

The Cup or Qôš? Lost Prayer and Wordplay in Lamentations 4:21–22

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Abstract

The article discusses the reference to Edom at the end of Lam 4. It makes two proposals. First, it argues that we should understand nearly all of the clauses in Lam 4:21–22 as volitive expressions that convey the speaker’s wishes or prayers. Second, it argues that the Hebrew text of Lam 4:21 contains a wordplay lost in the ancient Greek translation and, thus, lost in the subsequent tradition. When Lam 4:21 uses the Hebrew word כּוּס (“cup”) together with the syntagma עֵל עֵבֶר in a context of irony and concerning “Daughter Edom,” כּוּס alludes to Qôš (קוֹשׁ), the patron god of the Edomites and the Idumaeans. The Septuagint understood the Hebrew text’s volitive expressions as ordinary indicatives. It “quenched” the Hebrew text’s ironic pun and made an unambiguous expression of what originally was ambiguous.

Keywords:

Qos / Qaws / Qôš, Biblical Hebrew modality and volitives, irony and wordplay,
Edom / Idumaea, the cup of the Lord

1 Introduction

The reference to Daughter Edom in Lam 4:21–22 is part of the Hebrew Bible’s ambiguous approach to Edom. On the one hand, the Jacob–Esau stories in Gen 25–36 demonstrate a relatively positive attitude. On the other hand, several other texts express an anti-Edomite sentiment. Most outspoken is the book of Obadiah, where Yahweh accuses Edom of having benefitted from Judah’s calamity when the Babylonians invaded her. Additionally, several other passages give Edom the role of whipping boy of the wrath of either Yahweh,¹ Judah,² or of a coalition of Ephraim and Judah.³ Edom also appears together with several other nations that are either Israel’s, Judah’s, or Yahweh’s enemies.⁴

This article will *not* discuss why Lam 4:21–22 suddenly and without anticipation addresses Daughter Edom within the context of the lament of Daughter Zion’s fall and the collapse of her Zion theology (cf. Lam 4:11–12, 20). Instead, the focus here will be: *How* does Lam 4:21–22 address Daughter Edom? More concretely, this focus includes two research questions.

1 For example, Isa 34; Jer 25:21; 49:7–22; Ezek 25:8, 12–14; 35; Joel 4:19 (ET 3:19); Amos 1:11–12; 9:12; Mal 1:1–5.

2 Psalm 137:7.

3 Isaiah 11:14.

4 Jeremiah 9:24–25 (ET 9:25–26); 25:21; Ezek 25:29.

The first research question pertains to the modality of the verbs in Lam 4:21–22. The article hypothesises that we should understand all of the clauses in the strophes in Lam 4:21–22 as *volitive* expressions: clauses that convey the speaker’s wishes or prayers, not as present or future indicatives. It is problematic to translate the imperfects (*yiqtol*s) and the perfects (*qatal*s) in Lam 4:21–22 with indicatives. One problem is that indicative modality presupposes and construes the end of Daughter Zion’s punishment as a (past, present, or future) fact—as seen from the speaker’s perspective. However, this would either imply a prophetic speaker in Lam 4:21–22 (referring to the future) or that the speaker is addressing Zion and Edom retrospectively, looking back at the events *after* they have come to an end. In contrast, understanding the modality of all of the verbs in Lam 4:21–22 as volitives will better integrate the verses in the overall lamenting tone of Lam 4 and other examples of literature of lament. Moreover, understanding the modality as volitive will help to anchor the lament *in situ* in a time of crisis, not *after* it.

The second research question is what role the cup-metaphor in Lam 4:21 plays. The article hypothesises that the Hebrew text of Lam 4:21 contains a wordplay. When Lam 4:21 uses the word כּוּס (“cup”), it uses a metaphor of Yahweh’s wrath as a liquid substance (cf. Lam 4:11) in general, and one suspiciously reminiscent of the Jeremianic tradition (e.g., Jer 25:17–26; 49:7–22) in particular. However, the article proposes that the author of Lam 4 went one step further when connecting Edom and “the cup.” In Lam 4:21, he played on the graphemic and phonetic similarities between כּוּס (“cup”) and קוּס (Qôš), the name of the patron god of the Edomites and their successors, the Idumaeans. The author created an ironic, double-punned expression when he wished that כּוּס “may pass by” (the syntagma עבר על) Daughter Edom. Due to the graphemic and phonetic similarities, the readers and the audience probably read and heard an allusion to a theophany scene of sorts with the god Qôš visiting Edom.

