THE DIALOGUE OF SORROW, BLAME, AND PROTEST IN LAMENTATIONS 1

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PREFACE

This paper reflects research undertaken throughout the first year of my doctoral research, which seeks to examine the extent to which the theme and language of covenant influences the book of Lamentations. The majority of this first year has focused on the role and position of covenant in the Hebrew Bible, with the final few months switching attention to an initial analysis of the context, language and theology of the book of Lamentations. The argument put forth here has emerged principally from this second line of enquiry. In anticipation of the response to this paper from senior scholars and fellow doctoral candidates at OTSEM, I welcome any feedback and critique regarding the strengths and weaknesses of my argument, but I would particularly envisage three areas as the focal points of our discussion: First, the methodology for detecting poetic voices within Lamentations; second, the strength of the case put forth for identifying three voices in Lamentations 1; third, the feasibility of those voices offering a dialogue between differing theological positions, particularly with respect to the place of covenant in that dialogue. This last aspect is not discussed at length in this paper, and thus explores the potential for this paper's contribution to my wider research.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Lamentations is, in every respect, complex. From its intricate structure, to its evocative and allusive language, its richness runs deep and is best appreciated at close quarters with an attentive eye. Indeed, it is *a complex*: a composition of diverse literary features, genres, and perspectives, brought together to produce a literary work of multiple layers, both emotional and theological. Among the many literary devices employed regularly by the poet(s),[1] it has often been recognised that different voices or personae can be detected, which speak about the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem from different emotional and theological perspectives.[2] These voices do not necessarily always agree, and may even provoke each other to think differently, with the effect that any attempt to reduce the poems to a single "message" is confounded by the dialogue between them.[3] While the presence of voices is widely agreed, the

[1] For a full discussion of these literary features, including acrostics, enjambment, euphony, a *qinah* meter, and others, see: F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* IBCTP (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 12-23.

[2] The scholarly discussion on this point will be discussed below, but suffice it to say here that while he is not the first to make the observation, William Lanahan's work on this aspect has proved to be the most influential, and represents a breakthrough from merely observing the literary feature to appreciating more fully its importance for understanding the poems as a whole: W. F. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations' in *JBL* 93.1 (1974), 41-49.

[3] Several excellent studies have reflected on this aspect of the book of Lamentations as a whole. Important studies which have a bearing on my argument include: M. J. Bier, *'Perhaps There Is Hope': Reading Lamentations as a Polyphony of Pain, Penitence, and Protest* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015); N. C. Lee, *The Singers of*

number of those voices, and the division-points between them is disputed. There is broad agreement, however, that only two voices are present in the first poem: the first a narrator, possibly the poet himself, and the second the personified figure of Zion.

While this finding is consistent with the grammatical shifts between third- and first-person perspective utilised throughout both poems, a number of anomalies remain unaccounted for, most notably including the use of different names for the city, and for God, different explanations of how or why the disaster occurred, and different theological perspectives, all within the third-person speech. Typically, these are either disregarded as serious issues, or made to fit within the single voice of a narrator representing more than one viewpoint. However, if William Lanahan is correct to argue that a key function of multiple speaking voices within Hebrew poetry is "the displacement of the poet's imagination beyond the limitations of his single viewpoint so that he may gain a manifold insight into the human experience"[4] – that is, such a technique enables the poet to separate out his own complex of conflicting emotions in order to give each one space to be expressed – and in the light of other poetic passages which have been recognised to shift between alternate third-person referents without direct speech markers (e.g., Jer 10:21; Mic 6-7),[5] then we should take seriously the possibility that the third-person speech in Lamentations 1 represents more than one poetic voice. In fact, the contention of this paper is that three voices may be detected in the poetry of Lamentations 1: two observers, each speaking in the third person, and the first-person discourse of personified Daughter Zion herself. These three voices, which for the most part speak indirectly across each other, enable a dialogue to emerge between the sorrow experienced by Zion, shared by the observer who loves her; the guilt attributed to Zion, felt by the observer who blames her; and the protest from Zion that whichever perspective is emphasised, God must answer her cry.

In terms of scope, this paper focuses attention on Lamentations 1, which contains all of the anomalies which may indicate a third, undirected voice, as well as the clearest sense of shifting between these voices. In doing so, this paper proposes a means of detecting poetic voices in unmarked discourse which can then be applied to the remaining four poems. In terms of relationship to my doctoral project, the focus of my research is on the extent to which the book of Lamentations is influenced by the theme and language of covenant. A vital aspect of my investigation is, therefore, how far the theological character of the poems is expressed via the dialogue between the different voices through which the poet(s) addresses the reader. It is hoped that the analysis presented in this paper can establish a valuable line of enquiry for the project as a whole.

VOICES IN LAMENTATIONS

The presence of multiple voices in the poetry of Lamentations has long been attested by scholars. Max Löhr, for example, writing in 1906, noted the presence of Zion as a separate voice to the poet in Lamentations 1 and 2 (1:9, 11, 12-16, 18-22; 2:20-22), although this was the only 'external' voice he recognised throughout the five poems.[6] Whereas, Hermann

Lamentations: Cities Under Siege, From Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo (Leiden: Brill, 2002); T. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago, IL; University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[4] Lanahan (1974), 41.

[5] E.g., S. A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* SVT Vol. XLVI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 34-35; D. G. Hagstrom, *The Coherence of the Book of Micah: A Literary Analysis* SBLDS 89 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 106-13.

[6] M. Löhr, *Die Klagelieder des Jeremias: Übersetzt und Erklärt* (Göttingen: Vendenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906), 1, 9, 15, 23, 28.

