

THE FUNCTION OF LAMENT IN LAMENTATIONS 2:
A CLOSE READING OF LAM 2 RELATED TO THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN
PASTORAL CARE

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ILLUSTRATIONS/TABLES

ANE: Ancient Near East

ANET: Ancient Near Eastern Texts

BC: Book of Concord

BDB: The new Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English lexicon

BHS: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

Cf.: confer, Latin, “compare”

EBR: Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception

Ibid.,: Ibidem, Latin, “same place”.

LXX: The Septuagint

MT: Masoretic Text

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version Bible translation

OT: Old Testament

Vg.: the Vulgate

Qtd.: Quoted

I follow the SBL guidelines for abbreviating the books in the Bible

All references to the Bible, except those from Lam 2, of which I have made my own translation, are taken from the NRSV Bible translation. My translation of Lam 2 is found in the appendix to this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Why Write a Thesis on the Function of Lament in Lam 2?

Since I started seminary six years ago, I have developed a strong interest for the OT, and especially for the OT laments. The laments in the OT fascinate me because they are so open in their descriptions of suffering and pain, and they do not try to “excuse” God’s role in the pain they experience.

In many ways, they do not let God off the hook; rather, they go far in blaming God for the misery the sufferer goes through. Coming from a context where lament has been more or less ignored and the focus has been to “rejoice in the Lord, always,” the discovery of the lament genre has been crucial to me in my theological formation.

I chose to work on Lam 2 because it is a text that goes far in blaming God for the suffering (cf. Lam 2:2, 3, 4, 22), and the text does not end in reconciliation or comfort. The text troubles me: what kind of God not only allows suffering like this, but carefully plans the destruction and the subsequent suffering to happen (Lam 2:17)? If this is the image of God that Lam 2 explains, where can one find hope in expressing out one’s pain to God?

I wanted to learn more about how the lament works when it is *not* responded to. Is it worthwhile to lament if nothing changes in the sufferer’s situation? This is the situation presented in Lam 2, and I was tremendously intrigued by the descriptions of unresolved suffering. In other words, I wanted to find the function of lament in Lam 2.

Theological Issues Raised in Lam 2

Lam 2 speaks about inconceivable suffering. Having been written in the wake of the fatal destruction of Jerusalem in 586/87 BCE,¹ it describes the destruction of

¹The time of composition will be discussed more in chapter 3.

Jerusalem through the voices of at least two characters – a storyteller and Daughter Zion – and God is described as an enemy (Lam 2:4, 5), who acts out of anger (Lam 2:1, 2, 3, 4), and whose actions have fatal consequences for the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Lam 2:10, 12, 18, 20-22). The only voice that is missing in Lam 2 is the voice of God. God is present in fury, which functions as a cloud that separates the personified Jerusalem from God (Lam 2:1).

The issues that are raised in Lam 2 are still relevant. War, suffering and social and political instability are sadly still realities of the world we live in. Suffering is relatable: it makes us raise questions that are not easily answered, and they need to be taken seriously.

Knowing that suffering always will be a part of what it means to be human, the church faces an enormous challenge and opportunity: the care of the church to those who suffer, which in this thesis is limited to the practice of pastoral care, should also be informed by the passages in the Bible that speak about unbearable suffering and hold God responsible. In order to be a helpful pastoral caregiver, one needs to work theologically with texts like Lam 2 so that one may also find ways of employing texts like these into the practice of pastoral care.

Structure of the Thesis

As already indicated, this thesis will focus on Lam 2, but also seek to find a way of using what I find in the analysis of Lam 2 in the practice of pastoral care. The main focus will be on the exegetical work on Lam 2, because I think it is crucial to have a profound understanding of the original meaning and context of the text in order to find ways of using it today.

I start my work in Chapter 2 by presenting my method and also give a general background of Lam 2, which also will include an introduction to the city lament genre. As we will see in the coming chapter, Lam 2 shares some important features with the ANE city lament genre. It is important to understand the relation between the ANE city laments and Lam 2 because if the personified Jerusalem shares any features with the deified cities in the ANE city laments, this will inform our understanding of the personified Jerusalem.

Chapter 3 will focus on what I call “Opening Questions,” where different theories regarding authorship, genre, time of composition and the structure of Lam 2, will be followed by a close reading of Lam 2 in Chapter 4.

The close reading of Lam 2 will follow the outline of the text that I present in Chapter 3. Following the analysis, I will present a theological discussion of Lam 2 in Chapter 5, where I will discuss where God is in Lam 2. This discussion will function as a bridge between the analysis of Lam 2 and the pastoral care part of the thesis, starting in Chapter 6, addressing how Lam 2 is relevant to the practice of pastoral care. There, I will present three different ways of using the Bible in pastoral care: the instructional, the dynamic and the disclosive use of the Bible. Each of the theories will be discussed in order to find the most helpful method of finding the function of lament in Lam 2, which will be done in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, will summarize the main insights found in the text and the application of Lam 2 in pastoral care before I will offer my conclusion. The translation of Lam 2 and the bibliography list will follow Chapter 8.

CHAPTER TWO:

METHOD AND THE BACKGROUND OF LAM 2

Method and the Role of the Reader

In the following exegesis, I will use elements from the historical-critical method and analyze Lam 2 in light of its historical and religious context in order to come closer to the original understanding of the text. The historical-critical method is concerned about what the text describes and into what historical context it was first written.² This method is applicable to both historical books and poetical books, because the cultural, political and religious situations impact all texts, and knowledge about the historical and social

² John H. Hayes and Carl L. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 55.

context of the text shapes how the reader understands the text.³ The strengths of the historical-critical method are that it takes the context of the text, its time of authorship and its genre seriously. The historical-critical method emphasizes that in order to understand and reinterpret an ancient text today, the reader needs to know how it was used and understood when it was first written.

However, the historical-critical method has been criticized because its goal of finding the original meaning of the text is difficult to find because it is hard to fully overcome the gap between the reader and the text. There is no such thing as a neutral reading of any text, because the reader is colored by her history, her context and who she is.⁴

Nevertheless, I still think the historical-critical method is the best method to use for an analysis of an ancient text. In order to be a responsible reader of the text, one needs to know about its original context and try to find its first meaning in order to find ways of using the text today that are both truthful to the text's first context yet also relevant for the current readers of the text. The historical-critical method is, as I see it, the best method for this.

General Introduction to the City Lament Genre

Lam 2 shares important genre features with the Mesopotamian city lament, which is a genre focusing on the destruction of a city. The Mesopotamian city laments are significantly older than the city laments found in the OT. It is generally agreed that the latest date of composition for the Mesopotamian city laments is around 1925 BC.⁵ Before we start analyzing Lam 2 verse by verse, it is important to take a closer look on the city lament genre in order to understand its use, context and *Sitz im Leben*. This will help us to better understand the issues that are raised in Lam 2, and we will be more able to understand the imagery found in the text.

³Ibid., 54.

⁴Hanne Løland, *Silent or Salient Gender?: the Interpretation of Gendered God-language in the Hebrew Bible Exemplified in Isaiah 42, 46 and 49* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 55-56.

⁵Donna Lee Petter, *The Book of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian City Laments* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011), 8.

Noah Samuel Kramer was the first scholar who compared the Mesopotamian city laments and the biblical laments. He states that:

“there is little doubt that the Biblical book of Lamentations owes no little of its form and content to Mesopotamian forerunners, and that the modern Orthodox Jew who utters his mournful lament at the Western wall of “Solomon’s” long destroyed temple, is carrying out a tradition that begun in Sumer some 4000 ago”.⁶

In other words; the city lament genre has influenced some of the texts in the OT, and thereby also played a role in the development of rituals and liturgy.

Background for the City Laments

The Mesopotamian city laments are not homogenous in terms of style and structure.⁷ However, some of them have important features in common – and among them may the background be the most important feature they share. Some of the Mesopotamian city laments⁸ have in common that they lament the destruction of Sumer or other local calamities. They mourn the destruction of the city, as they also seek to explain why a new dynasty is arising.

Sitz im Leben for the Mesopotamian City Laments

There is not much information about how the Mesopotamian city laments were used. What we do know, however, is that the laments are written in a dialect called *emesal* which was only used by the priests.⁹ Based on this, and the fact that the laments

⁶ Qtd. in Randall Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah: Destruction and Lament in the Holy Cities* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8.

⁷ Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 10.

⁸ Some of the Mesopotamian city laments are: “The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur”, “The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur”, “The Eridu Lament”, “The Uruk Lament”, “The Nippur Lament”. Cf. Petter, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 8.

⁹ Petter: *The Book of Ezekiel*, 10.

are structured in a way called *kirugu* that was a common structure in the rituals, we can assume that the city laments were used as a part of the liturgy.¹⁰

Regarding where and when in the liturgy the city laments were recited, we cannot know for sure. There are a number of different theories on the matter, and the scholars have not succeeded on agreeing on one particular *Sitz im Leben*. Mark E. Cohen argues that the city laments were recited in ceremonies revolving the restoration of the city.¹¹ Thorkild Jacobsen, on the other hand, argues that they are not used for a restoration ritual, but rather for the razing of the old structures in the aftermath of the catastrophe.¹² Both Donna Lee Petter and Raphael Kutscher argue that the city laments were constructed for one specific ceremony, for example a worship service held for the offended deity in hope that s/he would return to his/her earthly dwelling place.¹³ It is probably impossible to decide which of these suggestions are correct, since the laments themselves say so little about their use.

However, I would argue that it is unlikely that the city lament genre has only been used for one specific ritual and then not been used anymore because it would be unlikely that the city lament genre would have influenced Lam 2 and other texts in the OT as much if the genre was not actually in use. In fact, that some of the OT laments share important genre features with the ANE city lament, shows that even if the city lament was not used much it was still known. We do not know whether the texts that were written in relation to specific situations also were used in different contexts, but the city lament genre was known regardless of how often each poem was recited or used in the cult.

The OT city laments are considerably younger than the Mesopotamian laments, and it is, as I see it, unlikely that the OT would draw on a genre that was not at all in use

¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹¹ Mark E. Cohen, *An Analysis of the Balag-Compositions to the God Enlil Copied in Babylon During the Seleucid Period* (Ann Arbor: University of Microfilms Press, 1970)

¹² I found the references to Thorkild Jacobsen, *Review of Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur by Samuel Noah Kramer* (ASJL 58, 1941), 219-224 in Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 12. See also Heskett's footnote no. 44 (chp. 2), 160. I did not pursue to find Jacobsen's book myself, due to the time limit of this thesis and because the book is very hard to find in any US libraries.

¹³ Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 12., Petter: *The Book of Ezekiel*, 10-11.

at the time when the OT city laments were written.¹⁴ Randall Heskett posits another possibility for how the OT has been influenced by the Mesopotamian city laments: he argues that the Mesopotamian city laments probably were used as songs in a number of different ceremonies, and that the city lament's successors – the *balag* (lament) and the *ersemma* (wailing tambourine; used as a liturgical composition of a single literary unit that lamented over a catastrophe)¹⁵ – were continued to be used in different ceremonies and rituals, and that the OT city lament developed from them.¹⁶

City Lament: Genre Characteristics

F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp's study of the Mesopotamian city laments serves as a basis for other scholars who compare the Mesopotamian city lament with the city laments in the OT. Dobbs-Allsopp found nine different features that seem to be present in most of the five Mesopotamian city laments.¹⁷ Even though there are differences between the five city laments,¹⁸ they share some important features. These features are:

Subject and Mood¹⁹

Common for all the Mesopotamian city laments is that they focus on the destruction of the city, and their mood tends to be mournful.²⁰ This feature seems obvious, but it is important to include because it constitutes the genre as a lament over the destroyed city.²¹ We see this feature in Lam as well (cf. Lam 2:1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 11).

¹⁴ I am aware that there is a discussion regarding the dependency between the OT city laments and the Mesopotamian city laments, but as far as I know Dobbs-Allsopp has been the only scholar presenting the theory that the OT city lament is not dependent on the Mesopotamian city lament. The format of this thesis is too short to allow a discussion on this particular topic.

¹⁵ Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 12.

¹⁶ Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder. Übersetzt und ausgelegt von Ulrich Berges* (Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 50.

¹⁷ F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), 31-94.

¹⁸ Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 11.

¹⁹ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 31-44.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

Structure and Poetic Technique²²

As already mentioned the Mesopotamian city laments are very diverse in terms of structure. However, there are some similarities between them that we can also find in Lam. Both Lam (cf. Lam 2:1-10, 11-19, 20-22) and the Mesopotamian city laments have interchanging speakers, which makes it possible for the texts to present different perspectives on the situation than by just using one voice.²³

Another poetic technique that is attested both in Lam and in the Mesopotamian city laments, is the use of contrasts and reversals. The poets compare the city's past and present, which he does by showing the contrasts between the time when the city was protected, honored and populated, to the current situation where the city is vulnerable, despised and desolate, which is also described in Lam (cf. Lam 1:1, 2:1, 5, 15). The contrasts are play a prominent part of the description of the suffering in Lam 2 – the young girls, whose main ritual task was to sing and dance, are now bowing their heads in silence (Lam 2:10). Both Lam and the Mesopotamian city laments are also usually focused on the destruction, the divine abandonment or the wrath of the gods/YHWH. In Lam 2, the wrath of YHWH is an important aspect (cf. Lam 2:1, 3, 5, 6, 17, 22) and is used to explain the misfortune of the city.²⁴

Divine Abandonment²⁵

According to the Mesopotamian myths, a city can only be destroyed if its god leaves.²⁶ In *Lament over Ur*, the poet presents a list of different city gods and goddesses who abandon their cities, which is used as an explanation for why the city was defeated.²⁷ If the god(s) leaves the city, it becomes an easy target for enemies.²⁸ Lam 2 does not use

²²Ibid., 32-44.

²³Ibid., 42.

²⁴Berges, *Klagelieder*, 144.

²⁵Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 45-52.

²⁶Ibid., 43.

²⁷Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 15.

²⁸Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 45.

the word “abandon” to describe YHWH’s actions, but it does use imagery of rejection and distance between the city and YHWH, as we see in Lam 2:1 where the cloud is used as a means of separation. YHWH withdraws his right hand, which symbolizes power and protection (Lam 2:3), and the city is no longer protected by YHWH. It is likely that even though the specific term for abandonment is not mentioned, that the text actually speaks of it.²⁹

Assignment of Responsibility³⁰

The Mesopotamian city laments usually assign the responsibility for the destruction of the city to the divine assembly.³¹ The divine assembly can be called upon and asked to save the city, but when it has made a decision, the city’s future is irreversible.³² Neither the city itself nor its population can be held responsible for the destruction – it is a decision of the divine council or the city’s main deity. The assignment of responsibility is a more open question in Lam.³³ In Lam 1, the city and its population are clearly held responsible for the destruction and the subsequent suffering that takes place in Jerusalem, and this is later confirmed in Lam 3:42, 4:13, and 5:17.

However, Lam 2 holds YHWH responsible for the destruction (Lam 2:20-22), and the question whether YHWH’s punishment against Jerusalem is fair is raised multiple times throughout the book (cf. Lam 1:9c, 11c, 2:20-22, 4:6, 5:1, 20, 22).³⁴

The Divine Agent of Destruction³⁵

The divine agent of destruction is usually depicted as a storm in the Mesopotamian city laments.³⁶ The main god Enlil is often identified as the storm, as he uses the violent

²⁹Ibid., 49.

³⁰Ibid., 53-55.

³¹Ibid., 52.

³²Ibid., 52.

³³Claus Westermann, *Lamentations, Issues and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 13-16.

³⁴Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 55.

³⁵Ibid., 55-66.

storm as a means to destroy the city. There is no actual storm in Lam, but we do find imagery that draws heavily on the storm motif.

First and foremost, YHWH uses a cloud (Lam 2:1) to hide himself from the city so the city can no longer reach out to him in prayer. One should not be too surprised to not find a specific storm motif in the OT city laments, because the storm in the Mesopotamian city laments were so closely tied to the god Enlil who is not regarded as a deity worthy of praise in the OT. However, the role of Enlil and the role of YHWH overlap to a certain extent in the city laments. In the Mesopotamian city laments, Enlil acts as a warrior against the city, which is not unattested in Lam 2, where YHWH is actually identified as the enemy (Lam 2:4, 5). YHWH is the warrior who goes to battle on the day of YHWH.³⁷ Other places in the OT (cf. Ex 15:8; 2 Sam 22:14-15) depicts YHWH as a storm god (or at least as a god who uses the natural forces as divine agents), so the motif of the storm as an agent for the divine wrath is present in city laments as well, even though it is not spelled out.

Destruction³⁸

Obviously, the city laments mourn the destruction or the fall of a city, but the description destruction usually plays a significant part in the Mesopotamian city laments as well as in the OT city laments.

Lam vividly describes the destruction of the temple (cf. Lam 2:1, 5, 6, 7, 8), the city environment, and even more tragically: the people in the city suffer and die.³⁹ The destruction affects all parts of society; the political structure as well as the social and

³⁶Ibid., 55.

³⁷Ibid., 55.

³⁸Ibid., 66-74.

³⁹Westermann, *Lamentations*, 17.

religious customs.⁴⁰ This is another feature the OT lament shares with the Mesopotamian laments, where the destruction of the temple(s), the city and its people.⁴¹

The Weeping Goddess⁴²

One of the most prominent images in the Mesopotamian city lament genre is what Kramer refers to as “the Weeping Goddess”.⁴³ In Mesopotamian religion, there is a belief that some cities are protected by a goddess. In *Lament over Ur*, the goddess Ningal weeps over the destruction of her city, its people and for the calamity that the destruction of the city has brought.⁴⁴ The weeping goddess tries to convince the main deity or the divine council to stop the destruction of the city, although the city and the Weeping Goddess are not identified.

In the OT city laments, and especially in Lam, the city is identified as Daughter Zion.⁴⁵ She is not a goddess, but is a personified as a woman who is close to YHWH: she is daughter (Lam 2:1, 4, 10, 13, 18), mother (Lam 2:22) and wife (Lam 1). She is close to God, but her different roles do not necessarily describe her relation to YHWH. She is, for example, not the mother of YHWH but the mother of her citizens. In other biblical literature, including Lam 1, she is described as YHWH’s wife, but this does not entail any sort of equality between her and YHWH. That a city is described as the deity’s wife is not unfamiliar in the Mesopotamian city laments. There, the Weeping Goddess is often connected to another deity by marriage or other family ties.⁴⁶

The OT does not tolerate the worship of multiple deities, so it would have been peculiar if the OT city laments would adopt the motif of the Weeping Goddess. However, Tikva Frymer-Kensky and Claus Westermann both argue that the personified Jerusalem

⁴⁰Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 73.

⁴¹Ibid., 68.

⁴²Ibid., 75-90.

⁴³Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴Ibid., 75.

⁴⁵Westermann, *Lamentations*, 17.

⁴⁶Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 77.

plays a similar role as the Weeping Goddess does in the Mesopotamian city laments.⁴⁷ There are good reasons to think that the personified Jerusalem of Lam is a counterpart to the Weeping Goddess – the similarities between them are striking.⁴⁸ Similar to the Weeping Goddess, Jerusalem in Lam weeps over the destruction of the city (Lam 1 and 2) and its people.⁴⁹ The personified Jerusalem addresses YHWH directly (Lam 2:20-22), just as the Weeping Goddess does in the Mesopotamian city laments, and both try to make the deity change their minds. There are, in other words, good reasons to argue that the role Jerusalem is given in Lam draws on the Weeping Goddess motif from the Mesopotamian city laments, even though she is not deified.

Lamentation⁵⁰

The proper reaction to a catastrophe like a destroyed city is to lament. The lament is a part of both the Mesopotamian city laments and the OT city laments, especially in Lam. The lament focuses on the losses of the city: the buildings, the leaders the people, the customs and so on. Lam is filled with references to mourning (Lam 1:4, 11a, 2:5, 10, 11), and the introduction cry, “alas” (אֵיִהּ), is typical for the lament genre.⁵¹ Dobbs-Allsopp makes it clear that the general lamentation imagery alone does not prove that Lam is dependent on the Mesopotamian city laments, but there are many shared features between them.

Restoration of the City and Return of the Gods⁵²

The city laments’ *Sitz im Leben* has already been discussed and we have seen that some scholars posit that the city laments were used in rituals for restoration of the city.

⁴⁷ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 170. Westermann, *Lamentations*, 30.

⁴⁸ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 92-94.