Before we start engaging with the research questions and hypotheses mentioned

above, we should briefly contextualise Lam 4:21–22. The verses represent the two concluding strophes of the acrostic poem. The poem addresses the suffering of Zion from two main perspectives. The first perspective is that of the “I”-person. The “I”-person is lamenting the sufferings of “the daughter, my people” (Lam 4:4, 6, 10) in vv. 1–16. Representing the other perspective is the “we”-group that is lamenting its self-experienced sufferings in vv. 17–20. The speaker of vv. 21–22 seems to be identical with that of the “I”-person from vv. 1–16. However, in vv. 21–22, the “I”-person addresses Daughter Zion and Daughter Edom directly in the *second* person. In contrast, the “I”-person of vv. 1–16 refers to Daughter Zion in the third person. Although Daughter Edom comes out of the blue, her personification corresponds with Daughter Zion’s personification earlier in the poem. Besides, it is in line with the personification of Daughter Zion in Lam 1 and Lam 2. In Lam 4, the voices of both the anonymous “I”-person and the “we”-group seem to look back at the aftermath of a disaster that has struck Jerusalem. The situation appears to concur with Judah’s Babylonian crisis at the end of the seventh and in the first part of the sixth centuries BCE. Judah’s Babylonian crisis serves as the *terminus post quem* for the date of composition. From a material viewpoint, the Qumran manuscript 5QLam^a (5Q6) gives the *terminus ante quem*. 5QLam^a dates to the late-Herodian period (ca. 30 BCE–68 CE) on palaeographical grounds⁵ and contains fragments of a text similar to Lam 4 and Lam 5. Moreover, several pericopes within Isa 40–55 (the so-called Second Isaiah that looks back to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem) allude to Lam 4.⁶ Therefore, there continues to be good arguments for dating Lam 4 to a period relatively shortly after Judah’s Babylonian crisis,

5 See Kotzé, *The Qumran Manuscripts of Lamentations*, 29–33; and Koenen, *Die Klagelieder Jeremias*, 26–28.

6 Compare these pairs: Lam 4:1–2 and Isa 51:20; 54:11–13; Lam 4:10 and Isa 49:26; Lam 4:14–15 and Isa 52:1, 11–12; Lam 4:17 and Isa 52:8; Lam 4:21 and Isa 51:17, 21–23. On the extent and nature of these connections, see discussions in Willey, *Remember the Former Things*; Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 129; Tiemeyer, “Geography and Textual Allusions”; Tiemeyer, “Isaiah 40–55 and Lamentations”; and Tiemeyer, “Lamentations in Isaiah 40–55.”

culminating with Jerusalem's destruction around 587 BCE.

5QLam^a contains an incomplete text of Lam 4:20–5:3.⁷ Regarding Lam 4:21–22, the actual words in the fragmentary manuscript do not differ from those of the consonantal basis of Masoretic Text, except for a few examples of plene writing. However, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar shows how the Qumran manuscript 4Q176 (4QTanh), an anthology of words of consolation collecting passages from Isa 40–54, contains a somewhat more complete quotation of Lam 4:21–22. According to Tigchelaar, the text is probably identical to the Masoretic Text, with one possible exception. It is possible to read ארם in 4Q176 and not אדום as one would expect.⁸ However, according to Tigchelaar, the semicursive character of the used script opens the possibility that the *resh* is a *dalet*. In that case, the manuscript reads “Edom” and not “Arom.”⁹

2 The Modality of the Finite Verbs in Lam 4:21–22

Lamentations 4:21–22 are part of a lament. The strophes address Daughter Edom and Daughter Zion. How should we understand the *modality* of the finite verbs in Lam 4:21–22? Do they relate to Edom's judgment and the salvation of Zion as (present or future, indicative) facts, as seen from the speaker's perspective?

Many translations render the Hebrew imperfects in vv. 21–22 with verb forms expressing future indicative (realis modality). For example, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) renders v. 21b thus: “... but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.” Likewise, the NRSV renders the imperfects in v. 22 with future indicative (realis modality): “... he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will punish, he will uncover

⁷ See Kotzé, *The Qumran Manuscripts of Lamentations*, 32.

⁸ See Tigchelaar, “Lamentations 4:21–22,” 6.

⁹ See Tigchelaar, “Lamentations 4:21–22,” 8.

your sins.” Concerning the verb in the perfect form that opens v. 22, the NRSV represents most modern translations *pars pro toto*. There, the NRSV has an English verb in present tense indicative with a past participle: “[t]he punishment of your iniquity, O daughter Zion, is accomplished” Likewise, the JPS TANAKH has “[y]our iniquity ... is expiated,” and the New Jerusalem Bible reads “[y]our wickedness is atoned for,” to mention other translations. The odd one out is the reading of the NET Bible (2nd edn), which understands the verb נִפְּלָא as “prophetic perfect,” according to the translator’s note: “O people of Zion, your punishment will come to an end.”

