering of the ravaged and dispersed people. Or, she is the spouse, the sister, and above all the mother, of Dumuzi, or a Dumuzi-like figure, who had been carried off into the nether world, a tragic fate that came to symbolize the death of the king and the destruction of her city and temple.[110]

Notwithstanding any developments in the motif, one of the first portrayals, that of the goddess Ningal in "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur," is considered the most striking, poignant and sensitive depiction of the "weeping goddess" in any of the extant Sumerian laments.[111]

With regard to Ningal in "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur," Tikva Frymer-Kensky finds it significant that "she is shown singing two laments, one before the city had been destroyed, in an attempt to avert the imminent destruction; and then

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[108] Dobbs-Allsopp, 55. See discussion of theology below.
[109] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 70.
[110] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 70.
[111] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 72.

afterwards, when the city had been ravaged, bemoaning the loss of the city and her home."[112] First, in her attempt to avert destruction of the city, Ningal pours out "the water of her eyes" before the gods An and Enlil, pleading with them and saying, "Let not Ur be destroyed! Let not its people perish!"[113] But An and Enlil refuse to change their decree.

In the aftermath of destruction, the embittered Ningal utters "a long heartbreaking soliloquy bemoaning the fate of her city and temple."[114] Kramer explains that:

> The poet interrupts Ningal's mournful soliloquy with a brief three-line passage depicting the goddess's violent emotional state: With tear-filled eyes she tears out her hair like rushes, and beats her breast like a drum. He then has the goddess continue her despondent monologue: Woe is her; her house is a stall torn down whose cows have been dispersed -- she was an unworthy shepherdess who let her ewes be struck down by the weapon. Woe is her; she has been exiled from her city and can find no rest, can find no home. As if she were a stranger in a strange city, curses and abuse are pressed upon her and she can say nothing in response.[115]

Thus, Ningal pleads on behalf of her city before the destruction; in the aftermath, she weeps and laments without comfort.

In addition, in the "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Eridu," the divine queen of Eridu, Damgalnunna, laments her city. She weeps uncontrollably, lacerates her body with dagger and sword and pulls out her hair over the destruction of her city and the suppression of her cult.[116] In the "Nippur Lament," however, its divine queen Ninlil is

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[112] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: The Free Press, 1992) 37.
[113] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 71.
[114] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 72.
[115] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 72.
[116] Dobbs-Allsopp, 76; Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 73.

only briefly mentioned, and not as a "weeping goddess" but rather as a "great mother," who offers a prayer to her husband Enlil.[117]

There is no "weeping goddess" *per se* in Lamentations. Indeed, as Dobbs-Allsopp explains, "Since biblical Yahwism did not tolerate the worship of deities other than Yahweh, one would not expect to find a literal importation of the weeping goddess motif into Lamentations."[118] And yet, a number of scholars see the personified Jerusalem of Lamentations as a counterpoint to the "weeping goddess" of the Mesopotamian laments.[119] Dobbs-Allsopp, for example, argues that "the Hebrew poets used personification to create a literary figure whose presence in the Hebrew Bible would otherwise be abhorrent to orthodox Yahwists."[120]

Personification confers personality on inanimate objects.[121] In Lamentations, Zion, that is, Jerusalem, is personified as a woman in mourning. She is likened to an *almanah*.[122] *Almanah* is generally translated as "widow." Chayim Cohen, however, in his article, "The 'Widowed' City," explains that in Lamentations, the city as *almanah* is not just any ordinary widow but a "once married woman who has no means of financial support, and who is thus in need of special legal protection."[123] Moreover, when applied to a city:

> This concept would undoubtedly designate a once independent city which has lost its independence and is now completely dependent upon another state for protection and survival. In short, *the "widowed" city motif seems*

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[117] Kramer, "Weeping Goddess," 72.
[118] Dobbs-Allsopp, 77.
[119] Dobbs-Allsopp, 77; see also Westermann, 14, 21.
[120] Dobbs-Allsopp, 87.
[121] Dobbs-Allsopp, 87.
[122] See Lamentations 1:1.
[123] Chayim Cohen, "The 'Widowed' City," *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University,* Vol. 5 (1973) 75, 78.

to refer to a once independent city which has become a vassal of another state.[124]

Through the poet's use of personification, the once-independent city of Jerusalem is depicted not only as a destroyed geopolitical entity but also as a dependent, grieving widow. The result "is a vastly complex literary figure, a city and its population embodied in a feminine persona."[125]

While in no way identical, this literary figure of the personified city in Lamentations corresponds in a number of ways to the "weeping goddess" of the Mesopotamian laments.[126] For example, in the Mesopotamian laments, the temple as well as its treasures and furnishings are understood as belonging personally to the city goddess.[127] In Lamentations 1:10, the Temple and its "precious things" are similarly depicted as belonging personally to Zion.

In addition, personified Jerusalem in Lamentations, like the city goddesses in Mesopotamian laments, suffers along with the city and expresses her grief over the destruction of the city and its inhabitants. Westermann explains that in "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur," "Ningal, the patron goddess of the city, personally takes up the lament over her city; she performs the lament over Ur in much the same fashion as does

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[124] Cohen, 78-9 (emphasis in original).

[125] Dobbs-Allsopp, 85. Part of this complexity results from personified Zion's embodiment of both goddess and city imagery. As motifs, the weeping goddess and personification of the city's architecture are generally kept apart in Mesopotamian laments. They have been merged in Lamentations. See Dobbs-Allsopp, 89-90.

[126] For a detailed discussion of these correspondences, see Dobbs-Allsopp, 78-85. In addition, it is important to note that these correspondences are not characteristic solely of the goddesses of the Mesopotamian laments. The "weeping goddess" motif appears elsewhere as well. The Israelite poets very well may have assimilated the characteristics of West Semitic goddesses into the literary figure of the personified city. See Dobbs-Allsopp, 85, f.n. 236.

[127] Dobbs-Allsopp, 80.

Lady Zion...."[128] Not only do Ningal and personified Jerusalem lament with words but they also express their grief by weeping,[129] sighing,[130] moaning,[131] spreading out their hands[132] and lifting up their hands.[133]

Another way in which personified Jerusalem corresponds with the "weeping goddess" motif is in her depiction as a mother.[134] In other words, not only is Jerusalem personified as a woman or widow; she is also a mother grieving for her children, the inhabitants of the destroyed city.[135] Throughout Lamentations, personified Jerusalem is portrayed as a mother and the city's inhabitants as her children.[136]

And yet, unlike the "weeping goddess," personified Jerusalem plays no role before the destruction. She does not lament in an attempt to avert destruction. In part, this results from the fact that Lamentations, unlike the Mesopotamian city-laments, is set solely in the aftermath of destruction. The difference also reflects the Bible's theology -- personified Jerusalem is not a goddess. Nor is she a prophetess. Personified Jerusalem's role is narrower than that of the "weeping goddess" because, though not identical, the prophets of the Hebrew Bible -- and not personified Jerusalem -- played the role of pre-destruction intermediary between God and the people.

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[128] Westermann, 14.

[129] See Lamentations 1:2, 1:16; cf. S.N. Kramer, "A Sumerian Lamentation," James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed. with supplement) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969) 455, 460 (line 254); 461 (lines 301, 311-13); 462 (line 359).

[130] See Lamentations 1:8, 1:22.

[131] See Lamentations 1:21.

[132] See Lamentations 1:17. Cf. Kramer, "Sumerian Lamentation," 458 (line 154). See also Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institue Press, 1980) 41-2 (spreading of the hands as gesture of entreaty).

[133] See Lamentations 2:19; 3:41. See also Gruber, 39-40 (lifting the hands as gesture of supplication).

[134] Dobbs-Allsopp, 81-2.

[135] Jeremiah 31:15 also contains this "weeping mother" motif. See Dobbs-Allsopp, 82; see also Frymer-Kensky, 167. In Jeremiah 31:15, Zion personified as Rachel refuses to be comforted as she weeps bitterly for her children, who are gone.

[136] Dobbs-Allsopp, 82. See Lamentations 1:5, 1:16, 2:19, 2:21-22.

Thus, while personified Jerusalem shares characteristics in common with the "weeping goddess" of Mesopotamian laments and even may have been modeled after her, "Lady Zion" is not identical to the "weeping goddess." The similarities as well as the distinctions are significant.

Influence

Related to genre is the question of influence. Hunter writes, "The matter of influence from other Ancient Near Eastern texts on the text of Lamentations became an immediate point of contention when Kramer published the text of the 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur'."[137] Kramer claims "that the Sumerian poets originated and developed the lamentation genre and that the biblical Book of Lamentations owes much of its form and content to its Mesopotamian forerunners."[138]

The "Lament over the Destruction of Ur" is considered the prototypical city lament and, as noted above, is one of five literary laments which describes the destruction of Sumer at the end of the Ur III period and more local calamities in the following early Isin period.[139] Scholars usually place the *terminus ante quem* for these city-laments at approximately 1925 BCE.[140]

In "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," Thomas F. McDaniel explores Kramer's claim of Mesopotamian influence upon and generic connectedness with Lamentations.[141] In his article, McDaniel compares a number of parallel motifs between Lamentations and the Sumerian city laments. For almost all of the parallels, McDaniel

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[137] Hunter, 70; Kramer, "Sumerian Lamentation," 455-63.
[138] Gwaltney, 192; see also Dobbs-Allsopp, 2.
[139] See Dobbs-Allsopp, 12-13, 19-20.
[140] Dobbs-Allsopp, 13.
[141] Thomas F. McDaniel, "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," *VT* (1968) 198-209.

concludes that they either result from common subject matter, are attested otherwise in biblical literature or have a prototype in the literary motifs current in Syria-Palestine.[142] McDaniel notes that some of the dominant themes found in the Mesopotamian laments are not found in Lamentations. In particular, he considers the absence of storm imagery as evidence that no connection exists between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-laments.[143]

Moreover, McDaniel questions how a second millenium Mesopotamian genre could have influenced a first millenium Palestinian work.[144] That is, McDaniel argues that the geographical and chronological gap separating the Sumerian city laments and the biblical Book of Lamentations is too great to support the supposition of literary influence or dependence.[145] Thus, according to McDaniel, while the Mesopotamian city-laments and Lamentations may share some common ideas, there is no direct influence.[146]

A number of scholars have responded in various ways to McDaniel's argument against Kramer's thesis. A complete discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.[147] Some general comments, however, are in order. First, it is important to make clear that ecause one cannot "fix the precise avenues of literary transmission does not a priori

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[142] Dobbs-Allsopp, 4.
[143] Dobbs-Allsopp, 55. Dobbs-Allsopp notes, however, that the destructive storm in the Mesopotamian laments was connected with the god Enlil. For this reason, "it would be very odd indeed to find a literal reflection of the storm in Lamentations; one would not expect Enlil imagery to show up verbatim in the Hebrew Bible. The functional equivalent of Enlil and the storm in Lamentations is Yahweh, the divine warrior who goes into battle on the Day of Yahweh." Dobbs-Allsopp, 55. Cf. Psalm 83:16 (petitioning Yahweh to take vengeance on Israel's enemies: "pursue them with Your tempest, terrify them with Your storm." (JPS transl.)).
[144] Gwaltney, 192.
[145] Dobbs-Allsopp, 4.
[146] See Hunter, 71.
[147] For discussions of this subject, see Dobbs-Allsopp, Gwaltney and Westermann.

invalidate the comparison [of Lamentations] with the Mesopotamian literature...."[148] After all, as Westermann writes, "There remains ... the simple fact that these texts closely resemble one another."[149] Indeed, with regard to "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur" and the biblical Book of Lamentations, "despite significant differences, it cannot be denied that we are here dealing with a genuine parallel; in quite a number of places an almost exact correspondence can be established."[150]

Indeed, as William W. Hallo writes:

> Modern literary criticism properly investigates literary parallels without necessarily or invariably finding the exact route by which a given idea passed from one author to another. And given the fragmentary nature of the ancient record, the answers cannot always be forthcoming.[151]

Thus, the question of influence probably should not be approached in an overly strict manner.

A more relaxed approach is called for not only with regard to routes of transmission but also in terms of parallels in content. As Hunter explains:

> In a world where various peoples had such intensive contacts with each other over long periods of time, imagery and literary conventions from various traditions easily mix and are used by different authors for their own purposes. This does not necessarily imply the direct borrowing of material for the same religious purpose in the sense of wanting to praize (sic) or lament about the same subject matter to the same God or gods. It probably simply means the employment of well-known poetic style and content in a new situation with a new or own meaning for individual or collective purposes. Religious beliefs are not necessarily taken over in the process but they are reshaped to fit own national and even occasional situations and beliefs. This has obviously been the case in Lamentations.[152]

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[148] Dobbs-Allsopp, 6.
[149] Westermann, 20.
[150] Westermann, 18.
[151] Dobbs-Allsopp, 6, citing William W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in W.W. Hallo, B.W. Jones and G.L. Mattingly, *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990) 6.
[152] Hunter, 72.

For example, in the Mesopotamian city-laments, a "weeping goddess" bemoans the city's sad plight. Gwaltney reminds us that while Israelite monotheism could not tolerate such an idea, the city of Jerusalem, personified as a woman, fulfills this role.[153] In other words:

> Because of the polytheistic theology underlying the Mesopotamian laments and their ritual observance, they could not be taken over without thorough modification in theology and language. Still the biblical book of Lamentations was more closely associated with the Near Eastern lament genre than simply borrowing the "idea" of a lament over the destruction of a city as McDaniel conceded.[154]

That is, notwithstanding the arguments of those who say the parallels between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-laments are coincidental, a generic relationship may be posited.[155]

Theology

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, in light of some directly opposing views by various scholars, the question of the theology of the Book of Lamentations is problematical.[156] A complete discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of this thesis.[157] Some mention of the subject, however, is in order.

In "Human Suffering in Lamentations," Michael Moore poses some important questions:

> Is Lamentations really an objectively thought-out theological treatise? Is this document anything more than what it claims to be, viz. a lament over Jerusalem? Doubtless the author(s) stood within a particular traditional

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[153] Gwaltney, 208; see especially Lamentations 1:12-17.
[154] Gwaltney, 211.
[155] See, e.g., Ferris, Jr., 173 (stating that the parallels are best explained as coincidental); Dobbs-Allsopp, 5, citing Simon Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition* (SBLSBS 24) (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) 62 (proposing a hypothesis regarding generic relationship).
[156] Hunter, 43.
[157] For a detailed discussion of this topic, see, e.g., Helen T. Cohn, *Theologies of the Book of Lamentations* (unpublished rabbinical thesis) (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1994).

> framework (deuteronomistic? zionistic?), but was he *consciously* and *methodically* employing all the stock symbols, phrases, and poetic word-pairs of this alleged historico/theological tradition in order to facilitate a communal lament? In other words, was he *intentionally* attempting to construct a theology?[158]

Westermann would answer this question in the negative. Using strong language, he writes:

> Lamentations is not literature -- not even theological literature. This material came about as reaction to a concrete event. Therefore, Lamentations is closer to being "a direct account of suffering" (Kaiser) than it is to being poetry crafted by some author. This material generates no intellectualized theology, nothing that can be summed up as a teaching. What we have here are laments, and it is simply as laments that they are best heard.[159]

To Westermann, in other words, Lamentations is not theological literature, intentionally or unintentionally created.

Moore also answers in the negative -- that it was not the intention of the author(s) to construct a theology. He writes:

> I am more inclined to believe that the hard theologizing about these events came later. There had to be some time to think it all through first. Such tragedies have to be absorbed into one's consciousness before one can then begin to "explain" them in any coherent way.[160]

In support, Moore compares the "simple confessions of sin" of Lamentations 5:7 with the "more categorical detail" with which they are later elaborated in Ezekiel 18, as theologians were forced to deal with questions such as individual vs. collective sin; the justice vs. injustice of Yahweh's actions; and the need for a new spirit, not simply a chastened heart.[161] It is important to make clear, however, that Moore, unlike Westermann, does

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[158] Moore, 536-37.
[159] Westermann, 86.
[160] Moore, 537.
[161] Moore, 537, fn. 10.

understand Lamentations to be a theological document, but one which "presupposes and contains, though embryonically, the tensions of later theology."[162]

Like Moore, Mintz regards theology to be secondary to the raw pain communicated in Lamentations. He recognizes that theology makes its way into Lamentations and notes that the Deuteronomic tradition, refined by the classical prophets in anticipation of a natural catastrophe, pre-existed the writing of Lamentations.[163] Nonetheless, referring to this Deuteronomic theology, Mintz explains:

> Written in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem in 587, the Book of Lamentations reveals that, despite this theological preparation, the trauma caused to the covenantal paradigm caused by the Destruction was massive. While professing allegiance to the conditional terms of the covenant, the poets of Lamentations represent traditions more popular in nature than classical prophecy: the belief that no matter how much Israel should be found wanting, the Temple Sanctuary and the Davidic monarchy would remain inviolable. The awareness of sin in Lamentations is therefore secondary to the experience of abandonment and the horror of destruction.[164]

Not only that, argues Mintz, "as a poem Lamentations has as its medium dramatized speech and not theological statement."[165]

Notwithstanding the arguments as to why Lamentations does not communicate a theology, or if so, not intentionally, or at most, secondarily, there are other scholars who examine the theology of Lamentations. Hunter summarizes:

> The theological views on Lamentations can be divided into three categories. Two of these categories represent views based on the major theological traditions of the Old Testament, i.e. the Deuteronomistic and

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[162] Moore, 537, fn. 10, citing Norman Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, (London: SCM, 1954) 71.
[163] See Mintz, 3. The Deuteronomic tradition to which he refers posits that the Destruction is a "deserved and necessary punishment for sin, a punishment whose magnitude is in proportion to the transgressions committed." Id.
[164] Mintz, 3.
[165] Mintz, 26.