Wiesmann (1954) identified as many as six voices: a narrator (1:1-6, 7-9b, 10-11b, 15c, 17; 2:1-10, 13-17), Zion (1:9c, 11c-15b, 16, 18-22; 2:11-12, 20-22), the people (2:18-19), Jeremiah (chapters 3 and 4), and two choirs (both in chapter 5), attributing every verse to a voice not necessarily to be understood directly as the poet himself.[7] Other scholars offered their own delineation,[8] but it was not until the publication of William Lanahan's article, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations' (1974) that the prevalence and purpose of these voices drew closer scholarly analysis.[9] The importance of Lanahan's thesis was not so much in his literary analysis; rather, it was in his recognition of the poet's decision to withdraw his own voice altogether in favour of a myriad of others, each expressing one of the poet's own emotional or theological responses to the calamitous situation he found himself in. Thus, Lanahan asserts: "the variety of voices sketches the topography of a unique spiritual consciousness, which can realize itself only by projecting its grief in its constituent phases by adopting different personae."[10]

As Kim Lan Nguyen has observed, Lanahan's article "probably influences all of the subsequent scholarly efforts in this area."[11] Certainly, it has contributed to a widespread acceptance of the significant role of different voices in the formation of the poetry of Lamentations, as well as a growing interest in its dialogic potential.[12] Nevertheless, there are gaps in his argument, which have resulted in the detail of his analysis proving less influential than the broad scope of its vision. The most immediately striking lacuna is in his lack of methodological discussion. Most of his article is given over to identifying and describing five personae active across the five poems (a reporter and personified Jerusalem in Lam 1-2, a defeated soldier in Lam 3, a bourgeois in Lam 4, and a choral voice in Lam 5), but he never explains how he has identified each of these voices.[13] It is probable that his analysis of Lamentations 1 is guided by the use of first- and third-person discourse (Zion and reporter respectively), which can be an effective means of signalling a change of speaker,[14] and would produce precisely the delineation he proposes (with the reporter speaking in 1:1-9b, 10-11b, 15c, 17; and Jerusalem speaking in 1:9c, 11c-15b, 16, 18-22). However, this cannot have been his only marker for Lamentations 2, a poem he argues projects the same two voices but includes instances of first-person speech that he attributes to the narrator (Lam 2:13-17).[15] Nor can it be true for chapters 3 or 4, each of which Lanahan attributes to one voice, despite both switching between first- and third- person speeches, including both singular and plural first-person speech

[7] H. Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder, übersetzt und erklärt* (Frankfurt: Philosophisch-theologische Hochschule Sankt George, 1954), 132, 167, 209, 241-2, 271.
[8] E.g., O. Eissfeldt (trans. P. R. Ackroyd), *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 500-03; D. R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 2nd Edition* AB 7a (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992 [1972]), 79, 103, 120-24, 145, 162.
[9] Lanahan (1974).
[10] Ibid., 42.
[11] K. L. Nguyen, *Chorus in the Dark: The Voices of the Book of Lamentations* HBM 54 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 8.
[12] Commentaries which cite Lanahan's work in their own discussion of this aspect include: A. Berlin, Lamentations: A Commentary OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 6-7; R. Parry, *Lamentations* THOTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 11-12; I. W. Provan, *Lamentations* NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 6-7; H. A. Thomas, Poetry and Theology in the Book of Lamentations: The Aesthetics of an Open Text HBM 47 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 90-93; cf. D. Bergant, *Lamentations* AOTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 15-16; T. Longman III, Jeremiah, Lamentations UBCS (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 329.
[13] Lanahan (1974), 42-49.
[14] Meier (1992), 34.
[15] Lanahan (1974), 43-45.

in Lamentations 3.[16] His lack of explanation on this point implies an intuitive approach, delineating the personae based on his subjective sense of the movement of the text.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that following Lanahan's analysis, a number of alternative delineations have been proposed in recent scholarship. These have ranged from as few as two voices detected by Nancy Lee, up to three by Iain Provan, four by Diane Bergant and Katheen O'Connor, and five by Adele Berlin and Gina Hens-Piazza, with Robin Parry speculating that as many as nine could be found depending on the criteria applied.[17] Here again, the method is often not described, but on the occasions that it is, each voice is determined on the basis of the grammatical person utilized, as well as the general 'tone' of the discourse.[18] There is little consistency in how 'tone' is measured, however, resulting in the above discrepancies.

The greatest differences of interpretation on this point have tended to surface in chapters 3-5, but an apt example may also be found in Lam 1:15c. The shift from first- to third-person in this verse occurs within an extended speech by Zion (1:11c-16), and has been understood by some scholars as signalling a shift back to the narrator, who now interrupts Zion just as she had interrupted him in 1:9c and 1:11c (and as he will again interrupt her in 1:17), in order to reinforce his earlier assertion of God's active role in her suffering (cf. 1:5).[19] Whereas others have disregarded the third-person indicator in favour of a sense that the statement conforms to the same mood as the rest of the strophe, evidenced not least by the imagery of crushing and tramping in 15b and 15c respectively.[20] As with Lanahan's configuration, then, these proposals are thus prone to subjective reasoning and artificial construction; a point acknowledged by Berlin, who viewed "the variety of interpretations that are possible as a sign that such identification is as much the product of the interpreter as a feature of the text."[21]

In striking contrast to the range of proposals for voices throughout the book of Lamentations as a whole, there is almost unanimous agreement that only two voices are present in Lamentations 1-2, the first most commonly described as a narrator, and the second, Daughter Zion. Notable exceptions include Wiesmann, who identifies a third voice in Lamentations 2 (that of the people in 2:18-19), and Claus Westermann, who objects that explaining the differences of perspective in terms of distinct voices "yields no intelligible sense," arguing instead that the poet is both a citizen of Zion and her representative, and as such inhabits both identities without the need of a distinct second voice.[22] While Westermann is right in one sense – clearly the poet does indeed sit behind both perspectives – he fails to appreciate the extent to which these perspectives confront and respond to one another, and thus the potential for projected voices to enter into dialogue together, thereby encouraging a more nuanced reception by the reader. True, in as far as there is a dialogue, it is somewhat manufactured by the poet before the reader, since the voices tend to speak across one another instead of to one another; but not exclusively. Lam 1:10c, for example, interrupts third-person speech with a second-

[16] Ibid., 45-48. In Lam 3, which begins and ends in first person singular speech, interruptions are made by third person speech (3:22-23, 25-39) and first person plural speech (3:40-47); in Lam 4, the predominant third-person speech is interrupted by a period of first person plural speech (4:17-20), and closes with a shift to a second-person address directed to both Edom and Zion (4:21-22).