In my opinion, it is problematic to understand the imperfects and perfects of vv. 21–22 as having the realis modality. I will draw attention to two problems.

The first problem regards the content of the verses if we read them as indicative statements. When we read the imperfects and perfects of vv. 21–22 as having the realis modality, the verses express a sudden, perhaps even unwarranted, change of mood from the overall lamenting tone of Lam 4. Read this way, the speaker suddenly utters words with a prophetic certitude if he speaks about the vindication and the judgment as if they are future realities. Alternatively, if the speaker speaks about the vindication and the judgment as realities in the (recent) past, vv. 21–22 still seem odd. Why do the “I”-person and the “we”-group of Lam 4 lament Daughter Zion’s fate in the first twenty verses and then in vv. 21–22 proclaim, as facts, her salvation and her antipode’s judgment?

A second problem with understanding the imperfects and perfects of vv. 21–22 as having the realis modality concerns how comparable lament texts end with prayers. For example, Lam 1 ends with an imprecatory prayer. The speaker of Lam 1:22 wishes that “all the evil” of the enemies “must come” (the third person singular jussive תָּבֵא) before Yahweh. He urges Yahweh to “deal with” (the imperative עֲלֵל) the enemies just like the latter dealt with him. Moreover, Lam 3 ends with an imprecatory prayer to Yahweh directed against the speaker’s assailants (cf. Lam

3:62). Lamentations 3:64–66 contains three jussives with Yahweh as the grammatical subject: “Pay them back ...! Give them anguish of heart ...! Pursue them ...!” (quoted from the NRSV). Furthermore, many communal and individual lament psalms include an imprecatory prayer against the enemies. For example, Ps 137, a communal lament, combines motifs of lament (centred around the themes of deportation from Zion and the destruction of Jerusalem) with a concluding imprecatory prayer against “the sons of Edom” and “Daughter Babylon” (Ps 137:7–9).¹⁰ Several individual lament psalms include a prayer for punishment and revenge over the enemy and for the salvation of the psalmist. We commonly find such imprecatory prayers at the end of the individual lament psalms.¹¹ In short, other lament texts’ concluding prayers create the expectation that we should find a similar type of prayer in Lam 4.

The problems connected to understanding the imperfects and perfects in Lam 4:21–22 as having the realis modality are potentially solved if we, instead, read all of the conjugated verbs as different types of *volitives*, verbal forms with the irrealis modality that mark wishes, requests, or commands.¹²

Lamentations 1:21, Lam 3:64–66 and the lament psalms in the Book of Psalms express their imprecatory prayers through different kinds of volitives. We can distinguish between first-person, second-person, and third-person volitives.¹³ Working as the first-person volitive, we mostly find the *cohortative*. In the context of the present discussion, such volitives are less relevant since imprecatory prayers have either a second-person (“you”) or a third-person addressee (“he,” “Yahweh,”

10 Other examples of imprecatory prayers in communal lament psalms are Pss 74:22–23; 79:6, 12; 83:10–19 (ET 83:9–18).

11 Compare Pss 3:8 (ET 3:7); 5:11–12 (ET 5:10–11); 6:11 (ET 6:10); 7:13–17 (ET 7:12–16); 10:15–18; 17:13–15; 31:18–19 (ET 31:17–18); 35:26; 40:15–16 (ET 40:14–15) = 70:3–4 (ET 70:2–3); 55:24 (ET 55:23); 56:8b (ET 56:7b); 59:9–16 (ET 59:8–15); 69:23–29 (ET 69:22–28); 70:3–4 (ET 70:2–3); 71:13; 86:17; 94:23; 109:6–21, 28–29; 140:9–12 (ET 140:8–11); 141:10; 143:12.

12 See Dallaire, *Syntax of Volitives*, 1 n. 1.

13 See Dallaire, *Syntax of Volitives*, 26–30.

or similar). Moreover, biblical texts can realise second-person volitives through two different verbal forms. One is the *imperative* (*qəṭôl*). The other is the *jussive*, which is the *imperfect*, using the short form of the imperfect when applicable.