Thematically, the motif of restoration and the return of the gods that is found in most of the Mesopotamian city laments can be used as an argument for that use of the text.⁵³

Most of the Mesopotamian city laments have sections where the hope for the restoration of the city is explicitly described along with the necessity for the city's future that the city god(s) return. The theme of restoration is not explicitly mentioned in Lam, except from one possible exception in Lam 4:22. Lam 5:21 contains a prayer for restoration, which is also common in the Mesopotamian city laments.⁵⁴ However, the theme of restoration and the return of YHWH is not a prominent motif in Lam. It seems more likely that the poems of Lam are not so much focused on the future possibility of restoration; it does not share the hope that is found in the Mesopotamian city laments. If Lam has any hope at all, it lies in the book's strong protest against the cruelty that takes place.⁵⁵

Summarizing City Lament and Lam 2

We have seen that there are many similarities between the OT city laments, especially those which are found in Lam, and the Mesopotamian city laments. Even though they are not identical they are still very similar in terms of genre, topic, motifs and themes.⁵⁶ Daughter Zion's role in Lam is not simply a reproduction of the Weeping Goddess; the city is personified, yet not deified in Lam 2.⁵⁷ The city lament genre in Lam may not be completely dependent on the Mesopotamian city lament, but as we have seen, there are good reasons to assume that the authors of Lam knew about the Mesopotamian city lament genre and drew on that in the development of Lam.⁵⁸

⁵³Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁵Ibid., 94.

⁵⁶Westermann, *Lamentations*, 17.

⁵⁷Heskett, *Reading the Book of Isaiah*, 15.

⁵⁸ Duane Garret and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs/ Lamentations*, ed. Bruce M. Metzser, vol. 23B, World Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 313.

If we read Lam 2 as a city lament, we also bring with us the understanding of Jerusalem as a woman who, similar to the ANE city goddesses, speaks up against the main deity whose wish is to destroy the city. Lam 2 does not deify Daughter Zion, but one of the similarities between her and ANE city goddesses is that she is in a position where she can stand up against YHWH and take on responsibility for her citizen's well-being. We will see later that her role as objector will play an important role in how we understand the function of lament in Lam 2.

A General Introduction to Personification

As we enter the analysis of Lam 2, it is crucial to have a basic understanding of the literary feature called personification. The personification of cities reaches back to the second millennium BC.⁵⁹ *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* defines personification as “a figure of speech that attributes human characteristics to plants, animals, objects or abstractions”.⁶⁰

Personification of cities is not limited to the OT. In fact, there are many examples from the ANET that personification of cities was not unusual, which we already have seen in the previous discussion on ANE city laments. In Sumer it was common that major cities had a patron goddess, and the city and its goddess were often so closely connected that they were almost completely identified with one another.⁶¹

In Mesopotamia the personification of the city describes the *relationship* between the patron goddess and the city, but the city is not typically identified with the goddess. In West Sumerian texts the personification sometimes leads to deification of the city because the language is feminine.⁶² The personification of a city as a woman in the OT is

⁵⁹Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 70.

⁶⁰P. E. Koptak, “personification”, in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 516.

⁶¹Mark E. Biddle, “The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Canon in Comparative Perspective*, Scripture in Context, vol. 4, B. Batto, W. Hallo, and L. Younger, eds. Lewiston: New York: Mellen Press, 1991, 174.

⁶²Biddle, “*The Figure of Lady Jerusalem*,” 175.

both based on the ANE background of personification, but it also stresses that the grammatical genus for the word “city” is feminine (עיר) and thus the language itself facilitates for a feminine personification of the city.⁶³

Through personification the poets are able to alter the description of the fall of Jerusalem into a literary experience that evokes the compassion of the community as the poet describes the communal suffering in Jerusalem in personal terms.⁶⁴ Jerusalem is personified as a woman, Daughter Zion (בת ציון), in Lam 2. The city, which is obviously not human, is given anthropomorphic characteristics as the city’s situation is described. Elizabeth Boase argues that the personification of the city in Lam “is its ability to express that which cannot be expressed otherwise.”⁶⁵

Personification of Cities in the Old Testament

Lam 2 is far from the only place in the OT where a city is personified. Jerusalem is often personified in the prophetic literature where the term “daughter”, (בת) is applied to Zion/Jerusalem/my people.⁶⁶ Other cities than Jerusalem can also be personified, even though the personification of Jerusalem is by far the most common in the OT (cf. Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14).⁶⁷ Examples of other cities that are personified in the OT are Tyros in Psalm 48:13, Nineveh in Zeph 2:13b-15 and Babylon in Isa 47. Both Nineveh and Babylon are depicted as women whose power has been taken away from them. The cities are destroyed, and the destruction is described in female terms. Nineveh loses her fertility, her land was fruitful and she was admired by other people, but now she is desolate and mocked by the surrounding nations. Babylon is also depicted as a woman. She had the role of a queen, but now she is desolate, she has lost

⁶³Elizabeth Boase, *The Fullfilment of Doom? The Dialogic Interaction Between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-Exilic/Early Exilic Prophetic Literature* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2006), 54.

⁶⁴Ibid., 51.

⁶⁵Ibid., 52.

⁶⁶Ibid., 53.

⁶⁷Ibid., 55-77.

her children and husband. In other words: she has lost all that give any woman security in the OT society.

The imagery is closely connected to women and female experiences. Jerusalem is depicted as a woman many times throughout the OT, and she is both referred to as Zion and Jerusalem. The roles of the personified Jerusalem vary throughout the OT; she is a daughter (2 Kings 19:21), a virgin (Isa 37:22), bride (Isa 62:3), wife (Isa 54:5, 62:4-5), a mother (Lam 2:20-22, Isa 51:20), a widow (Lam 1:1), a harlot (Jer 2:20). All of these roles are genuinely feminine, and they are often used to explain the relationship between YHWH and Zion. As a woman was dependent on her owner, who was typically either her father or her husband, Zion is dependent on YHWH in order to remain safe and to provide a safe space for her citizens/children.

The personification of Zion reveals an interesting dynamic between Zion and YHWH and also between Zion and her people. The relationship between Zion and YHWH is described in terms of family and love, and we see that their relationship is very close. Nevertheless, as a woman, the relationship between Daughter Zion and YHWH is asymmetrical in its nature. First and foremost because YHWH is god and Zion is not, and YHWH therefore by nature has more power than Zion, but this is also stressed by the fact that Zion is described as a female.⁶⁸ She is dependent on her patron – who is YHWH, and her relationship with YHWH is of great importance to the people because her status as beloved by YHWH affects them as well.

When Zion has failed to please YHWH this has a double effect – YHWH will leave Zion, or separate himself from her in some other way, and this deeply affects the citizens of the city as well. In many ways, one can say that Zion plays a role as mediator between YHWH and the people: the consequences of the relationship between the personified Zion affect the people who live in the city as well.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Carleen R. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 107.

⁶⁹Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom*, 55.

Personification in Lam 2

Jerusalem is personified as a woman throughout Lam 1, 2 and 4, but the use of “daughter”, (בַּת), increases in Lam 2 where much of the focus is on the physical destruction of Jerusalem and the people living there.⁷⁰ The use of personification in Lam 2 shares many features with the personification of cities in the prophetic literature.⁷¹ The city, which is in Lam 2 most often referred to as Daughter Zion, is described as a female who has a number of different roles.⁷²

Differently from the prophetic literature, the primary function of the personification of Jerusalem is to facilitate the lamenting language.⁷³ The descriptions of the personified city intensify as the text develops: in verse 1-10 the description seems almost cynical; the lack of identification with the city’s situation is remarkable.⁷⁴ In verse 11-19 this changes and the focus is on the emotions of the personified city and her inhabitants. This demonstrates that focusing on the personified city by describing the communal suffering in personal terms makes it possible for the poet to express lament and grief in the aspect of a single individual, which is helpful in order to express pain.⁷⁵

In Lam 2:20-22 the personification of Jerusalem reaches its peak point. There, the city cries out on behalf of her children who suffer unimaginable pain.⁷⁶ We see the personified Zion’s role as mediator between YHWH and her citizens/children especially clearly in Lam 2.⁷⁷ Zion is personified as a mother who tries to protect her children from YHWH’s anger (Lam 2:20-22). The anger of YHWH is directed towards Daughter Zion, but it impacts her children deeply (Lam 2:12, 17). They starve, they suffer and many of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁷¹ Ibid., 83.

⁷² Ibid., 84.

⁷³ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 52-53.

⁷⁶ Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 83.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 81.; Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom*, 95.

them die. Zion plays a role of a vulnerable daughter, being in a symbolic daughter – father relation to YHWH, but she is also the mother who cries out on behalf of her children.⁷⁸ The personification of Jerusalem serves, in other words, to describe communal suffering in personal terms and thereby creating a gripping and heart-wrenching story about the communal suffering of Jerusalem and her people.⁷⁹

Now we have the necessary background information regarding city lament and personification, and we can start looking at the opening questions concerning Lam 2.

CHAPTER THREE: OPENING QUESTIONS

Background

Title of the Book

In the Jewish tradition, the Book of Lamentations is known as *איכה*, which is the first word in Lam 1 and 2. According to the Brown Driver Briggs lexicon,⁸⁰ the word can be used both as a question (why?) and as an exclamation that introduces a lament (alas!). In Lam 2, the word is not followed by any questions, and it is therefore unlikely that the word is used as a question in this context. The best translation of the title as it found in the Hebrew text would be “the book of alas”.

However, the LXX and Vg. have translated the title to *θρῆνοι* and *Threni*, which translate to “tears” or “lamentations”. The Hebrew word that is used as the base for this translation is *קנינה* (“lament”), does not appear in Lam. The reason for why this word

⁷⁸Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 106.

⁷⁹Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom*, 51.

⁸⁰Francis Brown, S. R Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), “איכה” 32.

having been used to translate the book's title is probably because Lam has been identified as the laments mentioned in 2 Chr 35:25, where it refers to Jeremiah's dirge over King Josiah. This verse has had a strong influence on the interpretation of Lam for centuries.⁸¹ Common to both of the Hebrew words is that they do not simply name the book; they also provide an interpretation of the usage of the book. It is a mournful book, lamenting the losses of Daughter Zion and her people.

Author

Referral to the dirge in 2 Chr 35:25 led to the traditional understanding that Lam as a whole was written by the prophet Jeremiah.⁸² The authorship of Lam was not further questioned until Hermann von Hardt in the Helmstedter Programm in 1712 claimed that Lam was not written by Jeremiah, but rather, by five different OT characters.⁸³ His suggestion was rather creative, but it started the academic dispute on the authorship of Lam.⁸⁴ Modern scholars have mostly abandoned the theory that Jeremiah is the author of Lam.⁸⁵ Erhard S. Gerstenberger claims that "[modern scholarship cannot for] linguistic, historical, generic, and thematic reasons accept the authorship of the prophet Jeremiah".⁸⁶ The current discussion on the authorship of Lam focuses mainly on whether Lam is the work of one or multiple authors, or if it is at all possible to determine the authorship of the book.⁸⁷

There are a number of different theories concerning the authorship of Lam. Artur Weiser and Helmer Ringgren claim that Lamentations was written by one author.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 31.

⁸² Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 468.

⁸³ Berges, Ulrich: *Klagelieder*, 34.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁵ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 58.

⁸⁶ Gerstenberger, *Lamentations*, 468.

⁸⁷ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 56.

⁸⁸ Helmer Ringgren and Artur Weiser, *Das Hohe Lied, Klagelieder, des Buch Esters, übersetzt und erklärt von Helmer Ringgren und Artur Weiser* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 43-44.

Westermann, on the other hand, comments that “one gets the impression, however, that this thesis [of one author] grows not so much out of the texts themselves as out of these individual’s interpretation of the text”.⁸⁹

Those who claim that Lamentations has one author have not been able to point out semantic characteristics that support their claim,⁹⁰ which makes the theory that Lamentations has multiple authors the most convincing.

Time of Composition

The language in Lam 2 is poetic and it is hard to know the exact time in which it was written. Westermann and Ulrich Berges argue that it is likely that Lam 2 is the oldest of the poems in Lam and that it was probably written in Jerusalem, shortly after the fall of the temple in 586/7 BCE due to its vivid descriptions of the devastation of the city.⁹¹ Dobbs-Allsopp has done a linguistic study of the text in which he concludes that Lam 2 was probably written during the sixth century BCE.⁹² This means that in the following analysis of Lam 2, I will treat the text as an independent textual unit, and thereby read it independently from the other poems in Lam 2.

Genre

Determining the genre of Lam 2 is not an easy task. Lam 2 has elements of a number of different genres, and in many ways is it a unique text in regards to genre. We have already recognized similarities between Lam 2 and ANE city laments, but Lam 2 also contains elements from the lament psalms, as well as elements from the dirge, and the prophetic literature.

The headline in the chapter itself gives the reader a clue of what to expect: Lam 2 is introduced by the word *אֵיכָה*. This word is common for the prophetic literature; it is

⁸⁹ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 57.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 133.

⁹² F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations” in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 26 (1999): 1-36.

used to introduce lament in the prophetic books (cf. Isa 1:21, 8:8, Je 48:17).⁹³ Lam 2 has alternating speakers (Lam 2:1-10, 11-19, 20-22), which is typical for the ANE city laments and to the OT prophetic literature (cf. Jer 2-6 and 8:4-10:25).⁹⁴ It also shares some genre features with the dirge.

Hermann Gunkel classified the lament psalms in two categories, the communal and the individual lament.⁹⁵ Lam 2 has similarities to both types of lament. The main features for the communal lament are: 1) a lamenting complaint over the misfortune 2) a petition to YHWH to change the situation, 3) words of consolation 4) thoughts aimed to move YHWH to action 5) petition for justice and/or vengeance, and 6) promise of giving YHWH praise when the prayers are responded to. As for the individual lament, the main features are:⁹⁶ 1) summons to YHWH, 2) a complaint or petition to YHWH, which often is the most significant part of the personal lament, 3) challenge of YHWH's honor/qualities in order to move YHWH to action, 4) often, but not always, an assurance of being heard.⁹⁷

In Lam 2, there is a personal lament in verse 11-19. There is a first-person narrator, who describes his own situation, and his reactions to it (Lam 2:11). The situation of the children and sucklings in Jerusalem (Lam 2:12) is also described in the lament. Both the communal and the individual lament psalms are usually introduced by addressing YHWH (Ps 44:1, 74:1), but there are also examples of lament psalms that starts by describing the misfortune over which they are lamenting (Ps 79:1).

Lam 2 starts by describing the misfortune the city and her people are experiencing (Lam 2:2:1ff). YHWH has “set Daughter Zion under a cloud” due to his anger, and now she and her people are experiencing the results of the anger of YHWH. Another similarity between Lam 2 and the communal lament psalms is that the

⁹³ Gerstenberger, *Lamentations*, 489.

⁹⁴ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 32. See also the discussion above on ANE city laments and Lam 2.

⁹⁵ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 82-98., 121-198.

⁹⁶ Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 88.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85-95.

complaints are political in nature (Ps 79:1-4, 80:5-7, Lam 2: 5-9).⁹⁸ In verse 20-22, we see the petition to YHWH to change the current situation: YHWH is addressed by name, he is asked to “look and consider” (Lam 2:20) and the petition is followed by an appeal to YHWH in Lam 2:20b.

There are, in other words, important similarities between Lam 2 and both the personal and communal lament psalms. However, there are also some interesting differences between our text and the typical pattern for the lament psalms. Usually, the communal lament psalms end with a word of consolation or a promise of praise when YHWH has changed the misfortune of the people (cf. Ps 54:17, 18b-20, 58:12,79:13). This element is not present in Lam 2; there are no words of consolation nor any promises of praise. There is no expression of assurance of being heard, or any statement of trust that YHWH will eventually redeem the lamenter. Even though the poem does not include all of the typical elements of lament, there is no doubt that this poem is a poem of lament.

Westermann calls the framework of Lam 2 an “accusation against God”; the poem stresses the elements of anger and grief that are often found in the lament psalms.⁹⁹ It is rare to find texts that contain all of the different elements of the lament psalm, and Lam 2 is an example of a lament with both individual and communal elements that do not include a promise of praise.

Paul R. House argues that Lam 2 also shares some important characteristics with the dirge.¹⁰⁰ Typical for a dirge is that it is addressed to the community, but it does not necessarily follow a typical pattern.¹⁰¹ Commonalities between the dirge and Lam 2, is that they are communal and they include descriptions of the distress the mourners are going through. Lam 2 consists, in other words, of more than one literary type, and the author(s) of Lam 2 did not limit themselves to one genre.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 88.

⁹⁹ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ House, *Lamentations*, 315.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 315.

Structure

Acrostic pattern

Lam 2 is an acrostic poem. The first line of each stanza starts with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet, from \aleph to τ , following the order of \aleph then \beth , which is a variation on the alphabetical order that also occurs in other ancient Hebrew texts.¹⁰²

The purpose of the acrostic pattern is discussed among scholars. Friedrich Giesebrecht and Max Löhr suggest that the Hebrew alphabet was believed to have magical power.¹⁰³ Fredrik Lindström and other scholars, think that the acrostic pattern stresses that the text expresses totality,¹⁰⁴ in the same way as the New Testament uses A and \Omega as a way of expressing totality,¹⁰⁵ and as we use the expression “from A-Z”.¹⁰⁶

The totality Lam 2 describes is the totality of the suffering and pain of the city and her people. This understanding of the acrostic pattern seems to be a natural way of understanding the purpose of the acrostics in a text like this. Both Lam 1 and 2 are acrostics, but all of the poems in Lam have 22 verses (there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet), and the composition of the book as a whole shows that there must have been another purpose for the use of the acrostics other than the author(s) showing their poetical and liturgical skills.¹⁰⁷ The horrors of the city and the people are vividly described, and it

¹⁰²Ibid., 306.; Johan Renkema, *Lamentations* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 49.

¹⁰³ Friedrich Giesebrecht and Max Löhr: *Das Buch Jeremia & Klagelieder des Jeremia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), vii.

¹⁰⁴Renkema, *Lamentations*, 49., Fredrik Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament* (Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1983), 217.

¹⁰⁵Renkema, *Lamentations*, 49.

¹⁰⁶ House, *Lamentations*, 307.

¹⁰⁷ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 50.

makes sense that the author(s) would use the acrostic pattern as a means to describe the totality of the distress of the city and her people.¹⁰⁸

Alternating Voices

Lamentations 2 uses alternating voices that provide a basic structure for the text. The first unit (verse 1-10) is the story of the narrator. The narrator describes Daughter Zion's situation in verse 1-10.¹⁰⁹ Daughter Zion is described in third person terms, and her situation is described from a distant perspective. The description of the city and the reason for the suffering is given from the perspective of an all knowing narrator. The narrator is close enough that he can see the suffering and pain of the city, he describes the loss of the temple and the religious rituals, but he is not particularly emotionally involved in the situation.

The focus changes in verse 11, where the people and the human suffering in the city are the focal point. In the description of the human suffering, the perspective changes from a report to a personal lament that appears to describe Daughter Zion in third-person terms.¹¹⁰ The perspective changes into a personal lament. Finally, in verse 20-22, it is daughter Zion herself who is speaking. She has been silent throughout the text, but she raises her voice in the end, demanding God to listen to her. The analysis of the text will be based on the three different parts – or units – that each voice represents.

Perspective for the Analysis

In the following analysis of Lam 2, I will focus on what the text tells about the relation between God and Daughter Zion and her people. The ultimate task is to find the function of the lament in Lam 2, and to do so it is necessary to focus on the relationship (or lack thereof) between God and Daughter Zion. How is the dynamic between God and

¹⁰⁸ House, *Lamentations*, 308.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 372.

Daughter Zion described? What is being communicated about God in this text, and how does the text deal with the severe suffering that takes place in Daughter Zion?

What we find in the analysis of Lam 2 will be important in the following discussion on the use of the Bible in pastoral care practices. This means that the following analysis of Lam 2 will focus on what is important for the function of lament in Lam 2, and elements that are not important to the understanding of the text itself or that are irrelevant to the perspective of this thesis, will not be discussed in depth.

Lam 2 presents a painful situation that can only be relieved by God – but Lam 2 does not end in peaceful reconciliation with God. It is rather the opposite; God is being accused for being the source of the problem for Daughter Zion. What does this mean for the relation between God and the people?

CHAPTER FOUR:

EXEGESIS OF LAMENTATIONS 2

Unit I, Verse 1-10: the Narrator speaks about Daughter Zion's Distress

Verse 1-2: Introduction to Lament

⌘ 1 Alas!

