

M'CHORBAN L'BINYAN, FROM DESTRUCTION TO
REBUILDING: LAMENT AS A *PETACH TIKVAH*: A
DOORWAY TO HOPE

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Preface

How can the broken reenter the realm of language and speak the unspeakable? The doorway...is lament. In lament the boundary between the made and unmade is the thinnest, for it is the cultural form of the preverbal howl of pain. Lament can be incoherent and chaotic, picking its way through a broken rubble of unbearably vivid happenings and intolerable sensations. Its content is dangerously dark and disordered. And yet I want to argue that the doorway through which lament enters the world is a petach tikvah, a doorway of hope. – Rachel Adler¹

Loss reminds us of life's fragility, of our own fragility. When we have lost, either as an individual or as a community, our world is literally turned upside down, we lose more than just a person, or a dream, we lose our identities; we lose our sense of reality. Upon losing, we suffer a great crisis, for our web of safety is no longer intact. In the midst of that great suffering we may feel isolated, we may feel numbed, angry, bewildered, fearful, guilty and worried. We may be unable to express ourselves through relational language: the only thing to escape from our mouths is gaps, moans, wailings, screams and cries. A part of our souls has been ripped from us, we no longer know how to function in the world for we are different, having lost, and the world is different, for that person, or connection that was so deeply rooted within us is no longer present. In the face of the existential questions of life, and of that that is greater than us, we feel

¹ Rachel Adler "For These I Weep: A Theology of Lament" *The Chronicle* 68 2006 pg. 1.

paralyzed, unable to look back to the past that is no more, unable to see a future that seems empty, and we wail.²

Lament is a tradition that is nearly as old as civilization itself, and includes crying or wailing both in conjunction with text, or alone, as an expression of sadness, grief and loss. Lament is a term often associated with mourning and grief, generally over the dead and will most often occur in relation to a funeral. In some cultures lament is often associated with ritual partings, such as weddings or a farewell to one recruited for war service.³ Throughout most cultures the act of lamenting is primarily a woman's role. Lamenting, or wailing is a predominantly vocal expression of grief through song or chant. Laments may take on different vocal and musical stylization and characteristics, and may include improvisation through vocal or instrumental music, weeping, sighing, speech and movement. Laments often involve dialogical features, meaning they are call and response in nature, between a leader and the rest of the community or gathering. Laments are found all over the world in many different cultures. In the Jewish tradition, laments can be found in the Ashkenazic, Spanish-Judeo and Yemenite cultures through various genres of liturgy, *endecha* and Yemenite wailers. Laments are generally oral in nature, passed from the elders of the community to the younger generations. Laments may be associated with individual and communal loss, and range from improvisatory and poetic styles to communal epic descriptions of loss. Laments generally function as an

² Ibid

³ Laments from Karelia for example, are often used in easing the transference of a soul from the plane of the living to the spiritual plane. In klezmer music and Yiddish music, one might find laments of separation that are sung at weddings, and in the case of the Judeo-Spanish tradition one may find laments of farewell, and laments that recall the destruction of the temples. Yemenite wailers are traditionally women, who come to help mourners process their grief over the death of a loved one.

expression of mourning, parting, complaints about status in the community, or are sometimes used in some cultures to help spirits move from one world to the next.

There are two major types of lament: dirge laments are funeral and mourning songs used for mourning loss and processing grief. Lament prayers are used in various contexts, they are found within dirge laments as additional prayers, they may call for justice and revenge, or invoke a plea from the sufferer to God. There are many common motifs and features found in laments, as they reflect the universal experience of human suffering. Motifs to note are incomprehensibility of the loss itself; often questioning the loss, the mention of the death or loss, and how that death or loss came about, weeping and contrast motifs may be present within the text, and finally one may find a theme of reconciliation towards the end, a kind of making peace for the survivors of the loss or death. Lament prayers may also include a direct plea to a deity and may also include expressions of hope. Other motifs and techniques present in laments may be personification of nature, apostrophe⁴, and alliteration.⁵

One example of a weeping motif is found in the writings of Jeremiah upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 6th century B.C.E “O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears for the slain Bat-Ammi....but if you will not listen my soul will weep in secret for your pride; ...let my eyes run down with tears night and day...” (Jeremiah 9:1, 13:7, 14:17). An example of a weeping motif is also found in the writings of Croatian poet Jure Kastelan, post WW II, demonstrating the depth of time and space

⁴ An *apostrophe* is a literary device in which an inanimate object, or a person who is absent or deceased is addressed as if they were alive and present and able to reply.

⁵ *Alliteration* is a literary device where words are used in quick succession that begin with the same letter, or vowel or consonant sound group. Alliteration involves a repetition of similar sounds throughout the sentence and adds character to the text.

laments may cross: “My eyes today are as hundreds of springs, my voice a whistling from the glen. If only my arms were wings above the village that I might fly and fly, fly without cease.” (Postwar Croatian Lyric Poetry)⁶. One example of both a weeping motif and lament prayer to God comes from an Israeli Arab woman, recorded in the 1980’s: “O tears of my eyes flow forth, Renew your lament for the separation of my brother...God will diffuse my grief for me...let us entreat God’s mercy There is no escape from the pursuit of death.” (Anonymous, recorded by Mishael M. Caspi and Julia A. Blessing)⁷

Laments that feature personification link inanimate objects or nature to the motifs of weeping or melancholy and mourning, extending the plane of grief; grief is so profound that even the plants, or buildings grieve. Planet Sarajevo is a lament which features the personification of nature: “Listen to the breathing of Planet Sarajevo, Listen to the Girl crying: “Death, Don’t take me along!”⁸ In Isaiah we find writings that describe the weeping and destruction of nature and earth’s processes as a result of human wrong: “The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers...the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh...the earth is utterly broken...the earth staggers like a drunkard...and it falls, it will not rise again...” (Isa: 24:4-5, 7-8, 19-21, 23). From Croatia, to Sarajevo, Israel to Isaiah, this variety of examples culled from various time periods and cultures and their similar features demonstrates the universality of human suffering, and human response to that suffering.

⁶ Jure Kastelan, “Postwar Croatian Lyric Poetry” *American Slavic and East European Review* 17:no 4, 1958, 523.

⁷ Anonymous, Recorded in Weavers of the Songs: *The Oral Poetry of Arab Women in Israel and the West Bank*, 1991, 125-6.

⁸ Abdullah Sidran-“Planet Sarajevo” *Blind Man Sings to his City* 11-17.

Throughout history, the Jews have suffered great loss. Our biblical text is a paradigm for stories of individual and communal loss, and for how that loss and grief are expressed. Hannah in 1st Samuel, chapter 1, first loses her dream of having a child, then upon the miracle of giving birth to her son, must give him up to the service of God. In the book of Ruth, Naomi loses nearly her entire family: her husband Elimelech, and her children Mahlon and Chilion, and her daughter in law Orpha. David suffers a multitude of losses, from the loss of Saul and Jonathan, to his child with his mistress Bathsheva, his son Absalom, and finally the loss of his kingship. The bible also recounts stories of communal loss, from the great flood of Noah, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and two of the greatest and most painful losses of antiquity, the destruction of the first and second temples in 586 BCE and 70C.E as recounted in Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah. As a result of those communal losses, millions of individuals have suffered the loss of one family member or more, as a direct or indirect result of those tragedies. Communities at large, families and individuals have had to gather up their broken pieces and begin anew.

In 2 Samuel,⁹ David suffers a series of losses; that of Saul and Jonathan, his baby son born to his mistress Bathsheva, and his elder son Absalom. In each story, David laments his losses. Each of his laments and his actions surrounding the deaths illumine his state of mind, his processing of his loss. Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah offer a unique look into a significant part of Jewish history, the destruction of the first and second Temples. Lamentations, as a response to the destruction of 586 B.C.E is a howl of pain, a cry of despair upon the loss of the sacred city and temple. The narrator

⁹ 2 Samuel 1:1-25. 2 Samuel 12:1-31, 2 Samuel 18:32, 19:1-44

simultaneously cries out to God, searches for God, and lashes out at God, blaming God for the destruction. Throughout the entire book, we do not hear God's voice at all, yet through all of the cries of despair and the lack of God's voice, the author takes a hopeful tone in the final verses of the text. Written after the destruction of the second temple, Lamentations Rabbah not only laments a second loss, but also seeks to bring God's voice and greater sense of hope for the future back into the fold.

What can we learn from exploring these individual and communal losses found in biblical history, such as those of David and of the Jews of the first and second Temples? What can we learn from the expression of their losses, and how can we translate that knowledge to better serve our synagogues and congregants, to allow ourselves, our synagogues and congregants to fully and completely process and move through loss, tragedy, and the grief that comes with it? By acknowledging that suffering and grief is universal, and lament is a universal genre that allows for our expressing our grief, we learn that we are not alone. When we suffer loss, when we grieve over tragedy, we can take comfort that for thousands of years, others such as King David, and the great rabbinic sages have been brought low as we have. When we sit in shul, reciting *Kaddish* over a loved one, we can look across the room, at fellow members of our community who are doing the same, we can feel the support of our surrounding community and know that we are not alone in our suffering and grief. How can we bring back lament, a culture that has fizzled over the centuries, and use that lament to help process our grief, to open the doorway for reconciliation and new hope?

Jewish tradition offers a scope of lamentations as musical expressions of grief. The cantillation sounds of eicha that we recite on *T'sha B'av*; Klezmer and Yiddish

music (*kale bezingn*) and Chazzanut of the Ashkenazic traditions, Spanish-Judeo *Endechas*, Yemenite wailing are genres that offer musical expressions of grief, separation and loss. These genres enable us to remember our communal losses of the destruction of the Temples, our individual losses of family, friends, hopes and dreams. Today these genres are not as readily available to us as mourners, or as comforters of mourners. What is lost when we give up these beautiful expressions of grief? How do we bring those models into our modern world today? How can we use the expressions of grief from the various genres of Jewish tradition to fully process our losses today? Exploring a sampling of the above traditions in this thesis, allows us to understand how they have been, and could be repurposed and brought back to life in modern times.

Throughout the corners of the earth, suffering and loss are universal. All over the world people experience loss and suffering through genocide, domestic and religious terrorism, through natural occurrence and tragic accident. Laments are a universal response to that suffering and loss. As we will explore in this thesis, laments have existed through time and space in multiple forms: from biblical and rabbinic writings to Israeli Yemenite culture; and from ancient biblical melody to modern music. This thesis exposes the power of lament as an expression of sorrow and grief, as a transformative and restorative genre. This thesis explores the idea that our laments have the ability to both aid our grieving process, and move us through that grief to a new world, a new normal where we can begin again. This thesis demonstrates that Jewish text, culture and music are the medium through which we express lament and find renewal.

Chapter One of this thesis will explore individual and communal loss in biblical literature through a Jewish lens and perspective. We will explore the lament scenes of

David in 2 Samuel 1, as he loses Saul and Jonathan, 2 Samuel 12, upon the loss of his illegitimate child, and Samuel 19 upon the loss of his son Absalom. In exploring what Steven Weitzman labels “lament-scenes” we will explore how David processes his grief in different situations. With each successive loss, David becomes more alienating to his people. David’s laments and atypical reactions shine light on his own personal processes; they illumine not only his grief but also his ultimate political demise as King. In Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah we will explore the communal loss of the two destructions of the Temple. In Lamentations we witness a communal howl and cry of pain in response to the destruction of 586 BCE. These cries call for testimony and witness and Rebuke God for bringing the destruction. We will note that throughout the text there is both a searching for God and God’s comfort, but also that God’s voice is absent throughout. Lamentations Rabbah, a communal response by the Rabbis after the destruction in 70 CE attempts to reconcile God’s absence in Lamentations. Lamentations Rabbah also seeks to move towards hope and healing, demonstrating the transformative quality of lament. Lament not only allows us to exist in the center of our grief but allows us to move forward as well.

Chapter two will continue to explore lament through text, this time in the later writings of *Mishna*, and *Mishneh Torah*. We learn from these texts, how the rituals described in 2 Samuel develop into practice. We will explore various customs of mourning, through music, funeral rites and hesped; learning that *hesped*, or eulogy was a deeper, richer practice, involving not only a verbal speech remembering the dead, but also including specific musical and lament genres as well. There is much we can learn from these Jewish traditions, as well as from the textual traditions of *halacha*, that dictate

specific mourning instructions, from how long we mourn, to what music may be played at a funeral.

Chapter three explores lament through culture, specifically the Jewish-Yemenite wailing culture in Israel. Jewish-Yemenite wailers, or keeners are a tradition of women who aid individuals and communities in mourning their dead. Women educated in this tradition enter into homes of individuals and communities, creating laments based upon passed down oral knowledge and improvisation; enabling those who have lost to fully express their grief, and to begin to move forward after a tragedy or loss. We learn from the Jewish-Yemenite culture, that lament can be powerfully transformative; that lament may allow an individual or community room to cry and grieve, and that space for grieving can lead to healing, restoration and hope.

Chapter four covers musical expressions of grief found in various genres of Jewish tradition. We will explore the Ashkenazic tradition through *Eicha*, the cantillation system used to chant Lamentations on *Tisha b'Av*. We will further delve into the treatment of *eicha* as it is used in the finale of Leonard Bernstein's *Jeremiah Symphony*, *Lamentation*. The Judeo-Spanish tradition will offer an insight into laments of separation, and the *Endecha*, the funeral, or dirge lament. We will look at a modern musical interpretation of an *Endecha* in copla form: *Como La Rosa en La Guerra*, by Alberto Hemsí. Understanding a modern treatment of ancient and traditional melodies offers a window into how we can bring ancient music of lament into the modern world as a unique expression of grief.

Through exploration of biblical and rabbinic text, culture, and musical expression, this thesis will show a synthesis of ancient and modern worlds. This thesis will bring the

scope of lament as an expression of grief deep within the Jewish tradition to light, and will imagine how lament as an expression of grief maybe reinvigorated within our synagogue communities today.

How does one move forward from such tragedy and suffering? How does one recover from the loss of a child, parent, home, or dream, or from physical loss of some kind?. How can we process our losses, how can we move through our grief? Where do we turn? The first step is our lament. Lament enables us to speak the unspeakable, to exist in the very center of our torment, suffering and pain. Through existing in the depths of our despair, we are able to truly experience it, and ultimately move from it. *A Petakh Tikvah*, from the void of grief to a new world of reconciliation, Lament stands as an open doorway, a doorway of hope.

Chapter 1

“Look Adonai, upon my suffering, for the enemy is triumphant.”

Individual and Communal Mourning in Biblical Text and Writings

Just after David learns of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan,

David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him. And they wailed and wept and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

--2 Samuel 1:11-12

Upon the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of its Temple, the city “bitterly...sobs at night with tears on her cheeks...her priests [groaning], her maidens [grieving]” – Lamentations 1:2, 4

Both of these scenes occur after a great crisis; the former upon David’s hearing of Saul and Jonathan’s deaths, and the latter upon the destruction of the 1st Temple in 586 BCE. Each of these scenes describes the various physical and verbal actions of an individual or community suffering loss. In this chapter, we will explore individual and communal loss through biblical literature. Considering the three “lament scenes” of David and tracing his actions and various states of mind in each particular scene will allow for an in-depth look at the individual psyche of one who suffers multiple losses. The book of Lamentations is the outpouring of narrator representing a community who has suffered the devastating loss of their home. Later the Rabbis respond to the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE with Lamentations Rabbah. A comparison of

Lamentations and the later Lamentations Rabbah shows an important movement from devastation and despair to healing and hope. This journey teaches us that lament both allows the mourner to literally sit in the midst of their grief and cry, and allows the mourner to move towards healing. The biblical stories of David and the destruction of the two temples will allow us as readers and as clergy to envelop ourselves in the full range of human emotion and response upon suffering loss. Understanding how both individuals and communities deal with major losses is essential for today's clergy, as more and more often, we are called upon to be with our congregants in the midst and aftermath of tragedy and crisis. Witnessing the response to tragedy in biblical stories of David and lamentations and lamentations rabbah gives depth and insight into the many ranges of emotion one moves through as they grieve and mourn.