While second-person jussives are not common, Biblical Hebrew commonly uses jussives to express third-person volitives. However, it is essential for the present study that Biblical Hebrew has an additional form of the verb that can work as a second- or third-person volitive: the *perfect*. When a prayer uses the perfect and the context clarifies that it expresses a request or a wish, the perfect works as the so-called *precative perfect*, “the perfect of prayer.” Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor explain this different use as the perfect with irrealis modality. In her study of volitives (admittedly in Biblical Hebrew and Canaanite *prose*), H  l  ne Dallaire shows that the perfect working as a precative—what she calls *qatal* with deontic modality and optative usage of the perfect—is familiar to the branch of Semitic languages.¹⁴ Moreover, we probably find (Aramaic) precative perfects in the so-called Vidranga section of the petition letter from the Judaeans of Elephantine.¹⁵

The existence of precative meaning for the perfect (*qatal*) is contested. While John A. Cook opens up for the theoretical possibility that it might have existed, he nevertheless ends up arguing that one can explain the potential examples in terms of indicative meanings for the perfect.¹⁶ On the other hand, Jan Joosten makes a strong argument in favour of the existence of a precative use of the form.¹⁷ He gives examples of precative and optative use of *qatal* following particles such as כִּי אֶם (Gen 40:14), לֹ (Num 14:2; 20:3; Jos 7:7; Isa 63:19), and the formula מִי־יִתֵּן (Job 23:3). Also, he gives examples from biblical poetry without any introductory particle

14 See Dallaire, *Syntax of Volitives*, 141–142.

15 See Graner  d, “Temple Destruction,” 91–92.

16 See Cook, *Time and the Biblical Hebrew Verb*, 250 n. 87; cf. Notarius, *Verb in Archaic Biblical Poetry*, 21 n. 77, 193 n. 40, 195. Like Cook, Notarius seems not to deny the possibility for the existence of the precative perfect but is unable to identify it in the corpus of archaic poetry she analyses.

17 See Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 211–212, 423–424.

(Isa 43:9; Mic 1:10 [*ketiv*]; Ps 4:2; 22:22; 31:6; 116:16; Job 18:17; Song 1:4a; Lam 1:21; 3:55–59). What is more, he supports his case with how two parallel passages render an imperative in the one case (2 Sam 7:29) and a (precative) perfect on the other (1 Chr 17:27). Joosten’s estimation is, in my opinion, correct; the best explanation is to recognise the validity of the precative usage.

The speaker can use the precative regarding situations for which he / she prays. The reader can only recognise it contextually. The context must include other forms that signify a volitional mood.¹⁸ Christo H. van der Merwe et al. argue that we find the precative perfect in Biblical Hebrew exclusively in the Book of Psalms.¹⁹ However, Dallaire shows that it is present in prose as well. Alexander Andrason argues that approximately 1.5% of all uses of the perfect in biblical Hebrew have “modal shades of meaning,”²⁰ instead of the overwhelming majority of uses where the perfect has an indicative meaning (realis modality). Waltke and O’Connor complain that several modern Bible translations ignore that the precative perfect alternates with the imperfect or the imperative or “waffle on” this point.²¹ Perhaps their critique also has in mind Biblical Hebrew grammars that either ignore²² or reject²³ the possibility of a precative perfect. The examples Waltke and O’Connor give are lament psalms.²⁴ If we read the perfects that appear in the context of prayers in the lament psalms as precatives, it turns out that there is often no such thing as the petitioner’s change of mood (*Stimmungsumschwung*). The claim that many lament psalms exhibit a sudden mood change (from despair to confidence in Yahweh), turns out to be wrong. Instead, in most cases, the alleged sudden change of mood turns out to be caused by a failure to recognise that the Biblical Hebrew perfect

18 See Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 494–495.

19 See van der Merwe, Naude, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 146.

20 Andrason, “An Optative Indicative?,” 1–2.

21 See Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 494–495.

22 Thus apparently Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*.

23 Thus Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 313, § 106p n. 8.

24 Psalms 4:2 (ET 4:1); 22:22 (ET 22:21); 31:5–6 (ET 31:4–5).

occasionally expresses irrealis modality. The alleged sudden, unmotivated utterances of confidence are, on the contrary, desperate prayers.

The question that opened this section still needs to be answered: What modality do the finite verbs in Lam 4:21–22 reflect: the realis or the irrealis modality?