Adonay in his anger

has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!

He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel,

and not remembered his footstool on the day of his anger.

Lamentations 2 uses alternating voices that provide a basic structure for the text. The first unit (verse 1-10) is the story of the narrator, who describes Daughter Zion's

situation in third-person speech from a distant perspective.¹¹¹ The text starts with a cry – alas – for the city that is no longer remembered or cherished by Adonay. The Hebrew word אֵיכָה introduces the whole chapter.

As we have already seen, the word is not followed by any questions, and it is therefore used as an exclamation of lament: alas! Directly after the cry, the reasons for the lament are given: Adonay has set Daughter Zion under a cloud (יַעֲיֵב hi. Impf. 3msg), he has cast down (שָׁלַךְ) the splendor (תְּפִאֲרָה) of Israel and he has not remembered (וְלֹא זָכַר) his footstool. All the verbs in the first verse describe the actions of YHWH, and all his actions negatively affect Daughter Zion.

The narrator has a full overview of the current situation. He knows what the current situation looks like and how it happened: the reason for Daughter Zion's distress is told already in the first line of the very first stanza: Adonay has set Daughter Zion under a cloud. The mournful language and the motif of the cloud separating Daughter Zion and Adonay is similar to the motif of the storm god in some of the ANE city laments.¹¹² Due to this cloud, daughter Zion can no longer see him and she is no longer under his protection.

The closeness that was once there is now replaced by distance and lack of communication. The clouding of Daughter Zion expresses the distance that has occurred between Adonay and Daughter Zion and also that the anger of Adonay is impossible for Daughter Zion to escape from: she is surrounded by the fierce anger of YHWH that is as a cloud that covers her.¹¹³

Adonay, on his side, has set himself apart from Daughter Zion by veiling his face so that she cannot see him anymore, nor can he hear her cries.¹¹⁴ The presence of Adonay that once was so apparent in the lightning and thunder on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16-19) is not there anymore. What is present is the cloud of anger that separates Adonay from Daughter Zion. There was a time when Adonay was the one to whom the people could

¹¹¹ House, *Lamentations*, 372.

¹¹² Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 57-64.

¹¹³ House, *Lamentations*, 376.

¹¹⁴ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 135.

pray for deliverance, hoping that their prayers would be heard (Ps 38:23, 44:6, 27). They could pray to Adonay knowing that his love for Zion was stronger than for any other city (Ps 87:2), but now all these things are gone, because Adonay has set a cloud between himself and Daughter Zion.

The unique relationship between Daughter Zion and Adonay has not shielded her from Adonay's wrath,¹¹⁵ rather it is the reason why Adonay punishes her so severely (Lam 1: 18). The narrator stresses the severity of Daughter Zion's situation by referring to her former positions: she was his footstool (Lam 2:1), and her splendor was in the heavens with Adonay (Lam 2:1). Her position has now changed to the opposite – she is cast down from heaven and she is not remembered anymore. The unique relationship that once was protecting Daughter Zion is no longer there. She has become the target for Adonay's anger.

The language that is used here is full of contrasts; it stresses the distance between Adonay and Daughter Zion. Her current situation represents a strong contrast to what were usually her features (Lam 2:15). Her whole identity has changed – from being protected by Adonay and looked upon with favor from the peoples, Adonay has now become her enemy (Lam 2:5) and the peoples are hissing at her, celebrating her fall (Lam 2:16). The contrasting language again reminds us that Lam 2 shares important features with the city lament.¹¹⁶ There are, in other words, many losses to be lamented for Daughter Zion.

Not only does the clouding of Daughter Zion impact the relationship between her and Adonay, but it also paints another, rather disturbing, image of Adonay. Adonay, who presented himself as “slow to anger” to the people in Exodus (Ex 34:6) is now raging against Daughter Zion. The word that is used here is שָׁלַח which when in hiphil¹¹⁷ with Adonay as subject usually has negative connotations (see for example 2 Kings 24:30 and Jer 52:3).

¹¹⁵ House, *Lamentations*, 376.

¹¹⁶ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 40.

¹¹⁷ Hiph'il is a Hebrew verb stem that signifies the causation of an event.

The splendor (תפארת) of Israel refers to the temple,¹¹⁸ which was regarded as the meeting point between God and the people, implying that the link between YHWH and the people is broken.¹¹⁹ The people no longer have access to YHWH and they can no longer ask for salvation, because YHWH will no longer hear. The loss of the temple also implies loss of safety and security; the communication between Daughter Zion and her protector was assured by the temple, which is now destroyed.¹²⁰

The image of the temple as Adonay's footstool (חרגו רגליי) draws on the ANE tradition where the king sits on a throne with his feet resting on a low stool.¹²¹ In Israel, God is often compared to a king who is seated in heaven with the earth as his footstool. The temple was where God's feet would touch the earth (cf. Ps 132:7).¹²² Other texts suggest that God's footstool is the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Isa 60:13, Ezek 43:7). Our verse states that Adonay has disregarded his footstool – he is no longer present among the people,¹²³ and Adonay is no longer present on the place he once chose for himself (Deut 14:23, Jer 8:19, Joel 3:22). When the people cannot trust that Adonay will listen and remember them (זכר: see Ps 8:5, 20:4, 25:6-7, 98:3), everything is lost.¹²⁴

Anger is a very prominent feeling in Lam 2.¹²⁵ It is referred to as the main reason for Adonay's actions against Daughter Zion and it is mentioned two times just in the first verse, both times referring to the tragic situation of the city. However, the anger is not explained. The narrator does not suggest that Daughter Zion has done anything to deserve to be treated like this. There is no language of guilt or repentance in this text, which is unusual compared to most of the lament texts (cf. Ps 51:3, 5, 78:36). The lack of

¹¹⁸Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 68.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²⁰ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 136.

¹²¹ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 68.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²⁴ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 136.

¹²⁵ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 67.

repentance stresses the contrast between Daughter Zion and Adonay's actions: Adonay is the only one who acts in this verse, and all his actions are directed towards Daughter Zion and Israel. Daughter Zion is not described in terms of actions at all in this verse – she is the one who is acted *against* – she is the *target* for Adonay's wrath.¹²⁶

The active fury of Adonay and Daughter Zion's passive reception of the punishment is emphasized by the gendered language as well. Zion is identified as *daughter* (בת) throughout the whole text, which stresses the contrast to the [male] fury of Adonay who is raging against a defenseless woman who Adonay still, after all, considers family.¹²⁷

Verse 2-3: Adonay has broken and cut down the might of Israel

⌌ 2 *Adonay has destroyed without mercy
all the dwellings of Jacob;
he has in his wrath broken down the strongholds of daughter Judah;
he has brought down to the ground in dishonor
the kingdom and her rulers.*

⌌ 3 *He has cut down in his burning anger all the might of Israel
He has withdrawn his right hand from them
in the face of the enemy.
[He has] burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,
consuming all around.*

Verse 2 and 3 both thematically elaborate the actions of Adonay and what their consequences are for daughter Zion. Adonay is again described by verbs that all imply negative effect on the people, and again is Adonay the only one who acts. He is again acting according to his wrath. In most OT literature, God's wrath is not a feature of

¹²⁶ House, *Lamentations*, 376.

¹²⁷ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 135.

Godself – it is a way for God to react¹²⁸ to an event or incident (cf. Deut 22:22; Num 32:10; Josh 7:1; Jer 23:18-20; Ps 78:31; Mic 7:9).

This is not the situation for Lam 2. The text itself does not give any specific reasons for why the wrath of Adonay has hit them so hard. In Lam 2:14, we see that there have been incidents of false prophecy and that the iniquity of Jerusalem was not made known. However, the lack of the retrospection of Adonay's earlier saving deeds, is characteristic for Lam 2.¹²⁹ Lam 2 actually states that God did not do what he was supposed to¹³⁰ – instead, he withdrew his hands from them (Lam 2:3). The degree of devastation is described more clearly: Adonay is acting without mercy, destroying all the dwellings of Jacob.

Again, the target for Adonay's rage is described as “daughter” (בת), which stresses the asymmetric relationship between Adonay and Judah: Adonay is the raging male whose actions are merciless and Daughter Judah is the female whose borders have been crossed and destroyed. Her situation is fully dependent on Adonay's behavior and mood whilst Adonay does not share any of this dependency.

The description of Adonay as merciless is very out of character for how Adonay usually acts towards his people; the only other place in the OT where it is so openly stated that Adonay has become an enemy is in the laments of Job (Job 13:24; 33:10). The narrator of Lam 2:1-10, even though the situation is described from a distance, accuses Adonay for the suffering of the city, which is identified as a result of Adonay's anger.

Adonay's actions are described as without mercy (לֹא כְּמִלָּה) which is a fairly uncommon way of describing Adonay; usually this term describes enemies (cf 2 Chr 51:34). The contrast between the descriptions of Adonay's actions in Ps 124:2f and this text are vast. The threat that was described in Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 5:11, 7:4, 9:8-10) has now become real.¹³¹ What is being destroyed are the dwellings of Jacob (כָּל נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב), which

¹²⁸ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 150.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 151.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 151.

¹³¹ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 137.

after the fall of the northern kingdom also include Judah,¹³² and all the inhabited land including the temple itself, where Adonay dwells.¹³³

The verb “destroy” (הָרַס) is usually used regarding the destruction of the city walls (Jer 50:15, Ezek 26:4, 12; 30:4), but it can also refer to Israel as a whole (Jer 1:10, 3; 50:19). This is probably the case here, because the text goes further in the descriptions of the situation: not only are the “strongholds of Daughter Judah” brought down, but all the dwellers of Jacob are destroyed and the kingdom and the political powers are brought down as well.

The anger of Adonay is like a burning fire. The subject for the word וַיִּבֶרֶךְ is Adonay himself, and the language is similar to the language of theophany, even though it is not common that the language used is so direct (see for example Isa 30:27 and Ps 2:12). Adonay *is* the fire, he is the one who has burned and consumed everything around Jacob.¹³⁴

The sovereignty of Adonay is seemingly limitless in this text – his actions have enormous consequences for the targets for his anger, and a solution to calm Adonay’s anger is not presented. The threats that the enemies usually represented are here represented by Adonay. He has let Israel down and taken away the protection that was once offered by his right hand (יְמִינִי) (Job 40:9; Ps 21:9; 44:4, 60:7; 63:9) and by which they were led from Egypt into the promised land (Ex 15:6; Ps 44:4).¹³⁵ Adonay reveals himself in a negative theophany.¹³⁶ The center of religious and political power of Israel is destroyed, the people are suffering – and Adonay has become like an enemy.

Verse 4-5: Adonay has become like an enemy

7 4 He has bent his bow like an enemy

Set with his right hand as a foe

¹³² Ibid., 137.

¹³³ Ibid., 137.

¹³⁴ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 228.

¹³⁵ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 138.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 138.

*And he has killed all the pride in our eyes
in the tent of the daughter of Zion.
He has poured out all his fury like fire.
⌞ 5 Adonay has become like an enemy;
he has destroyed Israel.
He has destroyed all her palaces,
laid all his strongholds in ruins,
and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lament.*

The hostile actions of Adonay are further described. In verse 3, he withdrew his right hand, now the action of withdrawal intensifies. In verse 4-5, this imagery develops. He prepares his weapon – the bow (רשף) – for fight, and his right hand, which was earlier used to protect his people, is now used as a means for the enemy. Verse 4 and 5 show that the withdrawal of Adonay’s right hand should not be viewed as a sign of passivity;¹³⁷ here, the withdrawn hand comes yet again in focus and is now placed on the bow, ready to shoot arrows at Daughter Zion.

What does the image of God being an enemy mean? Does God act *like* an enemy, or *is* God an enemy? The text uses ׀, which can both mean “like” and “qualitatively like”.¹³⁸ There have been many discussions on the use of ׀ and it has to be discerned from time to time how it is supposed to be translated. Johan Renkema argues that the poet would not use the comparative particle ׀ to define Adonay as an enemy, because if Adonay not only shared the features of an enemy but *actually was the enemy*, it would be pointless to direct the prayers and lament to him.¹³⁹

Berges argues that the use of ׀ does not indicate any theological restraint, but the imagery that is used presents a tension in the image of Adonay.¹⁴⁰ According to Ronald J. Williams, the preposition often represents likeness, but it does not necessarily mean that

¹³⁷ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 227.

¹³⁸ BDB, „׀“458.

¹³⁹ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 229.

¹⁴⁰ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 139.

what is being compared is identical.¹⁴¹ The people knew from pre-exilic prophecies that Adonay surely could turn against his own people (Am 2:13-16, Jer 6:1-6). The bow that YHWH laid down in Gen 9:12-17 has now become a weapon of destruction.¹⁴²

Regardless of whether Adonay *is* an enemy or just *acts* like one, the text in Lam 2 does not give any other reason for the distress of Daughter Zion and her people than the hostile actions of Adonay. This reveals an interesting theological tension in the text:¹⁴³ Adonay is the reason for the suffering of the city and he has taken on the role of an enemy. Yet, he is the one Daughter Zion addresses in her cry for help (verse 20-22).

The act of firing the arrows is not described in the text, but we are presented with the results of it: the pride in their eyes in the tent of Daughter Zion.¹⁴⁴ YHWH's arrows are often a symbol of the divine judgment (Num 24:8, Deut 32:42, Ps 7:14, 8:15), and in Ezek 5:16 are they also connected to famine.¹⁴⁵ This is a valuable observation for our text, because there are descriptions of hunger and thirst later on in the poem (Lam 2:12).

The lament is caused by Adonay, yet it is also directed towards him, because he is the only one who is in power to stop the suffering. The lament seems to both identifying that Adonay is causing the harm, yet also, that Adonay is the only one who is able to stop the suffering. The tension in the lament is extreme.

Verse 6-7: Adonay has brought the Shabbat and the festivals to an end

*6 He treated his booth with violence,
as if it were a garden,
and he laid the place of his appointed feast in ruins.*

¹⁴¹ Ronald J. Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax, 3rd ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 101.

¹⁴² Berges, *Klagelieder*, 139.

¹⁴³ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 229.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

*YHWH brought the Sabbath and the festivals to an end
and he has spurned the king and priest in his fierce indignation.
7 Adonay has scorned his altar,
and disowned his sanctuary.
He has delivered the walls of her palaces
into the hand of the enemy,
They rose a clamor in the house of YHWH
as on a day of an appointed feast.*

The destruction unfolds in these verses, and the focus is now on the religious implications of Adonay's actions. Verse 6 starts by stating that Adonay treated his booth (שבתי) with violence (התביס). Adonay is again the active character, and the terms "booth" and "garden" draw on the imagery that Zion is God's garden (Isa 51:3), and that the temple is God's booth in the garden.¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the Old Testament, gardens are often places where people thrive and the gardens usually represent places where there is joy, righteousness, love, work and fertility (cf. Gen 2:15, Songs 5:1, 6:2, Isa 60:21, Jer 31:12).

In our text, on the other hand, the garden is the object for destruction and violence which the place where people should be happy, where fertility and growth have peaked, has now become a place for disaster, suffering and death. The garden imagery stresses the severity of the disaster even more – the contrast between what one expects a garden to look like and the situation in Adonay's own garden is striking. The topic in verse 4 is further developed here – the tent of daughter Zion that is mentioned in verse 4 is here identified as Adonay's own booth.¹⁴⁷

The booth, or the garden hut, is a metaphor for shelter (cf. Isa 1:8; Jonah 4:5; Job 27:18) and here it refers to the temple.¹⁴⁸ The temple, where the people gathered for prayer and protection, is destroyed as easily as a booth.¹⁴⁹ In Isa 1:8, Daughter Zion is

¹⁴⁶ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁴⁸ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 69.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

described as a booth, which is an image that stresses her vulnerability towards enemies, and in Psalm 27:5 and 31:21, the booth is where the people hide from danger. In our verse, the booth is no longer protected by Adonay and there is no longer any hiding place for the people. They have become easy victims for their enemies because they are no longer protected by Adonay.

The word for violence that is used here (הַמָּוֶה) is common in the Old Testament, but it is not typically used to describe God. Ezekiel identifies the evildoers with the priests that profaned God's holy things (Ezek 22:26), and Psalm 11:5 identifies God as one who hates the lover of violence. God is elsewhere described as the one who delivers the psalmist from the violent (Ps 18:49), and God is the one the psalmist turns to in prayer to be delivered from evildoers (Ps 140:1-6).

In Lam 2, the dynamic has changed. Adonay is no longer the one who protects or delivers the lamenters from evil. This time it is Adonay himself who treats his booth and garden violently! The piel form of the verb stresses that it is a chosen act, and we only find this form of the verb with Adonay as the subject in Lam 2:6.¹⁵⁰ Adonay has destroyed all the things that the people could rely on¹⁵¹ – the palaces, strongholds, the temple and the city are ruined, which is also a theme that reminds us of the city lament.¹⁵² Even the leaders of the nation are spurned by Adonay.

Again, we realize that the function of the lament in this text is different than in many other texts of lament. Here, the lament is both a *response* to the suffering, but in the response there is a plea for delivery. The one who can deliver Daughter Zion and her people is Adonay, who has the role of both a redeemer and an enemy.¹⁵³

Both verse 6 and 7 focus on Zion and on the loss of the festivals. Rituals and feasts were crucial to the people's understanding of themselves and their role as a chosen people. Adonay has destroyed all the things, both physically and spiritually, that the

¹⁵⁰ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 141.

¹⁵¹ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 152.

¹⁵² Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 68-70.

¹⁵³ Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 105.

people relied on¹⁵⁴. The elimination of the Shabbat and festivals stresses the nature of the disaster: blessings went out from Jerusalem and the temple.¹⁵⁵ Adonay has chosen to end the unique relationship; he is no longer interested in maintaining the relationship with the people.

In order to understand the severity of the loss of the Shabbat and the feasts, we need to take a closer look on the importance of the rituals and the feasts in Israel's self-understanding:¹⁵⁶ The feasts and the festivals both included each new generation into the history of Israel, and it also created space and time to worship and develop the relationship with God.¹⁵⁷ Lam 2 tells that Adonay has disowned the temple and brought the Shabbat and the appointed festivals to an end. This represents a tremendous challenge to the understanding of God and the relation between God and the people. Without the temple, the place God chose for Godself is gone.

This has many implications for the religious life of the people, because the temple was the only place where the people can bring their burnt offerings (Deut 12:1-11). The only place the people can come to and bring with them the prescribed offerings that the Lord demands from them (Deut 12:26) is now gone. If God does not want the festivals, feasts and Shabbat to take place, how can the relationship between Israel and God continue?

By rejecting the rituals and the temple, God does not just reject the people here and now, God erases the whole history of salvation and also the future of the relationship between Godself and Israel! All the parts of the relationship between God and Israel are now gone, and it represents both a religious crisis and an identity crisis for the people of Israel. The city that was described as the place from where God's blessings go out (Ps 128:5) is now in ruins. God is no longer there – or at least God no longer seems to listen

¹⁵⁴ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 152.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁵⁶ As already mentioned in Opening Questions, I date Lam 2 to shortly after the exile in 587/6, and the discussion on the role of the temple and the rituals will not take newer passages into account.

¹⁵⁷ Corinna Körting, "Feasts and Festivals," EBR, forthcoming.

to the people's prayers – and the means of which Israel used to contact God are now gone.

It is also noteworthy that the Shabbat is brought to an end by Adonay, not by the enemies or other surrounding circumstances. The people cannot keep the Shabbat anymore, because Adonay has brought it to an end along with all the other cultic festivals and feasts. The Shabbat is the sign of the relationship between God and the people, and it was supposed to last forever. Our text shows us, however, that God has rejected it. This is also described in Isa 8, but there the rejection of the feasts and Shabbat is explained by the sin of the people (Isa 1:13). In Lam 2, guilt and sin are not mentioned at all, and there are no attempts to explain the ongoing suffering in Daughter Zion.

In other words, what the city and the people in Lam 2 are experiencing in the text is not only a political crisis of enormous dimensions. It is also a religious crisis with no counterpart in the history of the people. The fall of Zion has also implications for the political and social system in Israel. With no meeting place, the people will be scattered, there will be no unifying factor among the people, and this will weaken them even more as they are facing the enemies. The loss of the temple implies that there will be no religious feasts, there will be no worship services and there will be no place to pray or to seek God. The remaining question for the lamenters in our text is this: can, or will, God hear their cries now that they don't have a meeting place?