> Zion traditions, while the third category represents views which do not necessarily belong to any tradition but merely formulate striking theological insights from the text of Lamentations.[166]

The first scholar to formulate the theological framework for Lamentations was Gottwald in 1954.[167] Moore explains that "among most recent studies of the theological import of Lamentations, the approaches of Norman Gottwald and Bertil Albrektson have dominated discussion."[168] Gottwald is connected with the Deuteronomic tradition whereas Albrektson is associated with the Zion tradition.[169]

Despite the dominance of these two approaches in discussions of the theology of Lamentations, Moore suggests:

> It seems to me that one might safely go as far as to say that deuteronomic and Zion traditions serve as contributing traditional sources for the development of the theory articulated in Lamentations, but to focus either upon one of these or even upon some sort of synthesis between the two eventually proves to be inadequate. . . .[170]

Among the reasons Moore offers for this inadequacy is the following:

> To posit a single theological focus would most likely imply that the poet(s) responsible for this collection of laments was calculatedly conscious of "doing theology" in the modern sense of the expression: i.e., that there was a deliberate attempt here to go *beyond* the crying need to begin Israel's "grief work" *on to* the development of a theological treatise.[171]

As discussed above in this section, Moore does not believe that the author(s) of Lamentations intended or deliberately attempted to construct a theology.

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[166] Hunter, 73.
[167] Hunter, 73. See also Gottwald.
[168] Moore, 534. See also Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963).
[169] For detailed discussions, see Westermann, 76-81; Hunter, 73-83; see also Cohn.
[170] Moore, 536.
[171] Moore, 536.

Conclusion

In summation, notwithstanding the attention which Lamentations has received in recent years, the above discussion makes clear that scholarly debate remains in nearly every area of research and interpretation. Depending on one's approach to or focal point of study, different areas or issues assume greater (and lesser) priority than others. That is, how one approaches the text as well as the decisions one makes in the process of developing that approach influences what in a particular study receives emphasis and what does not.

Indeed, no one study of Lamentations has the final word on the subject. When explored together, however, these various approaches to the text demonstrate the complexities of understanding Lamentations as part of the ancient Israelite literary and cultural milieu as well as an outgrowth of the greater ancient Near Eastern milieu. Lamentations was written in a particular time and place. Its author(s) wrote in response to actual destruction and crisis. The biblical text offers us today, scholar and lay reader alike, a point of entry into that world.

Chapter 2

EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF AND THE MOURNING OF LOSS

Introduction

Lamentations is a literary work written in response to actual destruction and crisis. It is a book about profound loss and devastating pain. While Lamentations memorializes a particular moment in time that impacted on a specific culture, it also brings to life timeless and universal human responses to loss. As such, it continues to speak to us today, far removed as we are from either the ancient Israelite cultural and literary milieu or the destruction of the Temple and the devastation of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

All human beings experience loss. Indeed, "life is a continuing series of separations and losses, small and large."[172] With loss there is grieving. We tend to think of the words, grief, mourning and bereavement, in connection with death. However, "grief is involved in all significant changes, losses, and life transitions, not just in the death of a loved one."[173] "Bereavement is the universal human crisis, striking everyone sooner or later."[174]

These statements regarding loss and mourning may seem obvious. The subject, however, warrants our attention. Indeed, while mourning is a normal human healing process for which most people have adequate resources, "in our death-denying culture,

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[172] Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling* (Revised and Enlarged Edition) (Nashville: Abington Press, 1984) 220.

[173] Clinebell, 219. While the literature on grief makes clear that mourning applies to all sorts of losses and not solely death, it generally discusses the topic in the context of death. Thus, the discussion herein reflects that tendency. It is important to make clear, however, that the depictions of grief in the Book of Lamentations result from a number of losses, including but not limited to death.

[174] Clinebell, 218.

many grief wounds become infected."[175] As a society, we deny the reality of death, and we are uncomfortable with the range and depth of the mourner's feelings.[176] We want to pick ourselves up from our losses and quickly move on. In our discomfort with grief, we also may encourage others to do so. In reality, however, we human beings do not function that way.

Rather, human beings grieve loss. In order to heal, mourning is necessary.[177] Mourning is a process, and, as Anne Brener points out, "'Process' implies that things change over time and that there are ways to encourage that change to happen."[178] Referring to an essay by psychiatrist George Engel, William Worden points out that:

> Grief represents a departure from the state of health and well-being, and just as healing is necessary in the physiological realm in order to bring the body back to homeostatic balance, a period of time is likewise needed to return the mourner to a similar state of equilibrium. Therefore, Engel sees the process of mourning as similar to the process of healing. As with healing, full function, or nearly full function, can be restored, but there are also incidents of impaired function and inadequate healing.[179]

Our society, however, does not value process or the reality that certain matters require time.[180] As Brener states clearly, in our emotional lives, "we expect to be healed without acknowledging the rupture. We expect to arrive at our destination with no journey. But the process of healing requires a journey for which there is no shortcut."[181] Not only that

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[175] Clinebell, 227. On this point, see also Anne Brener, *Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993) (foreword by Jack Reimer) xxiii.
[176] See Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D., *On Death & Dying*. (New York: Touchstone, 1969) 21; see also William J. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (2nd ed.) (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1991) 13.
[177] See Worden, 9-10. Worden uses "the term *mourning* to indicate the process which occurs after a loss, while *grief* refers to the personal experience of the loss." Worden, 34.
[178] Brener, 21.
[179] Worden, 9-10.
[180] See Brener, 21-2.
[181] Brener, 21-2.

but, "blocked, unfinished grief takes a heavy toll, sapping one's creative juices. The longer the healing is delayed, the more costly the protracted grief is to the person's wholeness."[182]

The costs of protracted or unresolved grief impact on the well-being of individuals, communities and our society as a whole. Such brokenness lessens our vitality and the ability to connect with each other deeply. Consequently, resources that help facilitate the process of mourning are of utmost importance.

The biblical Book of Lamentations can be such a resource. For one reason, Lamentations unapologetically expresses pain and loss. In this way, it contrasts sharply with some of our current approaches to "dealing with" pain felt from loss, such as numbing ourselves with drugs, keeping busy and other forms of denial.

In addition, as part of the biblical canon, Lamentations is accorded a certain status by those who deem it sacred text or authoritative teaching.[183] Consequently, Lamentations has the potential to afford credibility to and guidance through the mourning process to those who may not find strictly secular resources, such as "self-help" books, compelling.[184]

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, an examination of Lamentations as an exploration of the human response to loss powerfully merges the intellectual pursuit of text study with the domain of our emotional lives. This type of wholistic approach to the

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[182] Clinebell, 219.

[183] See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 3 (referring to authoritative texts or teachings whose religious-cultural significance is fundamental).

[184] Granted, the biblical authors did not intend Lamentations to be used as a "self-help" manual, nor could they have imagined that the text would be explored and deconstructed through the lens of a mourning process. As this paper indicates, in this writer's opinion, use of the biblical text in such a new and unintended manner in no way renders the exploration illegitimate.

text enjoys several important outcomes. First, when explored from a contemporary human relations perspective, the biblical text takes on new relevance, vitality and meaning. In addition, when explored this way in a group setting such as a synagogue, the biblical text becomes a starting point, a spark of creation whereby human beings may connect with each other in new and significant ways.

These outcomes are important. The integration of intellect with emotion, of text with human relations and of separate individuals into community with each other would indicate a significant step towards healing and wholeness. For Lamentations to contribute in such a way would be especially powerful. Specifically, approaching Lamentations as a guide and a tool in the process of healing, and not only as a remembrance of loss and destruction, would be a tribute both to the redemptive power of the biblical text as well as to the resilient spirit of the Jewish people, indeed to the possibility of healing and wholeness for all people.

As stated above, mourning is a process. Much has been written on the subject of grief and mourning.[185] Nearly nothing, however, has been written previously which connects Lamentations with the process of mourning loss.[186] In the pages that follow, I will discuss the process of mourning and the ways in which the imagery and depictions in the Book of Lamentations reflect certain aspects of the mourning process.

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[185] For an extensive bibliography, see Worden.

[186] In my research, the only mention that I found of Lamentations in connection with the mourning process is in Michael S. Moore, "Human Suffering in Lamentations," *Revue Biblique* 90 (1983) 534, 536 (referring to the psychological process of "grief work" as set out by Kubler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* and noting that traces of the stages of mourning can be found in Lamentations).

Mourning Ordinary Loss[187]

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and the Stages of Mourning

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's seminal book, *On Death and Dying,* came out of an interdisciplinary seminar for medical students and theological students on death, life and transition.[188] Central to the seminar were interviews with terminally ill patients. From these interviews, Kubler-Ross concluded that there are five "stages that people go through when they are faced with tragic news -- defense mechanisms in psychiatric terms, coping mechanisms to deal with extremely difficult situations."[189]

These coping mechanisms, or stages, are: (1) denial and isolation; (2) anger; (3) bargaining; (4) depression; and (5) acceptance.[190] She summarizes:

> All of our patients reacted to the bad news in almost identical ways, which is typical not only of the news of fatal illness but seems to be a human reaction to great and unexpected stress: namely, with shock and disbelief. Denial was used by most of our patients and lasted from a few seconds to many months ... . This denial is never a total denial. After the denial, anger and rage predominated. It expressed itself in a multitude of ways as an envy of those who were able to live and function. ... When the environment was able to tolerate this anger without taking it personally, the patient was greatly helped in reaching a stage of temporary bargaining followed by depression, which is a stepping-stone towards final acceptance.[191]

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[187] While no person confronting loss finds his or her situation "ordinary" in the sense that it is unexceptional or routine, there is an important distinction between ordinary loss and traumatic loss. As noted above, ordinary loss triggers a normal human healing process for which most people have adequate resources. Traumatic events, in contrast, are extraordinary because "they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life." Judith Herman, M.D., *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997) 33. A discussion of traumatic loss follows.

[188] See Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying,* 49.

[189] Kubler-Ross, 147.

[190] Kubler-Ross, 49.

[191] Kubler-Ross, 264.

It is important to point out, however, that these stages do not replace each other but can exist next to each other and overlap at times.[192] In other words, grieving does not proceed in a strictly linear fashion.[193] In fact, of a conversation with a woman dying of cancer, Clinebell writes, "She said that among her many feelings, the five identified in terminally ill persons by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross ... would come and go, not following a particular sequence."[194]

This suggests that while there may be an identifiable process of mourning, with various steps along the way, the stages are neither neatly begun and ended, nor are they uniform. Rather, the chronology of grief is unique to each person.[195] Moreover, "the way people respond to losses varies greatly depending on their own resources, the quality and length of the relationship, the timeliness of the loss, whether the death was expected, and the nature of the death."[196]

The point, however, is that there is an identifiable chronology of grief. Of the first stage, Kubler-Ross writes:

> The need for denial exists in every patient at times, at the very beginning of a serious illness more so than towards the end of life. Later on, the need comes and goes .... It is much later, usually, that the patient uses isolation more than denial.[197]

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[192] See Kubler-Ross, 265.
[193] See Worden, 18; Clinebell, 221.
[194] Clinebell, 231.
[195] See Brener, 30.
[196] Clinebell, 224.
[197] Kubler-Ross, 54.

Kubler-Ross explains that "when the first stage of denial cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy, and resentment. The logical next question becomes: 'Why me?'"[198]

This second stage is followed by the stage of bargaining, which, Kubler-Ross notes "is less well known but equally helpful to the patient, though only for brief periods of time."[199] Eventually, however, the patient's "numbness or stoicism, his anger and rage will soon be replaced with a sense of great loss."[200]

Finally comes the fifth stage of acceptance. Kubler-Ross explains that "acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost devoid of feelings."[201] Anne Brener applies Kubler-Ross's stages to those mourning the death of a loved one. She echoes Kubler-Ross in stating, "Acceptance is not synonymous with happiness."[202] Brener adds that acceptance "does represent a point at which a mourner begins to integrate the loss and to move toward a life less defined by attachment to the person who has died."[203]

Moreover, hopefulness permeates all of these stages. In this regard, Kubler-Ross writes, "No matter the stage of illness or coping mechanisms used, all our patients maintained some form of hope until the last moment."[204] She adds, however, "If a patient stops expressing hope, it is usually a sign of imminent death."[205]

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[198] Kubler-Ross, 63.
[199] Kubler-Ross, 93.
[200] Kubler-Ross, 97.
[201] Kubler-Ross, 124.
[202] Brener, 28.
[203] Brener, 28.
[204] Kubler-Ross, 264.
[205] Kubler-Ross, 149.

A Phases Approach to the Mourning Process

It is important to point out that Kubler-Ross's stages approach is not the only way to understand the process of mourning. There are some drawbacks to viewing the process of mourning in terms of stages. For example, Worden notes that:

> One of the difficulties with using the stage approach is that people do not pass through stages *in seriatum.* Also, there's a tendency for the novice to take the stages too literally. An example of this literalism is the way people responded to Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's stages of dying. After her first book, *On Death and Dying* ..., many people expected dying patients literally to go through the stages she had listed in some neat order.[206]

As discussed above, neither the process of dying nor that of mourning a loss happens in such a fixed, linear manner.

An alternative approach to stages is the concept of phases. Worden explains that:

> Parkes defines four phases of mourning (Parkes, 1970). Phase I is the period of numbness that occurs close to the time of the loss. This numbness, which is experienced by most survivors, helps them to disregard the fact of the loss at least for a brief period of time. Then the person goes through the second "phase of yearning," in which he or she yearns for the lost one to return and tends to deny the permanence of the loss. Anger plays an important part in this phase... . In the third phase, the phase of disorganization and despair, the bereaved person finds it difficult to function in the environme[n]t. Finally, he or she is able to enter Phase IV, the phase of reorganized behavior, and begin to pull life back together.[207]

As one can see, there are both differences as well as similarities between Parkes' phases approach and Kubler-Ross's stages approach. In addition, "as with stages, there are overlaps between the various phases and they are seldom distinct (Bowlby, 1980)."[208]

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[206] Worden, 34-5.
[207] Worden, 35.
[208] Worden, 35.

William Worden and the Four Tasks of Mourning

Worden, however, finds an approach which utilizes tasks of mourning more useful to the clinician than the schema of phasing. He writes that:

> Phases imply a certain passivity, something that the mourner must pass through. Tasks, on the other hand, are much more consonant with Freud's concept of grief work and imply that the mourner needs to take action and can do something. Also, this approach implies that mourning can be influenced by intervention from the outside. In other words, the mourner sees the concept of phases as something to be passed through, while the tasks approach gives the mourner some sense of leverage and hope that there is something that he or she can actually do.[209]

Worden acknowledges that there is validity to both approaches, as grieving is something that takes time. He adds, however, that "grief creates tasks that need to be accomplished, and although this may seem overwhelming to the person in the throes of acute grief, it can, with the facilitation of a counselor, offer hope that something can be done and that there is an end point."[210]

Worden's approach includes four tasks of mourning. They are:

1. to accept the reality of the loss;
2. to work through to the pain of grief;
3. to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing; and
4. to emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life.[211]

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[209] Worden, 35.

[210] Worden, 35.

[211] See Worden, 10-18. Clinebell also finds it useful "to focus on the essential tasks that must be accomplished by a person in order to complete the healing." Clinebell, 221. He lists the following five grief work tasks:

1. Experiencing shock, numbness, denial and gradually accepting the reality of the loss.
2. Experiencing, expressing and working through painful feelings -- e.g., guilt, remorse, apathy, anger, resentment, yearning, despair, anxiety, emptiness, depression, loneliness, panic, disorientation, loss of clear identity, physical symptoms, etc.
3. Gradual acceptance of the loss and putting one's life back together minus what was lost; making decisions and coping with the new reality; unlearning old ways of satisfying one's needs and learning new ways to satisfy these needs. Saying "goodbye" and reinvesting one's life energy in other relationships.
4. Putting one's life in a wider context of meaning and faith; learning from the loss.
5. Reaching out to others experiencing similar losses for mutual help.

Worden states clearly that:

> It is essential that the grieving person accomplish these tasks before mourning can be completed. Incompleted grief tasks can impair further growth and development. Although the tasks do not necessarily follow a specific order, there is some ordering suggested in the definitions. For example, you cannot handle the emotional impact of a loss until you first come to terms with the fact that the loss has happened.[212]

Stated simply, "accepting the full reality of the loss must eventually occur or the healing will be incomplete."[213]

In terms of task one, Worden points out that part of the acceptance of the reality of the loss is to come to the belief that reunion is impossible, at least in this life.[214] In addition:

> Coming to an acceptance of the reality of the loss takes time since it involves not only an intellectual acceptance but also an emotional one. The bereaved person may be intellectually aware of the finality of the loss long before the emotions allow full acceptance of the information as true.[215]

While grappling with this task, belief and disbelief are intermittent.