[17] Lee (2002), 11; Provan (1991), 7; Bergant (2003), 15-16; K. M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 17, 30, 44-45, 58, 70; Berlin (2002), 6-7; G. Hens-Piazza, *Lamentations: Wisdom Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), xlvii; Parry (2010), 12.

[18] Cf. C. W. Miller, 'Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1' in *Biblical Interpretation* 9.4 (2001), pp. 393-408, 393.

[19] E.g., Hillers (1992), 79; Lanahan (1974), 41; Miller (2001), 393.

[20] E.g., Berlin (2002), 48; O'Connor (2002), 26; Provan (1991), 33; Thomas (2013), 119.

[21] Berlin (2002), 6.

[22] Wiesmann (1954), 167; C. Westermann (trans. C. Muenchow), *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994 [1990], 139-40.

person address, "Those whom you commanded not to enter your assembly."[23] The intended recipient of this appeal is unclear and disputed, but clearly indicates the intention to converse about, and not merely project, an idea. Similarly, Lamentations 2:13-19 presents an extended second-person discourse, culminating in a direct invitation to "Pour out your heart like water, before the face of the Lord" (2:19b). Indeed, the direct appeals to Yahweh (1:9c, 11c, 20-22; 2:20-22), and to the passers-by (1:12), establish them as additional personae who, though they do not speak directly (the passers-by are quoted indirectly in 2:15, 16), are as much a part of the dialogue as the narrator or Zion.

It is this capacity for dialogue that has dominated discussions about the voices in the book of Lamentations in general, and Lamentations 1, in particular. In recent years, a number of insightful studies have shed light on the democratizing power of such a literary approach, which serves to elevate the pained voice of the vulnerable, in the form of Daughter Zion – a widow who has lost her children, a queen who has lost her crown, a woman in a man's world, rejected and enslaved, mocked and despised – so that her voice is not lost among the crowd of men who speak for (or against) her, explaining her plight and daring to hope for a brighter future.[24]

A PROBLEMATIC CONSENSUS

While this appreciation for the dialogue between narrator and Zion has proved a fertile ground for scholarly excavation of Lamentations 1, yielding much to aid our understanding and provoke our thinking, there remains an important question-mark over the depth of analysis that has concluded only two voices speak. As with the book *in toto*, in the absence of direct discourse markers (e.g., וַיֹּאמֶר, וַתֹּאמֶר), the first indicator has (rightly) been taken to be shifts in grammatical person.[25] Lamentations 1 utilises first-, second-, and third-person discourse, but for the most part second-person statements are clearly contained within a unit of first- or third-person discourse, making it clear that it should not be considered a separate voice. What remains, then, is a juxtaposition of first- and third-person speech, which can then be attributed to two distinct voices: the narrator dominating the first half of the poem (1:1-11), with two brief interjections from Zion (1:9c, 11c), who then prevails through the second half (1:12-22), save for one, or possibly two, interjections from the narrator (1:15c, 17).

As noted above, however, 1:15c disrupts the neatness of this attribution, as a third-person statement embedded in an extended first-person discourse, which could be interpreted as stemming from either voice, and so subjective measure of 'tone' is then applied to decide which voice it belongs to, resulting in disagreement among scholars regarding the precise lines of division. This disagreement over what is, after all, only one colon, appears not to be considered consequential, however, if the lack of scholarly critique of either position is any indication. The trouble is, that it certainly is consequential in 1:15. Heard from Zion's mouth, she conveys her deepening resignation that Yahweh is set against her: having first conceded his remote influence over world events (1:15b), she now despairs under his direct oppression (15c); whereas in the mouth of a narrator, this bleak statement seeks to press Zion further than she wishes to go: "not only did he determine your destruction, he did so personally, and it gave

[23] All translations from the book of Lamentations are my own.
[24] Two studies particularly worth mentioning in this respect are Linafelt (2000), and C. R. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).
[25] E.g., Miller (2001), 393; Thomas (2013), 122.

him cause for delight as your crushed body produced wine for his festivities." The effect of the dialogue is radically affected even by one's choice over this single colon.

Elsewhere, other instances of supposed tonal consistency can also be called into question. A common characterisation of the narrator's first speech (1:1-9b) is that it is "objective" (Mandolfo), "dispassionate" (Bergant), or "unemotional" (O'Connor).[26] Lanahan defines the speaker as a reporter, detached from the experience, who approaches the city from outside and simply describes what he sees and contextualises it, in contrast to the stark desperation expressed by Zion.[27] However, Miriam Bier has rightly questioned this assessment, finding instead "a sympathetic witness," whose opening cry (אֵיכָה "How!") "connotes worlds of pain."[28] Indeed, it is widely recognised that much of this opening speech conforms to the pattern and language of a dirge; in which case, far from being detached, the speaker is emotionally engaged, crying out in grief. That said, such engagement appears at odds with certain statements within this passage, which veer from dirge-like sympathy (1:1-2, 4, 6) to straight-forward description (1:3, 7, 9b) and even to judgement (1:5, 8-9a). At the very least, this example highlights the subjective and therefore potentially unreliable nature of such a measure for determining the character of a voice. But it should also be noted that such tonal variance seems to go unnoticed because of the assumption of a single speaker, determined by the consistent presence of third-person discourse.

