Abstract

The Book of Lamentations holds some of the most exquisite Hebrew poetry which creates a unique contrast to the horrific content described within its five poems. There are numerous subjects of interest to be discussed within these five poems, which range from the content, use of poetic devices, and theological messages. The question this paper seeks to address is the characterization of Daughter Zion and YHWH within the initial poem (Lam 1:1-22), and how the poetic devices of Lamentations 1 are being used to portray the relationship between Daughter Zion and YHWH. The methodology used will be a close reading of the text, paying attention to and noting the figurative language throughout as it lends itself toward the characterization of Daughter Zion and YHWH. Daughter Zion and YHWH appear to have a complex relationship with one another, as at times throughout the Old Testament YHWH is characterized as father, protector, and lover and Daughter Zion is conceived of as both daughter and mother as well as an unfaithful wife. Lamentations holds all of these former characterizations in tension in its background and carefully interweaves them while creating its own characterizations. Daughter Zion is the central subject of Lamentation 1 and she is portrayed as a widow, a grieving mother, a rape victim, and an abandoned city-woman. She is left desolate and despised, and while both she and the narrator admit her guilt, she is portrayed in such a way that evokes pity and questions whether or not her punishments exceed her crimes. This is the question that lingers and drives the tension in the relationship between Daughter Zion and YHWH, which will be explored throughout the five poems collectively.

Keywords: Hebrew poetry, lament, Daughter Zion, figurative language, widow, mother, rape victim