2 Samuel tells the story of David as he rises and then falls in the political and personal worlds. We will view David through three successive losses, or three "lament type-scenes"(please read further for description): the loss of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1, the loss of his illegitimate child (born to Bathseva) in 2 Samuel 12, and finally the loss of his son Absalom in 2 Samuel 19. Biblical literature often tells the story of a character or characters through various narrative conventions. One such convention is the type-scene, a convention originally coined by Walter Arend, in reference to certain compositional patterns of Greek Homeric epics.¹⁰ A type scene, or narrative episode is a fixed situation, where a narrative will unfold according to specific ordered motifs. Robert Alter proposes that type-scenes also appear within biblical literature, in modification, as biblical literature is not nearly as descriptive as Homeric epics. Alter explains that

¹⁰ Robert Alter, *The Art of the Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic, 1981), pg. 50.

biblical type scenes occur at “crucial junctures in the lives of heroes, from conception and birth to betrothal and deathbed.”¹¹ Steven Weitzman coins the term “lament type scene” in his article “David’s Lament and the Poetics of Grief in Samuel 2,” as he discusses the political and psychological journey of the hero, David. Weitzman argues that these lament-scenes, when viewed alongside each other, depict David’s political psychological and public standing at various stages in his reign.¹² Through these various lament-scenes we see a decline in all of the above, thus these various scenes not only allow us to witness the rise and then fall of a King of Israel, as Weitzman suggests, but we also experience the very depth of a human being in pain, and the sometimes erratic behavior of one in grief. Furthermore, the specific elements of the lament type scene may help one not only better understand an individual suffering a tragedy, but may shed light on an effective way to process and move through that grief.

There are three elements that comprise a lament type scene: the arrival of a messenger reporting someone has died (usually a verbatim), a description of the listener’s physical response to the news; these responses are usually a catalogue of conventional acts of grief: rending ones clothes, weeping and fasting, etc.¹³ and finally, the episode culminates in a verbal response recited verbatim by the mourning party or parties. The basic pattern of a type scene will change throughout the narrative, and the variations of

¹¹ Alter, Pg. 51.

¹² Steven Weitzman “David’s Lament and the Poetics of Grief in 2 Samuel” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85.3/4 1995 Pg. 360.

¹³ *V’eilu Megalchin*, Chapter 3 *Moed Katan* lists on page 16a the prohibitions of mourning: haircutting, donning tefillin, greeting others, studying torah, laundering, working, bathing wearing shoes, marital relations, sending sacrifices and obligations: wrapping ones head, rending (tearing) one’s garment (keriah) and overturning the bed.

this pattern elucidate certain mental states and characteristics of the particular character at the center of the story.

2 Samuel 1 plays fairly closely to the conventional type scene described above. In verses 1-10 of the narrative, an Amalekite arrives and tells the news of Saul's death in declaration and in conversation with David. Immediately upon hearing the news, David, followed by his men, rend their clothes, weep and fast (Verses 11-12). Verses 17-27 offer the third element of the type-scene, the verbal response, in this case David's lament.

This lament, the first of the three we will explore, is particularly eloquent and poetic; it is the most elegant of the three. Tod Linafelt comments on the elegant style of this lament, explaining that it is poetry,¹⁴ a "confessing of feeling", it is eloquent, that is it "pours itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy," and in addition, it is also a political statement, suggesting that David is ready for kingship, that he will become a better monarch than Saul.¹⁵ At a glance this lament is a mournful and honest expression

¹⁴ Linafelt describes some poetic features of this lament: parallelism: two lines forming couplets, denoting poetry rather than prose, here the latter phrase will intensify the former, i.e.: verse 22 describes the "martial prowess of Saul and Jonathan:" "from the blood of the slain/from the fat of the warriors" warriors is intensifying and specifying the word "slain" implying Saul and Jonathan's strength against the warriors. Further in verse 23 David describes Saul and Jonathan as "swifter than eagles, stronger than lions" the poetic techniques of imagery and metaphor (common features of lament poetry) allude to the animal prowess of these two fallen warriors. The entire poem exhibits a sense of symmetry, in verse 19, the beginning of the lament, David claims "Thy beauty O Israel, upon thy high places is slain! How have the warriors fallen!" In verse 25, towards the close of the poem David again exclaims "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle! Jonathan upon thy high places is slain!" What is interesting to note, is not only the symmetry of the poem itself, but also that David alludes to both Saul and Jonathan in the beginning of the poem "warriors" but only to Jonathan in this verse, excluding Saul. The lament also features the poetic technique of Apostrophe- David specifically speaks to Jonathan in verse 26.

¹⁵ Tod Linafelt "Private Poetry and Public Eloquence in 2 Samuel 1:17-27:Hearing and Overhearing David's Lament for Jonathan and Saul" *The Journal of Religion* 88 4 2008 Pg. 498 and 517.

of grief, as expected in this particular type scene. David honors and mourns Saul and Jonathan throughout- highlighting their military skill and prowess. In verse 22 David comments that the bow of Jonathan “never turned away” from the enemy, and Saul’s sword, never “return[ed] empty.” In verse 23, David calls Saul and Jonathan “lovely and pleasant...swifter than eagles...stronger than lions....in death they were not divided.” Verse 26 particularly emulates David’s pain over Jonathan’s death:

צַר-לִי עָלֶיךָ אַחִי יְהוֹנָתָן נִעְמַת-לִי מֵעוֹד נִפְלְאָתָה אֶהְבַּתְךָ לִי מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים

“There is distress upon me, for my brother Jonathan, pleasant has [he] been to me, wonderful [was] his love to me, more than the love of women.”¹⁶ What is interesting to note, is that along with the previous mournful and poetic descriptions of the fallen warriors, David makes comments that are almost like a backlash to Saul. David states in verse 21 “the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, the shield of Saul not anointed with oil.” We know that Samuel anointed Saul in 1:10. David directly declares Saul as no longer anointed; implying the political statement that Saul is not only dead but also rejected, placing himself in line for kingship. By the end of the poem, the last three verses, 24-27, David mentions only Jonathan, excluding Saul from the lament entirely. David’s lament in this first scene

evinces a consistent double edge in its treatment of Saul, celebrating his former military successes and grieving over his loss while at the same time

¹⁶ Some scholars and commentators view this statement as indicative of a romantic relationship between Jonathan and David. In this case we are not focusing on that possibility, but rather the indication and linguistic suggestion that at the very least David does have some kind of strong feelings toward Jonathan, that they had a relationship at least akin to “brothers” and that he is mourning his loss.

calling attention to his failure as warrior and his rejection as the lord's
anointed.¹⁷

David's apostrophe to Jonathan in verse 26 alludes to Jonathan's "pleasantness" towards David; nowhere in the poem do we mark that same allusion of Jonathan's feelings towards Saul or vice versa, nor the relationship between Saul and David. Based on this sole moment of relationship evidence, David seems to imply that Jonathan has chosen him over his own father, perhaps insinuating that others should and will choose him as next King.¹⁸ David leads his people in the lament, his men follow the David's physical mourning actions of rending clothes, wailing and fasting, and implores the daughters of Israel to weep (verses 12 and 24), suggesting that he is already acting as leader.

The poetic and underlying political nature of the lament features David at his height: he is eloquent and elegant throughout the lament, enough so that he can deliver a mournful expression of loss and grief while at the same time making a political statement about Saul's failed and rejected kingship.

David demonstrates mourning through the physical and verbal actions described in this scene. The next two type scenes show variations of the typical type scene employed in the above narrative. The variations and stark contrasts in the following two scenes (2 Samuel 12 and 19) illustrate David's erratic and deteriorating behavior through each subsequent loss. In 2 Samuel 12 David suffers the loss of his illegitimate child. In this particular scene, David's grief is unconventional and baffling. David's physical manifestations of grief are out of order of the typical lament scene, he performs the

¹⁷ Linafelt Pg. 521.

¹⁸ Thoughts and conjectures and information culled from the following sources: Linafelt "Private Poetry and Public Eloquence" Steven Weitzman "David's Lament and the Poetics of Grief" and Robert Polzin "David and the Deuteronomist."

physical mourning rites prior to the death of his child, upon hearing of the impending death from the prophet Nathan. (verses 16-17). David's reaction to the death itself is "detached and even coldly rational....[radically contesting] the meaningfulness of mourning rites."¹⁹ In verse 18 David's servants are afraid to tell David of his baby son's death for fear he would harm himself. However, in verse 19, David responds to the news not by harming himself, or mourning further. Instead, he rises, washes himself and anoints himself, changes his clothing, prays and eats, actions that directly contradict the mourning state David is supposed to be in upon hearing of the death of his son. In his book, *A Time to Mourn a Time to Dance*, Gary Anderson outlines the parallel rituals of joy and mourning according to this chart:²⁰ We can see from this chart that David's actions in this case, correspond with "Joy" rather than "Mourning."

Joy	Mourning
Eating and Drinking	Fasting
Sexual Relations	Sexual Continence
Praise of God	Lamentation
Anointing with Oil	Putting ashes or dust on one's head
Festal Garments	Sackcloth or torn (rent) clothes

David does not verbally lament his son upon hearing of his death, rather he is starkly accepting and perhaps almost numb in verse 23 stating, "he is dead, wherefore

¹⁹ Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative* 249-258 found in Weitzman, 356

²⁰ Gary Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991), Pg. 49.

should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he will not return to me.” Perhaps David’s detachment and lack of emotion upon his son’s death is not cold, but a sign of David’s movement toward acceptance.²¹ Based on the description of Elizabeth Kubler Ross’s stages of grief in the footnote below, one may gain more insight into David’s disordered conduct, David is an individual who has suffered loss more than once at this stage in the narrative. The lament scene we witness is not typical or ordered, there is a fearful announcement of the baby’s death,(verse 18 and 19) and the physical mourning and bargaining with God occur prior to the death (verse 16 and 17). There is no actual extended or verbatim lament upon hearing of the news of the death, rather, prior to the actual death of his son, David “ויבקש את-האלהים,” he makes a request to God for his son, greatly transforming the third element of the scene. David’s servants do not follow in his lament, or his physical actions of mourning as they do in the first scene. Instead, they question his contradictory behavior in verse 21.

²¹ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross discusses 5 stages of grief in her book *On Death and Dying*, 1969. Alan Chapman summarizes: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Denial is the conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts and reality related to a death or traumatic situation, Anger manifests through the sufferer either at themselves, or towards others, Bargaining generally involves the sufferer/mourner and a higher power, making a deal of some sort to avert or lessen a severe outcome, depression is referred to as “preparatory grieving” a rehearsal for the aftermath of the tragedy, “acceptance with emotional attachment.” Feeling sadness and regret at this stage is normal and indicative of the forthcoming stage Acceptance. Acceptance indicates emotional detachment and objectivity regarding the tragedy. It is important to note that this is a framework or basic model of grief, these stages may come in or out of order and may be revisited time and again. These stages are not linear, nor equal. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross *On Death and Dying* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969). Alan Chapman summary found at this website: <http://www.ekrfoundation.org/five-stages-of-grief/>

Alan Chapman summarizes Elizabeth Kubler Ross: “people’s grief and other reactions to emotional trauma are as individual as a fingerprint.”²² This scene, and the one that follows later in 2 Samuel 19 highlight the individual response to grief. David is neither elegant nor eloquent as he was the first time around. At this point in the scene he has accepted the loss of his son and mourned him prior to the actual time of death, knowing from Nathan the prophet, that it was an impending reality. David does not move through the scene in an ordered fashion, everything is backward and contradictory much like an individual who is moving through the stages of grief. An individual may begin in stage 3, bargaining, move to stage 5 acceptance, then move to stage 1, denial, before revisiting stage 5 again. The movements between stages may be baffling to the outside world, just as David’s actions are baffling to his servants, and perhaps also to the enlightened reader who understands literary convention.

David’s third lament scene takes place in 2 Samuel chapters 18-19, upon the loss of David’s elder son Absalom. This time all of the elements of a lament scene appear in order; a messenger announces the death of Absalom, the narrative describes David’s response, and we end with a verbal lament. (2 Samuel 18, 2 Samuel 19:1-5). Whereas the prior scene displayed a sense of disorder and bafflement, and perhaps acceptance of David of the death of his baby, this lament scene allows us to witness the depth of David’s grief over Absalom. The announcement of Absalom’s death occurs at the end of 2 Samuel 18, verse 32. Immediately the next chapter opens “The King was moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept,...O my son Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! Would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!!” (2 Samuel 19:1)

²² Ibid.

Right away we witness both the narrative physical response by David, who retreats and weeps, and the verbal lament response- the extended and choking cry over his son Absalom. What is interesting in this lament scene is that David retreats into private and utters not an eloquent lament but a repetitive, staccato, structureless cry.²³ David's actions reveal a crushing grief, so overwhelming he must weep in private, so overwhelming that it overtakes David's once poetic tongue. David does not accept his son's death, but wishes that he could have died for him. David exudes desperate sadness, and regret; his state is not one of apathy or detached acceptance as in the previous scene, but one of depression.²⁴ David's outpouring display of grief continues through the verses; he cries again in verse 5: "The King covered his face, and the King cried with a loud voice 'O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!'" Not only does David's grief persist, it is so strong that he covers his face and cries loudly, lamenting in his private chambers. The narrative specifically describes the volume of David's cry, suggesting that the people and servants outside his house are witness to this crushing lament. Where David's mourning, or lack thereof baffled his servants in the previous scene of chapter 12, here he alienates his people with his loud, vocal, falling apart display. His servant comments in the very next verses 6-7 that David "has shamed the faces of all his servants who this day saved [his] life." The servant continues, "I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and we had all died this day, than it had pleased you well." David utters inarticulate laments over his rebellious son, considering his worth, over all of those that survived the battle, protecting David. His servant surmises, that one life, the

²³ Steve Weitzman "David's Lament and the Poetics of Grief" Pg. 358

²⁴ Refer to the various stages of grief in footnote 11 for an explanation

life of David's son Absalom, holds much greater meaning than the many lives that were still continuing, the many lives that had protected David.

David moves from an elegant and articulate lament in the first scene to an almost lack of lament and disorder in the second scene, and finally deteriorates in a scene of inarticulate and loud cries. David displays general sadness and mourning in various levels throughout each scene. David is first quite eloquent, then disordered and emotionally detached, and finally depressed. The different and contrasting lament scenes allow us as readers to witness David's general psychological and political decline, and they also allow us as human beings and future clergy to understand that individuals who suffer loss and tragedy may act erratically and out of order. Sometimes our congregants may poetically remember those whom they have lost, or better times prior to a tragedy. Sometimes they hold themselves together. Sometimes they may display signs of emotional detachment, or they may mourn a loss before it even occurs. Sometimes they cry and scream, they retreat from our eyes. It is up to us as clergy not only to act as a supporting presence, but also to find ways that we may help our congregants mourn and grieve.

The varied actions throughout these scenes, as well as the laments themselves can give us as clergy not only an understanding of what an individual may be going through or how an individual suffering may behave, but also they can give us clues as to how to allow our congregants grieve. What is important to note in our study of these lament scenes, are the several very specific elements that make up the scene: an announcement by a messenger of the death, physical expressions of mourning and grief followed by a verbal expression of grief, a lament. Lament is a specific component in addition to the

necessary announcement of loss and physical responses of the characters. The combination of announcement, physical response and verbal lament suggest that an individual needs all three components to be able to process grief. We must hear the news directly from someone, we must perform the required halacha to signify we are in mourning, and finally, we must verbally lament our loss in some way. How do we lament our loss? Perhaps we are eloquent, perhaps in moments we have no words, perhaps we cry. Perhaps we write, draw, listen to music, or retreat and express our lament in private. Today, it is often the spoken eulogy that replaces a lament or cry at a funeral. Perhaps in these mourning situations the music we choose to express the loss should more personally and individually reflect the person who is no longer with us. Perhaps we as clergy can create new rituals marking the loss of our loved ones, and also marking the losses that do not result in death, but are tragic all the same. Creating support groups for those who have suffered tragedy and loss of any kind, using methods of expression such as writing, music, and talk will allow the mourner to experience and express loss through the three elements we have explored in the biblical lament scene. Talking aloud, and confronting oneself and others about a loss allows for someone to hear and directly acknowledge the loss itself. Methods of expression such as the physical and halachic marking of a loss,²⁵ as well as the verbal expression of a loss allow for a more complete vehicle to process the loss or tragedy.