The first line of Lam 4:21 opens with two imperatives (of שׂוּשׁ, “to rejoice,” and שִׂמְחָה, “to be glad”) that both use Daughter Edom as the grammatical subject. Therefore, Lam 4:21 starts with two clearly marked volitives. Moreover, the second line of Lam 4:21 includes three imperfects. The first imperfect (of עָבַר, “to go one’s way, to move through, to pass over,” etc.) use כּוֹס (“cup”) as the grammatical subject. The second and the third imperatives (of שָׁכַר, “to be drunk,” and עָרָה in *hitpael*, “to expose oneself”) use Daughter Edom as grammatical subject. In the light of the imperatives in Lam 4:21a and the comparable imprecations in other lament texts, we should probably understand the imperfects in Lam 4:21b as jussives. That includes the last imperfect (וְהִתְעַרְרִי). The וְ has a copulative meaning and coordinates the two last jussives. The copulative creates a sequence of simple, direct volitives with no subordination.²⁵

Moreover, in my opinion, it is likely that the volitive context which Lam 4:21 creates “rubs off” on the perfects and the single imperfect in Lam 4:22. It makes sense to read the perfects of Lam 4:22 as additional volitives, namely as precative perfects. The first part of Lam 4:22a has a perfect of the verb תָּמַם (“to be complete, finished”), with “your [= Daughter Zion’s] punishment” as the grammatical subject. The parallel clause at the beginning of Lam 4:22b has a perfect of the verb פָּקַד (“to attend, visit, muster, appoint” etc.), with “your [= Daughter Edom’s] iniquities” as the grammatical subject. The last clause in Lam 4:22b uses a perfect of the verb גָּלָה (“to uncover, reveal”), with “he” (Yahweh) as the grammatical subject. When we read these three perfects as precatives, they express prayers or wishes: “May your

25 See Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 345, 352; cf. Joosten, “A Note on *wəyiqtol* and Volitive Sequences.”

punishment be complete! ... May he muster your iniquities ...! May he uncover your sins!”

The lone negated imperfect in v. 22a (לֹא יִסֵּי) represents a potential problem for my overall argument to understand vv. 21–22 as a series of volitives—first in the form of imperatives, then jussives and precatives. My general view suggests that we could expect the phrase לֹא יִסֵּי in v. 22a to be a jussive. Morphologically, יִסֵּי is an imperfect of the root יס in the *hiphil* stem. However, it has a *long* theme vowel. Therefore, from a morphological point of view, יִסֵּי cannot be a jussive, which has a short form, when possible. Besides, in v. 22a, the negative particle לֹא precedes the imperfect יִסֵּי. Typically, a negative jussive appears with the negation לֹא, and not with לֹא.²⁶ Therefore, I suggest that לֹא יִסֵּי לְהִגְלוֹתָּךְ is a *negative command*.²⁷ The phrase imitates the form of a prohibition, and the third-person subject can be understood as “he” as well as an impersonal “one.” The negated verb יס serves an adverbial function (“not again,” or “not anymore”). When understood as a prohibition, the clause has a deontic (expressing duty or obligation) force, which again conforms with the irrealis mood of Lam 4:21–22 as a whole.²⁸

In short, I suggest that the irrealis mood of the (volitive) imperatives in Lam 4:21a “rubs off” on the imperfects and perfects in Lam 4:21b–22. An argument favouring this interpretation is that this reading of Lam 4:21–22 solves the problems caused

26 However, a few examples of negative jussives have the negation לֹא (Gen 4:12; 24:8; 1 Kgs 2:6); see Dallaire, *Syntax of Volitives*, 98 n. 187.

27 See Dallaire, *Syntax of Volitives*, 97–99; Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 510; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 371; Hendel, “In the Margins,” 170; and Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 317, § 1070 n. 8.

28 Another possibility is that the phrase לֹא יִסֵּי לְהִגְלוֹתָּךְ displays the collapse of verbal moods and the disintegration of the distinction between the negations לֹא and לֹא in Late Biblical Hebrew and Qumran Hebrew; see Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 77–78, 80–81; and Joosten, “The Syntax of Volitive Verbal Forms,” 59. Lamentations 4:9 gives a hint of the poem using a relatively late Hebrew: the verse uses the particle וְ and not אֲשֶׁר as one would expect. The alternative interpretation that this footnote explores opens for the possibility of letting the context determine the meaning of לֹא יִסֵּי לְהִגְלוֹתָּךְ, perhaps giving the following volitive translation: “May one [or: he] not exile you again [or: any longer]!”

by an “indicative reading,” which I argue above. The speaker in Lam 4:21–22 does not need to be seen as some sort of prophet or as one who looks back at Zion’s salvation and Edom’s judgment. Instead, it is a petitioner in a time of crisis who bursts out his innermost wishes: salvation for Daughter Zion and judgment for Daughter Edom. Moreover, a “volitive reading” of Lam 4:21–22 makes the two concluding strophes become (yet another) imprecatory prayer, in line with the conclusions of Lam 1, Lam 3, and many laments in the Book of Psalms.