Task two requires the mourner to work through to the pain of the grief. This "includes the literal physical pain that many people experience and the emotional and behavioral pain associated with loss."[216] In order to complete task two, "it is necessary to acknowledge and work through the pain or it will manifest itself through some symptoms or other form of aberrant behavior."[217]

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[212] Worden, 10.
[213] Clinebell, 222.
[214] See Worden, 11.
[215] Worden, 12.
[216] Worden, 13.
[217] Worden, 13.

People can short-circuit task two by cutting off their feelings, denying the pain that is present, or avoiding painful thoughts.[218] Experiencing and expressing the agonizing feelings fully is an indispensable part of the healing process. Consequently, blocked feelings means delayed healing.[219] Clinebell points out that his second grief work task calls for "the full catharsis of whatever feelings the loss has triggered in the person."[220] He adds that:

> These can include any feeling from total despair to relief and joy. Often the feelings are ambivalent and conflicted. The catharsis task begins intermittently as the numbness and denial gradually diminish, and the stark reality of the loss is allowed to enter awareness.[221]

That is, to complete task two, the mourner must experience, express and work through the many feelings that arise in connection with the loss.

To complete task three, the mourner must adjust to the loss of roles played by the deceased. Death also confronts the mourner with the challenge of adjusting to his or her own sense of self.[222] Thus, task three is arrested if the mourner fails to adapt to the loss by not developing the skills she or he needs to cope, or by withdrawing from the world and not facing up to environmental requirements.[223]

Finally, task four requires that the mourner emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life. Worden notes that for many people, task four is the most difficult one to accomplish. People "get stuck at this point in their grieving and later realize that their

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[218] Worden, 13.
[219] Clinebell, 222.
[220] Clinebell, 222.
[221] Clinebell, 222-3.
[222] Worden, 15.
[223] Worden, 16.

life in some way stopped at the point the loss occurred."[224] In other words, "the fourth task is hindered by holding onto the past attachment rather than going on and forming new ones."[225] A person may even decide never to love again. This results in incompletion of task four.

Task four, however, can be accomplished. Worden explains that:

> Our benchmark of a completed grief reaction is when the person is able to think of the deceased without pain. There is always a sense of sadness when you think of someone you have loved and lost, but it is a different kind of sadness -- it lacks the wrenching quality it previously had. One can think of the deceased without physical manifestations such as intense crying or feeling a tightness in the chest. Also, mourning is finished when a person can reinvest his or her emotions back into life and in the living.[226]

In addition, he notes that while it is impossible to set a definitive date for the completion of the tasks of mourning, he "would be suspicious of any full resolution that takes under a year and, for many, two years is not too long."[227]

Normal Grief Behaviors

In conjunction with an examination of the tasks of mourning, it is important to note that there are many behaviors and experiences associated with loss. No one person will experience all of these manifestations of grief.[228] Normal grief behaviors can be described under four general categories: feelings, physical sensations, cognitions and behaviors.[229]

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[224] Worden, 18.
[225] Worden, 17.
[226] Worden, 18.
[227] Worden, 18.
[228] Worden, 30.
[229] Worden, 22. Worden distinguishes "normal grief," sometimes called "uncomplicated grief," from "abnormal grief reactions," sometimes called "complicated mourning."

Worden identifies twelve feelings that manifest themselves in normal grief. They are: sadness, anger, guilt and self-reproach, anxiety, loneliness, fatigue, helplessness, shock, yearning, emancipation, relief and numbness.[230] Worden reminds us that there is nothing pathological about any of these feelings. He adds, however, "feelings that exist for abnormally long periods of time and at excessive intensity may portend a complicated grief reaction."[231]

In addition to feelings, people also experience physical sensations and cognitions associated with their acute grief reactions. Worden notes that these physical sensations are often overlooked, but they play a significant role in the grieving process. The following list constitutes the most commonly reported physical sensations associated with grief:

1. hollowness in the stomach;
2. tightness in the chest;
3. tightness in the throat;
4. oversensitivity to noise;
5. a sense of depersonalization: "I walk down the street and nothing seems real, including myself."
6. breathlessness, feeling short of breath;
7. weakness in the muscles;
8. lack of energy; and
9. dry mouth.[232]

Cognitions associated with grief include disbelief, confusion, preoccupation, a sense of the deceased's presence and hallucinations.[233]

Finally, there are a number of specific behaviors frequently associated with normal grief reactions. They include sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, absent-minded

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[230] See Worden, 22-5.
[231] Worden, 25.
[232] Worden, 25.
[233] Worden, 25-27.

behavior, social withdrawal, dreams of the deceased, avoiding reminders of the deceased, searching and calling out, sighing, restless overactivity, crying, visiting places or carrying objects that remind the survivor of the deceased, and treasuring objects that belonged to the deceased.[234]

Grief and Depression

Worden points out that many of these normal grief behaviors may seem like manifestations of depression. Indeed, both grief and depression may include symptoms such as sleep disturbance, appetite disturbance and intense sadness. In a grief reaction, however, "there is not the loss of self-esteem commonly found in most clinical depressions."[235] Thus, while grief and depression share similar features, they constitute different conditions. According to Freud, with grief, "the world looks poor and empty while in depression, the person feels poor and empty."[236]

Grieving may, however, develop into a major depressive episode. This results from the mourner's feelings of anger toward the deceased that are neither directed toward the deceased nor deflected onto some other person.[237] Worden explains that:

> If the anger is not directed toward the deceased or displaced onto someone else, it may be retroflected -- turned inward and experienced as depression, guilt, or lowered self-esteem. In extreme cases, retroflected anger may result in suicidal behavior, either in thought or in action.[238]

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[234] Worden, 27-30.
[235] Worden, 30.
[236] Worden, 31.
[237] See Worden, 43.
[238] Worden, 43. See also Kubler-Ross, 18 (explaining that grief, shame and guilt are not very far removed from feelings of anger and rage).

A major depressive episode that develops during bereavement is considered exaggerated grief.[239]

Abnormal Grief Reactions

Abnormal grief is sometimes called pathological grief, unresolved grief, complicated grief, chronic grief, delayed grief, exaggerated grief, complicated mourning or complicated bereavement. Whether it is called abnormal grief or some other name, Worden explains that it is:

> the intensification of grief to the level where the person is overwhelmed, resorts to maladaptive behavior, or remains interminably in the state of grief without progression of the mourning process towards completion.... [It] involves processes that do not move progressively toward assimilation or accomodation but, instead, lead to stereotyped repetitions or extensive interruptions of healing.[240]

Pathology is more related to the intensity of a grief reaction or to the length of its duration rather than to the presence or absence of a specific behavior.[241]

In this regard, Clinebell identifies certain danger signs that may indicate pathological grief if they persist over several months or longer. They are:

- increased withdrawal from relationships and normal activities;
- the absence of mourning;
- undiminished mourning;
- severe depression that does not lift;
- severe psychosomatic problems;
- disorientation;
- personality changes;
- severe, undiminished guilt, anger, phobias or loss of interest in life;
- continuing escape by means of drugs or alcohol; and
- feelings of inner deadness.[242]

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[239] Worden, 31.
[240] Worden, 70.
[241] Worden, 71.
[242] Clinebell, 226-7.

Grief therapy is most appropriate when: (1) the complicated grief reaction is manifested as prolonged grief; (2) the grief reaction manifests itself through some masked somatic or behavioral symptom; or (3) the reaction is manifested by an exaggerated grief response.[243]

Worden explains that:

> The goal of grief therapy is to resolve the conflicts of separation and to facilitate the completion of the grief tasks. The resolution of these conflicts necessitates experiencing thoughts and feelings that the patient has been avoiding.[244]

Although denial and repression of thoughts and feelings may enable a person to avoid the agony of a loss, "they also prevent the grief work from healing. The wound is infected and cannot heal until the person deals with the repressed feelings."[245]

Experiencing the feelings connected with the loss makes healing possible. Anne Brener explains:

> I have worked in many settings and with many different kinds of people. ... From all these people and from my own pain, I have learned that one principle applies: *The only feelings that do not change are those that are ignored.* Only by facing our feelings do we learn and grow. Pain has a size and a shape, a beginning and an end. It takes over only when not allowed its voice.[246]

In such cases, a person "gets stuck" in the mourning process. An incompleted task of mourning will be remembered until completed.[247] For this reason, it is important to work through to completion each of the tasks of mourning. It is that completion which makes healing possible.

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[243] Worden, 79.
[244] Worden, 80.
[245] Clinebell, 226.
[246] Brener, 4 (emphasis in original).
[247] Worden, 135.

Mourning Traumatic Loss

As noted above, ordinary loss is distinct from traumatic loss. In *Trauma and Recovery,* Judith Herman explains that:

> Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe. According to the *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry,* the common denominator of psychological trauma is a feeling of "intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation."[248]

Traumatic events devastate and destroy. Indeed:

> Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.[249]

In all of these ways, traumatic loss differs from ordinary loss.

Certain commonalities exist among those who suffer traumatic loss: "between rape survivors and combat veterans, between the survivors of vast concentration camps created by tyrants who rule nations and the survivors of small, hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes."[250] In this section, I discuss the nature of psychological trauma, certain features of traumatic disorders and the process of recovery from traumatic loss.

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[248] Herman, 33 (citation omitted). The discussion herein relies upon Herman's research and analysis, which are quite detailed and compelling.
[249] Herman, 51.
[250] Herman, 2-3.

Psychological Trauma

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that no one really wants to hear about the horrible things that some human beings do to others. It is important to point this out because the will to deny and repress such horrible things is part of the dialectic of trauma. It plays out in survivors, witnesses and the public at large.

Silence, however, does not make the reality of atrocities less real. In fact, as Herman writes:

> The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable.*
>
> Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work. Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told. ... Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.[251]

Terrible events and the psychological trauma they cause carry with them the "twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy."[252] In other words, this conflict "between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma."[253]

Indeed, people "who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy."[254] Far too often, secrecy

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[251] Herman, 1.
[252] Herman, 1.
[253] Herman, 1.
[254] Herman, 1.

prevails, "and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom."[255]

The will to deny and repress the reality of atrocities is pervasive. And yet, as Herman explains:

> Three times over the past century, a particular form of psychological trauma has surfaced into public consciousness. Each time, the investigation of that trauma has flourished in affiliation with a political movement. The first to emerge was hysteria, the archetypal disorder of women. Its study grew out of the republican, anticlerical political movement of the late nineteenth century in France. The second was shell-shock or combat neurosis. Its study began in England and the United States after the First World War and reached a peak after the Vietnam War. Its political context was the collapse of a cult of war and the growth of an antiwar movement. The last and most recent trauma to come into public awareness is sexual and domestic violence. Its political context is the feminist movement in Western Europe and North America. Our contemporary understanding of psychological trauma is built upon a synthesis of these three separate lines of investigation.[256]

The syndrome of psychological trauma attained formal recognition within the diagnostic canon for the first time in 1980. "In that year, the American Psychiatric Association included in its official manual of mental disorders a new category, called 'post-traumatic stress disorder.'"[257]

Traumatic reactions differ from the ordinary human response to danger. Herman writes that:

> The ordinary human response to danger is a complex, integrated system of reactions, encompassing both body and mind. Threat initially arouses the sympathetic nervous system, causing the person in danger to feel an adrenaline rush and go into a state of alert. Threat also concentrates a person's attention on the immediate situation. In addition, threat may alter ordinary perceptions: people in danger are often able to disregard hunger,

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[255] Herman, 1.
[256] Herman, 9.
[257] Herman, 27-8. See also American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd ed. (DSM-III) (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

> fatigue, or pain. Finally, threat evokes intense feelings of fear and anger. These changes in arousal, attention, perception, and emotion are normal, adaptive reactions. They mobilize the threatened person for strenuous action, either in battle or in flight.[258]

When action is of no avail, traumatic reactions occur. That is to say:

> When neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self-defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized. Each component of the ordinary response to danger, having lost its utility, tends to persist in an altered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over. Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory. Moreover, traumatic events may sever these normally integrated functions from one another. The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or may remember everything in detail but without emotion. She may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own.[259]

Herman explains that "this kind of fragmentation, whereby trauma tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion, is central to the historic observations of post-traumatic stress disorder."[260]

In other words, psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force.[261] Moreover, although the severity of traumatic events cannot be measured on any single dimension, "certain identifiable experiences increase the likelihood of harm."[262] Herman writes that:

> These include being taken by surprise, trapped, or exposed to the point of exhaustion. The likelihood of harm is also increased when the traumatic events include physical violation or injury, exposure to extreme violence, or

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[258] Herman, 34.
[259] Herman, 34.
[260] Herman, 34.
[261] Herman, 33.
[262] Herman, 33-4.

> witnessing grotesque death. In each instance, the salient characteristic of the traumatic event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror.[263]

The end result is the overwhelming of "the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning."[264]

Symptoms of Traumatic Disorders

There is a spectrum of traumatic disorders, "ranging from the effects of a single overwhelming event to the more complicated effects of prolonged and repeated abuse."[265] Herman explains that:

> The most powerful determinant of psychological harm is the character of the traumatic event itself. Individual personality characteristics count for little in the face of overwhelming events. There is a simple, direct relationship between the severity of the trauma and its psychological impact, whether that impact is measured in terms of the number of people affected or the intensity and duration of harm.[266]

Stated simply, "with severe enough traumatic exposure, no person is immune."[267]

The impact of traumatic events, however, does depend to some degree on the resilience of the affected person. No two people have identical reactions, even to the same event. In other words, "the traumatic syndrome, despite its many constant features, is not the same for everyone."[268]

Moreover, as Herman writes:

> During stressful events, highly resilient people are able to make use of any opportunity for purposeful action in concert with others, while ordinary people are more easily paralyzed or isolated by terror. The capacity to preserve social connection and active coping strategies, even in the face of

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[263] Herman, 34.
[264] Herman, 33.
[265] Herman, 3.
[266] Herman, 57.
[267] Herman, 57.
[268] Herman, 58.

> extremity, seems to protect people to some degree against the later development of post-traumatic syndromes.[269]

Nonetheless, though highly resilient people may fare better than others, the most important factor cited by survivors is good luck. Indeed, many survivors "are keenly aware that the traumatic event could have been far worse and that they might well have 'broken' if fate had not spared them."[270]

Herman explains that "traumatized people feel and act as though their nervous systems have been disconnected from the present."[271] This is due to the fact that traumatic events appear to recondition the human nervous system. Traumatized people alternate between feeling numb and reliving the event. This "dialectic of trauma gives rise to complicated, sometimes uncanny alterations of consciousness," which mental health professionals call "dissociation."[272]

The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are numerous. They fall, however, into three main categories. These are identified as "hyperarousal," "intrusion" and "constriction."

Hyperarousal is the first cardinal symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. Herman explains:

> After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated. In this state of hyperarousal, ... the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly.[273]

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[269] Herman, 58.
[270] Herman, 59-60.
[271] Herman, 35.
[272] Herman, 1.
[273] Herman, 35.

In other words, hyperarousal reflects a persistent expectation of danger.

The second symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder is intrusion, which reflects the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment.[274] Herman writes that:

> Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. It is as if time stops at the moment of trauma. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangerous, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma.[275]

Traumatic memories take on a heightened reality because they lack verbal narrative and context. Rather, they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images.[276]

Another aspect of intrusion is that the survivor often feels impelled to "re-create the moment of terror, either in literal or in disguised form. Sometimes people reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter."[277] Most survivors dread and fear such a reenactment because:

> Reliving a traumatic experience, whether in the form of intrusive memories, dreams, or actions, carries with it the emotional intensity of the original event. The survivor is continually buffetted by terror and rage. These emotions are qualitatively different from ordinary fear and anger. They are outside the range of ordinary emotional experience, and they overwhelm the ordinary capacity to bear feelings.[278]

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[274] Herman, 35.
[275] Herman, 37.
[276] Herman, 38.
[277] Herman, 39.
[278] Herman, 42.

Because reliving a traumatic experience provokes such intense emotional distress, traumatized people go to great lengths to avoid it. This effort to ward off intrusive symptoms, though self-protective in intent, further aggravates the post-traumatic stress syndrome, because the attempt to avoid reliving the trauma often results in a narrowing of consciousness, a withdrawal from engagement with others and in an impoverished life.

The third category of symptoms is called constriction or numbing. Herman explains that:

> When a person is completely powerless, and any form of resistance is futile, she may go into a state of surrender. The system of self-defense shuts down entirely. The helpless person escapes from her situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness. Analogous states are observed in animals, who sometimes "freeze" when they are attacked. These are the responses of captured prey to predator or of a defeated contestant in battle.[279]

This is a "state of detached calm, in which terror, rage, and pain dissolve."[280]

In addition, Herman notes that:

> These perceptual changes combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle. This altered state of consciousness might be regarded as one of nature's small mercies, a protection against unbearable pain.[281]

And yet, while this type of dissociation may be adaptive at the moment of total helplessness, it becomes maladaptive once the danger is past. Such altered states of consciousness "keep the traumatic experience walled off from ordinary consciousness," and consequently "prevent the integration necessary for healing."[282] In other words,

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[279] Herman, 42.
[280] Herman, 42.
[281] Herman, 43.
[282] Herman, 45.

