Chorus in the Dark

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Chorus in the Dark

The Voices of the Book of Lamentations

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חלקי יהוה אמרה נפשי על־כן אוחיל לו

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Preface

Chorus in the Dark is a revision of the dissertation I completed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am very grateful for the invaluable advice and supervision of Professor Michael V. Fox, who worked closely with me from the very beginning of my project. Although sometimes it took me a while to grasp the depth of his insight, his comments never failed to lead me into a deeper understanding of the subject matter. I am deeply indebted to him for the numerous hours he spent reading my manuscript and providing serious feedback, for his patience, and above all for his insistence on making me a better scholar. My gratitude is deepened still for his mentorship, which outlasts my time at UW-Madison. To be mentored by him is among the greatest blessings of my life.

I am also grateful to Professor Cynthia L. Miller for her remarks about who I am, which caused me to choose to study the book of Lamentations as I was weighing the texts in which I was interested. I want to warmly thank Dr Wendy Widder, my colleague and friend, for helping create a title that captures well the content of my book; *Chorus in the Dark* would not have gotten its name without her. My thanks also go to Professor David Bosworth for his gracious review of my dissertation, to Professor Philip Hollander and Professor Jordan Rosenblum for their fruitful advice about publication, and to my sisters and brother for their continuing support. Finally, special thanks must be given to Professor David Clines and Sheffield Phoenix for accepting my manuscript and working with me on the publication; without them the wish to share my book with a larger audience would not have come true so quickly.

It is necessary to acknowledge that my study is built on the works of many other scholars. Had these works not been available to me, I would not have been able to go this far. In recognition of their contribution, I have always endeavored to mention, either in the main discussion or in the footnotes, the authors and the sources from which I cite or draw ideas. I hope I have not missed anyone to whom proper credit is due.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ASV	American Standard Version
BDB	F. Brown, S. Driver and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996)
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
GKC	Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch; trans. A.E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd English edn, 1910)
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IUr	Lamentations over the Destruction of Ur
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Version
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KJV	King James Version
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OTL	Old Testament Library
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WS	West Semitic
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

1

Introduction

The fall of a nation is a traumatic event. Once experienced, it cannot be erased easily from the witness's memory. I can never forget the fall of South Vietnam, culminating in the conquest of Saigon, the city in which I lived, in 1975. When North Vietnam began its invasion of South Vietnam by crossing the border between the two countries, in the early days reports by the refugees who fled to Saigon from central Vietnam districts seized us with fear and terror. They described to us the horrible scene they witnessed with their own eyes as they frantically fled toward the city: corpses were everywhere along the road. With the withdrawal of the U.S. armed forces, we could anticipate nothing but the day of doom. That day swiftly arrived when northern soldiers flooded into the streets of Saigon with weapons and banners as we looked on hopelessly.

The years that followed saw our hunger, oppression, shame and despair. Rice, our main grain diet, became a precious commodity we could scarcely afford. Instead of rice, the government sold us flour and wild grains, elsewhere used to feed domestic animals. They put men associated with the previous regime in prisons and treated them more inhumanely than we could imagine. Religious leaders they put in concentration camps to reeducate. Students they stripped naked and made stand in line for hours in health clinics to shame them. Citizens they forced to do manual labor. The property of the wealthy they confiscated. Those who did not have a job they drove out of the city to develop new economic frontiers. The old culture, including music and books, was condemned and banned. Desperate men, women and children who tried to escape more often than not ended up in prison or died at sea. Our misery was intense, pervasive and seemingly unending.

Even though times are changing in many ways, the suffering of a defeated nation and its city does not seem to change very much. Twenty-five hundred years apart, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the fall of South Vietnam and Saigon in 1975 present more or less the same picture of affliction. The lamentations of the ancient Israelites are no less

anguished and despairing than the mourning we South Vietnamese felt in our inmost being. The major themes of the book of Lamentations in its five short chapters—death, danger, fear, hunger, oppression, shame, exile, anger and despair—help paint the most realistic picture of a defeat. Lamentations poetically displays before us an experience that would change a nation, a people, a society, and a culture and its way of life. To understand this book in depth is my present research interest, spurred in part by my personal experience.

The book of Lamentations is one of the shortest books of the Hebrew Bible, so short that it is sometimes referred to as a 'booklet'.[1] It consists of only five chapters, each of them a complete poem in itself. The English title 'Lamentations' is the translation of the title *Threnoi* found in the Septuagint, though the title found in the Masoretic tradition is *Eicha*, following the first word of the book. In the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is located within the third section, the Writings, while the Septuagint puts it together with the prophetic books, right after Jeremiah, according to the traditional belief that the book was written by Jeremiah, the prophet.

The most salient feature of Lamentations is its form. The first four poems are alphabetic acrostics, each with its own variant features. All these acrostic poems are composed of twenty-two stanzas, according to the numbering and order of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza in the first three poems has three lines, with the exception of 1.7 and 2.19, which have four lines, while in the fourth poem each stanza has only two lines. The first line of each stanza in poems 1, 2 and 4 begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but all three lines of the stanzas in poem 3 begin with the same respective letter. The fifth poem is not an alphabetic acrostic and has only twenty-two lines. Since it also has twenty-two lines, various efforts have been made to put it in the same acrostic category as the other four poems.[2]

Beyond the salient form, several other features of Lamentations are still being discussed, and in some cases it is doubtful if consensus will ever be reached, especially in the area of authorship and date of composition.[3] At

1. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (FOTL; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 467, uses the term 'booklet' to refer to Lamentations and other books of the *Megilloth*.

2. Theophile J. Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', in *The Interpreter's Bible* (ed. G.A. Buttrick; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI, p. 3, thinks 'it is possible that this was a first draft which the author intended later to work into an acrostic'.

3. Puzzling as it is, this little book enjoys a rare popularity among the communities of faith in the God of Israel. It is cherished by many and yet hated by others. Within Jewish communities, it is recited in synagogues every year on Tisha be'Ab. While in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity to attend a Tisha be'Ab service of an orthodox synagogue, in which the reading of the entire book of Lamentations constituted a major part.

present, the book still resists scholarly efforts to uncover its true authorship and date of composition. In his commentary of Lamentations, Iain Provan concludes the section on Author, Date and Place of Composition with the following comment:

> The general conclusion to which we are forced at the end of this section, then, is that we simply have insufficient evidence, when the literary character of the poems in Lamentations is taken into account, to decide questions of authorship and place of composition. The second poem, and therefore the book as a whole, may, with a degree of certainty, be dated between the 6th and the 2nd centuries B.C.; but beyond this we may not go.[4]

Provan's position might be extreme, but it helps state the case nevertheless.

1. *Date of Composition*

In the view of Provan, the book of Lamentations may be dated between the sixth and second century BCE. Several scholars have limited the time frame of Lamentations to 587–538 BCE. These end points encompass the earliest and latest dates accepted by scholars who connect the events portrayed in Lamentations to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.[5] The events portrayed in Lamentations speak clearly of the First Temple destruction. Scholars like Provan dwell on the possibility rather than the probability that Lamentations might portray the Second Temple destructions during the Hellenistic period

The atmosphere was sober. Chairs were put away and people sat on the floor as an act of mourning, not allowing themselves the comfort of sitting on chairs. It would be impossible for a Jew who attends this kind of service year after year not to know the words of the book of Lamentations. The book of Lamentations is also known within the Christian communities in a less direct way. Although most churchgoers may not know the name or the entire content of the book, they very likely recite Lam. 3.22-23 often ('Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassion never fails. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness', NIV). Every church I have attended includes often in its worship services one of the songs whose lyrics either contain or are based on the words of Lam. 3.22-23.

4. Iain Provan, *Lamentations* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 19.

5. Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (trans. C. Munchow; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 54. Kathleen O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), VI, pp. 1011-72 (1015), criticizing Provan for not crediting the interpretations that locate the book in Palestine after the Babylonian invasion, argues that 'if the invasion of Judah and Jerusalem is not the precise tragedy underlying Lamentations, then it is at least a central catastrophe in Israel's history that provides an illuminating backdrop for understanding the fury, grief, and disorientation that this book expresses'.

and tend to overlook important details. Several factors strongly support an early dating of the book. First, Lamentations speaks about false prophets in chapter 2. The sentiment expressed in this chapter is unlikely for any period much later than the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.[6] Second, since the portraits of Lady Zion in Second Isaiah and Lamentations strikingly correspond, and since Second Isaiah clearly speaks about the land ravaged by the destruction of the First Temple, it is more probable that Lamentations was about the events of 587 BCE to which Second Isaiah responds. If Lamentations was about another event, we have no adequate explanation as to why it would correspond to Second Isaiah since the prophet's picture of Lady Zion remained largely fulfilled. Third, based on linguistic evidence, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp excludes the possibility of pre-exilic, later Persian or Maccabean period dates, and assigns the late end to before 520 BCE.[7] Furthermore, based on the similarity among the languages of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Lamentations, Berlin dates the early end to 571 BCE.[8] For these reasons, it is best to assume a sixth-century date for the final composition of Lamentations.

2. *Authorship*

Little is known about the book's authorship. At the present time, scholars essentially support one of the following positions: (1) the text of Lamentations offers insufficient data to answer questions of authorship; (2) Lamentations has a single author; (3) Lamentations has multiple authors, since each poem has something distinctive in itself.[9]

According to the first view, nothing definite can be said about the authorship. If the book may be dated between the sixth and second cen-

6. Conflicting prophetic revelation is a major issue of the pre-exilic period, not later. Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 184-87.

7. F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations', *JANES* 26 (1998), pp. 1-36 (2, 36).

8. Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 33-34.

9. For a short and convenient summary of who holds which position, see C.W. Miller, 'The Book of Lamentations in Recent Research', *Currents in Biblical Research* 1.1 (2002), pp. 9-29. Detailed discussions of authorship can be found in the commentaries such as those of Paul R. House and Duane Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), or Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation*. See also Cornelius Houk, 'Multiple Poets in Lamentations', *JSOT* 30 (2005), pp. 111-25. Houk actually claims that each poem is a work of multiple poets, each of whom is responsible for a section of the poem and has a distinct preference for words with certain number of syllables. It would be difficult to verify his claim, since there seems to be no consensus on how the syllables are counted.

tury BCE, as Provan says, then it might be the case.[10] While admitting, like everyone else, that there is no simple answer to the question of authorship, I believe that this position gravely overlooks important data, both internal and external to Lamentations. Several studies have shown that although we might never reach an absolute conclusion about the authorship, some things about the author are certainly more probable than others. Norman K. Gottwald points out in his studies the strong connection between the book of Lamentations and Deutero-Isaiah and the evidence of the former being the source of the latter.[11] Gottwald's conclusion puts the author and the prophet Jeremiah approximately in the same time period and consequently gives rise to the question whether Jeremiah was the author of the book of Lamentations.

Prior to critical scholarship, traditions had long ascribed the authorship of the book of Lamentations to Jeremiah.[12] However, today, most scholars have rejected the traditional view.[13] Meek's evaluation of Jeremiah's authorship has cogently shown that it is highly improbable.[14] Among the marked differences which he believes to far outweigh the similarities between the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Meek enumerates the following: (1) Lamentations' high regard for kings, princes and priests; (2) Lamentations' concern for the cultus; and (3) expectation of help from Egypt in Lamentations. Even scholars who have found strong linguistic connections between the book of Jeremiah and the book of Lamentations ascribe only portions of Lamentations to Jeremiah's authorship.[15] It is only reasonable to agree with the majority of scholars on rejecting the traditional view that Jeremiah was the author of Lamentations.

3. *Composition*

Unless one takes the traditional view of the prophet Jeremiah being the author of the entire book of Lamentations, questions of literary unity also

10. As a consequence, this view basically supports the idea that the text of Lamentations neither confirms nor rejects the traditional view of Jeremiah being the author of Lamentations.

11. Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (SBT; London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 107, 116-17. This conclusion is tied to the date he has established for the book of Lamentations.

12. The LXX ascribes the authorship to Jeremiah in Lamentations' superscription, and so do the rabbis of late antiquity (*Lamentations Rabbah*).

13. Miller, 'The Book of Lamentations in Recent Research', p. 10.

14. Theophile J. Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 5.

15. Nancy Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* (Boston: Brill, 2002).

arise. There are strong signs of both unity and dissonance. If one looks for signs of unity then the acrostic form of the first four poems is one of them.[16] The contents and language of all the poems are also very similar. The similarity in form and content of poems 1, 2 and 4 is unquestionable. Poem 5 also shares common themes and language with poems 1, 2 and 4. Even if poem 3 seems to fall entirely out of the pattern seen in the other poems,[17] it still at the very least shares the themes and language of the genre. However, if by the term 'unity' we imply that all the five poems of the book of Lamentations were written by one author, then we face insurmountable challenges. First of all, the last poem is not an acrostic, although many scholars tend to see the poem as 'partially' acrostic since it consists of twenty-two lines, corresponding to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[18] But such an explanation reflects more of the interpreter's expectation rather than observation.[19]

The acrostic feature of the poems poses a more serious problem in its alternate use of two different orders or sequences of the Hebrew alphabet. The second, third and fourth poems reverse the order of the two letters *ayin* and *peh*. The best explanation for this occurrence attributes it to the possibility of the order not having been fixed during the time period in which the poems were composed.[20] This in turn speaks for the independence between the first poem and the next three rather than unity because it would be strange for one author to switch from one order to another, considering the meticulous care he gave to the form of his poems.[21]

In addition to the difficulty posed by the acrostic pattern, the content also poses some problems. Scholars have generally agreed that no clear structure or arrangement of the material is discernible in the book of Lamentations.[22] While there are superfluous repetitions of themes and images in all the poems, there appears to be no clear thematic progression from one

16. Cf. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1019.

17. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 88.

18. Cf. Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 3.

19. If this poem stands alone, one could probably see that the number of lines corresponds to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but one would hardly call it acrostic by any standard. C.W. Miller, 'The Book of Lamentations in Recent Research', p. 10, points out that T.J. Meek 'in an imaginative though unlikely proposal, has suggested that ch. 5 is actually the first draft of a poem to which the poet intended to return at a later time'.

20. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 98.

21. Some might suspect that the author forgot the order of the alphabet. But that is unlikely. All of my students while I taught the course 'Lamentations and its Interpreters' confirmed that it was impossible for them to forget the order of their alphabets.

22. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 63-66.

poem to another. Although several scholars see the triple acrostic pattern of chapter 3 together with its content, which has much to do with the themes of submission and hope, as a sign of this chapter being the apex of the book, no one has convincingly demonstrated why those themes appear to diminish significantly in the following two chapters.

At this stage of research, while it is still very difficult to resolve the question of compositional unity, I believe that it is legitimate to think of an editorial unity at least. The notion that Lamentations was a product of the entire community proposed by Erhard Gerstenberger is not at all convincing:

> The booklet itself does not indicate in the least an individual author of the texts. Its detached, autonomous existence within the canon precludes any assignment to known writers. Therefore we have to consider the individual laments and the collection as a whole as a product of communal worship rather than individual craft, notwithstanding that acrostic and literary artistry was provided by skilled individuals. The spirit of the texts is communal and liturgical in the same sense as the architecture of medieval cathedrals incorporates the talents of great masters into a totally communal enterprise.[23]

I find it hard to imagine how an orderly communal product such as Lamentations could have come into existence without an editor. Although the question of origin, whether Lamentations is the result of oral production and transmission or a literary product, is not settled, the role of a final author or editor is undeniable. Whether the acrostic pattern, a clear sign of literary activity, is a secondary development or not, the role of the person who was responsible for this is crucial since he determined which materials to preserve and how to arrange them. The fact that the poems of Lamentations are very similar to many poems in the Psalter thematically and formally yet distinctly separated from the Psalter indicates that the book was formed early and had a very specific purpose. Thus, the literary unity of the book of Lamentations to a considerable extent resides with the final editor and his purpose and will be discussed further in this study.[24]

23. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part II, and Lamentations*, p. 475.

24. My evaluation of the role of the author is therefore partially contrary to that of Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 104, who says, 'even in its written form the material that has come down to us strikes us as so powerful and authentic precisely because it still mediates a sense of genuine lamentation. We are still able to overhear the voices of the ones first affected by the calamity. The poet—or compiler—who wrote down these laments kept "his" own personality in check, just as did those anonymous figures who transmitted ancient folklore.'

4. *The Voices*

The dramatic nature of Lamentations has been recognized by several interpreters. Kathleen O'Connor classifies the entire book as dramatized speech.[25] To describe the multifaceted dialogue of Lamentations Knut M. Heim uses the phrase 'a drama of bereavement'.[26] Alan Mintz recognizes a drama in Lamentations 3.[27] In the religious sphere, Aryeh Strikovsky and Melissa Klein read the entire book of Lamentations as a play with a cast of characters.[28] The scholarly recognition of the dramatic nature of Lamentations is consistent with how dramatic poetry is understood. Among other interpretations, the phrase 'dramatic poetry' has been interpreted as lyrics or short poems that imply a scene,[29] or as the kind of poetry that involves imaginary characters.[30] The scene of a ruined Jerusalem, the presence of the personified Zion, the different voices and their dialogue thus firmly support the understanding of Lamentations as dramatic poetry.

It is the study of the voices in Lamentations that triggers my curiosity the most, and together with it a sense of dissatisfaction with the current state of research. The germinal work of William Lanahan[31] in the identification of the voices and their function in a modern sense probably influences all of the subsequent scholarly efforts in this area. Lanahan identifies a total of five voices in the book which function chiefly to allow the poet to describe the destruction from different perspectives. He calls them a reporter and Jerusalem (Lamentations 1, 2), a soldier (Lamentations 3), a bourgeois (Lamentations 4), and a chorus (Lamentations 5). Invaluable and foundational for later works, Lanahan's study is limited in scope and content. After Lanahan, significant attention has been drawn to the figure of Zion in the works of Barbara Kaiser, Mary Donovan Turner, Xuan Huong Pham, Knut

25. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1020.

26. Knut M. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem and the Drama of her Bereavement in Lamentations', in *Zion, City of Our God* (ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 129-69 (130).

27. Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 33.

28. http://www.ritualwell.org/holidays/tishabavmourning/primaryobject.2006-06-30.8484583624.

29. Ruby Cohn, 'Dramatic Poetry', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alexander Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 304-11 (304).

30. T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1957), p. 97.

31. William F. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voices in the Book of Lamentations', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 41-49.

Heim and Tod Linafelt.[32] Although these scholars rightly emphasize Zion's role as the agent through whom communal suffering is expressed, they generally overlook other important functions, especially the theological one.[33]

When it comes to the identity and role of the anonymous Man of Lamentations 3, no satisfactory answer can be found among the existing proposals. The identification of this figure with Jeremiah, Zedekiah, Jehoiachim, Zion, Israel, or some others does not harmonize with the text and severely lacks decisive evidence.[34] While it is true that the Man of Lamentations 3 and the personified Zion give us gendered pictures of male and female victims,[35] this is hardly the main reason for the use of these two personae in Lamentations. Likewise, considering the personified Zion as the alternate model for the presentation of suffering[36] versus the Man being the model for the theological interpretation of the book might be complementary but not nearly comprehensive, since it is apparent that every chapter of Lamentations forcefully raises theological issues fundamental to Israel's faith.

32. Knut M. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem'; Barbara Kaiser, 'Poet as "Female Impersonator": The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering', *JR* 67 (1987), pp. 164-82; Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); X.H.T. Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 302; Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Mary Donovan Turner, *Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration* (PhD diss., Emory University, 1992).

33. The works of Elizabeth Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006) and Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (SBL Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), published after I had advanced into the last stage of my research, also place Zion at the center of their discussions. Mandolfo reads Lamentations essentially from a postmodern and feminist perspective and thus has very limited value to a historical and critical reading of Lamentations. Part of Boase's observation of the theology of Lamentations is similar to mine and will be referenced where appropriate.

34. See, for example, B. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Lund: Gleerup, 1963); Berlin, *Lamentations*; Karl Budde, 'Die Klagelieder', in *Die Funf Megillot* (ed. K. Budde, A. Bertholet and D.G. Wildboer; KHC, 17; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989); Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. Peter R. Ackroyd; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966); Delbert Hillers, *Lamentations* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); Owens, 'Personification and Suffering in Lamentation 3', *Austin Seminary Bulletin: Faculty Edition* 105 (1996), pp. 75-90; Norman Porteous, 'Jerusalem—Zion: The Growth of a Symbol', in *Verbannung und Heimkehr* (Festschrift W. Rudolph; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1961), pp. 235-52; M. Saebø, 'Who Is "The Man" in Lamentations 3? A Fresh Approach to the Interpretation of the Book of Lamentations', in *Understanding Poets and Prophets* (FS G.W. Anderson; ed. A.G. Auld; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 294-306.

35. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 85.

36. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, pp. 5-18.

Another important area of the study of the voices is their interaction. Specific treatments of the interaction of the voices are found in the works of Heim, Nancy Lee, and C.W. Miller.[37] Heim compares Lamentations to a public dialogue that reflects a community's desperate grasping for meaning as the world around it has collapsed, and is recorded by means of the different utterances made by speakers who sometimes change their perspective and respond to one another as they would do in real life.[38] He explains further:

> This complex interaction, reflected by the different viewpoints in the dramatic dialogue, has been achieved through the literary creation of different personae. These personae are part of the fiction in the textual world of Lamentations, characters invented for the particular artistic purpose of presenting the community's struggles for survival, literally and metaphorically, as it wrestles with the issues of faith, doubt, and meaning in the face of the disaster.
>
> The utterances of the different personae in Lamentations do not correspond to the author's own perspective. Rather, his own perspective is captured only in the individual narrator's utterance. . . . He does not dominate the other personae, for his voice is but one interactive contribution to the communal discourse.[39]

While Heim's argument makes sense for the most part, it is arguable whether the author's voice is but one interactive contribution to the communal discourse. Consequently, Heim's conclusion that Lamentations is a consciously open text which gives multiple answers to the complex questions related to Jerusalem's destruction remains questionable. M.H. Abrams points to the fact that we are aware of a voice beyond the fictitious voices that speak in a work, and that all of the critics who deal with the concept of an authorial voice in a literary work agree on one thing:

> The sense of a convincing authorial voice and presence, whose values, beliefs, and moral vision serve implicitly as controlling forces throughout a work, helps to sway the reader to yield the imaginative consent without which a poem or novel would remain an elaborate verbal game.[40]

If these critics are correct, then Lamentations is far from being an open text. This is an issue worth further attention.

37. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem'; Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*; C.W. Miller, 'Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1', *BI* 9.4 (2001), pp. 393-408.

38. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', pp. 146, 168.

39. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', pp. 168-69.

40. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 7th edn, 1999), pp. 218-19.

Taking an oral poetic approach, believing that Lamentations has crystallized the oral dialogue of poetic singers, Lee proposes that these poetic singers performed their composed songs in response to one another and the performance took place as follows:

> The initial poet describes the devastated city of Jerusalem and typically personifies it as a woman (perhaps the poet has been moved by witnessing women suffering around him). Another poet (a woman perhaps moved by his depiction) responds by singing about her individual suffering, loss of children, etc., such that the juxtaposition of their songs and interaction leads to her being identified as 'Daughter Zion' (the city personified).[41]

Although Lee's approach remains a possibility to the study of voices in Lamentations, it does not appear to be probable for four reasons. First, it seems to oversimplify the origin and the development of the personification of Zion as a woman. Second, while there is a *possibility* that Lamentations may reflect the voices of several poets who performed their songs in an oral poetic context, Lee herself admits that Lanahan's approach, which suggests that Lamentations is a unified poetic drama, is *plausible*. Third, Lee's analysis does not seem to take into account the fact that Lamentations 3 contains no element from the dirge and the situation portrayed at the beginning of the poem is not related to the destruction of the city. And four, without attempting to reconstruct an original *Sitz im Leben* for the responsive performance of the prophetic and poetic singers of communal dirges, which seems to have no mention in the Hebrew Bible, Lee does not advance her thesis beyond the conjectural level.[42]

5. *The Purpose of This Study*

Since the voices of Lamentations obviously demand further attention and still present a great challenge, this study seeks to continue the scholarly effort to understand them, focusing specially on the problematic issues briefly identified above. While a discussion of the identification and interaction of the voices will be included in my analysis, the central emphasis is on the use of the personae in Lamentations.

41. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 42.

42. I completely agree with Berlin that the conclusion that Lamentations is oral poetry because it uses dialogue is false, since the use of dialogue is not limited to oral poetry alone, and that Lee's superimposition of Slavic lament tradition onto Lamentations is uncritical. Nothing warrants that what occurs in one tradition must occur in another. See Adele Berlin, 'Review of *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* by Nancy Lee, *BI* 13 (2005), pp. 197-200, esp. pp. 198-200.

a. *Personae in Lamentations*

In my study, the term *persona* is used to refer to the personified Zion and the Man of Lamentations 3, and only to these two. This is a more restricted use of the polysemous term *persona*, one that I believe most appropriate to the study of Lamentations. The interpretation of the term has a long and complex history, as illustrated in Robert C. Elliot's chapter on the word *persona*.[43] Whereas there is uncertainty about its etymology, there is no question that the word in Latin originally referred to a device of transformation and concealment on the theatrical stage, a mask. Through the ages, however, the term has taken on different meanings, and at the end of the twentieth century, it is still at the heart of some of our most intransigent philosophical, theological and ethical problems.[44]

Since we do not have a single meaning or use of the term, the meaning that is most appropriate to the study of Lamentations is preferable. Several factors favor the choice to restrict the term 'persona' to the personified Zion and the Man of Lamentations 3. First, let us remember that Lanahan was the first to call attention to the idea that the poet of Lamentations assumes *personae*, that is, masks or characterizations, as the medium through which he perceives and gives expression to his world, and refers to all the discernible speaking voices in Lamentations as personae.[45] Heim and Miller basically follow Lanahan's lead, as already mentioned. In doing so, these scholars essentially accept the view of objectivist critics of the twentieth century who recommend that a poem be read as an autonomous verbal artwork and thus use the term in an extended and indiscriminate sense.[46] While aware of the main concern of these scholars, that is, to avoid the identification of any voice with the author's true voice, I think a limited sense of the term is more suitable for the study of Lamentations for the following reasons.

First, the extended use of the term is relatively new and not accepted by critics committed to critical perspectives that stress expression or communication.[47] We need to keep in mind that Lamentations is primarily a religious document in a particular social context and as such unquestionably has a message to communicate to its intended audience. Unless we believe, on the one hand, that Lamentations is purely artistic and not meant to communicate or persuade and, on the other hand, give up altogether the

43. Robert C. Elliot, *The Literary Persona* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 19-32.

44. Elliot, *The Literary Persona*, p. 28.

45. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voices in the Book of Lamentations', p. 41.

46. Fabian Gudas, 'Persona', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alexander Preminger and T.V.F Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 900.

47. Gudas, 'Persona', p. 900.

attempt to find out the author's purpose, the objectivists' use of the term is less helpful in discerning how the original audience would understand the book. In the view of the critics who are committed to critical perspectives that stress expression or communication, persona is sometimes used to refer to a speaker who, though obviously not the poet, is a spokesperson for the poet and who may be a fictional character created or, more commonly, a historical or mythological figure selected by the poet.[48] In this sense, the term persona appropriately describes the personified Zion and the Man of Lamentations 3 since they are fictional characters (as demonstrated in this study).

Second, since the ancient scholars (Plato and Aristotle in particular) distinguish between poems or parts of poems in which the poet speaks in his own voice and those in which characters he has created are speaking, and since the term *dramatis personae* has long been used to refer to an author's created characters, especially as they appear in a drama,[49] it is important to keep in mind this ancient distinction in our reading of Lamentations. Even Heim, who applies the term to all the speakers of Lamentations, refers to the narrator as the implied author, as mentioned earlier.

The advantage of setting the two personae, Zion and the Man, apart from the narrator and the community is that we can hear the voices from the perspective of an ancient audience and keep in sight the authoritative effect of the implied author on the audience. Although the poet may present the experiences and utterances of his persona in such a way that the reader is led to assume a high degree of identification between that persona's attitudes and those of the poet, the use of persona is advantageous in many ways.[50] Among other things, the mask permits the poet to say things that he could not say in his own person; it permits him to explore various perspectives without making an ultimate commitment; it is a means for expressing anxieties and frustrations, or ideals that he may not be able to realize in his own life.[51] This study will take into account all these aspects of the use of personae in Lamentations.

b. *The Goals of This Study*

This study has three main goals. First, I seek to understand the identities of the personae Zion and the Man as to whom they represent. Second, I attempt to establish the personae's functions, essentially how Zion and the Man fulfill the author's purposes in the chapters in which they appear. Third, I seek

48. Gudas, ' Persona', pp. 900-901.
49. Gudas, ' Persona', pp. 900-901; Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, p. 218.
50. Gudas, ' Persona', p. 901.
51. Gudas, ' Persona', p. 901.

to draw conclusions on how the use of these two personae in conjunction with the other voices in the book shapes the meaning of Lamentations and the unity of the book.

The genre of Lamentations is discussed in Chapter 2 because the meaning of a literary work depends considerably on the interpretation of its linguistic and thematic conventions. For example, reading a literary work as science fiction rather than history would yield a very different kind of interpretation. Thus, before we can talk about identities and function, we need to determine a proper way to read Lamentations. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the use of the personification of Zion in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Chapters 5 and 6 concentrate on the use of the Man of Lamentations 3. Lastly, Chapter 7 synthesizes all the different voices of Lamentations to arrive at a conclusion on their effect on the meaning of the book as a whole.

Before concluding this introduction, I would like to clarify some terms I use in the following chapters to refer to the authorship and the text. I will use the term 'author' or 'poet' to refer to the author of the poem under discussion. The term 'editor' is used to refer to the compiler of the poems, with the understanding that he might be the author of one or more of the poems. Occasionally, for purposes of convenience, I use the phrase 'the author of Lamentations' or 'the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4' to put an emphasis on the authorship rather than on the editorship of the book or poems. This by no means indicates that one single author wrote the entire book or all the mentioned poems. With respect to the text, I use the term Lamentations to refer to the entire book, even in discussion of individual poems, if the issue under discussion is known to be true for the entire book from my perspective, in which case I always strive to provide the necessary evidence.

2

Genres of Lamentations

Since understanding of genre and other literary features can provide a firm interpretive framework, this chapter seeks to understand the genres and other literary features of Lamentations and consequently to acquire a point of departure for the study of the use of persona in the book. The genre of Lamentations, and particularly the genre of the individual poems, has been the subject of studies for over eighty years.[1] It is widely agreed that the

1. Johan Renkema, *Lamentations* (trans. B. Doyle; Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 40-41, 63-64, is one among only a few commentators who insist on placing an emphasis on the genre of the book as a whole: 'The genre of Lamentations as a whole has practically never been discussed. Instead the most common approach was to seek the genre of each individual song by investigating agreements with well known and appropriate genres such as the dirge or the CI [complaint of an individual] and CP [complaint of the people]…. The problem remains, however, that we are not dealing with independent songs which were later cast in the form of alphabetic acrostics and then compiled into a book. The evident cohesion of the songs, therefore, raises the question as to the genre of the whole.' He sees that what characterizes the whole book is a kind of new language, 'Given the circumstances, they [the temple singers] could not simply take over the usual forms of CP and CI in their entirety. They had to find a new mode of expression in order to record their thoughts and experiences and they succeeded in doing so by combining existing genres and motifs. The most striking combination is that of the religious lament with the profane dirge by which the poets were able to demonstrate how life threatening and deadly reality was for them. The combination can be found in all five songs. Westermann is of the opinion that this connection is absent from the third song and is swallowed up by the lament in the final song but this is incorrect. A new element—certainly in the measure that it can be found in Lamentations—is the use of the lament detached from its prayer context as an expression of self-pity.' Similarly, F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (BibOr 44; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), pp. 30-31, suggests looking at the whole of Lamentations as a city lament; see also *Lamentations* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), p. 7. Though some scholars see the communal lament as the primary type of the book,

book of Lamentations contains elements from three genres: dirge, communal lament and individual lament. Hermann Gunkel was the first to divide the five chapters of Lamentations into three subgroups of laments. He first classified chapter 3 as an individual complaint song, chapters 1, 2 and 4 as dirges, and chapter 5 as a communal complaint song.[2] But scholars have also noticed that none of the chapters of Lamentations displays a pure form.[3] Apart from chapter 5, which they generally assign to the category of communal lament, consensus has not been reached with respect to the genres of the other two groups. There is no doubt that chapters 1, 2 and 4 contain elements from the genres of dirge and communal lament; the question is whether they are primarily dirge or primarily communal lament. To complicate the matter further, questions about the relationship between these chapters and Mesopotamian city laments have also come to the fore. Chapter 3 has a similar problem as chapters 1, 2 and 4. It undisputedly contains elements from both the individual and communal laments. The issue at stake, however, is how we should interpret the co-existence of these elements in the same poem. Should the poem be read as a communal lament or an individual lament? Or should we also see the genre of this poem as mixed? And what is the implication of reading it as an individual lament, a communal lament or a mixed form? Since Lamentations 1, 2, 3 and 4 include elements from the communal lament, the following discussion will begin with Lamentations 5.

1. *The Genre of Lamentations 5*

When it comes to the genres of the psalms and similar literature, Gunkel insists that one can speak of a 'genre' only if the three stipulations, 'occasion in the worship service', 'thoughts and moods', and 'form', are met.[4] He assigns Lamentations 5 to the category of communal complaint songs, for which he then delineates the setting, content and form. First, the setting of the genre in the worship service is the fast, a great complaint festival at the sanctuary that the community held now and then in response to calamities such as war, imprisonment (exile), pestilence, drought, famine, etc., which may have already happened or may be impending.[5] Second, the thoughts of

they also emphasize the influence of other literary types in all the poems (e.g., Westermann, Gottwald, Ferris, etc.).

2. Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (ed. J. Begrich; trans. J. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), pp. 82, 95, 121.

3. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament*, p. 501; Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 41-42.

4. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms,* pp. 15-16.

5. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 82-83, believes that these festivals are presupposed and described in several passages, for example, Deut. 9.13; Josh. 7.6; Judg.

this festival day need no clarification, Gunkel says, and they are expressed often enough: In great distress Israel turns to its God (שׁוב in 1 Kgs 8.47f.; Hos 6.1; Joel 2.12; Lam. 3.40), who has sent this plague for the punishment of sins; Israel confesses its sin (1 Sam. 7.6; 1 Kgs 8.47; Neh. 9.2) and seeks his compassion (דרשׁ 2 Chron. 20.3).[6] And third, in its pure form, characteristic of this genre is the naming of Yhwh in the vocative within the first few words, and a plural 'we', which is the community of Israel, who sing the song. The main categories into which communal complaint songs are divided according to Gunkel are (1) a lamenting complaint over the misfortune, (2) supplicational petition to Yhwh to change the misfortune, whereby (3) all types of thoughts appear in which one reproaches one's self for consolation or speaks before Yhwh in order that he will hear and intervene.[7]

Lamentations 5 fits very well the description of the genre's content. With respect to the occasion, Gunkel suggests that Lamentations 5 may have been sung during one of the festivals at the ruins of Jerusalem like the ones mentioned in Zechariah 7.[8] In his analysis, Gunkel gives enough detailed comments on Lamentations 5 to show that formally it also belongs to the genre of communal complaint songs. Lamentations 5 contains several elements typical of the genre:

- The entire poem consists of complaint. The complaint 5.2-18 is political in nature.[9]
- The vocative appears within the first few words and in the new paragraph of the conclusion.[10]
- Petition is made in 5.1 and 5.21.[11]
- 'All kinds of thoughts': the people believe that the misfortune reveals Yhwh's wrath (5.22); the fate they now experience contradicts what they had confidently believed and hence they ask 'why?' (5.20); suffering greatly, it seems to them as if the distress has been for an eternity and therefore they ask 'how long?' (5.22).[12]
- Hymnic speech at the end of the complaint shows trust (5.19).[13]

20.23, 26ff.; 21.2ff.; 1 Sam. 7.6; 1 Kgs 8.33-36, 44; 21.9, 12; Isa. 15.2ff., 12; 16.7ff., 12; 29.4; 32.11f.; 33.47ff.; 58.3ff.; Jer. 2.27; 3.21, 25; 4.8; 6.36; etc.; Hos 7.14; Joel 1.11–2.17; Amos 5.16f.; Jonah 3.5ff.; Mic. 1.8-12, 16; 4.14; Zech. 7.3ff.; Ezra 8.21; Neh. 9.1; etc.

6. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 84.
7. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 84-88.
8. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 98.
9. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 88.
10. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 85.
11. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 90.
12. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 89, 90.
13. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 86, 95.

Apart from Sigmund Mowinckel, who states without any elaboration that Lamentations 5 is among the poems in the style of the dirge,[14] other scholars, though agreeing with Gunkel in assigning Lamentations 5 to the category of communal lament, do see in it influence from the dirge or some kind of adaptation to the mourning service. Claus Westermann thinks the dirge 'has influenced this text, not through the addition of themes that stem from that genre, but only in the development of the community's direct complaint—similar to the description of misery—in vv. 2-18'.[15] Erhard Gerstenberger likewise notes the use of first-person-plural diction in the same extended lament section, which he considers to be an adaptation to the commemorative mourning service that took place in the later periods of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the emerging Jewish community, most of all in the Persian period, and the particular types of mourning ceremonies in vogue at the time.[16]

In addition to the observations made by Westermann and Gerstenberger, Lamentations 5 contains two other noticeably peculiar features. First, Lamentations 5 differs from other psalms lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem (Psalms 74, 79, 89 and 137) in that it focuses deeply on the human suffering rather than on the physical ruins. Second and more significantly, the confession of sin in this concluding chapter (5.16) is not only unusual in communal laments but also accompanied by the recognition that the fall of Jerusalem was the result of transgenerational sins (5.7; cf. Psalm 79). The meaning of the confession in Lamentations 5, therefore, requires an explanation. Is it possible that we have here a case similar to Psalm 69, another communal lament? Paul Ferris has noticed that this psalm possibly contains both the claim of innocence (v. 5) and the admission of guilt (v. 6) and sought to explain this phenomenon.[17] Dating the psalm to the period around 535–515 BCE, a period of tension, he believes that there was a mixed sentiment among the returnees. On the one hand, the return was a sign of God's favor and an indication that he had forgiven their sins; on the other hand, the short-lived exuberance accompanying the return was, according to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, God's displeasure at their misplaced priorities and loyalties. While the situation characterized by Psalm 69 may not be applicable to Lamentations 5, the sentiment exhibited in the latter undeniably signifies a tension of some kind.

14. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), I, p. 40.

15. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 211.

16. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, p. 504.

17. Paul Ferris, Jr, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBL Dissertation Series, 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 132.

As the recognition that Lamentations 5 basically belongs to the communal-lament genre provides the starting point for interpreting the poem correctly, the identification of the divergences from the typical communal lament of this poem plays an important role in the process of verification. A cohesive reading of the book of Lamentations must somehow account for all of the aforementioned variations.

2. *The Genre of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4*

a. *Dirge or Communal Lament?*

The study of the genre of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 essentially begins with the work of Hedwig Jahnow, a student of Gunkel. As the title of her book indicates, Jahnow places chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations in the context of dirges found in folk literature. In her investigation, Jahnow presents the characteristics of the genre of dirges in terms of types, motifs and styles. First of all, in terms of types, dirges are used for a variety of the cases of death, for example, for a child, a young man, a young woman, a person who died in a foreign land or a murdered person. In the Hebrew Bible there are dirges for an only son (Jer. 6.26, Amos 8.10, Zech. 12.10), for a firstborn son (Zech. 12.10), for several children of the mother (Lamentations), for young men (Jer. 9.20f.) and for a virgin (Judg. 11.30-40, Amos 5.2).[18] The motifs in dirges occur in three groups: the two bigger groups contain motifs of praise and lament, while the third and smaller group contains the reconciling motifs.[19] In the exaltation praises, the corporal merits of the deceased play a great role; he is generally praised for his distinguished character, his body features, his wealth, his family and the like. In laments, one can find motifs such as the irreversibility and the inevitability of the fate of the dead, and subsequently the transitoriness of the deceased, the abandonment and the defenselessness of the survived or bereaved, and the catastrophe itself. The motifs of praises and laments occur in the definite scheme of contrast for the purpose of contrasting the glorious past and the miserable present. The third group of motifs involves a reconciliation in which the hardness of the fate of the deceased becomes softened in the eyes of the one who survived. This reconciliation is done through the motif of the manner of death. Thus it is felt as conciliatory, for example, when the fallen hero finds a glorious death upon the battlefield and an honorable burial is given to him. The reconciliatory motifs include not only the honor at the moment of death but also the posthumous fame of the dead, which is the honorary

18. Hedwig Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* (BZAW, 36; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1923), pp. 92-96.

19. Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied*, pp. 96-100.

memory the circle of his people keeps for him. The good name that the dead one leaves behind and the children in whom he survives should reconcile the bereaved and the bereavement. Finally, with respect to style, a number of characteristic elements are found in dirges, including a painful cry such as 'alas', an announcement of the death and a summons to mourn.[20] The reconciliation motif and the announcement of the death are not present in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4.

Another aspect of Jahnow's studies of dirges, which commentators have not called attention to but is also important for understanding the genre of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, is the discussion of the personnel who are responsible for performing dirges. Jahnow points out that the performance of dirges in general is an enterprise mostly reserved for women.[21] Although dirges are sometimes performed by men (for example, by Abraham upon the death of Sarah or by David on the death of Abner in the Hebrew Bible, or by professional dirge singers in other places), these examples do not speak against the overwhelming majority of information that demonstrate women as the primary dirge singers. Hence, even in personification, it is only appropriate to put dirges in the mouths of women, as in Jer. 49.3 and Lamentations. We encounter women as the lamenting ones not only in the customary dirge and its poetic application but also in the lament rites for the deities. In the Hebrew Bible, Ezekiel finds the women at the temple gate weeping for Tammuz (Ezek. 8.14), and the routine lament about the daughter of Jephthah is perhaps a reverberation of an old lament festival for the deities held by young women (Judg. 11.40). The import of Jahnow's findings for Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 will be discussed again later in this chapter.

For Jahnow, Lamentations is a case where the dirge undergoes a significant transformation: the transformation of an originally entirely profane poem into a religious poem.[22] While Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 contain the motifs characteristic of the dirge, the influence from the popular lament psalms is especially clear in Lam. 1.9c, 11c, 20-22 and 2.20-22, which contain the invocation of Yahweh, whose name does not appear in the real dirge. In addition, other frequent motifs of popular lament psalms such as the lament about the present affliction, the plea for Yahweh to look upon it, the confession of sin are also found in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4.

In his studies of the Psalms, Gunkel asserts that Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are derived from the corpse songs and are not to be classified among

20. For a complete summary of all the characteristic elements of dirges presented by Jahnow, see Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 1-11.

21. Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied*, pp. 59-60.

22. Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied*, p. 170

the psalms, thus following Jahnow.[23] Having presented the main categories of communal laments as (1) complaint over the misfortune, (2) petition to Yhwh to change the situation, and (3) all types of thoughts appear in which one reproaches oneself for consolation or speaks before Yhwh in order that he will hear and intervene, Gunkel confirms Jahnow's conclusion on Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 that in these chapters the transformation of the dirge is conducted with several motifs of the communal lament. He comments,

> This type of meddling is all the more noteworthy since the dirge and complaint are a world apart in terms of their type. On the other hand both genres do have a certain, distant relationship that dominates the complaints. Moreover, the dirge normally concerns the death of an individual, but in Lamentations it is related to Zion's misfortune. Thus it has been filled with political elements, thereby coming closer to the communal complaint. Thus, several elements, which were originally characteristic of the communal complaint, found their way into Lamentations. The element in which Yhwh is occasionally the subject was normally not possible in the dirge (cf. 1.5c, 12e, 13-15, 17f.; 2.1-9, 17-19, 21f.; 4.11, 16). . . . In this manner, the original secular genre of the dirge has been transformed into a religious poem (H. Jahnow).[24]

On the other hand, Claus Westermann, without denying that elements characteristic of dirges are present in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, contends that the songs of Lamentations cannot be dirges in any strict sense of the term and they should be understood as communal laments.[25] From his perspective, Jahnow made an important mistake in her analysis and consequently in her conclusion regarding Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, namely, to perceive the genre of the dirge in the prophetic texts specified as *qinah* in the Hebrew Bible, and thereby to assume that Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 were a modification of the dirge. Simply put, Jahnow, in Westermann's view, was close but missed the point:

> Jahnow did not realize that, with this list of features as she enumerated them on her pp. 170-71, she actually sketched out the structure of the communal lament as a distinct genre. That is, she did not simply list isolated motifs; rather, she described a coherent whole. Had she added to her list, the motif of the petition directed against enemies, she would have generated a full description of the communal lament. Moreover, the genre is best described precisely in the sequence of motifs that she gave. From this point it is only a short step to the recognition that, in fact, it is the

23. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 4.

24. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, p. 95.

25. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 95. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, p. 67, also argues that there are clearer family resemblances between Lamentations and lament psalms than between the former and the dirge or city laments.

> structure of the communal lament which underlies Lam. 1, 2, and 4. Only subsequently did the distinctive motifs of the dirge come to be attached to the structure of this particular type of lament.[26]

Westermann stresses the distinction between the dirge and the plaintive lament, a point that Jahnow already observed when she concluded that Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 represent a reshaping of a profane genre into religious verse. While the two genres share a common denominator, namely, human suffering being expressed in each, 'the decisive difference between the two is that the dirge is profane in nature while the plaintive lament is directed toward God'. He elaborates the point further:

> In a plaintive lament the living bemoan their own suffering, while in the dirge the speakers bewail someone else, someone who is deceased. The dirge looks to the past; the plaintive lament looks to the future. Therefore the plaintive lament is a type of prayer, while the dirge is not a prayer at all. The life-setting of the dirge is the funeral in all its varying aspects. The life-setting of the plaintive lament is worship of God.[27]

As he sees it, the life setting of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 undeniably corresponds to the life setting of communal laments: 'some disaster has befallen the city, and the survivors gather in a solemn assembly'. The disaster in this case is unique and unprecedented in that it involves the conquest of Jerusalem as the death of the city in 587 BCE. The death of the city is clearly caused by the extinction of the 'two institutions which, more than any others, symbolized the very existence of the people: the Davidic monarchy and the temple with its cult'. This unique set of circumstances hence finds its verbal articulation in the combining of elements from the dirge with the basic form of the communal lament.[28]

Most commentators, however, are not committed to a classification beyond the recognition of a mixed genre in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Additional suggestions are often nuances only. For example, while admitting that no easy answer to the question whether Lamentations is a dirge with elements of communal lament or a communal lament with dirge elements is forthcoming, Berlin asserts that there is no need to choose one genre over the other. At the same time, she proposes that Lamentations constitutes the Jerusalem lament, a new, post-586 type of lament, which combines yet transcends both the dirge and the communal lament. In addition, she suggests bringing yet another genre of poems into the discussion, the joyful Zion

26. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 5.
27. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 95.
28. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 95.

songs, for example Psalms 46, 48, 50, 76, 84, 87 and 122, which are clearly the antithesis of the Jerusalem lament.[29]

Whatever name one may choose to call the genre of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, the points observed by Jahnow, Gunkel, Westermann and others have unmistakably laid the foundation for understanding the overall message of these chapters of the book of Lamentations. The message emerging out of the recognition of the presence or absence of elements from both the dirge and the communal lament in these chapters is distinctly profound: the world of the survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 587 BCE is a world characterized by both life and death. The elements of the dirge present in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 signify a situation that is as good as death, but the decisive omission of an announcement of death undoubtedly reveals that death no matter how impending has not yet occurred. Death would mean irreversibility and therefore no more hope. On the contrary, the invocation of Yahweh in the communal lament implies that there is still a chance, no matter how slim, that he could and would bring deliverance and restoration; otherwise there would be no point to call upon him. Yet, at the same time the deliberate absence of the expressions of confidence, trust and praise, which are typical of the communal lament, betrays a great uncertainty as to whether the Lord would act favorably on the caller's behalf. Studying the mixture of forms of lament and dirge in Lamentations 1 and 2, Tod Linafelt observes a movement from dirge to lament in these two chapters: while the dirge dominates in Lamentations 1, in Lamentations 2 it is the lament that dominates. He concludes that when these two chapters are read together, the reader is drawn into the world of literature on survival, a world characterized by death in the midst of life and life in the midst of death.[30] Any interpretation of Lamentations, in order not to err, needs not only to maintain a balance between these two paradoxical aspects of life and death in the book but also to recognize and make sense of the progress from death to life expressed through the vehicle of genre.

Although it is fair to say that the study of Jahnow lays the foundation for understanding Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 as a mixed genre between the dirge and the communal lament, the picture is much more complicated, since various features including themes, motifs and images found in these chapters are not confined to the genres of dirge and Hebrew communal lament. Several elements in these three chapters undeniably correspond to those of Mesopotamian lament literature and require our attention next.

29. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 24-26.
30. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 43.

b. *Lamentations and Mesopotamian City Laments*

The correspondences between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city laments have been observed since the discovery and publication of the latter. The term city lament is generally used to refer to five classic Sumerian compositions that describe the destruction of Sumer at the end of the Ur III period and calamities in the following Isin period:[31] the 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur', the 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur', the 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur', the 'Eridu Lament' and the 'Uruk Lament'.[32] When Lamentations is compared to these city laments and correspondences are observed, the question of literary dependence immediately arises. Positions in response to this question generally fall into three categories: (1) assertion of direct dependency, (2) rejection of direct dependency, and (3) admittance of some relationship albeit unknown at present, including but not limited to indirect dependency.

An early advocate of the literary dependence of Lamentations on Sumerian city laments, Samuel Noah Kramer states, 'there is little doubt that it was the Sumerian poets who originated and developed the lamentation genre … and that the biblical book of Lamentations as well as the burden laments of the prophets, represented a profoundly moving transformation of the more formal and conventional prototypes'.[33] In spite of McDaniel's criticism presented shortly below, Kramer boldly confirms his position: 'the biblical book of Lamentations owes no little of its form and content to its Mesopotamia forerunners, and the modern orthodox Jew who utters his mournful lament at the western wall of Solomon's long-destroyed temple is carrying on a tradition begun in Sumer some 4000 years ago'.[34] The early supporters of Kramer's position include C.J. Gadd and H.J. Kraus.[35]

31. The Ur III period is approximately 2200–2113 BCE according to Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels* (New York: Paulist Press, 2nd edn, 1991), p. 333.

32. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 13. According to Ferris, *Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 21, there are six city laments. The sixth one on his enumerated list is 'Lamentation over *ekimar*'. William Hallo, 'Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad', in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1995), III, pp. 1871-81 (1872), also says there are no less than six laments commemorating the fall of Ur III.

33. See Thomas F. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', *VT* 18 (1968), pp. 198-209 (199). Cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, 'Sumerian Literature, A General Survey', in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (ed. G. Ernest Wright; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 249-66 (258-59).

34. Samuel Noah Kramer, 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur: A Preliminary Report', *Eretz Israel* 9 (1969), pp. 89-93 (89).

35. C.J. Gadd, 'The Second Lamentation for Ur', in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (ed. D.W. Thomas and W.D. McHardy; Oxford:

In a remarkable criticism of Kramer, Gadd and Kraus, Thomas F. McDaniel puts forward a detailed argument for the two central ideas previously proposed by other scholars but presumably without adequate substantiation: (1) the parallels are not too close and are due simply to a similar experience and situation, and (2) there is no historical connection between the Sumerian lamentations and the biblical Lamentations.[36] With respect to the first idea, he argues that the poets writing on the themes of war and defeat, though at different times and at different places, would likely refer to the hunger, famine, pestilence, the social disintegration during the siege, the destruction of the city, the spoils taken by the victor and the captivity of the conquered following defeat. Therefore, the parallel references in the Hebrew and Sumerian lamentations speak not so much of parallel literary motifs but of the common experience of the vanquished at the hands of the victor. On the other hand, in passages dealing with crying, a significant difference between the Hebrew and the Sumerian lamentations is notable: in the former it is the personified city, Jerusalem, which weeps and mourns, but in the latter, Ur is never personified and the one who weeps and mourns is the goddess Ningal.[37]

McDaniel's analysis of fourteen specific examples which he deems closest parallels[38] leads him to conclude that 'all of the motifs cited from

Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 61, criticizes Gottwald for not giving in his *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* sufficient recognition to the alien influence on the origin, themes and theology of the Hebrew lamentation motif and states, 'Certainly not all the harps were left hanging by the waters of Babylon, and some were attuned to sing at home the songs of a strange land'. Likewise Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Klagelieder (Threni)* (BKAT; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 4th edn, 1983), pp. 9, 10, argues that the lament over the ruined sanctuary of Ur, for example, offers an excellent parallel to Lamentations. Once one compares carefully the lamentation over the destruction of Ur (one can also add even the lament about the destruction of Akkade) the surprising parallels are displayed in both the formal background and the motifs.

36. See McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', pp. 199-200. McDaniel emphatically stresses the fact that earlier scholars did not discuss in detail why they arrived at their conclusions, for example, 'Kramer stated without going into detail', or 'Gadd without detailed discussion has stated that', or 'Kraus follows these statements by briefly citing (usually with text references only) examples of these parallels'. Commenting on the views presented by Kramer, Gadd and Kraus, McDaniel says, 'However, not all biblical scholars are in agreement with these views of Sumerian influence upon the Hebrew Lamentations. W. Rudolph, without any discussion, simply states that the parallels are not too close and are due simply to a similar experience and situation. Similarly, Otto Eissfeldt opposes any historical connection between the Sumerian lamentations and the biblical Lamentations.'

37. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', pp. 200-201.

38. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', pp. 201-207. The parallels are (a) the Hebrew word *eikah*; (b) references to exile followed by an

Lamentations are either attested otherwise in biblical literature or have a prototype in the literary motifs current in Syria-Palestine' and that 'certain dominant themes of the Sumerian lamentations find no parallel at all in this Hebrew lament'.[39]

McDaniel's analysis is overall acceptable except for two difficulties. First, at some points he seems to equate influence with exact reproduction as he repeatedly refers to the disparate characters found in the two types of texts. For example, he states, 'It is in these passages which deal with crying that one notes a significant difference between the Hebrew and Sumerian lamentations. In the former it is the personified city, Jerusalem, which weeps and mourns, but in the latter, Ur is never personified and the one who weeps and mourns is the goddess Ningal'.[40] Yet we should remember that in the Sumerian text, the city is in fact called to lament: 'O city, a bitter lament set up as thy lament' (IUr 40-41, 46, etc.). Second, he seems to conveniently disregard important facts in order to make his case. This can be seen at points (c) and (j). At (c) he compares Lam. 1.4a-b and IUr [Lamentations over the Destruction of Ur] 215-17 and comments, 'The parallel references in these lines to "roads" and "gates" are quite dissimilar. In the Hebrew text they are personified, like the city walls in 2.8, but in the Sumerian lamentation there is no parallel personification'.[41] But later in point (j), comparing Lam. 2.8, 'He caused the rampart and wall to lament; they languish together' and IUr 48, 53 and passim 'O thou brickwork of Ur, a bitter lament set up as thy lament', he says (205), 'The personification of inanimate objects is frequently encountered in funeral songs'.[42] It appears that McDaniel would reason away both the personification of inanimate objects and the lack of it in his examples.

Nevertheless, the second central idea that McDaniel raises in his discussion, namely, the historical connection between the Hebrew and Sumerian texts, is a real challenge. He insists that 'any attempt to postulate Sumerian

allusion to the lack of rest (Lam. 1.3b, 5.5; IUr 306-308); (c) references to 'roads' and 'gates' (Lam. 1.4a-b; IUr 215-17); (d) references to 'fire' (Lam. 1.13a; IUr 259-60); (e) the motif 'spreading a net' (Lam. 1.13b; IUr-F 200.30); (f) emphasis on divine wrath (Lam. 2.1a; Akkad 1); (g) the simile 'like an enemy' (Lam. 2.4a, 5; IUr 253, 374-75); (h) divine abandonment (Lam. 2.7a; IUr 4, 6 *et passim*); (i) divine decree (Lam. 2.8a, 17a-b, 3.37; IUr 140-42, 168-69); (j) personification of inanimate objects (Lam. 2.8; IUr 48, 53 *et passim*); (k) hungry children (Lam. 2.11c, 19; IUr 235-36, 370); (l) claim of innocence (Lam. 3.52; IUr 324-25); (m) the motif of joy being turned into mourning (Lam. 5.14-15; IUr 356); (n) the plea for renewal (Lam. 5.21; IUr 55-56).

39. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', p. 207.
40. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', p. 201.
41. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', p. 202.
42. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', p. 205.

influence upon the Hebrew poets must deal with the problem of how the Hebrew poets of the mid-sixth century had knowledge of this Sumerian literary genre of the early second millennium', since 'there is no evidence that these literary works survived in Syria-Palestine'.[43] This challenge indeed cannot be ignored, given the fact that other Sumerian and Babylonian literary works, for example, Gilgamesh epic, have turned up in the West.

Over a decade later, W.C. Gwaltney took up the challenge and contends that McDaniel's conclusion, namely, the temporal and spatial gap between Sumerian lamentations and Lamentations is unbridgeable, cannot be maintained. To show that this gap can be closed, Gwaltney lays out in his discussion three major parts: a summary of the history of the Mesopotamian lament genre to demonstrate that the first millennium Mesopotamian laments are true descendants of the Old Babylonian city laments; an analysis of the later evolved lament form; and finally a comparison of the later form to Lamentations in order to establish the relationship between them.[44]

In the first part, basing largely on the works of Mark E. Cohen, Raphael Kutscher and Margaret W. Green on the Sumerio-Akkadian genre of laments, Gwaltney differentiates three different stages in the history of its development. The earliest stage of the lament genre includes the five city laments mentioned above with their notable features.[45] The second stage of

43. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations', pp. 207-208.

44. W.C. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Near Eastern Lament Literature', in *Scripture in Context* (ed. William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), II, pp. 191-211.

45. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 194-96. The notable features of city laments include: (1) The usual accepted *terminus ante quem* for the five major city laments is 1925 BCE; (2) The city laments describe one event; (3) They were written largely in the Emersal dialect of Sumerian by *gala*-priests; (4) They were composed to be recited in ceremonies for razing Ur and Nippur sanctuaries in preparation for proper restoration. They were not reused in later rituals and did not become a part of the priests' ritual stock of available religious poetry for liturgical use. In the Old Babylonian scribal schools they became a part of the scribal curriculum but ceased to be copied during the first millennium.

As Gwaltney noted ('The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 196), the date is according to Mark E. Cohen ('Balag-Compositions: Sumerian Lamentation Liturgies of the Second and First Millennium BC', in *Sources from the Ancient Near East*. I, Fascicle 2 [Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1974], p. 9), but Margaret W. Green ('The Eridu Lament', *JCS* 30.3 [1978], pp. 127-67 [129f.]), on the other hand, raises the possibility of finding the origin of the Eridu Lament in the reign of Nur-Adad of Larsa (1865–1850 BCE) but prefers an earlier date in the reign of Išme-Dargan of Isin (1953–1935 BCE).

In his introduction to the 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur', Kramer writes, 'The tablets on which the poem is inscribed all date from the Early Post-Sumerian period, that is, the period between the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur and the beginning of Kassite rule in Babylonia: roughly speaking therefore, sometime in the first half of

the history of the Mesopotamian lament genre is formed by nearly simultaneous creation of the *eršemma*-composition and the *balag*-lament. The term *eršemma* means 'wail of the *šem*-drum', but not all *eršemma* are completely mournful since the subject matter at points served to praise a god. However, a large percentage of *eršemma* subject matter centered on catastrophes or the dying–rising myth of Inanna, Dumuzi or Geshtinanna. 'In general, the Old Babylonian *eršemma* are characterized as being a single, compact unit addressed to a single deity'.[46]

About 1900 BCE, the *balag* was created as a lamentation form as a literary outgrowth of the city lament. This relationship has been established by Cohen based on four factors: (1) the structure and form of city laments and Old Babylonian *balag*, (2) their content, (3) their ritual use, and (4) whether there was sufficient opportunity for development to occur. Although there was a close association between the *balag*-lament and its older city lament predecessor, there are some differences between the two.[47]

The Middle Babylonian period marked the advanced stage of the lament genre when the main *Emersal* hymnic types of the first millennium (the *balag*, the *eršemma*, the *šuilla* and the *eršahunga*) were probably created. The joining of *balag*-laments with *eršemma*-compositions to form a new composite genre might have also occurred in this period. It is not clear precisely how the text of earlier *balags* and *eršemmas* passed into the first millennium from their Old Babylonian origin; nevertheless, from the Neo-Assyrian period through the Seleucid, *balag-eršemma* laments are exceptionally well documented from three major sources: (1) incipit catalogs,

the second millennium BC. Its actual composition, too, must of course postdate the fall of Ur III; just how long after, however, it is impossible to say' ('Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur', in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* [ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3rd edn with supplement, 1969], pp. 455-63), [455]).

Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament,* p. 25, summarizes the situation as follows: 'consensus places the origin of five of the six laments in the Neo-Sumerian period (2200–1900 B.C.) and most of these within 75 years of the fall of Ur III. Isme-Dagan (1953–1934 B.C.) seems the most likely sponsor of the composition of most of the laments. The sixth, the "Lament over Eridu", was quite possibly composed some three quarters of a century later'.

46. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 196-97.

47. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 197-98. The differences are: (1) City laments were composed for one specific performance and preserved afterward in the scribal academy as a classical work, whereas *balags* were adopted for liturgical use and were copied over and over down into the Seleucid era; (2) the subject matter of city laments focused on one specific disaster, while *balags* were more general in their description of disaster and could be borrowed from city to city; (3) city laments were used in a narrow setting of temple demolition and reconstruction, while *balags* were recited in broader contexts as congregational laments.

(2) ritual calendar tablets, and (3) copies of the laments themselves together with their colophons indicating *inter alia* the nature of the genre.[48]

Having demonstrated that the evolved form of city laments was passed into the first millennium, Gwaltney then analyzes both city laments and first-millennium laments for structure and theme, noting the development from the former to the latter in part 2 of his discussion. The main features are listed in the footnote below.[49] In terms of formal structure, Gwaltney

48. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 199-200.

49. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 201-205. Features of city laments:

(a) In terms of structure, city laments were divided into songs called *kirugu*. Each *kirugu*, except the last, was followed by a one- or two-line unit called *gišgigal,* or antiphon, which summarized its *kirugu.*

(b) The poetic devices used in city laments include (1) the use of couplets, triplets, and even longer units of lines in which only one element is changed from line to line; (2) parallelism; (3) repeating units of a part of a line or a whole line or several lines; (4) complex interweaving of two or more refrains; and (5) use of lists.

(c) The composition alternates between first, second and third persons, and the dialect alternates between *Emesal* and standard *Emegir* Sumerian.

(d) In terms of content, there are six common themes: (1) destruction of the total city including walls, gates, temples, citizens, royalty, nobility, army, clergy, commoners, food, crops, herds, flocks, villages, canals, roads, customs, and rites; (2) the concept that the end has come upon Sumer by virtue of a deliberate decision of the gods in the assembly; (3) abandonment of the city by the suzerain god, his consort and their entourage; (4) restoration of the city is specifically mentioned or at least presumed; (5) the chief god returns to his city; (6) concluding prayer to the concerned god.

Features of first-millennium *Balag-Eršemma*:

Gwaltney cites the first-millennium composite lament form, the *balag-eršemma*, as clarified by Kutscher in his study of the history of the long-lived *balag* called *a-ab-ba-hu-luh-ha* (Raphael Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea: The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975]). Kutscher shows that this *balag* originated in Old Babylonian times but was expanded for public ritual use during Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Seleucid times in at least nine recensions, and has the following features (p. 203):

(a) *a-ab-ba-hu-luh-ha* used the usual poetic devices: repetition, refrain, parallelism, listing, division into stanzas, use of divine epithets, and apparent antiphonal performance. The *gišgigal*-unit (antiphon) is absent.

(b) Some of the elements contained in the later form of the above lament are: (1) 'Prayerful lament', lines 1-152 (stanzas II-X): Enlil's epithets, Nippur's and Babylonian ruin, 'How long?' plea to Enlil, wailing and mourning, Enlil's power, Enlil's dignity, 'How long?' plea with 'return to the land (!), plea to Enlil to 'restore (your) heart' ; (2) Hymn to Enlil, lines 153-59 (stanzas XI-XVII): Enlil sleeps, list of devastated areas of the city, let Enlil arise (!), Enlil sees the devastation, Enlil caused the destruction, the exalted Enlil; (3) *Eršemma*, lines 237-96. Plea for Enlil to 'turn around and look at your

notes that a certain development within the history of the *balag* has been demonstrated by Cohen. Like the city lament, *balag* in its Old Babylonian form had a formal external structure of *kirugu*-divisions, in which each stanza was followed by 'first, second', etc. *kirugu*. In some cases, a one-line *gišgigal* (antiphon) followed as in the city lament. 'Many scribes set the *kirugu and gišgigal* off by horizontal lines across the text both above and below these labels. As time passed, the labels tended to drop out leaving only the horizontal lines to mark stanzas.'[50]

Once the first-millennium laments are seen as legitimate descendants of the Old Babylonian city laments, and once a relationship between these later laments and Lamentations can be established, the influence of the older city laments upon Lamentations should become apparent. The last part of Gwaltney's studies is therefore devoted to formulating a hypothesis regarding the relationship between the first-millennium Mesopotamian lament genre and Lamentations by creating a typology for the former and then comparing the latter with that typology. Gwaltney's typology is set up under four major headings: ritual occasions, form/structure, poetic techniques, and theology. His results are reproduced in the footnote below.[51] In the first

city (!)', pleas for Enlil to 'turn around and look at your city (!)' from various locations, the flooded cities in couplets, the gluttonous man starves, the fractured family, the population rages, death in the city streets.

50. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 204.

51. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 205-207.

Ritual occasions:

(1) Before, during, or after daily sacrifices and libations to a wide range of deities; (2) special services, feasts, or rituals like the Akitu festival or the ritual for covering the sacred kettledrum; (3) *namburbi* incantation rites to forestall impending doom; (4) the circumstances of pulling down sacred buildings to prepare the site for rebuilding.

Structure: The structure was flexible but usually followed a broad pattern: (1) Praise to the god of destruction, usually Enlil; (2) description of the destruction; (3) lamenting the destruction ('How long?'); (4) plea to the destructive god to be pacified; (5) plea to the god to gaze upon the destruction; (6) plea to other deities (often a goddess) to intercede; (7) further description of the ruin.

Poetic techniques: (1) Interchange of speaker (third, second, first person) involving description (third person), direct address (second person), monologue (first person), dialogue (first, second and third person); (2) Use of woe-cries and various interjections; (3) use of *Emesal* dialect apparently to simulate high-pitched cries of distress and pleading; (4) heavy use of couplets, repeating lines with one word changed from line to line, and other devices of parallelism; (5) antiphonal responses; (6) tendency to list or catalog gods, cities, temples, epithets, victims, etc.; (7) use of theme word or phrase that serves as a cord to tie lines or whole stanzas together.

Theology: A. Divinity: (1) The god of wrathful destruction, usually Enlil, abandons the city, a signal for devastation, often called a 'storm', to begin; (2) this chief god may

two areas as he compares the formulated typology to Lamentations, as Paul House already noted,[52] Gwaltney finds a 'decided lack of similarity' in the area of structure,[53] and similarly in the area of ritual occasions, he cannot draw any definite conclusion because there is no documentation to inform us of the cultic usage of Lamentations.[54] Gwaltney however finds impres-

bring the havoc himself or may order another deity to attack the city or sanctuary; (3) in any case, Enlil's will is irresistible; he has the backing of the council of gods; (4) Enlil is described and addressed in anthropomorphic terms (warrior; the shepherd of the people; his word destroys; his heart and liver must be soothed; he must be roused from sleep; he must inspect the ruins to see what has occurred; he must be cajoled to change his mind; (5) yet there is an unknowable quality to Enlil; he is unreachable; (6) lesser deities must intercede with the chief god to bring an end to the ruin.

B. Humanity: (1) Human tragedy is described in terms of death, exile, madness, disruption of families, demolishing the buildings associated with the general population; (2) Mesopotamian society placed great emphasis on job definition; it is a tragedy when people cannot fulfill their jobs; (3) the citizens were seen as Enlil's flock but were trampled by Enlil; (4) the only response the population can make to the disaster is to mourn and offer sacrifices and libations (there seems to be a pervading sense of helplessness before the gods' power); (5) a gap separates the citizens and the gods. People must keep their distance. A sign of the tragedy is that the temple is demolished and people can see into the holy sanctuary.

C. Causality: Ultimate causation lies in the world of the gods. The emphasis is on the power of the divine and not on the rightness of the decision. The devastation is not judgment on evil humans.

52. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 312. I think House misreads Gwaltney, when he writes, 'In other words, there is insufficient evidence about the cultic usages of *either* Lamentations *or the Babylonian texts*' (emphasis mine). On p. 205, Gwaltney actually writes (referring to Cohen, *The eršemma in the Second and First Millennia B.C.* [PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, n.d.], pp. 9f., 27f.; Cohen, 'Balag-Compositions: Sumerian Lamentation Liturgies of the Second and First Millennium B.C.', in *Sources from the Ancient Near East,* I, Fascicle 2 [Malibu, CA: Undena, 1974], pp. 11, 13-15; Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea*, 6f.; Joachim Krecher, *Sumerische Kultlyrik* [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966], pp. 18-25, 34), 'In the present state of cuneiform scholarship we find four categories of religious circumstances when lamentations were employed in the cults of Mesopotamia'. And on p. 209 Gwaltney writes, 'We come finally to the question of cultic context. On this question we are without documentation to inform us. Of the four cultic occasions when first millennium laments were recited, the most likely candidate for the biblical is that of temple restoration.'

53. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 209.

54. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 209. Of the four ritual occasions, he sees temple restoration as the most likely candidate for Lamentations. Like several other commentators, Gwaltney (pp. 209-10) points to Jer. 41.5 and Zech. 7.3-5. Jeremiah 41.5 reports the account of eighty mourners who brought offerings and incense to the site of the destroyed temple in the days of Gedaliah, the governor. Zechariah 7.3-5 refers to the mournful feasts at Jerusalem in the fifth and seventh months which

sive similarities and differences between the typology and the biblical book in the areas of theology and poetic techniques. These similarities and differences can be found in the footnote below.[55] In conclusion, Gwaltney claims that 'we can now fill the gap in time between the city laments and biblical Lamentations'.[56] Furthermore, he claims that the spatial gap has been closed also, since the 'Babylonian Exile provided the opportunity for the Jewish clergy to encounter the laments'[57] and 'the exiles of the Northern Kingdom also had similar opportunities in the cities of Assyria to observe or participate in these rituals'.[58] He suggests that the dissimilarities between Mesopotamian laments and Lamentations can be attributed to the differences in religions: the polytheistic theology underlying the Mesopotamian laments and their ritual observance forbid that they were taken over into Lamentations without thorough modification in theology and language.[59]

Gwaltney does not convince everyone, however. Westermann does not even mention him but continues to acknowledge that 'McDaniel's conclusion is correct, in so far as it goes. A literary dependence of Lamentations on the Sumerian texts has not heretofore been established, nor is such a dependence likely to be established in the future'.[60] Westermann nonethe-

have been observed for seventy years. See also footnote on the cultic setting of the city laments above.

55. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations, pp. 208-209. Gwaltney enumerates the following as points of similarity and difference:

Theology: (1) God's majesty and irresistibility power, but Lamentations goes beyond Mesopotamian laments by insisting on God's righteousness; (2) God was the cause of the city's fall; (3) God abandoned his city; (4) God as a mighty warrior; (5) God's wrath; (6) God caused the destruction by his word; (7) God called upon to look at the havoc; (8) a goddess wanders about the destroyed city and bemoans its sad plight (Israelite theology could not tolerate such an idea, but the city Jerusalem fulfills this role in 1.12-17); (9) God to be aroused from sleep is totally lacking in Lamentations; (10) God's heart to be soothed and his liver pacified are likewise missing; (11) God called upon to return to his abandoned city is missing; and (12) the theme of the lesser gods called upon to intercede with the destroyed god is lacking.

Poetic techniques: Similarities include: (1) interchange of speaker involving first, second and third person with accompanying change in perspective reminiscent of dramatic or liturgical performance; (2) woe-cries and interjections occur to intensify dramatic effect; (3) parallelism of various orders runs throughout Lamentations. The only difference is that the Mesopotamian predilection for cataloging is lacking in Lamentations.

56. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', pp. 200-210.

57. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 210. This idea was originally suggested by Gadd, 'The Second Lamentation for Ur'.

58. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 210.

59. Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 211.

60. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 19.

less seeks to explain the close resemblance between the Hebrew and the Sumerian texts by attributing it to the effect of primordial human experiences. Pointing out that the affinity between texts that are spatially and temporarily far removed from one another occurs in the Hebrew Bible only with respect to the episodes relating to the primordial history in Genesis 1–11, Westermann suggests that the destruction of cities, which constituted 'small worlds' in their own rights, were elevated to the level of primordial human experiences.[61] The problem with Westermann's explanation is that primordial human experiences are supposed to be found everywhere, not just in Sumer and Israel.[62] While accounts of creation are found in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, and beyond, including Vietnam, city laments seem to be confined to the two bodies of literature under discussion.

More emphatically, Paul Ferris regards Gwaltney's attempt as unsuccessful.[63] His criticism of the first two categories of Gwaltney's typology, however, seems irrelevant and inconsequential.[64] He is more to the point in the refutation against Gwaltney's conclusion regarding the poetic techniques. First, he says, 'there is absolutely no basis for arguing that a special dialect is used in the Hebrew laments', and second, Gwaltney skews his results by limiting his comparison to the book of Lamentations.[65] Ferris admits that the first point is an argument from silence, for Gwaltney does not state that a dialect is used in the Hebrew laments. However, in saying 'only the Mesopotamian predilection for cataloging is lacking in the biblical Lamentations', Gwaltney indeed allows the kind of interpretation taken by Ferris.[66] Ferris's second objection seems rather irrelevant, if not farfetched, at this point. Admittedly, Gwaltney may or may not have in mind the entire Hebrew lament genre, rather than just Lamentations, as he takes issue with

61. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 22-23.

62. Based on a comment from Professor M.V. Fox.

63. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 168, 170.

64. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 168-69. With respect to the first category of Gwaltney's typology, Ferris argues that a 'genetic' relationship cannot be determined on the basis of similarity in cultic setting, for such similarity seems only coincidental at best and is best explained by the similarity in themes developed by the two corpora of public laments and by the fact that they are public rather than private laments. On the second aspect, Ferris argues that not only is there a decided lack of similarity, as Gwaltney discovers, but also form and structure are not very reliable criteria by which to determine a genre.

65. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 169.

66. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 169. See also Gwaltney, 'The Biblical Book of Lamentations', p. 209, and also above. I am not sure what Gwaltney really thinks, for in the comparison he lists only three of the seven points enumerated in his typology as similarities between the Sumerian laments and Lamentations. He does not state what Ferris assumes here.

McDaniel, but his analysis is for Lamentations only. To be sure, Gwaltney would fail if he argued for the Hebrew lament genre in general. But the fact remains that, when it comes to lament over the destruction of the city, in certain aspects, Lamentations resembles Sumerian laments more closely than it does other Hebrew laments. And this fact has to be accounted for sooner or later.

Ferris is most convincing in his contention against Gwaltney's conclusion on theology. The similarities and differences, he points out, do not prove a 'genetic' connection between the Mesopotamian and Hebrew laments. For example, the theme of God's greatness and his wrath are not unique to the lament genre but are represented in other genres throughout the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, the motif of rousing the deity from sleep is found not only in Mesopotamian laments but also in Egyptian texts and the psalms. While the similarities are inadequate to prove a relationship, the differences 'are sufficiently explained against the distinctives of the respective culture, e.g., Israelite monotheism over against the Mesopotamian polytheism'.[67]

To be sure, Ferris has proved that theological similarities and differences are inadequate to explain a direct relationship between Sumerian and Hebrew laments.[68]

67. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 172.

68. While I agree with Ferris on this, I disagree with his overall evaluation of both McDaniel's and Gwaltney's argumentations. Criticizing Gwaltney for his attempt to close the 'spatial and temporal gap', Ferris writes (pp. 172-73), 'The Seleucid *balag-eršemma* material he adduces to close the spatial and temporal "gap" is not a new discovery of the 1970's as he suggests. A significant sampling had been available long before Kramer addressed the question in 1959. But more importantly, the weight of McDaniel's thesis is based on literary, not spatial or temporal, factors.' But two things must be noted: (1) A significant sampling does not mean much until that sampling is analyzed for its value and use. It seems obvious that until the works of Cohen, Green and Kutscher, not much had been done on *balag* and *eršemma*. (2) McDaniel does put a heavy weight on his literary analysis and much less on the spatial and temporal gap since he devotes less than two pages in a twelve-page article to discuss that gap. However, as I mentioned above, his analysis contains some flaws, while the question concerning the gap was considered a real challenge since it demanded to be, and had not been, answered. This is seen as rather obvious in the response of Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 22, who seems to agree with McDaniel on everything yet tries to explain 'the structural similarities in texts so far removed from one another, *both temporally and spatially'* (emphasis mine).

Ferris cites Hillers as supporting his conclusion that the parallels between two lament traditions are coincidental rather than by direct connection by noting (p. 173 n. 580), 'Hillers seems to concur in denying any "direct influence" and that the "genuine, and occasionally close, parallels in wording … are to be explained in a wider context". However, it should be noted that according to Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 7, in the revised version of his commentary, Hillers *fully embraces* the notion of a

Yet, his explanation of the other correspondences is not as thorough as that of Dobbs-Allsopp, who finished a dissertation on the city-lament genre in the same year.[69] Dobbs-Allsopp advances the line of argument and the comparative method seen in Gwaltney while rejecting Gwaltney's conception of the connection between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments in terms of a unidirectional cultural borrowing.[70] For Dobbs-Allsopp, a generic relationship which accounts for the resemblances between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments could be generated by one or more of the following processes:[71]

1. The common elements of a genre that transcend cultural bounds may result because institutions and situations common to the societies in question produced similar forms of expression for similar process.
2. Even assuming the fact of some type of literary influence, often the emitter and the receiver of influence are not directly linked but are connected by intermediaries.
3. One cannot rule out the possibility of more direct influence, since the city-lament genre continued in the form of Sumero-Akkadian bilinguals into the Seleucid era.
4. Given the geographical proximity of cultural areas within the ancient Near East, one cannot discount the possibility that the Mesopotamian traditions entered the Hebrew Bible orally, or that the connection between the two traditions was ongoing and mutually influential, not limited to a single place, date, or direction of borrowing.
5. That one cannot fix the precise avenues of literary transmission does not *a priori* invalidate the comparison with the Mesopotamian literature.

Dobbs-Allsopp suggests that the generic relationship accounts for the resemblance, whereas the influence from other Israelite traditions on the Israelite city lament would account for the differences. He enumerates nine generic features common to Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments and stresses the fact that while any feature taken in isolation may not be convincing to classify Lamentations in the category of city lament, the

connection between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments (cf. Hillers, *Lamentations*, 2nd edn, p. 35).

69. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. vii. While it is understandable that Dobbs-Allsopp could not have access to Ferris's work while he worked on his dissertation and its revision for publication shortly afterward, it seems somewhat peculiar that he also did not mention Ferris at all in his later work, that is, *Lamentations*.

70. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 8.

71. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, pp. 5-8.

cumulative force of all nine features does persuade:[72] (1) subject and mood, (2) structure and poetic techniques, (3) divine abandonment, (4) assignment of responsibility, (5) the divine agent of destruction, (6) destruction, (7) the weeping goddess, (8) lamentation and (9) restoration of the city and return of the gods.[73] With respect to the differences, Dobbs-Allsopp argues that since Lamentations does not simply mechanically reproduce features from the Mesopotamian genre and is confronted by Israelite literary traditions, a number of marked differences result, for example, the motif divine warrior replacing the motif evil storm, or the personification of Jerusalem replacing the weeping-goddess motif.[74]

Dobbs-Allsopp's stance seems reasonable enough as far as Lamentations is concerned. Only in classifying various passages in the prophetic corpus to the city-lament genre does Dobbs-Allsopp seem to carry his theory a bit too far. His theory of a native Israelite city-lament genre, which he argues can better explain a variety of phenomena unique to the Israelite genre faces serious challenge when it comes to the setting of such genre. It is apparent that there was virtually no occasion to give rise to the genre in Israel.[75] Berlin's criticism of Dobbs-Allsopp's suggestion that 'the ancient poets were entirely capable of imaginatively creating situations for which the city-lament genre would be appropriate"[76] is especially astute:

> The poets do not imaginatively create situations in which to use genres; they adapt known genres (and perhaps create new ones) to address the situations which they confront. It is hard to believe that the prophets invented a city-lament genre, which happens to resemble the one in Mesopotamia, solely for the purpose of using it in a novel manner which turns on its head. If Dobbs-Allsopp wishes to maintain that there was a native Israelite city-lament genre, the chronology of his evidence must force him to posit the creation of the Israelite genre which is lost in obscurity, vestiges of the genre in the prophetic literature where it is used ironically, and only later (in Lamentations and Ps 137) after the destruction of Jerusalem, a full-blown and straightforward usage of the genre.[77]

72. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 30.

73. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, pp. 31-95.

74. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 95.

75. Eliezer Greenstein, 'קניה על חורבן עיר ומקדש בספרות הישראלית הקדומה' ('Lament over the Destruction of City and Sanctuary in Ancient Israelite Literature'), in *Homage to Shmuel* (ed. Z. Talshir, S. Yona and D. Sivan; Ben Gurion University, 2001), pp. 94-95.

76. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 162.

77. Berlin, 'Review of *Weep O Daughter of Zion* by Dobbs-Allsopp', *JAOS* 115 (1995), p. 319.

c. *Conclusion*

The survey of past scholarship on the genre of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 serves to provide some guiding principles for reading these chapters. As we have seen, the complexity of the matter makes it difficult to decide how we should read them. Nevertheless, some preliminary evaluation can be made at this point. There are three positions that require our attention: (1) We can read Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 primarily as dirge, following Jahnow and Gunkel, or (2) we can read them primarily as communal lament, following Westermann, or (3) we can read them primarily as a city lament of the Mesopotamian genre. Regarding position 1, with Westermann's cogent criticism of Jahnow and Gunkel, I believe it can be safely eliminated. I concur with Westermann that if we compare Lamentations with the lament genre and the dirge it becomes apparent that Lamentations resembles the lament genre more. If we follow the same procedure of comparing Lamentations to both the communal-lament genre and the Mesopotamian city-lament genre, since we would find that only one feature in Lamentations could not be fulfilled by the communal-lament genre, namely, the weeping goddess,[78] Lamentations is not primarily of the Mesopotamian city-lament genre. To be sure, Lamentation is a city lament, but of its own kind, or at least a special kind of Hebrew communal lament. Thus, while Westermann's position seems to be more probable than the other two, it is not without qualification. I disagree that the dirge plays a relatively minor role in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4.[79] Even if Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are to be classified as communal laments, we must remember that they differ from all the communal laments seen in the Psalter and from most communal laments found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in one aspect: the chief lamenter is not a man or a community represented by men but a woman: the personified Zion. The study of Meindert Dijkstra seems to confirm that women had no place in the the worship of Yahweh.[80] In search of what she calls 'a suppressed history'[81] or 'the

78. Dobbs-Allsopp himself acknowledges, as mentioned above, that the persuasion of his argument lies not in the similarities per se, but in the force of the clustering of the similarities. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the present study, there is no need to draw a sharp distinction between the Hebrew communal-lament genre and the Mesopotamian lament genre. The heated debate on the subject, as we have seen, was a response to the claim of a direct relationship between the two traditions rather than a denial of the correspondences between them.

79. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, p. 10.

80. Meindert Dijkstra, 'Women and Religion in the OT', in *Only One God?: Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (ed. Bob Becking; The Biblical Seminar, 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 164-88.

81. Dijkstra, 'Women and Religion in the OT', p. 164.

vanished religious history of women'[82] in the Hebrew Bible, Dijkstra finds that women did have a significant role in the worship of Tammuz (Ezekiel 8) and of Asherah, the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7.17-18; 44.17-19), which are activities officially sanctioned by the court and priests.[83] She also finds that there was formerly a role reserved for women in the ritual observed for preparation for war, namely, the handling of defeat and celebrations of victories (Exod. 15.20-21; Hos 2.17; Judg. 5.12; 11.34; 1 Sam. 18.6-7). But since she nowhere mentions trace of women in the worship of Yahweh, we must assume that it is not found in her study.[84]

Since dirge is essentially performed by women, as Jahnow points out, the voice of the personified Zion inevitably evokes the presence of dirge. The purpose and significance of this evocation cannot be ignored. It becomes quite clear now that what truly differentiates Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 from other Hebrew laments is the presence of the personified Zion. Previous studies of genre have helped point to dirge and city lament as the most likely sources of the personification of Zion. Therefore, in order to comprehend the role of the personified Zion in Lamentations, the role of the weeping goddess in Mesopotamian city laments and the role of women in dirge must be carefully investigated. This investigation will be carried out in chapters 3 and 4 of this study, and hopefully the result will also shed some light on the poet's purpose in incorporating motifs outside the communal-lament genre into his poems.

3. *The Genre of Lamentations 3*

a. *Communal Lament or Individual Lament?*

Scholarly opinions are considerably divided concerning the genre of Lamentations 3. No one seems to disagree that the poem is subsumed under the broad category of lament, but consensus is nowhere near as to whether it is an individual lament or a communal lament, not to mention that neither

82. Dijkstra, 'Women and Religion in the OT', p. 165.

83. Dijkstra, 'Women and Religion in the OT', pp. 175-77, 180.

84. In stark contrast to Gunkel's assessment (*Introduction*, p. 126; see also n. 37 on the same page), Lee claims, without giving proof, that there were women in the long tradition of lament/ temple singers (*The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 109). However, in the review of Lee's work, Berlin, 'Review of *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* by Nancy Lee, *BI* 13 (2005), pp. 197-200 (200), completely rejects the idea: 'this long tradition of women temple singers is oddly absent from the Bible, unless one finds it in Exod. 38.3 and 1 Sam. 2.22, verses that Lee does not reference and whose meaning is obscure'.

of those subgenres fit the wisdom elements present in the poem.[85] Gunkel decisively places it in the category of individual complaint songs while recognizing that it contains also a block of communal lament (vv. 40-51).[86] Joachim Begrich carefully clarifies Gunkel's position adding that it should not be so designated in the strict sense but rather should be understood as a mixture of genres with the main genre remaining preserved completely intact.[87] In Begrich's view, Lamentations 3 is a mixture that proceeds from the [individual] complaint song as it begins with thoughts characteristic of that genre, that is, a broad complaint (vv. 1-18), then petitions (vv. 19-20) and assertion of confidence (vv. 21, 24). However, thoughts stemming from other genres are also expressed in the poem, namely, from wisdom poetry (vv. 26f., 33f.), from communal complaint songs (vv. 42-47) and also from the individual thanksgiving songs (v. 55).[88] Gunkel bluntly rejects the idea that the 'I' might represent the community and that such interpretation should be accepted only where the poet makes it explicit. Following E. Balla, Gunkel states:

> The main objections against this interpretation are cited here briefly. Personification of that type would require complete pathos in the *first person* (e.g. Lam 1.9, 11-16, etc.). This interpretation should only be accepted where the poet makes it explicit (Ps 129.1; Isa 40.27; 49.21), or where the meaning demands such an interpretation (Mic 7.7; Isa 61.10; Pss Sol 1) in order to avoid being arbitrary. However, wherever these rather uncommon cases do not appear, the explanation of the 'I' as the poet is so natural, even self-evident, that any deviation from it should be perceived as a tasteless error and should be resisted with all one's strength.[89]

Westermann similarly places Lamentations 3 into the category of personal psalm of lamentation. Suggesting that Lamentations 3 consists of three basic parts (a personal psalm of lamentation vv. 1-25 appended by 64-66; a communal psalm of lamentation vv. 42-51; and a personal psalm of praise vv. 52-58) and two expansions (vv. 26-41 and vv. 59-63), he believes that determinative for the whole is the personal psalm lamentation. There are three reasons for this assignment: first, the poem begins and ends with a personal psalm of lamentation; second, both expansions are attached to this

85. Mowinckel (*Psalms*, I, p. 40), however, puts Lamentations 3 and Lamentations 5 in the category of dirge without further explanation. It should be noted that in another place, he lists Lamentations 5 among the unquestionably communal or national laments (*Psalms*, I, p. 194).

86. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 82, 94.

87. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 4, 121, 152, 304.

88. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 308.

89. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 122.

unit; and third, 'the composer of the total composition transformed what was originally a personal psalm of lamentation by adding at the beginning a sentence ("I am the one who experienced affliction . . .") which does not stem from the language of that genre'.[90]

At any rate, Gunkel, Begrich and Westermann represent only one end of the interpretive spectrum. At the other end, scholars such as Ferris or Gerstenberger assign the whole of Lamentations 3 to the category of communal lament with equal conviction.[91] Ferris follows Mowinckel, who argues that there are a series of I-psalms, which apparently are quite personal but in reality are national (congregational) psalms, such as Psalms 9–10; 13; 31; 35; 42–43; 55; 56; 59; 69; 94; 102; 109; 142.[92] Criticizing Smend, who says the 'I' in the psalms is *always* a personification of the congregation, for having an exaggerated and distorted view, Mowinckel also charges Balla and Gunkel with exaggerating the private, individualistic point of view. The correct view according to him is to be found in the ancient conception of 'corporate personality' and in 'the fact that there is, in the ancient meaning of the word, a *representative* person in the cult speaking on behalf of the congregation'. In the royal psalms this representative personality is the king himself.[93] In other national psalms of lamentation speaking of national and political conflicts in the I-form, the speaker might be the king or one of the leading men of the congregation, such as the High Priest, or the governor, or the chairman of the council (for example, the 'prince' of Ezekiel 45).[94] It should be noted that here Mowinckel sees the national laments in the I-form as influenced not by the form of the individual lament but rather as the earliest form that has two roots: first, the collective way of thinking of the ancients, which would look upon the plurality as a totality, a person, and

90. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 168-69.

91. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, pp. 492-97; Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14.

92. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 219. Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, rev. edn, 1980), pp. 37-42.

93. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 46. In Mowinckel's view, the corporate personality might be the person of the ancestor, the chief or the king: 'This person is not merely a casual chosen representative … and could not be replaced by anybody else. He is the representative because the soul, the history, the honor, the vigor and the blessing of the whole are concentrated in him. . . . All the others participate dynamically in what he represents. Because the clan … constitutes a community, having not only flesh and blood in common, but nature, blessing, soul, and honor too, everything flows from the one to the others, from the representative to the whole, and vice versa' (p. 43).

94. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* I, p. 226.

second, the official royal style, which would be more interested in the king himself than in what he represented.[95] The problem is that Mowinckel does not address Lamentations 3 directly, and Ferris fails to provide a connection between Lamentations 3 and Mowinckel's explanation of the national psalms in the I-form.[96] Ferris apparently agrees with Lanahan, who thinks the voice in Lamentations 3 is that of a defeated soldier which the poet assumed to express himself.[97] This is where Ferris departs perhaps completely from Mowinckel's reasoning, since for Mowinckel the early I-form psalms are not merely literary products but have roots in the cult. If Lamentations 3 were composed not for the primary purpose of being used in the cult but by an individual poet trying to express himself, it would be more difficult to understand how it fits in with the conception of 'corporate personality' in Mowinckel's view, especially when the 'I' is an anonymous defeated soldier.

Gerstenberger, however, approaches Lamentations 3 from a different angle, appealing not to the conception of corporate personality but to literary features. Having analyzed Lamentations 3, Gerstenberger states,

> Without doubt, the language of the text at times is very close to that of individual complaint psalms. Equally certain is that this language has been developed in liturgical, sapiential circles with some literary ambition. Still, the function of the form elements (which do not always coincide with literary units) proves sufficiently that our text was used and transmitted in worship situations and contexts. What kind of worship are we imagining? Since language and imagery of the individual complaint ceremony were overlaid by communal expressions, forms, and interests, we are probably safe in assuming that ch. 3 was either composed from scratch to be used in congregational assemblies, or (less likely because of the literary cohesion of the text) older individual parts were reworked to fit communal purposes. The idea mentioned above, that ch. 3 is possibly stressing the male sufferings in connection with the destruction of a city, while chs. 1 and 2 concentrate more on female perspectives, should be investigated.[98]

95. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 223. See also p. 61.

96. See Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 14-15.

97. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 136-37; Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations', pp. 41-49.

98. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, p. 496. The mismatches between the form elements and the literary units cited in his analysis include the underrepresentation of the formal element of 'affirmation of confidence' which is characteristic of the individual complaint genre in vv. 19-36 and the lack of traditional expressions of confidence in the same passage. Gerstenberger thinks they have been reformulated or replaced by phrases fitting to the situations, for example, vv. 21-23 like the surrounding verses sound like communal formulations rather than personal sentiment, and the

He finally concludes, 'Lamentations 1, 2, and 3 all may qualify, therefore, for the title Agenda of Communal Lament'.[99]

It is beyond question that the genre of lament has its origin in the cult, as the studies of Gunkel and Mowinckel clearly show. At the same time, they also confirm the likelihood that among the extant Hebrew laments many arose out of situations quite distant from the cult. Gunkel especially stresses that the psalms as we have them, which belong to this genre, as a whole do not show to any great degree the connection to the cult. There are psalms which he believes were composed a considerable distance from the sanctuary (for example, Psalms 16, 17, 42/43, 55, 61, 120, etc.). From his view, expressions of desire for Yhwh and Zion such as 'to see Yhwh's face', to 'go to the altar', to 'be Yhwh's guest forever', to 'be satisfied with the sight of your form', etc., could only arise in the heart of one who is painfully lacking what he desires most at the present time. Additional evidence comes from Jeremiah's complaint songs and the complaints of Job, which borrow from the complaint songs but contain no actions performed in a worship setting. According to Gunkel, the two alphabetic complaint songs, Psalm 25 and Lamentations 3, show how far the genre has been removed from its life setting since 'these two could only have been composed for a written form, to please the eyes, as would be true for all psalms so arranged'.[100]

As we have seen above, Gerstenberger again differs from Gunkel with respect to the life setting of Lamentations 3. Consenting that Lamentations 3 is no longer an authentic complaint psalm and that it was composed at a considerable temporal distance from the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, he asserts that 'the text utilizes various elements from older complaints and lament rituals to form a new genre of mourning song, adequate for the ongoing commemorative services in Judean congregations in and near Jerusalem, but also in the diaspora.[101]

Deviating only slightly from Gerstenberger, Eissfeldt argues that *all* of the poems of Lamentations were composed in recollection of the fall of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he says, 'it can hardly be decided with certainty whether they are expressions of personal distress at the disaster which were then taken into use at festivals of mourning, or whether they are from the first composed with a view to use at such mourning festivals, for recitation at them'.[102]

description of a standard regular male member of the community in vv. 28-30 also suggests the communal use of the text (pp. 493-94).

99. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, p. 497.

100. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 127-28; see also Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 14.

101. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, p. 496.

102. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament*, p. 504.

Westermann differs from the above still. Without elaborating the point, he simply suggests that the author of Lamentations was 'addressing an era considerably after the catastrophe of 587 BCE'. Although he nowhere indicates the kind of setting in which the author might possibly address his era, by suggesting that the author's primary intent is didactic and not liturgical, Westermann seems to rule out the cultic setting. It goes without saying that with such a specific purpose, Lamentations 3 is hardly a mere literary work, composed just to please the eye.[103]

b. *Conclusion*

The study of the genre of Lamentations 3 up to the present, although providing no easy answer, serves as guidance for reading the poem and for identifying areas that require further examination. First of all, we can see that a particular interpretation of how the various elements of the poem fit together ultimately affects the understanding of the genre of the entire poem. Unless we entertain the thought that the poem is a mini-collection of unrelated, or loosely related, components, we need to explain how these different materials work together as a unified entity. Even if the poem is understood to be a collection, which is impossible given its acrostic form, an explanation of how the poem as such fits into the book of Lamentations as a whole must be given. Also, the perception of the character of the individual speaker in the poem unquestionably influences the way it is interpreted. If one insists on seeing the individual speaker in this chapter as a defeated soldier or an every man, for example, the genre of communal lament would demand further explanation as to how such a figure might qualify to be a people's representative. Likewise, the genre of individual lament would fail to describe Lamentations 3 if the individual speaker is a personification or another trope. Admittedly, in spite of any knowledge we can acquire concerning this character, there may never be a complete consensus other than that the poem is a mixture of genres. It is true, however, that some interpretations are more plausible and cogent than others. And as long as a reasonably satisfactory reading of Lamentations 3 is still missing, which seems to be the case here, the investigation must continue. My investigation will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of this study.

103. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 192-93.

3

Personification of Jerusalem as a Woman: Origin

As discussed in the preceding chapter, Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 diverge from the traditional form of the communal-lament genre in their inclusion of a woman's voice, that of the personified Jerusalem. Jerusalem is apparently the focus of Lamentations. The destruction of Jerusalem and its aftermath are described and mourned for in chapters 1, 2 and 4, most saliently in terms of the personified city. Personification as a manner of speech endowing non-human objects, abstraction or creatures with life and human characteristics has been a feature of poetry since antiquity.[1] In the Hebrew Bible, this poetic feature, especially the personification of cities, begins with the classical prophets. The need for personification arises probably because as human beings we can best understand other things in our own terms, and personification allows us to use our knowledge and insights about ourselves to comprehend other things.[2] Psychologically and rhetorically, personification has been described as 'a means of taking hold of things which appear startlingly uncontrollable and independent'.[3] That description can be aptly applied to the personification of Jerusalem, since the city's destruction undoubtedly constituted a totally uncontrollable event for ancient Israelites, and its use was a critical means in Lamentations' effort to restore order.

Since personification is a special form of metaphor, I.A. Richards's discussion of metaphors allows us to understand how personification operates. Basically, as a metaphor, personification works either through some direct resemblance between the personified (that is, the city) and the personifying (that is, the woman), or through some common attitude that we may

1. John Arthos and T.V.F. Brogan, 'Personification', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alexander Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 902.

2. George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 72.

3. Arthos and Brogan, 'Personification', p. 902.

take toward them both.[4] Richards further asserts that when two things that belong to very different orders of experiences are put together in a sudden and striking fashion, the most important happenings in the mind are its effort to connect them in a variety of ways. When the two things put together are more remote and the connection between them seems impossible, an impracticable identification can at once turn into an easy and powerful adjustment if the right hints come from the rest of the discourse.[5]

The personification of the city in Lamentations operates more or less from the same principles as those suggested by Richards. At first sight, we might say that two things cannot be more remote than the city and the woman personifying it, but that is not necessarily the case. The resemblance, according to Westermann, is that the city and the woman both have a history or story, and that both are vulnerable to suffering.[6] From Christl Maier's view, the resemblance between the city and the woman figure resides in the relationship both have with other entities: in relation to its rulers, the city Jerusalem would be possessed like a woman; in relation to its inhabitants, the city would provide shelter and food like a mother for her children; and in relation to God, it would need his protection like a daughter or bride.[7] Even if the aforementioned identifications are not palpable, or seem impractical, with hints from Lamentations, the personification of the city indeed turns into a powerful one, though not easy, to give the book a meaning that is not attainable without it.[8]

The personification of the city Jerusalem is found in several biblical passages besides Lamentations;[9] however, only in the first two chapters of this book is it sustained without interruption. In Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, the personified Jerusalem is not merely an object endowed with human character but a thorough, complicated and multifaceted persona in the drama of her life. In her are found pronounced theological ideas and emotional sentiments associated with the much cherished, yet troubled, capital city of

4. I.A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 118; (cf. pp. 96-97).

5. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 123-26. Richards cites Andre Breton's emphatic remark, 'To compare two objects, as remote from one another in character as possible, or by any other method put them together in a sudden and striking fashion, this remains the highest task to which poetry can aspire'.

6. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 124.

7. Christl M. Maier, 'Daughter Zion as a Gendered Space in the Book of Isaiah' (http://www.cwru.edu/affil/GAIR/papers/2003papers/maier.pdf), p. 11.

8. Maier, 'Daughter Zion', p. 100.

9. See Isa. 1.8; 10.32; 22.4; 37.22; 49–54; 62; Jer. 4.11, 31; 6.2-5, 23, 26; 8.11, 19, 21-23; 10.19-20; 13.20-26; 14.17; 15.5-9; 18.13; Ezekiel 16; Mic. 1.13; 4.8, 10, 13; Amos 5.2; Zeph. 3.14; Zech. 2.10; 9.9; and Ps. 9.15.

Israel. Without comprehending the role of the personified Jerusalem, it is impossible to grasp the meaning and the purpose of the book itself. Since an understanding of the origin of the personified Jerusalem as a woman will greatly facilitate and enhance our appreciation of her role in Lamentations, an investigation of her origin is therefore worthwhile and will be presented below. The significance of her role first in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 and then in the context of the book of Lamentations as a whole will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 7 of this study.

Various studies have tried to explain the origin of the personification of Jerusalem as a woman in the Hebrew Bible. In the past thirty years, the personification of Jerusalem as a woman has been thought of as an Israelite adaptation of the concept of city as goddess in the ancient Near East. There are three major theses regarding the origin of the personification along this line of explanation. The most original of them is the thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald.[10] The other two are of Elaine Follis and F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp.[11]

1. *Aloysius Fitzgerald's Thesis: City as Goddess Married to the City's Patron God*

Fitzgerald was the first to suggest the idea that cities were originally regarded as goddesses in western Asia. In the article 'The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT', Fitzgerald purposes to explain 'why in the OT capital cities should be presented as royal figures and why the prophets should use adultery as an image for Israelites' disloyalty to Yahweh, participation in non-Yahwist cult or political alliances with non-Yahwists'.[12] For the purposes of the present discussion, only the first part of Fitzgerald's thesis is of primary interest here. Nevertheless, for clarity's sake, the entire line of Fitzgerald's argument will be summarized. Fitzgerald rejects the idea that the OT presentation of cities as female figures is a simple case of personification. His thesis is stated as follows:

> In the West Semitic [= WS] area capital cities were regarded as goddesses who were married to the patron god of the city. How far back this point of view goes, it is impossible to say with precision. It runs back as far

10. Aloysius Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 403-16, esp. pp. 405-406; and Aloysius Fitzgerald, '*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities', *CBQ* 37 (1975), pp. 167-83.

11. Elaine R. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup, 40; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 173-84; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*.

12. Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background', p. 403.

> as the documentary evidence available can take us—that is to say, to the middle of the second millennium; and if the evidence from WS city names is accepted, to the beginnings of urbanization in the area. It survives, as will be shown, into periods long after the OT books had been written. This is the origin of the presentation of capital cities as royal females, as queens, in the OT writings. In a polytheistic society worship of other gods in addition to the patron god of a city was completely acceptable. In Yahwist circles the only possible way to view this, within a framework of thought that regarded a capital city as the wife of the patron deity, was as the equivalent of adultery.[13]

In supporting his thesis, Fitzgerald cites as evidence (1) the representation of the city on Phoenician coins, (2) similar titles which are used for capital cities and goddesses and (3) the city names that are derived from divine names. Fitzgerald argues that the figure of a woman wearing a turreted or walled crown depicted on coins from important Phoenician cities, dating from the Hellenistic period, represents the city itself. He believes that the inscriptions on these coins confirm the interpretation that the woman is the *Tychē Poleōs*, the personified and deified city.[14] Fitzgerald cites four titles he believes are used for both goddesses and cities. The first of these is *rbt,* 'lady, mistress', a title used for goddess, city and queen.[15] The other three, *btwlt/bt,* 'virgin/daughter', *'m,* 'mother', and *qdšh,* 'holy', are used for goddess and city.[16] Finally, Fitzgerald attempts to show that in the Near East

13. Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background', p. 405.

14. The inscriptions he cites include: *Sidōnos tēs hieras kai asylou* ([coin] of holy and inviolate Sidon); *Sidōnos theas*; *Sidōnos hieras*; *Sidōnos theas hieras kai asylou kai nanuarchidos*; *lsr 'm sdnm*; *ll'dk' 'm bkn'n*; *lsdnm 'm kmb 'p' kt sr* ([coin] of [the city of] the Sidonians, the mother of Cambe, Hippo, Citium [and] Tyre); *lgbl qdšt*.