Therefore, based on my “volitive reading” of Lam 4:21–22, I suggest the following translation:

4:21 שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בִּתְּאֵדוֹם יוֹשְׁבֹתַי בְּאֶרֶץ עוּז

גַּם־עֲלֶיךָ תֵּעָבֶר־כּוֹס תְּשִׁכְרִי וְתִתְּעָרִי:

4:22 תִּם־עֲוֹנֶךָ בִּתְּצִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִגְלוֹתְךָ

פָּקֵד עֲוֹנֶךָ בִּתְּאֵדוֹם גְּלָהּ עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ:

4:21 Rejoice and be glad, Daughter Edom, who is living in the land of Uz!

To you, too, may the cup²⁹ pass by! May you get drunk and strip yourself bare!

4:22 May your punishment be complete, Daughter Zion! One [or: he] shall not exile you again!

May he muster your iniquities, Daughter Edom! May he uncover your sins!

3 Wordplay and Irony

My interpretation of Lam 4:21–22 results in identifying a (partially imprecatory) prayer of the poem’s “I”-person. This section will explore what role the cup-

²⁹ See the discussion about the Hebrew word below.

metaphor in Lam 4:21b plays. I will suggest that one aspect of the metaphor that was visible to the poem's readers and audible to its audience in antiquity, was wordplay. For the readers, the similarity in the writing of the words כּוּס ("cup") and קוּס (Qôs), the name of the Edomites' (and later, the Idumaeans') patron god, caused the wordplay. For the listeners, the wordplay was detectable in assonance between כּוּס and קוּס. Also, in this section, I will discuss the possible implications of the graphic similarity and the assonance between כּוּס and קוּס.

The cup-metaphor in Lam 4:21b continues a concept introduced earlier in the poem. Lamentations 4 depicts Yahweh as a god who has turned his wrath against his city and his people and annihilated them.³⁰ The image of the cup in Lam 4:21b pursues the idea of Yahweh's wrath introduced in Lam 4:11. Moreover, Lam 4:11, for its part, picks up the descriptions of Yahweh's anger that the second poem introduced (Lam 2:2, 4). According to Lam 4:11a, Yahweh has made his wrath "full" or "complete" (בלה *piel*). In some contexts, the verb בלה is used regarding a full container (see, e.g., 2 Chr 24:10). The subsequent clause in Lam 4:11b uses an image that underscores the notion of wrath as a fluid substance: "Yahweh has poured out his anger." The verb שפך denotes the pouring out of a liquid substance. From this conceptual world, the image of the cup in Lam 4:21b emerges.

The cup-metaphor also correlates to the metaphor of a cup filled with Yahweh's wine of wrath that we find in other biblical texts. For example, in Ezek 23:31–34, Jerusalem has to take over the cup from her sister, Samaria. Habakkuk cries out a "woe" over the one who pours it out to his neighbour, puts poison in the drink, makes him drunk, and sees him naked (Hab 2:15–16). Psalm 75, with its main topic Yahweh's judgment, relates that every unrighteous person on the Earth will have to drink the cup that Yahweh holds in his right hand (Ps 75:9). In a word of salvation addressing Jerusalem, the Book of Isaiah uses the image of the "cup of Yahweh's

30 For similarities with the Mesopotamian city-lament genre, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 30–96; cf. Granerød, "Temple Destruction," 101–103.

wrath,” making one stagger (Isa 51:17–22).

The poets who composed the poems of Lamentations did so with a view of the Jeremianic tradition. There are several stylistic and literary cross-connections between the Book of Jeremiah and the Book of Lamentations.³¹ The connections create the impression that Jeremiah authored the Book of Lamentations. Lamentations 1:1 LXX even explicitly speaks up for Jeremianic authorship of Lamentations. Concerning Lam 4 in particular, the reference to the sins of Zion’s prophets and the guilt of her priests “who shed the blood of the righteous (םַדַּי צַדִּיקִים)” (Lam 4:13) probably presupposes knowledge of the conflicts between Jeremiah and “the prophets and the priests.” The fourth so-called Confession of Jeremiah (Jer 18:18–23) presents the latter group among the prophet’s adversaries (Jer 18:18). Moreover, Jeremiah’s so-called Speech in the Temple (Jer 26) describes a conflict between Jeremiah and “the prophets and the priests.” According to Jer 26:8, 11, the latter group believed that Jeremiah deserved to die “because he has prophesied against this city.” However, Jeremiah himself responds to this threat by warning them that “if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood (םַדַּי נְקִי) upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants” (Jer 26:15). In addition, with one exception (Isa 22:4), the Hebrew Bible uses the expression בַּת־עַמִּי only in Jeremiah (Jer 4:11; 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21–23; 9:6; 14:17) and Lamentations (Lam 2:11; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10).