"constrictive symptoms, though they may represent an attempt to defend against overwhelming emotional states, exact a high price for whatever protection they afford."[283]

The Aftermath of Traumatic Events

Herman explains that:

> In the aftermath of an experience of overwhelming danger, the two contradictory responses of intrusion and constriction establish an oscillating rhythm. This dialectic of opposing psychological states is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the post-traumatic stress syndromes.[284]

Over time, however, the dialectic of intrusion and constriction undergoes a gradual evolution. That is:

> Initially, intrusive reliving of the traumatic event predominates, and the victim remains in a highly agitated state, on the alert for new threats. Intrusive symptoms emerge most prominently in the first few days or weeks following the traumatic event, abate to some degree within three to six months, and then attenuate slowly over time.[285]

As intrusive symptoms diminish, numbing or constrictive symptoms come to predominate.[286]

After this shift takes place, the traumatized person may seem to resume the outward forms of her previous life. This makes the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder easy to overlook. And yet, "long after the event, many traumatized people feel that a part of themselves has died. The most profoundly afflicted wish that they were dead."[287]

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[283] Herman, 46.
[284] Herman, 47.
[285] Herman, 47.
[286] Herman, 48.
[287] Herman, 49.

In the aftermath of trauma, a sense of alienation and disconnection pervades. As Herman explains, "Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life."[288] In summation:

> Traumatized people suffer damage to the basic structures of the self. They lose their trust in themselves, in other people, and in God. Their self-esteem is assaulted by experiences of humiliation, guilt, and helplessness. Their capacity for intimacy is compromised by intense and contradictory feelings of need and fear. The identity they have formed prior to the trauma is irrevocably destroyed.[289]

Nothing remains the same.

The Process of Recovery

With regard to mourning, Herman explains that:

> In ordinary bereavement, numerous social rituals contain and support the mourner through this process. By contrast, no custom or common ritual recognizes the mourning that follows traumatic life events. In the absence of such support, the potential for pathological grief and severe, persistent depression is extremely high.[290]

The survivor of trauma needs help from others to mourn her losses. Herman writes:

> The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.[291]

Specifically, the survivor needs others to bear witness. From them, she seeks not simple pronouncements of absolution but "fairness, compassion, and the willingness to share the guilty knowledge of what happens to people in extremity."[292] Although the relationship

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[288] Herman, 52.
[289] Herman, 56.
[290] Herman, 69-70.
[291] Herman, 133.
[292] Herman, 69.

between survivor and therapist is one relationship among many, it is unique in that its sole purpose is to promote the recovery of the patient.[293]

There is a process of recovery from traumatic loss. This process "can be observed not only in the healing of individuals but also in the healing of traumatized communities."[294] Herman explains that:

> Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the *establishment of safety*. The central task of the second stage is *remembrance and mourning*. The central task of the third stage is *reconnection with ordinary life*. Like any abstract concept, these stages of recovery are a convenient fiction, not to be taken too literally. They are an attempt to impose simplicity and order upon a process that is inherently turbulent and complex. But the same basic concept of recovery stages has emerged repeatedly....[295]

As noted above with regard to mourning ordinary loss, here, too, "no single course of recovery follows these stages through a straightforward linear sequence."[296] Indeed, the course of recovery from traumatic loss "often detours and doubles back, reviewing issues that have already been addressed many times in order to deepen and expand the survivor's integration of the meaning of her experience."[297]

The first task of recovery is the establishment of the survivor's safety.[298] No therapeutic work can succeed if safety has not been adequately been secured. Herman instructs that "establishing safety begins by focusing on control of the body and gradually moves outward toward control of the environment."[299]

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[293] Herman, 134. *Trauma and Recovery* focuses to a large extent on the therapeutic relationship.
[294] Herman, 241.
[295] Herman, 155 (emphasis added). For a more detailed discussion of the process of recovery, see Herman, 133-236.
[296] Herman, 155.
[297] Herman, 213.
[298] Herman, 159.
[299] Herman, 160.

Moreover, this first task of recovery calls for empowerment of the survivor. "She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure."[300] Indeed, it is important to recall that trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control. Thus, "the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor."[301]

The central task of the second stage of recovery is remembrance and mourning. As in the first stage of recovery, the principle of empowerment continues to apply. That is, "the choice to confront the horrors of the past rests with the survivor."[302]

In this stage, the survivor tells the story of the trauma. "She tells it completely, in depth and in detail. This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story."[303]

Herman points out that in the telling, the trauma story becomes a testimony.[304] Testimony is a ritual of healing. It "has both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is political and judicial."[305] This testimony transforms the trauma story from one of shame and humiliation to one of dignity and virtue.[306]

The telling of the trauma story, however, inevitably plunges the survivor into profound grief.[307] Herman points out that:

> The descent into mourning is at once the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery. Patients often fear that the task is

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[300] Herman, 133.
[301] Herman, 159.
[302] Herman, 175.
[303] Herman, 175.
[304] Herman, 181.
[305] Herman, 181.
[306] Herman, 181.
[307] Herman, 188.

> insurmountable, that once they allow themselves to start grieving, they will never stop.[308]

Consequently, the survivor frequently resists mourning. She does so, not only out of fear, but also out of pride.[309] That is, the survivor may consciously refuse to grieve as a way of denying victory to the perpetrator. Herman explains that:

> In this case it is important to reframe the patient's mourning as an act of courage rather than humiliation. To the extent that the patient is unable to grieve, she is cut off from a part of herself and robbed of an important part of her healing. Reclaiming the ability to feel the full range of emotions, including grief, must be understood as an act of resistance rather than submission to the perpetrator's intent. Only through mourning everything that she has lost can the patient discover her indestructible inner life.[310]

And yet, because of mourning's painfulness, resistance to it is probably the most common cause of stagnation in the second stage of recovery.[311]

Such resistance to mourning frequently appears as a "fantasy of magical resolution through revenge, forgiveness, or compensation."[312] According to Herman, "the revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed."[313] Revenge fantasies, however, do not bring relief. Rather:

> During the process of mourning, the survivor must come to terms with the impossibility of getting even. As she vents her rage in safety, her helpless fury gradually changes into a more powerful and satisfying form of anger: righteous indignation.[314]

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[308] Herman, 188.
[309] Herman, 188.
[310] Herman, 188.
[311] Herman, 189.
[312] Herman, 189.
[313] Herman, 189.
[314] Herman, 189.

The fantasies of bypassing mourning through an act of forgiveness or the quest for "fair" compensation, similarly, do not bring relief.[315] In order to heal, the survivor must mourn her losses.

This second stage of recovery, remembrance and mourning, is never entirely completed. Herman makes clear that:

> New conflicts and challenges at each new stage of the lifecycle will inevitably reawaken the trauma and bring some new aspect of the experience to light. The major work of the second stage is accomplished, however, when the patient reclaims her own history and feels renewed hope and energy for engagement with life. Time starts to move again. When the "action of telling a story" has come to its conclusion, the traumatic experience truly belongs to the past. At this point, the survivor faces the tasks of rebuilding her life in the present and pursuing her aspirations for the future.[316]

These are the tasks of the third stage of recovery, reconnection with ordinary life.

During this third stage, the survivor faces the task of creating a future. This involves developing a new self and new relationships as well as finding anew a sustaining faith.[317] The survivor no longer feels possessed by her traumatic past, and as Herman puts it, "In accomplishing this work, the survivor reclaims her world."[318]

Specifically, in the process of becoming the person she wants to be, the survivor "draws upon those aspects of herself that she most values from the time before the trauma, from the experience of the trauma itself, and from the period of recovery."[319] In the integration of all of these elements, the survivor creates a new self.

Moreover:

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[315] For an explanation, see Herman 189-90.
[316] Herman, 195.
[317] Herman, 196.
[318] Herman, 196, 202.
[319] Herman, 202.

> In the third stage of recovery, the traumatized person recognizes that she has been a victim and understands the effects of her victimization. Now she is ready to incorporate the lessons of her traumatic experience into her life. She is ready to take concrete steps to increase her sense of power and control, to protect herself against future danger, and to deepen her alliances with those whom she has learned to trust.[320]

In this process, survivors become more forgiving of themselves. Indeed, "the more actively survivors are able to engage in rebuilding their lives, the more generous they can be toward the memory of the traumatized self."[321]

Finally, it is important to point out that "resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete."[322] As the survivor reaches new milestones in her development and lifecycle, issues that were sufficiently resolved may be reawakened.

There are, however, certain criteria for determining the resolution of trauma. These are: (1) physiological symptoms have been brought within manageable limits; (2) ability to bear the feelings associated with traumatic memories; (3) the survivor has authority over her memories: she can elect both to remember the trauma and to put memory aside; (4) memory of the traumatic event is a coherent narrative linked with feeling; (5) the survivor's damaged self-esteem has been restored; (6) the survivor's important relationships have been reestablished; and (7) the survivor has reconstructed a coherent system of meaning and belief that encompasses the story of the trauma.[323] All of these issues are interconnected and are addressed at every stage of recovery.[324]

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[320] Herman, 199.
[321] Herman, 203-4.
[322] Herman, 211.
[323] Herman, 212-13, citing Mary Harvey, *An Ecological View of Psychological Trauma* (unpublished ms., Cambridge Hospital, Cambridge, MA, 1990).
[324] Herman, 213.

Moreover, resolution of the trauma may be sufficient so that the survivor may turn her attention from the tasks of recovery to the tasks of ordinary life. Indeed, as Herman instructs, "The best indices of resolution are the survivor's restored capacity to take pleasure in her life and to engage fully in relationships with others."[325]

Lamentations and the Mourning of Loss

In order to examine the ways in which the imagery and depictions in the Book of Lamentations reflect certain aspects of the mourning process, one must first choose the approach or interpretive lens to employ. After all, the lens through which we see impacts on how we relate to and understand that which we see.

For example, one could explore Lamentations through the lens of Kubler-Ross's stages approach to mourning. Moore suggests, although he does not pursue the subject in any detail, that "traces of all of these stages might quite readily be noted in Lamentations."[326]

Upon examination of the text, we see little indication of surface-level denial in Lamentations. On a deeper level, however, denial is operating in Lamentations. This is discussed below in the context of Worden's understanding of denial as it relates to accepting the reality of the loss.

Also in connection with Kubler-Ross's first stage, a sense of isolation permeates the text. For example, Lamentations begins with the statement that the city lies isolated. (Lam. 1:1). There is no one to comfort Zion. (Lam. 1:2, 1:9, 1:16, 1:21). Absent are festival-comers; places are desolate. (Lam. 1:4, 5:18). Zion feels completely alone in her

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[325] Herman, 212.
[326] Moore, 536 fn 7.

suffering, asking, "Is there any pain like my pain...?" (Lam. 1:12). The speaker in chapter 3 feels completely cut off, deep in the darkness of a pit. (Lam. 3:53-55).

With regard to Kubler-Ross's second stage of anger and resentment, the text makes clear that Zion feels bitter and betrayed. (Lam. 1:4, 1:19). She wants her enemies to be punished and made like her. (Lam. 1:21-22).

In addition, corresponding to Kubler-Ross's third stage, the penultimate verse of Lamentations expresses the attempt to bargain with God. The text reads, "Bring us back to You, Yahweh, and we shall return..." (Lam. 5:21). Perhaps, the writer prays, the loss is neither final nor complete.

And yet, as with Kubler-Ross's stages of mourning, the mood of the biblical text, too, eventually gives way to a sense of great loss.[327] A sense of tremendous loss abounds throughout the book of Lamentations. Zion is likened to a widow; the people of Zion have become orphans. (Lam. 1:1, 5:3). Zion has gone from being a princess to a body of forced labor; her children have been taken into captivity. (Lam. 1:1, 1:5). Zion's brokenness is as vast as the sea. (Lam. 2:13). The people's inheritance has been turned over to strangers; their houses to foreigners. (Lam. 5:2). Dancing has turned to mourning. (Lam. 5:15). All that once was, no longer is.

Finally, Lamentations does not communicate acceptance of these many losses. For one reason, the moment of time brought to life in the text reflects a near-immediate response to destruction.[328] The timing of Lamentations' composition essentially precludes acceptance of the loss.

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[327] Kubler-Ross, 97.

[328] See discussion in previous chapter on date of composition of Lamentations.

Moreover, for theological reasons, complete acceptance was never really an option. We see this exemplified in the messages of the prophets, who kept alive the hope and expectation of an eventual return to the land, rebuilding of the Temple and renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.

Similarly, we could examine Lamentations through the lens of Worden's four tasks of mourning. Explored in the context of task one, for example, the text indicates that those grieving are still very much in the process of accepting the reality of the loss. While clearly the text indicates that the survivors have a certain awareness of the reality and magnitude of the loss, there are also suggestions that they have not fully accepted the loss as true.

In verse 2:20, for example, the speaker pleads, "See, Yahweh, and look with consideration upon whom you have punished thus." (Lam. 2:20). Such a request suggests disbelief and the notion that perhaps something can still be done, that maybe the loss is not final. In addition, in certain places, Lamentations expresses a sense of hope -- that possibly the status can be changed. Indeed, the aforementioned attempt to bargain demonstrates the hope that something might change, that maybe the rupture is not irrevocable. (Lam. 5:21).

In exploring Lamentations through the tasks approach to the mourning process, one also finds imagery depicting people immersed in the second task of mourning. The biblical text certainly expresses pain. One should note, however, that while the text indicates that the survivors have worked through <u>to</u> the pain of the grief, Lamentations does not suggest that anyone involved has worked <u>through</u> the pain to experience a full

catharsis of the feelings that the loss has triggered.[329] Rather, the text leaves the reader, as the destruction left the survivors, with neither comfort nor catharsis.

Lamentations is not, in other words, a journey *through* the mourning process. The biblical text, however, does represent a journey *into* the mourning process. The question which remains, moreover, is into what type of mourning process does Lamentations take us?

Lamentations is a literary response to catastrophe. Its subject is the destruction of a city and a way of life. In it are references to military defeat, desecration of holy places, the taking of prisoners into captivity, rape of women, starvation to the point of cannibalism, feelings of intense guilt, and the fear of divine abandonment. Indeed, as Moore writes:

> Lamentations, composed and collected as it was so close to the events depicted within it, was primarily designed only to lament the nation's destruction, to put forward a first step toward picking up the emotional pieces, to articulate the anger, guilt, despair, and stubborn hopes of a nation too shell-shocked to begin this necessary "grief work" without help.[330]

As a national catastrophe, that which Lamentations depicts falls into the category of traumatic loss as described by Herman and outlined in the above discussion. Moreover, the biblical text memorializes a particular instance of human beings confronted "with the extremities of helplessness and terror...."[331] The destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE shattered the construction of a community and cast its people into a state of existential crisis.[332]

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[329] See Worden, 13; Clinebell, 222-3.
[330] Moore, 537-8.
[331] Herman, 33.
[332] See Herman, 51.

In part, therefore, it would be disingenuous, and perhaps a further act of victimization, to connect Lamentations in any manner with "ordinary loss." The same risks are inherent in connecting the trauma inflicted upon a survivor of domestic violence with the pain of a person mourning the death of a loved one. The experiences are not the same; the aftermath is not the same; and the process of recovery is not the same.

The discussion in the first part of this chapter makes the distinctions between ordinary loss and traumatic loss abundantly clear. To equate them is to deny the reality endured by the survivor of trauma and to allow the powers of repression and silence to prevail over truth-telling and recovery.[333] That, indeed, would constitute an act of further victimization.

On the other hand, the processes for mourning ordinary loss and for recovery from traumatic loss are not entirely unrelated. As discussed above, the second stage of mourning traumatic loss involves remembrance and mourning. During this stage, the survivor reconstructs the trauma story.[334] It is this testimony that plunges the survivor into profound grief.[335] At this point, she is called upon to experience the feelings connected with all that she has lost. As Herman puts it, "the descent into mourning feels like a surrender to tears that are endless."[336]

As indicated by the above discussion, the process of mourning traumatic loss is by its nature complicated. And yet, for the survivor of trauma, like the survivor of ordinary loss, mourning requires feeling the full range of emotions, including those connected with

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[333] Herman, 1.
[334] Herman, 176.
[335] Herman, 188.
[336] Herman, 195.

grief.[337] Experiencing and expressing these agonizing feelings is Worden's second task of mourning: to work through to the pain of the grief. In Clinebell's terminology, this task involves "experiencing, expressing and working through painful feelings."[338] As mentioned previously, this includes both literal physical pain as well as emotional and behavioral pain associated with loss.[339]

Lamentations takes the reader into this world of pain associated with loss. The biblical text expresses a number of the feelings that manifest themselves in grief. Sadness is one of them. For example, sadness is the most common feeling found in the bereaved. Although sadness is not necessarily manifested by crying behavior, often it is.[340]

Without question, "the biblical book of Lamentations is filled with references to weeping, crying and mourning...."[341] For example, in chapter 1, the narrator describes Jerusalem as weeping bitterly at night. (Lam. 1:2). Later in the same chapter, Zion speaks and tells us that for her many losses she weeps. Her eyes flow with water and are exhausted with tears. (Lam. 1:16, 2:11). The man who speaks in chapter 3 also cries ceaselessly over the ruin of his people. (Lam. 3:48-51).