We have seen that the loss of the rituals represent the loss of the relationship with Adonay, and also that by erasing the rituals Adonay has erased their history of salvation, their current relationship with Adonay, and possibly (at least from the perspective of Lam 2) the future of the relationship with Adonay. The relation between Adonay and the people is completely dependent on Zion as the place where Adonay is found and can be worshipped. The rejection of the temple and of the religious feasts is now elaborated. Not only has Adonay rejected the feasts and by the destruction of the temple made it impossible for the people to worship, Adonay has “scorned” (זָנָה) his altar and “disowned his sanctuary” (נָאֵר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ). The word “disown” (נָאֵר) is often found in lament psalms (cf. Ps 43:2; 10; 24; 77:8; 88:15) and in the prophetic literature (Hos 8:3, 5; Zech 10:6).

Common to most of the different instances where the word is used is that the people are the object for Adonay's rejection. Here, on the other hand, it is the altar, not the people that is the object of Adonay's rejection.¹⁵⁸

By the destruction of the sanctuary, the core of what is important to Daughter Zion is destroyed. The feeling that Adonay is absent is a common experience in much of the lament texts in the OT (Ps 22:7). Suffering is often connected to the absence of Adonay (Ps 42:10), but this text talks about Adonay in terms of presence. Adonay is not gone, he is present, acting out his fury.

Adonay has destroyed all of what the people relied upon in order to uphold a sense of security, order and direction.¹⁵⁹ The officials are deported, and Adonay has allowed the religious and political leadership to fall.¹⁶⁰ The destruction of Jerusalem symbolizes the fall of the whole people.¹⁶¹ Adonay has delivered what is most holy into the hands of the enemies, who have entered the temple and are using it as they wish.

It is remarkable that the tetragrammaton, YHWH, is not used in this text until the religious festivals and the temple are mentioned. In verse 6 and 7, YHWH is used twice, both in conjunction with the temple and the festivals. It was first revealed to Moses in order to convince the people that God would be with them and save them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 3:14-17) is now used as the people is facing a crisis in the land to which God led them. The religious sides of the crisis have reached its peak. Not only are the people suffering, the rituals are taken away from them, and the enemies have taken over the temple!

The enemies have been given the privilege that belonged to the people; they are raising their clamors in the house of YHWH. The sound of music and praise in the temple

¹⁵⁸ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 142.

¹⁵⁹ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 151.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶¹ House, *Lamentations*, 325.

(Ps 27:7) is now silenced and replaced by the noise of the enemies.¹⁶² The poet ironically compares their noise with the sounds of a festival day.¹⁶³

Verse 8-9: YHWH has done what he intended: Zion is in ruins

*π 8 YHWH determined to lay in ruins
the walls of daughter Zion.
He marked it off by the line,
he restrained not his hand from destroying,
and he caused the rampart and walls to lament;
they languish together.*

*Ϸ 9 Her gates have sunk into the ground,
he has ruined and broken her bars.
Her kings and princes are among the nations,
there is no law,
and her prophets find no vision from YHWH.*

The topic of divine destruction is further developed in these verses, but the speaker now reveals that the destruction of Daughter Zion has been carefully planned by YHWH.¹⁶⁴ Verse 8 describes the actions of a builder: he stretches out the measures to build and create something new. Here, the image is reversed – YHWH has planned the destruction of Daughter Zion as one would plan the building of a city.¹⁶⁵

The enemies were unable to take over the temple on their own: it is YHWH who has deliberately planned to let this happen.¹⁶⁶ The borders of Daughter Zion are carefully measured but not for the purpose of building something new. Now the purpose is destruction of Daughter Zion.

¹⁶² Berlin, *Lamentations*, 70.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁶⁴ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 143.

¹⁶⁵ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

¹⁶⁶ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 143.

The purpose of the walls and ramparts is to protect the city and its citizens. As YHWH deliberately destroys the walls and rampart of Daughter Zion, her people and her temple are no longer safe.¹⁶⁷ The walls can also represent the whole city, not just its boundaries.¹⁶⁸ The way of describing the destruction of the walls, the ramparts, the gates and the bars also corresponds to the order of the people who are mentioned: from great to small (wall – rampart – gates – bars and kings – princes – prophets).¹⁶⁹ YHWH has no intention in keeping Daughter Zion safe. She has become a vulnerable victim whose security and safety is lost for all perceivable future.

The walls and ramparts are given anthropomorphic features – they take part in the lament of the city as well, just as the people are mourning. Westermann points out that the ramparts and walls were built by humans, and now they suffer and mourn along with them and they, similar to the people, cannot fulfill their roles anymore.¹⁷⁰ They are no longer able to protect Daughter Zion and her people from danger. In Isa 3:26, the gates are personified and take part in the lament. They are mourning that none of all that God granted proved to be a secure possession. The temple is rejected by YHWH, the walls and ramparts of Daughter Zion are torn down and the city is filled with suffering and lament.¹⁷¹ In both Hellenistic and ANET, the wall is a part of the personified city. The female city is often depicted with a mural crown, and the mentioning of the walls stress the female personification of Jerusalem.

Verses 8c-9c makes a transition from the description of the walls and the ramparts to the people in Daughter Zion. The gates and bars mentioned in verse 9a fit with the description of the walls in verse 8c because both gates and bars are parts of the wall.¹⁷² The focus shifts from the personification of the walls to the description of the people in

¹⁶⁷ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁶⁹ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 143.

¹⁷⁰ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 152.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 152.

verse 9b. The only other biblical parallel to the lament of the walls is in Isa 3:26 where the walls of Zion lament and sit on the ground.¹⁷³

The leaders of the people, who are supposed to lead and guide them, are no longer able to fulfill their assigned task – just as the walls and ramparts are no longer capable of protecting the people of Daughter Zion. There is no guidance for the people, and there is no guidance from the political leaders. Even the prophets, which means “seer”, can no longer see visions from YHWH.

The lack of both political and religious guidance stresses the consequences of the clouding of Daughter Zion. The king, the priest and the prophets are again the focus of attention. Unlike verse 6, the king and the prince are now among the people who have been exiled – they are now a part of the suffering people.¹⁷⁴ There is no contact with YHWH, and therefore the guidance (תורה) that the people need is no longer there; neither is the guidance the people would receive from the visions of the prophets. Guidance, or torah, here does not mainly refer to the written Law; it is rather the priestly teaching and the religious life in general that is no longer there for the people to take part in.¹⁷⁵

The lack of prophetic visions has consequences for both the political and the religious life of Israel. Prophets were regarded as important counselors for the king, and their advice played an important role in the political decisions the king needed to make (Isa 7:3).

Verse 10: Silence and Grief

*• 10 The elders of daughter Zion
sit on the ground and keep silence.
They have thrown dust on their heads
and they put on sackcloth;
the virgins of Israel
bow their heads to the ground.*

¹⁷³ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 144.

¹⁷⁴ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 153.

¹⁷⁵ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 145.

Verse 9 with its descriptions of the loss of political and religious leadership is followed by its consequences for the people. The personification of the walls and ramparts makes the transition to focusing on the human suffering in the rest of the poem.¹⁷⁶ The survivors of the city's fall are described as mourners.¹⁷⁷ Every element of society suffers from the destruction of the city and the loss of the leaders.¹⁷⁸

The people who are mourning are described through a merismus, which is a rhetorical means, pairing contrasting words in order to express totality.¹⁷⁹ The old and the young, the men and the women, the mature and the immature – all parts of society take part in the mourning of the loss of the relationship with Adonay and its consequences.¹⁸⁰ The contrasting language is also typical for the ANE city lament.¹⁸¹ The elders remain silent, because they, like the prophets have no longer any advice or wisdom to offer, and the virgins whose role normally is to dance, sing and express joy have now bowed their heads as an expression of grief.¹⁸²

There is no longer any reason to rejoice, and the actions that are described here are all common signs of grief. It is also noteworthy that all the movements that are mentioned here go downwards: the elders are sitting on the ground the virgins of Israel bow their heads to the ground. As the walls were torn down, the inhabitants' reaction is the same.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 92.

¹⁷⁷ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 153.

¹⁷⁸ House, *Lamentations*, 385.

¹⁷⁹ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸¹ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 38.

¹⁸² Renkema, *Lamentations*, 266.; House, *Lamentations*, 385.

¹⁸³ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

**Unit II: Verse 11-19: First person speech mourns and describes Daughter Zion's
suffering**

V 11: the 1sg speaker describes how the situation affects him

*↷ 11 My eyes are spent on weeping,
my stomach is in distress,
my liver is poured out on the ground
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
because children and sucklings faint in the streets of the town.*

The description of misery continues, but as we enter verse 11, the perspective changes into a personal lament. The focus changes in verse 11, where the focus shifts from the destruction of the buildings and the ending of the feasts to the human suffering of the people in the city. In the description of the human suffering, the perspective changes from a report to a personal lament that appears to describe Daughter Zion in third-person terms.¹⁸⁴ It is likely that there is a change of speaker in this verse. The current speaker has first-hand knowledge about the situation, but this could also be a result of a changed state of mind of the speaker.

Gerstenberger suggests that the speaker in verse 11-19 is God, because of the use of the phrase “the daughter of my people” (בַּת עַמִּי).¹⁸⁵ He argues that we get a glimpse of God’s own reactions to the suffering of the city, but he fails to explain why God starts to speak about Godself in third-person in verse 17.

Dobbs-Allsopp, on the other hand, argues that the shift of perspective happens within the narrator, and that he changes his perspective because he now is affected by the suffering he until now has seen from a distance.¹⁸⁶ The change of speaker is very important in the dynamic of the text. From being a report of specific events, the new

¹⁸⁴ House, *Lamentations*, 372.

¹⁸⁵ Gerstenberger, *Lamentations*, 468-470.

¹⁸⁶ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 93.

speaker shows that he shares the pain that Daughter Zion is going through, and we see that he strongly identifies with her situation. The language used in this speech has strong resemblance to lament speeches in Jeremiah:¹⁸⁷ the usage of “weeping” (בדמעות), “my eyes” (עיני), and his favored term for Jerusalem, “Daughter of my people” (חב עמי) (Jer 8:19; 14:17) and he also uses “my liver” (מעי) in Jer 4:9. All of these words we also see in verse 11. Both Lee and House argue that the speaker in verse 11-19 is a prophetic figure who experiences the suffering of the city from a first-hand perspective.¹⁸⁸ This argument is more likely to be true than Gerstenberger’s suggestion that it is God who speaks in Lam 2:11-19: the text itself does not facilitate for the understanding that it is God who speaks here, which is uncommon for God-speech in the OT (cf. Isa 6:8, 50:1).

Regardless whether there is an actual change of speaker or if something has changed within the poet that makes him speak in first-person, the bottom line is that we now see the misery and suffering from a much closer distance. The speaker shares the pain of Daughter Zion.¹⁸⁹

The language in verse 11 is remarkably intense. The intensity of the misery escalates; now there are humans who are suffering. The focus has shifted from describing the destruction of the buildings and the city to describing the severe suffering of the people. The speaker’s reaction is naturally more emotional – not only is the city destroyed, but it has gruesome consequences for the people.

The speaker describes his reaction to what he is witnessing in physiological terms that signify anxiety and agitation.¹⁹⁰ His eyes are “spent on weeping” (כלו בדמעות עיני), which is a phrase that is found in the lament psalms (cf. Ps 69:4). He describes that his stomach is in distress (חמררו מעי). According to BDB, the verb refers to fluids fermenting or foaming.¹⁹¹ The liver and stomach are both considered to be the seat of emotions and a

¹⁸⁷ House, *Lamentations*, 385.

¹⁸⁸ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 149.; House, *Lamentations*, 385.; Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 147-148.

¹⁸⁹ House, *Lamentations*, 385.

¹⁹⁰ Berlin, *Lamentations* 71.; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 149.

¹⁹¹ BDB, “חמר”, 330.

commonality between both the tears and the internal organs is that they secrete fluids.¹⁹² The innermost of the poet's feelings, represented by the liver, are being poured out on the ground (גִּלְגָּל), in similar fashion as the heads of the virgins of Israel bowed to the ground in verse 10.¹⁹³ The verse offers an explanation for the extreme misery: children and sucklings faint in the streets of the town (11c).

The description of misery in verse 11 and the agony of the eyewitness focus on *one* particular reason for his pain: the suffering and death of the children.¹⁹⁴ We enter a situation that is so tragic that it is impossible to make sense of: children and sucklings are dying. The misery of the infants and children is given much attention. The severity of the crisis is nowhere so clear than in the suffering and death of small children.¹⁹⁵ Not only is the suffering of the smallest and most vulnerable persons utterly tragic and sad, but the death of children also implies loss of future and hope. The death of the children happens in public, they faint (בַּעֲטָף) in the streets of the town. The publicity of the most heartbreaking event that can ever happen – the death of children – makes the scene even more tragic. The children are not laid to bed in the privacy of their homes; they are exposed to public, similar to the suffering of the city that is exposed to the enemies in verse 15, but even worse.¹⁹⁶ Perhaps the public death of the children also creates a contrast to the former times when children were playing in the streets and the public places, under their mother's protecting supervision. Here, the mothers cannot provide the protection and safety the children need, and the result is the death of the ones whose lives are most precious.¹⁹⁷

In the OT world, women's identity and value were closely tied to their offspring. Women were, of course, emotionally and physically bonded to their children, but the children also represent their social status and their future security as they would be

¹⁹² Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72.

¹⁹³ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 149.

¹⁹⁴ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 153.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹⁶ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

dependent on the children taking care of them when they get old.¹⁹⁸ The image thus serves to inform the reader that not only does the loss of the children bring with it an unbearable pain, but it also represents the loss of Daughter Zion's future.¹⁹⁹

The function of the new speaker is to describe the situation more closely. He is not a neutral reporter of events – he is there, with Daughter Zion, he understands her pain and shares her grief. It becomes even clearer that the situation for Daughter Zion is utterly tragic and deeply moving to be a witness to. Perhaps this is the only glimpse of hope in this unit of Lam 2. Daughter Zion has someone by her side that sees her and cries with her. This, of course, does not take away her pain from losing her children, but she is at least not alone in her sorrow. The speaker identifies with Daughter Zion and suffers

with her.²⁰⁰ The speaker cannot refrain from reacting to the misery Daughter Zion experiences! The Hebrew text plays on the downward movement: his inmost parts, which is represented by the liver, is poured to the ground²⁰¹. The identification with Daughter Zion is so strong that even his body is reacting to the suffering he witnesses.²⁰² This identification makes a strong contrast to Adonay's role in the text – he should be moved into compassion as well.

V 12: The Cries of the Suffering Children and Suckling

↳ 12 *They cry out to their mothers:*

“Where is bread and wine?”,

as they faint like the fatally wounded,

in the streets of the city,

as their lives are poured out on their mother's bosom.

¹⁹⁸Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations & The Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 37.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

²⁰⁰ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 93.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁰² O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 37.

The tragic situation of the children is further described, and we see that even the children raise their voices against what is happening to them: “where is bread and wine?” (Lam 2:12a). The misery needs to stop! It is remarkable that the first persons to raise their voice against the situation are the babies. They do not simply describe the situation, but they turn to their mothers and ask for food so that they can survive.

Nobody has raised their voice against Adonay so far in this text, but the babies introduce a protest against the situation as it is brought on to them by Adonay. The babies turn to their mothers, whose role is to nurture and care for them, making their needs known.²⁰³ As the babies are dependent on their mothers for survival, their mothers are dependent on Adonay for their lives as well. But they have not protested against Adonay yet. The most babies, who are the most innocent of the victims, are the first to raise their voices against the results of Adonay’s actions.²⁰⁴

Sadly, the cries of the children are not answered. There is no bread or wine left: there is no food for the starving babies.²⁰⁵ It might be surprising that the children are asking for bread and wine and not milk. According to Berlin, wine and bread are food that can easily be stored, and the question implies that not only is all the fresh food, like milk gone, but also the food that people would keep in their reservoirs is gone as well.²⁰⁶ Even the stored up food is gone.

As a result of the lack of food and wine, the lives of the children are poured out on their mother’s bosom. Life slips away almost before it even got started. The word “pour out”, (שָׁפַךְ), is the same that is used for the speaker’s feelings in verse 10, and it implies a sense of process of death.²⁰⁷ Their lives are poured out and the process of death has started and takes its course.

²⁰³ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 150.

²⁰⁴ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 94.

²⁰⁵ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

The small babies are compared to the warriors who are fighting in war. The image is striking. The children, who have done nothing wrong to anyone, are the victims of violence that is so harmful that they are compared to soldiers whose lives are lost in battle. The main difference is that, unlike the warriors the children have no weapons or power to defend themselves. Wounded soldiers die from wounds caused by weapons; these children die from the wounds caused by hunger.²⁰⁸

The language is deeply intimate. The verse starts with the children crying out to their mothers, who were once their source of life. A mother's bosom should be the safest place in the world for a little child, but the verse ends with a horrifying inclusio: the mother's are not able to provide what their children need to survive.²⁰⁹ The bosom as the place where life once was conceived has now become a place for suffering and death.²¹⁰ The life of the children end in the place it started such a short time ago.

V 13-14: Rhetoric question and answer: What can I witness for you?

*13 What can I witness for you,
what can I compare for you,
Daughter of Jerusalem?
What can I compare with you that might comfort you,
virgin Daughter Zion?
For vast as the sea is your fracture;
who can heal you?*

*14 Your prophets have seen false and deceptive visions for you,
they have not made known your iniquity
to restore your fortunes,
but have seen oracles for you that were false and misleading.*

²⁰⁸House, *Lamentations*, 386.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 386.

²¹⁰ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.

How is one supposed to react to a crisis as tragic as the one witnessed in verse 11? How can one come to terms with the death of the children, and thereby also the loss of future, dreams, and hopes? Verse 13 is full of questions – the Hebrew word *מה*, “what”, is used three times. The speaker has now fully entered the situation of Daughter Zion and he realizes once and for all that her suffering is incomprehensible – there is nothing that can comfort her.²¹¹ Daughter Zion is addressed for the very first time in Lam 2: the speaker asks questions that do not have any answers.²¹²

The questions are rhetorical; they are not meant to have an answer, and they are not commonly asked in other lament songs.²¹³ The lack of any answer goes along with the topic as well – there really should not be any answers to this. What can comfort a people whose small children are dying?²¹⁴

The catastrophe is so enormous that there is no historical or natural event the speaker knows about that can be used to compare what Daughter Zion, also referred to as Daughter Jerusalem,²¹⁵ is experiencing in this text.²¹⁶ The speaker asks “what can I compare you with”, implying that there is not possible to comprehend a tragedy like the one he witnesses now. However, he goes on by comparing Daughter Zion’s situation to the “vastness of the sea”. The image of the sea is highly symbolic: it represents endlessness and chaos.²¹⁷ The sea is infinite; it represents the idea of the cosmic sea and with it comes to mind the chaotic forces that the sea represents.²¹⁸ In metaphoric sense,

²¹¹O’Connor, *Lamentations*, 38.

²¹²Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 95.

²¹³Westermann, *Lamentations*, 154.

²¹⁴Ibid., 154.

²¹⁵O’Connor, *Lamentations*, 38.

²¹⁶Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.

²¹⁷O’Connor, *Lamentations*, 38.

²¹⁸Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.

the destruction of Daughter Zion is like the flood that returned the world into its primordial chaos (cf. Isa 54:90).²¹⁹

The speaker continues to ask rhetorical questions that are impossible to answer. Here we also see a typical feature for Lam 2: it refuses to console where there is no comfort to find. It is harsh yet honest – there will be no consoling for those who witness the suffering and death of the children.²²⁰ The verb to console (נִנְחֵם) is important in this context. It is impossible to console Daughter Zion in this situation. Her children are suffering, and the young people who represent the future of her people die. However, it is very important to notice that she has someone who is looking for something that can comfort her – even though he fails to find anything that may ease her grief. The search for consolation has no results in this text, which is also true in Lam 1 where the search for consolation is a major theme as well. Nobody can console Daughter Zion in the situation she is right now.

But the search for consolation does not need to end with the text. Second Isaiah is introduced by the word “console”, (נִנְחֵם), (Isa 40:1), which is a response to the horrors Daughter Zion goes through in Lam 2.²²¹ There, the people and Daughter Zion are consoled by God, after having lived through the horrors that the exile brought with it. The hope in Lam 2 is that the situation will not last forever. This is also one of the most important functions of lament in Lam 2: by lamenting, the voices and Daughter Zion share the hope that the situation can change. Lament provides the sufferer with language to express pain, ask hard questions and to seek hope beyond the suffering.²²² If there is no hope that YHWH will redeem Daughter Zion from her suffering, there would not be any need for lament.