15. Fitzgerald provides the following examples: A. goddess: (1) *rbt atrt ym* (Mistress Athirat of the Sea, *UT*, 49.I:16); (2) *špš rbt* (Mistress Šapš, *UT*, 52.54); *rbt špš* (*UT*, 125.36-37); 3) *lrbt ltnt pn b'l* (for the Mistress, for Tinnit, face of Baal, *KAI*, 78,2); (4) *hrbt b'lt gbl* (the Miarewaa, Queen of Byblos, *KAI*, 10, 15); (5) *thwm rbh* (Isa. 51.10); B. city: (1) *rbt bny 'mwn* (Dt 3.11); *rbh* (Jos 13.25); (2) *sydwn rbh* (Jos 11.8; 19.28); (3) *udm rbt udm trrt* (*UT*, Krt: 108-109); (4) *hbr rbt hbr trrt* (*UT*, 128.IV:8-9); (5) *'ykh yšbh bdd h'yr rbty 'm* ; *hyth k'lmnh rbty bgwym śrty bmdynwt hyth lms* (Lam. 1.1); C. queen: (1) *rabītut.*

16. *btwlt/bt:* A. goddess: (1) *btlt 'nt* (*UT*, 49.II:14); B. city: (1) *btwlt bt sywn* (Isa. 37.22); (2) *btwlt bt bbl* (Isa. 47.1)

'm: A. goddess: (1) *l'm lrbt pn b'l* (*CIS* I, 380, 4; of Tinnit); (2) *um ilm* (*UT*, 1002.43; of Athirat); (3) *'m'štrt* (*KAI*, 14, 14; personal name); 4) *'ttrum* (*PRU* V, 162, B, 6; personal name); B. city: (1) *'yr w'm byśr'l* (2 Sam. 20.19; of Abel-beth-maacah); (2) *lsr 'm sdnm* (Hill, CXXIII); (3) *ll'dk' 'm bkn'n* (Hill, L and 52)

qdšh: A. goddess: (1) *bnqdšt* (*UT*, 400. V: 11; = *bin-qa-diš-ti*, Ugaritica V, 7, 14; personal name); (2) *'l gbl qdšm* (= the holy gods of Byblos; *KAI*, 4, 4-5); B. city: (1) *lgbl qdšt* (Hill, LXXIX and 98); (2) *yrwšlym hqdwšh* (Madden, 69).

gods and goddesses were regarded as married to each other,[17] and goes on to argue, following J. Lewy,[18] that many WS place names are feminine counterparts of the masculine divine names or titles.[19] Fitzgerald adds a note that later turns out to be much more significant than it seems at first:

> So far as is known, neither ʻAn or ʻAštar were important gods in any WS pantheon. This might indicate that they would be unlikely to become patron deities of a city. But it is known that pantheons differed from period to period and from area to area. If what has been suggested up to this point is correct, it just has to be assumed that at the time when these cities got their names, ʻAn and ʻAštar were important.[20]

In his understanding, the concept of city as goddess began in the broader context of ancient Near Eastern religion.[21] In this religious context, nature forces that exert powerful influences over human life were personified and deified as people's attempt to conceptualize and verbalize their experience of the numinous in the pre-historical period. As urbanization took place, the city itself became a very powerful force in urban people's life and was naturally deified. In the West Semitic area, once the city, grammatically feminine, became a goddess, the idea of her being connected in marriage to

17. His evidence: ES (East Semitic): Enlil/Ninlil; An/Antum; Bel/Beltum; Aššur/Aššuritu; WS (West Semitic): *ʾl/ʾlt* (*ilt=ʾrt*; *UT*, 49.I:12); *ʻttr/ ʻttrt*; *ʻn/ ʻnt*; *lbu/ lbit*

18. J. Lewy, 'The Old West Semitic Sun-God Hammu', *HUCA* 18 (1944), pp. 429-81.

19. His evidence: geographic names: (a) *bʻlwt* (Josh. 15.24); *bʻlh* (Josh. 15.9; = *qryt yʻrym*); (b) *ʻntwt* (Jos 21.18); *ʻnt* (Judg. 3.31); (c) *ʻštrwt* (Josh. 9.10); divine name or title: (a) Baʻal; (b) ʻAn; (c) ʻAštar.

20. Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background', p. 411. To establish that the *Tychē Poleōs*, the idea of a goddess who personifies the city, is of Asian origin, Fitzgerald argues that while the concept of *tychē* (fortune) is much older in Greek thought, the idea of a *tychē poleōs* is a comparatively late development. The fact that the *Tychē* on the coins is modeled after the bronze statue fashioned by Eutychides at the order of Seleucus Nicator, the founder of Antioch on the Orontes shortly after 300 BCE, and that such coins never spread to Greece but are limited to Western Asia, especially Asia Minor and Syria, suggests that the whole concept of a goddess as *tychē poleōs* is of Asian origin. The facts can be explained thus: 'In the WS area cities were regarded from time immemorial as goddesses. During the period after Alexander when Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine were Hellenized, when old phenomena were given Greek names, the divine city is identified with *tychē*, and thereafter during the period of the Roman Emperors the *Tychē poleōs* spread west. For such Roman assimilation of eastern religious ideas there are, of course, innumerable parallels. Confirmatory of the Asiatic origin of *tychē poleōs* is the fact that she had for all practical purposes no place in Greek mythology, and that in all periods the vast majority of the evidence for the cult of the divine city comes out of Asia Minor and Syria' (p. 414).

21. Fitzgerald refers to T. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz* (ed. W. Moran; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

the patron god of the city was also naturally conceived. Fitzgerald suggests that the personification of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible is an adaptation of the West Semitic tradition of regarding major cities as goddesses and wives of their respective patron deities. In the mode of adaptation, Israelite theologians and poets were able to retain the concept of God as 'father' from the older nature religion, in which the particular god is thought of as having a divine consort and children, while presenting him as beyond the sexual.

Fitzgerald's thesis on the origin of the personification of Jerusalem was widely accepted until his data and argument were scrutinized by Peggy Day.[22] Although Day's criticism might not wipe away the influence of Fitzgerald's thesis entirely,[23] it is no less powerful and convincing than Fitzgerald's thesis itself. With considerable effort to demonstrate where and why Fitzgerald errs, Day successfully casts doubt on his entire thesis. First, with respect to the Phoenician coins, Day correctly points out that the Phoenician coins are Hellenistic and significantly postdate the biblical material Fitzgerald attempts to explain. She also points out that while the Greek inscriptions on Hellenistic coins seem to refer to the city of Sidon as a goddess, none of the coins has corresponding Phoenician inscriptions that unequivocally regard Sidon as a goddess. The inscriptions can be admitted as evidence only if the crowned female figure is equated to Sidon, the city, a point that is assumed rather than proved by Fitzgerald.[24] Obviously, the Phoenician coins cannot be used as a determinative source for identifying the WS origin of the personification of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible. However, so far, Day demonstrates only that Fitzgerald has not proved or substantiated his point, rather than proves that the crowned figure on the coins is definitely not a representation of the city itself.

22. Peggy L. Day, 'The Personification of Cities as Female in the Hebrew Bible: The Thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F.S.C.', in *Reading from This Place* (ed. Fernando Sergovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), II, pp. 283-302. Day lists the scholarly works influenced by Fitzgerald including M.E. Biddle, 'The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East', in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon, 1991), pp. 173-94; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*; Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter'; T. Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses* (New York: Free Press, 1992), pp. 168-78; J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992).

23. In Berlin's view (*Lamentations*, p. 11), Day's criticism puts Fitzgerald's entire thesis in doubt, but the fact is after the publication of Day's article, the mythical origin of the personification of Jerusalem as proposed by Fitzgerald seems to continue to be accepted by others. For example, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 53; Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?*, p. 53.

24. Day, 'The Personification of Cities', pp. 286-87.

In the second category of Fitzgerald's evidence, Day argues that several of the examples supplied by Fitzgerald for the titles are not conclusive.[25] She concludes that the evidence provided by Fitzgerald is unsatisfactory because it 'fails to distinguish titular from other uses and does not establish the existence of an exclusive and unambiguous common pool of titles applied to both goddesses and cities'.[26]

Yet, the most fatal blow to Fitzgerald's thesis lies in the category of city names derived from divine names, where Fitzgerald attempts to show that cities were regarded as goddesses married to the patron gods in WS area. Not only does Day accurately observe that Fitzgerald provides no evidence or reference to substantiate his data and subsequent claim, thus leaving it no more than an assumption, she also calls attention to a crucial fallacy in his conception that goddesses, for example, Anat, came into being when cities were named after male deities.[27] Whether or not Fitzgerald is aware of the implication of his suggestion, his note on Lewy's explanation cited above logically leads to the understanding that in Fitzgerald's assumption a city such as Anat is not named after the goddess Anat but rather 'the city name is a feminine formation from the name of the male patron deity'.[28] Such an assumption can hardly be accepted. At this point, Day has established that Fitzgerald's reasoning is built on very shaky ground and that his thesis remains at best an unproved possibility or conjecture.

Some of Day's comments on Fitzgerald's second study, '*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities', are pertinent to the present study and worth mentioning here. As she already observes, based on Fitzgerald's data, the title *bt* is not found anywhere outside the Hebrew Bible as a title of either a city or a goddess, and the title *btwlt* is found nowhere outside the Hebrew Bible as a title for a city. What this means is that Fitzgeral's claim that the use of these titles in the Hebrew Bible follows a WS pattern must also be regarded as basically unfounded.

2. *Elaine Follis's Thesis: Athena, the Daughter of Zeus*

Examining the resemblance between the image of the daughter of Zion in the Hebrew Bible and the description of Athena, the patroness of Athens

25. Day, 'The Personification of Cities', pp. 292-93. She contends, for instance, that in *špš rbt* and *thwm rbh*, the second word is in the position of an attributive adjective, not of a substantive or title, and that *'m* in *'m 'štrt* and *lsr 'm sdnm* is not transparently titular. In addition, words like 'mother' and 'holy' can be used not only of cities and goddesses but also of people or individual.

26. Day, 'The Personification of Cities', pp. 292-93.

27. Day, 'The Personification of Cities', pp. 294-95. See also Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background', p. 411 n. 42.

28. Day, 'The Personification of Cities', p. 294.

and the daughter of Zeus, Follis suggests that (1) the idea of a holy city as a divine daughter is hellenosemitic in scope; (2) the poetry of Hebrew and Greeks was a channel within which this idea was expressed and possibly transmitted; (3) the feminine quality of the holy city pertains to an inseparable relationship between place and people, between the land and its inhabitants, and to the whole notion of civilization as over against barbarity; and (4) the holy city as daughter in Hebrew literature may represent a 'broken myth'—the Hebrews' radically modified version of the great goddess, who appears here (as in certain elements of Greek tradition) not as the consort but as the daughter of the high god.[29]

Follis contends that the explanation of the phenomenon that Zion, the holy city, is presented as daughter can be found in the language of symbol and myth. In both ancient and modern cultures, sons are commonly thought to represent the adventuresome spirit of a society, constantly pressing beyond established boundaries, while daughters have been associated with stability, with the building up of society, with nurturing the community at its very heart and center. The expression Daughter Zion, therefore, is more than simply the personification of a group of people, but an image of the unity between place and people within which divine favor and civilization create a setting of stability, home and fixedness.[30]

According to Follis, these notions about Daughter Zion find a strong resemblance in the goddess Athena, daughter of Zeus, in Greek thought.

> Like Daughter Zion, Athena was her father's favorite, beloved child. But like Daughter Zion, and Yahweh's chosen people, Israel, the goddess was not exempt from punishment, should she defy her father! And, of course, her punishment by Zeus would affect directly the fate of her 'chosen people', the Greeks centered in her city, Athens. While strictly speaking Athena does not personify her city, she is intimately bound up with its identity and fortunes.[31]

While claiming that 'the holy city as daughter is a theme that occurs in Greek as well as Hebrew tradition',[32] Follis does not discuss or give any direct reference to Athens being regarded as daughter. The comparison between Zion and Athena, though interesting, is not convincing.

3. *F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp's Thesis: The Weeping Goddess*

Approaching the issue of origin from a slightly different angle, Dobbs-Allsopp suggests the personification of the city in Lamentations is the

29. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', pp. 173-74.
30. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', pp. 176-78.
31. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', p. 181.
32. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', p. 182.

metamorphosis of the city goddess in Mesopotamian city laments, presumably because of the theological pressures associated with ancient Israel and Judah's monolatrous culture.[33] Dobbs-Allsopp acknowledges that the idea of the personified Jerusalem being a counterpart to the weeping goddess has been previously perceived by other scholars such as Gwaltney, Westermann, Frymer-Kensky and Hillers,[34] but goes into much detail to prove the point. He sees the similarities or correspondences between the two motifs as especially striking in five particular areas. First, the goddess and the personified city are depicted as weeping over the destruction of the city in similar terms (Lam. 1.2a, 8c, 16a, 4c, 21a, 17a; 2.19c). Second, the authorial points of view regarding the city goddess in the Mesopotamian laments and personified Zion in Lamentations closely correspond, that is, both the goddess and personified Zion complain and address the controlling deity in similar manner, and the poets have similar addresses to the goddess and personified Zion in the respective literatures. Third, both the goddess and the personified city are referred to as the possessor of the Temple and its treasures (Lam. 1.10ab). Fourth, the goddess and the personified Zion are portrayed as mother. Finally, similar exile and enslavement language is used to describe the condition of the goddess and the personified Zion after the city's destruction.[35] In addition to those five areas, Dobbs-Allsopp adduces as evidence for the equivalence of the city goddess and the personified Zion the epithets *bĕtŭlat*, *bat*, *yōšebet*, *rābbātî* and *śārātî*, since 'all these titles fit the metrical pattern of divine epithets known from the Ugarit texts, confirming their divine nature'.[36] Dobbs-Allsopp concludes,

> The correspondences between the personified city motif in Lamentations and the weeping city goddess motif in the Mesopotamia laments and personified Zion's appropriation of divine epithets suggest that the Hebrew poets exploited the Mesopotamian weeping goddess motif (however latent or implicit it may have been in the Israelite literary tradition) when crafting the image of the Daughter of Zion. What results is a vastly complex literary figure, a city and its population embodied in a feminine persona.[37]

He adds,

33. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, pp. 50-53; *Weep*, pp. 77ff.

34. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, p. 77, cites Gwaltney, pp. 208-209; Westermann, *Klageliede*, p. 30; Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p. 170; Hillers, *Lamentations,* 2nd edn, p. 34.

35. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, pp. 78-83.

36. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, p. 84.

37. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, pp. 84-85.

> Evidently, the Hebrew poets used personification to create a literary figure whose presence in the Hebrew Bible would otherwise be abhorrent to orthodox Yahwists.[38]

Dobbs-Allsopp explains further that the Hebrew poets personified cities, as opposed to other entities, because of the particularly close identification of goddesses with their cities. He draws attention to a central function of goddesses in the ancient Near East as being protectress of the city, who is represented as a woman with the turreted crown, as seen most clearly in the Hellenistic *tychē poleōs*.[39]

Thus it seems, from Dobbs-Allsopp's perspective, the personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations originates from the desire of the Hebrew poets to bring the figure of the weeping goddess into their literary products; in other words, the desire to import the weeping-goddess motif preceded the decision to personify Jerusalem the city. While it is tempting to agree with Dobbs-Allsopp on the correspondences between the personified Jerusalem and the Mesopotamian goddesses, there are a few items that require further attention. A close examination of the correspondences between goddesses and the personified Zion readily reveals that they are by no means exclusive. In the first area of correspondence, having compared the similarity in the mourning gestures of goddesses and the personified city and having shown that the gestures lacking in Lamentations are found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Dobbs-Allsopp states, 'These gestures, which are not unlike those used to depict the weeping goddess, are typical for mourning someone's death in Syria-Palestine'.[40] Indeed, most if not all of the mourning gestures shared by the goddess and the personified city are often shared also by the lamenters in communal laments, individual laments, dirges and funeral ceremony.[41]

38. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, p. 87.

39. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, pp. 88-89. It is obvious that this understanding is essentially based on the studies of Fitzgerald and others who share a similar conviction.

40. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, p. 79.

41. See Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 83-84, 126; Weeping, lamenting aloud, whispering like a bird chirping, stretching out the hands, and lifting up the hands to the divine in prayer are among common gestures. See also Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*. Pham gives an exhaustive numeration of mourning gestures citing from the Epic of Gilgamesh, poems about Baal and Anath, the Tale of Aqhat, and other ancient Near Eastern texts. In summary she writes, 'the mourning rites of the ancient Near East are closely related to the rites of supplication or lamentation. . . . They include loud weeping (usually aided by professional wailing women), the tearing of clothes and donning of sackcloth, sitting or lying on the dirt, gashing the body, strewing dirt on the head, fasting, abstaining from anointing with oil. There are also some variant actions with regard to the hair and beard' (p. 23). Other gestures include walking back and forth in front of the dead body (p. 17).

In the area of authorial points of view regarding goddesses, the similarity between Lamentations and Mesopotamian city laments is not unique. It is hardly surprising that both the goddess and the personified city lament. In fact they do just what other speakers in lament literature do—complain and lament. Although the voice alternating in Lamentations resembles Mesopotamian city laments and differs from the laments in the Psalter, it by no means resembles only the former. A quick reading of chapters 4, 8 and 9 of the book of Jeremiah will clearly confirm that in those discourses different voices alternate, for example, Yahweh, Jeremiah and Zion or the women lamenters. Zion or the women lamenters are directly addressed by either Yahweh or Jeremiah, and they also respond. Kaiser has demonstrated quite clearly that in Jer. 4.16-21 there is a gradual progression toward the personification of Jerusalem within the context of these verses: first, the lamenter speaks about Jerusalem (v. 16-17), he then addresses Jerusalem personally (v. 18), and finally he becomes Jerusalem; in other words the personified Jerusalem speaks for herself (vv. 19-21).[42] As might be expected, Dobbs-Allsopp does attribute the Jeremiah passage to the genre of city lament and goes on comparing its language to that of other biblical passages, including Lamentations.[43] His attribution is questionable to say the least,[44] but even if not so, the poetic style of speaking voice shift is not limited to those passages Dobbs-Allsopp categorizes as city lament alone. This poetic style is undeniably utilized in the nonlament narrative poems of the Song of Songs. In Song 1, the narrative voice of the woman first describes her lover (v. 2a), then addresses him (v. 2b, 7) and finally he speaks (v. 9ff.).

Likewise, in the next area of correspondence, the motif of exile and enslavement is not applied exclusively to goddesses and the personified city. I completely agree with McDaniel's suggestion that the motif of exile in Lamentations is more likely linked to the covenant warning to Israel, 'The Lord will scatter you among all people … among these nations you shall find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot' (Deut. 28.64-5).[45]

Moreover, Dobbs-Allsopp's argument with respect to the divine epithets is not very compelling. The epithet *btwlt* is not a common epithet. In

42. Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator', p. 170. Although some construe vv. 19-21 as Jeremiah's speech, Kaiser points out that images contained therein are not appropriate for Jeremiah. On the contrary, when Jer. 4.19-21 is compared to Jer. 10.19-21 and Isa. 54.1-2, both of which refer unequivocally to Jerusalem and use the same references to tents and children, it is more plausible that here the personified Jerusalem also speaks (pp. 167-69).

43. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*, pp. 137-39, 178.

44. See also discussion on Mesopotamian city-lament genre in Chapter 2.

45. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence', pp. 201-202.

fact, outside the Hebrew Bible it is used of the goddess Anat alone; and at any rate, Anat is not a weeping goddess. As Day points out, Anat is named *btwlt* essentially because she is an adolescent goddess, and it would seem ordinary enough for the biblical writers to use the term in its most ordinary sense to draw attention to the prime age of the cities.[46] As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to imagine that the biblical writers, as they contemplated using the term *btwlt* for the personified Jerusalem, had a sentiment not unlike that of the ancient Israelites about the death of a virgin. This sentiment is demonstrated clearly in the account of the virgin daughter of Jephthah (Judg. 11.36-39) who weeps and mourns her death at the age when the marital fulfillment is most anticipated and desired. The untimely death of a marriageable young woman is apparently considered so tragic that it is worth commemoration every year.

Furthermore, the comparison between the epithet *bat* GN in the Hebrew Bible and the titles occur in the Neo-Babylonian Tammuz lament *mārat* GN (daughter of GN) made by Dobbs-Allsopp has been proven weak by Berlin. She enumerates as points of weakness the following: (1) The usage of *mārat* GN is rare and does not occur in the Sumerian city laments or other Sumerian lament literature; (2) these titles do not work the same way as they do in the WS sources that Fitzgerald cites; (3) Dobb-Allsopp limits his discussion to cases containing a geographic name, hence does not explain the similar usage *bat 'ammi*.[47] To be sure, the similarity or difference between *bat 'ammi* and *bat* GN in the Hebrew Bible, especially in Lamentations, deserves a more detailed discussion and will be discussed later in the study. Suffice to say here that the first two points in Berlin's comment contribute to invalidate Dobbs-Allsopp's claim.

In addition, the epithet *yōšebet* is used in the Hebrew Bible not only for God and personified cities but also for kings and the inhabitants of geographical places.[48] Therefore it is difficult to say that by using this epithet the Hebrew poet was elevating the personified city to a divine status. Finally, his explanation that the personification in the Hebrew Bible was chosen as opposed to other entities because of the close identification of the goddess with her city is at best only a conjecture since the identification between goddesses and their cities has never been proved.[49]

46. The word *btwlt* is used only thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible. Nine times it is used of Jerusalem, Judah, Zion or *bat 'ammi* (2 Kgs 19.21; Isa. 37.22; Jer. 14.17; 18.13; 31.4, 21; Lam. 1.15; 2.13; Amos 5.2). Three times it is used of Sidon, Babylon and Egypt (Isa. 23.12; 47.1; Jer. 46.11).

47. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 11-12.

48. In the Hebrew Bible, examples include Num. 21.1; Judg. 1.17, 21, 27, etc.; Isa. 5.3; 8.14; 10.24.

49. See above on Day's refutation of Fitzgerald's thesis.

Through a different approach, Dobbs-Allsopp, like Fitzgerald, arrives at a similar conclusion, attributing the origin of the personification of Jerusalem to a process of literary and theological adaptation of language and concepts applied to goddesses in the ancient Near East. As seen earlier, Fitzgerald's thesis has already lost its widespread influence after Day's critique, and apparently Dobbs-Allsopp's thesis is not much more persuasive either. The evidence is simply insufficient to suggest that the creation of the personification of the city as a woman in the Hebrew Bible comes from the poets' intentional adaptation of traditions regarding goddesses in the ancient Near East. Neither the idea that the personified city in the Hebrew Bible is an adaptation of the concept of the weeping goddess nor the idea that the Hebrew poets intentionally adapted foreign traditions has been established. Similarly, Follis fails to demonstrate that the city is identified as a goddess in early Greek mythology. In short, no thesis on the foreign origin of the personification of Jerusalem has been proved satisfactory. Where do we go from here?

4. *A New Approach: City as a Mourning Virgin*

I suggest that we take a different approach to the issue of the origin of the personification of Jerusalem. A different alternative, viewing the personification of Jerusalem as a purely poetic creation in which the need for this poetic device takes precedence, would be more credible. Since the personification of the city as a woman appears first in the laments of the prophets,[50] it is advisable to look for a connection between the personification and the form in which it appears.[51] It is not difficult to imagine that when the prophets saw the coming destruction of the nation or city and felt the need to address it, they found the personification of the city and the dirge to be effective tools to get their message across. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one

50. See Turner, 'Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration', pp. 7ff. Turner uses the symbol 'daughter' to refer to the incidents in which either Zion, Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, or 'my people' is combined with one of the epithets 'daughter', 'virgin', or 'virgin daughter' (pp. 7-8). She finds that of the seventy instances where 'daughter' is used in the prophetic texts and Lamentations, thirty-six are related to the destruction of the people of Israel and Judah (Amos, one; Micah, one; Isaiah, three; Jeremiah, thirteen; Lamentations, eighteen), sixteen are related to the destruction and devastation of other cities and peoples (Isaiah, six; Jeremiah, seven; Lamentations, two; Zechariah, one) (p. 16).

51. While recognizing that the association between the daughter symbol of the city and the lament motif is strong, Turner hesitates at suggesting a positive correlation between them, stating 'whether there is a correlation between the ritualized mourning rites of women, and the choice of a female symbol, a daughter, to represent the devastated and dying city is not known' (p. 16).

of the major differences between the Hebrew communal lament and the dirge is the irreversibility of the situation portrayed in the latter. Normally, the communal lament is directed to God in order to prompt him to act in the behalf of his people to remove the cause of distress. On the other hand, the dirge is chanted to mourn for the dead for they are no more and there is no hope for reversal. Thus, when the prophets foresaw the total destruction of Israel coming, they tried to emphasize this irrevocable fact and elicit the proper response from the people by proclaiming it in the form of dirge. For painting the irrevocable end of the nation, no rhetorical means can make a more powerful impact than the dirge, the last song.[52] Jahnow suggests that Amos 5.2 represents the earliest dirge in the Hebrew Bible that is used in this unreal sense, as the prophet speaks about catastrophe when Israel is at its peak of political and economic prosperity.[53]

נפלה לא־תוסיף קום בתולת ישׂראל
נטשׁה על־אדמתה אין מקימה

Fallen, no more rise, is maiden Israel;
forsaken in her land, with no one to raise her up (NRSV).

With respect to one mourning for her own death at a prime age, no account in the Hebrew Bible presents a more striking resemblance to Amos 5.2 than Judg. 11.29-40.[54] In the latter, Jephthah's virgin daughter, upon hearing that her father had made an unbreakable vow to Yahweh to sacrifice her as a burnt offering, requested two months to roam the hills and weep with her friends because she would never marry. Judges 11.39 emphasizes that she was a virgin when she died: 'At the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to the vow he had made. She had never slept with a man' (NRSV). והיא לא־ידעה איׁש thereby implies that she was at the age quite ready for marriage and marriage was the only logical expectation. The tragedy thus lies in the fact that instead of having an anticipated fulfilling future, her time was abruptly cut short. In a parenthetic note, we can see that, in a sense, the two epithets that are used the most with Jerusalem

52. Jahnow, *Hebräische Liechenlied*, p. 162.

53. Jahnow, *Hebräische Liechenlied*, p. 165. The only two real dirges (i.e., mourning real human dead) in the Hebrew Bible are David's lamenting the death of Abner (2 Sam. 3.33-34) and Jeremiah's lamenting the death of Zedekiah (Jer. 38.22). Although similar, David's lament for Jonathan (2 Sam. 1.19-27) and the lament in Jer. 9.16-21 are artistic imitations of genuine dirges (Jahnow, *Hebräische Liechenlied,* pp. 124, 131; also Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 1-2).

54. See Turner, 'Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration', pp. 42-46. In her discussion about the development of the symbol daughter in Amos, Turner's observation is similar to mine. However, she does not see Amos 5.2 as the originating point of the personification of Zion as a woman, but as the earliest stage in the Hebrew development, probably due to the influence of Fitzgeral's thesis.

or Zion, 'daughter' and 'virgin', find their natural relationship in this story. Since a daughter would receive no inheritance from her father, she only gets to her rightful place when she is married. Therefore, to die as a virgin, a daughter rather than the wife of someone, is to die before her time.

The death of a virgin was considered so tragic that it was worth commemorating. According to Judg. 11.39-40, the mourning for the daughter of Jephthah had become an Israelite custom, in which each year the young women of Israel went out for four days to commemorate her. Since the custom was early[55] and assuming that it was somewhat popular, Amos might have been familiar with it and thought it profitable to apply the image of a young woman dying at her marriageable age to Israel. Alternatively, the death of a virgin might have been generally perceived as the most tragic death at the time of Amos, and he simply applied it in his proclamation. Once the image of a fallen virgin was employed to refer to the demise of the northern kingdom, it was just a short step to transfer it to prophecies predicting the demise of Judah and Jerusalem. In Lamentations 1, even though Jerusalem is compared mainly to a widow, still the virgin image is not missing (1.15); and in Lamentations 2, it is the image of a virgin or daughter that predominates (for example, 2.10, 13). This germinal image of woman in the personification of the nation and the capital city is naturally reinforced by two other factors: nations and cities are feminine grammatically and women are typical mourners.[56]

In the Hebrew Bible, there is no evidence that the personified city is a goddess demythologized. Granted that the Hebrew writers could make use of mythical motifs without believing in them, it is not palpable in the case of the personification of the city. Even in Ezekiel 16, although Jerusalem is identified as Yahweh's wife, she is not elevated to the divine status of a goddess.[57] On the other hand, it is a fact that the city in Hebrew is grammatically feminine. The Hebrew poets did not have to be influenced by any foreign tradition to conceptualize the city as female. In their world and language, the city is not only female, she is also an entity that can have

55. The Israelite custom was at least earlier than the composition of this individual unit. Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), p. 30, suggests that the history of the book of Judges has four stages. The composition of individual narrative units and the formation of early Israelite epic belong to stage 1. Stage 2 includes a didactic collection of such stories and was completed by the eighth century BCE.

56. Both of these factors have been observed perhaps by all scholars who discuss the personification of Jerusalem as a woman.

57. Genesis 6.2-4 gives an example of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men. Undoubtedly this passage is one of the most obscure in the Hebrew Bible, and the identification of the 'sons of God' is not determined with any certainty. Taken at the superficial level, this proves that the divine can have a human wife.

daughters, as evident in their reference to villages surrounding a city as בנותיה, 'her daughters' (for example, Josh. 15.45, 47; 17.11; Judg. 11.26).

We have seen that, except for the presence of the personified woman, all literary features in Lamentations can be found in the Hebrew lament genre. It is the presence of this personified woman that makes Lamentations unique as a communal lament. That women had no place in the worship of Yahweh has been shown to be the case by Gunkel, Dijkstra and Berlin.[58]

While it is true that women did not have a place in ancient Israelite worship and consequently were not heard in the communal and individual laments, their voice is pervasive in another public sphere, the funeral ceremony. We have ample evidence of women mourning for the dead: women sit at the north gate of the temple to mourn for Tammuz (Ezek. 8.14); the women singers along with the men singers mourn for Josiah with their dirges (2 Chron. 35.25); the women of King Zedekiah's harem sing a dirge for him in one of Jeremiah's oracle (Jer. 38.22); Rachel weeps for her children and refuses to be comforted because they are no more (Jer. 31.15); the daughters of Israel go out year after year to mourn for the daughter of Jephthah, and, most tragic of all, the daughter of Jephthah mourns for her own death before she is presumably sacrificed by her father (Judg. 11.40).

When it comes to lament for the dead, women are noticeably summoned. Even as David takes up a lament concerning Saul and Jonathan, he specifically calls to the daughters of Israel to weep for Saul (2 Sam. 1.24). It is worth noting that even though David laments bitterly, especially for Jonathan whom he loved, he still feels the need to call women to do so. As the prophets attempted to project the future demise of cities, they did so by lifting up the *qynh*, funeral song or dirge, and by calling women to mourn. Jeremiah relays to the people a message from Yahweh, in which he commands the people to call on the women lamenters to come and weep over the impending destruction of the nation (Jer. 9.17-20). Ezekiel also proclaims a lament for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and asserts that it will be chanted not by the women of Israel but by the daughters of the nations (Ezek. 32.16).

As mentioned before, Jahnow notices in her studies that, although both men and women could perform dirges, among many peoples performance of dirges is an enterprise reserved almost solely for women. The men remain silent where they are, and in many cases they even should not enter the death chamber.[59] One of the reasons for this reservation might be the ability of women to express their sadness intensely and thus increase pathos. Leslie

58. Gunkel, *Introduction*, 126. See also discussion in Chapter 2.
59. Jahnow, *Hebräische Leichenlied*, pp. 59-60.

Brody's study of gender differences in sadness, grief and depression shows that it is indeed the case:

> Women in America as well as in a wide range of European countries express sad and distressed feelings for a longer duration and with more intensity than men do, using both words and behaviors. Women cry more often than men do, and behave in a hopeless and depressed manner more often than men. That women score more highly on measures of depression (measured as the expression of sadness, crying, and hopelessness) between the age of 18 and 64 has been documented cross-culturally.[60]

Brody also finds that gender differences in the expression of sadness seem to set in quite early with young girls using both facial expressions and words to express sadness more than boys, and that boys, in fact, may mute their expressions of sadness increasingly as they get older.[61] Most interesting is the following report:

> In fact, research by Grossman and Wood found that not only did women produce more facial activity in response to emotional imagery than men, but they found it difficult to inhibit their facial activity, even when requested to do so. Men had the opposite problem: they were incapable of exaggerating their facial expressivity when they were asked to do so. In other words, the social demands of the situation were not sufficient to override the direction of gender differences in facial expressivity.[62]

If death demands expression of sadness and hopelessness, it is small wonder that the female relatives of the dead are chiefly responsible for chanting the dirge, according to Jahnow, who remarks that lamentation of women seems to be the most appropriate form to convey mortality, as implied in an Arabic song, in which the following words are put in the mouth of the dead:

> Three women lament about me,
> my sister, the daughter of my sister, and the daughter of my uncle.[63]

According to her, the mourning personnel originally consist of only relatives, and after them professional guilds are developed.[64] The fact that skillful women are employed at funerals to weep and wail until their mourning becomes so contagious that other attendants assume the same sadness and sorrow is made absolutely clear in Jer. 9.17-20.

60. Leslie Brody, *Gender, Emotion, and the Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 94.
61. Brody, *Gender, Emotion, and the Family*, p. 95.
62. Brody, *Gender, Emotion, and the Family*, p. 34.
63. Jahnow, *Hebräische Leichenlied*, p. 63.
64. Jahnow, *Hebräische Leichenlied*, p. 63.

> Thus says the Lord of hosts:
> Consider, and call for the mourning women to come;
> send for the skilled women to come;
> let them quickly raise a dirge over us,
> so that our eyes may run down with tears,
> and our eyelids flow with water (NRSV).

The rabbis of late antiquity seem to assert the same thing when they ascribe to Rachel that exquisite ability which neither the patriarch Abraham nor Moses possesses: moving the heart of God with her lamentations.[65]

Joel 1.8 confirms that the only kind of mourning that is appropriate as destruction approaches is like that of a virgin grieving for the husband of her youth. If that is the case, the presence of mourning women is imperative if the tragic loss is to be realized and everyone is affected emotionally by that loss. Of course, the funeral ceremony is not complete without the help of women. Again Jer. 9.17b-19 illustrates this point quite well: Yahweh calls for the lamenting women when he announces the imminent demise of Israel.

Fitzgerald observes that the imagery of the city as a woman in its developed form 'is limited to a situation in which the city is presented as having suffered or about to suffer a disaster'.[66] He is absolutely correct if we view the appearance of the imagery in scenes of restoration as the flipside of the very same coin. The city as a woman in its most developed form is found in the book of Jeremiah and in Lamentations, and the disaster involved is none other than the total destruction of Jerusalem.[67] The communal lament that is voiced by men is no longer a suitable form to express such a momentous tragedy. If Jerusalem is to mourn for itself, what voice is more appropriate than that of a woman?[68] Now we can confidently suggest that the development of the woman imagery originates from the intricate cooperation of three principal bases: the image of the fallen virgin in Amos's dirge, the grammatical gender of the noun 'city' and the woman imagery in mourning and funerary ceremony.

Various scholars attribute the emergence of the mixed literary type of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 to the need of a new kind of expression in an

65. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (eds.), 'Lamentations', in *Midrash Rabbah* (trans. A. Cohen), p. 49; Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature*, p. 62; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 115.

66. Fitzgerald, 'Mythological Background', p. 415. This point is elaborated in M.D. Turner, *Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration;* and Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?*.

67. The city as a woman in its most developed form is also found in Second Isaiah (chapters 40 and 49–54) and Third Isaiah (chaps. 60-62 and 66) where restoration is the theme.

68. Then she is like Jephthah's daughter, who mourns for her own death.

unprecedented situation. Not a few see in Lamentations a reflection of some sort of doubt on the part of the poets and perhaps the people as well concerning the future of Jerusalem. Hope of restoration is slim in the entire book, even in chapter 3. In the discipline of medical sciences, studies have confirmed that in the terminally ill, hope, no matter how thin, is the thread that runs through the different stages of their battling death.[69] In the same way, hope in Lamentations may be present but only as drops in the ocean of despair and fatality. Even if all but one of the elements of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 can be found in the communal lament,[70] the presence and voice of the mourning woman in these chapters make it clear that an air of death is being projected. I believe that the most important voice in the dirge, the woman's voice, is unjustly overlooked when the elements of dirge in Lamentations are enumerated.[71] The elements of the dirge in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are undoubtedly employed to set up a scene of mortality.[72] The very first word of each of these poems, the mournful cry *eicha*, 'how', undeniably echoes the cry at the funeral ceremony. Even though this cry is uttered by the narrating lamenter, Pham identifies the woman Jerusalem as the chief mourner.[73] If the woman's presence and her mournful performance of dirge are indispensable at the funeral ceremony, then her absence in Lamentations would be unthinkable and intolerable. Unlike communal laments, which are intended for the invocation of Yahweh at a worship service, Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are intended for the visualization and realization of ruins and death. They are laments at the grave, where the weeping of the woman is wanted and demanded for its unrestrainedly contagious quality. That the cry of the woman must be present in Lamentations for death to be felt would naturally suggest the idea of portraying the city as a mourning woman who knows how to mourn for her own demise.

5. *Summary*

In this chapter the origin of the personification of Jerusalem as a woman was examined. Evidence clearly shows that the personification of Jerusalem

69. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), p. 122.