However, the consistency of grammatical person may not be an altogether reliable means of identifying a single voice. In a benchmark study of speech-patterns in Hebrew poetry, Samuel Meier has noted "abundant evidence for the non-necessity of explicitly marking direct discourse" in Hebrew poetry (e.g., Ps 46:10-12; 82; Isa 40:6),[29] a feature he finds to be deliberate, and which can make identification of the speaker, and the delineation of their speech difficult to discern. [30] Indeed, responding to Meier's findings, Naana Zahavi-Eli has argued, in her doctoral dissertation, that such obfuscation adheres to a poetic convention, in which voices alternate without clear signals to the reader in order to create ambiguity and draw the reader to more naturally empathise with multiple viewpoints.[31] Whereas Knut Heim has speculated, "It may have been designed to reflect the historical situation of a community going through turmoil and crisis."[32]

A key example with regard to grammatical person is Micah 6-7, which many scholars have noted is a passage which shifts between a variety of distinct voices (variously numbered between three and six) without direct markers to clarify when, or even *that* this has happened.[33] In a careful analysis of this aspect of Micah, David Hagstrom has collated different scholarly delineations of these voices, and outlined how the text signals changes in speaking voice.[34] While some of these shifts can be affirmed in response to changes of grammatical person,

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[26] Mandolfo (2007), 80; Bergant (2003), 15; O'Connor (2002), 17.
[27] Lanahan (1974), 42-44.
[28] Bier (2015), 43; see also S. P. Re'emi, 'Lamentations' in R. Martin-Achard & S. P. Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis: Amos and Lamentations* ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 83; cf. Parry (2010), 43.
[29] Meier (1992), 32.
[30] Ibid., 33-34.
[31] N. Zahavi-Ely, *Voice and Persona: The Convention of Changing Speakers in Biblical Hebrew Poetry and its Use in the Book of Jeremiah* (Doctoral Dissertation, Union-Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2010), 17-19.
[32] K. N. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem and the Drama of His Bereavement in Lamentations' in R. S. Hess & G. J. Wenham (Eds), *Zion: City of Our God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 129-169, 146.
[33] E.g., J. L. Mays, *Micah: A Commentary* OTL (London: SCM Press, 1976), 9-10; B. Renaud, *La Formation du Livre de Michée: Tradition et Actualisationa* (Paris: J. Galbalda, 1977), 301-3, 335, 380-81; Hagstrom (1988), 109.
[34] Ibid., 106-13.

others are identified despite the grammatical person remaining unchanged, signalled not so much by changing tone as changing priorities or outlooks (e.g. a heightened concern for social justice at Mic 6:9ff.), as well as a consideration of changing addressees.[35] On this basis, scholars have detected that a new speaker which maintains first-person speech is introduced in Mic 6:6; new speakers which maintain second-person speech are introduced in Mic 6:1b (or 6:2 – this point is disputed, but the grammatical effect is the same) and 7:14; and new speakers which maintain third-person speech are introduced in Mic 6:9 and, Renaud argues, in Mic 7:4.[36] Meier also notes Jeremiah 10:21, which follows a third-person referent described (within first-person speech) in 10:20 with a description of that referent from a new unmarked voice, continuing in the third-person.[37] Taken with above-noted potential for one speaker to use multiple grammatical persons (e.g., Lam 1:10; 2:13-17), it must be conceded that while it is a natural starting point, grammatical person is an insufficient final measure for determining distinct voices in poetic text, just as tone can provide only a subjective means to confirm them.

Before we consider a more thorough means of determination, however, it is important to note that, in addition to the uncertainties left by analyses of grammatical person and tone, there are further anomalies within the text of Lamentations 1 that are not resolved by the standard two-voice delineation:

I. *Inconsistent names*. Different names are used for the city: some passages name her Zion (1:4, 6, 17), others Jerusalem (1:7, 8, 17). Robin Parry has explained this in terms of context, noting the cultic backdrop to statements naming the city Zion,[38] although this appears not to be the case in 1:17, which includes both attributions. Related to this, different names are used of the nation, with Lam 1:3 and 15 speaking of Judah, but Lam 1:17 speaking of Jacob. Scholarly attention has tended to be drawn more to the use of Judah than Jacob, noting the effective relocation of focus in 1:3 from the remnant to the exiles (a movement which itself might be taken as a disjunctive shift in tone or focus, especially when, as Parry notes, 1:4 disallows attention to linger there and pulls the reader back to the city).[39] However, some have sought to explain the different terminology by highlighting the function of Jacob as a title for the whole people of God after the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel;[40] thus, the scope of the present disaster extends beyond Jerusalem, to Judah, and even to God's entire people. Such an explanation is compelling but remains problematic, given that the only reference to Jacob (1:17) is set between two references to the city (named as both Zion and Jerusalem), which would seem to invite the reader's gaze to remain on the city, not to look beyond.[41]

Finally, different names are ascribed to God, who is sometimes called Yahweh (1:5, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 20), and sometimes Adonai (1:14, 15).[42] Contrary to Hillers' view that, "The variation between *ʾᵃdōnāy* and *yhwh* seems to be haphazard … for in a given passage one seems

[35] Ibid., 111.
[36] Ibid., 108-10; Renaud (1977), 380-81.
[37] Meier (1992), 35.
[38] Parry (2010), 46.
[39] Berlin (2002), 51; E. R. Dalglish, *Jeremiah, Lamentations* LBBC (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1995), 149; O'Connor (2002), 21; Parry (2010), 45-47; Westermann 126; but note Salters, who argues (persuasively in my view) that the exile is not envisaged here; rather, the poet is describing the voluntary migration of Judahites away from the terrible situation left in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem: R. B. Salters, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Lamentations* ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 42-43.
[40] Bergant (2003), 50; P. R. House, 'Lamentations' in D. Garrett & P. R. House, *Song of Songs and Lamentations* WBC 23b (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 361; Parry (2010), 60; J. Renkema, *Lamentations* HCOT (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 178.
[41] Cf. Salters (2010), 88-89.
[42] A trend that is further complicated in chapter 3, where two more names are introduced alongside the other two: El'yon (Lam 3:35, 38) and El (3:41).

about appropriate as the other,"[43] Renkema has argued that the two terms convey different aspects of God's sovereignty: יהוה is used "in prayers and expressions of trust" as well as "the context of his oppression" or when "he executes judgement." Whereas אֲדֹנָי combines with "somewhat 'harsher' terminology" to describe his active participation in causing Zion's suffering.[44]

II. *The characterisation of Zion*. This is specifically an issue in the third-person speech. At times, Zion is viewed positively (e.g.: "She who was great over the nations, a princess over the provinces," Lam 1:1), whereas at others it is sharply negative (e.g.: "And so unclean she became; all her glorifiers despise her," Lam 1:8). It is this second attitude towards Zion that has often caught scholars' attention, and has contributed to their characterisation of a detached, dispassionate narrator. Whereas Mary Conway has noted "the multivalent nature of metaphor" (in this case, of Zion as a woman), which is deployed by the poet to express both judgemental and compassionate reactions to Zion's plight, and to dialogue with her own sense of suffering, in order to yield a richer understanding of the whole situation.[45] Given Lanahan's assertion that poetic voices function to express different perspectives – a conclusion echoed by Zahavi-Ely when she noted that "the effect achieved by the multiplicity of personae is a multiplicity of viewpoints"[46] – a legitimate question is raised as to whether one persona vocalising both reactions is the most fitting interpretation of the third-person speech in Lamentations 1.