Seen from a canonical perspective, we learn that Daughter Zion’s need for consolation will be met. However, this lies in the future for the people who are described

²¹⁹ Ibid., 73.

²²⁰ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 154.

²²¹ Ibid., 154.

²²² Herbert Anderson, “The Bible and Pastoral Care” in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, ed. Paul Ballard and Stephen R. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 208-209.

in Lam 2. There is no consolation in the present situation. Even though there is no consolation for Daughter Zion, it is obvious that she has the sympathy of the speaker. The speaker relates to Daughter Zion in her suffering, and by using the words of lament, he also establishes a community for the one who suffers.²²³ Even though it does not change her current situation – the speaker cannot possibly bring the deceased back to life and restore the relationship with Adonay – his presence shows that Daughter Zion is not alone in her suffering.

The role of the speaker also contrasts Adonay's actions. Adonay seem even more despicable; why is it so that the speaker seems to have more compassion for the people than Adonay himself? The survivors experience a hard truth of war: it makes a significant difference in a story if it is told by the victims.²²⁴ Verse 14 follows with a preliminary observation for why all of this could happen to Daughter Zion: the prophets have seen false visions, and they failed to make her iniquity known to her.²²⁵

The role of the prophets was, among other things, to guide the officials of the people so that they could make good decisions on behalf of the people (cf. Isa 7:3). The prophets have failed their task to do so in Lam 2. The prophets, whose task is to see, have seen not seen clearly, but their visions have been false and deceptive. The iniquity (עוֹנֵי) of Daughter Zion is not made known, due to the flawed work of the prophets. The prophets are responsible for the fall of the city, which is also known from Jeremiah (Jer 5:31; 6:14; 8:11; 14:13-16; 23:9-40; 27:9-10; 28:8-9).²²⁶ Lam 2 seems to agree with Jeremiah who blames the false visions of the prophets for the destruction of Daughter Zion.²²⁷

Lam 2 does not describe the iniquities of Daughter Zion in detail. Westermann argues that the open confession of sin is due to the fact that the speakers are stunned by the events that take place in Daughter Zion.²²⁸ He further argues that Daughter Zion's sin

²²³ Ibid., 208.

²²⁴ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 154.

²²⁵ Ibid., 155.

²²⁶ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 153.

²²⁷ House, *Lamentations*, 388.

²²⁸ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 155.

implied by the fact that YHWH is described in terms of anger – because the motif of God’s wrath in the OT appears as an interpretative reaction to something that has happened.²²⁹ However, the speaker does not investigate the people’s guilt for having followed the false prophets. Sin and guilt are, at most, implied.

House, on the other hand, states that there is neither room nor need to focus on the sin of the people now – the focus is on the suffering of Daughter Zion.²³⁰ By saying this, House implies that the sin *is* an issue for Daughter Zion, but not an issue she can deal with at the moment. This argument leads to a justification of Adonay’s actions that is not supported by the text itself. If the speaker thought a confession of sin and guilt would change Adonay’s actions against Daughter Zion, why would he not plea her to confess her sins in order to make Adonay change his mind? Daughter Zion’s iniquity is mentioned, but those who are to blame are the prophets who did not make them known to her before the disaster so that she could avoid it or find consolation.²³¹ The speaker seems, on the other hand, to think that Adonay’s punishment is not fair, regardless what Daughter Zion’s iniquities may have been.

Verse 15-16: The reaction of the passerby and enemies is described

o *15 All who pass along the way
clap their hands at you;
they wag their head at the daughter of Israel;
“Is this the city that was declared
the perfection of beauty,
the joy of all the earth?”*

o *16 All your enemies open their mouth against you,
they hiss and gnash their teeth,
they shout “we have destroyed her!”*

²²⁹ Ibid., 155.

²³⁰ House, *Lamentations*, 388.

²³¹ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 97.; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 155.

*“Ah, this is the day we have longed for,
now we have found it; now we see it”*

The poet’s perspective on the situation is confirmed by the strangers that appear in verse 15.²³² The situation is really as bad as the poet describes: it is even confirmed by Daughter Zion’s enemies.²³³ The reactions from those who pass along and the enemies are slightly different.

Verse 15 describes the reactions of those who pass along: they clap their hands, wag their heads and are obviously surprised by the radical change Daughter Israel²³⁴ has gone through. The nonverbal gestures are mentioned, graphically conveying the reaction of the people who pass by.²³⁵ Their gestures are reinforced by words in the last part of the verse. The reaction of those who pass by is hard to interpret. It can be amazement or derision, but their reaction does not need to be interpreted as hostile.²³⁶

The enemies’ reaction, on the other hand, is hostile. The open mouths and the gnashing teeth are all expressions of insult and dishonor.²³⁷ The focus is, as in verse 7, on the enemies. Their presence makes the fatality of the situation even clearer. The roles are reversed – the people of Daughter Zion cannot trust YHWH to take care of them any longer, but the enemies, on the other hand, is now favored by YHWH. They are making joyful noise similar to a feast (Lam 2:7) while the people of Daughter Zion are silenced. The enemies are actively hostile against the people, but Daughter Zion and her children cannot protect themselves. Thus, the enemies are celebrating the devastation of the city and her people.

²³² Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.

²³³ Ibid., 73.

²³⁴ Here the term “Daughter Jerusalem” (בת ירושלים) is used for the personification of the city

²³⁵ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 74.

²³⁶ Ibid., 74.

²³⁷ Ibid., 74.

Verse 17: YHWH has carried out his threat

*v 17 YHWH has done what he purposed,
 he has carried out his threat,
 as he commanded in the ancient days.
 He threw down and did not pity,
 and he has caused the enemy rejoice over you,
 and exalted the might of your foes.*

An interesting image of God develops in verse 17. As the enemy takes delight in the destruction of the city, the poet soberly points out that this has not happened due to the greatness of the enemies.²³⁸ YHWH has carried out his threat (בצע אמרתו). The verb has violent overtones,²³⁹ which stresses the severity of the context of our text.²⁴⁰ The suffering is not symbolic. It is real and its source is identified: YHWH is responsible for planning this, and the result is that the enemies now can celebrate and rejoice over her misery.²⁴¹ The disgrace of the suffering is mentioned, making clear that the destruction of the city is also deeply humiliating.²⁴²

The enemies are YHWH's agents for the destruction of the city, and their might is exalted, as a contrast to the might of Israel that is cut down (Lam 2:3). The word "might" (קרן) implies features of power and force, which once belonged to Daughter Zion, but is now given to the enemies. The might is not longer just taken away from them, but it is given to the enemies whose interest is to destroy Israel. The idea that YHWH is ultimately responsible for what is happening to Daughter Zion creates an interesting dynamic in the relationship between Daughter Zion and YHWH, because it implies that YHWH is both the source of suffering but also from whom redemption comes. If there was no hope that YHWH would change his mind, there would be no need to lament.

²³⁸ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156.

²³⁹ BDB, "בצע", 130-131.

²⁴⁰ House, *Lamentations*, 390.

²⁴¹ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 159.

²⁴² Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156.

The theme of the divinely planned destruction of Daughter Zion is another topic that is taken up in Second Isaiah, which again shows the connection between Lam and Second Isaiah. In Second Isaiah, Daughter Zion and God reconcile and it is made clear that YHWH, the Lord of History, was active in both the defeat and restoration of Daughter Zion (cf. Isa 41:26-27; 43:15-28). The image of the restored Zion is also present in Third Isaiah: cf. Isa 62:1-5).²⁴³

Verse 18-19: Cry out to Adonay! Do not cease lamenting!

‡ 18 *Their heart cry out to Adonay,
wall of daughter Zion: let tears flow down,
like a torrent day and night.
Give yourself no rest,
the daughter of the eye no respite.*

♯ 19 *Arise, cry out in the night,
at the beginning of the watches.
Pour out your heart like water,
before the face of Adonay!
Lift your hands to him,
for the lives of your children
who faint from hunger on the head of the street.*

As we already have seen in verse 17, the description of YHWH is compelling – on one hand, he is the enemy that has brought all of this upon Daughter Zion and her people (Lam 2:4) but on the other hand he is also the one the people prays to in order to be redeemed.²⁴⁴ In this verse the speaker urges the walls of Daughter Zion to cry out to Adonay, and the summons of Daughter Zion to lament is known from the dirge.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Ibid., 156.

²⁴⁴ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 158.

²⁴⁵ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156.

The first verb, “cry out” (צִעַק), in Lam 2:18 is extremely hard to interpret because it is masculine while the rest of the verbs are feminine singular. Who are “they” whose hearts cry out to Adonay? The verb is often emended to feminine imperative and is interpreted as the cry of the walls of Daughter Zion.²⁴⁶

Both Berlin and O’Connor argue that the verb refers to the walls of daughter Zion.²⁴⁷ Berlin bases her arguments on the fact that the walls have been personified earlier in the text, and that it would make sense for the personified walls to cry out because they have failed their most important task: to protect the city and her citizens.²⁴⁸ She also refers to ANET, where the motif of a crying wall is not unusual, and that the mentioning of the “beginning of the watches” in Lam 2:19 goes along with this understanding, because the watches were held outside the walls.

On the other hand, House, Berges and Renkema all argue that the cry in 18a comes from the lips of the babies who are still alive. All of them base their argument on the fact that the babies already have spoken up against the suffering they are experiencing, and that the verb does not need to be emended if it refers to the babies. According to Berges, it makes the most sense that it is the babies who are crying out because they do not have the strength to cry out loudly because they are weakened by starvation. They have no power left; their cries come from their innermost part, which is represented by the heart (לב). They cry with their hearts, praying that Adonay will hear them in their misery and rescue them.²⁴⁹

The verb is hard to interpret, but the MT does not suggest a feminine verb form, and even though the reading presented by Berlin and O’Connor makes thematically sense is it still no reason for the verb to be emended. The interpretation that the outcry comes from the babies makes sense, and it is also a powerful image that stresses the tragedy of the reality that is described in Lam 2 as a whole.

²⁴⁶ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75.

²⁴⁷ O’Connor, *Lamentations*, 41.

²⁴⁸ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75.

²⁴⁹ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 160.; House, *Lamentations*, 391.; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 308.

After addressing the babies of Daughter Zion Lam 2:18a, the weeping of the city comes to focus. The imagery used to describe the lamenting rituals is very physical. The poet urges the city to arise from where she is cast down (Lam 2:1) and to let her tears flow down, as a torrent day and night. The weeping should be like a torrent that pushes its way through a channel. The image of the crying city is common in ANET where the city often is personified as a woman; in Lam 2:19 Daughter Zion is urged to cry because she failed to provide the protection and safety that the residents needed.²⁵⁰

But the only voice we hear in this verse is the poet's who describes the suffering and lamenting of the young children of Daughter Zion. The hope that is expressed through prayer is yet to be answered. The cries of lament are directed to Adonay because the children crying out for Adonay have hope that he will change the situation. The cry expresses direction and hope that Adonay will remember the affected children.²⁵¹

Form-critically, these lines correspond to imperatively worded summons to praise Adonay known from the Psalms.²⁵² In this text, the imperatives play a different role. They do not summon the people to give thanks for all that Adonay has given them – the situation is opposite. There is nothing to give thanks for, but Adonay needs to be addressed because he is the *only one* who can change the current situation.

The summon to cry out to Adonay forms the high point of the chapter as a whole – this is the only time Daughter Zion is addressed and asked to act on her own behalf. There is a chain of imperatives; in fourteen lines there are twelve imperatives, where the speaker urging Daughter Zion to take action. He tries to empower her to leave the role of a victim, to stand up, take her place, and speak up against the suffering.²⁵³

Nothing has changed for Daughter Zion yet – and maybe this is the reason why the poet suddenly approaches her personally, begging her to stand up for herself and express her grief to Adonay in her own way. The intensity of her grief is so strong that there will be no rest – not even the smallest, most inward part of the eye, which is

²⁵⁰ Berges, *Klagelieder*, 161.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵² Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156.

²⁵³ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 41.

described as “the daughter of your eye”, (בַּת עֵינֶיךָ), should cease crying, and the lament should not even stop at night. The water should not stop flowing, for the children’s lives are at stake and the losses they have already experienced are so painful that there is no consolation to find.²⁵⁴

The poet has already described what he sees and his reactions to the suffering, but Daughter Zion has remained silent throughout the whole text. Now it is her time to speak up; maybe that will change Adonay’s actions? Her babies spoke up before she did, and now is it time for her to express her feelings and put words to what she is going through. She is no longer just a victim – she is a woman whose voice has yet to be heard.

Both verse 18 and 19 describe the lament in physical terms. Lifting of hands and stand up in the night are both common ways of expressing grief.²⁵⁵ Daughter Zion is asked to lift her hands for (עַל) the sake of her children. It is interesting that there is no plea for restoration in this; the children whose lives were lost are not included in the prayer. It only implores that the children who are still alive will not die.²⁵⁶ The summons to lament continues: stay up in the night, in the day and in the beginning of the watches!

Those who pray should be as earnest as the watchmen that guard the city. The prayers are their last hope to be heard by Adonay, and they should not be taken lightly.²⁵⁷ The poet tells Daughter Zion to pour her heart out like water – as the children’s lives are poured out, so should the hearts of the residents of Daughter Zion be poured out as well so that Adonay can listen and perhaps prevent more lives from getting lost.

Daughter Zion should pour her heart out like water before the face of Adonay. We have already seen that the temple is gone, and that Adonay’s presence is no longer granted. The people are, however, challenged to seek Adonay’s face so that he can see them. The problem here is that there is no place where Adonay can be found! One can only hope that the cries of the babies and their mothers are strong enough to catch Adonay’s attention.

²⁵⁴ House, *Lamentations*, 392.

²⁵⁵ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 157.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁵⁷ House, *Lamentations*, 392.

Unit III: Verse 20-22: Daughter Zion speaks up against YHWH's actions

V 20-22: Look, YHWH, and consider!

*ו' 20 Look, YHWH, and consider
to whom you act severely.
Should the women eat the fruit of their womb,
the children they have cuddled?
Should the priest and prophet
be slain in the sanctuary of Adonay?
ו' 21 Young and the old are lying
on the ground in the streets;
my young virgins and my young men
have fallen by the sword;
you killed them on the day of your anger,
slaughtering without mercy.
ח 22 You invited my terrors from every side
as to a feast day,
and on the day of the anger of YHWH
no one escaped or survived,
those whom I have cuddled and cared for,
my enemies destroyed.*

Again, the voice shifts. Daughter Zion has done what the poet urged her to do: she opens her mouth and uses her voice to talk to YHWH.²⁵⁸ She mentions “my virgins” (בתולות), “my terrors” (מגורי), and she refers to those she has cuddled for in first person speech (ורביתי), and thus we identify the speaker as Daughter Zion herself. She has taken

²⁵⁸ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 42.

the former speaker's urge to cry out to YHWH into action.²⁵⁹ This is the first time YHWH is addressed directly.²⁶⁰ She cries out to YHWH and demands him to listen: for the first time in Lam 2, the lament has become a prayer.²⁶¹

Until now, she has been silent, but now she speaks up. This has to stop! Daughter Zion speaks on behalf her suffering residents; she stands up against the one who is identified as their enemy: YHWH. The voice's plea to arise and cry out to YHWH in verse 11-19 gave Daughter Zion the space and courage to speak up against her enemy.²⁶² His compassionate presence and words did not change the situation, but they changed her. Now she has gone from being a silent victim to being an empowered mother who speaks up against her oppressor for the sake of her children and her citizens! The focus is no longer on the past: Daughter Zion cries out to YHWH, telling him to stop the cruelty so that her remaining children can have a future.²⁶³ Daughter Zion speaks up against God, mediating between God and her children, thus once again bringing the city lament genre into mind: the personified city speaks on behalf of the inhabitants,²⁶⁴ and the asymmetric relation between the female Daughter Zion and YHWH is again stressed.²⁶⁵

The name for God that is used here is, again the tetragrammaton, and now he is addressed in imperative, "look!" (ראה), by a female. She demands him to look and presents him with the consequences for his actions. She asks rhetorical questions that are so harsh that even the most oblivious listener would know the answer. She blames YHWH for the incredible suffering of the mothers and children – the children who are dying and the mothers who in spite of their love and comfort for their children cannot save them from dying. The Hebrew describes the situation in very intimate terms; the

²⁵⁹ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 76.

²⁶⁰ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁶² O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 41.

²⁶³ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158-159.

²⁶⁴ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, 79-79.

²⁶⁵ Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom*, 54-55.

suffering is at its most obvious in the realm of motherhood and caring for a baby, which is usually a place for nurturing and safety.

The imagery is very female oriented, and it describes the present situation in such a horrific way that it is impossible to remain unaffected. The children, who the mothers have so carefully cuddled, sung for, nursed and played with are now subject to mortal danger. What the survivors had to suffer is beyond horrible – cannibalism and murder in the sanctuary are both things no one should ever experience.²⁶⁶ The order of the societal structure is turned upside down: mothers should feed their children, not eat them, and priests and prophets should be safe, not slain, in the temple (Lam 2:20).²⁶⁷

Berlin argues that the motif of cannibalism may not be true, because it may be an exaggeration. Even though cannibalism is documented in famines it involves less than 1 percent of the population.²⁶⁸ Westermann, on the other hand, does not discuss this part of the text in depth. He simply states that what the survivors had to experience was beyond horrible.²⁶⁹ House argues that what is described is probably real, because there are multiple other texts in the Old Testament also describe that cannibalism sometimes happened during famine (cf. 2 Kings 6:24-31; Lev 26:29; Deut 28:52-57; Jer 19:1-9).²⁷⁰ House argues, based on these texts that the reason for the cannibalism is that the people have rebelled against God.²⁷¹ Even though the other texts, possibly with the exception of 2 Kgs 6:25-31, connect the cannibalism with the people's rebellion against God, is this not the case in Lam 2. O'Connor argues that regardless of the accuracy of this particular topic, it attempts to force YHWH to pay attention.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158.

²⁶⁷ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75.

²⁶⁸ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 76.; Pitrim Aleksandrovitch, Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity: the Effects of War, Revolution, Famine, Pestilence Upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 66-81.

²⁶⁹ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158.

²⁷⁰ House, *Lamentations*, 394.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 394.

²⁷² O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 42.

I think both Berlin and House make the mistake of trying to make the reality that is described in verse 20-22 less gruesome than it in reality is while Westermann neglects the issue of cannibalism in his analysis of the text.²⁷³

House seems to make an attempt to excuse God for why God has brought this on the people, while Berlin tries to avoid the situation by saying that it is very likely that the cannibalism that is described did not happen at all. If there are any arguments against the cannibalism in this text, it is because it is a part of a rhetorical question. In rhetorical questions one often exaggerates and goes to extremes in order to make the listener understand the point of the question. The text itself does not give any clues to the reader that the language is metaphoric, and one should not assume that the text does *not* tell the reality of the situation unless the text itself gives more reasons to do so. The situation may be exaggerated in the rhetoric but this is not a necessary conclusion.²⁷⁴

YHWH is directly addressed for the first time in the whole chapter, and he is not asked, but *told* to look at his own behavior. He is addressed by the female Daughter Zion who is responding to the challenge to cry out, and she steps up for the weakest of her residents: her babies and their mothers.²⁷⁵

The lament has now turned into a petition to YHWH so he can change the situation – the lament has become a prayer.²⁷⁶ The words of accusation differ from verse 1-8; the events that have taken place remain incomprehensible but the focus of the lament has changed. It does not look at the past, as it did in verse 1-8, now it looks at the present and demands change.²⁷⁷ The questions in verse 20 b-c are supposed to persuade YHWH that he has to stop acting so severely against Daughter Zion.

The tragedy of Daughter Zion and her people is summarized in verse 21 and 22.²⁷⁸ The young and old, who in verse 10 were sitting on the ground and keeping silent, are

²⁷³ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 157.

²⁷⁴ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 42.

²⁷⁵ House, *Lamentations*, 394.

²⁷⁶ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁷⁸ House, *Lamentations*, 394.

now lying on the ground (שכבו לארץ הוצוה). The merismus includes here, as in verse 10, the old and young and everyone in between.