70. This would be the announcement that a death has occurred.

71. See, for example, Westermann's list of characteristic elements.

72. Pham, *Mourning*, sees mourning ceremony as the setting of Lamentations 1 and 2.

73. Pham, *Mourning*, p. 50.

originated within the Hebrew prophetic tradition as a result of the interplay of three determining factors: (1) the dirge as the most appropriate genre to proclaim the demise of a nation; (2) the death of a virgin as the most untimely death and the exquisite role of a woman in mourning the death of herself or others; (3) the grammatical gender of the noun 'city' in Hebrew. Originating in this Hebrew tradition, the personified Jerusalem is clearly distinguished from any goddess figure in the ancient Near East and has a unique role in the book of Lamentations.

4

Zion: Protester, Comforter, or Scapegoat?

The personification of Jerusalem as a woman carries a greater significance than merely giving Lamentations a funerary mood. Understanding the significance of this persona in the poems in which she appears is imperative if we are to understand the meaning and the purpose of the entire book of Lamentations. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to examine how the personified Jerusalem is used in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Discussion of portions of Lamentations 3 and 5 will be given if and only if necessary to clarify the matter at hand.

Jerusalem, or more often Zion, is referred to as a woman in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, but given a voice only in the first two chapters. In chapter 1, Zion's voice is alternating with the voice of another speaker, who talks about Zion in the third person and hereafter is referred to as the lamenter.[1] In chapter 2, the voice of the lamenter[2] dominates, with Zion responding briefly at the end. The boundaries between the two voices are mostly accepted as follows:[3]

1. Scholars usually refer to this speaker either as the narrator, the reporter or the poet. However, these terms are somewhat misleading. First, this speaker is not merely narrating or reporting. He is the one who laments and begins his lament with the word איכה. Second, calling this speaker the poet is not always appropriate, since Zion is also the expression of the poet. One, however, may think of this speaker as the implied author/poet. The name 'lamenter', as Professor Fox suggests, seems to be the best alternative.

2. The lamenter in Lamentations 2 might not be identical with the lamenter in Lamentations 1, but his point of view is probably the same. This point will be elaborated in Chapter 7, under the section 'The Lamenter's Voice'.

3. Berlin, *Lamentations*; Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974); Hillers, *Lamentations*; Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations'; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations'; Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East*; Provan, *Lamentations*; Renkema, *Lamentations*.

Lamentations 1

1-9b	Lamenter
9c	Zion
10-11b	Lamenter
11c-16	Zion
17	Lamenter
18-22	Zion

Lamentations 2

1-19	Lamenter
20-22	Zion

Tracing the development of the symbol Daughter Zion in the prophetic corpus, Mary D. Turner finds that the personification of Zion reaches the peak of its complexity in the book of Lamentations.[4] In Lamentations, the personified city accomplishes much more than just playing the role of a typical woman mourner bewailing her own demise. In a broad sense, personification is part of rhetorical or figurative language, and as such has the power of persuasion. This persuasion can be achieved through different venues. Personification might be used as a means for effecting emotional elevation of the audience, and it might be used to offer an apparent illusory meaning in order to allow the reader better to find or grasp the real and true meaning.[5] As a type of metaphor, personification works either through some direct resemblance between the personified subject and the personifying object or through some common attitude we may take up toward them both.[6] Furthermore, personification functions as a persona to permit the poet to express what he could not otherwise.[7] These characteristics of personification are evidently realized in the personification of Jerusalem in the book of Lamentations.

Personification in Lamentations, as a poetic device, fulfills two principal functions: persuading and enlightening the audience. The former is essentially the means to achieve the latter. The personification of Zion engages and persuades the audience emotionally and psychologically in order to enable them to understand and believe in the impossible. A perusal of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 will demonstrate that through the personification of Zion the poet is able to elicit from the audience the desired emotion and

4. Turner, *Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration*, p. 122.

5. Timothy Bahti, 'Figure, Scheme, Trope', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alexander Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 409-10.

6. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 118.

7. Gudas, 'Persona', p. 901.

attitude, express ideas normally perceived as unacceptable without risking his credibility and finally bring the audience to alter their conception about themselves and God.

1. *Personification of Zion as a Means to Engage the Audience*

The communal suffering at the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE was certainly enormous. Lamentations conveys the sense of that enormity by various literary vehicles such as the use of personae and personification. If the acrostic pattern of the poems helps convey the broad idea that the totality of suffering has been expressed (from *aleph* to *tav*),[8] the use of personae and personification fills in the picture with details. Various scholars agree with Lanahan that the poet of Lamentations employed various personae or voices to gain a manifold insight into the human experience and help the audience achieve a deeper understanding of the situation.[9] Sometimes the poet is understood as speaking in personal terms about the suffering and sorrow he has experienced and so identified with the suffering community.[10] While it is completely believable that the poet might be an individual who partook in the communal suffering and spoke not only for himself but also for and to his community, the power of persuasion of his work is not dependent on whether he was a sufferer himself or not. Competent poets in their great imagination and intuition probably can persuade and enlighten their readers about great human experiences that they themselves have not gone through realistically. I think, however, that we have reason to believe that the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 was among the sufferers, or at least he considered the suffering of the people his and wished to get his people through their ordeal. Lamentations 2.11-20 portrays a deeply involved person rather than just a sympathetic describer of Jerusalem's suffering. The purpose of self-expression in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 therefore is only secondary to that of persuasion. For the primary purpose of persuasion, the poet utilizes the personification of Zion to achieve the desired effects.

a. *Effecting Emotional Elevation in the General Audience*

What captures scholars' attention the most is how the personified Zion draws the audience to her side. Even though Lamentations in its entirety is about destruction and suffering, only what it says of the woman Zion

8. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 29; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. xxvi.

9. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations', pp. 41-49; Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator', pp. 165-66; Owens, 'Personification and Suffering in Lamentations 3', p. 82.

10. Owens, 'Personification and Suffering in Lamentations 3', p. 82.

arouses so intense a response as to suggest burning the book.[11] At the most superficial level, just by looking at Zion as a woman, sympathetic sentiments arise. Dobbs-Allsopp rightly observes,

> By imbuing the city with personality and individuality, the poet gives his portrait of suffering the humanity and concreteness required to ring true to and to grip his audience. That is, it is one thing to look at a city in ruins, even if it is your own city, and quite another to imagine that city as a person who has suffered enormously. A city however beloved remains an inanimate object. Once destroyed, it can always be rebuilt, even, at least potentially, better than before. But a person can never fully erase the scars of radical suffering.[12]

Similarly, Fitzgerald states, 'Violence done to a strong man or a city wall is violence; but violence done to a delicate young mother is violence indeed'.[13] In the same vein, Lanahan writes, 'Converting the city into a woman makes her fall all the more shameful. The speaker sees the disgrace of the city as the other passers-by see the disgrace, but he sees it with a rudimentary pity when he sees a despondent woman in the ruins of Jerusalem.'[14] The image of the widow (1.1) conjures up the sense of the vulnerability and loneliness in Zion. The Hebrew Bible consistently portrays widows and orphans as helpless and in need of mercy. They are without providers and protectors and probably at the lowest economic stratum of the society.[15] If any widow deserves sympathy, Zion deserves more, for she is not an ordinary widow. She is a victim who has experienced degradation (1.1) and betrayal (1.2), was trapped (1.3), oppressed (1.5), bereaved of children (1.5), shamed, even raped (1.8), without any comforter (1.2, 9), and without rest (1.3). It is hard to imagine that any single person could suffer more than Zion quantitatively or qualitatively. Not feeling sympathetic toward Zion would be almost as cruel as the very act of inflicting such suffering on her.

The poet stirs up favorable feeling toward Zion not only through his description of her misery but also through her verbal expression. Before Zion speaks for herself, the audience can see her only from without, but now they look into her inmost being and know her feelings. As a woman, Zion could skillfully express her grief or emotional outburst and move people to tears with her lamentations. Kaiser observes that when the woman is allowed to speak for herself in the Hebrew Bible, she is passionate, complex

11. Naomi Seidman, 'Burning the Book of Lamentations', in *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible* (ed. Christina Buchmann and Celina Spiegel; New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994), pp. 278-88 (288).
12. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 51.
13. Fitzgerald, 'Mythological Background', p. 416.
14. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations', p. 42.
15. See the book of Ruth, the book of Proverbs, and the Prophets.

and fully human.[16] The female persona allows the poet to express the intensity of his grief and of the communal suffering when he draws on the experiences of women.[17] In Lamentations Zion verbally lays bare the pain of seeing her own children suffer from destitution and starvation (1.16, 19), from being crushed (1.15) and captured (1.18). She cries out with the pain of being despised (1.11), burned, trapped, trampled (1.13, 15), and having no comforter (1.16, 17, 21). Her affliction is too much to bear silently; she must show it not only to Yahweh (1.11, 20) but even to the passers-by (1.12). She even articulates her physiological states, that is, bowels churning and heart turning over (1.20). Much attention has been drawn to this kind of kinesthetic oppression felt within Zion.[18] These physical symptoms betray Zion's extreme mental and emotional state, just like the writhing of a woman in childbirth betrays her physical pangs. A listener who is physiologically sensitive can empathize with Zion and quickly grasp the immense magnitude of her agony.

While it is true that Zion is a victim of ruthless violence, she is not an innocent victim. She is charged with having grievously sinned (1.5, 8) and pleads guilty (1.14, 18, 20, 22). While some commentators see the confession of sin, especially in 1.18, as justifying the punishment of Zion,[19] Berlin suggests through the image of the abused Zion, the real message is 'even the most unfaithful of women should not have to suffer the sexual abuse and degradation that Jerusalem suffered'.[20] Notwithstanding one's initial position regarding the nature or magnitude of Zion's sin in chapter 1, as the book progresses to chapter 2, it is hard not to pity Zion as the poet aligns himself to her side in light of Yahweh's unrelenting wrath. Lamentations 2 features Yahweh as the subject of over thirty verbs of destructive actions, the majority of them are concentrated in the first half of the chapter and their object is none other than Zion in various aspects. In this chapter, Yahweh is portrayed as acting in his terrible wrath eight times in different terms: יעיב באפו, 'he has beclouded',[21] and ולא־זכר הדם־רגליו ביום אפו, 'he has not remem-

16. Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator', p. 165. See also Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations', p. 41.

17. Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator', p. 166.

18. Lanahan, 'Speaking Voice', p. 44; Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator', p. 175; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 59; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 17.

19. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 135-36; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 361; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 180-81.

20. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 9.

21. The exact meaning of יעיב is uncertain; NRSV translates 'he has humiliated', probably understanding it as a verbal form of תועבה 'abomination', as Hillers also suggested, translating 'he has treated with contempt' (*Lamentations*, p. 35). BDB suggests 'to becloud', denominative verb of עוב.

bered his footstool in the day of his anger' (2.1), הרס בעברתו, 'in his wrath he has broken down' (2.2), גדע בחרי־אף, 'he has cut down in fierce anger' (2.3), שׁפך כאשׁ חמתו, 'he has poured out his fury like fire' (2.4), וינאץ בזעם־אפו 'in his fierce indignation has spurned' (2.6), הרגת ביום אפך, 'you have killed in the day of your anger' (2.21), ולא היה ביום אף־יהוה, 'and on the day of the anger of Yahweh' (2.22). Yahweh is described as acting like an enemy twice: דרך קשׁתו כאויב, 'he has bent his bow like an enemy' (2.4), היה אדני כאויב, 'the Lord has become like an enemy' (2.5). And three times Yahweh is accused of acting without pity or mercy: לא חמל, 'he did not show mercy' (2.2, 17, 21). Just as the audience in a drama is often observed to identify completely with the sinful character, for example, an adulterous wife or husband, when the wronged character, for example, cheated husband or wife, ruthlessly punishes his or her spouse, the poet seems to suggest that his audience does the same by providing a protocol. The response of the lamenter in chapter 2 is indeed an apt model. Unlike the lamenter in chapter 1, the lamenter in Lamentations 2 identifies himself with Zion after witnessing Yahweh's ruthless revenge on her. Her physical and kinesthetic suffering has become his:

כלו בדמעות עיני חמרמרו מיעי
נשׁפך לארץ כבדי על-שׁבר בת-עמי
בעטף עולל וינק ברחבות קריה

My eyes are exhausted with tears; my inward parts are in a ferment.
My liver is poured out on the ground
because of the crushing of the daughter of my people.
As children and babes faint in the plazas of the city (2.11).

Moreover, he no longer sees Zion as an obstinate sinner but an erring woman who is kept in the dark by the deception of her counseling prophets, for he says in 2.14.

נביאיך חזו לך שׁוא ותפל
ולא-גלו על-עונך להשׁיב שׁביתך[22]
ויחזו לך משׂאות שׁוא ומדוחים

Your prophets have seen for you empty and tasteless visions.
They did not reveal your iniquity to restore your captivity
But they have seen for you oracles worthless and misleading.

b. *Affecting the Target/Intended Audience*

An important question needs to be raised at this point: Who is the intended audience of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4? Who did the author want to affect emotionally by portraying Zion as a sinner who mourns in her indescribable suffering? Tod Linafelt suggests that Lamentations is written for other

22. *Qere* שׁבותך. *kethib* and *qere* are variant forms. Both mean 'captivity, captives'.

survivors, and, as liturgical laments, is desperately trying to persuade God.[23] Not ruling out the author's desire to lament and appeal to God, I would suggest rather that Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 were written primarily for the sake of other survivors. The use of the acrostic pattern and the tropes suggests that the author was trying to appeal to his human audience. Furthermore, even liturgical laments are written with a congregation in mind and are read in the hearing of that congregation. Scholarly comments such as 'Lamentations is struggling toward a new ethical and spiritual foundation for the community',[24] or 'Lamentations sought to explain the failure of Zion theology in terms of Deuteronomic theology, and to lead Israel back to faith in a person rather than a place',[25] affirm that the transformation in the people is the primary concern of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Written primarily for the sake of the survivors, Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 let Zion become their collective voice, their source of comfort and the bearer of their guilt.

Zion: The Collective Voice of the Survivors. Linafelt is correct in comparing Lamentations with modern survival literature with respect to the presentation of pain and the survivor's desire to witness to pain.[26] Following Terrence Des Pres, Linafelt points to the fact that the focus of modern survival literature is the presentation of suffering rather than the explanation of suffering and that the primary drive of survivor testimony is chiefly devoted to conveying the experience of atrocity and survival.[27] This is clearly expressed in the testimony of Holocaust survivor Primo Levi. Levi writes in *Survival in Auschwitz*, 'The need to tell our story to "the rest", to make "the rest" participate in it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs'.[28] This desire to witness to suffering can be seen clearly in

23. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 50.

24. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 89, quotes Gottwald without citing any source. I have not been able to locate it from the primary source.

25. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 89. Dobbs-Allsopp again quotes Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 21, saying, 'and Provan, in his feeling (never elaborated upon) that the poet is somehow seeking "to lead Israel back to faith in a person rather than a place"'. I believe that Dobbs-Allsopp is mistaking Provan's summary of Albrektson, *Studies*, pp. 214-39, with Provan's own view. In the context of Albrektson's discussion, the person refers to God himself, and the place refers to the Temple.

26. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, pp. 43-47.

27. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 47.

28. Primo Levy, *Survival in Auschwitz* (trans. Stuart Woolf; New York: Touchstone, 1999), p. 9.

Lamentations 1 and 2, as Linafelt correctly observes.[29] Zion calls attention to her suffering not only from Yahweh but also from the passers-by:

ראה יהוה את-עניי כי הגדיל אויב
Look, O Lord, at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed (1.9c).

ראה יהוה והביטה כי הייתי זוללה
Look, O Lord, and see, for I have become worthless (1.11c).

לוא אליכם כל-עברי דרך הביטו וראו
אם־יש מכאוב כמכאבי אשר עולל לי
אשר הוגה יהוה ביום חרון אפו
Let it not come unto to you,[30] all you passers-by. Look and see
If there is any pain like my pain, which he severely dealt out to me
Which the Lord inflicted on the day of his burning anger (1.12).

The presentation of Zion's misery either by the lamenter or by Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2 definitely satisfies the community's intense desire to make known its suffering. This in turn helps the surviving audience release part of their emotional anguish since the community's immeasurable suffering has found expression. Zion's voice speaks for the people collectively what each of them feels in their inmost being and the sympathetic portrayal of Zion draws all survivors into some kind of sentimental solidarity to love Zion and to identify with her. With Zion, the loss of each survivor is not felt only individually but also incorporated into a whole that transcends the sum of its parts.

Zion: The Source of Comfort in the Face of a Silent God. One of the main themes in the poet's description of Zion's misery is her lack of a comforter. The crucial role of the comforter in mourning rites has been pointed out by scholars.[31] According to Anderson, 'to comfort' (נחם) has two meanings:

29. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations,* pp. 43-44.

30. The meaning of the phrase לוא אליכם 'not to you' at the beginning of this line is quite elusive. The LXX translates literally οὐ πρὸς ὑμάς. Modern translators, however, try to make sense of it in different ways. Gottwald, followed by NRSV, renders, 'is it nothing to you?' (*Studies*, p. 8). I adopt the Soncino Bible's translation, which is in accordance with the interpretation of the Midrash, 'Let it not come unto you' (see Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*, p. 67; Berlin's translation, 'May it not happen to you', is also a variant of it). Albrektson rejects both and suggests instead the rendering '(it is) not for you/(this is) nothing which concerns you', reading the preposition in the sense of 'of, concerning, about'. Furthermore, appealing to Job 21.29 and Prov. 9.15, where the phrase עברי דרך refers to those who travel the road, he believes that the entire line means something like: (This is) not for (= nothing which concerns) ordinary people, this does not happen to everybody (*Studies*, p. 69).

31. Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied*, pp. 183-84; Pham, *Mourning*, pp. 27-35; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 17.

'it can imply either the symbolic action of assuming the state of mourning alongside the mourner, or it can have the nuance of bringing about the cessation of mourning'.[32] Besides identifying with the mourner through participating in the mourning rites, Pham suggests that a comforter can also try alternatively to comfort by speaking to the mourner.[33] Since the role of the comforter is so important in the mourning process, his absence would be intolerable. The poet must have felt the desperate need of his suffering people and attempted to remedy this in some way. Several commentators have noticed that after witnessing the vastness of Zion's suffering and identifying with her (2.11), the poet then speaks to her in an attempt to comfort her (2.13):[34]

כלו בדמעות עיני חמרמרו מעי
נשפך לארץ כבדי על-שבר בת-עמי
בעטף עולל ויונק ברחבות קריה

My eyes are exhausted with tears; my inward parts are in a ferment.
My liver is poured out on the ground
because of the crushing of the daughter of my people
As children and babes faint in the plazas of the city (2.11).

מה-אעידך מה אדמה-לך הבת ירושלם
מה אשוה-לך ואנחמך בתולת בת-ציון
כי-גדול כים שברך מי ירפא-לך

What can I testify for you, to what can I compare you, O daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you so that I might comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion?
For great as the sea is your breaking; who can heal you? (2.13)

There is no agreement on the result of that attempt, however. Berlin and Provan suggest that 2.13c implies that the poet's attempt was unsuccessful, for Zion's ruin is too great. Nancy Lee, on the other hand, suggests that 'Jeremiah's[35] concern to comfort Daughter Zion at this poignant moment answers the repeated cry by Jerusalem's poet across Lamentations 1 that there is "no one comforting her"'. Lee also quotes Robert Lowth, 'The

32. Garry A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 84.

33. Pham, *Mourning*, p. 28.

34. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 72-73; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 73; Pham, *Mourning*, p. 111; Nancy Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, pp. 149-50; Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (trans. G. Gregory; London: J. Johnson, 1787), II, pp. 137-38.

35. For Lee, the speaker here is the prophet Jeremiah.

prophet, indeed, has so copiously, so tenderly, and poetically bewailed the misfortune of his country, that he seems completely to have fulfilled the office and duty of a mourner'. Pham includes both positions in her answer, suggesting that while the speaker of 2.13 confesses his inability to comfort Jerusalem, by giving her advice to call to the Lord for help he fulfills his role of the 'comforter', מנחם.[36] Alternatively, the difference in these scholarly opinions might be reconciled if we differentiate between fulfilling a role and success. Whether the poet is perceived as fulfilling his role or not, he undeniably fails to bring an end to Zion's mourning.

Whether the poet (or more specifically the lamenter in Lamentations 2) fulfills his role as the comforter of Zion or not, his attempt to comfort her is clear. By identifying with her in her mourning and crying for her he acts as a comforter in Anderson's terms. By way of analogy, we can say that the poet through Zion provides comfort to his people. Although Zion is not explicitly presented as a comforter, she obviously does what a comforter does in Anderson's terms, assuming the state of mourning alongside a mourning people. As the survivors mourn their losses, Zion mourns for her people,

על־אלה אני בוכיה עיני עיני ירדה מים
כי־רחק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי
היו בני שוממים כי גבר אויב

Because of these things, I weep; my eye[37] streams down with waters.
For far from me is a comforter, one to revive my soul.
My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed (1.16).

שמעו־נה כל־העמים[38] וראו מכאבי
בתולתי ובחורי הלכו בשבי

But hear all you people, and see my pain.
My virgins and young men have gone into captivity (1.18b, c).

קראתי למאהבי המה רמוני
כהני וזקני בעיר גועו
כי בקשו אכל למו וישיבו את־נפשם

I called to my lovers; they deceived me.
My priests and my elders expired in the city
As they searched for food to revive[39] themselves (1.19).

36. Pham, *Mourning*, pp. 111, 116.

37. The second עני seems to be a dittography for it is lacking in some Hebrew manuscripts, LXX, Syriac and Vulgate. Albrektson rightly comments, 'Doubtless the faithful Greek translator would not have failed to render both words, had they been in his Hebrew manuscript' (*Studies in the Text*, p. 77).

38. Read with the *qere*. *Kethib* עמים.

39. Indirect jussive (*w-yaqom*) after an indicative (Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996], §116e;

ראה יהוה והביטה למי עוללת כה
אם־תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי טפחים
אם־יהרג במקדש אדני כהן ונביא
שכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן
בתולתי ובחורי נפלו בחרב

Look, O LORD, and see; to whom you have acted so severely?
Should women eat their fruit, the children they have carried on the palms?[40]
Should priests and prophets be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?
They are lying on the ground in the streets, young and old.
My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword (2.20-21a, b).

As mother Zion mourns her dead and agonizes with the children who struggle to survive, the people cannot but identify themselves as her children and as such find some comfort in her. The effect of Zion's sorrow and accusation against Yahweh is no less powerful than that which the weeping goddess in the Mesopotamian city laments has on the inhabitants of her city. In the hearing of the people, someone is suffering with them and interceding for them. At least the people know they are not alone and ignored in their catastrophic misery. Even if mother Zion, like the poet, cannot effect the cessation of suffering, the attempt must be carried out somehow, especially in the face of a silent God. It is unthinkable that the comforter should shy away even in the face of their inability to succeed, as in the cases of Jacob (Gen. 37.35) and Rachel (Jer. 31.15) who refuse to be comforted, and of Job (Job 16.2) who finds his friends inflicting suffering rather than comforting.

Zion: The Bearer of the Burden of Guilt. In addition to providing the people with some comfort, the personified Zion plays the role of a sacrificial substitute who takes away the burden of guilt from her people. In a world which assumes that destruction is a manifestation of divine displeasure in general,[41] and in the national Deuteronomic tradition that attributes destruction and exile to sin against Yahweh in particular,[42] confession of sin after the destruction of Jerusalem is an inevitable element. How important is the confession of sin in Lamentations is still a matter of dispute. At one end of the spectrum, Linafelt represents the view that the confession is only conventional.

> The persona of Zion does indeed admit her sins or disobedience. Such an admission is a genre convention of the lament, and Lamentations 1 and 2

cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 47).

40. Literally, 'children of dandling'.

41. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 92-93.

42. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 66; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 78; Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 17-18.

> does not excise it. Yet rather than making her sins the primary concern of her speeches, she admits them flatly and not altogether wholeheartedly.[43]

At the other end, Westermann represents the view that confession is very important, commenting on Lam. 1.18,

> Just how important the acknowledgment of guilt is for Lam. 1 has already been shown (with ref. to vv. 5 and 9). Here, at the high point of the whole song, this motif is brought into conjunction with an acknowledgment of the justice of God's way such that the whole preceding lament is set off: God must act in this way, because we have transgressed against his word.[44]

While not entirely consenting that the confession of sin in Lamentations is in conjunction with the acknowledgment of God's justice, I agree with Westermann that the confession of sin is of utmost importance to the author and to his theology and purpose, which I intend to demonstrate below and in the remaining chapters of this study.

Although the charge of guilt is plain, for it is repeated several times, not much explanation of it is given. Zion is certainly guilty, but of what? Several scholars have stressed the ambiguity of Zion's indictment.[45] Comparing Lamentations to the Curse of Agade, an ancient Sumerian text closely related to the city laments, in which the god Enlil destroys Akkad because a prominent king of Akkad, Naram-Sin, has looted the temple of Enlil in Nippur, Edward Greenstein says the crime in the Sumerian text is explicit while in Lamentations it is vague. He suggests the vagueness in Lamentations is part of the rhetorical strategy for expressing the sense that God has been unfair.[46] Greenstein's reading is quite sympathetic toward Zion. Quite opposite to Greenstein's interpretation, Gottwald believes this vagueness signals something far more serious than specific acts of sin. He writes,

> As to the specific sins which constitute the great iniquity of Judah, we are surprised that more detail is not given. It may be that the incisive teaching of the prophets, contained in the denunciatory oracles of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, is here presupposed as the content of the disobedience. Or this may be a deliberate omission expressive of the poet's convic-

43. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 48.

44. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 135-36. Non-critical scholars such as Daniel Berrigan, *Lamentations: From New York to Kabul and Beyond* (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2002), p. xix and passim, also see confession of sin as what Lamentations is really about.

45. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 68; Edward L. Greenstein, 'The Wrath at God in the Book of Lamentations', in *The Problem of Evil and its Symbols in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Henning Graft Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), p. 34; Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 25; Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 476.

46. Greenstein, 'The Wrath at God in the Book of Lamentations', p. 35.

> tion that the sin of Judah was much more serious and deep-rooted than the combination of many overt acts.[47]

Renkema takes a middle road, commenting,

> Such vagueness with respect to the nature of the people's sins is bound up with, among other things, a particular understanding of what is implied by sin, namely that transgression is inclusive of its consequence and that the accent can shift from one to the other. In our case the seriousness of the sin is not measured according to the number of commandments transgressed; it is related, rather, to the extent of the misfortune it brings upon the transgressor. . . . The greater the misfortune the greater the sin which brought it about must have been.[48]

Westermann offers yet another way to look at the vagueness of the confession,

> At issue here is not primarily the specific sins of particular individuals in the realm of their personal dealings. Rather, the focus is on a guilt which all the people bear, in the very nature of their being.[49]

While not objecting to the points made by these scholars, I think it is surprising that none of them seems to see this vagueness as characteristic of the Hebrew lament genre. Concerning the confession of sin in the psalms, Mowinckel comments, 'It is quite characteristic of the psalms that they do not deal very much with concrete sins. It is the natural result of their being psalms for general use in the cult, that they have to speak in general terms.'[50] A perusal of the psalms, especially laments, proves that he is very correct. Before discussing further this characteristic element, it is necessary to arrive at a working definition of lament psalms and some criteria for classifying a psalm as such.

In general, communal laments are understood to be prayers offered on special occasions of communal crisis.[51] Individual laments, on the other hand, are prayers rising out of individual distress.[52] While some scholars distinguish between psalms lamenting a disaster that has already fallen and psalms seeking protection from threats, both types of psalms seem to

47. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 68.
48. Renkema, *Lamentations,* p. 121.
49. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 224.
50. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 14.
51. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 82-83; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 191; Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba House, 1974), p. 293.
52. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 1; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. 213.

be subsumed under the same broad category of laments. The dichotomy between lament and complaint sometimes creates confusion.

Gerstenberger uses the term 'lament' to refer to lamentation over destroyed cities, a pure form of which is not attested in the Psalter, and the term 'complaint' to refer to prayer when the final blow has not yet fallen and there is still time to argue a case before Yahweh.[53] It is problematic that he does not identify the psalms lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem (for example, 74, 79 and 89) as communal laments, but as communal complaints, thus somehow smudging his own definition and categorization of laments and complaints.[54] To avoid this complication, I will adopt Ferris's definition below, one that does not make a sharp distinction between 'lament' and 'complaint':

> A communal lament is a composition whose verbal content indicates that it was composed to be used by and/ or on behalf of a community to express both complaint, and sorrow and grief over some perceived calamity, physical or cultural, which had befallen or was about to befall them and to appeal to God for deliverance.
>
> An individual lament is a composition whose verbal content indicates that it was composed to be used by and/or on behalf of an individual to express sorrow and grief over some perceived calamity which had befallen or was about to befall him and to appeal to God for deliverance.[55]

Communal and individual laments have a similar structure, which is comprised essentially of three major sections: an introduction/invocation, a main section that includes several elements not always presented in the same order (complaint, supplication, expression of trust, etc.), and a conclusion, which also varies.[56] The similarity in structure between the communal and the individual laments no doubt contributes to the lack of agreement among scholars as it comes to the identification of the two. This lack of agreement is obvious as we look at Ferris's summary of past identification of communal laments as shown in chart 1.[57]

53. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, pp. 10-12. He finds components of dirge and lamentation in Jer. 22.18-34; 34.5; 2 Sam. 1.19-27; Amos 5.2 and 16; Ezek. 19.1; 27.33; Isa. 14.4-21 and 31; Lam. 1.1-6, 20-22; 2.1, 18, 20.

54. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, pp. 77, 79, 100, 147, 154.

55. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 10.

56. Sabourin, *The Psalms,* pp. 213-18, 295.

57. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, 16.

Chart 1. Summary of Past Identification of Communal Laments

Psalm	SD 1891	HG 1904	HG 1931	SM 1924	OE 1934	CW 1961	AW 1962	OK 1969	AA 1972	LS 1974
9/10				Y						?
12				X						
13				Y						
14	X			X						
21							Z			
31				Y						
33							Z			
35				Y						
42/3				Y						
44	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
46						X				
55				Y						
56				Y						
58				X						?
59				Y						
60	X	X	X	X	X	X	Z	X	X	X
68							Z			
69				Y						
74	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
77										?
79	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
80	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
82	X									?
83	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	?
85	X					X	Z	X	X	X
89			X	X	X		Z	X	X	X
90						X	Z	X	X	X
94	X	X		X						?
102	X			Y						
106						X				?
108	X									?
109				Y						
115						X				
123	X						Z			X
124									X	
126							Z		X	?
129							Z			
137	X						X	X	X	X
142				Y						
144				X					X	

Legend

X = Identify as Communal Lament	Y = Very Personal Communal Lament
Z = Psalm with Communal Lament Theme	? = Possibly a Communal Lament

SD = S.R. Driver	OE = O. Eissfeldt	OK = O. Kaiser
HG = H. Gunkel	CW = C. Westermann	AA = A. Anderson
SM = S. Mowinckel	AW = A. Weiser	LS = L. Sabourin

According to chart 1, agreement to a greater or lesser extent among the listed authorities is found only for the we-form laments, that is, Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 90, 94 and 137. For the psalms that fall within the area of disagreement, as far as identification is concerned, Ferris's emphasis on the content and purpose rather than form (as his definition clearly indicates) seems helpful, and I am inclined to agree with him. As content becomes the prior criterion for identification, Ferris suggests considering also some other psalms as communal laments. Ferris convincingly demonstrates that Psalms 31, 35, 42/43, 56, 59, 69 and 142 should be considered as such.[58] These psalms are among those Mowinckel describes as 'quite personal, but in reality are national (congregational) psalms'.[59] Supporting Mowinckel's view, Ferris explains why these psalms are communal. Psalm 31, though couched in the first person, actually focuses on the community in vv. 24-25. In the same vein, Psalm 35, though identified in the title as a psalm of David, does enjoin the community to praise Yahweh in v. 27. Psalms 42 and 43 also indicate the communal context in mentioning the crowd's procession to the house of God. In Psalms 56 and 59, it is the nations who attack and oppress, thus indicating not the enemy of an individual but of the community. Lastly, Psalms 42/43, 69 and 102, like Psalms 79, 80 and 137, deal with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

My identification of communal laments in chart 2, therefore, includes all the we-form laments identified by most scholars plus the I-form laments that Ferris demonstrates to be communal. With respect to the individual laments, since scholarly opinions also vary, I include in chart 3 only the psalms confirmed by three or more scholars.

58. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 14-15.

59. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14. Cf. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* I, p. 219.

Chart 2. Identification of Communal Laments[60]

Psalm	SD	HG	SM	OE	CW	AW	OK	AA	LS	PF	KN
31			Y							X	X
35			Y							X	X
42/3			Y							X	X
44	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
56			Y							X	X
59			Y							X	X
60	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
69			Y							X	X
74	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
79	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
80	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
83	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X
85	X				X		X	X	X	X	X
89		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
90					X		X	X	X		X
94	X	X	X							X	X
102	X		Y							X	X
109			Y							X	X
137	X						X	X	X	X	X
142			Y							X	X

Legend
X = Identify as Communal Lament Y = Very Personal Communal Lament

SD = S. R. Driver OE = O. Eissfeldt OK = O. Kaiser PF = P. Ferris
HG = H. Gunkel CW = C. Westermann AA = A. Anderson KN = K. Nguyen
SM = S. Mowinckel AW = A. Weiser LS = L. Sabourin

60. Modified from Ferris's chart (*Genre*, p. 16).

Chart 3. Identification of Individual Laments[61]

Psalm	HG & JB	SM	CW	LS	JK	EG
3	X				X	X
5	X			X	X	X
6	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	X			X	X	X
13	X		X	X	X	X
22	X	X	X	X	X	X
25	X			X	X	
26	X			X	X	X
28	X	X	X	X		X
38	X	X	X	X	X	X
39	X	X		X		X
51	X	X		X		X
54	X			X	X	X
55	X		X	X	X	X
57	X			X	X	X
61	X			X		X
63	X			X	X	X
64	X			X	X	X
70	X			X	X	X
71	X		X	X	X	X
86	X			X	X	X
88	X	X	X	X	X	X
120	X			X		X
130	X	X		X		X
140	X			X	X	X
141	X			X		X
143	X	X	X	X	X	X

Legend
HG & JB = H. Gunkel & J. Begrich CW = C. Westermann JK = J. Kraus
SM = S. Mowinckel LS = L. Sabourin EG = E. Gerstenberger

Having identified the communal and individual lament psalms, now we can proceed to consider whether it is characteristic of lament psalms that

61. Data obtained from: Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 121; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, pp. 1-30; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. 218; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, p. 14; Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 181-82; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), pp. 53-54.

they do not deal with concrete sins. Reading through the lament psalms one quickly realizes that the nature of sin is not specified whenever sin, guilt, transgression or iniquity is confessed. Confession of sin in these various terms is found in the 'we' communal laments Psalms 79, 85, 90, in the 'I' communal lament Psalms 31 and 69, and in the individual lament Psalms 25, 38, 39, 51 and 130. Confession is also found in a few psalms that do not fall easily into the genre of lament, namely, Psalms 40, 41 and 106.[62] Psalm 40 is identified variously as an individual complaint, an individual thanksgiving, and a mixed style of personal lament and thanksgiving. [63] Similar to Psalm 40, Psalm 41 is identified as either an individual lament or an individual thanksgiving.[64] With respect to Psalm 106, different categories are also suggested, ranging from communal lament, penitential psalm, to confession of guilt with hymnic instruction.[65] In all these texts apart from Psalm 106, no attempt is made to specify what kind of sin is committed:

'We' Communal Laments

Psalm 79.8-9

Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake (NRSV).