²⁵ Jewish tradition offers specific procedure and period of mourning which Maurice Lamm highlights in his book, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, (New York: J.David Inc), 1969 Pg.78. There are five stages of the mourning process: **1.** The period between death and mourning “*aninut*” during which time despair is most intense. **2.** The first three days following burial, these days are devoted to weeping and lamentations. The mourner does not respond to greetings, and remains in the home. **3.** *Shiva* includes the first three days following the burial and is seven days long. During this time the mourner

Hearing directly about a loss, physically marking a loss and verbally responding to it, may allow the sufferer or mourner a way to release the emotions they are feeling, to sit with their grief, and ultimately to move through their grief towards healing.

Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah mark both the cries of destruction and howls of pain and a movement towards healing. As human beings, and as communities, we seek to rectify, and move through experiences and descriptions of horror, loss and terror. We seek to make sense out of that which is senseless. In my introduction I suggest, based on information culled from the likes of Rachel Adler, that lament may be a *petach tikvah*, an open door, which not only allows the sufferer to cry and mourn over the loss or tragedy, but also allows the individual or community to move towards healing and hope. Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah can serve as both mourning and healing literature that clergy and those who have lost can mirror and refer to. Culling major themes and motifs found in these books, and using them in our programming and pastoral work with congregants and communities allows their laments to truly be an open door, to serve as a cry or howl of pain, to serve as pathway to healing and reconciliation.

observes the customs of avelut-rent garment, refraining from shaving, sitting on a low stool, reciting *Kaddish*, and also begins to talk about the loss and accept comfort from friends, neighbors and family. Isolation and retreat inward begins to relax and move toward normalcy. 4. *Sheloshim* is the first 30 days following a burial and includes *shiva*. During this period, after *shiva*, the mourner is encouraged to leave the house and slowly rejoin the world. At this time the rent clothing may still be worn for the death of a parent, as a reminder that not enough time has elapsed to be fully integrated back into society. 5. The final stage is the 12-month period from the burial, which includes *Sheloshim*. During this period the mourner returns to his or her routine though full entertainment and amusement is curtailed. Finally at the close of the 12-month period the mourner will mark a *yarzheit* and say *kaddish* for their loved one once a year.

Lamentations is a series of communal laments²⁶ filled with rich imagery of cries of grief that mourn the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE. The personified weeping Zion, the graphic accounts of war and plunder and rupture of daily life are a howl of pain, giving voice to a previously unimaginable scale of loss. Throughout the five chapters,²⁷ the narrator, and the personified city call for a witness to the destruction, and for testimony from God. These chapters hold a record and account of the terrible destruction that befell the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they are not only a cry of pain, but also a call of rebuke towards God, and a call for God's testimony and witness, by those

²⁶Nancy C Lee breaks laments into two main categories: Lament as Plea, and Lament Dirge, as discussed in my introduction. (*Lyrics of Lament*) In *Lamentations*, Adele Berlin explains that the book of lamentations is both a communal lament and also a kinnah. A communal lament is a plea to prevent or reverse a calamity, while a kinnah is an outpouring of grief for a loss that has already occurred, with no expectation of reversing it. (24) Berlin furthers that lamentations may be called a city-lament, or Jerusalem lament, as it transcends both genres, and constitutes a new post 586 BCE lament. This type of lament arose out of communal and kinnah laments, and also out of a new historical and theological situation. In *Surviving Lamentations*, Tod Linafelt calls this material "literature of survival" that is, it is literature produced in the aftermath of a major catastrophe. This is literature that calls attention to issues of survival in the face of destruction. The concern for Zion's children for example, becomes the concern for the survival of the Jewish people. (21). Linafelt also believes that Lamentations is a mixture of genres, a lament-individual or communal and a funeral dirge. For Linafelt the dirge is not a separate category of lament, rather it is simply a funeral song. The elements of the dirge can be found in the mournful cry that opens chapter 1,2 and 4, in the contrast motifs of chapter 4, and in the description of misery. (36-37) The lament genre is also present within the book though as a contrast to the funeral dirge, the lament's primary focus is life. "The lament addresses God and expects and a answer. ...The lament is concerned with the removal of the suffering itself...it is a genre that looks beyond the situation of death." (38)

Todd Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), Pg's 21, 36-38.

²⁷ Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). Adele Berlin explores the book of Lamentations in depth, in this translation, commentary and exegesis. Berlin separates and labels each chapter as such: Mourning and Shame, Anger, Exile, Degradation, and Prayer.

who survived the tragedy.²⁸ These themes are prevalent throughout the chapters. Many verses rebuke, or blame God. Looking through chapter one as an example, Lamentations opens with a cry “איכה” / “Alas!” or literally, “how! has this city become like a widow.” (1:1) The translation of *Eicha* into Alas,²⁹ is an expression of sighing, or a mournful cry. Three out of the five chapters of lamentations open with this expression, giving the allusion of an extended cry throughout the book (1:1, 2:1 and 4:1).³⁰ This sighing or crying is heightened in the second verse by the description and personification (a poetic technique common in lament) of the city “bitterly sobb[ing] at night with tears on her cheeks.” Zion cries again in verse 1:16, “for these things I do sob, my eyes, my eyes flow with water.” Not only does the city sigh and sob through chapter one, but also calls for God to witness this terrible destruction. In verse 9, the city interjects the narrator’s graphic description of her impurity, calling upon God to look upon her suffering: “ראה יהוה את עניי כי הגדיל אויב” / “Look Adonai, upon my suffering, for the enemy is triumphant.” (1:9)³¹ The city seeks witness from God, and also from passerbys in verses 12-13, also rebuking and blaming God for the destruction upon her:

may it not happen to you all you passerby. Look, see: is there any pain like my pain, which befell me, which the Lord made me suffer on the day of his anger? From on high he set fire into my bones, and he brought it down.

²⁸ Jo Hirschmann “How can I be your witness? Lament and Storytelling in Lamentations, Lamentations Rabbah and Contemporary Pastoral Care” *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Winter, 2010 Pg. 110-111.

²⁹ Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

³⁰ “Alas, she sits alone..” (1:1) “Alas, in His anger...” (2:1) “Alas, the gold is dulled” (4:1) Berlin, Pg. 41, 61, 98.

³¹ Berlin, Pg. 42.

He spread a net for my feet, he held me back. He made me desolate, all day long languishing.

Here in these two verses, the city calls not for God to look upon her, but for those in her midst, and she blames God for God's destruction upon her, setting fire to her, desolating her. Finally at the end of chapter one, the city calls for revenge from God: "Let their evildoing come before you, and do to them what you did to me for all my transgressions. For many are my groans, and my heart is languishing." (1:22) Again, we see a reference to the groaning and languishing city, features of a city lamenting and mourning, and we see a call for the cities enemies to come before God, for God to punish the enemies as God punishes the city.

Chapter two is a violent description of God's wrath, a rebuke towards God for the destruction brought upon Zion. God "hurls from heaven to earth...consumes mercilessly...chops off in fierce anger, turns back his right hand, scorns his own altar...determines to destroy the wall of Dear Zion." (2:1,2,3,5,7,8). Again we see a cry of lament in verses 18 and 19 in the form of weeping: "their heart cried out to the Lord...let tears stream down like a torrent day and night...arise cry aloud at night...pour your like water before the presence of the Lord." Once more we also see a call for God to witness this terrible destruction, "see Lord and look, to whom you have done this...should women eat their own fruit, the little children they care for? Should priests and prophets be killed in the Lord's sanctuary?" (2:20).

Chapter 3 is an intimate prayer by the poet describing his agony and his hope that God will eventually deliver him. The poet pens that "God is a lurking bear...a lion in hiding [who] forced me off my way and tore me apart, leaving me desolate..."(3:4)

Towards the end of the chapter the poet calls out for God, demanding God to “hear his voice [not to] shut His ear to his plea for relief” (19) Once again, as in chapters 1 and 2 searching for God and demanding God to witness the destruction. The poet iterates in verse 9 that “Good is the Lord to those who hop in him, to the one who seeks him. It is good to wait and be still for the Lord’s deliverance,” indicating that though he yearns for God to bear witness upon the atrocities, he still has hope that God will deliver him.

Chapter 4 employs a contrast motif, an element found in dirge laments that compares life as it once was to what it is now, after the devastation of an entire community. The chapter opens “Alas, the gold is dulled, the purest gold has lost its luster...those used to feeding on delicacies starved in the streets.” (4:1, 4:5)

Chapter 5 once again calls out to God, and pleads with God, whose voice is silent throughout the entire book.

“Consider Lord, what has become of us, look and see our degradation...our ancestral land has been turned over to outsiders...why do you eternally ignore us, forsake us our whole life long? Take us back, Lord, to yourself, O let us come back. Make us again as we were before.
(5:1,2, 20,21)

Adele Berlin comments on the nature of mourning and lamentation in her commentary and exegesis of the book. She writes that death and mourning as religious concepts mean to be cut off from God. Throughout the chapters the poet and the personified city Zion yearn for God’s presence, calling for God to witness the atrocities, rebuking God for the destruction upon the city. Lamentations “is a plea for comfort in the

form of access to God.”³² God should hear, see, remember, pay attention, and “take us back” yet God is nowhere to be found. A mourner in a state as this, according to Gary Anderson in his book *A Time to Mourn a Time to Dance* cannot, in this case literally and figuratively praise/access God.³³ Therefore, God remains distant, and silent; the mournful pleas in lamentations are without end.³⁴

Theologically, I do not believe that God remains silent through such tragedy and destruction. Perhaps, God is distant, because God is also mourning the destruction. Just as I have come up with a simple interpretation of God’s silence throughout Lamentations, The Rabbis, during the time after the destruction of the second Temple sought to fill in Lamentations with their own interpretations. Linked with the book of Lamentations is Lamentations Rabbah, a book of midrash that reflects the Rabbinic response to the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE. The Rabbis sought to understand the destruction by exploring the text, and providing stories which filled in the gaps and holes surrounding God’s silence, and the extension of comfortless mourning. The Rabbis echo the cries of grief and pain in Lamentations and in Lamentations Rabbah through midrash, a series of stories, bring God’s voice back into the text and allow the reader, and Rabbis/biblical characters in the stories to more fully process their grief and move towards reconciliation.

Petichta 24 shows that God is not only a witness to the destruction, God is also a mourner. God calls to his ministering angels, “come, let us go together and see what the

³² Adele Berlin: *Lamentations, A Commentary*, Pg. 16.

³³ Berlin, Pg. 15

³⁴ Berlin, Pg. 16

enemy has done in My house.”³⁵ They go to the site of the destruction, and upon seeing the desecrated Temple, God weeps and cries “Woe is Me for My house! My children, where are you? My priests, where are you? My lovers, where are you? What did I do to you?” (42) The Rabbis reconcile the lack of God’s presence in lamentations, by writing it in Lamentations Rabbah. Here God responds to the despondent and unanswered cries in Lamentations. God really does see the destruction of the Temple. Moreover, God is far from silent, but becomes a mourner as well. God’s presence in the story can now become more of a comfort, God witnesses the atrocities and mourns along with the people of Zion; they are not alone, their calls out to God have been answered.

Petichta 28 marks a move from despair and mourning to hope and reconciliation and is based on Lamentations 5:17-18: “our heart has languished, because of these our eyes are dulled, because of Mount Zion, do desolate that foxes/jackals roam around on it.”³⁶ The *petichta* describes a mournful account of Rabban Gamliel, R. Eleazar ben Azaria, R. Joshua and R. Avkiva walking upon the Temple Mount. When they see a jackal emerge from the holy of holies, three of the Rabbis weep, while Rabbi Akiva laughs, to their astonishment. Explaining, Rabbi Akiva tells the story of two prophecies, that of Uriah from the first Temple and that of Zechariah from the second Temple. Uriah’s prophecy is fulfilled, “Zion is plowed as a field...the Temple mount a shrine in the woods.”³⁷ Because this prophecy came true, Akiva believes with certainty that Zechariah’s prophecy will also come true: “old men and women [will] sit in the broad

³⁵ H.Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah, Lamentations*, (London: The Soncino Press, 1983), Pg. 41.

³⁶ Berlin, Pg. 115.

³⁷ Micah, 3:12

places of Jerusalem.”³⁸ In the midst of tragedy, Akiva offers laughter and *nechemta*, rather than tears. Akiva acknowledges that both tragedy and laughter are a part of life, and offers a wonderful sense of hope in relating Zechariah’s prophecy, that Jerusalem will once more be whole and filled with people. Akiva’s laughter and hopeful comfort allow his fellow rabbis to offer comfort as well “Akiva, you have comforted us! May you be comforted among those who are given comfort.”

Lamentations is a long, drawn out cry that offers small glimmer of hope that all will be returned and restores. Lamentations Rabbah moves beyond despair and destruction of the initial tragedy, and tells a story that is filled with hope and laughter and life.

Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah both reflect upon destruction, however we see a movement towards reconciliation, healing and hope with the later Rabbinic text, Lamentations Rabbah. Jo Hirschmann finds among pastoral care situations today that the stories of Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah often provide useful mirrors for survivors, that the same themes prevalent in Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah are prominent in the care of survivors of loss and tragedy. These themes include a giving voice to the tragedy and to the lament, “affirming the sanctity of lament and protest.”³⁹ Hirschmann specifically marks a journey that survivors of tragedy today make from lament in the early stages after disaster to storytelling, which is found in the later stages of moving towards healing. This journey, according to Hirschmann mirrors the movement from Lamentations, as an outcry and communal lament, to the midrashic stories of Lamentations Rabbah, which fill in the silences and gaps of lamentations with

³⁸ Zechariah 8:4

³⁹ Jo Hirschmann “Lament in Lamentations” Pg. 119.

stories of hope and reconciliation. Hirschmann remarks that “lament tends to dominate in the early stages after disaster and storytelling tends to be more prominent in the later stages.”⁴⁰ Hirschmann interviewed numerous Rabbis and offers a piece of an interview with Rabbi Nancy Weiner, who worked at Ground Zero and Family Assistance Centers after 9/11. Weiner explains, “in the first weeks, lament dominated. People were all over the map, there would be spurts of narrative...or no narrative at all.”⁴¹ Hirschmann explains that Rabbis and pastoral care givers who continued to work with survivors in the long term were “much more likely to hear stories and narratives. Their healing potential lies in the way they shift and evolve over time.” By shaping and res-shaping and continuously re-telling their stories, survivors of loss and tragedy can give a voice to what has happened, they can describe the devastation that turned their worlds upside down, and they can “raise a voice of protest about all the things that are wrong and unjust about it.”⁴² Just as the narrator in Lamentations exclaimed *eicha!* How/Why? So do today’s survivors of loss and tragedy. These survivors seek to answer that same question. Their story-telling and searching allows for those around them to bear witness to what has befallen them, and it allows them to find meaning and healing. Hirschmann explains that “Lamentations, and Lamentations Rabbah remind us that Jewish tradition has a place for howls of lament, for brutally honest descriptions of suffering and for stories about rebuilding, reconstruction and hope.”⁴³

Our exploration of lamentation in biblical text illuminates much. From King David, we learn that grief can bring a varied emotional toll upon a person, and that a

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jo Hirschmann “Lament in Lamentations” Pg. 119-120.

⁴² Ibid., Pg. 121.

⁴³ Ibid., Pg. 125.

person may fluctuate from one state to the next, sometimes galvanizing and touching those around them, and sometimes alienating their loved ones, pushing them away. We learn about the possibility of hope and healing from Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah. We learn that there is a place for our grief, and that expressing our grief through lament allows one move forward towards restoration and healing. We understand that there is another side to our grief. These are the biblical contexts that establish lament, grief and mourning practice in our Jewish tradition; though at this point we do not know what actual lament and expressions of grief actually look like or sound like. We turn now to chapter two to discover how the paradigms set up in our biblical writings play out in actual Jewish practice and halacha.

Chapter 2

“Two Flutes, and a Wailing Woman” Mourning Traditions in Halacha

Chapter one’s exploration of David, and the writings of Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah demonstrate that grief has a profound impact upon an individual, and that an important part of processing that grief in addition to physical expressions, is the act of lamenting. Lamenting or chanting dirges has an incredible power to move a person from one state to another as we have seen through our study of King David, (who performs both physical expressions of grief and lamentations in various literary forms) and it has the power to move a person from despair to hope, in the case of Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah.