Lamentations 4 presupposes an early version of the Book of Jeremiah. This literary dependence is relevant for the question of the literary background of the cup-metaphor in Lam 4:21a. According to Jer 25:15–16, Yahweh commanded the prophet Jeremiah to take “from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath” and to make “all the nations to whom I send you drink it.” Moreover, according to Jer 25:17–26, Jeremiah took the cup and “made all the nations to whom Yahweh sent me drink

31 See Koenen, *Klagelieder (Threni)*, 29*–36*; and Frevel, *Die Klagelieder*, 16–17.

it.” After this autobiographical declaration, the prophet lists up the recipients of the cup. Among them are “Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites” (Jer 28:20). Furthermore, in the section of oracles against the nations (Jer 46–51), there is an oracle explicitly directed against Edom (Jer 49:7–22). Jer 49:12 claims that Edom will have to “drink the cup” as part of Yahweh’s judgment and punishment.

I propose that a by-product of the cup-metaphor in Lam 4:21b in a context also mentioning (Daughter) Edom, was that the word בּוֹס (cup) alluded to קוֹס (Qôs). Graphemically, the similarity between the two words is obvious. Both words are written employing three letters, of which the last two are identical. The graphemic similarity was true regardless of whether the poem was written with a Palaeo-Hebrew alphabet variant or its successor, the (Aramaic) “square script.” Phonetically, the similarity expressed itself in assonance between בּוֹס and קוֹס. Except for the opening phonemes (assumedly /k/ in בּוֹס, and /q/ in קוֹס), the two words probably sounded similarly in the pronunciation (probably /-aws/, which later in the linguistic development became /-ōs/). Besides, the place of articulation of the assumed opening phoneme /k/ (in בּוֹס) was probably not far away from that of /q/ (in קוֹס).³²

Several inscriptions with personal names connect Qôs to Edom and Edom’s successor, Idumaea.³³ Strangely enough, although the Hebrew Bible is not in short of references to Edom, it never names the Edomite god.³⁴ Nevertheless, educated (Judaean) readers and listeners of Lam 4 in antiquity were probably aware of the

32 The phonemes /k/ and /q/ are both plosives but differ in their respective place of articulation: /k/ is velar and /q/ is uvular.

33 See Vriezen, “Edomite Deity Qaus”; Knauf, “Qaus”; Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, 187–208; Dearman, “Edomite Religion”; Knauf, “Qôs”; Kelley, “Toward a New Synthesis”; Cornell, “Costobar Affair,” 98–100; and Levin, “The Religion of Idumaea,” 6–10. In recent years, some two thousand Aramaic ostraca from Idumaea, dating to the fourth century BCE have been published, in which theophoric names including the god Qôs flourish; see Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumaea*.

34 The Edomite deity is probably indirectly attested in the name Barqos (בַּרְקוֹס, “Son of Qôs”; Ezra 2:53; Neh 7:55).

connection between Edom and Qôš.

I will argue that the similarity in Lam 4:21b between בּוֹס and קוֹס is not a coincidence, but the result of the poet's deliberate choice of words. When the poet composed Lam 4, he chose to let בּוֹס work as the grammatical subject in the clause גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תִּעְבְּר־בוֹס (v. 21b). In the *qal* stem, the verb עבר has meanings like “to go one's way, to move through, to pass over,” etc. Sometimes, when the verb in the *qal* stem has Yahweh as the syntactic subject, the phrase refers to Yahweh's judgement (Exod 12:12, 23; Amos 5:17) or revealing himself (Exod 22:26; 1 Kgs 19:11). I suggest that the expression גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תִּעְבְּר־בוֹס plays at these nuances. An indication that a theophany is a possible play in the background is the uniqueness of the combination of the noun בּוֹס with the verb עבר. Within the Hebrew Bible, Lam 4:21 is the only verse that combines the noun and the verb. The result was that v. 21b expressed the “I”-person's ironic and mocking wish for Daughter Edom in a context of benevolent wishes for Daughter Zion. In this context, the “cup” played on the word's multiple associations. It was a metaphor for abundance and joy, but also Yahweh's wrath. Besides, the “cup” worked as a veiled reference to the Edomite god Qôš, with the ironic pun: “To you, too, may Qôš pass by!”