Psalm 85.3

You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins (NRSV).

Psalm 90.8

You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance (NRSV).

62. Psalm 32 also includes a confession of sin (vv. 1, 2, 5). However, this psalm is consistently categorized as individual thanksgiving (Gunkel, *Introduction,* p. 162; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, p. 32; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. xvi; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, p. 367; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, p. 143).

63. Respectively: Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, p. 173; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. xvi; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 74, and Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, pp. 421-23.

64. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, p. 177, and Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 2; Sabourin, *Psalms*, p. xvi.

65. Respectively: Gunkel, *Introduction,* p. 82; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 112; and Sabourin, *Psalms*, p. xvi; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, pp. 236, 243-44; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, pp. 316-17.

'I' Communal Laments

Psalm 31.11

For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery [Hebrew עוני 'my iniquity'], and my bones waste away (NRSV).

Psalm 69.6

O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you (NRSV).

Individual Laments

Psalm 25.7-8, 11, 18

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; (7)
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness sake, O Lord!
Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. (8)
For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great. (11)
Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins (18) (NRSV).

Psalm 38.4-6, 19

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones because of my sin. (4)
For my iniquities have gone over my head;
they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. (5)
My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness; (6)
I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin (19) (NRSV).

Psalm 39.9, 12

Deliver me from all my transgression.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool. (9)
You chastise mortals in punishment for sin,
consuming like a moth what is dear to them; surely everyone is a mere breath (12) (NRSV).

Psalm 51.3-7, 11, 15-16

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (3)
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (4)
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. (5)
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. (6)
Indeed I was born guilty; a sinner when my mother conceived me. (7)
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. (11)

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. (15)
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance (16) (NRSV).

Psalm 130.3, 8

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? (3)
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities (8) (NRSV).

Individual Lament/Thanksgiving Psalms

Psalm 40.13

For evils have encompassed me without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me (NRSV).

Psalm 41.5

As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me;
heal me for have I sinned against you'.
(NRSV)

Communal Lament/Penitential with Hymnic Element

Psalm 106.6ff.

Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly. (6)
Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea (7) (NRSV).

Psalm 106 is an exceptional case, where the rebellious acts of the ancestors are enumerated with great detail. Yet even here, while the poet confesses both the sins of his generation and the ancestors and provides an exhaustive list of the sins of the latter, he says literally nothing about those of his generation.

Outside the Psalter, we also find poetic confessions in the prophetic corpus (for example, Isa. 38.9-20; 59.12f.; 64.4, 6, 8; Jer. 14.7; Mic. 7.9). Even in the prophetic corpus, where all kinds of transgressions are described within the literary contexts, the poetic laments themselves rarely enumerate specific sins (for example, Isa. 38.9-20; 64; Jeremiah 14; Micah 7). Thus, we may agree with Mowinckel that the ancient Hebrew poets seldom discuss the detail of sin in their laments.

Furthermore, it is notable that confession of sin in the communal laments of the Psalter is a very rare phenomenon.[66] As said above, confession is found only in Psalms 79, 85, 90, 31 and 69. The confession in Psalm 79 mentions both עונות ראשנים, 'the iniquities of our ancestors', and חטאתינו, 'our sins'. Although one may argue that the meaning of עונות ראשנים is rather ambiguous and that it might refer to 'former iniquities', whatever that means, we should note that the sufferers of Psalm 79 are unmistakably portrayed not as a sinful but a righteous people,[67] according to v. 2.

> נתנו את־נבלת עבדיך מאכל לעוף השמים
> בשר חסידיך לחיתו־ארץ
> They have given the bodies of your servant to the birds of the air for food,
> the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth (NRSV).

Psalm 85 mentions only the iniquity and sin that God has forgiven in the past, Psalm 90 confesses the iniquity of mankind in general, and finally the confession in Psalm 69 is coupled with the poet's claim of unjustified attack[68] from the enemies (vv. 5-6):

> More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause;
> many are those who would destroy me, my enemies who accuse me falsely.
> What I did not steal must I now restore?
> O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you (NRSV).

66. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 92-93; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 214, 216; Ferris, *Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 129.

67. J.C. McCann, 'The Book of Psalms', in *New Interpreter's Bible* (Abingdon Press, 1996), IV, pp. 641-1280 (995), is incorrect in suggesting that the 'faithful' in Ps. 79.2 might not be so faithful. In fact, McCann basically follows H. Ringgren, 'חסיד', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; trans. David E. Green; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), V, pp. 76-77, who argues that in Psalm 79 the word חסיד does not designate the 'perfect', 'blameless', or 'upright', as 2 Sam. 22.26; Ps. 18.26; and Mic. 7.2 do. Ringgren thinks חסיד here is used to designate the cultic community, that is, the people of Israel, the same way Ps. 50.5 does. However, a close reading of Psalm 50 suggests that while the word חסיד in חסידי 'my faithful ones' certainly refers to all of Israel, it is not for that reason robbed of its basic meaning. Here Yahweh is indicting his people for not offering sacrifices acceptable to him. By addressing his people sarcastically as 'my faithful ones' he reminds them of who they should be in the face of their blatant failure. Psalm 79, on the other hand, is the people's speech, and there is no discernible reason for them not to use the word חסיד in the normal sense.

68. Ferris calls this a claim of judicial innocence, a case in which the liability of actual guilt has been paid for and the defendant released from the penalty (*The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 130, 132). See also the discussion on the genre of Lamentations 5.

The rarity of confessions in communal laments coupled with the desire to be vindicated evidently shows that the poets who included a confession in their laments took it quite seriously. Otherwise, they could have easily omitted it, since this element is obviously not required of the genre. Tracing the development of genre from the communal lament to the penitential prayer that emerged in the Persian period, Richard Bautch and Mark Boda confirm that only in the penitential prayers such as Nehemiah 9 or Daniel 9 does confession become an essential element of the form.[69]

Compared to the lament psalms, Lamentations says more, not less, about sin. In only three chapters, Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, sins in various terms are mentioned nine times: 'transgressions' (פשעיה and פשעי; 1.5 and 22), 'sinned' (חטאה; 1.8), 'rebelled' (מריתי; 1.18 and 20), 'iniquity' (עונך and עון; 2.14, 4.6 and 22), and finally 'sins and iniquities' (חטאת and עונות; 4.13). Confession with this level of concentration in lamentation is not seen anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

Against the backdrop of the Hebrew lament genre, as we have seen, it is undeniable that the confession of sin occupies a central, rather than conventional or superficial, place in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4.[70] Gunkel suggests that the idea of theodicy in Lam. 1.18 is an example of prophetic influence,[71] and he is probably right. Other scholars also observe that the connection between sin and punishment in pre-exilic prophecy of doom is clearly reflected in Lamentations.[72] The author apparently assumes that destruction and exile are punishment for sin, as specified in the book of Deuteronomy, especially 4.26-27, 28.32-67, 29.23-27, 30.17-18. In the belief of the ancient Israelites, Yahweh, unlike the gods of Mesopotamian city laments, does not act without a specific cause. According to Deuteronomy, he responds to obedience and disobedience with blessings and curses respectively. Obedience and loyalty to Yahweh results in abundant blessings, but disobedience and disloyalty, especially idolatry, bring about disastrous punishment. The threats of Deuteronomy are emphasized

69. Richard Bautch, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 119, 135, 156, and Mark Boda, 'The Priceless Gain of Penitence', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 25 (2003), pp. 51-75 (52).

70. Compared to the penitential prayer, the confession in the communal lament is quite brief. Bautch believes that the confession in the communal lament is secondary to existential concern (*Development in Genre*, p. 70). But secondary to existential concern does not necessarily mean conventional or superficial.

71. Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 92-93.

72. Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 51, 67; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 224; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 64-65; Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 17-22; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 317.

repeatedly in the announcement of the pre-exilic prophets, from Amos down to Jeremiah, and Lamentations seems to confirm them at various places, for example:

היו צריה לראשׁ איביה שׁלוּ
כי-יהוה הוגה על רב־פּשׁעיה
עולליה הלכו שׁבי לפני־צר

Her foes have become the master; her enemies are at ease
Because the Lord made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions.
Her children have gone away, captives before the foe (1.5).

צדיק הוא יהוה כי פיהו מריתי

He, the Lord, is just, for I have rebelled against his mouth (1.18a).

עשׂה יהוה אשׁר זמם בצע אמרתו
אשׁר צוה מימי־קדם הרס ולא חמל
וישׂמח עליך אויב הרים קרן צריך

The Lord did what he had purposed; he accomplished his word,
which he had commanded from the days of old; he tore down and showed no mercy.
He made the enemy rejoice over you; he exalted the horn of your foes (2.17).

Consistent with the prophetic teaching is the belief that the people of Israel need to confess their sins and to return to Yahweh. And the author of Lamentations also appears to be a strong advocate of that belief, as shown in Lam. 3.40-42. To be sure, the confession in Lam. 3.40-42 must be distinguished from the confession of Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2, and the distinction will be shown in the next chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 is confronted with the pressing need to confess the sin that has brought about the fall of the nation. Competing with the need to confess, however, is the author's desire to lift up the spirit of a downtrodden people by relieving them of their heavy guilt trip. This difficult dilemma, however, finds solution in the personified Zion. Through this literary figure, the author can freely confess the great sin of Jerusalem, which he believes to be the immediate cause of its downfall, without having to lay a guilt trip on the survivors. Thus the burden of guilt is transferred from the people to Zion, and this in turn gives the people a sense of being acquitted, which they desperately need, given the continuing prophetic accusations. That this transfer of guilt is accomplished deliberately is supported by the fact that accusations against Zion come from both the lamenter and Zion herself (as cited above), while accusation against the surviving sufferers is completely lacking in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Admittedly, the interpretation of עון בת־עמי in Lam. 4.6 might constitute a problem against such a statement if בת־עמי is understood as referring to

the people. Nevertheless, this interpretation is probably incorrect, as will be shown below, while the likelihood that Zion and the survivors are not identical and that her sin is not necessarily equal to theirs will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Excursus: בת־עמי. The phrase בת־עמי occurs five times in Lamentations (2.11, 3.48, 4.3, 6, 10), and various English equivalents have been employed to translate it. The ASV, Westermann, Pham and House render it as 'daughter of my people', while the NRSV, NIV, and Hillers translate it as 'my people', and the JPS has 'my poor people'. Renkema offers a slightly different rendering, 'my daughter, my people', and Berlin opts for 'my dear people'. Of all these translations only the rendering 'daughter of my people' retains the semantic ambiguity of the Hebrew construction, whose exact meaning is anything but palpable.

Although extensive studies have been done to suggest how בת־ציון, or the more general construction בת plus a geographic name, 'daughter-GN', should be interpreted, few studies have been done directly on the construction בת־עמי, 'daughter-my people'. More often, interpretation of the phrase בת־עמי is arrived at only by assuming the similarity in construction it shares with the other phrase. Although explanations of 'daughter-GN' vary, the majority of scholars apparently agree that the phrase refers to GN and not to its offspring. A few, however, differ in their application of 'daughter-GN' to 'daughter-my people'.

W.F. Stinespring classifies the Hebrew construction 'daughter-GN' as appositional genitive, a grammatical class that includes other phrases such as נהר פרת, 'river Euphrates'. And בת עמי, 'daughter my people' is another example of this appositional genitive.[73] The influence of Stinespring on later translations of the phrase בת־עמי is obvious.[74] Nonetheless, the accuracy of this understanding of בת־עמי is questionable. It is evident that the construct chain can assume different meanings, as amply demonstrated by Waltke-O'Connor in their *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*.[75] With respect to the phrase בת־ציון, similar to Stinespring, Waltke and O'Connor call the Hebrew phrase בת־ציון a *genitive of association*, in which the individual G (that is, the genitive/absolute/second term) belongs to the class C (that is, the construct/head/first term), and the English equivalent of which

73. W.F. Stinespring, 'No Daughter of Zion', *Encounter* 26 (1965), pp. 133-41.

74. See above for those who follow him in translating the phrase. As already mentioned in this chapter, Berlin is one of the supporters of this understanding, considering בת־ציון and בת־עמי to belong to the same type of construction. She thinks not considering the similarity between these two phrases is a weakness in Dobbs-Allsopp's analysis.

75. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 143-54.

is an appositional phrase; thus the proper translation for בת־ציון would be 'daughter Zion'.[76] Since Waltke-O'Connor make no mention of בת־עמי, we do not know exactly how they would interpret it. However, looking closely at the examples they offer for the *genitive of association*, one thing stands out immediately: the second noun in four of five examples involves a geographic name, and the fifth involves a phrase that might be good for any other class, פלני אלמוני, 'such and such'.[77]

נהר־פרת	River Euphrates (Gen. 15.18)
ארץ מצרים	The land [of] Egypt (Exod. 7.19)
גן־עדן	The garden [of] Eden (Gen. 2.15)
בתולת ישׂראל	The virgin [of] Israel (Amos 5.2)
מקום פלני אלמוני	Such-and-such a place (1 Sam. 21.3)

It is beyond question that the second noun in בת־עמי is of great importance, since it clearly dissociates בת־עמי from the class of בת־ציון.

Fitzgerald prefers to understand the Hebrew construction 'daughter-GN' rather as two nouns in apposition, with the first being the title of the second; he thus arrives at the same translation for בת־ציון as Stinespring, 'daughter Zion'.[78] However, he believes that the first and second nouns in the phrase בת־עמי assume a differing semantic relationship and should be interpreted as 'daughter/capital of my people'. Thus בת־עמי once again involves the personification of a city rather than עמי.[79] Fitzgerald believes that all the occurrences of בת־עמי in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 (and Jer. 6.26) should be interpreted 'daughter/capital of my people' and contends that although some instances are ambiguous (Isa. 22.4; Jer. 4.11; 8.19, 21, 22, 23; 14.17; Lam. 3.48) or textually problematic (Jer. 8.11; 9.6) there is no example that gives clear evidence that the phrase should be interpreted 'daughter, my people'.[80]

Fitzgerald's analysis and subsequent interpretation of the phrase בת־עמי stem from his understanding of בת and בתולת as titles for cities in West Semitic tradition, but that understanding has been seriously challenged. Nonetheless, his analysis of the phrase בת־עמי seems very plausible, espe-

76. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 153 and 226.

77. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 153.

78. Fitzgerald, '*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities', pp. 180-81, believes that the prefixing of the article to the title in הבת ירושׁלם (Lam. 2.13) can be interpreted as indicating how the author of the poem understood the relation of בת to ציון in the phrase בת־ציון.

79. Fitzgerald, '*BTWLT* and *BT'*, pp. 172-73. This interpretation is similar to those of בנות פלשׁתים (Ezek. 16.27) and בת כשׂדים (Isa. 47.1).

80. Fitzgerald, '*BTWLT* and *BT'*, pp. 173-75.

cially when it comes to the examples found in Lamentations 2 and 4. He is correct in pointing out that the whole poem of Lamentations 4 is about the destruction of Jerusalem. In that context, בת־עמי in Lam. 4.3 is clearly a continuation of the mother Zion imagery of Lam. 4.2.

בני ציון היקרים המסלאים בפז
איכה נחשבו לנבלי־חרש מעשה ידי יוצר
The precious sons of Zion, who were weighed against pure gold.
How they are reckoned as earthen vessels, the work of a potter's hands.

גם־תנין חלצו שד היניקו גוריהן
בת־עמי לאכזר כיענים[81] במדבר
Even jackals bare the breast and suckle their young;
but the daughter/capital of my people is cruel like ostriches in the desert
(4.3, Fitzgerald's translation).

That בת־עמי refers to the city, not the people, is most evident where it is explicitly compared to the city Sodom in 4.6.[82]

ויגדל עון בת-עמי מחטאת סדם
The penalty of the daughter/capital of my people
is greater than the punishment of Sodom (4.6, Fitzgerald).

Fitzgerald also correctly observes that in Lamentations 2 the speaker's expression of sorrow (vv. 11-12) is sandwiched between his description of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 1-10) and his addressing Jerusalem (vv. 13-19). The context clearly favors his interpretation, seeing בת־עמי as referring to the city. Different aspects of the destruction of Zion are described in vv. 1-10, including the temple, the strongholds, the political and religious institutions and finally the people in v. 10.

ישבו לארץ ידמו זקני בת־ציון
העלו עפר על־ראשם חגרו שקים
הורידו לארץ ראשן בתולת ירושלם
The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silent.
They have put dust upon their heads; they have girded sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground (2.10).

The speaker turns to address Jerusalem in vv. 13ff.:

מה־אעידך מה אדמה־לך הבת[83] ירושלם
מה אשוה־לך ואנחמך בתולת בת־ציון
כי־גדול כים שברך מי ירפא־לך

81. Read with the *qere; kethib* כי ענים.

82. Parallelism clearly favors this, in spite of the fact that Jer. 23.21 compares the false prophets (i.e., people) and Sodom. It should be noted that Jer. 23.21 is textually problematic.

83. The definite article supports Stinespring's interpretation of the Hebrew construction 'daughter-GN'. Unfortunately, it does not help the interpretation of the construction 'daughter-my people'.

What can I testify for you, to what can I compare you, O daughter
Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you so that I might comfort you, O virgin daughter
of Zion?
For great as the sea is your breaking; who can heal you?

In the intervening verses, the speaker expresses his sorrow over the ruin of the city in vv. 11-12.

כלו בדמעות עיני חמרמרו מעי
נשפך לארץ כבדי על-שבר בת־עמי
בעטף עולל ויונק ברחבות קריה
My eyes are exhausted with tears; my inward parts are in a ferment.
My liver is poured out on the ground
because of the crushing of the daughter of my people
As children and sucklings faint in the plazas of the city (2.11).

לאמתם יאמרו איה דגן ויין
בהתעטפם כחלל ברחבות עיר
בהשתפך נפשם אל־חיק אמתם
To their mothers they say, 'Where is grain and wine?'
As they are fainting away like the slain in the plazas of the city
As their lives are being poured out upon the bosoms of their mothers
(2.12).

Similarly, Linafelt states concerning v. 11, 'it is because of the brokenness of Zion, here called the 'daughter of my people', that the persona of the poet is in such distress'.[84]

From an essentially different point of view, focusing on the mourning ceremony portrayed in Lamentations 2, Pham arrives at the same interpretation for בת־עמי as Fitzgerald and Linafelt. She argues the understanding that בת־עמי representing the national community ignores the imagery of the whole poem. She writes,

> The speaker in vv. 1-19 is present at this mourning ceremony with the elders and the young women of Jerusalem who sit on the ground (v. 10). Jerusalem too sits on the ground (vv. 1b, 2c, 8-9a). The speaker addresses Jerusalem (vv. 13-19) and she reacts to that address (vv. 20-22). Nowhere in the poem does the imagery lose sight of the principal mourner at this mourning ceremony, Lady Jerusalem. I thus understand בת־עמי as representing Jerusalem, with בת as an honorific title for a capital city (בת־ציון) or a country (בת־אדום, Lam. 4.21), and עמי as the ordinary genitive of possession. The 'daughter = lady of my people' is Jerusalem as ruler and mother (Lam. 2.22).[85]

84. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, p. 53. See also Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 131.

85. Pham, *Mourning*, p. 105; see also p. 13.

While it is more difficult to generalize this understanding of בת־עמי for the entire Hebrew Bible, the context of Lamentations definitely favors it. As a result, the iniquity confessed in Lam. 4.6 can be safely ascribed to the personified city rather than the people, confirming that the transfer of guilt from the people to Zion in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 does not happen accidentally but quite intentionally.

Furthermore, I suggest that the purpose of reducing the guilt from the survivors is evident even in the entire book of Lamentations, when the people's self-confession in Lam. 5.16 is demonstrated to be half- rather than wholehearted. As already said, Lam. 5.16 is a self-confession by the people:

נפלה עטרת ראשנו אוי־נא לנו כי חטאנו
The crown of our head has fallen; woe to us for we have sinned!

However, this self-confession is significantly held in tension with a preceding blame on the fathers in v. 7.

אבתינו חטאו ואינם ואנחנו[86] עונתיהם סבלנו
Our fathers sinned and they are no more; and we, their iniquities, have borne.

Semantically the noun עון can refer to either 'iniquity' or its consequence, 'punishment',[87] and scholars apparently disagree on how to understand it in Lam. 5.7. Scholars such as Renkema, Hillers, Provan, O'Connor, Dobbs-Allsopp and House are convinced that the idea is the sins of the previous generations are being visited upon the current generation, that is, the survivors have to suffer for what their forefathers did, as attested in Exod. 20.5 and Jer. 31.28-29.[88] These scholars, however, differ in their understanding of the degree of association or disassociation the current generation wishes to put between themselves and the previous generations. Dobbs-Allsopp believes that Lam. 5.7 is at once a statement of fact and a protest (cf. Jer. 31.29 and Ezek. 18.2), indicating the survivors' wish to be disassociated from the sin of the previous generations. Hillers and House think Lam. 5.7 and 16 are both true in that the current generation suffers not only for the sins of the previous generations but also for their own sins. In this case, the former more or less identifies itself with the latter. Provan seems to think along the same line as Hillers and House, yet his comment is worth exploring a little further. He writes,

86. Read with the *qere; kethib* אינם אנחנו.

87. BDB, pp. 730-31.

88. Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 605-606; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 104; Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 128-29; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, pp. 145-46; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1069, House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 463.

> The notion that the sins of one generation could be visited on subsequent ones is well-attested in the OT (e.g. Exod 20.5), though it was not thought inconsistent at the same time to believe that personal responsibility formed part of the picture (Dan 9.16). V 16 makes clear that the author of this poem himself had no difficulty in holding these two ideas together.[89]

This is precisely the point I would like to make here, that the people's self-confession in Lam. 5.16 is not much different from that of Daniel (Dan. 9.16). Perhaps like Daniel, they do not deny their personal responsibility, at least in principle. While Daniel feels the collective guilt keenly and confesses 'because of our sins and the iniquities of our ancestor, Jerusalem and your people have become a disgrace among all our neighbors', the connection between him and the apostates cannot be more remote. We could hardly tell from the book bearing his name that he commits any sin at all, let alone the kind of sins that attracts severe punishment. If Daniel is in any way responsible, that responsibility is limited to being a Jew who participates in the life and culture of the nation. It is not hard to imagine the tension between the sense of collective guilt and that of individual righteousness in people like Daniel. The same tension was probably felt by many who survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, as will be shown below.

Against the mainstream, Berlin believes that the stress of Lam. 5.16 is on the duration of the punishment rather than on the origin of sin, taking אבתינו, 'our fathers', in a nonliteral sense as referring to those who died in the destruction or already went into exile.[90] Berlin's argument is weak since nothing in the context suggests a nonliteral reading of אבתינו. In fact, Gottwald notes earlier that 'it may be that the "fathers" are not those of the preceding generations but rather the leaders or eminent among the Jews', but he nonetheless acknowledges that it refers more naturally to the ancestors.[91] At any rate, the blame on the fathers greatly undermines whatever the effect the people's confession might produce if standing alone. This is not to minimize the sense of transgenerational responsibility but to acknowledge the tremendous tension within the community that underlines the complaint 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge!' (Ezek. 18.2).

89. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 128.

90. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 120-21.

91. In the first interpretation, the former leaders are said to be no more because they are in captivity, so far from Jerusalem that as far as the Jerusalem community is concerned they have ceased to exist. Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 67-68, notes that there is evidence for the usage of אב 'father' with respect to rulers, priests, prophets, noblemen (see Gen. 45.8; Judg. 17.10; 18.19; 1 Sam. 24.11; 2 Kgs 2.12; 3.13; 6.21; 13.14; 2 Chron. 2.12).

2. A Means for Expressing Frustration and Anger

As the English name of the book implies, Lamentations consists basically of laments. As lament, Lamentations displays features commonly found in the communal lament of the psalms and the prophetic corpus, which include address to God, complaint of the people about their plight, and address to or about the enemy. At the same time, the book has its own distinctive features that make it unique among communal laments. Among these distinctive features we readily find the alternative speaking voices, and one of those is the female voice of the personified Zion. Another distinctive element is the prevalence of the lament proper,[92] more specifically the complaint against God.[93] Speaking of the divergence between Lamentations and the normal pattern of communal lament Westermann states,

> The extensive, even excessive description of affliction in the book of Lamentations diverges so radically from the lament of the people that we can no longer speak of it as a lament in the real sense.[94]

Ferris elaborates further on the same point,

> The other elements can hardly be called incidental but it seems clear that (1) the appeal for deliverance and/or (2) the appeal for the cursing of the enemy with the motivation, (3) the expression of confidence and hope and (4) the expressing of thanksgiving and praise are secondary.[95]

The divergence between Lamentations and the communal lament of the psalms, however, runs deeper than the formal features and is exposed only when the accusations against God uttered by the personified Zion in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are compared to those typically found in the communal laments outside Lamentations. Zion's accusation against God is the first of its kind in terms of severity and vehemence. Through Zion, an unprecedented frustration and anger is expressed.

In order to appreciate the role of Zion in voicing the community's anxiety and frustration, first we need to survey the communal complaints typically seen outside Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Although three subjects, God, the enemy and the lamenter, are the basic components of the laments in the Psalter and can be readily discerned in both the communal and individual laments, Westermann argues that the lament directed at God is clearly dominant in the communal laments (for example, Psalms 79, 74, 44, 80, 89, 83, 60; Lamentations 5; Jeremiah 14; Isa. 63.7–64.12; Habakkuk 1).[96] In

92. Ferris, *Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 146.
93. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 222.
94. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, p. 173.
95. Ferris, *Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 146.
96. Westermann's list of biblical passages is exemplary and not at all exhaustive.

contrast, Mowinckel contends that although the lament may be directed at God himself because he has allowed the disaster to happen, as a rule, the lamentations are directed against the enemies of the people.[97] While one may argue that the ultimate responsibility lies with God, who allows disastrous events to happen, it must be recognized that the psalm laments make a clear distinction between God and the human agency, the enemy of the lamenter. This distinction, however, seems to fade out or vanish altogether in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4.

Generally, the lament directed at God in the communal lament exhibits the belief that misfortune reveals Yahweh's wrath (Pss. 60.3; 74.1; 79.5; 80.5; 85.6; 89.47; Isa. 63.4; Jer. 31.18; Lam. 5.22), that he has 'rejected' (Ps. 74.1; cf. Pss. 44.10; 60.3; 89.39; 108.12), 'insulted' (Ps. 44.10), 'offended' (Ps. 60.3), 'sold' Israel 'like cattle' (Ps. 44.12f.). He forgets the 'trouble and distress' of his people (Ps. 44.25), 'does not allow himself to see any longer' (Ps. 89.47), 'hides his face before his people' (Ps. 44.25; Isa. 64.6; cf. Ps. 10.1), 'holds his right hand in the midst of his breast' (Ps. 74.11), and sleeps (Ps. 44.24). Israel's path is hidden from him (Isa. 40.27), the people are slaughtered because of him (Ps. 44.23), he has transferred control of the world to other divine beings who misuse that power (Ps. 58.2f.) and left the whole earth to godless power (Hab. 1.13ff.).[98]

When the people's experience is incongruous to what they previously hold true, they constantly ask the apprehensive question 'Why?': 'Why should the heathens say, "Now where is your God?"' (Pss. 79.10; 115.2; Joel 2.17; Mic. 7.10); 'Why do you forget us forever?' (Lam. 5.22); 'Why do you cause us to stray from your ways?' (Isa. 63.7; cf. also Pss. 10.1, 13; 44.24f.; 74.1, 11; 80.13; Exod. 32.11; Josh. 7.7; Judg. 21.3; Isa. 58.3; 63.17; Jer. 14.8; Hab. 1.13).[99] Beside the question 'Why?' the impatient question 'How long?' complains about the duration of the distress: 'How long will the adversary slander?' (Ps. 74.10); 'How long will you continue to be angry?' (Ps. 79.5; cf. 80.5; 85.6; 89.47; Jer. 3.5); 'How long will the wicked rejoice?' (Ps. 94.3; cf. also 80.5; 89.47; 90.13).[100]

The accusation against the enemies is typically about political harassment. What the enemies have done to Yahweh's people includes the conquest of his land (Ps. 79.1, 7), destruction of his holy city Jerusalem (Pss. 79.1; 80.16), desecration of his temple (Pss. 74.3ff.; 79.1), killing and terrorizing (Pss. 79.3; 94.6; Lam. 5.11-15), crushing and afflicting (Ps. 94.5),

97. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 197-99.

98. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 89. Cf. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 197-98; Westermann, *Lament in the Psalms*, pp. 176-81.

99. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 89.

100. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 89.

slandering (Pss. 44.14ff.; 74.10, 18; 75.5ff.; 79.4, 10, 12; 123.4), arrogance and criminal plans (cf. Pss. 12.5; 14.1; 74.8; 83.5, 13; 94.7).[101]

A few observations can be made readily when the accusations against God in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 and in the communal laments of the psalms are juxtaposed. First, several themes appear to be common to both corpuses:

God's Wrath (Lamentations 1.12; 2.1, 2, 3, 4, 22; 4.11)

אשׁר הוגה יהוה ביום חרון אפו
Which the LORD afflicted on the day of his burning anger (1.12c).

איכה יעיב באפו אדני את־בת־ציון
ולא־זכר הדם־רגליו ביום אפו
How the Lord in his anger beclouded[102] the daughter of Zion
And he did not remember his footstool on the day of his anger (2.1a, c).

כלה יהוה את־חמתו שׁפך חרון אפו
The LORD brought his wrath to pass, he poured out his hot anger (4.11a).

God's Rejecting, Insulting, Offending, and Selling his People (Lamentations 1.15, 14; 2.2ff.)

סלה כל־אבירי אדני בקרבי
The Lord has rejected[103] all my warriors in my midst (1.15a).

נתנני אדני בידי לא־אוכל קום
The Lord gave me into the hands of those I cannot withstand (1.14c).

101. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 89.

102. The meaning of the verb יעיב is uncertain. This is a *hapax legomenon* and has been translated in different ways: (1) as a denominative verb of עב 'cloud' in the hiphil to mean 'becloud' (BDB). The LXX's rendering ἐγνόφωσεν 'he darkened' seems to reflect this understanding; (2) as a verbal form of תועבה 'abomination' (Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 61, 66), but this is doubtful, since the denominative תעב already existed as attested in several other biblical texts; (3) JPS's and NRSV's translations, 'shamed' and 'humiliated' respectively, probably reflect the understanding that the verb is a derivative of an Arabic verb meaning 'blame, revile' (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*, p. 86).

103. The verb סלה occurs only two times in the Hebrew Bible, here and Ps. 119.118. BDB sees it as an equivalent of the Aramaic סלא 'despise' and the Syriac *sll* 'reject' and so renders 'to make light of, toss aside' (in the piel, 'flout'). Albrektson also thinks the word here means 'to reject' (so do JPS and NRSV). The LXX's rendering ἐξήρε 'he removed, got rid off' is semantically close to 'reject', while the Peshitta has *kbaš* 'tread down, subdue' (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*, p. 76). Hillers chooses to see here a verb equal in sense to the Hebrew verb סלל 'to heap up', or alternately a scribal error for a form of סלל (*Lamentations*, pp. 3, 12-13). Since we do not know if the Syriac translator actually read סלה and since Hillers does not make a strong case, I adopt the meaning more or less supported by the Aramaic, Syriac and Greek versions.

בלע אדני לא חמל את כל־נאות יעקב
הרס בעברתו מבצרי בת־יהודה
הגיע לארץ חלל ממלכה ושׂריה
The Lord destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob.
He tore down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah.
He brought to the ground and defiled the kingdom and its princes (2.2).

God's Forgetting (Lamentations 2.1)

ולא־זכר הדם־רגליו ביום אפו
And he did not remember his footstool on the day of his anger (2.1c).

God's Hiding, Sleep, Silence, or Not Seeing (Lamentations 1.11, 20; 2.20; 4.16)

ראה יהוה והביטה
Look, O Lord and see (1.11c; 2.20a).

פני יהוה חלקם לא יוסיף להביטם
[With respect to] the faces of the Lord, he scattered them! he will no longer look at them (4.16a).

Second, in Lam. 2.4 and 5, God is said to have become and acted like an 'enemy', a term that is reserved only for the human agency in the communal laments:[104]

דרך קשׁתו כאויב
He bent his bow like an enemy (2.4a).

היה אדני כאויב
The Lord became like an enemy (2.5a).

Third, in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, God does what only the human enemies would do in the psalms:

Destruction of his City Jerusalem/Zion (Lamentations 2.1, 8, 9; 4.11)

חשׁב יהוה להשׁחית חומת בת־ציון
The Lord planned to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion (2.8a).

104. In the Hebrew Bible, the word אויב 'enemy' is used only of men. In Isa. 63.10, Yahweh is said to become the enemy of his people because they grieved his holy spirit. But this passage, like Deutero-Isaiah, is probably later and may have been influenced by the themes and motifs of Lamentations. In Job's laments (13.24 and 33.10), he complains that God has considered him like an enemy, and the term therefore is used for Job, not God. It is only in Jer. 30.14 that Yahweh says in his indictment of Israel, 'I have dealt you the blow of an enemy, the punishment of a merciless foe, because your guilt is great, because your sins are numerous' (NRSV). But here again, the word 'enemy' does not come from human lament against God.

טבעו בארץ שׁעריה אבד ושׁבר בריחיה
Her gates sunk to the ground; he destroyed and broke to pieces her bars (2.9a).

כלה יהוה את-חמתו שׁפך חרון אפו
ויצת־אשׁ בציון ותוכל יסודתיה
The LORD brought his wrath to pass; he poured out his hot anger
And he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations (4.11).

Desecration of his Holy Temple (Lamentations 2.6, 7)

ויחמס כגן שׂכו שׁחת מועדו
שׁכח יהוה בציון מועד ושׁבת
וינאץ בזעם־אפו מלך וכהן
He broke down his booth like a garden, he destroyed his tabernacle.
The LORD made forget in Zion festival and Sabbath.
And he spurned in his angry indignation king and priest (2.6).

זנח אדני מזבחו נאר מקדשׁו
הסגיר בידֿאויב חומת ארמנותיה
The Lord rejected his altar, he spurned his sanctuary.
He delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces (2.7a, b).

Crushing and Killing his People (Lamentations 1.15; 2.4, 21, 22)

קרא עלי מועד לשׁבר בחורי
He proclaimed a time against me to crush my young men (1.15b).

כצר ויהרג כל מחמדי־עין
Like an adversary[105] he killed all the pleasing to the eye (2.4b).

שׁכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן
בתולתי ובחורי נפלו בחרב
הרגת ביום אפך טבחת לא חמלת
They are lying on the ground in the streets, young and old;
my virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword;
You killed on the day of your anger; you slaughtered without mercy (2.21).

Based on these observations alone we can say with certainty that the complaints against God in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are much more severe and vehement than they normally are in communal laments.[106] In Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, God is not only violent but also ruthless like the enemy.

105. I agree with other translators that the thought of 2.4a ends with this phrase in 2.4b.

106. Henning Fredriksson observes in his studies on Yahweh as a warrior that the direct destructive work of Yahweh is exemplified in Lamentations far more baldly than in any other Old Testament book (*Jahwe als Krieger: Studien zum alttestamentlichen Gottesbild*, [Lund, 1945, 93]; cf. Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 73-74).

Upon further scrutiny, it becomes clear, however, that it is not the lamenter but Zion who makes no distinction between God and the human enemies. While it is true that the lamenter does see God act violently, he nonetheless qualifies or justifies God's action. In distinction, Zion blatantly charges God with unthinkable crimes against his people. Their perspectives are shown in the respective charts below.