The idea of expressing one’s grief, either through physical acts and/or lamentation is so important that we not only find evidence of it in our biblical writings and texts, we also find evidence of these customs in the *Mishna* and the *Talmud*, our codes of *halacha*. After a series of discussions based upon *Mishna Seder Moed Katan*, *Talmud Moed Katan* lists the various prohibitions and obligations of mourning in chart form.⁴⁴ *Mishna, seder*

⁴⁴ From Talmud Moed Katan, discussions based on Mishna Seder Moed Katan:

<u>Prohibitions:</u>	<u>Mourner</u>	<u>Excommunicate</u>	<u>Metzora</u>
Haircutting	Forbidden	Forbidden	Forbidden
Donning Tefillin	Forbidden	Unresolved	Unresolved
Greeting Others	Forbidden	Unresolved	Forbidden
Studying Torah	Forbidden	Permitted	Permitted
Laundrying	Forbidden	Forbidden	Forbidden
Working	Forbidden	Permitted	Unresolved
Bathing	Forbidden	Unresolved	Unresolved
Wearing Shoes	Forbidden	Unresolved	Unresolved
Marital Relations	Forbidden	Forbidden	Forbidden
Sending Sacrifices	Forbidden	Unresolved	Unresolved
<u>Obligations:</u>	<u>Mourner</u>	<u>Excommunicate</u>	<u>Metzora</u>

Moed Katan, discusses various mourning customs in the context of Shabbat and festivals, and in addition to the customs mentioned in *Moed Katan*, *Mishna Shabbos* mentions the addition of flute playing at funerals. Mourning customs can also be found in *Hilchot Avel*, the laws of mourning found in *Mishneh Torah*, a medieval compilation of halacha by Rambam. Through physical acts of expression of grief, and through lamentation, halacha offers a complete mourning experience for the bereaved.

ההספד כבוד המת הוא. לפיכך כופין את היורשין לתן שכר מקוננים והמקוממנות וסופדין אותו. ואם צוה שלא יספדוהו - אין סופדין אותו. אבל אם צוה שלא יקבר אין שומעין לו, שהקבורשה מצוה, שנאמר: כי קבור תקברנו.

A eulogy is an honor for the deceased. Therefore we compel the heirs to pay the wages of the men and women who recite laments and they eulogize him. If the deceased directed that he not be eulogized, we do not eulogize him. If however, he directed that he not be buried, we do not heed him, for burial is a mitzvah, as Deuteronomy states 21:22 states: ‘And you shall certainly bury him.’ Rambam, *Mishneh Torah* Chapter 12 Number 1⁴⁵

This text from Rambam’s code of *halacha*, *The Mishneh Torah*⁴⁶ highlights two honors and a mitzvah to be performed for someone who has died. We learn from this text, that it is an honor to eulogize the dead, so much so that one should pay special people

Wrapping Head	Obligated	Unresolved	Obligated
Rending Garment	Obligated	Unresolved	Obligated
Overturning Bed	Obligated	Unresolved	Unresolved

⁴⁵ Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, *Maimonides, Moses Mishneh Torah Hilchot Evel: The Laws of Mourning: A New translation with commentaries and notes by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger*. (New York: Moznaim, 1986), Pg. 473.

⁴⁶ *Mishneh Torah* is a system of codifying *Halachah*, Jewish law, composed by Moses ben Maimon, otherwise known as Rambam or Maimonides. Rambam lived between 1105-1204 and was a physician, philosopher, and rabbinic authority during his time. Rambam concluded *Mishneh Torah* circa 1180. He is also known for his philosophic work “The Guide to the Perplexed”

who “recite laments and eulogize.” Rabbi Eliyahu Touger,⁴⁷ translator and commentator of one publication of Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* explains in his commentary, that a Eulogy is a “measure of respect for the dead” thus, the living heirs are compelled to grant the deceased this honor, unless the deceased has requested no eulogy. The deceased has a choice to decline this honor but does not have the choice to decline a burial, because it is a mitzvah; a commandment and obligation to bury the dead.

Rabbi Touger offers an insight into a deeper meaning of the word “*Eulogy*” as a translation for the Hebrew word “ההספד”. In a modern context, “*hesped*” does in fact mean a Eulogy given by a clergy member or honored member of the deceased’s family. “*Hesped*,” according to Touger however, was much more than a simple speech about the departed; rather, “hesped was a multi-dimensional mourning experience involving the chanting of dirges and other physical expressions of grief.”⁴⁸

Chapter three of *Talmud Moed Katan* lists basic halachic expressions of mourning in two categories, acts that are prohibited and acts of obligation. Haircutting, donning tefillin, greeting others, studying torah, laundering, working, bathing, wearing shoes, marital relations and sending sacrifices are prohibited while in mourning.⁴⁹ A mourner is

⁴⁷ Rabbi Eliyahu Touger is the translator and commentator of the publication of *Mishneh Torah* I have worked with in my research. Full publication information can be found in the list of Citations.

⁴⁸ Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, *Maimonides, Moses Mishneh Torah Hilchot Evel: The Laws of Mourning: A New translation with commentaries and notes by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger*. (New York: Moznaim, 1986), Pg. 473.

⁴⁹ The period of *Avelut*, or mourning begins from the moment the deceased is buried. Between the moment of death and internment, a person mourning for an immediate or close relative is called and *Onen* and also upholds the various prohibitions listed above. These prohibitions continue through *Shiva*, the first days immediately following internment. The Blackman commentary of *Mishna Moed Katan* explains that the first three days of *Shiva* (the seven day period following internment) are the most important, and must be “given over to weeping.” Maurice Lamm describes five stages of mourning:

obligated to wrap their head(cover their head), rend their garment(rip a piece of garment near the heart, as an expression of the loss the bereaved suffers) and overturn their bed.⁵⁰

Leon Wieseltier explains the history of “wrapping ones’ head” in his book, *Kaddish*.⁵¹ The concept for wrapping one’s head in mourning comes from a conversation in the Talmud centered around a verse from Ezekiel, 24:16-17:

Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes
with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou make lamentation nor weep, neither
shall thy tears run down. Sigh in silence; make no mourning for the dead,
bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not
thine upper lip, and eat not the bread of men.

Wieseltier elucidates that the Rabbis understood this verse as “a statement of implied opposites.”⁵² The speaker in the quote above is forbidden to cover his lips because he is forbidden to mourn, thus a mourner must cover his lips. The reason one should “cover their lips” or “wrap their heads” is so “people [would not] fail to see that a mourner is a mourner.”⁵³ It was essential for those in the community to note others of the

1.*Aninut*, the first period between death and burial (when despair is most intense) 2.the first three days following burial, this time is devoted to lamentation and weeping, 3.*Shiva* is the first seven days from burial, and includes the first three days mentioned above, during this time the mourner still expresses grief through avelut, but acquaintances now come to the mourners home to express empathy and sympathy for the mourner, 4. *Sheloshim* is the first 30 days following burial, which includes *Shiva*. The mourner is encouraged to leave the house during this period of time and to slowly rejoin society. 5. The fifth stage is the 12-month period following burial including *Sheloshim*. During this stage entertainment and enjoyment are curtailed, and at the close of this stage the mourner is not expected to continue mourning, except during periods of *Yizkor* or *Yarzeit*.

⁵⁰ *Talmud Moed Katan*, Chapter 3, 16a.

⁵¹ Leon Wieseltier, *Kaddish*, (New York: Knopf, 1998), Pg. 480-490.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 480.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

community who were in mourning. Wieseltier follows this custom through generations of sages such as Nahmanides, Rashi, Joseph Karo, and Issreles to name a few. Each had an opinion of how this custom was to be observed, if at all. Eventually, by the end of the 19th-century this custom disappeared.

Contemporary author Rabbi Maurice Lamm⁵⁴ comments on the “most striking Jewish expression of grief”⁵⁵ rending one’s garment, in his book *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*.⁵⁶ There are many biblical instances of rending clothes after news of a death, for example, the aforementioned King David rends his clothes upon hearing of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. Lamm iterates that “rending is an opportunity for psychological relief. It allows the mourner to give vent to his pent-up anguish by means of a controlled, religiously sanctioned act of destruction.”⁵⁷ The tearing of one’s clothes upon the death of a loved one, is the external symbol of the broken heart within. We are no longer able to give love to those we have lost, thus *Keriah* represents the finality of separation between ourselves and those whom we have lost. *Keriah*, as an external symbol is a public and physical expression of loss.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Maurice Lamm is a contemporary author, Rabbi and professor at Yeshiva University

⁵⁵ Lamm, Pg. 38

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lamm explains the laws of *Keriah* further: Those obligated to perform *Keriah* are son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, and spouse. They must be adults over the age of 13. Minors may make a slight cut in their clothing, so as to unite with family at a time of tragedy and loss. Those who are divorced may also rend, though they are not obligated. Like-wise, sons and daughters may rend out of respect. Bride and Groom should not perform this obligation during the first seven days following their wedding: “this time is one of inviolate joy even in the face of grief.” (40) Mentally ill patients should not tear clothing, nor should the physically handicapped. (40) Rending should take place at the moment of hearing of the death, at the home or chapel just prior to the service, or at the cemetery, prior to internment.

The final obligation mentioned in the initial passage is overturning the bed, which was a practice in Mishnaic times.⁵⁹ *Mishna Moed Katan* Chapter 3 number 7⁶⁰ states that during a festival, the “mourner’s meal may be eaten with the couch (literal translation of zkufah is ‘upright’) in its usual position. The Blackman commentary of Moed Katan explains, as it was the custom to recline while eating during non-mourning periods, during the mourning period meals must not be set up in the normal manner, which is why one would “over-turn the bed” as a physical expression of mourning⁶¹.

The *Mishna* also lists verbal expressions of grief in addition to the physical expressions discussed above. The act of Eulogizing the deceased is given a prominent mention in mourning customs. It was an honor for the deceased, for those still living to pay special people to lament their dead. The eulogy, today a simple speech given in honor of the dead, was a much richer custom, involving not only physical expressions of grief, but also the chanting of dirges and lamentations. The following *Mishna* refers to the custom of eulogizing the dead. Chapter 1 of *Moed Katan*, *Mishna* 5⁶² discusses sadness and mourning in the context of Chol Hamoed. The text reads

לא יעורר אדם על-מתו ולא יספידנו קדם לרגל שלשים יום /A person may not inspire lamentations for his dead, nor eulogize him during the thirty days preceding a festival.

Yad Avraham, the commentary in the Artscroll translation and commentary of *Mishna*

⁵⁹ Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, *The Mishna: A New Translation with a Commentary, Yad Avraham Anthologized from Talmudic Sources and Classic Commentators*, (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1979), Pg. 57.

⁶⁰ Phillip Blackman, *Mishna Moed Katan Chapter 3 Number 7 Mishnayoth*, (New York: Judaica, 1964), Pg. 481-2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, *The Mishna: A New Translation with a Commentary, Yad Avraham Anthologized from Talmudic Sources and Classic Commentators*, (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1979), Pg.14-17.

Moed Katan refers to two explanations from Talmud 8b. The first explanation iterates that there was a fear people would spend money dedicated to festival activities on the hiring of eulogists. Secondly, the saddening effects of the eulogy lasted for thirty days. So as not to lessen the joy of the festival, eulogies should not be given during this period. From this text, we learn that eulogizing involved something more than a simple speech honoring the deceased; it involved the hiring of skilled men and women to perform the eulogy, enabling the mourners to express their grief at the loss of the deceased. Furthermore, a eulogy had lasting effects upon the mourners for an extended period of time, thirty days. From this we learn that eulogizing is something deeply expressive, requiring special skills, and offering lingering effects for mourners. We also understand that eulogizing the dead was something often done in tandem with “inspiring lamentations” for the dead.

Several mishnayot highlight lamenting, or weeping for the dead as a part of the mourning and eulogy process. Yad Avraham comments on *Mishna Moed Katan* Chapter 3 Number 5,⁶³ that a mourner who has observed three days of *shiva* before a festival is considered as if they have completed the entire *shiva*. However, if a mourner had mourned for two days, and then is interrupted by a festival, that does not annul the *shiva*. Yad Avraham explains the reason for this distinction is the first three days are the main part of *shiva*, and the most intense. Avraham refers to *Gemara* 27b, which states

⁶³ Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, *The Mishna: A New Translation with a Commentary, Yad Avraham Anthologized from Talmudic Sources and Classic Commentators*, (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1979), Pg.52-53: “He who buries his dead [relative] three days before a festival has the edict of the seven [days of mourning] annulled. [He who buries his dead relative] eight [days before a festival] has the edict of thirty [days of mourning] annulled. [This is so] because they said: Sabbath is included [in the period of mourning] but does not interrupt [it]. Festivals, [however] interrupt but are not included.”

שלשה לבכי /The first three days are for weeping.⁶⁴ During this stage, a mourner may not even acknowledge a greeting from another. A poor person may begin to work on the fourth day of shiva, but must desist during the first three days, lest the work, according to Rabbeinu Yerucham 28:2 distract the mourner from weeping for the dead.⁶⁵ From this text we learn that weeping for the deceased is so essential for the grieving process, it must be continued if interrupted by a festival. Weeping must be given its full expression; even by one who must work for a living.

Moed Katan Chapter 3 mishnayot 8 and 9⁶⁶ offer further insight into the custom of weeping or lamenting for the deceased:

ח אין מניחין את המטה ברחוב, שלא להרגיל את ההספד, ולא של נשים לעולם, מפני הכבוד. נשים במועד מענות, אבל לא מטפחות. רבי ישמעאל אומר, הסמוכות למטה, מטפחות:
ט בראשי חדשים, בחנכה ובפורים, מענות ומטפחות, בזה ובה (אבל) לא מקוננות. נקבר המת, לא מענות ולא מטפחות. איזהו ענוי, שכלן עונות באחת. קינה, שאחת מדברת וכלן עונות אחריה, שנאמר, (ירמיה ט) ולמדנה בנתיכם נהי, ואשה רעותה קינה. אבל לעתיד לבוא הוא אומר, (ישעיה כה) בלע המות לנצח, ומחה ה' אלהים דמעה מעל כל פנים וגו':

We do not set down a bier⁶⁷ in the street, so as not to encourage eulogies. The biers of women are never set down out of respect. Women may sing dirges during *Chol Hamoed*, but may not clap. R' Yishmael says: those near the bier may clap. On *Rosh Chodesh*, Chanukah and Purim, [the women] may sing dirges and clap on any of these days, but they may not engage in [responsive] wailing. Once the deceased is buried, they may neither sing dirges, nor clap. What is meant by dirges? That all lament in unison. [And what is meant by] wailing? That one speaks and all others respond after her; as the verse states: 'and teach your daughters a lament and each woman [shall teach] her neighbor a wailing. [Jer. 9:19]

We learn from number 8 that apparently it was a custom to set down a bier in the street to permit and inspire eulogies of the deceased. This act highlights the centrality and

⁶⁴ Ibid. Pg. 52

⁶⁵ Ibid. Pg. 53

⁶⁶ Ibid. Pg. 58-62

⁶⁷ A bier is a casket or coffin

importance of eulogizing. We also learn that women may sing dirges, but may not clap (since it is a festival time). From this verse we understand that singing dirges and clapping ones hands were important features of eulogizing. *Mishnayot* 9 describes this process with more detail: we understand that dirges and clapping are a part of eulogizing, as well as “responsive wailing.” The mishna goes on to describe aspects of both dirges and wailing. Dirges are communal, union laments, while wailing is responsive; one person “speaks and all others respond after her.” Commentary *Yad Avraham* elucidates that “responsive wailing...is regarded as a greater expression of grief than either clapping or wailing. This form of lamentation is with a leader and a chorus, is more moving and causes more grief on the part of the participant.”⁶⁸ It is important to note that in these two texts the only eulogizers or lamenters mentioned are women. Both the translation and Hebrew text also use feminine pronouns when referring to the eulogizers, indicating that women, rather than men are the primary leaders of this custom⁶⁹.