III. *References to the antagonists*. At times there is only one (1:5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16), at others, several (1:2, 3, 5, 7, 17, 21); sometimes they are referred to as אוֹיֵב ("enemy": 1:2, 5, 9, 16, 21), sometimes צָר ("adversary": 1:5, 7, 10, 17), sometimes רוֹדֵף ("pursuer": 1:3, 6). As to the variant numbers, this tends to be overlooked and no satisfying reason has been offered. The most straightforward explanation may be that just as the poet shifts between viewing the plight of individuals, the city, and the nation, so the antagonists are viewed as both (plural) individuals and a (singular) nation. However, at times there seems to be a theological implication, with the singular "adversary/pursuer" able to create an ambiguity as to whether it is an opposing nation or Yahweh that is in view. As to variant terminology, attempts have been made historically to identify a difference between "enemy" and "adversary,"[47] but these have proved unpersuasive within the academy and the counter-explanation given by Gottlieb, Renkema, and others, that these are interchangeable terms which enrich the poetry, is far more convincing.[48]

IV. *Reasons for Zion's predicament*. At times it is portrayed simply as a political situation, in which Zion has been betrayed by her allies (1:2c, 19a); the declaration "I have rebelled greatly" (1:20b) could also refer to such a political situation, in which she has been punished for breaking covenant with Babylon, but this is unclear and could just as easily refer to Zion's rebellion against Yahweh. Mostly it is portrayed as the consequence of a religious situation, but different explanations for it are given, including Zion's sin (1:5b, 8a, 9a, 14a, 22b), her resistance of Yahweh's word (1:18a, and possibly rebellion, 1:20b [see above]), Yahweh's

[43] Hillers (1992), 74.
[44] Renkema (1998), 167; cf. House (2004), 359; Thomas (2013), 119.
[45] M. L. Conway, 'Daughter Zion: Metaphor and Dialogue in the Book of Lamentations' in M. J. Boda, C. J. Dempsey & L. Snow Flesher, *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2012), 105-13; cf. Hens-Piazza (2017), 7.
[46] Zahavi-Eli (2010), 37; cf. Lanahan (1974), 42.
[47] See, for example, Brunet's argument that צָרִים are the Babylonian invaders, whereas אוֹיְבִים are pro-Babylonian Judeans: G. Brunet, *Les Lamentations contre Jérémie*, Bibliotèque de l'Ecole des hautes études. Sciences Religieuses 75 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968), 9.
[48] H. Gottlieb, *A Study of the Text of Lamentations* Acta Jutlandica XLVIII Vol.12 (Århus: Århus Universitet, 1978), 12f; Renkema (1998),119; cf. Provan (1991), 41; Salters (2010), 48-49.

anger (1:12c), and possibly her idolatry, depending on how 1:10b is understood.[49] At times, Yahweh is viewed as directly causing Zion's plight (1:5b, 12c-14b, 15a-c, 21b-c, 22b), at others he influences the events from afar (1:14c, 17b), and when viewed as a political situation, Zion's companions are responsible (1:2c).

V. *Multiple genres*. To call this aspect an anomaly is somewhat disingenuous, since it is hardly anomalous for poetry to draw from multiple source materials, including generic themes, to form its own unique expression. Nevertheless, George Wright (admittedly speaking about modern poetry) has attested to the importance of distinct poetic voices remaining consistent to their own character,[50] so the presence of multiple genres, which do not correspond to the pattern of the standard two-voice delineation, warrants its inclusion in this list. This key aspect of form criticism is one of the most common literary aspects of the book of Lamentations to enjoy scholarly attention. Hedwig Jahnow, followed by Hermann Gunkel, notably argued that Lamentations 1 (along with chs. 2 and 4) corresponds to a funeral dirge (Leichenlied);[51] a claim countered by Westermann, who argued instead that the book as a whole was better understood as a collection of communal laments, albeit containing some elements from dirge motifs in order to convey the theological death of the city.[52] Whereas Kraus and Dobbs-Allsopp, among others, have drawn closer comparisons with Mesopotamian city-laments.[53] It has sometimes been argued that a broad division can be made within Lamentations 1, with hallmarks of dirge dominating vv.1-11 and lament characterising vv.12-22, which broadly follows the lines of a two-voice dialogue.[54] However, such a claim is undermined by apparently close connections with city/communal laments traceable within the first half of the poem;[55] something Westermann views as a deliberate juxtaposition of dirge and lament motifs.[56]

VI. *Different theological perspectives*. In the wake of Norman Gottwald's seminal monograph (1954), numerous attempts have been made to identify the theological heart of the book of Lamentations.[57] For Gottwald, it resided in "the tension between Deuteronomic faith and historical adversity,"[58] seeking to explain how, after the success of Josiah's reform, God could administer such punishment to his covenant people. Bertil Albrektson's response (1963)

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[49] This can be read as either a description of the invasion and destruction of the Temple, or as a criticism of idolatrous behaviour, in which foreign gods were set up as companions to Yahweh. The historical setting supports the first; the allusion to Deut 23:2-3 in Lam 1:10c supports the second.

[50] G. T. Wright, *The Poet in the Poem: The Personae of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 1-59.

[51] H. Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied: Im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* BZAW 36 (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1923), esp. pp. 165-97; H. Gunkel & J. Begrich (trans; J. D. Nogalski), *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998 [1933]), 82, 94-96.

[52] Westermann (1994), 1-23.

[53] H-J. Kraus, *Klagelieder* BKAT 20 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), 9; Dobbs-Allsopp (1993), 31-96.