The roads of Zion mourn, and all of her gates are desolate. (Lam. 1:4). Ramparts and walls mourn and languish. (Lam. 2:8). The elders throw dust on their heads and gird themselves with sackcloth. (Lam. 2:10). Joy has ceased, and dancing has turned to mourning. (Lam. 5:15). Indeed, mourning and lamenting pervade throughout Judah. (Lam. 2:5).

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[337] Herman, 188; see also Clinebell, 221; Worden, 13.
[338] Clinebell, 221.
[339] Worden, 13.
[340] Worden, 22.
[341] Dobbs-Allsopp, 91.

Loneliness is another feeling manifested in grief. Lamentations opens with an expression of this feeling of loneliness. We read, "How isolated lies the city that once was full with people!" (Lam. 1:1). Westerman notes that, in part, the city suffers so much because no one consoles her.[342] To be unconsoled is a terrible type of loneliness. This motif "runs like a thread throughout this whole [first] song" of Lamentations.[343] Again and again we are told that there is no one to comfort Zion. (Lam. 1:2, 1:16, 1:17, 1:21). Zion feels utterly alone. She also feels helpless.[344]

Feelings of guilt and self-reproach are also expressed throughout Lamentations. Personified Jerusalem blames herself for the losses she suffers. (Lam. 1:18, 1:22, 4:6). Self-blame is common among survivors, and as Worden explains:

> Usually the guilt is manifested over something that happened or something that was neglected around the time of the death. Most often the guilt is irrational and will mitigate through reality testing.[345]

In Lamentations, however, these feelings of guilt and self-reproach, though perhaps irrational, are theologically based and, consequently, more complicated.

That is, the expressions of guilt and self-reproach in Lamentations actually may reflect feelings of anger. Anger is frequently experienced after a loss but can be one of the most confusing feelings for the survivor.[346] As Worden explains, "The anger that the bereaved person experiences needs to be identified and appropriately targeted towards the

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[342] Westermann, 125.
[343] Westerman, 125.
[344] See Ferris, Jr., 142.
[345] Worden, 23.
[346] Worden, 22.

deceased in order to bring it to a healthy conclusion."[347] Frequently, however, anger is at the root of many problems in the grieving process.[348]

With the destruction of Jerusalem, the losses were numerous. While relationship as the people knew it to be with God may have constituted one of these losses, it was complicated by the role in the destruction that the people assigned to God. Yahweh was not only part of what was lost; Yahweh was seen as the primary perpetrator of the trauma. Consequently, the expression of anger directed towards God was especially complicated, if not an impossibility.

Lamentations does not express anger that is directed towards God. The feelings of guilt and self-reproach that are expressed in Lamentations, however, actually may reflect anger turned inward against the self. This type of retroflection is one "of the most risky maladaptations of anger...."[349] It infects the mourning process and can lead to suicidal behaviors.[350]

As discussed above, in addition to feelings, a number of physical sensations also are associated with grief. Worden lists hollowness in the stomach and tightness in the chest among them.[351] Lamentations contains numerous images and expressions depicting these physical sensations. Mourners feel sick in their chests. Their hearts turn over inside. (Lam. 1:20, 1:22, 5:17). Their bowels churn. (Lam 1:20, 2:11). Zion exclaims, "My liver is poured out onto the ground over the destruction of my people." (Lam. 2:11).

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[347] Worden, 23.
[348] Worden, 22-3.
[349] Worden, 23.
[350] Worden, 23.
[351] Worden, 25.

Moreover, there are a number of specific behaviors frequently associated with normal grief reactions.[352] As discussed above, crying is a frequent manifestation of sadness. In addition to crying, Lamentations also depicts the behaviors of sighing and calling out. For example, personified Jerusalem, in her calling out to Yahweh, exclaims that many are her sighs. (Lam. 1:22). The priests of the city sigh as well. (Lam. 1:4).

Furthermore, Lamentations depicts the behaviors of spreading out of hands, lifting up of hands and clapping of hands. These gestures also represented grief behaviors in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East.[353] For example, in chapter 1, while lamenting her losses, Zion spreads our her hands. (Lam. 1:17). In chapter 2, the narrator implores Zion to cry out from the heart to Adonai. He adds, "Lift up your hands to [Adonai] for the lives of your children, who faint with hunger..." (Lam. 2:19). All who pass by clap their hands at the fallen Jerusalem. (Lam. 2:15).

It is important to note that in ancient Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, these hand gestures, as well as the other aforementioned expressions of grief, served not only as a ventilation of emotion but also constituted purposeful acts, even ritual behavior.[354] For us moderns, the performative element associated with the emotional life is understood as following from that experience.[355] And yet, anthropological studies have shown that ritual activity can create a certain sentiment as much as it can follow from

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[352] See Worden, 27-30.

[353] See, e.g., Gruber, 39-40 (lifting the hands as gesture of supplication); 41-2 (spreading of the hands as gesture of entreaty). For clapping of hands as an expression of grief, see Nili S. Fox, "Clapping Hands as a Gesture of Anguish and Anger in Mesopotamia and Israel," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 23 (1995), 49-60.

[354] Frymer-Kensky, 38 (lament as specifically intended to serve as an intercession).

[355] Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) 2.

one.[356] Thus, in Lamentations, not only do the abovementioned behaviors *express* grief, they also serve to evoke the emotional experiences of grief. For the ancients, the emotional experiences of grief were inseparable from their behavioral components.[357]

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, no one person will experience all of these many manifestations of grief. In order to journey through the process of mourning, however, a survivor must experience those feelings which do arise as well as the behaviors connected with them. This is a difficult task in the mourning process.

Indeed, both the survivor of trauma as well as the survivor of ordinary loss frequently resist this task of the mourning process -- the feeling and expression of the pain connected with loss. The survivor of trauma may resist mourning out of pride, as a way to deny victory to the perpetrator.[358] Both the survivor of trauma and the ordinary mourner may avoid agonizing feelings because we human beings tend not to welcome pain into our lives.

Moreover, our culture does not support the expression of grief. The message is pervasive: make the pain go away; and make it go away quickly. We are encouraged, if not challenged, to feel good all the time. Whether we do so by means of purchasing cars and clothing or the latest pharmaceutical invention is inconsequential. This, too, is still another way to avoid feeling the full range of human emotions.

And yet, notwithstanding our many forms of resistance, avoidance only stagnates healing and infects the grieving process. It is in this regard that Lamentations can best

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[356] Anderson, 4.
[357] Anderson, 2.
[358] Herman, 188.

serve as a tool or guide in the process of healing. For while our dominant culture encourages denial, the biblical text operates differently.

Lamentations is, after all, just that -- a compilation of laments, passionate expressions of grief. As Westerman states:

> In the Bible, ... lamentation has genuine integrity; in the Bible, lamentation reflects the very nature of human existence. Just as pain and suffering are characteristic of human existence ..., so also the expressing of pain is intrinsic to life as we know it. Lamentation is the language of suffering.[359]

Without question, Lamentations unabashedly depicts a world loaded with agony. In its voice of pain, the text invites us to enter its world and bear witness to all that was lost with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Simultaneously, the biblical text invites the modern reader to enter our own inner worlds. In so doing, it grants permission to feel. This is the path to healing.

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[359] Westerman, 89.

Chapter 3

THE PERSONIFICATION OF JERUSALEM: A FEMINIST READING

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I proposed, with hopefulness, the possibility that Lamentations might serve as a resource or guide in the process of mourning loss and healing. From a feminist perspective, however, this possibility poses difficulties.

As discussed above, in the Book of Lamentations, Jerusalem is personified as a woman in mourning. She is a mother. She is an *almanah*, a once married woman who has no means of financial support and is thus completely dependent on another for protection and survival.[360] She is also a survivor of sexual and domestic violence.

These metaphors are powerful. So, too, are their implications. Consequently, prior to any attempt to utilize Lamentations as a resource in the process of healing, we first must give careful consideration to the poet's use of these metaphors in the personification of Jerusalem as well as the metaphors' implications. This chapter engages in such a discussion.

Feminist Criticism

In the introduction to her book, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics,* Rachel Adler offers the following understanding of what it means to be a feminist:

> I believe that being a woman or a man is an intricate blend of biological predispositions and social constructions that varies greatly according to time and culture. Regardless of its cultural specifics, gender has been used to justify unequal distributions of social power and privilege. Feminists view these power disparities as a moral wrong and an obstacle to human flourishing. This moral evil can be overcome only with great effort because

[360] Cohen, 78-9.

> its distortions pervade social institutions, personal relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief, including religious traditions.[361]

Adler notes that Judaism is not yet fully attentive to the impact of gender and sexuality either on the classical texts or on the lived experiences of the Jewish people. Moreover, as a feminist theologian, she understands that while the devotion to sacred text and to the interpretive process that continually recreates the text is at the core of Judaism, the texts themselves have ignored or marginalized women, and women have been excluded from the interpretive process.[362]

Some definitions of several interrelated terms are instructive. In *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman,* Esther Fuchs explains that:

> 'Androcentrism' is the epistemology of masculine normativity, the presumption that the male is the center and supreme manifestation of what is right and good in the order of things. 'Patriarchalism' is the politics of male domination and the ideological validation of androcentrism. 'Misogyny' is a psychological phenomenon: it refers to the hatred and fear of women.[363]

Although misogyny and patriarchalism are related, they are distinct terms. While the portrayal of women as deceptive or dangerous is the hallmark of a misogynous text, the aim of a patriarchal text is to affirm the political subordination of women and may very well portray women as "good."[364]

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[361] Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998) xv.
[362] Adler, xvii.
[363] Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman.* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 29. See also Exum, J. Cheryl, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives.* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 9.
[364] Fuchs, 30.

As a literary text authored by and for men, the Bible is androcentric.[365] The world view that finds expression in biblical literature is the dominant male world view. Consequently, "the female perspective is muted, if not altogether excluded."[366] Moreover, although female characters appear in the Bible, they "reveal more about the wishful thinking, fears, aspirations, and prejudices of their male creators than about women's authentic lives."[367]

In addition, feminist critics understand the Bible to be not only a literary document but a political text as well -- one that both reflects an ancient patriarchal society and also operates to legislate and authorize the political supremacy of men over women.[368] The Bible, in other words, is prescriptive as well as descriptive. As Fuchs explains, "My critique is premised on the proposition that the biblical narrative is not merely a historical interpretation of past events, but a prescriptive interpretation of culture."[369] That is to say, the Bible is not simply a text authored by men; it also fosters a politics of male domination.

The Bible's patriarchalism, however, is not always obvious. In particular, biblical constructions of femininity may seem natural or apolitical. Fuchs, however, argues that:

> It is primarily for their rhetorical effectiveness that so many of the Bible's constructions of femininity seem natural, or non-ideological. Poetic ingenuity and ideological forcefulness complement rather than exclude each other.[370]

Consequently, she seeks to expose the link between the politics of male domination and the representation of women in the Bible.

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[365] Fuchs, 11; Exum, 11.
[366] Exum, 10.
[367] Exum, 11, citing Fuchs (citation omitted).
[368] See, e.g., Fuchs, 7, 24-5; Exum, 9.
[369] Fuchs, 29.
[370] Fuchs, 7.

To reveal this connection, Fuchs proposes a particular reading strategy. She writes:

> To read as a woman ... means to engage a hermeneutics or interpretive method based on resistance. A hermeneutics of resistance, or 'reading against the grain' affirms a woman's ability to challenge the Bible's sexual politics. This reading process requires shifting the litmus test of interpretive validity from the authority of the text to the authority of an interpretive community.[371]

We may not be able to discover or liberate an authentic feminine voice within the text. A hermeneutics of resistance, however, is the first step in a process of liberation. Fuchs explains:

> As we resist the political messages and as we question the function of the Bible's narrative strategies we loosen the grip of male supremacy over our consciousness and imagination. No woman is free of this grip, because the biblical narrative has in many ways been inscribed in Western culture and its consumers. To some extent we have become the male-authored texts, and by re-reading the biblical text, one of the most powerful sources of male hegemony, we in fact also re-read ourselves.[372]

In other words, a hermeneutics of resistance makes possible our own transformation. This alters our relationship with the biblical text. And that shift is the first step in the process of liberation.

A Feminist Reading of Lamentations

Jerusalem is personified as a woman throughout Chapters 1 and 2 of Lamentations. An exploration of the poet's use of this literary device makes conscious a strand of the biblical text which may otherwise remain unnoticed or ignored. Prior to exploring the text itself, however, I state at the outset my awareness that some readers may disagree with some of my interpretations of figurative language in Lamentations.

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[371] Fuchs, 17.
[372] Fuchs, 17.

Others may acknowledge the possible validity of my analysis but then claim that such interpretations are not obvious.

What I offer here is a feminist reading of the biblical text. As Fuchs remarks, "The political dimension of any literary text is its unconscious, and the feminist reader is not different from the psychoanalytic investigator in probing the linguistic and structural symptoms of its ideology."[373] In reading the text this way, I employ a "hermeneutics of resistance," which is based on the recognition that the Bible's rhetorical art and patriarchal ideology are inseparable and complementary.[374]

Chapter 1 of Lamentations begins with the narrator describing Jerusalem in the third person. Jerusalem is isolated; once great among the nations, a princess, she has become "like a widow." (Lam. 1:1-2). Bitterly she weeps, and there is no one who comforts her.

We learn, however, that it is Yahweh who makes Jerusalem suffer. Yahweh afflicts her "for her many transgressions." (Lam. 1:5). The narrator comments, "Surely Jerusalem has sinned a great sin..." (Lam. 1:8). And yet, we are not told explicitly what this great sin is. According to the narrator, Jerusalem committed some sexual transgression. But she did not consider the consequences of her actions. (Lam. 1:9). And then she was brought down.

Those who once honored her despise her because "they have seen her nakedness." (Lam. 1:8).[375] The evidence of her uncleanness shows on her skirts. (Lam. 1:9).[376] She is

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[373] Fuchs, 29.
[374] Fuchs, 7, 29.
[375] See Hunter, 127 (nakedness is connected with sexual acts and is thus seen as sinful; here used to express extreme nature of sin of the city).

an "unclean woman." (Lam. 1:17). The enemy has stretched out his hand over all her precious things. This woman, the personification of Jerusalem, has been gang-raped; the nations have entered her sanctuary. (Lam. 1:10).

Then personified Jerusalem speaks out. She tells us of her pain which Yahweh inflicted upon her "on the day of his burning anger." She describes being raped: "From on high he sent fire then he sank it into my bones; he stretched out a net for my feet; he turned me back. He made me desolated, sick all day." (Lam. 1:13). And then he turns her over to others for more of the same. She tells us, "Adonai has given me unto the hands of those against whom I am unable to stand up." (Lam. 1:14).

But Jerusalem excuses Yahweh's actions: "Yahweh is in the right, because I rebelled against his words." (Lam. 1:18). And then, seeking reconciliation, she blames herself: "See, Yahweh, as I am in distress! My bowels are churning; my heart is turned over inside me because surely I have rebelled." (Lam. 1:20).

In Chapter 2, the narrator further describes Yahweh's rage. Yahweh is a destroyer who swallows up and tears down; he burns, cuts off and kills. (Lam. 2:1-4). And again, we are told that what ensues is rape: "In the tent of fair Zion he poured out his anger like fire." (Lam. 2:4).

After the ravaging, Yahweh leaves. We read, "Yahweh rejected his altar; he spurned his sanctuary." (Lam. 2:7). And again, we are told that Yahweh delivers her into the hand of the enemy. Others, too, can enter her.

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[376] This "uncleanness" refers to menstrual blood. See, e.g., Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Poet as 'Female Impersonator': The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering," 67 *Journal of Religion* (1987) 164, 175-6; Frymer-Kensky, 151, 169; Westermann, 129; contra Hunter, 126-28.

The narrator implores personified Zion to take action before God: "Cry out from the heart to Adonai! O wall of fair Zion, let tears fall down like a river, day and night!" ... Pour out your heart like water, before the face of Adonai." (Lam. 2:18-19). Do it for the sake of your starving children, the narrator encourages. (Lam. 2:19).

Immediately following mention of her ailing children, Zion speaks. She begins, "See, Yahweh, and look with consideration upon who you have punished thus. Should women eat their own fruit, the children they have raised?" (Lam. 2:20). She directs Yahweh's attention to all whom have perished and then she confronts him as perpetrator: "You killed on the day of your anger. You butchered; you did not spare. You have summoned, as though a festival day, those who terrify me from all sides." (Lam. 2:21-22). In the voice of a mother, she concludes: "Those whom I cared for and brought up, my enemies have brought to an end." (Lam. 2:22).

The Personification of Jerusalem: Metaphors and Their Implications

Jerusalem as Mother[377]

In her article, "Poet as 'Female Impersonator': The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering," Barbara Bakke Kaiser notes the biblical writers' awareness that there is no sorrow quite like that of a parent bereft of a child. In poetic texts a mother's bereavement is a common image for a nation's loss of population during warfare. In Chapter 2 of Lamentations, the poet employs this metaphor but intensifies the image.[378]

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[377] For a detailed discussion of the Biblical mother, see Fuchs, 44-90.
[378] Bakke Kaiser, 176.