The depth of description of wailing and its specifics in these mishnayot suggest that the idea of weeping or lamenting the deceased is central to the mourning experience. Furthermore, we understand that the first three days, the most intense days of the grieving period were giving over to weeping and lamentation. The Blackman commentary in *Mishna Moed Katan* corroborates this detail as well: “the first three days after a death must be giving over to ‘weeping’. This period is according to a law from Moses from

⁶⁸ Ibid. Pg. 62

⁶⁹ One may raise the question of *kol isha* as an issue in this particular custom. In the Yemenite culture, women wailers are generally post-menopausal, so the idea of *kol isha* would not apply, as these women are no longer viewed in a sexual nature. I suspect the same in this case.

Sinai to be accepted as obligatory without dispute or question.⁷⁰ As mentioned previously, Maurice Lamm explains that after the first three days of weeping and lamentation, the mourner would begin the healing process, welcoming acquaintances to the home, who would offer sympathy for the loss of the bereaved. Based on the texts we have studied thus far, weeping and lamentation are integral for the mourner as a verbal expression of grief, so he or she can begin to heal and move forward.

Verbal lamentations were not the only mournful expressions of grief found in the *Mishna* and rabbinic texts. Hanoach Avenary writes, in his “Flutes for a Bride or a Dead Man,”⁷¹ that the custom of blowing flutes at both weddings and funerals is mentioned in the *Mishna*.⁷² *Mishna Shabbos*⁷³ Chapter 23:4 states, “if a gentile brought flutes on the Sabbath, a Jew may not bewail with them, unless they came from a nearby place.”⁷⁴ The Yad Avraham commentary on this mishna text explains further, that “it was the custom in those days to follow the coffin with flutes playing melancholy music invoking wailing.”⁷⁵ (Rav Tif. Yis.) From this text we learn that lamentations were not only dirges sung by women clapping their hands, or sung responsively between leader and choir, but also they were connected to the sound of the flute, which would invoke the wailing. Hanoach Avenary describes the sound quality of the flute as clear, gay, lugubrious, stirring and

⁷⁰ Phillip Blackman, *Mishna Moed Katan* Chapter 3 Number 5 *Mishnayoth*, (New York: Judaica, 1964), Pg. 479-480.

⁷¹ Hanoach Avenary, “Flutes for a Bride or a Dead Man”, *Encounters of East and West in Music, Selected Writings*, (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1979), Pg. 10-22.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, *The Mishna: A New Translation with a Commentary, Yad Avraham Anthologized from Talmudic Sources and Classic Commentators*, (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1979), Pg. 370-375.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 370-371.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pg. 372-73.

frenzying.⁷⁶ Avenary states that “the emotional effects of the sound will be proven to be of no avail,”⁷⁷ however, it seems plausible that something in the sound quality of the flute was able to stir a chorus of women to bewail a death. Avenary describes another flute as well, the Phoenician *gingras* flute associated with ritual wailing, as a “short, and high pitched pipe...its plaintive tone...a matter of embouchure and blowing technique.” If not outright inspiring certain types of emotion, a certain knowledge and skill in manipulating the instrument with breath and embouchure elicits sadness, or as we will see below, revival of the soul.

Avenary turns to the roots and symbolic meanings of the flute in its applicability to stir both sadness and happiness, and everything in between. Flute instruments were generally associated with fertility and nature, and also seen as life affirming and revival instruments, as opposed to instruments of death.⁷⁸ The first appearance of a flute symbol in the middle east, according to Avenary, is as a spiritual symbol of revival from death, and rebirth. Avenary recounts the Acadian version of the epic of Ishtar’s descent into the underworld. Ishtar is instructed in the procedure of reviving “the lover of her youth,” Tammuz. As part of the instructions, Ishtar is instructed to “let him play on a flute of lapis.”⁷⁹ A few verses later we again see the mention of flute, and this time also a mention of wailing men and women in connection with revival: “on the day when Tammuz come up to me, when with him the lapis flute and the carnelian ring come up to me when with him the wailing men and the wailing women come up to me, may the dead

⁷⁶ Hanoch Avenary, “Flutes for a Bride or a Dead Man”, *Encounters of East and West in Music, Selected Writings*, (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1979), Pg. 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Avenary, Pg. 12.

rise and smell the incense.”⁸⁰ Here, as in the text from *Mishna Shabbos* 23:4, we see a direct connection of the flute to ritual wailing for the dead. In this particular text we also see a transcendent quality provided by the flute and the wailing. The flute playing and the wailing allows for the soul to transcend from one state to another, from one world to another; in this case reviving back to life from the underworld.⁸¹ Flute playing combined with wailing creates a special, powerful ability to transform the soul of the deceased, perhaps even bringing that soul back to life.

Chapter 12:2 of *Mishneh Torah* states: “Anyone who is sluggish with regard to the eulogy for a sage will not live long. Anyone who is sluggish with regard to the eulogy of an upright person is fit to be buried in his lifetime. Anyone who sheds tears for an upright person will have his reward for this guarded by the Holy One, blessed be He.”⁸² *Mishna Ketuvot* 4:4⁸³ discusses the marital duties of a man towards his wife as extending to her eventual bemoaning: “Rav Yehuda says: even a pauper in Israel shall not employ less than two flutes and a wailing woman.”⁸⁴ These two texts demonstrate how important the custom of mourning a loved one was. “Shedding tears” for a loved one was so

⁸⁰ Hanoch Avenary, “Flutes for a Bride or a Dead Man”, *Encounters of East and West in Music, Selected Writings* (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1979), Pg. 12.

⁸¹ Laments in Karelia and in the Yemenite culture serve as a means to elevate or transcend the soul of the deceased from one state to another. In Karelian funeral ceremonies the lamenter will guide the soul of the deceased to *Tuonela*, the Finnish-Karelian land of the dead, and in Yemenite culture the lament narrative is composed in order to elevate the status of the deceased within the community, ultimately elevating the soul upward as well. Reciting *kaddish* as a part of the mourning process in modern Judaism has the same effect: a bereaved will recite *kaddish* for 11 or 12 months so as to raise up the soul of their loved one.

⁸² Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, *Maimonides, Moses Mishneh Torah Hilchot Evel: The Laws of Mourning: A New translation with commentaries and notes by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger*. (New York: Moznaim, 1986), Pg. 472-73.

⁸³ Avenary, Pg. 14.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

essential, that one who is slow to offer a eulogy “will not live long”; that even a poor person was expected to employ skilled flute players and wailers to bemoan their loss. We learn from the myriad of texts and cultures we have explored that at some point women lamenting and the playing of flutes at funerals and as expressions of grief were employed in the Jewish tradition as essential parts of hesped, a deep mourning experience.

Today, all that remains of hesped is a speech or series of speeches honoring the deceased, coupled with various combinations of prescribed liturgical texts and music. What would be an appropriate way to bring this deep tradition back, and give a fuller voice to our suffering? Apparently, this tradition was so important that it is found in halacha through the ages, as well as ancient pre-biblical cultures. What happened?! Over time culture and practice have given way to canonized liturgy. We do employ a specific funeral service, or rite in our modern day mourning. We recite psalms that remind us of God’s comforting presence in our time of loss. As clergy, and specifically cantors, we use our unique training in music, liturgy, and pastoral care to share our voices to send comfort around those who mourn. Our voices give shape and life to those who have passed. Our voices, both sung and spoken hold the tears of our congregants, and the voices of those who can no longer speak in the physical world. Perhaps our understanding of hesped as a deep mourning experience filled with text, instrumentation and music can build upon the liturgy we already have in practice and help create various meaningful new rituals, designed for a scope of loss, not limited to the loss of a loved one.

The ritual practices we witnessed in the biblical writings of King David and Lamentations and Lamentations Rabbah, clearly develop into concrete halachic ritual and

practice. Some of these customs, such as extended wailing or flute playing at funerals, may have fallen out of practice in the modern western world, while some remain, such as the rending of the garment, and delivering a eulogy honoring the deceased.

As we turn to chapter three, we will discover that there are still cultures today that employ actual wailing within the community, and that there are designated wailers who hold this sacred honor. We will explore the Yemenite-Jewish wailing culture that still remains to this day in Israel. We will learn through an in-depth study of this small culture, that wails and cries of lament have a transformative power, to move a mourning individual and community to tears, and to bring them to restoration and healing.

Chapter 3:

Wailing Women, The Jewish-Yemenite Community of Israel

כה אמר יהוה צבאות התבוננו וקראו למקוננות ותבואינה ואל החכמות שלחו
ותבואנה: ותמהרנה ותשנה עלינו נהי ותדנה עינינו דמעה ועפעפינו יזלו מים:

Thus said Adonai of Hosts: consider and call for the mourning women,
that they may come, and send for the wise women, that they may come;
and let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may
run down with tears and our eyelids gush out with waters.

–Jeremiah 9:16-17

In the midst of recounting the destruction of the city of Jerusalem God calls for the “mourning women...to take up a wailing” to lament and express the terror and decimation that has come upon the people of Israel. These women are highly specialized; God qualifies these women as both “mourning women” and as “wise women.” These women who will “take up a wailing” on behalf of the community will allow those in crisis who have suffered the loss of their homes and community to mourn and release their grief. The image of the wailing, wise woman helping those express their trauma and grief serves as a powerful symbol for victims suffering crisis and loss.

In her article, “Calling the Keeners,”⁸⁵ J.L Claasens explains “the office of the wailing women constitutes a professional trade, one that requires study.”⁸⁶ Wailing women are literally called “wise women” drawing upon the reservoir of laments passed down from generations and adapting these laments to suit the particular needs of the

⁸⁵ L.Juliana M. Claasens “Calling the Keeners: The image of the wailing woman as a symbol of survival in a traumatized world” *JFSR* 26.1 2010 Pg. 63-77.

⁸⁶ Claasens, Pg. 67.

current situation. The wailing women voice the grief and trauma of those in crisis, these “laments truly represent a community response to trauma.”⁸⁷

This chapter focuses on the culture of Yemenite-Jewish women wailers, a small tight-knit culture that still remains in Israel today.⁸⁸ In this chapter, we will explore the typical characteristics of the Yemenite-Jewish women wailers including age range, method of learning the tradition of wailing, and skill sets these wailers employ. We will examine situations in which wailing may occur and specific features of the lament wailing performances. Finally, this section will explore the therapeutic nature wailing can have for those who have suffered loss.

Tova Gamliel’s studies “Wailing Lore in a Yemenite-Israeli Community” and “Performance versus Social Invisibility What can be Learned from the Wailing Culture of Old-Age Yemenite-Jewish Women” bring several defining characteristics and qualities to light about Yemenite-Jewish wailing women.⁸⁹ Gamliel culled her studies from members of a Jewish-Yemenite community during the years 2001-2002. Gamliel describes her

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Similar to the skilled and wise wailing women, as cantors today, we learn both ancient and modern liturgy and music from our elders, our professors. We are called upon as skilled liturgists, similar to those women who are called upon as skilled lamenters. Just as they are responsible for serving the community, and expressing grief on their behalf, we as cantors are responsible for serving our community and expressing prayer on their behalf. We must be adaptable and innovative, just as the women wailers are: picking text and music that will suit any given situation, from Shabbat, to chag, to simcha, to sorrow.

⁸⁸ The Yemenite community is not the only culture of wailing women. The Karelian lament is found in eastern Finland and Soviet Karelia, and like the Yemenite culture, this lament is only performed by women; generally within the context of funerals or wedding; though they may accompany all stages of separation and transition. Elizabeth Tolbert, “Women Cry with Words: Symbolization of Affect in the Karelian Lament” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 22, 1990 Pg. 80

⁸⁹ Tova Gamliel “Wailing Lore In a Yemenite-Israeli Community,” *Social Science and Medicine*, 65 2007, Pg. 1501-1511 and “Performance versus social invisibility: what can be learned from the wailing culture of old-age Yemenite-Jewish woman?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 31 2008 Pg. 209-218.

subjects as mostly immigrants, arriving in Israel from Yemen between 1948-1953.⁹⁰

Gamliel spent time both observing wailing in homes of the bereaved, in addition to including 24 in depth interviews with wailing women.⁹¹ Gamliel comments upon her research: “on occasions where wailing was performed at the home of a bereaved person, or during an interview, I personally experienced the thrills and grief that the wailer creates.”^{92&93}

According to Gamliel’s study, the women in this Yemenite-Jewish community are post-menopausal, about 60-80 years old. This particular age implies a certain amount of life experience, and menopause signifies a cleansing and transition to a status of honor and wisdom. Tova Gamliel explains in her research,⁹⁴ that the losses that accumulate over one’s life are an essential qualification for making others cry.

These women have grown up, married, given birth, and grown older, moving through the separation from one’s family that comes with marriage, as well as experiencing loss; both as they have watched their own children grow up and move away, and as they have lost close family members and friends who have passed away. Motherhood is an especially important experience for the wailer, as this culture believes that a mother is supremely knowledgeable in matters of illness and death. One

⁹⁰ Tova Gamliel, “Wailing Lore In a Yemenite-Israeli Community,” *Social Science and Medicine*, 65(2007) 1501-1511.

⁹¹ Gamliel, “Wailing Lore In a Yemenite-Israeli Community,” Pg. 1504.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ I have scoured web and library resources, unable to find a recording of a Jewish-Yemenite wailing women. I have found a you-tube recording of a women wailer in Omsk, Russia. This brief recording incites fear, grief, and stirring desperation and sadness. Please find the video at this website:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8yDZ_X7mys

⁹⁴ Tova Gamliel, “Performance versus social invisibility: what can be learned from the wailing culture of old-age Yemenite-Jewish woman?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 31 2008 Pg. 209-218.

interviewee relates, “since an old woman has already gone through lots of troubles, what she says is truer.”⁹⁵

Women learn how to wail in two phases called storage and incubation.⁹⁶ Women store and incubate knowledge until the right moment of retrieval, the moment they are called upon to wail. Women generally learn the art of wailing in houses of mourning, consorting with other wailing women in the collective. One Yemenite wailer recounts “I had a neighbor who was a wailer, when my mother-in law died she told me to sit and to wail, ‘I’m here and I’ll help you.’”⁹⁷ Sometimes a daughter will pick up the craft from her mother; she will accompany her mother to houses of mourning, and upon the death of the mother, she will take up the wailing herself. The separation of Mother and daughter due to death produces a great trauma, and often the only thing a daughter can do to alleviate her sorrow is to wail herself.⁹⁸

The wailing performance generally takes place during the first three days of shiva,(the seven day time period following the burial of a loved one) also called “the days of tears.” The wailing eulogizes the deceased, and reminds the listeners that the death has in fact occurred, injecting a sense of realness into the crisis. The lament employs the use

⁹⁵ Tova Gamliel, “Performance versus social invisibility: what can be learned from the wailing culture of old-age Yemenite-Jewish woman?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 31 2008, Pg. 212.

⁹⁶ Gamliel, Pg. 213.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ In Yemen, separation of both death and marriage produce a great trauma. Separation from mother to daughter upon marriage was so difficult and final that the community developed a wedding song that resembles wailing and its melancholy characteristics. See appendix and CD. Similarly, in Karelia a lamenter will be in constant attendance at a bride’s home during an engagement period lasting 2-3 weeks. The first lament they will offer will be at the betrothal ceremony, where a bride leaves her birth family undergoing a ritual “death” to transition into a “rebirth” into her husband’s family. Tolbert, “Women Cry with Words: Symbolization of Affect in Kareilian Lament” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 22 1990, Pg. 81.

of dialogue, narrative and metaphor. Wailing should illicit outbursts from the listener. A professional wailer iterates, “when someone dies its quite a severe trauma. Some people burst into tears and others are ashamed. When you begin to wail, its like you’ve opened a door... anyone who has suffered a trauma hears the wailer and cries.”⁹⁹ Ultimately, the wailing releases the emotions of the listeners in an experiential practice.