The downward movement plays on the continuous horror Daughter Zion experiences. In Lam 2:2, dust/earth (ארץ) is mentioned to make known how far the kingdom and her rules have been thrown away from God; in Lam 2:10, the dust/earth is where the elders of Daughter Zion sit and they also throw dust on their heads to show their sorrow. In Lam 2:21, the place of lament has been transformed into a place of death and dying.²⁷⁹

Daughter Zion has already described the famine, but now she describes the death of her young virgins and young men who have fallen by the sword. The ruin of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple was not merely an architectural tragedy – people were also killed by the Babylonians. The young virgins and the young men, who both represent strength and vitality, are now killed by the enemy. Along with the loss of the young generation comes the loss of hope for a new generation to restore Jerusalem.

In the latter part of verse 21 YHWH is again identified as the reason for the tragedy. The words echo verse 4, where YHWH is identified as the enemy. The accusations of YHWH are direct and outspoken: you killed them! The theme of “the day of your anger” (ימי אפך), which we know from Lam 2:1 has come into focus again. Not only did YHWH throw down the splendor of Israel, but we now know that the day of YHWH’s anger had even worse consequences than that. The severity of this day emerges in the final statement – YHWH slaughtered without mercy.²⁸⁰ The word slaughter (טחבה) plays on cannibalism in a manner that goes beyond the conventional: the root of the word (תבך) is used for butchering an animal as part of the preparation of the meal (1 Sam 25:11), but here it is the *people* who are slaughtered by YHWH.²⁸¹

Daughter Zion identifies the enemies as tools for YHWH’s destruction. It is not because of their merits they have succeeded in the destruction of the city – it is because YHWH invited them in, allowing them to celebrate as if it was a feast day, which is a

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 394.

²⁸⁰ House, *Lamentations*, 395.

²⁸¹ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 77.

repetition of the main topic in Lam 2:7.²⁸² The enemies are agents for YHWH's anger, and the result is devastating. Daughter Zion has done what she can: she cries out to YHWH, but he does not seem to listen. The prayer remains accusatory – Daughter Zion neither praises nor asks anything specifically from YHWH.²⁸³ The text ends in deep devastation. Daughter Zion soberly reports what she sees: no one escaped or survived. The babies, whom she cuddled and cared for are now all destroyed by the enemies.

Lamentations 2 shows us an image of God that is truly disturbing. Daughter Zion is the one who fights for the children – God is not on the weakest side. Daughter Zion cried out to YHWH. It didn't help. She begged for the life of her children. Her cries were not heard. The only thing that is left for Daughter Zion is bottomless sorrow.

Summary of Lam 2

Lam 2 portrays the suffering of Daughter Zion, the religious and official leadership and the suffering and death of her people, including her children. Lam 2 is not an easy text to read, and one can fall for the temptation to justify God while working on a text like this. The text presents an image of God that is truly disturbing and upsetting, and it is natural to make an attempt to justify God's actions, because it makes it easier to continue it believing in the ultimate goodness of God. As we have worked through Lam 2 we have seen that Daughter Zion has developed from being silent and powerless, to through the compassionate listening of the speaking voices, has been empowered to arise and cry out to YHWH for the sake of her children.

Lam 2 challenges how one views God. Lam 2 does neither justify God nor console Daughter Zion. Lam 2 accuses God and expresses strong disagreement with God's actions, and the reader of this text should not fall for the temptation to justify God when the text does not facilitate for that. That being said, it is also important to notice what Lam 2 tells about grief and empowerment through listening. Even though Daughter Zion experiences that there is a cloud that separates her from God, she is not alone. She has at least one person who sees her and who talks to her, advocating for her and urging

²⁸² Ibid., 76.

²⁸³ Ibid., 77.

her to cry out to God. We know from the text that there is no resolution to Daughter Zion's suffering in Lam 2, but we have also seen that there are strong thematically connections between Lam 2 and texts in Second Isaiah. There is no one to comfort Daughter Zion in Lam 2, but she will be comforted in Isa 40.

This does not ease the current pain of Daughter Zion, but it gives a glimpse of hope that her misery will end sometime. In Second Isaiah, God returns to Daughter Zion again, and the splendor that was destroyed in Lam 2 is restored and given back to her (cf. Lam 2:1-9, 15, 17; Isa 49:14-26). The lament did not change Daughter Zion's fortunes in Lam 2. But the appeal to lament in verse 11-19 gave Daughter Zion the courage she needed to speak up against her oppressor. The lament brought with it a form of change: Daughter Zion does no longer internalize and accept the violence, now she cries out and demands YHWH to stop!

She was seen by the narrator and her losses and sorrow were acknowledged and shared by the poet in verse 11-19. This empowered her to name the truth about her feelings. She cries out for change, demanding YHWH to reconsider his actions. She used to be silent, but her silence gave her nothing. Now she speaks up for justice, accusing YHWH for her terrors. She has become a heroine, and she is fighting against God, showing him how true compassion looks like. She stands up for her children.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION IN LAM 2

Where is God in Lam 2?

There are, as we have seen, three different voices in the text that all are describing the suffering of Daughter Zion. The different voices that shape each unit of Lam 2 all speak in favor of Daughter Zion. Even the walls and ramparts' voices lament the tragedy that has occurred (Lam 2:8), and the most innocent and vulnerable of all, which are the

children and sucklings, raise their voices in despairing hope that they will be fed (Lam 2:12).

In the midst of the chorus of different voices lamenting Daughter Zion's fortune, there is one voice that is missing: the voice of God. God is also the only character in Lam 2 who is directly addressed and who does not answer: God's voice is simply missing, and Lam 2 does not speak of God's presence.²⁸⁴ The verbs that are used for God in Lam 2 describe attack and destruction; God's actions are the reasons for Daughter Zion's suffering. YHWH has set Daughter Zion under a cloud (Lam 2:1), cast down (Lam 2:1), not remembered (Lam 2:1), destroyed (Lam 2:2), cut down (Lam 2:3), broken down (Lam 2:3), burned (Lam 2:4), set his hand on the bow (Lam 2:4), killed (Lam 2:4), poured out his fury (Lam 2:4), he has treated his booth with violence (Lam 2:6): the list goes on and on. The only explanation for God's actions is that he is acting out of anger (Lam 2:1). If we read Lam 2 and Lam 1 together,²⁸⁵ we see that the theological explanation of suffering in Lamentations 2 is very different from the discussion in Lamentations 1. In Lamentations 1, Daughter Zion is given all the blame for her current misfortune (Lam 1: 5, 8) and she also agrees to YHWH's right to punish her (Lam 1:18). In Lamentations 2, this changes. The narrator no longer blames Daughter Zion; he speaks out in compassion for the city and in fury towards YHWH who not only permits this to happen, but he also acts violently against Daughter Zion.²⁸⁶ The blame has passed from Daughter Zion to YHWH. The current situation of Daughter Zion is YHWH's fault. Lam 2 tells that Adonay has put Zion "under a cloud" (Lam 2:1). This image expresses the gap between Daughter Zion and YHWH: there is no contact between them anymore. The one who once was loved and cherished by YHWH is now cut down and destroyed and the gap between YHWH and Daughter Zion has become so great that there is no worship and

²⁸⁴O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 15.

²⁸⁵ I am aware that most scholars argue that Lam 2 is older than Lam 1, with which I agree. However, when we work theologically with a biblical text, it can be helpful for the discussion to also include the surrounding texts in order to see the changes in the dynamic of the themes presented.

²⁸⁶O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 33.

feasts in the temple. YHWH has rejected and abandoned the land, her people, the temple and all the feasts.²⁸⁷

The words of Daughter Zion should have an effect on YHWH, but it does not seem to change his actions against his people. Even the narrator, who in Lamentations 1 blamed Zion for her own misfortune has changed his mind: YHWH is the one to blame; he is the one who is acting violently.²⁸⁸ The theological framework has, in other words, changed from Lamentations 1. God's presence is described in terms of anger, and the narrator, the first person speaker and Daughter Zion are all addressing a God whose actions they strongly disagree with. The prayers and the demands seem to be in vain because YHWH does not listen. Still, he is the only one Daughter Zion can address because he is the only one who can restrain himself from the violent behavior.²⁸⁹

To see the consequences of YHWH's burning anger is especially interesting when they are compared to the main identity of the people of Israel: the Lord is one, the Lord is our God (Deut 6:4). Blessings, land and offspring are all promises from God (Gen 12:1-3). The current situation is far away from what YHWH once promised: the blessings are gone, even the temple is in ruins, and the babies and sucklings die on the streets. The question raises a number of big theological questions concerning the goodness of God and the presence of God.

Lam 2 does not, however, say anything specific about *why* the separation between God and Daughter Zion has taken place. Lam 2:14 mentions the false visions of the prophets, but it does not mention any specific sin that Daughter Zion did in order to deserve this tragedy to occur. Lam 2 tells about unexplainable suffering.²⁹⁰

Lam 2 speaks both about presence and distance: God's compassion is no longer near, but Daughter Zion has someone by her side who witnesses to her suffering.²⁹¹ What Lam 2 tells about suffering, is that it can only be responded to when it is witnessed: the

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 35.

²⁸⁹ Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 105.

²⁹⁰ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 105.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 104.

speakers in verse 1-9 and 10-19 both *see* Daughter Zion's misery and *react* to it.²⁹² The absence of God's mercy forces someone else to stand up for Daughter Zion and listen to her cries. The listeners do not take over her story: they speak on her behalf and let her cry out to God when she is ready to do so.²⁹³ They do not try to minimize her pain, which only would result in lack of trust between the speakers and the sufferer, but they acknowledge her suffering and accepts that it is "as vast as the sea" (Lam 2:13).²⁹⁴ By witnessing to Daughter Zion's pain, allowing themselves to be open to Daughter Zion's pain, the speakers empower Daughter Zion to stand up for herself and cry out to God.²⁹⁵

Lam 2, becomes, in other words, a text that witness about the presence of other human beings while God's mercy is absent.²⁹⁶ The turning point in Lam 2, where Daughter Zion is empowered to arise and cry out to God, is not evoked by any promise from God or any sense of merciful divine presence.²⁹⁷ It is rather the opposite: God is not moved to act on Daughter Zion's behalf, but those who witness to her suffering become involved and active in converting her from being a silent victim to finding her voice and rage against God.²⁹⁸ Lam 2 speaks about a reality that is so gruesome that it cannot be accepted as it is – and it is a testimony to how one can speak to God.²⁹⁹ Daughter Zion's raging outburst against YHWH shows that even in the midst of her extreme suffering, she can raise her voice and articulate her lament, creating room for hope that YHWH at last will respond to her cries.³⁰⁰

²⁹² Ibid., 104.

²⁹³ Ibid., 104.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 106-107.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 107.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 15., 108.

²⁹⁷ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 104.

²⁹⁸ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 159.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 159.

³⁰⁰ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 103.

CHAPTER SIX:
LAM 2 AND PASTORAL CARE

Lamentations 2 and Its Relevance to Pastoral Care

As we have read Lam 2 in depth, we have seen that Daughter Zion's plea for help is not answered, at least not within the context of the text itself. Her pain is immeasurable; there is no comfort for the weeping Daughter Zion whose losses are greater than any. The metaphor of Daughter Zion losing her children describes the grief that is called "the most intense and overwhelming of all griefs."³⁰¹ Daughter Zion cries out to God, hoping and begging that God will listen to her cries and act accordingly. After having read Lam 2, we know that Daughter Zion's cries were not responded to and she was not redeemed from her misery.

Lam 2 would be an easier text to read and accept if it had a different ending. It is an unpleasant text because its witness about a God who does not always answer the sufferer's prayer – at least not instantly. The text in Lam 2 does not make any attempts to make sense of the suffering which Daughter Zion goes through. There is no expression of *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* and there is no explicit connection between sin and suffering. The opposite is rather the case; God acts like an enemy and God's anger is the reason for Daughter Zion's and her children's suffering.

The text is, as we have seen, written into a certain context: the text portrays a people whose suffering and struggles are deeply rooted in the loss of the Temple and that their political and spiritual leaders have been taken captive by Babylon. Lam 2 has, in other words, a very specific *Sitz im Leben* and one may wonder whether the text has any relevance for the practice of pastoral care today.

However, we have also seen that there is a development in the text, even though it is subtle: Daughter Zion goes from being silent and passive to rising up, letting her tears flow like a torrent as she cries out her misery to God, accusing God for her misery, demanding God to stop letting her children die. But it is in the description of the suffering

³⁰¹ Lena Holmberg, "Words That Made a Difference: Communication in Bereavement," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 12:9-29 (2007): 9.

where the text's relevance to pastoral care may be found. Suffering is simply, as hard as it is to accept and understand, an inevitable part of life. We all know that not all suffering will be solved within one's lifetime, and we all have witnessed suffering either in our own lives or through the lenses of others, near or far. It might be its misery, its unresolved pain that makes Lam 2 relevant to pastoral care, because as pastoral caregivers know, many things will not easily be "fixed," and sometimes a problem will simply not be solved. The question remains: how can a text like Lam 2 be helpful in a pastoral care setting?

In order to answer this question, I will present different views on the use of the Bible in pastoral care practices before I show how Lam 2 can be used in a helpful manner in pastoral care. Before I do that, we need to discuss why the Bible is a source for pastoral care in the first place.

The Bible, Red Riding Hood and Shakespeare – What Is the Difference?

The Bible has played – and still plays – an important role in the Norwegian culture. The Norwegian Constitution states that even though there is freedom of religion, the Kingdom of Norway is still Evangelical-Lutheran³⁰² and the king should confess and protect the Evangelical-Lutheran religion.³⁰³ Regardless of how the Constitution may be changed and reinterpreted in the future,³⁰⁴ there is no doubt that the Bible has played a significant role in the Norwegian culture. However, the Bible's important role in a specific society is not reason enough to use it in pastoral care practices – there are many other influential texts in society. If popularity is a reason to use a text in pastoral care, then why should we not use the fairy tale about the Red Riding Hood or the writings of Shakespeare, since both undoubtedly have played an important role in our culture as well?

³⁰² *Kongeriget Norges Grundlov, given i Rigsforsamlingen paa Eidsvold den 17de Mai 1814*, § 2, <http://lovdata.no/all/hl-18140517-000.html> accessed April 10th 2012.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, § 4, <http://lovdata.no/all/hl-18140517-000.html> accessed April 10th 2012.

³⁰⁴ I am aware that §2 will be changed as of May 21st 2012, but this does not change the fact that Christianity Bible have played an important role in Norway.

This question may seem odd, but it is an important question to discuss because the coming discussion of the use of the Bible in pastoral care depends on the answer to this question: what is the difference between the Bible and other stories?

In Lutheran theology,³⁰⁵ the Bible is, unlike Shakespeare's writings or *The Red Riding Hood*, considered to be the source of "all articles of faith,"³⁰⁶ and faith is, according to the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, sparked by the Word.³⁰⁷ Further, even though the term "pastoral care" is almost impossible to define, any definition of pastoral care is based on an understanding that we are related to God and that pastoral care is an act of either a Christian community or a Christian leader towards a person who struggles either spiritually or otherwise.³⁰⁸ Regardless of who the pastoral care provider is – a layperson or clergy – the practice of pastoral care is an act of faith. This means that the practice of pastoral care is offered by Christian believers, who by definition are more or less influenced by the Bible.

The Red Riding Hood or the writings of Shakespeare do not have any religious power, and they do not claim to be of divine character, unlike the biblical literature. Whereas the Bible tells stories about God and humanity, narrating the story of creation through fall and redemption, and thereby creating a framework to understand human life, the purpose of Red Riding Hood and Shakespeare's writings is mainly for amusement.³⁰⁹ The stories are valuable in themselves – but they do not represent faith, neither do they attempt to explain the nature of faith or God. Regardless of whether the Bible is actively used in a given pastoral care setting, its foundation is in the Christian faith and thereby is the Bible also an important source to interpret and re-interpret one's faith.

³⁰⁵ I will not discuss the role of the confessions in the Lutheran tradition today, this is simply an example to show the importance of the Bible in the Lutheran tradition

³⁰⁶ Martin Luther, "The Smalcald Articles (Articles of Christian Doctrine which were to have presented by our side at the council in Mantua – or whatever else it was to have met – and which were to indicate what we could or could not accept to give up, etc.)", in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), § 15, 304.

³⁰⁷ Martin Luther, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession", BC, § 73, 132.

³⁰⁸ L. O. Mills, "Pastoral Care, History, Traditions and Definitions," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 837.

³⁰⁹ Anderson, "The Bible and Pastoral Care", 198-199.

Introduction to Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is generally defined as spiritual as well as emotional care for individuals. It is lived out by offering conversations and counseling to those who are in need, and has its foundation in the biblical image of God as a caring shepherd.³¹⁰ When it functions on its best, it is a discipline where practical and theoretical interests meet to make a beneficial difference in the care-receivers' lives.³¹¹ The practice of pastoral care can be roughly described as "storytelling."³¹² The pastoral caregiver is usually presented with a problem of emotional or spiritual character (and of course, often both), which is presented by the care-receiver telling his or her story. Stories are what center the pastoral care meeting and set the agenda for the meeting. The stories are usually centered on loss of meaning, dying and death and broken or changed relationships.³¹³

In order to discuss Lam 2's relevance for the practice of pastoral care, we need to see how the Bible is used to inform pastoral care. How is the Bible used in pastoral care practices? Are there any models or methods of how to use the biblical literature to inform the practices of pastoral care? Before we enter the discussion on Lam 2's relevance for the practice of pastoral care, it is necessary to take a brief look at the three most common models for pastoral care and their use of the biblical literature.

³¹⁰ Mills, "Pastoral Care, History, Traditions and Definitions," 836.

³¹¹ Archie Jr., Smith, "'Look and See If There Is Any Sorrow Like My Sorrow?'" Systemic Metaphors for Pastoral Theology and Care", in *Word & World*, 21, no. 1, (winter 2001): 7.

³¹² Denise Dombkowski Hopkins and Michael S. Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word, the Old Testament and Pastoral Care Practices* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 6.; Edward P. Wimberly, *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 21.

³¹³ Smith, "Look and See," 6.

Using Scripture in Pastoral Care: Background and Methods

The use of the Bible in pastoral care has been a matter of concern and controversy since the beginning of the pastoral care movement in the early 1930's.³¹⁴ Pastoral caregivers are by their occupation informed by the Bible in their work, but there is often confusion regarding how to use the Bible in pastoral care.³¹⁵

The first influential written attempt to create a method of using the Bible in pastoral care was presented by R. C. Cabot and R. L. Dicks in the book *The Art of Ministering to the Sick*.³¹⁶ The authors posit that the Bible is the Protestant pastoral caregiver's training ground for the ministry of pastoral care giving, but also, they warn against a simplistic use of the biblical material in pastoral care. They argue that the passage that is used needs to be *relevant* to the situation and it needs to bring *perspective* to the individual who receives pastoral care.³¹⁷

Cabot and Dicks offer a number of Bible verses that may accommodate different needs, and their argument is mainly based on that the Bible should be used when it is helpful for the care-receiver. However, they do not offer a systematic method or approach to use the Bible in pastoral care – they simply state that the biblical stories should be offered to establish perspective to the care-receivers after carefully listening to their stories.

Cabot and Dicks have been very influential for the development of the methodologies of using the Bible in pastoral care, and after their book was published in 1936, two main principles of using Scripture in pastoral care were developed:³¹⁸

- 1) The use of Scripture should be guided by the needs and the context of the care-receiver.

³¹⁴ D. Capps, "Bible, Pastoral Use and Interpretation Of." in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 83-84.

³¹⁵ Hopkins and Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word*, 10.

³¹⁶ Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks, *The Art of Ministering to the Sick* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), 234-243.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

³¹⁸ D. Capps, "Bible, Pastoral Use and Interpretation Of," 83.

- 2) Its use should show pastoral sensitivity concerning the care-receiver's physical and mental condition.

As the pastoral care field developed further throughout the 1940s, a third principle emerged from S. Hiltner's book *Pastoral Counseling*:

- 3) The use of the Bible in pastoral care and counseling should be informed by general counseling principles.³¹⁹

This last principle has been the root of many discourses on the function and basis of pastoral care. Should a pastoral care provider also know about and be trained in the psychological aspects of grief and suffering? If that is the case, how should psychology and the Bible connect? Different views on the Bible's role in pastoral care and how to relate pastoral care to other professions have resulted in two different approaches to how to use the Bible in pastoral care: the dynamic and the instructional use of the Bible.³²⁰

These approaches also represent axioms in the field of pastoral care, and the dynamic approach has been further developed in order to find the disclosive power of the biblical texts. In order to establish a method for how to relate Lam 2 to the practice of pastoral care, I think it is necessary to present the three approaches and explain which approach I will use.