The Lamenter's Account of Yahweh's Violent and Destructive Acts

DJ: Daughter of Judah
DZ: Daughter of Zion

REF.	VERB PHRASE	OBJECT OF WRATH
1.5b	הוגה	Zion
	'he grieved her'	
2.1a	יעיב את־בת־ציון	Zion
	'he beclouded DZ'	
2.1b	השליך תפארת ישׂראל	splendor of Israel
	'he cast down the splendor of Israel'	
2.1c	לא זכר הדם־רגליו	his footstool
	'he did not remember his footstool'	
2.2a	בלע את כל־נאות יעקב	dwellings of Jacob
	'he consumed all the dwellings of Jacob'	
2.2b	הרס מבצרי בת־יהודה	strongholds of DJ
	'he tore down the strongholds of DJ'	
2.2c	הגיע/ חלל ממלכה ושׂריה	kingdom and its rulers
	'he struck down/ defiled kingdom and its rulers'	
2.3a	גדע כל קרן ישׂראל	might of Israel
	'he cut down all the horn of Israel'	
2.3c	ויבער ביעקב	in Jacob
	'he burned in Jacob'	
2.4a	דרך קשׁתו, נצב ימינו	
	'he bent his bow, he set his right hand'	
2.4b	ויהרג כל מחמדי־עין	the pleasing to the eye
	'he killed all the pleasing to the eye'	
2.4c	באהל בת־ציון שׁפך חמתו	in the tent of DZ
	'he poured out his wrath in the tent of DZ'	
2.5a	בלע ישׂראל	Israel
	'he consumed Israel'	

REF.	VERB PHRASE	OBJECT OF WRATH
2.5b	בלע כל־ארמנותיה	Israel's palaces
	'he consumed all its palaces'	
	שׁחת מבצריו	Israel's strongholds
	'he destroyed its strongholds'	
2.5c	וירב תאניה ואניה	mourning
	'he multiplied mourning'	
2.6a	ויחמס שׂכו, שׁחת מועדו	his booth, tabernacle
	'he tore down his booth,	
	destroyed his tabernacle'	
2.6b	שׁכח מועד ושׁבת	festival, Sabbath
	'he made forget festival and Sabbath'	
2.6c	וינאץ מלך וכהן	king, priest
	'he spurned king and priest'	
2.7a	זנח מזבחו, נאר מקדשׁו	altar, sanctuary
	'he rejected his altar, spurned his sanctuary'	
2.7b	הסגיר חומת ארמנותיה	walls of Zion's palaces
	'he delivered up the walls of her palaces'	
2.8a	חשׁב להשׁחית חומת בת־ציון	wall of DZ
	'he planned to destroy the walls of DZ'	
2.8b	נטה קו לא־השׁיב ידו מבלע	from destroying
	'he did not turn back his hand from destroying'	
2.8c	ויאבל־חל וחומה	Rampart, wall
	'he caused rampart and wall to mourn'	
2.9a	אבד ושׁבר בריחיה	Zion's bars
	'he destroyed and broke her bars'	
2.17b	הרס ולא חמל	
	'he tore down and did not spare'	
4.11a	כלה את־חמתו, שׁפך חרון אפו	
	'he fulfilled his wrath,	
	poured out the wrath of his anger'	
4.11b	ויצת־אשׁ בציון ותאכל יסודתיה	Zion's foundation
	'he kindled a fire in Zion.	
	It consumed her foundations'	
4.16a	לא יוסיף להביטם	priests and prophets (?)
	'he no longer regards them'	

Zion's Account of Yahweh's Violence and Wrath:

REF.	VERB PHRASE	OBJECT OF WRATH
1.12c	הוגה	Zion
	'he caused sorrow'	
1.13a	שלח אש בעצמתי	fire in Zion's bones
	'he sent a fire in my bones'	
1.13b	פרשׂ רשׁת לרגלי	net for Zion's feet
	'he spread a net for my feet'	
1.13c	נתנני שׁממה	Zion into desolation
	'he made me a desolation'	
1.14b	הכשׁיל כחי	Zion's strength
	'he made my strength stumble'	
1.14c	נתנני בידי לא־אוכל קום	Zion into enemy's hands
	'he gave me into the hands	
	of those I cannot stand'	
1.15a	סלה כל אבירי	Zion's warriors
	'he rejected all my mighty men'	
1.15b	קרה מועד לשׁבר בחורי	Zion's young men
	'he called a time to break my young men'	
1.15c	גת דרך לבתולת בת־יהודה	the virgin DJ
	'he trod as a wine press the virgin DJ'	
2.20	למי עוללת כה אם־תאכלנה נשׁים פרים	women, children, priest, prophet
	אם־יהרג כהן ונביא	
	'to whom have you acted so severely?	
	Should women eat their offspring?	
	Should priest and prophet be killed?	
2.21	שׁכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן בתולתי ובחורי נפלו בחרב	young and old, young women and men
	הרגת ביום אפך טבחת לא חמלת	
	'They lay on the ground in the streets, young and old	
	My virgins and young men fell by the sword	
	You killed in the day of your anger	
	You slaughtered without mercy.'	
2.22	תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב	everyone

ולא היה ביום אף-יהוה פליט ושׂריד
אשׁר-טפחתי ורביתי איבי כלם

You invited like a day of festival my terrors
from all around;

and no one, on the day of the anger of the
Lord, escaped or survived;

those I carried in the palms and brought up
my enemy has destroyed.

The single most important factor that can be elicited from the above charts is that the lamenter and the personified Zion significantly differ in their accounts of God's acts against the people: the lamenter neither focuses on the destruction of people nor accuses God for destroying the innocent, but Zion forcefully does both. The key element here is the fate of the people.

As discussed above, the personification of Zion as a woman is created so that the suffering of the city can be grasped adequately. The inanimate city cannot effectively elicit compassion and sympathy from the reader since it does not actually feel hurt, only the people do. An inanimate or abstract entity that has been destroyed can be replaced, but a life that is lost can never be recovered, and a life that is crushed can never be the same again. In the same way, the people of Zion outweigh her structures in importance. To show that the survival of Zion's children occupies a critical role in the rhetoric of persuasion of Lamentations, Linafelt points out that it is the perishing of children that leads to the poet's own breaking down (2.11).[107]

From the lamenter's account, God indeed vents his wrath upon the city's physical structures, including the Temple, on the political and religious institutions, and on the elite, including the king, priests, prophets and those pleasing to the eye.[108] But the focus is clearly on Zion and her physical or abstract structures, not the people. In his account, the people are mentioned only in 2.2c, 4c, 6c; 4.16a, and they all belong to the class of elite. It should be noted, moreover, that the lamenter explicitly charges the national elite, especially the priests and prophets, with grave sins (2.14; 4.13, 14). Although the king is not singled out, he can hardly be innocent. Another thing worth noting is that the destruction of all physical, political, religious and social structures does not produce a kinesthetic effect on the lamenter,

107. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, pp. 50, 57.

108. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 141, understands those pleasing to the eye to be the 'well-equipped'; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 31, sees them as the 'good-looking men'; Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 233, prefers to understand them as referring to the magnificent temple buildings and precincts.

but the suffering of innocent children definitely does. It is very unlikely that the lamenter, having made Yahweh the subject of over thirty verbs of destruction, accidentally omits the identification of the responsible agent in the suffering of the innocent children who caused him to break down emotionally. The word אמתם, 'their mothers', in Lam. 2.12a and c indicates that the nouns עולל, 'child', and ויונק, 'sucklings', in Lam. 2.11 are used in a literal sense.

The lamenter's account, therefore, subtly represents a theological belief that it is Zion, the rebellious city, who is the direct object of Yahweh's unrelenting wrath, not the innocent among the survivors. While inevitable amidst the destruction of the city, the children's suffering must necessarily be blamed on the human enemy's long siege, the national elite's faulty policy and strategy, or on mother Zion's long history of rebellion. With the exception of reporting on God becoming 'like' an enemy and destroying his own temple, the lamenter, or more specifically, the *human* lamenter in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, is more or less staying within the bounds of the psalmists' attitude, which might allow the attribution of destruction of national, political, religious and social structures, but never the brutal killing of innocent people, to God. The use of the simile 'like' has the effect of mitigating the lamenter's accusation. The use of this simile in Lam. 2.4 allowed the rabbis of late antiquity to interpret it as an indication of God not going to the extreme in punishing the Israelites, since he is not said to have become an enemy but only 'like an enemy'.[109] And while it is true that the lamenter also differs from the psalmists in reporting God destroying his own temple, this difference has very limited effect. While we do not know whether the author of Psalm 79 actually viewed the destruction of the Temple to be more important to God than the suffering of his people,[110] in the context of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, the Temple certainly belongs to the realm of inanimate and impersonal things.

For a reader who is not personally involved in the plight of Zion, the lamenter's stance may seem rational enough, but a survivor would find it extremely difficult to agree. After all, the fate of the people ultimately rests with Yahweh, either through his direct involvement or through his abandonment and negligence. The years following the fall of Jerusalem probably saw the people's shock and their inability to comprehend and accept what had befallen them (cf. Ezekiel 18 especially). Through their eyes, God was

109. *Midrash Rabbah Lamentations*, p. 73.

110. Based on the fact that Psalm 79 begins with the destruction of the sanctuary (v. 1) and only thereafter speaks of the massacre of the people (vv. 2-4) Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 91, seems to draw the conclusion that Yahweh is more concerned about the destruction of his temple than about the people.

not just 'like' an enemy, he was the enemy.[111] When no distinction could be maintained between God and the enemy, the hope for deliverance from a benevolent God essentially vanished and gave way to frustration and anger. Whether these feelings were negative or not, they were undeniably deep. Keeping them pent up was no way to healing, and the author of Lamentations could not afford to do so. Hillers accurately observes, 'men live on best after calamity, not by utterly repressing their grief and shock, but by facing it, by measuring its dimensions, by finding some form of words to order and articulate their experience'.[112] In the realm of medicine, Kübler-Ross's studies have shown that when a patient is understood and allowed to ventilate some of her rage, she was able to show the better side of her and eventually found peace if not acceptance.[113] Caught between two competing interests, one theological and the other psychological, the author of Lamentations once again resorts to his literary persona, the personified Zion, for the solution. Through Zion's mouth the people's psychological and emotional states find their outlets, while the lamenter's view of God may remain uncompromised.

In Zion's account of God's violence, she, unlike the lamenter, focuses intensively on the destruction of people: warriors (1.15a), young men (1.15b), women, children, priest, prophet (2.20), young and old, young women and men (2.21), everyone (2.22). Her accusations against him concerning the people, especially in Lamentations 2, are the most severe ones we encounter in communal laments. There, she boldly confronts him for committing heinous and inhumane crimes against his people by allowing incredibly evil conditions to exist, in which women are driven to eat their own children to survive and priest and prophets are allowed to be killed in the very sanctuary where dead bodies are not permitted (2.20):

ראה יהוה והביטה למי עוללת כה
אם־תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי טפחים
אם־יהרג במקדש אדני כהן ונביא

Look, O Lord, and see; to whom you have acted so severely?
Should women eat their fruit,

111. Ferris, *Genre*, pp. 140-41, has a similar observation, 'Lamentations speaks of Judah's circumstances and their causes in a way somewhat different from those Psalm laments which appear to be treating the same or similar circumstances. I am referring to the role of divine adversary. This is true especially of chapters two and three. . . . God is indeed cast as adversary as Deuteronomy indicated.' Ferris however does not distinguish between the accounts of the lamenter and the personified Zion. Similarly, Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 63, notes the disillusionment of God and the people's feeling of bitterness and even defiance.

112. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. xvi.

113. Kübler-Ross, 'Anger', in *On Death and Dying*, pp. 44-71, esp. pp. 70-71.

the children they have carried on the palms?
Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?

With equal vehemence, she accuses him for acting in the same manner as the enemy, killing indiscriminately both the young and old, men and women, in other words, both the guilty and the innocent (2.21, 22). Notice that the enemy's killing (2.21b, 22c) and Yahweh's killing and slaughtering (2.21c, 22a, b) are intertwined in both verses:

שׁכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן
בתולתי ובחורי נפלו בחרב
הרגת ביום אפך טבחת לא חמלת
They are lying on the ground in the streets, young and old;
my virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword;
You killed on the day of your anger; you slaughtered without mercy.

תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב
ולא היה ביום אף־יהוה פליט ושׂריד
אשׁר־טפחתי ורביתי איבי כלם
You invited like a day of festival my terrors from all around;
and no one, on the day of the anger of the Lord, escaped or survived;
those I carried in the palms and brought up my enemy has destroyed.

Zion's account of God's violence clearly does not distinguish between God and the enemy, which most likely reflects the survivors' sentiment. Thus, through Zion's harshest accusation against God's perceived cruelty even against the innocent, the people's frustration and angry protest were ascertained to be heard.

3. Personification of Zion as a Means to Convey New Insight

As mentioned earlier, one of the major enigmas of Lamentations is the vague nature of the sin attributed to the personified Zion. It has been established above that the vague nature of Zion's sin is no indication that her confession is merely conventional, as some scholars would like to believe. As we have seen, the fact that confession in the book of Lamentations is a primary concern of the author has been wrongly denied. The confession of Lamentations apparently exceeds the level of detail required by the communal laments of the Psalter. In addition to the fact that sin is mentioned in a concentration rarely seen in the psalm laments, the charge of particular sins to specific persons in a few places is stated explicitly. For instance, in 2.14, the prophets are singled out as the perpetrators of false and deceptive visions:

נביאיך חזו לך שׁוא ותפל
ולא־גלו על־עונך להשׁיב שׁביתך
ויחזו לך משׂאות שׁוא ומדוחים

Your prophets saw for you empty and tasteless visions.
They did not reveal your iniquity to restore your captivity
But they saw for you oracles worthless and misleading (2.14).

Again in 4.13, the nature of sin and the identity of the culprits are anything but ambiguous: the prophets and the priests are charged outright with shedding blood:

מחטאת נביאיה עונות כהניה
הׇשׁפכים בקרבה דם־צדיקים
Because of the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests,
Those who poured out in her midst the blood of the righteous.

This description of specific sin is quite extraordinary indeed. Such a detail has no parallel in the Psalter and can be found only in the prophetic corpus of the Hebrew Bible, especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[114] Like the prophets, the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 does not seem to be afraid of pointing a finger at the guilty as far as he is convicted, that is, the false prophets and violent priests.

It remains perplexing that the author never attempts to reveal the exact identity of the personified Zion, let alone her particular offenses. That he overlooks the import of his omission is almost inconceivable, if repentance from those who need to repent is assumed to be the implied aim of all the confession that Zion makes. When the poems were read in the hearing of the survivors, would everyone identify with Zion? If they identified with her, did they know the personal offenses they had committed against God and from which they needed to repent? Who is Zion in a concrete sense and whose sin is hers? I believe that these questions have not been accorded the importance due them by scholars, as they often view the personified Zion as representing the people without further qualification. I suggest that the author's ambivalent portrayal of Zion's sin is intentional rather than accidental. An ambivalent portrayal of her is necessary if both corporate and individual responsibilities are to be represented in her confession, and the complexity of the situation after the fall of Jerusalem seems to demand such a representation. The fall of Jerusalem constitutes a novel condition for which no adequate response can be obtained from extant theological paradigms. The fall creates an unprecedented theological crisis, and the solution of it requires nothing less than a radical understanding of God and of the

114. Jeremiah stresses the sin of the false prophets and Ezekiel the sin of the idolatrous priests. See Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?* Boase suggests that Lamentations engages in a dialogue with the prophetic texts (p. 31) and sees the link in the references to the failings of the false prophets in Lamentations and Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the sin references used in conjunction with the personification, and in the idea that Yahweh acted against Jerusalem on the basis of sin (pp. 189-90).

people in terms of their covenantal relationship. We need to understand the crisis as it occurs after the fall of Jerusalem before we can better understand the author's purpose in his portrayal of Zion.

a. *The Crisis*

At the core of the crisis is what appears to be the nullification of the covenant God made with Israel. For the first time in Israel's history, the possession of the land, the autonomy of the nation and the Davidic kingship appeared to be completely severed from the people of Israel. The following factors further complicate the situation: (1) the breaking of God's promise to sustain the Davidic throne, which will be treated in the next chapter; (2) the failure of the Deuteronomic tradition to effectuate the repentance occasioned by King Josiah's reform only two decades earlier; and (3) the brutality of a devastation that severely took its toll on the helpless and innocent people of the city. While some believe that the prophetic pronouncement of divine judgment was finally acknowledged by the people after the fall, this belief seems to be too simplistic. For the survivors, the Deuteronomic tradition completely fails to explain the problem of innocent suffering.

i. *The Failure of the Deuteronomic Tradition.* The true extent of the failure of Deuteronomic belief is often overlooked when the personified Zion is equated with the people without necessary qualification. To be sure, scholars have correctly observed that the confession of sin in Lamentations is in keeping with the Deuteronomic faith as portrayed in the book of Deuteronomy and the prophetic teaching. According to the Deuteronomic faith, God is a god who controls history, and thus historical events are attributed to his acts of benevolence or retribution. Political and economic prosperity represents God's blessing for obedience while calamity is a sure sign of punishment for sin. The many confessions of sin in Lamentations testify to the fact that the author held a faith similar to that of the prophets, who had relentlessly pronounced judgment on Jerusalem and called for repentance from sin without success. Lamentations definitely stands in agreement with the prophets in directing its attention to a guilt that has corrupted the whole people, and the admission of sin in Lamentations probably indicates that the surviving community as a whole confirms the prophetic pronouncement.[115] There is little doubt that the survivors finally realized what previous generations had entirely rejected, that judgment day was inescapable because of Israel's collective sin (1.15a, 17b; 2.17ab, 21c, 22b; 3.37). And it is equally clear that the magnitude of the collective sin, due to the scope

115. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 224-25; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. xvi; Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 432; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, pp. 323-24; Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 66-69.

of destruction, was finally acknowledged and agreed upon by them (1.5b, 8a, 14a, 18a, 20b, 22b; 2.14; 3.42; 4.6, 13, 22; 5.7, 16). The fact that this realization was done by the surviving community is undeniable, since the different voices in Lamentations, that is, the lamenter, personified Zion, the גבר, 'man' and the community, seem to speak with one accord.

However, the agreement is good only as far as the collective sin of Israel is concerned, with 'collective sin' referring to all the sin committed by the people of Israel through all of its historical periods. The problem comes in when this collective sin is treated as if it is unquestionably absorbed by the surviving remnant. House, for instance, exemplifies this problem with the following statement:

> The people in Lamentations lay their woes at the feet of their own nation's sin, yet they continue to reach out to the God who alone can deliver them from the present horrible distress. In this way, the book operates somewhat like the book of Job, but in reverse. It demonstrates that *those who suffer because of their own sins* may cry out to God as readily as innocent sufferers do.[116]

The above statement presupposes that all the sufferers were guilty, a point that is quite contestable, to say the least. Earlier in this chapter, the wholeheartedness of the people's confession in Lam. 5.16 is called into question and shown to be less likely than the opposite alternative. Here, the focus will be on the confessions of the lamenter and the personified Zion in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. It is not too difficult to see that House's faulty presupposition stems from equating Zion and the survivor indiscriminately since nowhere do we find an attribution of sin to the common populace. In fact, with the exception of 2.14 and 4.13, both the lamenter (1.5b, 8a; 4.6, 22) and the personified Zion (1.14a, 18a, 20b, 22b) attribute all sins to Zion herself. The utterances made by the lamenter in 2.14 and 4.13 confess not the sin of the people in general but of the religious leaders, specifically the prophets and priests.

Confessions by the Lamenter

> כי יהוה הוגה על רב-פשעיה
>
> Because the Lord made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (1.5b).
>
> חטא חטאה ירושלם על-כן לנידה היתה
>
> Jerusalem sinned grievously, therefore she has become impure[117] (1.8a).

116. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 320. Italics mine.

117. The Hebrew word לנידה is a *hapax legomenon,* and I follow BDB (p. 622) by taking it as a variant of the form נדה 'impurity', as in Lam. 1.17. Others take it as from נוד 'move to and fro, wander, show grief'; Berlin (*Lamentations*, p. 42) and NRSV translate

ויגדל עון בת-עמי מחטאת סדם

For the iniquity[118] of the daughter of my people has been greater than the sin of Sodom (4.6a).

תם-עונך בת-ציון

The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion (4.22a).

Confessions by Zion

נשׂקד על פּשׁעי בידו ישׂתרגו

The yoke of my transgressions has been under watch;[119]
In his hand they intertwined themselves (1.14a).

צדיק הוא יהוה כי פיהו מריתי

He, the Lord, is just, for I have rebelled against his mouth (1.18a).

נהפך לבי בקרבי כי מרו מריתי

My heart is turned over within me, because I have been very rebellious (1.20b).

it as 'banished' and 'mockery' respectively. But Albrektson seems right to give more weight to BDB's understanding for two reasons. First, in the sense of mockery, the verb נוד is usually used with the word ראשׁ 'head', and second, it makes more sense to take the word as 'impurity' in connection with the word ערותה 'her nakedness', implying female impurity, in v. 8b (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, pp. 63-64).

118. The NRSV has 'For the chastisement of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom', which reflects also the understanding of Fitzgerald ('*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities', pp. 173-75), Greenstein ('The Wrath at God', p. 38), Dobbs-Allsopp (*Lamentations*, p. 131), Berlin (*Lamentations*, p. 99); see also the NIV. I prefer the other sense of עון 'iniquity' and חטאת 'sin' here; so do the JPS, the ASV, Westermann (*Lamentations*, p. 194), Hillers (*Lamentations*, p. 75), Renkema (*Lamentations*, p. 508), and House and Garrett (*Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 431).

119. The word נשׂקד is a *hapax legomenon,* the meaning of which is very doubtful. According to BHS, several Hebrew manuscripts have נשׂקד 'to be watched'. The LXX further reads על as a preposition and thus renders ἐγρηγορήθη ἐπι τὰ ἀσεβήματά μου 'He watched over my transgressions'. David Kimchi (followed by Gottwald, JPS, NRSV) takes the MT as is and suggests the meaning 'bind on' (BDB, p. 974). Other emendations have also been suggested. For example, נקשׁה על פּשׁעי 'schwer gemacht ist das Joch meiner Sünden/the yoke of my transgressions has become heavy' by F. Praetorius, and נקשׁו עלי פּשׁעי 'schwer lasten auf mir meiner Sünden/my transgressions weighed heavily on me' by Rudolph (cf. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*, pp. 73-74). Hillers's emendation reads נשׂקד על פּשׁעי 'Watch is kept over my steps' (*Lamentations*, pp. 3, 11). To deal with the difficulty, Berlin chooses a neutral word to convey that a yoke is being made, translating, 'My yoke of transgressions was fashioned' (*Lamentations*, pp. 43, 46). Since the renderings of the LXX and other ancient translations seem to reflect an effort to deal with the same textual difficulty facing modern interpreters, I am inclined to retain the MT as much as possible, reading only with the Hebrew variant to convey the idea of God making sure that the yoke stays in its place.

כאשר עוללת לי על כל-פשעי

As you have dealt severely with me because of all my transgressions (1.22b).

When House speaks of the people suffering because of their own sins, he apparently assumes that the personified Zion and the survivors are somehow interchangeable.[120] Nothing in Lamentations warrants such an assumption. Nowhere is Zion identified as the surviving people. To the contrary, the suffering people are always described in possessive terms in relation to Zion as follows:

כהניה	her priests	1.4
בתולתיה	her young girls	1.4
עולליה	her children	1.5
שריה	her princes	1.6
עמה	her people	1.7, 11
אבירי	my warriors	1.15
בחורי	my young men	1.15
בני	my children	1.16
בתולתי ובחורי	my young women and young men	1.18; 2.21
כהני וזקני	my priests and elders	1.19
מלכה ושריה	her king and princes	2.9
נביאיה	her prophets	2.9
זקני בת־ציון	elders of daughter Zion	2.10
בתולת ירושלם	young girls of Jerusalem	2.10
נביאיך	your prophets	2.14
עולליך	your children	2.19
בני ציון	children of Zion	4.2
נזיריה	her princes	4.7
נביאיה	her prophets	4.13
כהניה	her priests	4.13

If anything can be inferred from this exhaustive list, nothing would be more obvious than the distinction between Zion and the people. The suf-

120. This assumption is rather obvious in his commentary. We find, for instance, comments such as 'Chapter 1 … also addresses why such disaster has befallen the chosen city. God has sent the day of the LORD on the people for their sins against his word (1.5, 8-9, 12, 14, 18-22)'. Or, 'The city's grief is compounded by the realization that it need not have happened. The people sense that their affliction is self-inflicted to an extent. God has punished their sin, just as the covenantal blessings and curses texts (see Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27–28) promised. They understand that the God who protected them in the past has forsaken this role because of their disobedience. Their wounds are their own fault' (*Lamentations*, pp. 364-65).

fering people are not Zion's equivalent, despite the fact that they integrally belong to her.

Speaking of Zion's identity, House is not alone in casually restricting the people she represents to the surviving remnant. In fact, Dobbs-Allsopp makes the same mistake when he comments on Jerusalem's identity:

> Jerusalem, as city is something more than the sum of all of its walls, buildings, gates, and roads, and the full gravity of its destruction can only begin to be fathomed if we envision the city as a person. . . . And yet as the personified Jerusalem's communal identity is so obvious—she is the people personified as well as the city's leading citizen—the particularity of the pain and anguish that she retracts is made so as to resonate more broadly.[121]

Identifying Jerusalem in the context of her suffering, Dobbs-Allsopp in effect restricts the community she represents to the survivors. Differentiating between the religious leadership's guilt and Zion's guilt, Gottwald even reduces the category of people represented by Zion to the common populace only.[122] Although Gerstenberger attempts to broaden the spatial scope of the community to include not only the local Jerusalem congregation but also any group loyal to Yahweh, either at home or abroad, he remains within the temporal restriction.[123] Fortunately, the fact that Zion is to be distinguished from the surviving remnant does not escape other scholars' attention. Westermann asserts,

> The notion of 'personifying' here would be inappropriate if by that one meant nothing more than the equating of a some*thing* with a some*one*, of an object with a person. The essential point of this comparison [Lam. 1.2-3] is that, through it, a history of a people is accorded a characteristic usually reserved for a personal story. A whole people acquires the traits of an individual, someone whose destiny involves the possibility of suffering.[124]

In terms of history, the people who actually suffered after the fall of Jerusalem comprise only a small portion of her. Hillers correctly states, 'Zion, the city of God, the community of the elect, who in her historical being is not identical with those alive at any one time'. When Zion refers to herself

121. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 52.

122. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 69, states, 'But one thing is sure: the sin is not laid solely at the door of the religious leadership, but is shared equally by the populace. This can be seen in the distinction that is made between the prophet's falsity and "thy guilt" (2.14).' However, Gottwald doesn't seem to be correct in his interpretation of Lam. 2.14. It is true that the lamenter makes a distinction between the prophet's falsity and Zion's guilt, but that distinction does not necessarily exclude the prophet's guilt from Zion's guilt. Zion herself does not seem to differentiate the prophets and priests from other groups of people. All are referred to as hers.

123. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, pp. 472, 476.

124. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 124.

as 'I', it is not the 'I' of an individual, 'even as the spokesman for the survivors, but of Zion herself'.[125]

As we can see, Zion's identity is anything but concrete. With that in mind, we need to consider whether Gottwald is correct in what he calls the situational key to the theology of Lamentations, 'the tension between Deuteronomic faith and historical adversity'.[126] According to Gottwald, Lamentations 'stands at the point in Israel's life where tension between history and faith is for the first time most sharply posed'.[127] Indeed, it would be incomprehensible why total destruction took place only a couple decades after the nation's great religious reform rather than at another time, for instance,as when the nation was led completely astray by its most evil king, Manasseh. The discrepancy between the historical optimism of the Deuteronomic reform and the cynicism and despondency evoked by the fall of the nation must have been pronounced. Gottwald's student, G. Kubota, remarks,

> This series of disasters must have been too tremendous a strain upon the old theory of the interrelation between sin and suffering. Here was a pious ruler, bending his energies upon the observance of the Law. The law book promises explicitly that prosperity and long life are the reward of obedience. Why, then does Josiah die in the prime of time? Why does the nation suffer more than ever before immediately after its earnest attempt at reform?[128]

Although this kind of criticism would have been bluntly dismissed by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel as they asserted that all would die for their own sins (Jer. 31.29-30; Ezek. 18.1-4; cf. 18.14), it must have been strong and pervasive.[129] Even as it confesses the sins of the past and present generations, Psalm 79 boldly claims that the dead were among the faithful:

> נתנו את־נבלת עבדיך מאכל לעוף השׁמים בשׂר חסידיך לחיתו־ארץ
> They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food,
> the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth (79.2, NRSV;
> cf. 79.8, 9).

125. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 17.

126. Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 50-53.

127. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 51.

128. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 51, citing G. Kubota, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament* (MA thesis, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1928), p. 16.

129. The critical spirit of the people might be the precise setting of Ezekiel 18 according to Greenberg: 'Ezekiel's generation were conscious of their religious superiority over their ancestors of the time of Manasseh and Amon. . . . Not even the author of Kings, who scraped up sins to explain the exile, could find in the "evil" of the kings after Amon reason enough to explain it; he must invoke "the sins of Manasseh" in order to explain the decision to destroy Judah' (*Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 339).

Though a firm believer in the Deuteronomic faith, the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 apparently could not ignore exceptions where the interrelation between sin and punishment evidently fails. Granted that Lamentations has for its basic purpose the mastery of pain and doubt in the interests of faith, as Gottwald puts it,[130] that mastery does not necessarily mean sweeping under the rug anything that questions the insufficiency of the prevailing theological system. True faith requires honest dealing with discrepancy until the answer is found. Even if the answer can never be found, the fact somehow must be acknowledged. What the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 did was an effort to deal with, or at the very least acknowledge, discrepancy, namely, the presence of innocent suffering after the destruction of Jerusalem.

ii. *The Problem of Innocent Suffering*

To be sure, the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 was not the first to confront the problem of theodicy. Several other biblical writers faced the same challenge, and their approaches to the problem include at least seven means of reconciling underserved suffering with belief in order and purpose: suffering is understood as retributive, disciplinary, revelational, probative, illusory, transitory or mysterious.[131] In Crenshaw's view, what permeates the Deuteronomic history and most of the Hebrew Bible is the notion of reward and punishment in the defense of God: the people are merely reaping what they sowed.[132] Crenshaw cites Jer. 5.1, among other passages, as an example of the tendency to save God's honor by sacrificing human integrity:

> Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth; that I may pardon her (NRSV).

While it is true that the prophets occasionally recognize that the righteous and innocent can suffer too (for example, Amos 2.6; 5.12; Jer. 2.34),

130. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 52.

131. James L. Crenshaw, 'Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy', in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 4. See also Klaus Koch, 'Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?', in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 79. Koch argues that the ancient Israelites were hardly aware that the concept of an action with built-in consequences was at odds with what lies in the realm of our experience. While recognizing that even a faithful member of the community had to suffer occasionally (Pss. 140.13, 14[12, 13]; 146.7-9; Amos 2.6; 5.12) or a lot (Ps. 34.20[19], and that from time to time the wicked person could enjoy disproportionate happiness (Pss. 37.12; 73.2, 3), they reasoned that the greater the wicked person's success in the short term, the greater the fall would be in the end, that the righteous suffer only temporarily (Ps. 125.3) and would be blessed forever (Pss. 37.29; 112.3, 4, 9).

132. Crenshaw, 'Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy', p. 5.

that recognition is essentially drowned out by their judgment of the nation, which accuses *everyone* (for example, Jer. 6.11, 13; 9.4ff.).[133] In some places, Jeremiah and Ezekiel flatly deny the suffering of the innocent (Jer. 5.1; Ezek. 14, 18). Against the prophetic teaching of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 affirms innocent suffering after the destruction.

The response of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 perhaps was not so much a challenge to the worthiness of traditional authority as an act of rectification. Study in the prophetic corpus shows that prophecies are not static but vary greatly from prophet to prophet and especially from one historical period to the next. While some variations are attributed to the prophets' individual characteristics, the theological ones are often due to change and development in historical circumstances.[134] The author of Lamentations, even if he did not belong to the prophetic circle, might still legitimately be a participant in this prophetic phenomenon. As such, he could not help but reexamine even the most cherished theological principles in light of historical development.

In terms of historical development, the destruction of Jerusalem marks the actualization of earlier prophetic pronouncements. The claim of absolute justice made by Jeremiah and Ezekiel perhaps was pronounced before the Day of Yahweh became a reality.[135] Since the primary focus of Jeremiah and Ezekiel was judgment, it is understandable that they either did not give much thought about the death of infants or were not able to even imagine

133. Mandolfo has a similar observation, 'In Jer. 5.26-29, YHWH implies that not all the people are deserving of punishment when he divides the populace into 'scoundrels' and 'others', but the vast majority of the remainder of the prophetic rhetoric makes it clear that he will punish indiscriminately "the nation", "the people", the "House of Jacob", "this city", "Jerusalem", "Daughter Zion"' (*Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, p. 97).

134. See John Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), p. xxiii; Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, pp. 227-29.

135. In its literary context, Jer. 31.29 is a prophecy about the future, which Yahweh commands Jeremiah to write down in a book (Jer. 30.2). This took place perhaps toward the end of the reign of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians (see Jer. 32.1-2). The date of the composition is uncertain; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, pp. lxxii, 287. I assume as the worst scenario that it authentically originated from Jeremiah himself. Ezekiel 18.1-32 belongs to the section of prophecy of doom spoken by the prophet before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Ezekiel here responds to the resentment the first exiles might have felt toward their compatriots who still remained in Jerusalem (Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970], pp. 236-37); the oracle was probably pre-fall, and the principles of retribution and repentance that Ezekiel enunciated are highly theoretical and hardly take realities into account (Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* [AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], pp. 341-42).

it. Ezekiel 14 defends God's justice by referring to the evil ways and deeds of the exiled remnant rather than directly accusing the devastated Judean remnant, whose suffering the prophet never actually witnessed. Ezekiel 18 only justifies God's judgment on people who have full capacity for making choices but does not take into consideration the fate of children who are too young to know the difference between good and evil.

The prophetic judgment confronted its reality in the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, when death did not seem to distinguish the old from the young or the wicked from the righteous. The reality, as Lamentations sees it, is on the Day of Yahweh none survive or escape (2.22), that children faint for hunger at the head of every street (2.19), that women eat their offspring (2.20) and that the young women and young men fall by the sword (2.21). The unquestionably innocent were the children who died from either hunger or cannibalism. While the loss and suffering of children indisputably constitutes a part of the curses upon the disobedient according to Deuteronomy (28.41, 53-57), the children themselves are implicitly not counted among the disobedient. Although Deuteronomy considers disobedience the definite cause of curses and punishment, the kind of disobedience in focus is not arbitrary but that which is against the commandments of Yahweh (28.1, 15, 45). It is virtually impossible for children and infants to understand the commandments, let alone intentionally disobey them. In effect, like the prophets, Deuteronomy does not even address the presence of innocent suffering. It would take an extremely rigid, or even insane, adherent of the Deuteronomic faith to think that children and infants suffer for their own sins and Lamentations refuses to do so.

The suffering of children is described as the cause of weeping for both the lamenter (2.11) and the personified Zion (1.16). In fact, from the lamenter's point of view, the children constitute the only legitimate reason to appeal to Yahweh. Only for the sake of children, the lamenter urges Zion to appeal to Yahweh in 2.19:

קומי רני בלילה[136] לראשׁ אשׁמרות
שׁפכי כמים לבך נכח פני אדני
שׂאי אליו כפיך על־נפשׁ עולליך
העטופים ברעב בראשׁ כל־חוצות

Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches.
Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.
Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children,
who faint in hunger at the head of every street (2.19).