Yemenite lamentation texts feature various narrative categories designed to release the emotions of the listener. These categories include narratives about and on behalf of the deceased and the living, personal appeals to the deceased, greeting and addressing the consolers, addressing the mourners, personal story, addressing other wailers and addressing death. For example, a wailer would say: “how respected you were, how everyone loved you...” then look at a mourner and wail at him “where has your father gone? Where’s the man who supported you?”¹⁰⁰ Here the wailer is addressing the deceased, extolling the virtues of the deceased, in this case- recounting the love and respect the deceased garnered during their life. She then switches gears entirely and addresses a child of the deceased with words designed to illicit an emotional response. The questions the lamenter asks remind the mourner that the deceased is truly gone- the person they looked to for support is no longer physically with them. Another example of a lament narrative is as follows

Rachel, you’ll be amazed who is here. Your daughter is here. Good evening Rachel, how are you? Do you have a candle in hand? [Deceased replies:] ‘I haven’t got a candle, I am a prisoner of darkness...’ ‘Your

⁹⁹ Tova Gamliel, “Wailing Lore In a Yemenite-Israeli Community” *Social Science and Medicine*, 65 2007, Pg. 1506.

¹⁰⁰ Gamliel, Pg. 1504-1505.

Mother has died...make a cradle for your bereavement, let it dangle from your right hand, that way you won't forget your mother...¹⁰¹

Here the wailer addresses the deceased, Rachel, directly. She lets the deceased know that her daughter is there to mourn her, and then she continues to have a conversation with her. The wailer allows for the realness of the situation to settle in through the dialogue- Rachel doesn't have a candle because she is "a prisoner of darkness," she is dead. Sometimes the wailer will employ creative descriptions of the death of the deceased itself so as to highlight the tragedy and the crisis the death has brought upon the mourners:

Your dead son should be able to get married and have children/ the illness entered you like a drug in the body. What's the reason? The illness lodged in the liver." "You got in the car and you couldn't get out anymore and you're a young flower."¹⁰²

These narratives describe a death from liver disease and a death from a tragic car accident.¹⁰³ Describing the death in this manner verbalizes the tragedy for the mourners and allows for a sense of catharsis and control for the listener. The

¹⁰¹ Gamliel Pg. 1504-1505.

The cradle metaphor is a special symbolic metaphor found in Yemenite wailing texts. Often the wailer will advise the bereaved to make a cradle, like a basket or a pouch to hold the memory of the deceased forever. When the mourner is finally left alone after the shiva process, the pain of loss can often become worse. By making a cradle, he or she will have a special place in which to hold their memories of their loved one. The cradle full of memories will help the bereaved not to feel alone in their grief.

¹⁰² Gamliel, Pg. 1507.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

wailer voices the tragedy for the listeners, using narrative skill and creative innovation to draw out an emotional release.¹⁰⁴

The narrative descriptions of the deceased not only help the bereaved mourn their loss and express emotion, they also serve to determine the place of the deceased within the community as well as to move the deceased into the “sublime abode of the souls.”¹⁰⁵ The iteration of the good qualities of the deceased secures a significant place for them in the community. They will always be remembered in the way that the lamenter eulogized them through her narrative. This narrative elevates the person’s soul within the community, and reminds the listeners of the good things this person achieved during their lifetime. At the same time the narrative literally elevates the status of a person’s soul within the community, the narrative also elevates the soul upward.¹⁰⁶

Just as there is a specific narrative makeup of the lament itself, there is also a specific wailing sequence the women follow.¹⁰⁷ One wailing performance in a house of mourning constitutes a “dramatic unit” which is made up of four phases. There is an

¹⁰⁴ The laments of Karelia feature narrative and dialogues as well. Sometimes the narratives take the form of rhetorical mourning questions, or wondering questions. A woman from Karelia addresses her deceased husband in this lament: “Why did you, my dear life companion, leave me here to wander alone? We could have wandered our lives together.” Tolbert writes, “death is not accepted stoically. In the face of the irrevocability of death, [the bereaved] express bewilderment; they will try to ascertain if they are to blame for the death because the dead are feared as well as mourned. An example of this feature is this question a woman asks her dead husband “How has a mistake been made through speech? How have words offended?” Elizabeth Tolbert, “Women Cry with Words: Symbolization of Affect in Karelian Lament” Pg. 83.

¹⁰⁵ Gamliel Pg. 1509.

¹⁰⁶ Laments in Karelia also serve as a means to elevate the soul of the deceased. In funeral ceremonies the lamenter will guide the soul of the deceased to *Tuonela*, the Finnish-Karelian land of the dead.

¹⁰⁷ The following description comes from Tova Gamliel, “Performance versus social invisibility: what can be learned from the wailing culture of old-age Yemenite-Jewish woman?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 31 2008, Pg. 214.

“active waiting” or warm-up phase, the wailing performance itself, a cooling off phase, and an aftermath. The wailer will enter the house of mourning, greet the mourners with a blessing of peace and sit, looking around the room. The wailer will time her performance based on sensory information. She will wait to wail until blessing and praying and eating has ceased. She will also distance her performance from noisy or religious activities of the men. Often times she will wait until an audience member implores her “for heaven’s sake woman, do something!” or entreats her “let it be your atonement, say a few words.” These words isolate the wailer and draw her into focus. When the wailer begins to wail she will stop speaking about the deceased in a participatory way. The wailer lowers her eyes, covers them with a kerchief and initiates a sound accompanied by a body movement. This is phase two of the wailing sequence, the performance itself. Often the woman will sway with the “singsong melody” of the lamentation.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes the wailer will move her hand in gestures that illustrate her words, other times the wailer will tap her head with her finger, or place a hand over her breast to demonstrate how anguished she is. The wailing performance will last approximately a half hour. Generally, the women in the audience will indicate they want it to end by soothing the wailer. This is phase three of the performance. They will express empathy for the wailer, and tell her “you’ve had enough.” Additionally, these remarks will indicate that the audience is pleased with the performance. The wailer will show acquiescence, her speech will transition, and she will move into phase four of the performance; removing her kerchief, making motions of wiping away tears from her eyes, and finally establishing eye-contact with the audience. It is important to note that the wailer generally does not cry herself

¹⁰⁸ Gamleil, Pg. 214

during the performance. She is an expert in giving over the impression of commiserating with the bereaved, and in that way the wailer is there to truly serve the community. Both the community and the wailer exist in this performance together, the wailing generated by the lamenter will generate tears and emotion in the audience. The audience will gesticulate along with the wailer, the performance becoming a shared experience between the audience and the wailer. The wailer gives herself to the performance, allowing the audience to experience a release of emotion.

The power of wailing is immeasurable...it can defeat even the most hardened skeptic. It overcomes the evildoer and melts those who carry a heart of steel in their chests, and humbles the haughty. It surmounts the limits of human emotions; it “makes the stones tremble.” The wailer leaves everyone weeping, under her influence, everyone, little, or big, cries. One wailer makes a thousand onlookers cry.¹⁰⁹

The Yemenite wailing tradition is highly specialized, requiring skill and innovation from the wailer so as to allow for her audience to fully express their grief after a loss.

A Yemenite wailer is a “woman who can make stones cry.”¹¹⁰ She is an expert orchestrator of emotion and empathy, placing herself into a specific state, so that she can draw out the tears of the mourners. A wailer’s expertise functions on two levels: she is an expert in lamentation lyrics and an expert in contriving a display of emotion. Her wailing requires a combination of vocal qualities and an intelligent use of words and metaphor, a

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Tova Gamliel, “Wailing Lore In a Yemenite-Israeli Community” *Social Science and Medicine*, 65 2007, Pg. 1505

specific combination that allows the wailer to “touch the sensitive points....to touch the dead.”¹¹¹ Yemenite wailers are innovative; an expert wailer will use creative metaphor their lamentation, so that people in an individual mourning home will think she made up something new. The skill and performance of a wailer allows the mourner to experience grief in a real way.

The wailer opens a door for the mourner, to allow for their sadness and grief to release, to allow the mourner to move towards healing. This skill allows the wailer to truly serve her community, much in same the way that we as clergy use our voices to truly serve our communities. In the midst of a communal or personal loss, we empathize and place ourselves in the mindset of our mourners, while maintaining our professional, yet passionate and empathetic composure. We sit with our congregants as they mourn, and we mourn with them, and hold them up but we do not lose ourselves in grief in the manner that a mourner does. We give ourselves so that our congregants may grieve and mourn and release their pain. In western civilization the act of true wailing may seem uncouth, or uncivilized. We have generated a practice of canonized liturgy in order to help us express our loss and grief. We have explored the practices and halacha of funeral and mourning rites, understanding that perhaps our knowledge of the deeper meaning of these practices may help us create new rituals, and draw out the meaning of our current rituals that mark a loss. Music is an essential vehicle that allows for us as clergy, particularly cantors, to share our voices and surrounded our mourners with comfort. Music is the vehicle that allows one to express what cannot be expressed in words. Music can generate old memories, and create new; music can touch and draw out the soul unlike

¹¹¹ Ibid.

any other art form. Music reaches our core. It is to music we turn in this final chapter, to experience how ancient melody and modern composition allow us to express sadness, loss and grief; to hold ours tears and sorrow, to surround us with comfort, healing and hope.

Chapter 4

If Music Be the Food of Love: Music as Lament, an Expression of Grief

א איכה | יִשְׁבֶּה בְּדָד הָעִיר רַבְתִּי עִם הָיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה רַבְתִּי בְּגוֹיִם שְׂרָתִי בְּמִדְיָנוֹת הָיְתָה
לְמַסִּי: ב בָּכּוּ תִבְכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה וְדִמְעָתָהּ עַל לִחְיָהּ אֵין לָהּ מִנְחָם מִכָּל־אֲהֻבֶיהָ כָּל־
רְעֵיהָ בְּגָדוּ בָּהּ הָיוּ לָהּ לְאִיבִים:

Alas/How! Lonely sits the city once great with people! She that was among the great nations is become like a widow; the princess among states is become a thrall. Bitterly she weeps in the night, her cheek wet with tears. There is none to comfort her of all her friends. All her allies have betrayed her, they have become her foes.

---Eicha 1:1-2

Eicha-alas! How! The first word that opens the book of lamentations is a great crying sigh over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Each year on *T'sha B'av* synagogue communities gather for a *maariv* service followed by the reading of this book *Eicha*, or Lamentations, in commemoration of this terrible destruction. *Eicha* cantillation is one of several musical expressions of grief we will explore in this chapter. In addition to the cantillation system *eicha*, we will explore Leonard Bernstein's treatment and employment of the *eicha* text and its music in the finale of his Jeremiah symphony, Lamentation. We will journey outside of our western liturgical and musical tradition, into the Judeo-Spanish region, exploring the Spanish Judeo *Endecha*, or dirge for the dead.

Eicha is a highly rhythmic and melodic cantillation system¹¹² whose musical motifs emulate the sighs and crying described in the text. There are 13 clauses that appear throughout the five chapters in various combinations, and each clause is a highly melodic and rhythmic unit. The system as a whole vacillates between both major and minor

¹¹² Cantillation system transcription by A.W Binder, Arranged by Cantor Lawrence Avery. Please refer to diagram/anthem and recording in appendix 1 for Text and 2 for music.

modes. The two most common clauses, *etnachta* and *katon* display overarching example of this vacillation.

The *etnachta* clause¹¹³ outlines both g minor and d minor chords, while *katon*¹¹⁴ clause is firmly in F major. Additionally, both trope clauses employ a mixture of dotted, slightly longer notes followed by, or surrounded by quick moving notes. The *etnachta* clause is made up of four tropes: *mercha*, *tipcha*, *munach* and *etnachta*. *Mercha* moves in an eighth-note and then a dotted eighth-note, from d-b-flat, a minor sixth. *Tipcha* takes over on the b-flat, moving in a quick descending fashion: an eighth-note, 2 sixteenth-notes and an eighth-note, landing on g. Thus after this second trope we have outlined g minor: d-bflat-g. *Munach* continues on the g, back down to d in three eighth-notes, and *etnachta* moves quickly, up to g and then follows a descending scale to d on two sixteenth-notes, a grace-note, a dotted eighth-note-sixteenth note combination, and finally lands quarter note, the longest note in the entire pattern. The descending¹¹⁵ phrase on *etnachta* moves through g minor and lands on d minor.

¹¹³ Appendix 2 # 1-8

¹¹⁴ Appendix 2 #9-12

¹¹⁵ Alex Ross discusses the nature of descending figures in his book *Listen to This*. Alex Ross, *Listen To This*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010). Pg 98-102. The *basso lamento* is a descending ostinato (repeating) figure of four notes over a minor mode. Ross explains that this “descending figure has represented sorrow for at least one thousand years.” (98) Ross explains the music of dejection as “hard to miss. When a person cries her or she makes a noise that slides downward and then leaps up to an even higher pitch to begin the slide again.” (99) This sliding downward, and moving up in pitch and sliding down again is prevalent throughout the eicha cantillation system. Ross traces the descending figure all over the world: a from a Hungarian bocet(lament) of a woman pining for her husband (the figure moves from d-c-bflat-a) to a Russian wedding song where symbolic “killing the bride” is a part of the ceremonial rite- the wailing of the bride descends down a fourth. (102). Ross describes four descending twangs on a guitar as remnants of a flamenco genre called the siguririya, a form that stems from a gypsy lament. Ross comments that these stepwise figures not only emulate our tears, they also emulate the drooping of our faces and shoulders. These figures may also represent a

The *katon*¹¹⁶ clause is also a highly rhythmic trope clause, although it outlines F major, a contrast to the minor tone of *etnachta*. *Katon* is made up of five tropes: *kadma*, *mapach*, *pashtah*, *munach* and *katon*. *Katon* begins with an upward motion, just as *mercha*, however *kadma* move on an eighth-note to a dotted quarter note from A-C. *Mapach* takes over on the same note, C, just as *Tipcha* takes over on the same note in the *etnachta* clause. *Mapach* descends as *tipcha* does, however it moves downward in thirds from C-A-F on an eighth-note/grace note and three descending eighth-notes rather than a stepwise scale. The notes A-C-A-F outline F major. *Pashta* moves quickly up the scale again, in a sixteenth-note, to an eighth-note to a quarter-note, from A-D-C, again outlining F major, the D in the chord acting as a passing tone, or appoggiatura, emulating the sighing nature of the melodic and rhythmic structure. *Munach* begins on C one octave below the end of *Pashta*. *Munach* moves upward C-F on a triplet and finally *katon* moves from G-A-F on an eighth note, a quarter note, and a dotted quarter note.

The juxtaposition of these two major trope clauses, major against minor, and the varied rhythms within each clause allows for the ability to truly highlight the text in eicha. Tragedy brings great shock and distortion to one's world, thus it makes sense one would see the clash of major and minor modalities intermixed with one another. Cries of anguish take on various rhythms and pitches, and these tropes emulate those cries with combinations of dotted rhythms, eighth notes, and descending sixteenth-note scales. The vacillation between major and minor might also allude to one moving through various

spiritual or figurative descent into the underworld. Of interest is Ross's belief that laments can also bring one out of the "labyrinth of despair." According to Ross, "just like an Aristotelian tragedy, laments can allow for a purgation of pity and fear; through the repetitive ritual of mourning, we tame the edges of emotion, give shape to inner chaos." Lamenting music becomes an open doorway towards healing.

¹¹⁶ Appendix #2 9-12

stages of grief; that perhaps the major tonality of *katon* offers a glimmer of hope and comfort for one in the middle of despair.

A look at *Eicha* chapter 1:1¹¹⁷ allows for greater understanding in how these trope clauses emulate the lament found in this text. The first verse of *eicha* employs several clauses: *etnachtha* and *sof pasuk*, *rvii* and *katon*. The *rvii* clause opens the verse with *munach*, *munach rvii* on the words “*eicha, yashva, vadam*.” *Rvii* clause moves from F major on *munach- munach*, to d minor on the descending *rvii* trope, and lands on C major. The circular movement on the first *munach*, an eighth note and five sixteenth notes circling the F note, the descending broken arpeggio on the second *munach* and the stepwise descending scale on the *rvii* sound like various cries. The following phrase is a *katon* clause in F major, highlighting the text “once great with people.” The sharp contrast between the various tonalities of *rvii* and *katon* emulate the sharp contrast found in the text: The city that was once great, filled with people, is now empty.¹¹⁸

Moving further into the verse, another *etnachtha* clause follows *katon*, ending in a descending phrase on d minor, highlighting the word “*k’almana* /widow.” The city is not only empty, she has become like a widow, totally alone in the world. *Rvii* comes back once more in shortened form, with a *munach- rvii*, a crying descending phrase over the words “*rabati vagoyim*” or, “great nation.” *Katon* comes back once more, juxtaposing the tonalities between d minor, C major and F major on the words “*sarati bam’dinot* /the

¹¹⁷ Appendix #1, Pg. 1-2 For all text.