Admittedly, the verb תִּעְבְּר is feminine and congruent with the noun בּוֹס. Therefore, בּוֹס is not fully interchangeable with (the masculine) קוֹס. Nevertheless, if the author used the word בּוֹס as a veiled reference to the god Qôš, the point he made with the קוֹס / בּוֹס-similarity was first and foremost ironic. The “I”-person hinted at a theophany of sorts in which Qôš comes to visit Daughter Edom, albeit with a negative result.

The irony in v. 21b suggested above conforms to a broader picture of irony and wordplay. Lamentations 4, as a whole, uses irony and wordplay among its chief literary devices; for example, v. 22a and v. 22b use the verb גלה with entirely different meanings (in *hiphil*, “to exile”; in *piel*, “to uncover”). Moreover, the unit Lam 4:21–22 opens with irony in v. 21a where the anonymous “I”-person urges

Daughter Edom to be happy while v. 21b transitions from merriness to humiliation. The speaker's wish that the cup may visit Daughter Edom can also be understood as integrated with his / her initial wish for Edom, comparable to how an overflowing cup signals confidence and joy in Ps 23:5. However, the concluding clauses in v. 21b evoke an image of a female character's humiliation and possibly sexual abuse. The speaker wishes that she may get drunk and expose her nakedness. Simultaneously, the undressing of Daughter Edom in v. 21b builds a bridge over the verb גלה that occurs twice in v. 22. Moreover, as a whole, Lam 4 is rich in making contrasts, oppositions, reversals, and ironic twists. Going through the entire poem is the contrast between "before" and "now." The poem describes Zion's catastrophe through contrasts and reversals. The gold has become dim (Lam 4:1). Daughter Zion's children were worth gold but are now reckoned as clay vessels (Lam 4:2). There is a contrast between how jackals feed their cubs and how Zion's infants lack food (Lam 4:3–4). People who are used to a luxurious lifestyle perish in the streets (Lam 4:5). The once beautiful princes are now dirty shades of the former past (Lam 4:7–8). Mothers have started eating their babies (Lam 4:10), and the once impregnable Jerusalem witnesses her enemies bursting through her gates (Lam 4:12). Prophets and priests are polluted with the righteous ones' blood (Lam 4:13–15). Yahweh's anointed, who once offered protection, is captured like an animal in a trap (Lam 4:20).

If the interpretation suggested above is correct, Lam 4:21b supplements the Hebrew Bible's surprising lack of knowledge about the religion of Edom. Elsewhere, it only briefly refers to "the gods of the people of Seir" (2 Chr 25:14–15) and "the gods of Edom" (2 Chr 25:20). The Hebrew Bible never identifies Edom's gods, unlike the case with many of the other of Israel and Judah's neighbours.³⁵ However, in a veiled way, Lam 4:21a identifies Qôš as Edom's patron god.

³⁵ See, e.g., Num 21:29 and Jer 48:26.

4 Lost in Translation

If I am correct in identifying volitive expressions in the Hebrew text of Lam 4:21–22, the ancient Septuagint translation has turned them into Greek indicatives. In v. 21b, the Septuagint renders the Hebrew imperfects by future indicatives. In v. 22, it renders the Hebrew perfects by aorist indicatives, and the Hebrew imperfect $\eta\iota\delta\iota$ by a future indicative. Moreover, if it is correct that \cup (“cup”) in Lam 4:21b originally played on its graphemic and phonetic similarities to $\cup\kappa$ (Qôš), then the veiled allusion was lost in the early reception history. The Septuagint’s reading “quenched” the wordplay. When the Septuagint reads *καί γε ἐπὶ σὲ διελύσεται τὸ ποτήριον κυρίου* (“even to you the cup of the Lord will pass”), it narrows the meaning of the “cup” in the Hebrew text. In the Greek text, the “cup” is “the cup *of the Lord*.” In Lam 4:21b LXX, the ancient translation turns what had been a purposefully ambiguous phrase in the Hebrew text into a less ambiguous Greek expression. Furthermore, the Septuagint changes the sexually loaded humiliation of Daughter Edom in the Hebrew text to a problem of drunkenness. Lamentations 4:21 LXX addresses Daughter Idumaea (*θύγατερ Ἰδουμαίας*) and states: “you will become drunk and spill” (*μεθυσθήσῃ καὶ ἀποχεεῖς*). The clumsiness of the drunk Daughter Idumaea causes her to spill, but the Septuagint does not clarify what she spills. In any event, any possible veiled allusion to Qôš is lost.

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