[54] Eissfelt (1965), 501-2; Linafelt (2000), 35-43.

[55] Note for example, the following correlations with the *Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur* (LU): i) Lam 1:3 combines references to exile and rest, as does LU: "I am the one who has gone out of my city" … "I am the one who can find no rest" (*ANET* 306-07); ii) Lam 1:5 identifies the people of Jerusalem as her children, a common motif in city/communal laments: e.g., *ANET* 28, 369-70; iii) Lam 1:5 also bears a resemblance to a standard lament divine-warrior motif, in which the god is held directly responsible for the destruction (cf. *ANET* 203, 257-60). For a full discussion of correlations between Lamentations 1 and city-laments, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* BEO 44 (Rome: Editrice Pontifico Istituto Biblico, 1993). On these examples in particular, see ibid., pp. 58, 81-83; cf. Eissfelt (1965), 501-2; Westermann (1994), 14.

[56] Ibid., 11.

[57] N. K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* SBT 14 (London, UK: SCM Press, 1954),

[58] Ibid., 48.

advanced Gottwald's interpretation on two fronts.[59] First, he offered an important correction to Gottwald's reading of history, noting Judah's failure to maintain the standards of the Josianic reform, such that Lamentations could explain the events of 587 BCE as the consequences of covenant infidelity warned about in Deuteronomy 28, a passage alluded to on a number of occasions (e.g., 1:3 cf. Dt 28:64-65; 1:5, 18 cf. Dt 28:13, 44 & 28:41; 1:9 cf. Dt 28:43).[60] Moreover, he identified the hallmarks of Zionistic theological traditions (cf. 1:1, 4, 6), which co-existed alongside Deuteronomic theology, in order to pose and resolve the theological conundrum.[61] Provan has countered that this overestimates the resolution offered in any of the poems, which present Deuteronomic and Zionistic perspectives more equivocally.[62] Nevertheless, Albrektson's insights have paved the way in recent years for a broader recognition that there is in fact no single theological centre to the book of Lamentations; rather, it is a composite of different perspectives. An important theme to have emerged in this vein, has been the highlighting of the theological importance of lament, both to prioritise the expression of suffering over the need to explain it (e.g. Linafelt; O'Connor),[63] and to emphasise the right to protest against perceived injustices or excessive punishment, even from God (e.g., Westermann; Dobbs-Allsopp).[64] Alongside this should be mentioned the work of Xuan Huong Thi Pham, who has shown how much of the poetry in Lamentations 1-2 corresponds to mourning ceremonies, enabling the poet (or a persona) to draw alongside Zion as a comforter.[65] Here again, these different perspectives do not neatly correspond to a two-voice division, as they are to be found in both the first- and third-person speech.

VOICE DETECTION IN LAMENTATIONS 1

Each of the above anomalies cut across the standard two-voice delineation of the text of Lamentations 1, but that does not necessarily mean that they are inconsistent with such a division. Scholars of Biblical Hebrew poetry are familiar with its capacity to communicate on multiple levels via a combination of literary effects – something that many analyses of the acrostic structure in Lamentations have surely demonstrated.[66] However, it is interesting that in the cases of the contrasting characterizations of Zion and the multiple theological perspectives, as the above summary has indicated, these anomalies have spurred scholars to speculate that a dialogic effect is intended by the inconsistencies.[67] Moreover, studies of the use of voices and persona in Biblical Hebrew poetry have identified many of these aspects as key indicators of a distinct speaker. Drawing from the insights of Knut Heim, Meier, Nguyen, and Zahavi-Ely, who have each examined this issue to varying degrees of depth, as well as my own analysis, at least eight criteria can be recommended for consideration:[68]

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[59] B. Albrekston, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations: With a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* Studia Theologica Lundensia 21 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), 214-39.
[60] Ibid., 231-37.
[61] Ibid., 219-30, 238-39.
[62] Provan (1991), 22.
[63] Linafelt (2000), 55; O'Connor (2002), 83.
[64] Westermann (1994), 81; Dobbs-Allsopp (2002), 24-5.
[65] X. H. T. Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East* JSOTSS 302 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), esp. pp. 13-95.
[66] E.g., B. Johnson, 'Form and Message in Lamentations' in *ZAW* 97.1 (1985), pp. 58-73; M. P. Hedley, 'Hope Makes a Difference' in *Clarion Journal of Spirituality and Justice* (Oct 2014), 1-9.
[67] E.g., Provan (1991), 7, 20-21; Dobbs-Allsopp (2002), 25; Lee (2002), 41-42; Parry (2010), 12.
[68] Heim (1999), esp. 144-68; Meier (1992), esp. 32-37; Nguyen (2013), esp. 8-11, 189-224; Zahavi-Ely (2010), esp. 15-161.

I. *Direct discourse markers*. None are present in Lamentations 1. As discussed above, Zahavi-Ely and Heim have argued that this is a deliberate ploy of the poet, either to draw the reader in to empathise with multiple perspectives at once, or else to reflect the confusion of many competing voices from "a community going through turmoil and crisis."

II. *Grammatical indicators*. These are likely to include indications of gender, number (of either speaker or addressee), and grammatical person. As noted above, an assessment of grammatical person divides the text into third-person speech (1:1-9b, 10-11b, 15c, 17) and first-person speech (1:9c, 11c-15b, 16, 18-22). Furthermore, feminine singular participles are used at points within the first-person speech, which confirms a female speaker (זוֹלֵלָה in 1:11c; שֹׁמֵמָה in 1:13c; and בוֹכִיָּה in 16a). No such aid is present in the third-person speech, however, which may indicate a deliberate obfuscation on the part of the poet.[69] Regarding number, as noted above, sometimes the antagonist(s) are viewed in the singular and sometimes the plural, but the speakers themselves, both the first- and third-person, speak as singular entities addressing singular entities. This has led Nguyen to refute Lee's attribution of all the third-person speech to a company of female temple singers.[70]

III. *Shifts in tone*. As discussed above, contrary to the frequent characterization of the third-person speaker as objective and dispassionate, there appear to be significant shifts in tone within the third-person speech, which at times expresses despair and sympathy for Zion (1:1-2, 4, 6, 9b, 11a-b, 17a), at others shows judgement, and even disdain (1:5, 7-9, 10b-c [possibly], 15c, 17c).