The personification of Jerusalem as a mother mourning the loss of her children is an effective rhetorical device. As Mintz explains, "The figure of the grieving woman who remains forlornly in place while her sons are taken captive to a far-off land mirrors the simultaneous stasis and dispersion that were Israel's fate."[379] And yet, as Tikvah Frymer-Kensky notes, Lamentations depicts Jerusalem as a failed mother. Her sons have become cheap and expendable. Her children are hungry, for she can no longer suckle them. Her children are forlorn; they have been taken into captivity.[380]

The personification of Jerusalem as a mother mourning the loss of her children effectively describes the suffering that permeated Jerusalem during and after its destruction. And yet, the poet's use of this metaphor serves a prescriptive purpose as well. The implication is that a good mother protects her children. A good mother provides for her children. The message is that good mothers, and good women more generally, contribute to continuity of the patriarchal system.[381] Consequently, threats to and destruction of the system are linked with failures on the part of women.

Jerusalem as *Almanah*

Lamentations opens with a comparison of Jerusalem to an *almanah*. As discussed above in chapter 1 of this paper, *almanah* is generally translated as "widow." A better definition for *almanah* in this context, however, is a once married woman who has no means of financial support and who is thus in need of special legal protection.[382] The

[379] Mintz, 24-5.
[380] Frymer-Kensky, 176. See also Lamentations 1:6, 4:3.
[381] See Fuchs, 47.
[382] Cohen, 76-7.

personification of Jerusalem as *almanah* evokes a powerful image. The text tells us that the city has become completely dependent on another state for protection and survival.

The personification of Jerusalem as *almanah,* however, achieves more than the creation of a vivid description of the post-destruction condition of Jerusalem. This particular metaphor both describes and sanctions the precarious status of women. Paula Hiebert, in her study of the *almanah* with regard to the economic support system, concludes:

> From an investigation of the resources available to the biblical widow to supply her economic needs a grim picture emerges. A woman's economic well-being was directly related to her link with some male. Though a married woman may have owned some property in the form of her dowry, she could not have supported herself on that alone, if at all, when her husband died. Ordinarily the widow's maintenance would have been the responsibility of either her sons or father-in-law. When these male persons were nonexistent, then the widow's connection to the kinship structure was severed. She became an *almana.*[383]

The *almanah,* on the fringes of society and without a male to provide her access to the public sphere, was rendered available to be abused with impunity.[384]

Jerusalem as Survivor of Sexual Violence

The biblical text also indicates what can happen to the woman who finds herself beyond the patriarchal societal order. With no designated male to protect her, a woman may be violated sexually. Within the confines of a relationship deemed acceptable by the society, woman's sexuality can be contained and appropriated. Beyond that, however, woman is dangerous -- sexual transgressor, sinner, unclean and despised. (Lam. 1:5, 1:8, 1:9).

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[383] Paula S. Hiebert, "'Whence Shall Help Come to Me?' The Biblical Widow," *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel,* Peggy Day, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 131.
[384] See Hiebert, 130; Mintz, 24.

In Lamentations, Jerusalem the woman has committed some alleged transgression. Although her supposed sin is never explicitly named, the text indicates that she is guilty of promiscuity, that she has had lovers. (Lam. 1:2). Dobbs-Allsopp comments that foremost among Zion's transgressions was breach of covenant -- infidelity.[385] She has ventured beyond the established boundaries and for this, she will be punished. The text, moreover, tells us that her punishment is rape. Mintz explains that:

> What began as an unwitting, voluntary promiscuity, suddenly turned into unwished for, forcible defilement. The force of this image of violation is founded on the correspondence body-Temple and genitals-Inner Sanctuary. So far have things gone that even in the secret place of intimacy to which only the secret sacred partner may be admitted, the enemy has thrust himself and "spread his hands over everything dear to her." (1:10). Violated and desolate, Fair Zion's nakedness lies exposed for the world to see.[386]

The implication, moreover, is that she got what she deserved. As Mintz puts it, "sympathy is cut with judgment, for we are aware that in her wantonness, Zion has brought the inevitable upon herself."[387] That, at least, is what the poet would like us to believe.

The personification of Jerusalem as a survivor of sexual violence has another dimension to it as well. As discussed above, the primary perpetrator of sexual violence unleashed on this woman Jerusalem is Yahweh. Jerusalem supposedly has been unfaithful; she has had other lovers.

The relationship between Jerusalem and Yahweh depicted in Lamentations resonates with the so-called "marriage metaphor," employed elsewhere in the Bible,

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[385] Dobbs-Allsopp, 53-4.
[386] Mintz, 25.
[387] Mintz, 26.

predominantly in the books of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[388] This metaphor is perhaps less explicit and complete in Lamentations, but here, too, we see the cycle of domestic violence play out nonetheless.

The marriage metaphor characterizes the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as that of husband and wife. Their marriage represents the covenant. The first clear exposition of this theme is found in the first three chapters of Hosea, which develops an extended allegory of the relationship between God and Israel as a family in which God has a "wife" who is the mother of the children of Israel.[389] This wife is the personification of the nation as a whole.

The marriage metaphor powerfully expresses the intense emotionality and exclusivity of the divine-human relationship.[390] It goes beyond that, however, as it is driven by God's assertions of power and control. As Frymer-Kensky explains:

> The marriage is not a "happily ever after" affair. The wife ... is a wanton, and does not give God the steadfast exclusive loyalty that is expected of her. God-as-husband is not forbearing. He is angry, and punishes. Nevertheless, the marriage does not end, for the marital metaphor emphasizes the commitment of God to Israel. The repudiation will only be temporary, and God will come again to woo his bride, and re-espouse her. After the disaster comes the reconciliation; after the destruction, the renewal; after the violence, the lovemaking.[391]

This biblical narrative depicts the cycle of domestic violence.

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[388] This marital metaphor has been discussed elsewhere, primarily with regard to its use in Hosea. See, e.g., Adler, 156-67; see also T. Drorah Setel, "Prophets and Pornography: Female Sexual Imagery in Hosea," *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty M. Russell, ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985); Renita J. Weems, "Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor?" 47 *Semeia* (1989) 87-104.
[389] Frymer-Kensky, 145.
[390] Frymer-Kensky, 144, 146.
[391] Frymer-Kensky, 148.

Lamentations is not a complete journey through the cycle of domestic violence. It contains no reconciliation and honeymoon period. That reconciliation, however, is precisely that which the poet seeks.

The implications of the personification of Jerusalem as a victim and survivor of sexual and domestic violence are profound. Through the marriage metaphor, the poet uses objectified female sexuality as a symbol of evil.[392] Such personification arises in part from the male's fear of losing control over his wife, of patriarchy's fears of losing control over "their women." The intensity of the language employed in this regard in Lamentations and elsewhere in the Bible, with "their sexual fantasies of nymphomania and revenge seem to be fueled by unconscious fear and rage."[393] The same can be said of today's representations of women in pornography.

Moreover, the association of God with the perpetration of sexual violence is a troubling one. Renita Weems inquires, "Does the fact that the marriage metaphor is '*only* a metaphor' and the motif of sexual violence '*only* a theme of the metaphor' insulate them from serious theological scrutiny?"[394] The answer is undoubtedly "no."

The use of such language with regard to the personification of Jerusalem raises real concerns. The biblical text relies upon the sexual abuse of a woman to communicate a theological notion of human sin and divine punishment.[395] As Weems states clearly, "For women who have been the victims of domestic and sexual violence, the image of God as

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[392] Setel, 86.
[393] Frymer-Kensky, 151.
[394] Weems, 100.
[395] See Weems, 89-90.

ravaging husband may be intolerable."[396] For anyone to be revictimized and excluded in such a way, we all should be concerned.

Implications for Healing

In conclusion, the above discussion makes clear that the language employed in Lamentations to personify Jerusalem poses serious problems for Lamentations' use as a resource or guide in the process of mourning loss and healing. Some of the metaphoric language, in fact, may serve to exacerbate pain or revictimize survivors of sexual and domestic violence. This is cause to pause and consider whether Lamentations can provide any assistance in the process of healing from loss.

To deny or remain silent about the ways in which the biblical text personifies Jerusalem as well as their implications is not an acceptable option for those committed to healing in our world. As discussed previously in the context of traumatic loss, truth-telling is an imperative in the process of recovery. It is called for here as well.

A feminist reading and interpretation of Lamentations suggests that the biblical text itself is in need of healing. As Rachel Adler writes:

> I am concerned not only with critiquing androcentric structures, categories, and motifs and constructing feminist theory and interpretation, but also with mending and healing Judaism by encountering, renewing, and reclaiming the holiness in texts. The theological questions I ask of a text are designed to interrogate its moral universe, to hold the text accountable, and to redeem the text by learning Torah from it.[397]

We might ask what Torah we can learn from Lamentations. What is God telling us through the text? Where is God in the text? What meanings does the text have for us?

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[396] Weems, 101.
[397] Adler, xxv.

What demands does it make upon us that we must integrate into the way we live our lives?[398]

Finally, notwithstanding the fact that the "woman's voice" in Lamentations is in actuality the male poet's construction, perhaps some healing of the text and of ourselves may come from our willingness to be present with this woman Jerusalem. Lamentations begins with a declaration of Jerusalem's isolation. She sits alone with no one to comfort her. And yet, as Tikvah Frymer-Kensky reminds us, this very "woman" is also ourselves.[399]

Maybe this "woman" has something to say. Perhaps we might learn to listen. Perhaps then we can "hear each other into speech."[400] To speak one's experience is a powerful act of healing.

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[398] Adler, xxv.
[399] Frymer-Kensky, 169.
[400] Marcia Falk, Hebrew Union College -Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati. March 27, 2001, referring to the liberation theology of Nelle Morton.

CONCLUSION

In her poem entitled "Artemis," Olga Broumas wrote:

> I am a woman committed to
> a politics
> of transliteration, the methodology
>
> of a mind
> stunned at the suddenly
> possible shifts of meaning -- for which
> like amnesiacs
>
> in a ward on fire, we must
> find words
> or burn.[401]

To transliterate is to represent letters or words in the letters of another language. To transliterate is to unconceal what previously had been hidden, to bring within reach what before remained out of grasp. To transliterate is to make accessible. To transliterate makes possible new relationships.

With a text, the act of unconcealing and making accessible is transformative -- of the text itself, but perhaps more importantly, of the reader and his or her relationship with the text. The process of working with the biblical Book of Lamentations and writing this rabbinical thesis, the outcome of that work, has been for me, an act of unconcealing and making accessible. It has allowed me a new relationship with the biblical text.

With regard to Scripture, the Mishnah teaches: "Turn it and turn it again for everything is in it..." (Avot 5:22). In many ways, this paper offers such a kaleidoscopic turning. In it, I have explored the text of Lamentations through various interpretive

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[401] Olga Broumas, "Artemis," *Beginning With O.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) 23-4.

lenses. I have done so with the awareness that the lens through which we see necessarily impacts on how we relate to and understand that which we see.

In chapter 1, I have offered a history of research and interpretation of the Book of Lamentations. Specifically, I examined the date of composition, place of composition, authorship, nature of the composition, form, genre, influence and theology. In doing so, I have shown that, notwithstanding the attention which Lamentations has received in recent years, scholarly debate remains in nearly all of these areas. In addition, I have situated Lamentations in time and place and have demonstrated the complexities of understanding the text as part of the ancient Israelite literary and cultural milieu.

In chapter 2, I suggested that Lamentations might serve as a guide or resource in the process of healing. I discussed the processes of mourning with regard to both ordinary and traumatic losses. I then examined the ways in which the imagery and depictions in the Book of Lamentations reflect certain aspects of these mourning processes. I concluded that while Lamentations is not a journey *through* the mourning process, the biblical text does represent a journey *into* the process of mourning. Specifically, I discussed the ways in which the expressions of grief in Lamentations take the reader into the world of pain associated with loss. In so doing, the biblical text invites the modern reader to enter our own inner worlds. In other words, Lamentations grants permission to feel. This is the path to healing.

In chapter 3, I examined the Book of Lamentations from a feminist perspective. In particular, I discussed the ways in which the authors personify Jerusalem as a woman and the implications of the particular metaphors employed. I concluded that such language

renders problematic the use of Lamentations as a resource for healing and requires that we pause and consider whether the text can provide any assistance in the process of healing from loss. Finally, at the close of chapter 3, I suggested that the Book of Lamentations is itself in need of healing. Indeed, to the extent that Lamentations wounds those whom it addresses or about whom it speaks, the text does need healing.

The biblical text, however, cannot heal itself. Rather, the text calls upon us to engage in relationship with it. Like Oriah Mountain Dreamer in her poem, "The Invitation," Lamentations says to us: "I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it."[402]

Thus, ultimately, Lamentations functions as an invitation to sit with unhealed pain, with grief wounds that have not fully healed. This willingness to be with pain -- to feel it, express it, and to allow pain its voice -- is not the way of our quick-fix culture. Consequently, many grief wounds remain unhealed. As Worden states clearly, each incompleted task of mourning will be remembered until completed.[403] The courage to be with pain is the path of healing. Perhaps it is the only path.

Writing about healing, Carolyn Myss, in her book, *Anatomy of the Spirit,* explains that each of us will have experiences meant to "break our hearts" -- not in half but wide open. She reminds us, "Regardless of how your heart is broken, your choice is always the same: 'What will you do with your pain?'"[404]

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[402] Oriah Mountain Dreamer, *The Invitation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999) 1.
[403] Worden, 135.
[404] Carolyn Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996) 217.

The biblical Book of Lamentations does not shy away from pain, nor must we. Our grief wounds, in our authoritative texts and in our lives, will present themselves again and again, until the path we choose takes us on the journey of liberation. The challenge is to be with our pain, to experience the full range of emotions connected with loss.

In conclusion, Lamentations captures a moment in a world of brokenness. It is a book about profound loss and devastating pain. And yet, in its courage to be with pain, Lamentations also depicts a step of the journey on the path of healing. The biblical text invites the reader into its world. It challenges the reader to feel. That is the path of healing.

Appendix

LAMENTATIONS: TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY[405]

Chapter 1

1) How isolated lies the city that once was full [great] with people!
Once great among the nations, she has become like a widow;
Once a princess among states, she has become a body of forced labor.
2) Bitterly she weeps at night and her tears are on her cheeks.
Of all her lovers, there is no one who comforts her.
All of her neighbors/friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.
3) Out of poverty/affliction and much labor, Judah has gone into exile.
She dwelt among the nations but she did not find rest.
All of her pursuers overtook her in narrow straits.
4) The roads of Zion mourn, since absent are festival-comers.
All of her gates are desolate; her priests sigh.
Her virgins are grieved; and she is bitter.
5) Her adversaries came out on top; her enemies have it easy.
For Yahweh afflicts her [makes her suffer] for her many transgressions;
Her children have gone into captivity before the foe.
6) All of her splendor has gone out from Zion.
Her leaders are like stags who have found no pasture
But, without strength, go on before the pursuer.
7) Jerusalem remembers, [in] the days of her affliction and straying, all of her precious things that she had in previous days.
When her people fell at the hand of the enemy and there was no one who helped her, her enemies looked at her and they laughed at her annihilation.
8) Surely Jerusalem has sinned a great sin; therefore people shake their heads at her.
All who [once] honored her despise her because they have seen her nakedness.
She herself sighs/groans aloud then draws back.
9) Her uncleanness/defilement is on her skirts;
She did not consider the consequences for her so she descended/ came down extraordinarily, with no one to comfort her.
"Look, Adonai, at my misery, for the enemy has become great!"
10) The enemy has stretched out his hand over all of her precious things.
She has seen the nations (heathens) enter her sanctuary, about which You commanded, "They shall not enter into your assembly."
11) All of her people are groaning, seeking bread/food;
they gave [up] their precious ones for food, to renew/refresh [their] lives/soul.
"See, Yahweh, and behold how worthless I have become!
12) Come, all you who pass by on the road, look and see:

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[405] In translating the text of Lamentations from the Hebrew, significant reference was made to Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972).

Is there any pain like my pain, which is severely dealt out to me,
which Yahweh caused me to suffer on the day of his burning anger?

13) From on high he sent fire then he sank it into my bones;
he stretched out a net for my feet; he turned me back.
He made me be desolated, sick all day.

14) Watch is kept upon my steps; they are entangled by his hand.
His yoke is on the back of my neck; he has made me weak.
Adonai has given me unto the hands of those [against] whom I am unable to arise/stand up.

15) Adonai has heaped up in my midst all of my valiant men;
he summoned an assembly against me to break/destroy my young men.
Adonai trod down the wine-press of fair virgin Judah.

16) Over these things do I weep; my eye, my eye flows with water.
For far from me is a comforter, one who may revive my life.
My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed."

17) Zion spread out her hands -- there was no one to comfort her.
Yahweh commanded Jacob's enemies to surround him;
Jerusalem has become an unclean woman among them.

18) "Yahweh is in the right, because I rebelled against his words.
Listen, all peoples, and see my pain!
My virgins and young men have gone into captivity.

19) I called out to my lovers but they betrayed me;
My priests and my elders expired in the city
as they sought food to renew their lives.

20) See, Yahweh, as I am in distress! My bowels are churning;
My heart is turned over inside me because surely I have rebelled.
Outside, the sword makes childless; in the home, it is famine.

21) Listen, for I moan! There is no one to comfort me.
All of my enemies heard of my distress; they rejoiced because you did it.
Oh, bring on the day you proclaimed, and let them be like me!

22) Let all of their evil come before you and act severely towards them as you have acted severely towards me for all of my transgressions.
For many are my groans/sighs and my heart is sick.