¹¹⁸ As you listen to the text and cantillation, also note the hopefulness the major tonality alludes to, juxtaposed with the mournful minor tone. The combination of tropes not only alludes to cries of grief but also demonstrates the mixtures and extremes of emotions one moves in and out of as they suffer a loss. While one is in the midst of suffering, there is a kernel of, a searching for and a yearning for hope.

princess of the states.” The major tonality highlights the grand metaphor of Jerusalem as a royal princess among the nations.

Finally, the sentence ends on *tipcha sof pasuk*, a descending dotted eighth-note sixteenth-note scale ending on d minor, on the words “*haytah lamas*,/ the city has become a thrall.” The quick moving notes and the juxtaposition of the major and minor tonalities emulate the anguish and tears one would shed over the destruction of what was once a great city. This first verse is a small microcosm, an example of the twists and turns of the melodies and rhythms throughout the five chapters of *eicha*. From this small example, we can understand how a simple trope system can draw out the sighs, cries, tears and anguish found in the poetry.

Leonard Bernstein’s “Lamentation”¹¹⁹ from the finale of his Jeremiah symphony¹²⁰ is a modern interpretation of this ancient text. Bernstein employs cantillation melodic and rhythmic motifs together with specific dynamics and crying chromatic melodic lines to express the despair found in this text. Measures 1-10 comprise the first verse of *eicha*.¹²¹ Bernstein gives detailed direction for how he would like this text sung: in the vocal line he writes “*lento*” and directs the singer to bring out the text

¹¹⁹ Please refer to CD recording and provided sheet music, appendix 3 Pgs. 1-7

¹²⁰ Bernstein conceived and sketched Symphony No. 1: Jeremiah originally as a song for Soprano and orchestra, in the summer of 1939. Bernstein later expanded the work into three movements: Prophecy, Profanation and Lamentation, ultimately writing the final movement for Mezzo-Soprano. Bernstein entered the work into a competition organized by New England Conservatory. Although he did not win the competition, the piece premiered January 28, 1944 with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Bernstein commented on the piece, that the final movement “is the cry of Jeremiah, as he mourns his beloved Jerusalem, ruined, pillaged and dishonored after his desperate efforts to save it.” The work is dedicated to his father. Information culled from:

<http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/symphony-no-1-jeremiah-leonard-bernstein> and http://www.leonardbernstein.com/works_jeremiah.htm December 19, 2012

¹²¹ Appendix 3-1.

“*eicha*” by placing an accent mark over the word. Bernstein also writes “tragically” over the text in the second measure. There are many dynamic markings in both the piano and the vocal line: the piano moves from piano-mezzo forte, to piano in three measures (m1-3) and the vocal line moves from forte in the second measure to mezzo piano on the third measure. These few measures are indicative of the various moving dynamics throughout the rest of the piece, and they emulate the varied style of the cantillation trope system.

The meter is especially erratic and fluctuating in the piece, echoing the highly rhythmic style of *eicha* trope. Throughout measures 1-10 the time signature changes eight times: from $\frac{3}{4}$ in measure 1, to $\frac{2}{4}$ in measure 3 and back to $\frac{3}{4}$ in measure 4, to $\frac{4}{4}$ in measure 6, $\frac{3}{4}$ in measure 7, to $\frac{4}{4}$ in measure 8, $\frac{3}{4}$ in measure 9 and $\frac{4}{4}$ in measure ten.

In addition to the constantly changing time signatures, Bernstein uses rhythmic motifs from the *eicha* system: measures 1-10 emulate the *etnachta* and *katon* clauses in several ways. The word “*ha-ir*” in measure three emulates the rhythmic structure of the *tipcha* trope in its descending two-sixteenth note/eighth note phrase. The series of eighth notes over the text in measures one-two echoes the parlando nature of cantillation. The same *tipcha* motif is also found on the word “*k’almana*” in measure 6, and in measure seven through 8 over the words “*rabati vagoyim*” we hear echoes of *pashta-katon*. In measures 9 and 10 we see the return of the *tipcha* motif over the repeated words “*hayta lamas.*” These varied melodic and rhythmic techniques coupled with remnants of *eicha* trope truly highlight this text. We can hear the cries of the anguished city in the changing rhythms and melodies.

Over the following page and a half¹²² Bernstein moves away from the melodic thread of cantillation, but retains its rhythmic structure, playing with various combinations of triplets and eighth notes, as well as constantly changing time signatures. Bernstein composes a “crying motif” in this section, that also returns toward the end of the piece, built around F-natural, G-flat, and E-natural; a tight circle of notes that emulates the harshness of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the cries of its people. This particular melody is written to the words “*Bacha tivkeh ba-laila, v’di-ma-ta a-le-che-ya* / bitterly the city weeps in the night, her cheek is wet with tears.” (measures 11-14) and later the words, “*lama la-netsach tish-kacheinu? La netsach taazveinu?* / Why have you forgotten us, why have you forsaken us?” (measures 97-100)¹²³. Bernstein writes these notes in a quarter, eighth-note/quarter-triplet pattern that highlights the speech patterns and accents of the text, and draws on the various rhythmic combinations found in the cantillation system.

Bernstein brings back the motifs found in measures 1-27¹²⁴ at the end of the piece. Bernstein repeats the opening measures and text “*eicha yahsva vadad, ha-ir k’almano*” in measures 52-55¹²⁵ in the same parlando, rhythmic manner as the beginning. Measures 84-90¹²⁶ bring back the crying motif of the measures 11-13 into a winding descending scale duet with the piano. Each descending scale moves up one-half step until it explodes in the first measure of the third system on the second to last page, measure 91, on the words “*suru tome koru lama, suru al tigau!* / they are unclean, do not touch!” The crying and

¹²² Appendix 3-2, 3-3.

¹²³ Appendix 3-6, 3-7.

¹²⁴ Appendix 3-1, 3-2, 3-3.

¹²⁵ Appendix 3-4.

¹²⁶ Appendix 3-6.

eighth note-triplet motif returns again on measure 97 through the end of the piece- the text implores, “why have you forgotten us for all time? Return us to you, *Adonai!*”

The above text from *Eicha* 5:20-21 pauses in the tanach, after the word *Adonai*. Bernstein echoes this features with a dramatic pause in the music after the word *Adonai*, with a sforzando in the piano and a fermata in the voice. Finally, the voice comes in subito piano, plaintively on the word “*eilecha*/to you.” Employing rhythmic and melodic structure and pattern from the *eicha* trope system, Bernstein creates a dramatic, modern expression of grief in this symphony finale.

The Sephardic Jews are also culture rich with a tradition of lament songs and dirges. There are several different types of lament songs that are a part of Sephardic culture. There are specific dirges that recount terrible tragedy and heartbreak, dirges that are specific to the destruction of the Temple/fall of Jerusalem¹²⁷, *endechas*, which are dirges specified for the deceased and finally, mourning ballads and satirical dirges.

¹²⁷ Dirges that are specific to the destruction of the Temple and fall of Jerusalem, are called kinnot, and are often sung on T’sha B’av, the commemoration of the destruction of the first and second Temples. These kinnot are often based on midrashim. Paloma Diaz-Mas, in her article “Sephardic Songs of Mourning and Dirges” mentions several kinnot. Paloma Diaz-Mas, “Sephardic Songs of Mourning and Dirges,” *European Judaism* 44.1, 2011 Pg. 80-97. The kinnot mentioned include: ‘The Blood of Zecharia’ based on the Midrash of the prophecy of the death of Zecharia, ‘Blood and Sister in Slavery,’ which highlights the theme of incest which may have attributed to the fall, and ‘The Destruction of Zion.’ Diaz-Mas elaborates on a specific text as “one of the most poetic kinnot in Ladino” (88) The Destruction of the Temple. This particular kinah weaves into the text laments over the fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the temple, and the captivity of the Jews and Diaspora: “The honored Temple, Alas! It is destroyed so....Where is your beauty and your tall building? Now you are so low, buried in the dust. You were light and stars of the world...and now you are deep down, buried so low.” This particular lament demonstrates the contrast motif discussed by Nancy C Lee, in her book *Lyrics of Lament*. This lament contrasts the Temple as light and stars, to where it is now, buried in the dust. We also note the rhetorical questions present in this text: “where is your beauty and tall building” another feature common in laments. Another lament of similar nature is ‘La Almenara,’ a dirge specific to the Moroccan Sephardic tradition, which deals with the fall

*Como la Rosa en La Guerta*¹²⁸ is an example of an *endecha*¹²⁹ in copla form.¹³⁰ A

copla is a strophic poem with fixed metric schemes. This type of poetry will feature various short and long strophes, sometimes with a refrain and sometimes not. A strophe may be rhymed in three lines, or four, and the entire poem may occasionally feature an acrostic ordering. The content of the poem is characterized by thematic continuity, its

of the Temple as well: “Menorah, Menorah, of gold it shown...glowing in the Holy Place..and now it looks so dull. Weep, Weep, remember the destruction...” Again, the contrast motif presents itself, comparing the light and gold of the menorah of the Temple before the destruction, to its dull likeness afterwards. In this lament we also see the illustration of weeping, another common feature of laments.

¹²⁸ *Como La Rosa En La Guerta* op. 8, CS V11. Also known as *Comme la rose au jardin*, and *La moribunda enamorada*. This is “a particularly moving song...” narrating the complaint of a mother upon losing her daughter. “Local superstitions prevented women who knew this funeral song (*castiga de muerte*) from singing it for fear of the evil eye. Hemsí was only able to hear the song from the mouth of a man” named Josef Benatar in Rhodes, 1926. Sami Sadak, *Alberto Hemsí Liner Notes*, Buda Musique, 2005, Pg. 31. Upon further research, this piece does not get much mention. It is a part of a collection of resource and research material in scholarly work entitled *Cancionero sefardi* by Alberto Hemsí, edited by Edwin Seroussi.

Alberto Hemsí and Edwin Seroussi, *Cancionero Sefardi* (Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 335-336.

The song appears in the “Canciones de Muerte” section, pg. 335-336 as *La Moribunda enamorada*. It is sourced to Sr. Yosef Benatar, Rhodes, 1926.

¹²⁹ Death and mourning songs may also be known as oinas. Typically *oinas* or *endechas* are performed at funerals by women called *endechaderas* or *oinaderas*.

Susana Weich-Shahak, *Judeo-Spanish Songs for the Lifecycle* (Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), Pg. 12

¹³⁰ *Endechas* may also come in Romance form. A romance is a narrative song, usually revolving around a scene, dramatic situation or legend. These stories are sometimes derived from medieval epics. The poetic text in a romance features an indefinite number of verses composed of 12-16 syllables in “assonant rhyme.” Many *oinas* or *endechas* employ a personification of death as *Huerco*, or *Guerco*; the Angel of Death. In some songs Death will engage in dialogue with the person who is about to die. Other texts of *endechas* will explore sadness and despair, bad luck and misfortune.

Ibid.

content may be narrative, descriptive or argumentative. Please see the text and translation below¹³¹:

Como la Rosa en la Guerta Y las flores sin avrir Ansi es una donzella A las horas del murir	Like the rose in the garden And flowers not yet in bloom There lies a young maiden At the hour of death
Tristes horas en el dia Que hazina ya cayo Como la reina en su lecho Ya cayo y se desmayo	That day sad were the hours As she fell ill Like the queen on her bed She lost her strength and fainted
Lagrimas de una madre El Dio y alas va sinitr Pensa que agora pacites Aspera buen avenir	The tears of a mother God will soon feel them Though you now feel pain A better future awaits you
Su gracia y su mirada Eran mi consolacion Al mi lado se asentaba Su mano en mi Corazon	Her grace and her look Were my consolation At my side she would sit Her hand on my heart
Avrid puertas y ventanas A mi hija acudir Quen la via la llorava De ver este angel murir	Open the doors and windows Come to my daughter Those who saw her crying Those who saw this angel die.

This text includes five strophes or verses, four lines each in an ABAB rhyme pattern. The poem describes the scene of the death of a young girl, described as a rose in the garden whose flowers have yet to bloom. This scene is quite dramatic: this is the death of a young girl whose life is tragically cut short, before she could fully blossom into a woman. The poem describes the girl as she fell ill, the tears and grieving of her

¹³¹ Translation and full text found at
at:<http://www.sefaradrecords.com/lyrics.php#ComoLaRosaEnLaGuerta>
December 21, 2013

mother and the commentary of the poet. For the first three stanzas of the poem the poet speaks, describing the girl, the sadness of the hour of her death, the way she looked (as a queen on her bed), and how the girl took ill.

The poet recounts that the tears of her mother will reach God, and either comforts the mother or comforts the young girl with these words: “though you now feel pain, a better future awaits you.” The words, if directed toward the mother might be understood that, though she feels despair at this moment, there is hope for moving forward, for healing. Perhaps the daughter has been sick for quite some time, her mother might finally be able to move forward, no longer caring and worrying over a sick and dying child. The finality of the daughter’s death, perhaps brings forth a beginning towards healing for her mother, allowing the mother to move forward, content that her daughter is now with God. Perhaps these words directed to the daughter, mean something similar. Though the sick girl may be in the midst of pain, eventually she will no longer feel that pain, she will be with God. In this case, a messianic tone might ring through the text: *a better future* in the world to come awaits.

Perhaps the poet speaks to both mother and daughter, encapsulating both of these ideas for each of them at the same time: though sickness and sadness prevail, the finality of death allows both parties to move forward. The world to come awaits both mother and daughter, though at different times. The world to come is immediate for the young girl, the mother may look forward to her future with her daughter in the world to come when it is her own time to pass. Death brings relief for both mother and daughter immediately and in the future. While sickness and death brings on pain for the girl, and despair for her mother, it is also a vehicle for transition, for moving on and for eventual healing.

The Alberto Hemsí arrangement¹³² of this folk tune opens with flair and drama. The piano is in three staves: one bass clef, and two treble clefs. The base begins with a forte b-octave, with a sforzando cluster chord in the middle treble stave and a sforzando outline of F# in the top. The combination of B plus F# indicates the outline of B minor, the prevailing key throughout the piece. In the very next measure we move from forte to piano then to forte in the following measure 3, and piano again in measure four, ending with pianissimo in measures 5-8. Perhaps the furiously changing dynamics echoes the tears of her mother, or the dying girl gasping for air: they emulate the rise and fall of tears, of sickness and of emotion.

The bass clef for the most part holds a steady b-octave chord through measures 1-8, with the exception of measure 5, where we see a cluster chord centered on F-natural, G-natural and C-sharp. There is much movement over the steady bass line throughout measures 1-8 in the top two treble staves. Hemsí writes a grand chord F#-C-F, supporting the b minor sound in measure one, on a half note, followed by a florid rhythmic and melodic combination of an eight note triplet, sixteenth note triplet, thirty-second note triplet, and finally a sixty-four-note cluster of four notes, in a melodic line that runs from e-f#-g-a-b-and back down to e. The statement finishes with a recap of the F#-C-F chord, this time on a quarter note rather than a half. The entire statement repeats once more in

¹³² Please refer to CD and Appendix 4, Pgs 1-4. Alberto Hemsí 1898-1975 was an internationally renowned artist and composer. He was born in a small town called Cassaba to parents of Italian nationality. Hemsí received a scholarship to study in Milan in 1914. When he returned home to Cassaba, Hemsí realized “the necessity of safeguarding [his heritage of Judeo-Sephardic music] until then transmitted solely by oral tradition.” 1928 brought Hemsí to the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Egypt, where his *Coplas Sefardies* was published during the years 1932-1938. In 1957 he left for Paris, and he passed away in 1975. Hemsí left behind 54 works, including a number of pieces for voice and piano. Herve Rotan *Alberto Hemsí Coplas Sefardies Liner Notes*, (Buda Musique: 2005), Pg. 10-11.

measures 3-4 with the addition of a G#, brightening the somber tone of the opening statement, perhaps alluding to the glimmer of hope the poet mentions in stanza three, “the tears of a mother, God will soon feel them, though you now feel pain, a better future awaits you.”

Measure 5 displays a combination of descending and ascending scales in the two treble staves, followed by measures 6-8 which move from three staves to two (treble and bass) in a series of floating alternating chords outlining b-minor.