IV. *Shifts in perspective*. This might be theological, emotional, political, social, historical, or spiritual. Three of the above anomalies relate to this criterion. First, there are the differing characterizations of Zion. These correspond to the tonal variations, with positive statements made about Zion in passages which express sympathy for her plight ("she who was great … a princess," 1:1; "all her magnificence", 1:6), and negative statements made in passages expressing judgement ("she became unclean; all her glorifiers despise her," 1:8; "Her filthiness was in her skirts," 1:9). Second, there are the differing theological perspectives. In Lamentations 1, two viewpoints dominate - a Deuteronomic perspective which seeks to explain Jerusalem's plight, especially in relation to the curse list in Deuteronomy 28, and the proclamation of Deuteronomy 32 (1:3 cf. Dt 28:64-65; 1:5, 18 cf. Dt 28:13, 44, 41; 1:7 cf. Dt 32:7; 1:9 cf. Dt 28:43; 1:14 cf. Dt 28:48; 1:15 cf. Dt 32:14; 1:20 cf. Dt 32:25), and a theological response which prioritises and empowers lament and mourning as a means to comfort Zion, or appeal to God (1:1, 4, 6). Perhaps unsurprisingly, exalted memories of the city, drawn from Zion theology, underpin this second viewpoint. Third, and related to theology, are the different explanations for Jerusalem's plight, which can be viewed as a political situation, influenced from afar by Yahweh (1:2c, 17b), or as a religious situation, in which Yahweh has directly countered Jerusalem's sin (1:5b, 8a, 12c-14b, 15, 18a, 21b-22b).

V. *Shifts in vocabulary and/or metaphor*. Here again, the varying characterization of Zion must be noted, along with the use of different names for God, the city, and the nation, and different attributions for the antagonists. As discussed above, the different attributions for the antagonists is probably explained by the general richness of the poet's vocabulary, although it is notable that צַר is an important term in Deuteronomy 32 (cf. Dt 32:27, 41, 43), a passage which describes Yahweh countering his adversaries, just as he counters Jerusalem in Lamentations 1. Whereas the different names for city and nation appear to follow a pattern in the third-person speech, with Zion and Jacob appearing in sympathetic passages of speech, which offer positive characterizations (1:4, 6, 17b); and Jerusalem and Judah appearing in

[69] Cf. Heim (1999), 146; Zahavi-Ely (2010), 18-19.
[70] Nguyen (2013), 11.

judgement passages of speech, which offer negative characterizations (1:3, 5, 7, 8, 17c). The effect of this correlation is to contrast an idealised People of God (Zion, Jacob) against the actualized people of Jerusalem and Judah. The different names for God also represent a shift in vocabulary, and while יהוה features in both sympathy and judgement cola, it is notable that אֲדֹנָי only appears in cola which evoke Deuteronomic imagery (1:14 cf. Dt 28:48; 1:15b cf. Dt 7:5, 12:3; 1:15c cf. Dt 32:14).

VI. *Shifts in addressee*. This is used three times in quick succession, twice within the first-person speech (1:9c, 11c) and once within the third-person speech (1:10c). In both first-person instances, it certainly connotes a change of speaker, and the new addressee is Yahweh. In 1:10c it is often affirmed that Yahweh is the addressee here too.[71] This seems reasonable, but it should be noted that if a third voice were present, who represents a Deuteronomic perspective, then this voice might also be a candidate for the addressee in 1:10c, which alludes to Deuteronomy 23:2-3. In either case, it provokes the question of whether a change of speaker could be signalled, but is certainly not clear.

VII. *Responses to previous statements*. Identifying a response to a previous statement, as opposed to an elaboration of it, especially in unmarked speech, is not straightforward and is inevitably a subjective exercise. Therefore, statements which create a disjunctive effect are of particular interest here. Shifts between the city (idealized Zion) and the nation (actualized Judah) in 1:2-4 may qualify, but a clearer example is the dialogic effect of 1:6-7, in which sympathy for the grief of Zion's young women (1:6) is countered by the judgement that it is by Yahweh's design (1:7). Another example may be in 1:17, which begins by mourning alongside *Zion*, who is depicted as desperate, subject to her adversaries (1:17ab), but ends with a scornful jibe that *Jerusalem* is despised (1:17c).

VIII. *Shifts between genre*. As noted above, Wright has highlighted the effect of genre in speech to define the character of a persona's voice, and so the presence of dirge and lament generic themes in Lamentations 1 could possibly be a literary device of the poet to distinguish between voices.[72] If so, then it is notable that aspects of generic dirge and mourning literature are found in the sympathetic third-person speech, whereas features of city/communal lament literature dominate both the first-person speech and the 'judgment' third-person speech.

REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE

Any one of these criteria has the potential to confirm a distinct poetic voice, but in the absence of direct discourse markers, highlighted earlier as both a known and, potentially, deliberate feature of Hebrew poetry, a combination of these indicators acting together may be necessary to detect most effectively how many speakers are present. Based on the evidence collated here, we are in a position to draw some conclusions. First, there is no evidence for more than one first-person speaker. The grammatical indicators of person and gender, and the prevalence of generic lament themes, reinforced by a consistent tone confirm this. Every occasion of first-person speech in Lamentations 1 is thus confirmed as the voice of personified Zion. Even so, she does display shifts in perspective, between protesting her harsh treatment (1:12-15b), crying out in sorrow (1:16), and appealing to Yahweh from a place of repentance (1:18-22). Had there been more indicators of distinct voices, one might have cause to speculate a second speaker, but as it is this shift is better viewed as an emotional and spiritual (albeit unresolved)

[71] E.g., Hens-Piazza (2017), 11; Parry (2010), 54; Pham (1999), 80; cf. Renkema (1998), 144; Provan (1991), 47; contra Albrektson (1963), 65-66.
[72] This appears to be the basis on which Lee has delineated the voices in Lam 1: Lee (2002), 77.

journey of sorts. Second, it seems clear that Zion is speaking to others she anticipates can hear her. Five times she directs her plea, three times to Yahweh (1:9, 11c, 20-22), and once each to the passers-by (1:12), and to "all peoples" (1:18), but in each instance, she goes unanswered. Allusions to Deuteronomy in her speech (1:14 cf. Dt 28:48; 1:18 cf. Dt 28:13, 44, 41; 1:20 cf. Dt 32:25) may also indicate that she responds to the Deuteronomic perspective in the third-person speech, but identifying this anonymous speaker is impossible from her discourse, since she never addresses them directly.