The Instructional Use of the Bible in Pastoral Care

The instructional use of the Bible, often represented by the pastor and pastoral care provider Jay E. Adams,³²¹ was a reaction to Hiltner's and Cabot and Dicks' approach because, according to Adams, the dynamic use of the Bible fails to let the Bible itself define the problems of the care-receiver.³²² According to the instructional use of the Bible, the pastoral caregiver should confront the care-receiver with passages from the

³¹⁹ Ibid., 83.

³²⁰ Ibid., 83-84.

³²¹ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970)

³²² Ibid., xiii.

Bible in order to convince the care-receiver what behavior he or she needs to change in order to overcome his or her problems.³²³

Adams states that most problems – physical, psychological and emotional – are results of “their unforgiven and unaltered sinful behavior.”³²⁴ This method does not consider psychology as a resource for its practice; psychology is rather often viewed as a counterpart to the instructional pastoral care giving. The instructional use of the Bible in pastoral care assumes that the source of people’s pain and need is to know God and to live according to the biblical laws.

The instructional use of the Bible suggests that pastoral caregivers should listen to the care-receiver’s needs and use the Bible as a response to this particular need. If the care-receiver is in distress over his or her marriage, the proper response to this would be to read him or her passages that explicitly talk about marriage.³²⁵ Suitable Bible passage for this situation according to this approach could be texts like Eph 5:25a “husbands, love your wives!” or Mal 2:16a: “for I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel.” The Bible is thereby used as a means to instruct the care-receiver that whatever his or hers troubles in the marriage may be, it can be fixed by “living according to the Bible.” This approach seeks therefore to use the Bible as a means to determine the care-receiver’s needs, not the other way around, as Cabot and Dicks suggested.³²⁶

It should be noted that this approach has criticized by the defenders of the dynamic approach to using the Bible in pastoral care. Most of the criticism has been grounded in the fact that this method does not take anything else than the Bible into account, and that it fails to address the individual’s intrapsychic conflicts.³²⁷

The method has also been criticized because it reduces the biblical literature to topical lists that can be applied into specific situations, not taking into account that there are underlying dynamics in all texts and that the Bible itself is not a handbook for

³²³ Ibid., xiv.

³²⁴ Ibid., xvi.

³²⁵ Ibid., 3.

³²⁶ D. Capps, “Bible, Pastoral Use and Interpretation Of,” 84.

³²⁷ Ibid., 84.

pastoral care.³²⁸ The method is also heavily criticized for its one-sided focus on sin and guilt and that its attempts to apply the Bible in pastoral care is mainly concerned about how to use the Bible in order to persuade the care-receiver that he or she needs to confess sin and be forgiven.³²⁹

The Dynamic Use of the Bible in Pastoral Care

In the dynamic approach to using the Bible in pastoral care, on the other hand, are the Biblical texts that are used are not chosen based on topical relevance for the care-receiver's situation, but rather because of their dynamic relevance to the situation presented.³³⁰ The goal of this method is *not* to make the care-receiver repent, confess and be forgiven for his or her sins, but to use the Bible as a source of information to the dynamic process that takes place within the care-receiver self, and in the relation between the caregiver and the care-receiver. In other words, this method does not use the Bible as a moral guide, but the Bible is viewed as a resource for interpreting one's own dynamics and levels of conscience.³³¹

In this approach, the Bible passages are chosen for their relevance to the deeper dynamics involved in the issues the care-receiver brings up.³³² The dynamic use of the Bible is more open to re-interpreting the texts because this method acknowledges that the meaning of a biblical text is not limited to its topic.

This method does not use the Bible as a topical handbook for pastoral care, as Adams does, but the biblical stories are used as narratives that can be interpreted on many levels. An example of dynamic use of the Bible is found in Carroll Wise's book "Psychiatry and the Bible"³³³ from 1956. He suggests that instead of reading a text that

³²⁸ Hopkins and Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word*, 20-21.

³²⁹ Smith, "Look and See", 6.

³³⁰ D. Capps, "Bible, Pastoral Use and Interpretation Of," 83.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

³³² *Ibid.*, 83.

³³³ Carroll Wise, *Psychiatry and the Bible* (New York: Harper, 1956), 27-28.

fits with the topic of the presented problem/concern, one should use texts that communicate on multiple levels.

In the dynamic approach, for the care-receiver whose marriage is in trouble, the texts that are used are not used for their instructional value (e.g. “Husbands, love your wives” Eph. 5:25), but they are used to reflect the emotions that the care-receiver has expressed, for example anxiety, if that is a dominant feeling for the care-receiver. A suitable text may be Matt 6:25; “do not be anxious about your life.”³³⁴

The text is in other words chosen on the basis of the feelings the care-receiver describes, and to the caregiver’s reaction to them. Together the care-receiver and the pastoral care provider can address the feeling of anxiety the care-receiver experiences and the focus would be on how the care-receiver can find ways to deal with his or her anxiety and to change the way it currently impacts his or her life.

The dynamic method demands that the care-receiver has profound insight in the Bible and that he or she is able to detect and identify underlying feelings for the care-receiver. The focus, however, is not on the text: the text itself is used to illuminate the dynamic that goes on within the care-receiver and the dynamic between the care-receiver and the caregiver.

This is in fact the biggest challenge to this method – the Bible stories are mainly used to show the dynamic that takes place in the situation itself; it is not used to reveal the dynamics within the text itself, which may also be helpful in a pastoral care setting.

A Third Approach: Finding the Disclosive Power of the Biblical Texts

This method seeks to find the disclosive – or revealing – power of the biblical text. It draws heavily on the dynamic approach, but it takes the understanding of the dynamic use of the Bible even further. It not only seeks to find biblical passages that can illustrate the dynamics of the emotions that the care-receiver goes through, but this use of the Bible also claims that the biblical texts have disclosive power within themselves. The Bible is used not only for its relevance to the internal dynamics within the care-receiver,

³³⁴D. Capps, “Bible, Pastoral Use and Interpretation Of,” 83.

but because it can disclose both the dynamics within the care-receiver and also within the world. This method claims that the biblical literature used by the caregiver after cautious listening to the stories of the care-receiver can offer a new disclosure to the situations presented in the pastoral care setting.³³⁵

In order to be able to use the biblical stories' disclosive power, the caregiver needs to be highly skilled in listening to the stories presented to her, and she needs to have profound knowledge of the disclosive power of the Bible.

A fourth principle of how to use the Bible in pastoral care emerges from this:

- 4) The use of the Bible in pastoral care should be informed by the pastoral caregiver's awareness of the disclosive power of the specific biblical text.³³⁶

If we use the same example as we have in the other methods, the disclosive method would not apply a text about anxiety or marriage onto a person who experiences anxiety due to his marital problems – the text book example is the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).³³⁷

In this specific case, the caregiver recognized resentment that led to the care-receiver's alienation from the spouse as an underlying factor for the anxiety the care-receiver experienced. Because of the common theme of resentment, the caregiver chose to use the story about the prodigal son as a means to reveal the destructive power of resentment on the one who experiences it.³³⁸ The common theme of resentment presents the justifying factor for using this specific Bible passage in this particular situation.³³⁹ The next step in this method is to facilitate for the care-receiver to think through how the text may also disclose a "new world" for the care-receiver to which the care-receiver may orient him- or herself.³⁴⁰

³³⁵ Ibid., 84.

³³⁶ Ibid., 84.

³³⁷ Ibid., 85.

³³⁸ Ibid., 85.

³³⁹ Ibid., 85.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 85.

A key to this parable's disclosive power, as it is used and interpreted in this situation, may be the father's response to his son's resentment: "son, you are always with me, and all I have is yours" (Luke 15:31), a statement which discloses a world that the care-receiver has yet to experience.³⁴¹ In this disclosed world, the alienation caused by the resentment the care-receiver experiences is surpassed.³⁴²

However, it remains an open question how the care-receiver will react to this "new world". This method seeks to use the Bible to disclose a new world, or at least the potential for a new world, but it is up to the care-receiver whether he or she will enter this new world.

It is important to note that this method is highly personal. Its use is dependent on the pastoral care-receiver's knowledge on the Bible, her theology and her ability to understand the dynamics of both the pastoral care-receiver and the texts she assesses in the situation. Its use of the Bible invites the care-receiver to reflect and re-understand his or her story so that the new world or reality that is revealed can enter and thereby also change the care-receiver's life. The effect of it is thereby also dependent on the care-receiver's reaction to this new world.

Discussion of the Presented Methods

There are things to discuss in each of these approaches to how to use the Bible in pastoral care. I will offer my criticism of each of these methods before I will decide what method I will use for the further exploration of how one can use Lam 2 in pastoral care.

As I have already noted, the instructional use of the Bible has been disregarded by many scholars.³⁴³ Adam's view on illnesses and problems of practical or emotional character as results of people's "unforgiven and unaltered sinful behavior"³⁴⁴ does not only reveal his lack of theological reflection, but by making this argument he inevitably

³⁴¹ Ibid., 85.

³⁴² Ibid., 85.

³⁴³ Cf. Anderson, "The Bible in Pastoral Care", 196.; Hopkins, and Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word*, 20-21.; Smith, "Look and See," 6.

³⁴⁴ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, xvi.

states that the Bible is nothing more than a book of rules. The biblical literature itself gives many examples on underserved suffering, such as it is described in the book of Job, in Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl 9:2, 11) not to mention that Jesus self states that illnesses are not results of sin (John 9:3).

This method communicates a very narrow image of God. If the care-receiver repents his or her sins and surrender to the laws that the care-giver presents, this will have an impact on how much God cares for the care-receiver. If the care-receiver sins less, his or her life will be better and the problems will go away. This is a truly problematic view on God. The image of God this method presents is a God whose only interest is whether a person has sinned or not – nothing else seems to be relevant to God. God is not encountered in terms of healing and restoration, but rather, as a judge who punishes those who fail to live according to God's will.

The instructional use of the Bible in pastoral care is not just simplistic in its use of the Bible and in its image of God; it fails tremendously to take people's problems and suffering seriously and it is, as I see it, likely to create more harm than to do good when it is used in pastoral care.³⁴⁵ This method does not offer any comfort to those who suffer; it rather states that the suffering is God's punishment on them due to unforgiven sin, which is, as we have seen, both unbiblical and ignorant of people's pain.

The instructional use of the Bible also fails to take modern psychology into account, and it refuses to be informed by anything else than the Bible in its practice, which, of course, also is problematic if one wants the pastoral care to actually be a help for those who go through different stages of grief. Needless to say, I do not think this method is useful to pastoral care practices at all, I think it is unhelpful and potentially damaging to those who seek help from the church.

The dynamic use of the Bible, on the other hand, takes the psychological aspects with pastoral care into consideration. In fact, its main focus is on the internal dynamics within the care-receiver, and the Bible is used to illuminate or portray the internal dynamics. This method is also much more aware of the fact that the Bible is not an instruction book for pastoral care. It does not seek to convince the care-receiver of his or

³⁴⁵ Hopkins and Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word*, 21.

her sin, but its focus is on the narrative, or the story, that the care-receiver tells. The stories that are told present the basis on what Bible text might be used in the conversation, and it tries not to be instructional but rather to illuminate the process that already takes place within the care-receiver and in the dynamic between the caregiver and the care-receiver.

One may argue that the weakness of this method is its strong focus on the internal dynamic of the care-receiver and that the method does not assign the biblical stories enough importance in the pastoral care meeting. This specific critique of the dynamic use of the Bible in pastoral care led to the development of finding the disclosive power in the biblical texts. The last approach leans heavily, as we have seen, on the dynamic approach but it has a stronger focus on the text itself.

This is, as I see it, the biggest challenge of finding the disclosive power of the text. Any text can mean anything, if one's own reading of it is the only guideline for the interpretation and use of it. If one should use this approach to the Bible in pastoral care, I would argue that profound knowledge of the biblical text's historical contexts, their origin and so on, is a necessity. If the pastoral caregiver is able to both find historical meaning in the text and apply it into a pastoral care setting without losing too much of the text's own character and original context, I think this method can be very helpful in pastoral care practices.

However, there is one aspect this approach does not explain. By trying to find the disclosive power of the text, it is, as we have already seen, important to know the text. If the text is not known, it cannot open itself up to either the caregiver or the care-receiver. This leads us to a different issue; how can the disclosive power of the biblical text be found in a secular culture where biblical knowledge is often limited to those who work in the religious institutions? This needs to be further discussed.

When the Biblical Stories Are Unknown: How to Find and Apply the Bible's Disclosive Power in a Secular Culture

We have seen that in order to find the disclosive power of the text, the pastoral caregiver needs to have knowledge about both the Bible and about general psychology,

such as the nature of grief and how to accommodate those who grieve. This method is, in other words, dependent on the knowledge of the caregiver, but does the care-receiver need to have knowledge about the biblical stories in order to see their disclosive power?

This is an important question if one is to use this method in a Norwegian context, for which this thesis is tailored. The method of revealing the power of the biblical text does not provide the pastoral caregiver with any methods of *how* to use the Bible in the actual pastoral care session. Should the story the care provider finds suitable be read in order for it to have disclosive power? Or, is it enough that the caregiver knows about the texts and their disclosive power and thereby can let that knowledge impact the conversation?

There have, to my knowledge, not been any studies done on this, and the length of this thesis does not open for an in-depth discussion on this particular topic, but I will share some of my reflections: the pastoral caregiver is the one who navigates the conversation, and she is always informed by the texts of the Bible. This means that the questions she asks and the associations she makes between the text and the care-receiver's situation are always informed by the biblical texts. If she has knowledge about the text's disclosive power, she can apply this knowledge to a conversation without necessarily reading from the Bible to the care-receiver. This means that one side of the conversation, at least, will be informed by the biblical stories.

The Norwegian context, where most people do not have much knowledge about the Bible, they would usually not understand their own experiences of grief, suffering and existential questions through the stories of the Bible.³⁴⁶ It is, in other words, up to the caregiver to make the disclosive power of the biblical literature known through the way she navigates the pastoral care meeting.

If the care-receiver is open to it, the text may be read and reflected upon, but the text may also play the role of a silent resource of the pastoral caregiver. The text's power is not limited to whether it is read out loud or not. If the pastoral caregiver is informed by the disclosive power of the text, she may pass this power on to the pastoral care-receiver

³⁴⁶ There are, of course, exceptions to this.

by addressing different approaches to the conversation and by offer insights to the pastoral care-receiver.

Of the methods presented, there is no such thing as a “perfect” way of applying the Bible in pastoral care. But both the dynamic and the disclosive use of the texts are methods that can be interesting if they are accompanied by knowledge of both the Bible and about psychological aspects of grief and other emotional processes. In the following part of this thesis, I will use the disclosive approach to show how Lam 2 can be a helpful text for pastoral care. I will use both the knowledge gained from the analysis of the text different psychological aspects of grief that I find in the text.

Our question, then, remains: what is the disclosive power of Lam 2? And, how can the disclosive power of this pericope inform pastoral care practices?

CHAPTER SEVEN:

THE FUNCTION OF LAMENT IN LAM 2

Finding the Disclosive Power of Lam 2

As we have seen in the previous discussion on using the Bible to find disclosive powers in the texts, we know that the process of disclosing powers in the biblical texts will look different for each pastoral caregiver and – receiver. The pastoral caregiver is always informed and shaped by the Bible, even though this looks different from person to person because of one’s faith, interpretation of the biblical texts and understanding of psychological aspects of grief and suffering. This means that different people will disclose different powers of the biblical texts.³⁴⁷ We have also seen that regardless of the care-receiver’s knowledge about the Bible and the Christian faith, the disclosed power of the Bible informs the pastoral caregiver in her work, and therefore ultimately also the

³⁴⁷ Anderson, “The Bible and Pastoral Care”, 209.

pastoral care-receiver. The pastoral caregiver should in other words trust that the biblical language and imagery remain disclosive speech.³⁴⁸

So, what is the disclosive power of Lam 2? How can a text that focuses so strongly on suffering and anger reveal any truth that may be helpful to the pastoral care-receiver as he or she goes through suffering, grief and anger in hope to find restoration?

Lam 2 consists of speech. As we have seen in the analysis of the text, there are one or two voices that articulates two perspectives on the suffering of Daughter Zion (Lam 2:1-10 and 11-19) before Daughter Zion herself cries out her misery at the end of the text (Lam 2:20-22). The only voice that is absent from the conversation is the voice of God. Daughter Zion and God are described in terms of distance (Lam 2:1-2), and Daughter Zion's cries are not responded to by God within the framework of Lam 2.

However, Daughter Zion is not abandoned: she has the support of the voices in the text. This leads us to the first disclosed power in Lam 2: the sufferer is not alone.

Disclosed Power I: The Sufferer Is Not Alone

Archie Smith Jr., professor of pastoral psychology at Pacific School of Religion and Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, argues in his article “*“Is There Any Sorrow Like My Sorrow?” Systemic Metaphors for Pastoral Theology and Care*” that the reason Daughter Zion eventually finds the strength to cry out her anger and grief is because the observers who are watching over her feel with her in her pain and show her comfort.³⁴⁹

Daughter Zion has the privilege of having observers who listen to her with compassion and comfort. They do not try to explain her suffering, but they listen to her and allow her to remain *in* the pain here and now, because they know that there is nothing else that they can do (Lam 2:13).³⁵⁰ The suffering is noticed by those who speak to and about Daughter Zion (Lam 2:1-10 and 11-19), her pain is acknowledged and articulated

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 209.

³⁴⁹ Smith, “Look and See,” 11.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 12.

by them and this support makes Daughter Zion able to stand up and take charge of her own situation.³⁵¹

This is crucial to know in order to see the function of lament in Lam 2. Daughter Zion goes through a tremendous change in Lam 2. She is not even actively present in the first 19 verses; she does not own her situation and she has not acted in order to change things. She lets her supporters speak for her. Daughter Zion is empowered to speak up for herself by the support she has received from the other voices in the text. In verse 1-10, she is described from a distance and her pain is described through the lenses of someone who is not too close. This shifts, as we know, in verse 11-19. The voice addresses her in her misery, affirming her pain and that she has not deserved what she goes through. God has no reason to treat Daughter Zion this harshly. The support that Daughter Zion is given empowers her to leave her apathy. She develops from being victimized to being a survivor whose cries of pain cannot be ignored. The counterpart to lament is apathy,³⁵² and Daughter Zion goes from complete powerlessness in her apathy to take charge of her situation and demanding God to stop acting like an enemy. The support from the voices in the text empowered her to act.

Lam 2 reveals that Daughter Zion, even when she experiences that there is a dark cloud between her and God, is not alone. Someone is watching her, caring for her and crying with her.³⁵³ For a pastoral care-receiver who feels abandoned by God, this can be a very important discovery. The text does not argue with the feeling of abandonment that is described, but it represents an argument against that she is abandoned. Her listeners are there with her³⁵⁴. For both the pastoral care-receiver and the pastoral caregiver, this is a power disclosed in Lam 2: the presence of someone who listens and cares truly makes a difference in the sufferer's situation!³⁵⁵ The presence of the listeners becomes a vehicle

³⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

³⁵² Anderson, "The Bible in Pastoral Care", 209.

³⁵³ Smith, "Look and See," 11.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

³⁵⁵ Susan K. Heddal, *Listening Ministry: Rethinking Pastoral Leadership* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 14.

for prayer – Daughter Zion is enabled to pray and cry out to God after she has been encouraged by those who see her.³⁵⁶

In order for Daughter Zion to start her own grief-work, so that she can be restored, she needs to be empowered to speak about her misery. Lam 2 does not force the one who suffer to explain her own suffering; she is allowed to grieve and work through her pain because that is the only way to restoration³⁵⁷. By staying with Daughter Zion in her pain, encouraging her to express her grief and anger to God, they are also facilitating her to lament.

Disclosed Power II: Anger and Lament are Parts of True Worship

The compassionate presence of the voices gave Daughter Zion the power and strength to pour out what's in her heart before the face of God (Lam 2:19). The Book of Lamentations in general and, Lam 2 specifically, can seem like the opposite of true worship.³⁵⁸ There is no expression of praise of God in Lam 2, it rather expresses the opposite: God should not be praised when Daughter Zion experiences the things she goes through.