Text/Philology

1:1 *vadad:* isolated, separated, alone.

1:2 *bakho tivkeh:* emphatic -- surely she weeps; bitterly she weeps.
bagdu bah: they have dealt treacherously with her; betrayed her.

1:3 *hisiguha:* to corner; encircle; from *nsg.*

1:4 *shomemin:* desolate; *mugot:* are grieved; from *ygh.*

1:5 *tsar:* adversary, foe.
olel: child.

1:7 *umrudeha:* restlessness, straying, usually with regard to the wandering poor; from *rvd.* See also Lam. 3:19; Isa. 58:7.

makhamudeha: her precious things; from *khmd*: desire, take pleasure in. See Lam. 1:10-11.
mime qedem: from of old; see Isa. 23:7, 37:26, Mic. 7:20; Lam. 2:17.
mishbateha: her annihilation/cessation; from *shvt.*

1:8 *ervatah:* her nakedness; *rau ervatah* implies shameful exposure. See also Gen. 9:22-3; Ezek. 16:37.
nenkhah: sigh/groan.
vatashov akhor: from *shv;* with *akhor* means draws back. See also Lam. 1:13, 2:3; Gen. 38:29; 1 Kgs 13:4; Josh. 8:26; Pss. 44:11, 74:11; Isa. 44:25; Jer. 2:24.

1:9 *tumatah bshulekha*: her defilement is on her skirts; See Jer. 13:22, 13:26; Nah. 3:5.
plaim: wonder, unusual, extraordinarily.

1:11 *makhamadehem:* their precious ones/things; their children. See Hillers, 25.
lhashiv nafesh: to refresh/renew life/the soul. See also Lam. 1:16, 1:19; Ps. 19:8; Prov. 25:13, Ruth 4:15.
Here, the text shifts to first person, with Zion herself speaking.
zolelah: from *zll:* light, worthless. See Deut. 21:20, Prov. 28:7, 23:20, Jer. 15:19.

1:12 On addressing those who pass by, see also Job 21:29. The passersby are a figurative representation of common human experience. (Hillers, 26).
makhov kmakhovi asher olal li: is there any pain like my pain which is severely dealt out to me. See Judg. 19:25 (abusing a woman).
hogah: caused me to suffer; *ygh:* suffer; see also Lam. 3:22; Zeph. 3:18 (of exiles); Lam. 1:5, 1:4; Job 19:2; Isa. 51:23; Lam. 3:32; 2 Sam. 20:13.
kharon apo: burning anger/wrath; from *khrh;* frequently used to refer to God's anger.

1:13 on use of *yrd*, to come down/descend, in connection with fire from God, see also 2 Kgs.1:10-14; 2 Chr. 7:1.
ntanani shomema: he made me be desolated; see also 2 Sam. 13:20; Lam. 1:14, 1:16; Isa. 49:8, 54:1; Dan 8:13; Ezek. 33:28.
davah: sick, ill, unwell. See Hillers, 27.

1:14 *yistargu:* from *srg:* be intertwined, enmeshed.
tsavari: the back of my neck; see also Isa. 8:8; Jer. 28:10; Neh. 3:5; Judg. 8:21; Gen. 27:16, 40; Jer. 27:2, 8, 11, 12; Mic. 2:3; Deut. 28:48; Isa. 10:27; Jer. 28:10-14; 30:8.
hikhshil kokhi: make feeble, weak.

1:15 See Hillers, 27 (destruction of Jerusalem compared to a grim harvest, denoting punishment.) Cf. Jer. 9:21, 51:33; Amos 1:3; Micah 4:12-13; Isa. 41:15-16; Joel 4:13).
silah: heaped up; see Hillers, 12-13. See also Jer. 50:26 (Babylon to be punished by piling her up like heaps of grain).
moed: assembly; festal meeting, appointed meeting
gat: wine-press; *gat darakh:* trod down the wine-press. On treading and wine imagery, see also Job 24:11; Neh 13:15; Amos 9:13; Mic. 6:15; Isa. 16:10, 63:2; Jer. 25:30, 48:33; Isa. 63:3.

1:16 *eni, eni:* my eye, my eye. Repetition is either for emphasis or a case of dittography, copying one word twice by mistake. Hillers, 16.
shomemim: desolate; also used above in 1:13. This adjective is usually used in connection with cities, less often of people as here. See 2 Sam. 13:20; Isa. 54:1.

1:17 Hillers comments that the emphasis shifts here and is "signaled by the momentary abandonment of first person in favor of third person, that is, the poet speaks about Zion, instead of Zion speaking for herself." Hillers, 28. Introduced here is the new theme of a progressive turning to Yahweh. Yet also established is that Yahweh is the author of the calamity.
Here, Yahweh is described as a military commander, leading Israel's enemies in battle against Israel.
hayta yrushalayim lnidah: imagery of Jerusalem as a menstruating woman, ritually unclean. On *nidah* see Ezek. 18:6, 22:10, 36:17; Lev. 12:2, 12:5, 15:19-25,26, 33, 18:19; Num. 19:9-21, 31:23; Ezr 9:11; Zech 13:1.

1:18 *fihu mariti:* I rebelled against his (Yahweh's) words; from *mrh;* on this phrase for rebelling against Yahweh's words, see also Ps. 105:28; Num. 20:24, 27:14; 1 Sam. 12:15; 1 Kgs. 13:21, 26.
btulotai uvakhurai: my virgins and young men; on these two words paired together, see also Ps. 148:12; Isa. 23:4; Zech. 9:17; Lam. 2:21.

1:19 *hema rimuni:* they betrayed me; from *rmh:* beguile, deal treacherously with, betray.
gavau: expired, perished, died.
vyashuvu et nafsham: to renew their lives, restore their lives. See also Lam. 1:11, 1:16.

1:20 *tsar li:* I am in distress.
mai: my bowels, guts, internal organs. Figurative for seat of emotions; here the term is parallel to *libi,* my heart.
khamarmaru: are in a ferment, are churning; the phrase, *mai khamarmaru* parallels *nehpakh libi* in the same verse; expressing distress at the calamities that have befallen Jerusalem; see also Lam. 2:11; Job 16:16 (my face is reddened from weeping).
maro mariti: surely I have rebelled.
shiklah kherev: the sword makes childless; from *shkhl:* be bereaved; on making childless, see also Deut. 22:25; Ezek. 21:19.
kamavet: literally: actually death. On translation as famine, see Hillers, 14.

1:21 *shamu:* For rationale behind translating in the imperative, see Hillers, 14-15.
raati: my distress, misery, injury.
sasu: they rejoiced.

Chapter 2

1) How, in his anger, Yahweh has disgraced Fair Zion!
He has thrown down from heaven to earth the honor/beauty/glory of Israel and did not remember his footstool on his day of anger.
2) Yahweh swallowed up, and did not spare, all of the habitations of Jacob.

He tore down in his fury the fortresses of fair Judah.
He brought down to earth, he profaned the kingdom and its leaders.
3) In burning anger, he cut off all of the horns of Israel.
He turned back his right hand from the face of the enemy;
Then he burned against Jacob like a fire of flame that consumes all around.
4) He bent his bow like an enemy, handle of sword in his right hand;
Like an enemy, he then killed all those in which the eyes delight.
In the tent of fair Zion he poured out his anger like fire.
5) Adonai has become like an enemy; he swallowed up Israel.
He swallowed up all of her palaces; he destroyed his fortresses.
Then he made mourning and lamenting great in fair Judah.
6) He has done violence to his pavilion/booth as to a garden; he destroyed his assembly.
Yahweh has caused to be forgotten in Zion festival and Sabbath;
Then, in his angry indignation, he spurned king and priest.
7) Adonai rejected his altar; he spurned his sanctuary.
He delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her citadels;
they made a shout in the house of Yahweh as if it were a feast day.
8) Yahweh planned to destroy the wall of fair Zion;
he stretched out a line; he did not withdraw his hand from swallowing up.
He made rampart and wall mourn; together they languished.
9) Her gates have sunk down into the earth; he has destroyed and shattered her bars.
Her king and her officials are among the heathen; there is no instruction.
Also her prophets find no vision from Yahweh.
10) The elders of fair Zion sit on the ground; they grow silent.
They have thrown dust on their heads; they gird themselves with sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem lower their heads to the ground.
11) My eyes are exhausted with tears; my bowels/guts churn.
My liver is poured out onto the ground over the destruction of my people.
As the child and infant faint in the streets of the city,
12) To their mothers they said, "Where is grain and wine?"
As they fainted like the fatally wounded in the streets of the city,
As their souls pour themselves out in the bosom of their mothers.
13) How shall I compare you? What shall I liken to you, fair Zion?
What can I match to you, that I might comfort you, o fair virgin Zion?
For your brokenness is vast as the sea; who shall heal you?
14) Your prophets saw visions for you that were emptiness and whitewash.
They did not reveal your iniquity to restore your good fortune,
But they saw visions for you that were oracles of emptiness and enticement.
15) All who pass by the way clap hands at you;
They hiss and shake their heads over fair Jerusalem:
"Is this the city that they call 'perfection of beauty,' 'joy of all the earth?'"
16) All your enemies open their mouths at you;
They hiss then gnash their teeth. They say, "We have swallowed [her] up!
Ah, this is the day that we have waited for! We have found it; we have seen it."

17) Yahweh has done what he planned; he has carried out his word,
That which he commanded from days of old. He has torn down and did not spare;
He caused the enemy to rejoice over you; he raised up the horn of your foe.
18) Cry out from the heart to Adonai! O wall of fair Zion, let tears fall down like a river, day and night!
Do not give yourself a respite! Do not let your eyes stop weeping!
19) Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches;
Pour out your heart like water, before the face of Adonai.
Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint with hunger at the head of every street.
20) See, Yahweh, and look with consideration upon whom you have punished thus.
Should women eat their own fruit, the children they have raised?
Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of Adonai?
21) In the streets lie young and old;
My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword.
You killed [them] on the day of your anger.
You butchered; you did not spare.
22) You have summoned, as though a festival day, those who terrify me from all sides.
On the day of Yahweh's wrath, there was not one who escaped nor a survivor.
Those whom I cared for and brought up, my enemies have brought to an end.

Text/Philology

2:1 *yaiv:* treats with contempt; disgraced.
bat tsion: fair Zion; see Hillers, xxxvii-xxxix for discussion. Such phraseology serves a metrical purpose and also helps make explicit the personification of the people or city as a woman.
tiferet: beauty, glory, honor; referring to the Temple (paralleling *hadom raglav)*; see also Ps. 96:6; Isa. 60:7, 63:15, 64:10.
hadom raglav: footstool; usually referring to Israel; sanctuary. see Isa. 60:13, 66:1; Ps. 110:1.

2:2 *bilah:* swallow down, swallow up, engulf. See Isa. 3:12, Lam. 2:5, 2:8; Job 2:3, 10:8; Ps. 21:10.
haras: throw down, break, tear down; also used in Lam. 2:17; elsewhere used regrading tearing down altars (for idolatry): Judg. 6:25; 1 Kgs 18:30, 19:10, 19:14; Ezek. 16:39; tearing down cities: Isa. 14:17; 2 Sam. 11:25; 2 Kgs 3:25; of Yahweh's dealings with men: Ps. 28:5; Jer. 1:10, 31:28; Job 12:14.
bevrato: in his fury; from *evrah:* overflow, arrogance, fury. With regard to Yahweh, see also Hos. 5:10, 13:11; Hab. 3:8; Isa. 9:18; Ps. 90:9, 11; Zeph. 1:15, 18; Ezek. 7:19; Prov. 11:4, 23; Job 21:30.
mivtsre: fortification, fortress, stronghold.
khilel: profaned; see Ps. 79:39-46.

2:3 *bakhari af:* in burning anger; see above 1:12.

2:4 *nitsav ymino ktsar:* "handle of sword in his right hand like an enemy;" on difficulties of this phrase, see Hillers, 37.

shafakh khamato: he poured out his anger; see also Hos. 5:10; Ezek. 14:9; Jer. 10:25; Isa. 42:25; Ps. 79:6; Jer. 6:11; Ezek. 20:33-4.

2:5 *shikhet:* he destroyed; ruined.
taaniyah vaaniyah: literally, both words mean mourning; translated here as "mourning and lamenting;" see also Isa. 29:2.

2:6 *vayakhmos:* he has done violence; see also Job 15:33.
bzaam apo: in his angry indignation; see also Isa. 10:5, 10:25, 30:27.

2:7 *zanakh:* reject, spurn.

2:8 *nata kav:* he (Yahweh) stretched out a line. Pertaining to destruction, see 2 Kgs 21:13; Isa. 28:17, 34:11. Although stretching a line is generally the action of a builder, done to mark straight lines, it is occasionally, as here, used as a metaphor for divine judgment. Hillers, 38.
umlalu: be weak, languish. see Hos. 4:3; Isa. 16:8, 24:4; Nah. 1:4; Isa. 33:9, 24:7; Job 1:10; Jer. 14:2.

2:9 *tavu:* they have sunk down. See Ps. 69:3 (metaphor of distress); Jer. 38:6, 38:22 (metaphor of entanglements and difficulties).
ibad: cause to perish, destroy, kill.
shibar: break, break in pieces, shatter. See Isa. 21:9; Exod. 9:25. On shattering tablets, see Exod. 32:19, 34:1; Deut. 9:17, 10:2. On shattering pillars (*matsevot),* see Exod. 23:24, 34:13; on shattering images, see 2 Kgs11:18; on Yahweh as the one who shatters, see Isa. 45:2, 38:13; Lam. 3:4; Pss. 46:10, 76:4, 107:16.

2:10 *yeshvu laarets yidmu:* "In silence they sit on the ground..." Hillers, 38. *dmm* can be translated either as grow silent/still or wail.
yidmu: be or grow silent, still. See also Lam. 3:28. On *dmm* as wail, see Isa. 23:2 ("wail, ye coast dwellers...").
heelu afar al rosham: they have thrown dust on their heads; see also Josh. 7:6; Ezek. 27:30.
khagru sakim: they gird themselves with sackcloth; see also Isa. 15:3, 22:12; Ezek. 7:18, 27:31; 2 Sam. 3:31; Jer. 4:8, 6:26, 49:3; 1 Kgs. 20:32; Jonah 1:8.

2:11 *kalu:* be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished. spent; here: exhausted.
khamarmru mai: my guts/bowels churn; see above 1:20.
kvedi: my liver; liver as the heavy organ, par excellence, of the body. Liver was regarded as seat of emotions.
beatef: faint. See also 2:12 and 2:19.

2:12 *bhishtapekh nafsham:* their souls pour themselves out; i.e. they expire. See also Job 30:16 (my soul pours itself out upon me); used in Lam. 4:1 as figurative of slaughter.

2:14 *shav:* emptiness, vanity; from 10 commandments of Exod. 20:7 and Deut. 5:11 -- do not take up name of God in vain; on false/empty prophecy (as here) see Ezek. 12:24, 13:6-16, 23, 21:34, 22:28.
Ihashiv shvutekh: can mean restore the captivity of or, more generally, restore fortunes. The latter seems to work better here.
masot: utterance, oracle.
madukhim: a thing to draw aside, enticement. See Deut. 13:14; 2 Kgs. 17:21.

2:15 *sharku:* hiss, whistle.

vayaniu: they shake their heads (in mockery); see also 2 Kgs. 19:21; Isa. 37:22; Pss. 22:8; 109:25; Job 16:4; Zeph. 2:15.

2:16 *patsu:* part, open. Of enemies, see Lam 3:46; Ps. 22:14; Ezek. 2:8.
vayakharku shen: then they gnash (or grind) their teeth; see Pss. 37:12, 35:16, 112:10.
shikivinuhu: that we have waited for.

2:17 *zamam:* consider, purpose, devise, plan.
haras: throw down, break, tear down.

2:18 *fugat:* benumbing cessation; grow numb.
al tidom bat enekh: cease not to weep.

2:19 *roni:* cry out (in distress).
shifkhi libekh: pour out your heart; give expression to your innermost thoughts and feelings. Hillers, 40.

2:22 *mguri misaviv:* those who terrify me from all sides. See Hillers, 41; see also Jer. 6:25, 20:3, 20:10, 46:5, 49:29; Ps. 31:14.
palit: escaped one, fugitive.
sarid: survivor.

Chapter 3

1) I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his fury.
2) He led me then caused me to go -- in darkness and not in light.
3) Surely he turns his hand against me again and again all day long.
4) He wore out my flesh and my skin; he has smashed my bones.
5) He besieged me then he caused poverty and hardship to encircle me.
6) In dark places he made me dwell, like those long dead.
7) He has built a wall around me so that I cannot go out; he has made my chain heavy.
8) Even when I call [to God] and cry out for help, he shuts out my prayer.
9) He has obstructed my way with hewn stones; my paths he has twisted.
10) He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding.
11) My ways are rebellious so [God] tore me in pieces; he has made me desolate.
12) He bent his bow then he set me up like a target for the arrow.
13) He has sent into my vitals the arrows of his quiver.
14) I have become an object of derision for all of my people, the subject of their mocking songs all day long.
15) He sated me with bitter things; he filled me with wormwood.
16) He crushed my teeth in the gravel; he made me cower in the ashes.
17) I despaired of having peace; I have forgotten happiness.
18) So I said, "My endurance and my hope from Yahweh have vanished."
19) Remember my affliction and restless wandering, wormwood and poison.
20) Surely you shall remember but my soul is despondent.
21) Yet this I recall; therefore I shall hope:
22) Yahweh's love surely is not finished; surely His mercies are not at an end.
23) For the mornings, they (i.e. God's mercies) are renewed; great is your faithfulness!