Finally, in the absence of direct markers or grammatical indicators, the prevalence of conflicting vocabulary, tone, and perspective throughout the third-person speech suggests the possibility that two voices are present. As we noted above, the presence of multiple unmarked speakers in third-person speech has precedent in Hebrew poetry (Mic 6-7), and may be an intentional device of the poet to obscure the speakers. This would seem to be supported by evidence of dialogue within the third-person speech (1:2-4; 1:6-7; 1:17ab-c; possibly 1:10c). Furthermore, when the above evidence is mapped onto Lamentations 1, it seems all the clearer that two voices emerge: the first, a sympathetic mourner who recalls the city at her height, and continues to speak in terms of the idealized Zion and Jacob, perhaps holding out for God to fulfil his commitment to an everlasting covenant; the second, a more objective lamenter, who sees Jerusalem and Judah as they have become and seeks to explain the cause, with recourse to Deuteronomic covenant theology. Inevitably, there remain cola that cannot be attributed with absolute confidence to one voice or the other, and so in the end the obscuring hand of the poet prevails and subjective decisions must be made. I have included my own subjective delineation in the Appendix to this paper.

These two voices dialogue with one another, speaking out their sorrow and their blame, inviting both Zion and the reader to engage with both perspectives – the line between them blurred by the hand of the poet – and therefore to hold them together. Remarkably, Zion responds to both. Convicted by the second speaker, she accepts the blame and turns to Yahweh in repentance; buoyed by the first speaker, she cries out in protest at the excessive treatment she has endured. Both speakers, it seems, have contributed to Zion finding her voice, and yet all three voices agree that she has no comforter, and so the cumulative effect of all three voices is to direct Zion's plea to "all peoples" (1:18) towards the reader(s), who must, in the end, decide their own response.

APPENDIX

PROVISIONAL DELINEATION OF VOICES IN LAMENTATIONS 1

Speaker 1

How she sits alone,
The city so full of people;
She has become like a widow,
She who was great over the nations –
A princess over the provinces –
Has become a slave.

Bitterly, she weeps in the night,
And her tears are on her cheeks.
There is no-one to console her
From all her lovers.
All her companions have dealt treacherously with her;
They have become her enemies.

The roads of Zion are in mourning
For no-one is coming to the festival.
All her gates are abandoned;
Her priests are groaning,
Her virgins are grieving,
And she herself is bitter.

It has gone from daughter Zion –
All her magnificence –
Her princes have become like stags
That find no pasture.
They have gone without strength
Before the pursuer.

Speaker 2

Judah has departed from affliction
And from harsh labour.
She lives among the nations,
Finds no resting place,
All her pursuers have overtaken her
In the midst of her distresses.

Her adversaries have become the head,
Her enemies prosper.
Because Yahweh has grieved her
For the abundance of her transgressions.
Her children have gone into captivity
Before the adversary.

Speaker 3 (Zion)

Jerusalem remembers,
In the days of her affliction and wandering,
All her treasures
From the days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the adversary
There was no helper for her.
The adversaries saw her;
They laughed at her destruction.

Jerusalem sinned greatly,
And so unclean she became.
All her glorifiers despise her
Because they have seen her nakedness.
Indeed, she groans
And turns away.

Her filthiness was in her skirts;
She did not remember her future.
She fell terribly;
There was no comforter for her.

See, Yahweh, my affliction,
For the enemy has triumphed.

His hand, the adversary has stretched out
Over all the treasures,
For she has seen the nations
Enter her sanctuary;
Those whom you commanded
Not to enter your assembly.

All her people groan,
Seeking bread.
They have given their treasures for food
To restore the soul.

See, Yahweh, and look,
For I have become worthless.

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see
If there is pain like my pain,
Which has been severely dealt to me.
Which Yahweh has inflicted
In the day of his burning anger.

From on high he sent fire
Into my bones, and he had dominion over it.
He stretched a net for my feet,
He turned me away.
He has made me desolate,
Sick from menstruation, all day long.

He bound the yoke of my transgressions,
By his hand they slotted together,
They were lifted onto my neck;
He caused my strength to fail.
The Lord has given me
Into the hands of those whom
I cannot withstand.

He has rejected all my strong men,
The Lord, in my midst.
He has called against me an appointed time,
To crush my young men.

The Lord has trampled as in a winepress
Virgin daughter Judah.

For these things I weep:
My eyes, my eyes run down with tears,
For a comforter is far from me,
One who restores my soul.
My sons are desolate,
Because the enemy has prevailed.

Zion stretched out her hands;
There is no comforter for her.
Yahweh has commanded for Jacob
That his neighbours will be his adversaries.

Jerusalem has become
A filthy thing among them.

Yahweh is indeed righteous,
For I have resisted his word.
Listen, please, all peoples,
And see my sorrow.
My virgins and my young men
Have gone into captivity.

I have called to my lovers;
They have betrayed me.
My priests and elders
Have perished in the city.
Indeed, they sought food for themselves
To restore their life.

Look, Yahweh, for I am distressed;
My insides burn.
My heart is overthrown within me,
For I have rebelled greatly.
Outside the sword bereaves,
Inside it is like death.

They heard that I am groaning;
There is no comforter for me.
All my enemies heard of my calamity –
they rejoice;
Because you have caused it.
You have brought the day you announced;
Let them become like me.

Let all their evil come before you,
And deal harshly with them
As you have dealt harshly with me,
Because of all of my transgressions.
For many are my groans,
And my heart is faint.