Kathleen M. O'Connor argues in her book *Lamentations and The Tears of the World* that it is precisely because Lam addresses God in the midst of suffering, it represents an act of true worship.³⁵⁹ She argues that the fact that the complaints are directed towards God, even in its unpretentiousness, anger and resentment, it can teach the world how to pray to God under all circumstances. She states:

“It [the Book of Lamentations] can show us how to stand before God without pretension. By allowing us to be broken, angry, and tear-drenched before God, it can melt our hearts and become a vehicle of prayer for the wounds of the world.”³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Smith, “Look and See,” 11.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁵⁸ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 124.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 124.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 124.

Seen from this perspective, Lam 2 gives the pastoral care provider insights to how to help the pastoral care-receiver to express his or her anger, sorrow and pain. This goes well along with the principle for worship which, according to the Eastern theologian Raimon Panikkar, is that “worship should be truthful in its expression of feelings.”³⁶¹

There is no such thing as an easy life – everyone experiences suffering to some extent throughout a lifetime. Therefore, is it extremely important for the pastoral caregiver to be familiar with the texts in the Bible that describe pain, anger and suffering. Lam 2 is one of these texts, and it reveals to the one who suffers that lament is not just accepted as a part of life, but the one who suffers is actually encouraged to lament and to pour out one’s feelings (Lam 2:19). It is in telling the truth, even when the truth is uncomfortable and disturbing, that the first step toward the end of suffering is taken.³⁶²

Worship cannot be truthful if it does not allow us to be honest, and so is it with pastoral care as well. Telling one’s story can only be healing if the story is true. This should be a guideline for pastoral care practices, and this is something Lam 2 advocates for. One disclosed power we find by reading Lam 2 is that it facilitates the sufferer with language of grief and anger. Lam 2 is filled with descriptions of anger of both divine and human character (cf. Lam 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 21). It does not cover up anything – rather it reveals the pain and anger of Daughter Zion. To be informed by Lam 2 when one practices pastoral care is to be aware that there is room for anger and resentment against God, and the words of Lam 2 can help a pastoral care-receiver to address his or her own anger and pain. This should not be perceived as a threat against faith in God, as many people tend to think. The harsh language of Lam 2 should rather be viewed as an act of true worship. Lam 2 speaks about feeling distant from God (Lam 2:1), and it is harshly direct in its descriptions of God’s actions against Daughter Zion and her children (Lam 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 20). The disclosive power of Lam 2 is its honesty about the pain Daughter Zion goes through. As O’Connor states, the act of lament not only draws attention to the misery of Daughter Zion – but in addressing God, the lament also becomes an act of hope.

³⁶¹ Raimon Panikkar, *Invisible Harmony: Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 41.

³⁶² Smith, “Is there Any Pain,” 14.

The importance of finding direction for one's anger is also described by the late M. D. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and their own Families*.³⁶³ In this book, Kübler-Ross describes what she calls "the stages of grief."³⁶⁴ Anger is, according to her, the second stage of grief. She describes the anger that is evoked by the humility of being exposed to others in one's pain, and she states that anger is a way of getting attention:

... we have found that those patients do best who have been encouraged to express their rage, to cry in preparatory grief, and to express their fears and fantasies to someone who can sit quietly and listen.³⁶⁵

Even though Kübler-Ross' theories on the stages of grief are no longer considered to be accurate, her descriptions of anger as a natural part of grieving are noteworthy. If a pastoral care-receiver is offered the possibility to lament and given the language to do so, he or she may be able to express pain and hope for restoration through the act of lament. Lam 2 should teach the pastoral caregiver that anger and lament are both parts of true worship.

In other words, the descriptions of suffering and rage against God disclose another power of the text. Lam 2 tells a story about unresolved suffering, and it even blames it on God. Lam 2 is an act of angry, daring prayer. It is not pretty or comfortable – it takes the reader out of the comfort zone, because there is no redemption or quick fix in the text. Still, the hope that God eventually will hear and redeem Daughter Zion prevails. If there was no hope for change, there would be no prayer.

In his book *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, Walter Brueggemann states that a result of the loss of the lament genre is the "loss of genuine covenant interaction."³⁶⁶ He argues that where lament is absent, the voice of the sufferer is silenced and thereby made

³⁶³Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying: What the Dying have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and their own Families* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969)

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 38-112.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 119.

³⁶⁶Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 102.

powerless.³⁶⁷ Keeping this in mind, we realize that Lam 2 advocates for the exact opposite: in the lament, in the loud outcry to God, Daughter Zion refuses to remain silent (Lam 2:20-22). She does not accept to be in a one-sided relationship with God. Her voice matters and it should matter to God as well! Where there is lament, there is also hope that God will actually hear the lamenter and that the ongoing suffering will end one day. The active outcries of Daughter Zion and those who see her are important to listen to, also for pastoral care practitioners today. For it is in the articulation of suffering it is made visible.³⁶⁸

This point leads us to the final disclosive power in Lam 2: the act of lament believes in change – the rage of Daughter Zion is an act of hope.

Disclosed Power III: There Is Hope, Also In Suffering

The American poet Robert Frost, whose life was far from easy, once said: “In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life – it goes on.”³⁶⁹ It is in the hope that the intense, unbearable suffering will have an end that Daughter Zion cries out to God. Hope is a presupposition for the lament: if there is no hope that the situation the lamenter experiences will change, the lament loses its function. Westermann argues that by addressing YHWH directly and demanding him to consider to “whom you act severely” (Lam 2:22), something new emerges in the way Daughter Zion looks at the situation: she now looks at the future and demands God to change it.³⁷⁰

By addressing God, Daughter Zion reveals that she has hope for a different future, even while she is the midst of extreme suffering.³⁷¹ Andrew L. Lester, professor of pastoral theology and pastoral counseling at Brite Divinity School, states that:

“Hoping does not limit reality to what is perceived in the “now” but continuously looks further for development of reality that is being formed. As the future

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 102.

³⁶⁸ Smith, “Look and See,” 9.

³⁶⁹ Qtd. in *Harper Book of Quotations*, 3rd ed., Robert I. Fitzhenry, (Glasgow: Collins Reference, 1993), 261.

³⁷⁰ Westermann, *Lamentations*, 158.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 158.

unfolds, it reveals new data that change our understanding of reality. Reality for the hoping person is always in transition, fluid rather than static. Hope assumes the future contains potentialities not visible in the present.”³⁷²

By crying out to God, Daughter Zion shows that she has hope that her future “contains potentialities not visible in the present,”³⁷³ in other words; she hopes that her situation will change. For a care-receiver, this is an important power to disclose: there is hope, even in suffering.

Lament has often been regarded as the opposite of hope, but Lam 2 discloses that there is hope even in suffering that is “vast as the sea” (Lam 2:13).³⁷⁴ Kathleen D. Billmann, professor of pastoral theology and counseling at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and Daniel L. Miglore, professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, argue in their book *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* that “genuine hope cannot be separated from the experience of suffering.”³⁷⁵

They state:

“Just as we come to know the true meaning of hope only through suffering, so we can praise God with a full and joyful heart only if we are free to grieve and lament the real pain and injustices of the world. [...] Where there is lament, there is life, and even in the midst of suffering, this life will be vital and expectant. When lament ceases to function and all questions are silenced, then what is, is accepted as what will be, in religion, in society, in the political and economic structures of life.”³⁷⁶

The element of hope in Lam 2 is that by lamenting, Daughter Zion goes from sitting in apathetic silence to rising up, crying out her anger and pain to God. Her lament changes how she relates to her own situation. She goes from resignation to lamentation, hoping that her future will be different from her present situation. The expression of hope

³⁷²Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 89.

³⁷³*Ibid.*, 89.

³⁷⁴Kathleen D. Billmann and Daniel L. Miglore, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1999), 124.

³⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 124.

³⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 124.

is frail: it is by addressing God, who is the source of the suffering for Daughter Zion that hope is expressed: maybe God will listen?

Regardless of the immediate response (or lack thereof) to the lament, it carries with it hope that the future may look different than the present.³⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this hope is not explicitly described in Lam 2: Daughter Zion cannot say with confidence that the future will be better, hence the lack of affirmation of being heard and the promise of praise, which are present elements in other OT laments (cf. Ps 22:21a-22; 27:10, 13).

This brings us to an important discovery for the caregiver: It is up to the sufferer to explain his or her expectations for the future. For a caregiver to tell a care-receiver who is not yet ready for it, that his or her future will be better than the present situation is to trivialize the reality of the pain the care-receiver goes through.³⁷⁸ Lam, 2 discloses that it is by *identifying* with Daughter Zion's pain, and speaking on her behalf, she is given strength to rise up and lament. The listeners in Lam 2 do not attempt to describe her pain – we know from Lam2:11 that it is impossible to find a suitable image to convey her suffering. But she is encouraged to put words to her pain, to cry and to arise from the ground and cry out to God. The caregiver should facilitate for the lament to emerge, because it is by lamenting true hope can be found.³⁷⁹

In the analysis of Lam 2, we have also seen how Daughter Zion's need for consolation is met in Second Isaiah. Here, Daughter Zion is comforted (Isa 40), and God has again redeemed her. The loss of hope comes with the loss of lament. It is only when the suffering is not articulated that hope disappears – because the lament is encouraged by the hope that maybe, one day, will God change God's mind and look at Daughter Zion with favor again. Second Isaiah answers Daughter Zion's lament – there will be redemption, and the relationship between God and Daughter Zion will again be restored.

The hope of the lament is a disclosed power in Lam 2, and after having analyzed Lam 2, we also know that the story of Daughter Zion does not end in Lam 2. Even though

³⁷⁷Edward P. Wimberly, *Claiming God, Reclaiming Dignity: African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 114.

³⁷⁸Billmann and Miglore, *Rachel's Cry*, 124.

³⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 139.

her suffering is immeasurable, she will ultimately share the experience described by Robert Frost: Life goes on.

Daughter Zion's losses are many, but there are possibilities for goodness to come in her future when she has gone through the seasons of grief and suffering.³⁸⁰ This is the final and perhaps most important disclosed power in Lam 2 as I see it: all the others lead to the hope that there is room for hope, even in the midst of suffering. The encouragement in Lam 2:19 that Daughter Zion should let her tears flow like a torrent is rooted in the hope that her cries *will* be heard and that God once again *will* remember God's grace.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSION

I started working on Lam 2 wanting to gain insight about the function of lament in Lam 2. Lam 2 is a text that laments the destruction of a city by its own God. It describes the suffering of the personified city and her people, and the text ends with the cry of the city, demanding God to stop the violent behavior.

We have seen that Lam 2 is a text that does not attempt to excuse God for God's actions. Rather, it goes far in blaming God for the suffering that takes place. Reading Lam 2 as a complete text, and thereby not taking the other chapters in Lam into account, makes us conclude that within the perspective of Lam 2, the pain of Daughter Zion and her children is not eased.

We have also seen that there are some important similarities between the ANE city goddesses and the role of Daughter Zion, and we have seen how the non-deified Jerusalem stands up for her citizens in a similar fashion as the deified cities in the ANE city laments stand up against the main deities in order to protect their citizens. The personification of the city makes the image of the suffering Daughter Zion and her

³⁸⁰Ibid., 124-125.

children almost unbearable to witness: it stresses the contrast between the suffering woman and God, who is raging against her, seemingly not affected by the suffering that takes place. Similar, but not identical, to the divine abandonment in some of the ANE city lament, Daughter Zion is separated from God, who was supposed to protect her from danger.

The language in Lam 2 is very harsh in its descriptions of God, and the text raises many theological questions, such as God's role in Daughter Zion's suffering, and the identification of God as an enemy. We have also seen that the only voice that is missing in Lam 2 is the voice of God. Lam 2 does not seek to explain the suffering, or to minimize Daughter Zion's pain. Rather, she is encouraged to arise from the ground and cry out on the behalf of her children who suffer.

Even though the situation in Lam 2 is not resolved by the end of the text, we have seen that, from a canonical perspective, Daughter Zion's cries are responded to in Isa 40, when God no longer hides in anger. Lam 2 tells us that there is no quick redemption for Daughter Zion: she has to wait, but she will be comforted in the future.

The lack of God's merciful presence is stressed by the presence of those who witness to Daughter Zion's pain. The speaker in the text suffers with her and identifies strongly with her pain (cf. Lam 2:11). Even though there are good reasons for Daughter Zion to feel abandoned by God, she is not alone in her suffering. This and the fact that Daughter Zion is being encouraged to cry out her pain to God are important factors in the lament in Lam 2.

In the discussion on how to use the Bible in pastoral care, we discussed the instructional, dynamic and the disclosive use of the Bible. We have seen that the instructional use of the Bible in pastoral care, with its excessive focus on sin and guilt, not only is likely to increase the care-receiver's pain, but the method fails tremendously to take the texts of the Bible that address unexplained suffering and pain into account and thus, limits the Bible to a list of laws.

The dynamic use of the Bible in pastoral care is more concerned about the dynamics that takes place within the care-receiver, and that pastoral care should be informed both by the needs of the care-receiver as well as insights from general counseling. The dynamic use of the Bible can be very helpful to care-receivers as it

focuses on their stories and the dynamic they go through. In the discussion on the different methods, we saw that the dynamic method functions as a basis for the approach of finding the disclosive power of the biblical texts.

We have seen that the method of disclosing powers in the biblical texts takes both the care-receiver's needs and context into account as well as it focuses on the Bible itself, in accordance with its goal to disclose powers of the biblical texts. We have seen that the disclosive powers in Lam 2 are the realization that the sufferer is not alone in his or her suffering, and providing the sufferer with language to express his or her lament and anger to God, subsequently showing that both lament and anger are parts of true worship. The suffering and anger is given direction – it is not a threat against faith to express one's distress, lament and anger. The last function of lament in Lam 2 is the discovery that hope can be found even in suffering.

We have seen that the act of lamenting is an act of hope. It is by resigning oneself that hope is lost: to lament is to object to the finality of the suffering. Hope is found in the development from being apathetic to finding strength to rise up and cry against God, because hope is to believe that the future can be different than the present, which is what is expressed in the outcry against God. Seen from a canonical perspective, the reader knows (and this can be disclosed to the sufferer by the caregiver) that Daughter Zion will be comforted at last, which is a disclosed power that can be a source of hope even for those who suffer today.

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APPENDIX: TRANSLATION OF LAM 2

The following translation is my own working translation of Lam 2. It is based on the MT as it appears in BHS. I will include textual criticism when appropriate for the translation and the understanding of the text. This translation is meant to be a word-for-word translation, which means that I will also translate the imagery as directly as possible.

א 1 *Alas!*³⁸¹

*Adonay*³⁸² *in his anger*

*has set Daughter Zion*³⁸³ *under a cloud!*

He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel,

and not remembered his footstool on the day of his anger.

ב 2 *Adonay has destroyed without mercy*

all the dwellings of Jacob;

he has in his wrath broken down the strongholds of daughter Judah;

³⁸¹ אֵיכָה, introduces the whole chapter, and it is given a line on its own – possibly to mark the title of the book itself. The word is often translated to “how”, but it is also used to introduce a lament (see Lam 1:1, 3:1), and it is not followed by a specific question, and it is therefore more appropriate to translate the word with “alas,” to stress its function as an introduction to a lament.

³⁸² The text shifts between using the vocalized name for Adonay and the tetragrammaton YHWH. In order to maintain the nuance of the text, I will keep the Hebrew versions of Adonay’s name.

³⁸³ The translation of בַּת צִיּוֹן, is usually understood as an appositional genitive (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 10-11.), which gives the translator two options: should the term be translated to “daughter of Zion” or “Daughter Zion”? , “Daughter Zion” refers to the personification of Jerusalem (cf. “a General Introduction to Personification” in chapter 1). When we understand the term as referring to the personification, translating the term to “daughter of Zion” can be misleading, because it is not Zion’s daughter who is addressed (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 10.)

*he has brought down to the ground in dishonor
the kingdom and her rulers.*

*3 He has cut down in his burning anger all the might of Israel
He has withdrawn his right hand from them
in the face of the enemy.
[He has] burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,
consuming all around.*

*4 He has bent his bow like an enemy
Set with his right hand as a foe
And he has killed all the pride in our eyes
in the tent of Daughter Zion.
He has poured out all his fury like fire.*

*5 Adonay has become like an enemy;
he has destroyed Israel.
He has destroyed all her palaces,
laid all his³⁸⁴ strongholds in ruins,
and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lament.*

*6 He treated his booth with violence,
as if it were a garden,
and he laid the place of his appointed feast in ruins.
YHWH brought the Sabbath and the festivals to an end
and he has spurned the king and priest in his fierce indignation.*

*7 Adonay has scorned his altar,
and disowned his sanctuary.
He has delivered the walls of her palaces*

³⁸⁴ The apparatus suggests “her stronghold”, but there are no texts that support that reading.

*into the hand of the enemy,
They rose a clamor in the house of YHWH
as on a day of an appointed feast.*

*π 8 YHWH determined to lay in ruins
the walls of daughter Zion.
He marked it off by the line,
he restrained not his hand from destroying,
and he caused the rampart and walls to lament;
they languish together.*

*Ϸ 9 Her gates have sunk into the ground,
he has ruined and broken her bars.
Her kings and princes are among the nations,
there is no law,
and her prophets find no vision from YHWH.*

*· 10 The elders of daughter Zion
sit on the ground and keep silence³⁸⁵.
They have thrown dust on their heads
and they put on sackcloth;
the virgins of Israel
bow their heads to the ground.*

*Ϸ 11 My eyes are spent on weeping,
my stomach is in distress,
my liver is poured out on the ground
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
because children and sucklings faint in the streets of the town.*

³⁸⁵ According to BDB, “דָּמָה”, can both mean “silent” or “mourn”, 199. House argues that the translation best fits “silent”, House, *Lamentations*, 371.

ה 12 They cry out to their mothers:
 “Where is bread and wine?”,
 as they faint like the fatally wounded,
 in the streets of the city,
 as their lives are poured out on their mother’s bosom.

ו 13 What can I witness³⁸⁶ for you,
 what can I compare for you,
 the daughter of Jerusalem?
 What can I compare with you that might comfort you,
 virgin daughter Zion?
 For vast as the sea is your fracture;
 who can heal you?

ז 14 Your prophets have seen false and deceptive visions for you,
 they have not made known your iniquity
 to restore your fortunes,
 but have seen oracles for you that were false and misleading.

ח 15 All who pass along the way
 clap their hands at you;
 they wag their head at the daughter of Israel;
 “Is this the city that was declared
 the perfection of beauty,
 the joy of all the earth?”

ט 16 All your enemies open their mouth against you,
 they hiss and gnash their teeth,

³⁸⁶ The Qere reads אעיד (qal. Impf. 1sg of עיד) “I witness”. Vg. reads *comporabo te*, “I will compare you”. Both of these seem to be efforts to make a difficult MT reading easier.

*they shout “we have destroyed her!”
 “Ah, this is the day we have longed for,
 now we have found it; now we see it”*

*v17 YHWH has done what he purposed,
 he has carried out his threat,
 as he commanded in the ancient days.
 He threw down and did not pity,
 and he has caused the enemy rejoice over you,
 and exalted the might of your foes.*

*z 18 Their heart cry out to Adonay,
 wall of Daughter Zion: let tears flow down,
 like a torrent day and night.
 Give yourself no rest,
 the daughter of the eye no respite.*

*p 19 Arise, cry out in the night,
 at the beginning of the watches.
 Pour out your heart like water,
 before the face of Adonay!
 Lift your hands to him,
 for the lives of your children
 who faint from hunger on the head of the street.*

*w 20 Look, YHWH, and consider
 to whom you act severely.
 Should the women eat the fruit of their womb,
 the children they have cuddled?
 Should the priest and prophet
 be slain in the sanctuary of Adonay?*

*21 Young and the old are lying
 on the ground in the streets;
 my young virgins and my young men
 have fallen by the sword³⁸⁷;
 you killed them on the day of your anger,
 slaughtering without mercy.*

*22 You invited my terrors³⁸⁸ from every side
 as to a feast day,
 and on the day of the anger of YHWH
 no one escaped or survived,
 those whom I have cuddled and cared for,
 my enemies destroyed.*

³⁸⁷ LXX expands this sentence: “went away in captivity, because of the sword and because of the famine”. There are no other texts that suggest this expansion, so I will not include it in the translation.

³⁸⁸ LXX offers a different reading of the line: “my sojourners.” This reading implies that God is the one calling for sojourners (not terrors) to come to the feast day. The MT text connects this text with similar texts in the Old Testament, see for example Jer 6:25, 20:3, 49:29. However, there is no good reason that MT text should be altered.