The florid dramatic dynamics, melody and rhythm in this instrumental opening emulate the drama and seriousness of the poetic text.¹³³ The opening music sets up the tragic emotion, the scene of the young girl falling ill, losing her strength and fainting, so the voice may enter with a simple, parlando, expressive melodic line that recites the poetic text. The vocal structure of the song is set up in a strophic structure of ABCD, instrumental refrain, then ABCD once more. (the A phrase is a combination of A with a small repeat in shortened form immediately following: A1). It is common for the musical structure of a copla to parallel the poetic structure of the text. In this case, each stanza is four lines, thus we have a musical strophe of four lines. This musical arrangement sets only the first two stanzas of the text.

¹³³ Between 1923-1937 Hemsí collected 230 poems, 60 of which he retained as traditional tunes he then set to music in his *Coplas Sefardies*, adding parts for piano. Hemsí comments that this feat was “quite complicated because it wasn’t simply a question of accompanying the songs, but of encapsulating them into little symphonic tableaux, in order to suggest, as much as possible, the atmosphere, the spiritual state of mind, the subject, and the melody.” Herve Rotan *Alberto Hemsí Coplas Sefardies Liner Notes*, (Buda Musique: 2005), pg. 12.

A four phrase ABCD is the most common type of musical phrase, or strophe in a copla, and two strophes will often be set with a refrain in between¹³⁴, as we see in this musical arrangement as well. A and A1 comprise measures 9-11 and 31-36, B: measures 15-19 and 37-41, C: measures 20-22 and 42-44, and D: measures 22-26 and 44-48. Measures 27-30 and 49-52 comprise a refrain and ending instrumental statement.

Metrically, coplas have a clear beat and meter, commonly featuring 4/4, 2/4 and 6/8. The metric pattern of a mourning song may echo the pattern of the mourning women's hands beating on their thighs.¹³⁵ This arrangement alternates between $\frac{3}{4}$: measures 1-14, 18-22, 26-36, 40-44, and $\frac{2}{4}$: 15-17, 23-25, 37-39, 45-52.

The vocal line itself highlights the text, the rhythm echoes the natural ebb and flow of the language. Measures 9-14 and 31-36, the A and A1 section is quite parlando and small in range, moving from B, up to D, down to F and resting on B again, about a 6th interval from the lowest note F, to the highest note, D. In measures 15-26 and 37-47, Hemsí builds tension and emotional drama through the *con animo* crescendo and change to 2/4. The movement in the base- a triplet against the feel of the 2/4 in the treble piano and vocal line propel the line forward and highlight the text: "and flowers that haven't bloomed, is a young girl at the hour/moment of her death...when she was taken ill like the queen on her bed, she lost her strength and fainted." The range is considerably higher on these more dramatic and descriptive verses as well, moving from B as a starting point to the highest note, A, filling in and staying a range from B-F before descending to rest on an extended F. The vocal line becomes more florid through these passages, with

¹³⁴ Susana Weich-Shahak, *Judeo-Spanish Songs for the Lifecycle* (Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), pg. 14

¹³⁵ Ibid.

primarily descending 16th-note passages, and grace notes, echoing the tears and despair of this text.

Through detailed exploration, one notes the careful attention Hemsí pays to the emotional drama and story of the text. The vocal line clearly expresses the text through both parlando melody during descriptive moments and vocal motion during emotional portions of text. The piano creates drama with its vibrant and florid opening, expressive refrain and quiet haunting end. Hemsí lifts this simple folk melody to a high and dramatic intellectual and emotional level.

This poem is rife with varied emotion. Amidst the despair that runs throughout the text, there is also a glimmer of hope. The author writes, “*lagrimas de una madre, El Dio ya las va sentir piensa que agora pacites aspera buen avenir* / the tears of a mother, God will soon feel them, a better future awaits you.” This sentence reminds us that in the midst of our suffering, God is there with us as a comfort and divine presence. We are also comforted by the fact that our loved ones are now in the presence of God in the world to come, and that someday we will be with them, and with God as well. This teaches us that within our suffering, we also have the opportunity to find meaning, hope and holiness as well.

We learn this message from Rebbe Nachman as well. There is a beautiful story told about Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, found in a book of his aphorisms entitled “The Empty Chair.” It is as follows:

Rebbe Nachman was shattered, empty. His infant son had just died. Although the Rebbe’s closest followers had come to console him, they could not bear to witness his torment, and ran from the room. When

they returned the next day, the Rebbe said to them, “had you not run out, I would have told you something beautiful.” He then taught a lesson entitled Garden of the Souls, explaining how we can extract meaning from even our greatest suffering. This is what we must do if we are to leave sadness, and find hope and joy.¹³⁶

Rebbe Nachman teaches us in the last line, that finding God, finding the holiness in our suffering, allows us to find meaning in it, to move towards hope and joy. In the very same book, Rebbe Nachman explains that “the most direct means for attaching ourselves to God from this material world is through music and song.”¹³⁷ Music allows the soul to express what words cannot. We learn from Rebbe Nachman that in the midst of our greatest suffering we may be able to find great meaning. Music can be an important vehicle towards finding meaning, holiness, hope and joy. Music can help us feel the holiness of God’s divine presence and comfort. Expressing our grief through text and biblical chant, through the beauty and drama of instrumentation and vocal interpretation, music can express our deepest despair, and our innermost yearning. Music can open us up to find greater meaning within our suffering. Fully experiencing and expressing grief through the nuances of music, one may begin to “leave sadness and find hope and joy.”

¹³⁶ Rebbe Nachman and Moshe Mykoff, “*The Empty Chair: Finding Hope and Joy*” *Jewish Lights Publishing*, (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994), Pg. 98

¹³⁷ Ibid.,Pg. 50

Conclusion

In an interview with Studio 360¹³⁸, Steve Reich reflects on his journey in writing WTC 09/11, a haunting, intense and poignant piece written nearly ten years after the fall of the two towers. Reich explains,

I am doing a piece about something that happened to me...if I had lived on west 85th street I probably wouldn't have written the piece the same way...or written it at all...really...absolutely...I wrote this piece because my son called me up and I thought if those radio towers go over...if they had tipped over...I wouldn't have a family anymore. I didn't write it cause I was going to write a piece about 09/11, I had something that happened in my life which I hadn't the time or the inclination, to deal with at the time in which it happened.

Reich's piece is part documentary, part composition, with the string quartet doubling the electronically extended narrative voices. In the first movement, we hear the fervent beeping of a phone off of the hook, and alarm or wake up call to the listener. We hear dissonance in the quartet, a highly rhythmic and chaotic ostinato, and we hear much distortion in the narration of air traffic controllers and firefighters. We hear the terror, the shock that something like this could happen, the fear and horror in their voices and in the music. Reich tells the story of his inspiration for this opening:

I was taking a shower one morning, and I guess I hadn't hung up my phone properly and it began to beep at me furiously as an off the hook phone will do. When I heard that I said, that's it, that's the wake up call,

¹³⁸ Please refer to CD for interview and for the complete WTC 09/11. Link to interview: <http://www.studio360.org/2011/sep/09/steve-reichs-wtc-911/> September 9, 2011

that's the warning, that's the tempo, that's the beat, actually in F. The last vowel, constantly would be extended, it would be doubled by viola, the sound is about getting people's attention for something that needs to be corrected.

The second movement features the stories of Reich's friends and neighbors. Reich and recorded their stories himself with his own video recorder. We hear the story of a woman, a member of his ensemble who worked at the towers, who by chance decided to take a personal day and come to work later that morning. "Her eyes shot up at the plane over head, and she watched the towers crumble to the ground." By mere chance of arriving to work later, she is alive. There is the story of a father, who dived to the ground with his kids on the way to school, because they didn't know how low the plane actually was. He tells the story that he had to walk his children back home at an angle, so they would not see the jumpers flying out of the building. We hear the perspective of both the father "we thought it was an accident" and the woman, "I knew it wasn't an accident."

Throughout the composition, of note, the string quartet follows the word accents and vocal inflections of the narrators; the music takes on the sounds of the statements. The voice narration becomes clearer in this movement, there is less distortion, and the narration is pulled into more of an extended melody or vocal inflection, that is still doubled by viola. There is less urgency in the strings, we now hear a lower range in the composition. There is a settling, steady low pulse, rather than the sharp biting pulse of an emergency in the first movement. It is as if telling the stories helps to pull back the music, to try to put the unimaginable into real terms and perspective.

Kurt Anderson, who interviewed Reich for this broadcast, points out that the final movement features a woman faintly singing throughout the movement. Reich explains his inspiration for that movement as the Jewish tradition of *Shmira*, the guarding of the body from the moment of death until the moment of burial, that the women of Stern college performed. The women of Stern College who sat for months in rotating shifts guarding the bodies and body parts of the victims of 09/11, singing and reciting psalms and parts of the bible, were the inspiration for this part of the movement:

And during 09/11, as you well know there weren't very many bodies. There were a few bodies, and a lot of body parts. And these were all taken to the Medical Examiners Office in NYU hospital in east 30's and put in refrigerated trucks. There were these Jewish Women who were at Stern College, on Lex and 30th and they volunteered to sit in these tents saying psalms, or singing psalms if they had the voice for it, or parts of the bible. And because of the nature of 09/11, and because you weren't dealing with whole bodies, the DNA analysis took 7 months, and these women religiously in shifts, kept on, kept the vigil going. When I found out about this I thought, here is this horrible event that happened in NYC four blocks from where I live and it really brought out the best in New Yorkers as we all noticed at the time. Here is an instance of these Jewish women, and they weren't singing it for Jews because who knew who these fragments belonged to? They just thought... that's what you do so I am going to do it.

The cantor on the recording sings in Hebrew “God watch over us until the end of time.” This is a significant moment in the piece. A terrible tragedy has happened, we hear the distortion in the first movement, and the stories and gradual clarity of the narration in the second movement, and finally we hear a representation of hope in the faint tones of the cantor. Amidst the “...stench, of burnt flesh, burnt electronics, burnt furniture, burnt cement... burnt everything...”¹³⁹ women were singing psalms, guarding over the dead. The best of NYC came to light in the middle of terrible darkness.

Steve Reich’s composition is an expression of the loss that he experienced in the days of 09/11. It is a representation of what happened to him, and to the people that he loved, the city and neighborhood he loved. Music for Steve Reich was the means in which to express his grief, sorrow and lament. Reich’s music demonstrates and ties together the concepts we have explored throughout this thesis. The music is eloquent, yet chaotic, moving in fits and starts and words. The piece is a deeper “*hesped*” a eulogy over what happened during that dark time, voicing the words of Reich, his friends and neighbors. Reich demonstrates a glimmer of hope and healing through the final movement. This work speaks to the entire city, and the entire nation of people who suffered a tragic loss that day; the loss of our security and safety, a small crack in the freedom that we so celebrate. This composition is all at once modern and ancient, pulling together discordant tones, and ancient Hebrew words in the voice of a female cantor. Reich’s piece is a modern example of what we learned throughout this thesis; that lament, through words and music becomes an expression of what has happened to us, an expression of cries, sorrow, grief and loss; and an expression of hope and healing.

¹³⁹ Steve Reich upon his return to NYC after 09/11.

Our previous chapter reminds us that music is the ultimate expression of emotion. Be it joy, sadness, grief, sorrow, elation, happiness, lament; music touches and expresses the soul in a way that words cannot. We learn from King David that one expresses grief in many different ways: eloquent at times, numb and chaotic at others. We understand from studying David, that we may feel this extreme range of emotion, and act upon it various times throughout our grieving. As clergy, this gives us insight into what our community or individual families and congregants may experience when they have suffered a loss. Emotion spikes and peaks and drops. We try to make sense out of what or whom we have lost with words, we act irrationally, we lose ourselves in our sadness and grief. Lamentations reinforces that it is ok to wail and cry, to ask and to demand “why” and “how” such a tragedy could happen. It is ok to feel like we cannot make sense out of our loss. Yet, the very end of that text, and our study of Lamentations Rabbah reminds us that there is still a glimmer of hope within the tragedy. We can tell our stories, allow others to witness what we have suffered, and see hope and healing. We can laugh again. We can find God, the divine presence in the world and in our lives again. Our study of Jewish mourning rites and customs through *halacha* reminds us that we have a set routine in which to follow. Perhaps those routine rituals such as rending one’s clothes, sitting low to the floor, and offering *hesped* have the possibility of offering us a deeper, richer, more meaningful experience in processing our grief. Again, we turn to music as a part of these rituals, learning that *hesped* was not merely a recitation of words, but a chorus of women wailing, a clear flute inspiring their tears. While we no longer wail publicly in the manner dictated in our *halacha*, we learn that in some cultures, such as the Jewish-Yemenite women wailing culture of Israel, wailing still remains in practice today as a highly

specialized art form. The Jewish-Yemenite women teach us how to truly serve our communities; to truly be present with those in our community as they suffer loss. They help us understand that offering our voices as an inspiration of letting ones tears flow ultimately provides a source of comfort and a pathway towards healing for our community. Allowing our voices to grieve and wail through our music, allows our community to full express their grief and move forward. Much as Jewish-Yemenite women offer themselves, we as cantors offer a truly humbling and divine gift with our voices, and our clergy and pastoral support. And once again, we return to music; understanding that our Jewish tradition holds ancient and beautiful melodies that emulate the sighs and tears of those who have suffered great destruction and individual tragedy. We experience how those ancient melodies meet modern motif through expert composition in various cultures. Bernstein weaves cantillation throughout his finale, emulating the tears and sighs and hope of Eicha text. Alberto Hemsí echoes the heart-wrenching pitches and falls of emotion of a mother watching her young daughter die. Rebbe Nachman reminds us of the hope and healing and meaning we might find in our tragedy and loss, and that music has a unique way of allowing us to lament and express our loss; enabling us to move towards that hope and healing. Music becomes our lament; an expression of what has happened to us.

At the same time that music becomes our lament, music also allows us to see the other side. Each of the compositions we have studied illuminates a glimmer of hope. Bernstein's Lamentation alludes to the time when God will take us back to God's arms once more, Como La Rosa en La Guerta reminds us that even in the despair of losing a child, a world to come awaits. Rav Kook, the first chief Rabbi of Israel stated "the old

shall be renewed and the new shall become holy.”¹⁴⁰ Lamenting our grief through music allows us to acknowledge what once was, to sanctify and honor that life and at the same also look towards a new normal. The people we have lost, the dreams or the things we have lost along the way are never really completely gone. They remain with us in a new and different way. We hold them in our hearts and bring their memories to life through our lament. This same process allows us to acknowledge that a new existence after suffering a loss is possible, that our life may be renewed, and that it may be a holy, meaningful, and beautiful existence as well.

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.ravkooktorah.org/industry.htm>, Letters Vol. 1 Page 214, January 14, 2013

CD Track Listing

1. WTC 09/11: Movement 1: 09/11 Composed by Steve Reich,
Performed by Kronos Quartet
2. WTC 09/11: Movement 2: 2010 Composed by Steve Reich,
Performed by Kronos Quartet
3. WTC 09/11: Movement 3: WTC Composed by Steve Reich,
Performed by Kronos Quartet
4. Studio 360 Interview Kurt Anderson and Steve Reich, WNYC New York Public
Radio
5. Como La Rosa En La Guerta Composed by Alberto Hemsí Performed by Pedro
Aledo
6. Jeremiah Symphony Number 1: 1. Prophecy composed by Leonard Bernstein
Performed by Jenny Tourel, Leonard Bernstein and The New York Philharmonic
7. Jeremiah Symphony Number 1: 2. Profanation composed by Leonard Bernstein
Performed by Jenny Tourel, Leonard Bernstein and The New York Philharmonic
8. Jeremiah Symphony Number 1: 3. Lamentation composed by Leonard Bernstein
Performed by Jenny Tourel, Leonard Bernstein and The New York Philharmonic
9. Eicha Chapter 1:1-8 chanted by Lauren Furman
10. Eicha Tropes: Etnachta/Sof Pasuk, Katon, Tvir, Rvii, T'lisha G'dola, T'lisha
K'tana, Kadma V'azla, Geresh, Yitiv, Zakef-Gadol, Segol, Sof Aliyah. Chanted
by Lauren Furman

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