24) Yahweh is my portion, says my soul, therefore I shall wait for him.
25) Yahweh is good to the one who waits for Him, to the person who seeks Him.
26) It is good that one wait and be silent for Yahweh's deliverance.
27) It is good for a man that he bear a yoke in his youth.
28) Let him sit alone and be silent when it is heavy on him.
29) Let him put his mouth in the dirt -- maybe there is hope.
30) Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him; let him be filled with reproach.
31) Because Adonai shall not reject forever,
32) Because if He causes suffering, He then will have compassion according to the greatness of His love.
33) Because He does not intentionally afflict or grieve human beings.
34) To crush under His feet all prisoners of the earth;
35) To deny a man justice before the presence of the Most High;
36) To bend a man in his case at law (i.e. to deprive a man of justice in his case at law); does Adonai not see?
37) Who is this "who spoke and it came to be?" Did Adonai not command?
38) Does not [both] the bad and the good come out from the mouth of the Most High?
39) For what does a living man complain? [Each] man over his sins.
40) Let us test and examine our ways, and return to Yahweh.
41) Let us lift our heart with our hands to God in heaven.
42) We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not forgiven.
43) You have overshadowed [us] in anger and pursued us. You have killed; You have not spared.
44) You have enveloped Yourself in cloud so that prayer may not pass through.
45) You have made us offscouring and refuse among the peoples.
46) All of our enemies open their mouths at us.
47) Dread and pit have come about for us; devastation and shattering.
48) My eye sheds streams of water over the ruin of my people.
49) My eye flows and shall not cease, without growing numb,
50) Until Yahweh looks down and sees from heaven.
51) My eyes give pain to my soul, from all the daughters of my city.
52) My enemies have hunted me like a bird, without cause.
53) In the pit, they have put an end to my life; they cast stones on me.
54) Waters flowed over my head; I said, "I have been cut off!"
55) I have called Your name, Yahweh, from a pit of the lowest places.
56) Hear my voice -- do not cover Your ear -- to my relief; to save me!
57) Draw near at the time that I call You; say, "Do not be afraid."
58) Fight, Adonai, in the struggle of my soul; redeem my life.
59) Yahweh, see my deprivation of justice; vindicate my judgment.
60) See all their vengeance, all of their plans/devices for me.
61) Listen to their scorn, Yahweh, all their plans against me,
62) The speech of my adversaries and their plotting against me all day.
63) Look, in their sitting down and in their rising up, I am the subject of their mocking song.
64) Return to them their recompence, according to the deeds of their hands.

65) Give to them anguish of heart; may Your curse be upon them!
66) Pursue them in anger and wipe them out from under the heavens of Yahweh!

Text/Philology:

3:1 *evrato:* his [God's] fury.

3:3 *bi:* against me; used with words expressing or implying hostility. See, e.g., Gen. 16:12; Deut. 13:10; 1 Sam. 5:9, 18:17.

3:4 *bilah:* become old and worn out.

3:5 *rosh:* read as *resh:* poverty. See Hillers, 54.
utlaah: hardship. See Exod. 18:8; Num. 20:14 (of distress of Israel in Egypt); Neh. 9:32; Mal. 1:13.

3:6 *makhashakim:* dark places; see also Isa. 42:16; 29:15; Pss. 88:19, 88:7, 143:3.

3:7 *gadar:* wall up or off, build a wall; shut off. Here. meaning obstructing path of life; see also Job 19:8; Lam 3:9; Hos. 2:8.

3:8 *ezak:* I cry out, call. Frequently used for calling out to God.
ashavea: cry out for help; see Ps. 72:12; Job 19:7,24:12, 29:12, 30:28, 35:9; Isa. 38:13. For crying out to God, see Pss. 5:3, 18:42, 119:147; Job 36:13; Isa. 58:9; Jon. 2:3; Hab 1:2.

3:9 *gazit:* hewn stones; building stones.
ntivotai: my paths; here, meaning path of life. See also Job 19:8, 30:13; Pss. 119:105, 142:4; Hos. 2:8.
ivah: bend, twist; see also Isa. 24:1.

3:10 *orev:* lie in wait; see Ps. 10:9 (use of same image as here of bear/lion lying in wait; wicked lying in wait for the lowly/poor).

3:11 *vayfashkheni:* he tore me in pieces; see also 1 Sam. 15:33 (Samuel killing Agag).

3:12 *darakh kashto:* he has bent his bow; see also Lam. 2:4; Ps. 7:13 (figurative of divine judgments).
vayatsiveni: then he set me up.
kamatarah: like a target; see also Job 16:12.
khets: arrow.

3:13 *bkhilyotai:* from *kilya,* kidney; most sensitive and vital part.

3:14 *skhok:* laughter, derision, sport; object of derision. See also Jer. 20:7, 48:26-7; Job 12:4.
nginatam: subject of [mocking] song; see also Job 30:9; Ps. 69:13. Related word, *manginatam,* mocking/derisive song, appears in Lam. 3:63.

3:15 *hisbiani:* he sated me.
hirvani: he saturated me; he caused me to drink.
laanah: wormwood -- a woody plant with bitter flavor; relating to Yahweh's chastisement. See Jer. 9:14, 23:15.

3:16 *vayagres bekhatsats shinai:* he crushed my teeth in the gravel; fig. for divine chastisement.
hikhpishani: he made me cower.

3:20 *vtashuakh ali nafshi:* my soul is despondent; see Pss. 42:7, 43:5.

3:22 *tamnu:* read as *tamu:* be complete, finished, come to an end. See also 4:22.

ki: asseverative here, not causal. See Hillers, 56-7.
khalu: be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished, spent.

3:25 *lkovav:* to wait for. On singular versus plural, see Hillers, 57.

3:28 *natal:* heavy, weighty. See Hillers, 57. See also Prov. 27:3.

3:31 *yiznakh:* reject, spurn.

3:32 *hogah:* cause suffering.

3:33 *inah:* be bowed down, afflicted. In *piel,* this can mean afflict as a discipline (where God is the agent). See Deut. 8:2, 3, 16; 1 Kgs. 11:39; Pss. 88:8; 90:15, 119:75; Isa. 64:11; Nah. 1:12. However, *inah* can also mean humble a woman by cohabitation. See Gen. 34:2 (rape of Dinah); Deut. 21:14, 22:24, 29; Judg. 19:24, 20:5; 2 Sam. 13:12, 14, 22, 32; Ezek. 22:10-11; Lam. 5:11.

3:36 *lavet:* be bent, crooked; here, to bend, make crooked; subvert or deprive of justice.

3:41 *lvavenu el kapayim:* our heart with our hands. Hillers suggests reading *el* as *al.* Hillers, 59. See also Joel 2:13.

3:43 *sakotah:* overshadow, screen, cover. In this context, it is arguable whether God covers God's-self or is covering Israel. See Hillers, 59.
khamalta: spare, have compassion.

3:45 *skhi:* offscouring.
maos: refuse; that which is rejected.

3:46 *patsu:* part, open. Regarding enemies, see also Lam. 2:16; Ps. 22:14; Ezek. 2:8.

3:47 *pakhad:* dread.
pakhat: pit; see also Jer. 48:43; 2 Sam. 17:9, 18:17, Isa. 24:17.
hashet: devastation.
shever: break, fracture, breach, crash.

3:48 *palge mayim:* channel of water; here, metaphor for tears; see also Pss. 1:3, 119:36; Isa. 32:2; Prov. 21:1, 5:16.

3:49 *nigrah:* pour, flow, run; see also Ps. 77:3.
tidmeh: cease, cause to cease, cut off, destroy; see also Jer. 6:2, 14:17; Hos. 4:5.
hafugot: grow numb; see Gen. 45:26, Pss. 77:3, 38:9, 88:16.

3:52 *tsod tzaduni:* hunt; see also Lam. 4:18, Jer. 16:16, Lev. 17:13, Job 10:16, 38:39; Mic. 7:2, Ps. 140:12, Ezek. 13:18.
khinam: gratuitously, without cause, undeservedly; especially of groundless hostility or attack; see also 1 Sam. 19:5, 25:31; Pss. 35:7, 109:3, 119:161; Prov. 1:11, 3:30, 23:29; Job 2:3, 9:17, 22:6; Ezek. 14:23; Pss. 35:19, 69:5; 1 Kgs. 2:31; Prov. 24:28, 26:2.

3:53 *tsamtu:* put an end to, exterminate, annihilate; see also Job 6:17, 23:17, Pss. 88:17, 119:139.
vayadu: throw, cast.

3:54 *tsafu:* flow, overflow.
nigzarti: cut, divide; here, meaning cut off, destroyed; see also Exod. 37:11; Isa. 53:8; 2 Chr. 26:21.

3:55 *takhtiyot:* lower, lowest (places).

3:56 *al talem:* conceal, hide, cover; see also Ps. 10:1; Isa. 1:15; Ezek. 22:26; Lev. 20:4; Prov. 28:27; Job 42:3.
lravkhati: respite, relief.

lshavati: emend to *lshuati:* to save me; change is supported by LXX, Symmachus and perhaps Syriac. See Hillers, 59-60.

3:57 *al tira:* do not be afraid.

3:59 *avatati:* subversion, deprivation of justice.

3:61 *shamata kherpatam:* listen to their scorn, reproach; see also Jer. 51:51; Zeph. 2:8.

3:62 *kamai:* my adversaries; those who rise against me.
hegyonam: their plotting, imagining.

3:63 *shivtam vkimatam:* in their sitting down and in their rising up. Cf. Hillers, 60 (in everything they do).
manginatam: subject of their mocking song; see also Job 30:9; Ps. 69:13; Lam. 3:14.

3:64 *gmul:* dealing, recompence; see also Ps. 28:4; Isa. 59:18, 66:6; Jer. 51:6.

3:65 *mignat lev:* anguish of heart.
taalatkha lahem: curse.

Chapter 4

1) How gold is despised! The good gold is hated! Jewels are spilled at every street corner.
2) The people of Zion, precious and weighed in gold, alas, are now thought of as earthen vessels, work of the hands of a potter.
3) Even jackals present a breast and cause their young to suck; my people is truly cruel, like ostriches in the wilderness.
4) Out of thirst, the tongue of the suckling sticks to the roof of his mouth. Young children ask for bread; no one spreads it out for them.
5) Those who fed on luxuries are desolated in the streets; those brought up in scarlet have embraced refuse heaps.
6) So the iniquity of my people was greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand laid on it.
7) Her Nazirites were more pure than snow, whiter than milk. Their bodies were more ruddy than corals; their beards were lapis lazuli.
8) [Now], darker than blackness are their faces. They are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shrivelled over their bones, has become dry like wood.
9) Better off were those pierced by the sword than those killed by famine, those who were pierced through than those who lacked the fruits of the field.
10) The hands of compassionate women have cooked their children; they were for devouring during the destruction of my people.
11) Yahweh let out His wrath; He poured out His anger; He ignited a fire in Zion, which consumed her foundations.
12) Neither the kings of the earth nor any of the inhabitants of the world could believe that foe and enemy would enter the gates of Jerusalem.
13) On account of the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests, who, in her midst, spilled blood of the righteous,
14) [Like] blind men, they tottered in the streets, defiled with blood; without trying, they touched their clothing.

15) "Get away! Unclean!" they called out to them; "Get away, get away! Do not touch!" "Because they have fallen in ruins, so, too, they shall wander." They said, among the nations, they shall no more dwell.

16) The presence of Yahweh divided them; no more would He look upon them. The faces of the priests, they did not receive graciously, the elders, they would show no favor.

17) We kept awake and wore out our eyes looking for help -- in vain; on our lookout we kept watch for a nation that does not save.

18) They hunted us so that we could not walk in our streets. Our end drew near; our time filled up, because our end has come.

19) Our pursuers were swifter than eagles of [the] heavens. They hotly pursued us upon the mountains; in the desert they lay in wait for us.

20) The breath of our nostrils, the annointed of Yahweh, was captured in their pits, of which we said, "in his/its shadow we shall live among the nations."

21) Rejoice and be glad, Fair Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz! To you also the cup shall pass; you shall get drunk and you shall make yourself naked!

22) Your iniquity has come to an end, Fair Zion; no more will He cause your exile. He has taken note of your iniquity, Fair Edom; He has discovered your sins!

Text/Philology:

4:2 *nivle kheres:* earthen vessels; see also Isa. 30:14, 45:9; Prov. 26:23; Ezek. 23:34.

4:3 *tanim:* jackals. Jackals are wild flesh eating-animals. The implication here is that even these animals feed their young. But Israel does not.
khaltsu: draw out, present.
shad: breast.
gurayhen: their young
lakhzar: cruel, fierce; the *l* is for emphasis (an emphatic *l*). See Hillers, 80; see also Job 30:21, 41:2, Deut. 32:33.
kaiyanim: like ostriches; Ostriches are loud with a piercing shriek. See Mic. 1:8.

4:4 *khiko:* its roof of mouth, palate. Tongue clinging to roof of mouth is sometimes an expression for speechlessness. See, e.g., Ezek. 3:26; Job 29:10. Here, the implication is of extreme thirst; see Ps. 22:16.

4:5 *nashamu:* be desolated; appalled. See Jer. 4:9, 12:11; Zeph. 3:6; Ezek. 4:17, 30:7, 36:34.
khibku ashpatot: literally: they have embraced refuse heaps; see Hillers, 80 (pick through garbage).

4:10-11 There are parallels in these verses. In 4:10, mothers devour their children. In 4:11, God consumes the foundations of Zion. Parallels here.

4:10 *lvarot:* to eat, devour.

4:11 *kilah:* accomplish, fulfill, bring to pass.
khamato: his wrath.
vayatset: kindle, burn.

4:14 *nau:* quiver, wave, waver, tremble, totter.

4:17 *btsipiyatenu tsipinu:* look out or about, spy, keep watch.

4:19 *kalim:* light, swift, fleet.
dlakunu: they hotly pursued us; for "hotly pursued," see also Gen. 31:36; 1 Sam. 17:53; Ps. 10:2.

4:20 *bishkhitotam:* in their pits; see also Ps. 107:20.
nilcad: captured.

4:21 Image of Edom as drunken woman. Edom raided Jerusalem from the south. See 2 Esdrus in the Apocrypha.

Chapter 5

1) Remember, Yahweh, what has happened to us; please look and see our disgrace.
2) Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers; our homes to foreigners.
3) We have become orphans, without a father; our mothers are like widows.
4) Our water, with money we drink; our trees, for a price they come.
5) Close behind our necks, we are pursued. We have grown weary, but no rest is given to us.
6) We hold out a hand [to] Egypt, [to] Assyria to have enough bread.
7) Our fathers sinned and are no more; so we bear the burden of their iniquities.
8) Slaves have dominion over us; and there is no one who rescues [us] from their grasp.
9) With our lives [at risk] comes our bread, before the sword of the wilderness.
10) Our skin has grown hot like an oven, from the presence of raging heat of famine.
11) They have raped women in Zion, virgins in the cities of Judah.
12) By their hands, princes have been hanged; [the] faces/persons of [the] elders were not honored.
13) Young men carry millstones, and youths stumble with [loads of] wood.
14) Elders are cut off from the gate; the young men from their music.
15) The joy of our heart has ceased; our dancing has turned to mourning.
16) The crown of our head has fallen; woe to us for we have sinned!
17) Over this, our heart has become sick; over these [things], our eyes have grown dim.
18) On Mount Zion, which lies desolate, foxes prowl about.
19) Yet You, Yahweh, shall reign forever; Your throne is for all generations.
20) Why have You forgotten us in perpetuity? [Why] have You left us for so long a time?
21) Bring us back to You, Yahweh, and we shall return; renew our days like they were before.
22) Indeed, You have utterly rejected us; You have raged against us exceedingly much.

Text/Philology:

5:1 *kherpatenu:* our disgrace, shame, reproach.

5:2 *nakhalatenu:* our inheritance.

5:4 meaning that the people must pay to drink their our own water and to buy firewood.

5:6 we make a deal or pact with Egypt.

5:7 *savalnu:* bear a heavy load or burden; see also Isa. 53:4, 11; Exod. 1:11.

5:11 *inu:* bowed down, afflicted; humbled by cohabitation (i.e. raped). See Gen. 34:2 (Dinah); Deut. 21:14, 22:24, 29; Judg. 19:24, 20:5; 2 Sam. 13:12, 14, 22, 32; Ezek. 22:10, 11.

5:14-15 Cf. Jer. 7:34.

5:16 *nafla ateret roshenu:* the crown of our head has fallen.

5:17 *daveh:* faint, unwell; see also Lam. 1:13. *Daveh* can also mean menstruous; see Lev. 15:33, 20:18; Isa. 30:22.
khashkhu enenu: our eyes have grown dim (darkened); see also Ps. 69:24; Eccl. 12:3.

5:18 *shualim:* foxes; perhaps also jackals; as haunting ruins, see Ezek. 13:4.

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