It is interesting to note that the lamenter's advice to Zion in 2.19 is accompanied by a formal anomaly. Instead of having three lines like other

136. Read with the *qere, kethib* בליל.

stanzas in the poem, 2.19 deviates from the normal pattern to include a fourth line. The fact that a similar deviation occurs in 1.7, which is often considered the result of a gloss, makes it difficult to readily assess the significance of the formal deviation in 2.19.[137] Since 1.7 has been proven to contain a gloss, the same scholarly conclusion on 2.19 is hardly surprising.[138] In the case of 2.19, the last line seems to pose no new problem if deleted. As far as the content is concerned, it is recognized as a mosaic of bits from

137. Albrecktson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, p. 62; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 9; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 112; Pham, *Mourning*, pp. 70-71; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 46; see also the critical apparatus of BHS.

In a poem of three line stanzas, Lam. 1.7 has four lines instead of three:

זכרה ירוּשלם ימי עניה ומרודיה
כל מחמדיה אשׁר היו מימי קדם
בנפל עמה בידֿצר ואין עוזר לה
ראוה צרים שׂחקו עלֿמשׁבתה

Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering,
all the precious things that were hers in days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her,
the foe looked on mocking over her downfall (NRSV).

Although the ancient versions LXX, Peshitta and Vulgate also have four lines, given the fact that these translations were much later than the original, the majority of scholars agree that one of the lines was a gloss. With the same assumption that this stanza should conform to the strict formal pattern of the poem, scholars differ on whether 1.7b or 1.7c should be stricken as a gloss. Most scholars take out 7b since it seems out of place if v. 7 is to be consistent with the rest of the context by referring to Jerusalem's remembering the time of her destruction. The Hebrew of 7a seems to support this conclusion with ימי עניה ומרודיה being the object of זכרה . Albrecktson, however, is concerned that if this is the case, then the days of Jerusalem's affliction must be understood as something already past, which to him obviously is not the situation of the dirge. Albrecktson therefore regards ימי עניה ומרודיה as temporal accusative, 'in the days of . . .', and deletes the third line 7c. Theophile J. Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 9, seems to avoid making a decision by suggesting that 1.7 is a conflate text which contains two variant readings, 7b and 7c. Against the majority, Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 131, questions the above-mentioned assumption. He correctly observes that 'it is hardly imaginable that a glossator or copyist would not have noticed the interpolation of a marginal note that disturbed the evidently regular structure of three bicola per strophe'. Appealing to structural analysis of the subcanto Lam. 1.7-11, he argues that both 7b and 7c function on a higher literary level within the song and concludes that it is possible that 'the poet consciously employed literary irregularity in order to express the precise extent to which YHWH's aloofness had knocked Lady Jerusalem off balance' (pp. 131-32). Renkema's structural analysis, however, is not convincing. Neither does the suggested purpose of the poet seem to be significant enough in either chapter 1 or the entire book of Lamentations to justify a divergence from the strict pattern of the poem.

138. Albrecktson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 119; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 40; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 146; Pham, *Mourning*, p. 109.

2.11b, 12b; 4.1b, and formally it is the only line that does not open with the second-person volitive. Even so, I think it is worthwhile to reconsider the possibility and even probability of a theological irregularity alarmed by the formal divergence of 2.19.

In contrast to 1.7, whose formal irregularity cannot be justified by a well-established significance in content, 2.19 signals a theological crux, a seeming failure on the part of Yahweh that urgently demands correction: innocent suffering. Nowhere does the lamenter urge Zion to appeal to Yahweh except here in 2.19. Contrary to scholarly opinion, regarding 2.19d as superfluous, I suggest that it is precisely what gives legitimacy to the appeal. Whereas v. 19c just begins to give a reason for the appeal 'concerning the life of your children', עַל־נֶפֶשׁ עוֹלָלַיִךְ, v. 19d explains why it is a legitimate reason: 'who are fainting because of hunger at the head of every street', הָעֲטוּפִים בָּרָעָב בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצוֹת. Verse 19d is not an unnecessary repetition of 2.11c or 12b, as usually thought, but an important specification of who the children are in the lamenter's view. By using the same terms, the lamenter makes sure that these are the innocent infants who are dying in their mothers' laps. It is only by appealing for these undeniably innocent children that Zion can possibly hope to change Yahweh's mind. The lamenter's view is in sharp contrast to Zion's blurry vision in which the children are extended to include the entire populace (2.20-22).

רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהַבִּיטָה לְמִי עוֹלַלְתָּ כֹּה
אִם־תֹּאכַלְנָה נָשִׁים פִּרְיָם עֹלְלֵי טִפָּחִים
אִם־יֵהָרֵג בְּמִקְדַּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא
שָׁכְבוּ לָאָרֶץ חוּצוֹת נַעַר וְזָקֵן
בְּתוּלֹתַי וּבַחוּרַי נָפְלוּ בַחָרֶב
הָרַגְתָּ בְּיוֹם אַפֶּיךָ טָבַחְתָּ לֹא חָמָלְתָּ

Look, O LORD, and see; to whom you have acted so severely?
Should women eat their fruit, the children they have carried on the palms?
Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?
They are lying on the ground in the streets, young and old.
My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword.
You killed on the day of your anger; you slaughtered without mercy.

Thus 2.19, in the entire book of Lamentations, marks the only thing that the Deuteronomic theology fails to explain: the suffering of the innocent.[139]

139. If the argument for the author's intentional divergence at 2.19 has merit, then maybe we can proceed to suggest an explanation for how 1.7 got its fourth line. Hypothetically, if 2.19 originates from the author, then to a scribe or copier who does not discern that this irregularity is meant to signal something extremely important, the strictness of the formal pattern is weakened considerably. As Renkema points out, it would be unimaginable that a scribe or glossator would take the liberty to disrupt the strict pattern of the poem by adding a fourth line to 1.7. With the presence of the irregular 2.19,

The theological failure inherent in the Deuteronomic tradition but surfacing only in the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction compelled the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 to seek a new understanding, and the ambiguity about Zion became a crucial element in his strategy to achieve it.

b. *A Modified Theology*

I have suggested that the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 intentionally rather than coincidentally was ambivalent about the nature of Zion's identity and sins. I have also suggested that the historical situation after the fall of Jerusalem signaled a serious discrepancy between the Deuteronomic faith and the reality of the suffering of the innocent. I would like to suggest further that the ambiguity about Zion was an instrumental part of the author's mechanism for resolving this theological conflict. Through Zion's ambiguous sin and identity the author could justify the city's destruction and protest the measures of judgment placed on the survivors at the same time. In Crenshaw's terms, the author defended God's justice without sacrificing human integrity.

First, the fact that Zion, as a city stained by the sins of her inhabitants, deserves her punishment is clearly stated in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Her massive and unforgivable sin against Yahweh is admitted both quantitatively and qualitatively. Let us recall that the blame is profusely placed on the personified city by both the lamenter and Zion herself in these chapters. As a city, Zion legitimately represents all the people who live in her throughout all her history. Since any group of people who live in Zion at any time can be called hers, their sins also become hers. At the same time, any group of people who live in Zion at any given time must necessarily participate in her history, or in the person she is, whether they are in her recovering present or in her depraved past. In terms of law and order, just as a person who has committed heinous crimes in her past cannot be acquitted even if she has become clean in the present, so Zion's past sins must be punished if justice is to be upheld. The collective sin accumulated by Zion's citizens through all generations has made her totally corrupt and repulsive to Yahweh. It is this accumulated sin that may be said to be worse than the iniquity of Sodom and deserves every measure of punishment. With their sense of

however, the situation is changed considerably. Now, having precedence, the glossator would be less restrained to add a line when he feels a pressing need to do so, unwittingly creating a problem for later exegetes. Pham suggests that 1.7a cropped up because the glossator did not think it right for Zion not to remember the temple. The speaker in 1.4, 10, 11 is not only concerned about Jerusalem but also about Yahweh's honor and the proper worship of Yahweh, and Jerusalem seems to share this sentiment in 1.18a. But here in 1.7, without 7b, it would seem that Jerusalem thinks only about her own loss. Therefore the glossator corrected the picture by adding 7b (*Mourning*, pp. 70-71).

corporate responsibility, which accepts the fact that the sin of one person might make Israel susceptible to destruction, as Joel Kaminsky shows in his study of Joshua 7,[140] the survivors perhaps understood very well the rationality of the fall of the corporate entity symbolized by Zion. Thus, through the profuse blame placed on the personified city, God's judgment on the city is fully justified.

Admittedly, the question raised against the justification of the destruction of Jerusalem by modern exegetes cannot be ignored. The suffering of the survivors usually prompts scholars to address the so-called excessive punishment of the city.[141] Gottwald offers one of the strongest statements regarding the matter: 'In 2.20-22 there is fierce indictment of God, spared from blasphemy only by the brutality of the circumstances it describes and by the relentless and callous God which the whole poem has portrayed'.[142] Dobbs-Allsopp believes that the vagueness of Judah's sin indicates that in the mind of the author the sin of Judah was not equal to her suffering.[143] He adds,

> Furthermore, the appropriateness of the suffering is questioned implicitly as well as explicitly in Lamentations. The gruesome images of children

140. Joel S. Kaminsky, 'Joshua 7. A Reassessment of Israelite Conceptions of Corporate Punishment', in *The Pitcher Is Broken* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 315-46 (320). See also Kaminsky, 'The Sins of the Fathers: A Theological Investigation of the Biblical Tension between the Corporate and Individualized Retribution', *Judaism* 46 (1997), pp. 319-32; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, pp. 42-44; Geo Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1936), p. 171.

141. House (House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, pp. 319, 323), seems to be the only one who equates Zion with the surviving remnant but affirms justice in her destruction. In House's view, the people in Lamentations consider their losses perhaps more than sufficient for the crimes committed, but the suffering of children does not provide a sufficient basis for questioning God's justice. His view is clearly betrayed in his critique of those who raise the question: 'First, they do not note that the different speakers in Lamentations agree about what has happened to Jerusalem. . . . Every character agrees that Israel's sin has caused this pain, that God has brought this pain, and that the pain is severe. Second they do not accept the book's own statements about the original context. That is they do not fully believe the book's speakers when they state that all the book's sufferers are not innocent sufferers. Of course, they correctly observe how the speakers in Lamentations mourn the treatment of innocent children, and this issue deserves to be addressed. At the same time, it is more than an open question whether one should consider God abusive at this point or the Israelites the most negligent parents imaginable. The biblical testimony is that these parents ignored warning after warning before the Babylonians came.'

142. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 58.

143. F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology in the Book of Lamentations', *JSOT* 74 (1997), pp. 29-60 (36-37).

> dying in the streets from starvation (2.11-12; 4.2-4) or being cannibalized by their mothers (4.10) stand as paradigms of innocent suffering for which there is no justification and for which Yahweh's actions are directly and indirectly responsible. In 4.6 one suspects that the comparison with Sodom is offered as something more than a simple description of Judah's punishment. Whether irony or sarcasm or utter dismay is intended is of course hard to tell, but any one implicitly raised doubts about the rightness of Yahweh's cause.[144]

Greenstein echoes Dobbs-Allsopp, finding 'Lamentations' focus on the cannibalization of the children a case of divine wrath gone to the extreme—a terrible excess of "justice", which is no justice at all', and 'the idea that YHWH's punishment of Judah is way out of proportion is expressed as well in 4.6'.[145]

The above comments show clearly that the question of God's justice in his punishment of Jerusalem is tightly linked to the suffering of the survivors and based on the assumption that punishment rather than sin is the focus of Lam. 4.6. Such questioning involves not only an indiscriminate view of the punishment of the city and the punishment of the surviving people, but also a questionable interpretation of Lam. 4.6.[146] Once the personified Zion is recognized as the *personification of the city, a center of civilization with a history and a people*, I believe the questioning of the justice of her punishment cannot maintain its force. The destruction of Zion, with respect to her material culture, her institutions (political, religious, economic, social), and her mainstream population (the condemned by the prophets), is justified in the author's view.

While the objection against the treatment of Zion, the city, cannot be maintained, the protest against the suffering of innocent people rightly brings our attention to the great tension between the ideas of corporate and individual responsibilities that clearly surfaced in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jeremiah 5; Ezekiel 14, 18).[147] Through Zion's ambiguous confession, the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 could spare the surviving community from undeserved accusations and protest the measures of punishment placed on them. Even if the survivors, in the scheme of things, are relatively insignificant compared to the city, the author would not sacrifice their human integrity. Although Zion's representative nature makes it completely believable that the people as a whole has acknowledged that Yahweh is in the right, as scholarly interpretation of Zion's confession

144. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology', p. 38.
145. Greenstein, 'The Wrath at God in the Book of Lamentations', p. 39.
146. See also the discussion on the nature of Zion's sin above.
147. Cf. Kaminsky, 'The Sins of the Fathers'.

amply shows,[148] in effect, this is only half the picture. On the one hand, in Zion, the surviving community could represent the whole people to confess the nation's sin and probably would not hesitate to admit the horrendous magnitude of it. On the other hand, the popular proverb 'the parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' makes it doubtful that the guilt placed upon Zion was necessarily felt by the common survivors, who were never singled out for reprimand as the prophets and the priests were. As a person who faces judgment for past crimes would not have difficulty understanding that it is her past behavior that is responsible for punishment, the survivors probably had an idea which part of Zion extracted her judgment. Moreover, the ancients' knowledge of corporate culpability does not necessarily prevent them from wishing to avoid suffering for the sins of others, as demonstrated clearly by the two Akkadian passages below. The first acknowledges corporate responsibility, while the second expresses the desire to escape it.

> On account of a sin of my father (or) my grand father,
> a sin of my mother (or) my grandmother,
> On account of a sin of my family,
> of my kinsfolk (or) of my clan . . .
> The wrath of god and goddess have impressed upon me.[149]

> The sin of my father (or) my grandfather,
> (or) my mother (or) my grandmother,
> (or) my family (or) my kinsfolk (or) my clan,
> myself may it not approach, elsewhere may it go.[150]

Theoretically, placing all the measures of punishment on one guilty generation can hardly be justified, let alone on one not so guilty. Although Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 do not explicitly affirm the innocence of the surviving remnant, we have enough evidence for understanding that it was the case. First, let us recall again that in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 the blame is not even once placed on the common survivors. On the contrary, concrete crimes are charged directly to the prophets and priests. Second, as the existence of innocent suffering is firmly established in the children who died from hunger after Jerusalem fell,[151] the case can be extended to include the suffering

148. See above. It appears that all scholars think the *surviving remnant* confessed the sin of the nation through Zion.

149. Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms*, p. 171. Cf. Kaminsky, 'The Sins of the Fathers', p. 32.

150. Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms*, p. 171.

151. See also Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Tragedy', p. 38; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 271, 310; Y. Gitay, 'The Poetics of National Disaster: The Rhetorical Presentations of Lamentations', in *Literary Responses to the Holocaust 1945–1995* (San Francisco: International Scholars, 1998), pp. 1-11.

of those Psalm 79 called the 'faithful ones' חסידיך (v. 2), those who were like the Rechabites[152] whose obedience to their ancestors was commended by Yahweh (Jeremiah 35), those who were like Ebed-melech (Jer. 38.7-13; 39.15-18) or Baruch (Jeremiah 45), those who died in battle after they had repented in the religious reform like King Josiah (2 Kgs 23.28f.), and the list could go on. In fact, the people who were left in the land of Israel were the poorest and owned nothing (2 Kgs 25.12; Jer. 39.10). They plausibly belonged to the category of the oppressed 'innocent poor' (Jer. 2.34) who had no means to escape to other countries during the war or immediately after the destruction.[153] Third, 2 Kings 22–23 makes it crystal clear that Josiah's reform was too late to ward off the Day of Yahweh. Judgment had been sealed, and the day had already been decreed, a fact that Lamentations confirms (2.17; cf. 3.37). The destruction of Jerusalem testified to the hard fact that on judgment day none survived or escaped; both the guilty and the innocent suffered from hunger, hardship and shame, if not by the sword. To be sure, this would have been the reality whether the Day of Yahweh took place in 587 BCE or not, because children and the innocent inescapably exist side by side with the wicked in every generation. Unless judgment on the city is revoked, innocent suffering is just a matter of fact.

It is the innocent portion of the populace and their undeserved fate that concern the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. To ask them to believe that they are being destroyed by God for their own sins or to confess in order to be forgiven is not just wrong, it is cruel and oppressive. With Zion's confession, the surviving remnant is not required to do so. More positively, their suffering is acknowledged by both Zion and the lamenter as underserved. They are portrayed as innocent victims caught in the crossfire between God and the city. And most importantly, they constitute the only reason why God must look and consider, the only reason for Zion's appeal. They are the only part to whom justice has not been done in Jerusalem's destruction. If the punishment inflicted on Jerusalem is seen as unjust, on what basis

152. The ethnicity of the Rechabites is somewhat perplexing. According to 1 Chron. 2.55, they were descendants of Caleb. In the same verse, however, they were also called Kenites. The Kenites were not Israelites but associated with or lived among them, according to Judg. 1.16; 4.11; 1 Sam. 27.10.

153. H. Tadmor, 'The Babylonian Exile and the Restoration', in *History of the Jewish People* (ed. H.H. Ben-Sasson; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 159-82 (161-62), states, 'There can certainly be no doubt that a great many left Judea during the war or immediately after the destruction and fled in all directions–to Samaria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, or Egypt'. My personal experience of the fall of Saigon in 1975 confirms the fact that while the wealthy have the option to leave or remain in the country before or after its defeat, the poor in general have no choice but remain. They simply have no means.

can one appeal to a God who is unjust in the first place? But if Jerusalem's destruction is seen as fully justified, God remains a just God. Supposedly, a just God cannot overlook the suffering of the innocent. Will he not eventually intervene and compensate those who suffer because of a cause bigger than themselves? The answer we get from Lam. 4.22a is affirmative. The suffering of the remnant depicted in 4.18-20 seems to be the basis for the community's hope of an imminent divine intervention in 4.22.

תם־עונך בת־ציון לא יוסיף להגלותך
פקד עונך בת־אדום גלה על־חטאתיך

The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion;
He will no longer keep you in exile.
He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will reveal your sins.

The situation after the fall of Jerusalem required a paradoxical theology which must acknowledge both the justification of the city's destruction and the presence of undeserved suffering. Paradoxical as it is, justice and injustice can intricately coexist. The fall of Jerusalem confirms that an ideal situation in which only the wicked are punished does not exist in reality, but the author of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 clearly showed that one does not have to despair for that matter. In the presence of injustice, one can still believe in God's justice. And believing in God's justice does not have to blind one from recognizing injustice even if tradition teaches otherwise. The surviving generation does not have to choose between justifying God and condemning themselves or justifying themselves and condemning God. They can both recognize God's justice and show him their undeserved suffering, believing that God will eventually correct the tragic situation. If the surviving generation can view their situation in this way, they may have hope for the future and be able to endure extreme adversity in the present. After all, the purpose of Zion's vague confession, if anything, is to exonerate this downtrodden community and reinforce a sense of hope and trust in God's justice.[154]

4. Summary

In this chapter, the significance of the personification of Zion as a woman in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 is examined. The significance of the personified

154. Crenshaw, 'Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy', p. 2, argues that 'meaning and not happiness was basic to survival. Isolated individuals could endure sporadic irruptions of undeserved distress in the knowledge that the belief system was not threatened. So long as that conviction of order held firm in the universe, essential meaning remained intact despite occasional disturbances that made happiness an elusive goal.'

Zion can be seen in the rhetorical functions associated with personification as a literary device. As a woman, Zion engages the audience by representing the suffering of the city and its people at the personal level. As a literary persona, Zion expresses on the people's behalf what they might be unwilling to express for themselves, such as feelings of frustration and anger against God's treatment. As the personified city, who can legitimately represent the people and at the same time is not the people, Zion allows the surviving people to come to grasp a new truth: her destruction fits the transgenerational guilt of her people, but the suffering of the innocent survivors is not justified and requires God's intervention.

Before turning our attention to Zion's role in shaping the meaning of the book of Lamentations as a whole, we need to discuss the use of the second major persona, the Man, in the context of the individual poem in which he appears. The Man of Lamentations 3, therefore, will be the focus of the next two chapters.

5

The Man of Lamentations 3: Identity

Chapter 3 of Lamentations in several aspects differs from other chapters. Formally, the acrostic pattern is tripled, and the mourning cry איכה, 'how!', at the beginning of the poem disappears. Related to the latter is the shift in genre and mood. While it is still difficult to determine with certainty the exact genre of this poem, scholars unanimously agree that the dirge and its funerary mood are no longer a component here. Instead, wisdom teaching appears as a totally new component, and other elements from the lament genre such as confidence and trust also emerge. In terms of gender, the female protagonist Zion and her mourning cries are totally removed from the scene to give way to the voice of a rather enigmatic figure, הגבר, 'the Man'. Thematically, the focus is not the destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering of her people but the ordeal of one individual, the Man, and how he emerges victoriously from it. These differences are often interpreted as a strong indication of the centrality of Lamentations 3 in the entire book in spite of the perplexity scholars feel about the identity of the Man. To be sure, one does not need to identify the Man in order to recognize the fact that he attempts to present a way out of despair, a remedy for human suffering. But the Man's identification would no doubt contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of his role in the rhetoric of Lamentations 3 and its purpose. Since the role of this important character in Lamentations cannot be fully understood unless his identity is revealed, I will seek to establish the Man's identity in this chapter. In the next chapter, full attention will be given to the discussion of his function in Lamentations 3. Finally his role in the book of Lamentations as a whole will be addressed in the final chapter of this study.

1. *Existing Interpretations of the Man's Identity*

Not a few attempts have been made to identify the Man. The suggestions can be divided into three broad categories. First, the Man is identified liter-

ally with a historical person who lived at the time of the destruction; second, he is considered to be the personification of Israel, Jerusalem or the exile; and third, he is identified as one paradigmatic representation or another. The major identifications in these categories are discussed below.

a. *Literal Interpretation*

The Man has been identified with at least three historical figures: the prophet Jeremiah (c. 626–585 BCE), King Jehoiachin (609–598 BCE) and King Zedekiah (597–587 BCE). For each of these figures, scholars have found support both in and out of the text of Lamentations.

Jeremiah. Before modern criticism became the predominant mode in biblical studies, scholars had invariably assumed that the Man was the prophet Jeremiah, probably based on the traditional attribution of the book's authorship to Jeremiah.[1] This traditional belief continues to be upheld by a number of scholars into the twentieth century, but does not seem to stand against literary and linguistic criticism. Even Lee, who in a recent work analyzes thoroughly the voices in Lamentations and identifies the speaker of Lam. 2.1-19 as Jeremiah, does not think there is sufficient evidence to identify the Man as the prophet.[2] Lee asserts that there are certain generic reasons to lead one to such an identification: first, the speaking style of Lamentations 3 with its alternating between the third person and first person is quite similar to that of Lam. 2.1-19; second, the lament in Lam. 3.1-24 would also follow the speech of Jeremiah, that is, the speaker in Lam. 2.1-19; and finally, Jeremiah employed individual lament more than any other prophet as evidenced in the book of Jeremiah. Nevertheless, in Lee's view, these generic reasons alone are insufficient to identify the speaker of Lam. 3.1-24 as Jeremiah. She believes that only additional evidence in a paralleled use of images and themes, peculiar terminology, rhetorical technique and content would be sufficient to identify the poet in Lam. 3.1-24 as Jeremiah, but her analysis suggests that it is not at all the case. The images, themes and terms of Lam. 3.1-24 are simply typical of many psalms of lamentation and not congruent with those elements in Jeremiah's personal lament in the book of Jeremiah. Lee, however, finds similarity in terminology, style and genre between Lam. 3.46-51 and Lam. 2.1-19, and thus suggests that Jeremiah is also the poet of the former.[3] Her evidence for such similarity includes two word-pairs ופחת פחד, 'panic and pitfall' (Jer. 48.43; Lam. 3.46), the phrase שׁבר בת־עמי,

1. For example, Rashi, *Judaica Press Complete Tanach with Rashi* (http://www.chabad.org); John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (trans. John Owen; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950).

2. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, pp. 169-70.

3. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 179.

'crushing of daughter of my people' (Jer. 8.11, 21; 14.17; Lam. 2.13; 3.48), and Jeremiah's expression of weeping (Jer. 8.23; 13.17; 14.17; Lam. 2.18-19; 3.48).[4] In essence, Lee's study shows that while there is some similarity in language and style between part of Lamentations 3 and Jeremiah, the identification of the Man with the historical Jeremiah is not likely.

Jehoiachin or Zedekiah. The identification of the Man with Jehoiachin is proposed by Porteous.[5] Porteous suggests that if the poems of Lamentations were indeed used on cultic occasions in Jerusalem, then the individual lament of the Man may have been intended to express the bitter suffering of the young king Jehoiachin. He contends that much of the description would suit the king's situation better than Jeremiah's, while the reference to חסדי יהוה, 'covenant loyalties of Yahweh' (3.22), suggests the חסד of Yahweh toward his covenant with David and his successors. The possibility of this interpretation is allowed by the dramatic character of Hebrew worship. The king might be introduced as the supposed speaker of such lament in his character as the representative of the people, and although in this case the king could not be present in person, a priest might have spoken his part for him. If Jehoiachin is indeed kept in mind in Lamentations 3, the assertion that the Lord would not reject forever but would yet have mercy (vv. 31-33) would be fulfilled in the happy issue of Jehoiachin's exile (2 Kgs 25.27-30). Making reference to the argument made by Eric Burrows that the Servant of the Lord in the prophecies of Second Isaiah is the Davidic House and that the sacrifice and suffering of Jehoiachin suggested some of the imagery of the Servant poems, Porteous also finds a resemblance between Lam. 3.30 and Isa. 50.6.

In his quite brief identification, Porteous does not explain why he thinks much of the description suits the situation of Jehoiachin better than that of Jeremiah. Not even one specific linguistic or thematic element is mentioned. Thus, his argument appears to hinge heavily on the reference to Yahweh's loyalty to the Davidic covenant in v. 22 and the extratextual reference to the release of Jehoiachin. Although the Davidic covenant appears to be an important clue in the identification of the Man, we simply lack evidence for identifying him specifically with Jehoiachin.

Although Ezekiel dates his visions according to the year of Jehoiachin's captivity and nowhere mentions the name Zedekiah, indicating that the exile considered Jehoiachin and not Zedekiah the real king at the time of the destruction, Judah obviously recognized the kingship of the latter (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 37). This allows for the identification of the

4. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, pp. 177-79, 147.
5. Porteous, 'Jerusalem—Zion: The Growth of a Symbol', pp. 244-45.

Man with Zedekiah, which is brought forward by M. Saebø.[6] Regarding the twin themes of Zion and the Davidic king as the key to a new solution of the riddle of Lamentations 3, Saebø argues that what might be the nearest identification of the Man is with the last king of Jerusalem, King Zedekiah. According to Saebø the evidence for this identification can be found in the narrative account of 2 Kgs 25.1-21, in which Zedekiah's fall with the temple and the royal city was most dramatic. There are linking features in this narrative and Lamentations 3. First, 2 Kgs 25.7b and Lam. 3.7b speak of 'bronze fetters', which are signs of being a prisoner. Zedekiah was put in prison till the day of his death, according to Jer. 52.11b, while the Man is similarly treated as a captive, according Lam. 3.7-9; cf. 3.5-6, 15-16, 52-54. Second, there is a resemblance between Lam. 3.2, where the Man complains that 'He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light', and 2 Kgs 25.7b, which says of Zedekiah, 'his eyes were put out, and he was brought to Babylon'. Saebø contends that even though the picture of the deep misery of the Man also includes other traditional elements of the individual lament genre, it may have been influenced by the tragic experiences of Zedekiah in 2 Kings 25.

From Saebø's view, the references to the king of Judah in the two chapters adjoining Lamentations 3, namely, 2.6b, 9b ('king and priest alike he spurned') and 4.20 ('her king and rulers are exiled among the gentiles') are scarcely accidental. Rather they contribute to the impression that chapters 2, 3 and 4 represent a specific literary sequence to the book of Lamentations. Even the relationship of the individual and the collective elements of the lament may be more easily explained through a royal-messianic interpretation of Lamentations 3, since the king in a unique way is the primary representative of the people. The royal interpretation of Lamentations 3 is further substantiated since the expression found in Lam. 3.1b ('the rod of his wrath') can be related to the rod God would use to punish a disobedient king, as mentioned in 2 Sam. 7.14b and Ps. 89.31-33. Finally, to show that Zedekiah fits the picture of the Man of Lamentations 3 better than Jehoiachin, Saebø points to Jeremiah's rebuke of the last kings of Judah, ending with King Jehoiachin (Jeremiah 22), whereas the prophet's messianic message in 23.5-6 ends with a noteworthy name: יהוה צדקנו, 'Yahweh is our righteousness', which might be taken as a word-play of the name Zedekiah (צדקיהו).

From his discussion, we can see clearly that Saebø, like Porteous and other scholars, draws attention to a feature central to the identification of the Man, that is, his royalty. Nevertheless, the identification with Zedekiah

6. Saebø, 'Who Is "The Man" in Lamentations 3? A Fresh Approach to the Interpretation of the Book of Lamentations', pp. 302-304.

specifically is also weak. Apart from the term 'fetters' in 2 Kgs 25.7b, all other elements can be interpreted differently. First, from 2 Kgs 24.12 we know that the king of Babylon also took Jehoiachin prisoner. Second, the darkness experienced by the Man (3.2) is not exclusive to blind men. Third, the tragic experience of Zedekiah does not uniquely fit Lamentations 3. Porteous, for one, already suggests that the experience of the young Jehoiachin might have inspired the description of Lamentations 3. Finally, while the release of Jehoiachin might have been the reason for the hope explicitly expressed at the end of Lamentations 4, the fate of Zedekiah was completely obscure. Thus, the specific identification with either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah cannot be well sustained, even though they rightly call our attention to the royalty associated with the Man.

b. *Personification*

In this category, the Man is considered to personify either Jerusalem/Israel or the exile community.

The Man as Personification of Jerusalem. The view that the Man should be understood as the personification of Jerusalem is championed by Otto Eissfeldt. Eissfeldt argues that Lamentations 3 was composed with reference to the disaster to Jerusalem, and even the fact that it begins *I am the man*, whereas elsewhere Jerusalem is normally referred to in the feminine as the city, does not provide an argument against this. To him, on the one hand the change over to 'we' (vv. 40-47) can only be understood if the poet had from the outset a plural entity in mind, Jerusalem or Judah; and on the other hand, the placing of the third poem with the others represents at the very least the oldest commentary upon the poem that we have.[7] In his view, the personification of Jerusalem and most of all its equation with a man find support in that the first poem, which clearly refers to Jerusalem, and the third poem both picture Jerusalem as a sick body (נתנני שממה כל־היום דוה, 1.13; בלה בשׂרי ועורי שׁבר עצמותי, 3.4).[8] Thus the beginning of the third poem, *I am the man*, is to be understood as implying that the suffering figure is presupposed as well known, and here Jerusalem says of itself: 'I am this sufferer'.[9]

Eissfeldt does not see the differentiation between the 'I' and 'the daughter of my people' in 3.48 as posing any difficulty to his interpretation. The 'I' and 'the daughter of my people' in reality are one and the same, he contends. Since the following 'I' section (3.49ff.) clearly refers to the unfortunate, the 'I' in 3.48 must also refer to the unfortunate. The kind of dissection

7. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, p. 503.
8. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, p. 502.
9. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, p. 502.

seen here is not unique to Lamentations 3 but also found in the Servant of Yahweh poems and in the book of Baruch (4.9b-16, 17-29).[10]

Eissfeldt's argument is weak in general. First of all, the transition from 'I' to 'we' does not denote unequivocally a community behind the 'I' but usually depicts an individual addressing a community as seen most often in the psalms ascribed to David (for example, Psalms 20, 36, 60, 78, etc.). Second, while the saying 'I am the man' may presuppose a figure familiar to the original audience, that figure is not necessarily the same as the personified Jerusalem in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4. Third, his explanation for considering the 'I' and the 'daughter of my people' as one and the same in reality is not at all convincing. This view encounters serious difficulties, as Hillers clearly points out.[11] One of the difficulties is that Zion is a woman, a mother in other poems, whereas the speaker of Lamentations 3 is unmistakably male, a גבר. The contrast is especially sharp because 3.1, 'I am the man', follows immediately on the last verses of chapter 2, which portray the bereaved mother Zion. To be sure, Zion and the Man appear in different poems, and no one can be certain that they were written by one author. Even so, Provan, Berlin and others think it is appropriate to approach the poems in their relation to one another, in other words, to read the book of Lamentations as it now exists.[12] The reader who comes to Lam. 3.1 via Lamentations 2 would not naturally assume that the Man here is to be identified with Zion.[13] Another difficulty with Eissfeldt's view is that the speaker of Lamentations 3 is explicitly set apart from עמי, 'my people' (v. 14)—a point that evidently bothered ancient adherents of the collective theory, since the reading is changed to עמים, 'peoples', in the Syriac, some Greek manuscripts, in a *Sebir*, an ancient conjecture having reference to the Masoretic Text, and in some Hebrew manuscripts.

The Man as Personification of Israel. Following Eissfeldt, Albrektson also suggests a collective interpretation of Lamentations 3.[14] However, since the 'I' in Lamentations 3 is a man and not a woman as in other chapters, he thinks the collective that the poet had in mind is not primarily Zion-Jerusalem but Israel, the chosen people, and that additional support for this interpretation can be drawn from what other biblical passages say about

10. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, p. 502.

11. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 62. See also Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 81; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 137.

12. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 6; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 29.

13. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 80. Even though Berlin prefers a collective identification of the Man, she sees him as the personified exile rather than Zion (*Lamentations*, p. 84).

14. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, pp. 127-29.

Israel. First, the Isaiah passage (10.5), in which Assyria is likened to the rod of God's wrath (שֵׁבֶט אַפִּי) with which he strikes Israel, might indicate that the 'I' in Lam. 3.1 (אֲנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה עֳנִי בְּשֵׁבֶט עֶבְרָתוֹ) is the Israel that was attacked by the great power in the East. Second, the background of the use of נהג in Lam. 3.2 may be the well-known metaphor of God as the shepherd who leads his flock Israel, as depicted in Ps. 80.2 (רֹעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הַאֲזִינָה נֹהֵג כַּצֹּאן יוֹסֵף, 'Listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who led Joseph like a flock!'); the use of this metaphor would favor a collective interpretation: the great shepherd has led his flock Israel into darkness. The phrase אֹתִי נֹהַג, 'me he has driven', in Lam. 3.2 is also an echo of Deut. 28.37, which threatens Israel (in the singular) with the horror of exile (בְּכֹל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר־יְנַהֶגְךָ יְהוָה שָׁמָּה, 'among all the people where Yahweh will lead you'). Since the differentiation between the 'I' and 'my people' in 3.14 (הָיִיתִי שְׂחֹק לְכָל־עַמִּי) would be problematic for this collective interpretation, Albrektson opts for the variant reading עמים instead of עמי although the latter is found in most Hebrew manuscripts and is supported by LXX and the Vulgate.[15]

Like Eissfeldt's interpretation, Albrecktson's argumentation is basically weak in that the supporting evidence is not at all conclusive. As seen above, the rod of God's wrath can also be applied to any Davidic king. As for the term נהג, although it is used of God leading Israel, it is also used of a king leading his captives and prisoners (Isa. 20.4), and the Man as an individual captive can surely fit the latter imagery.

The Man as Personification of the Exile. Berlin differs from Eissfeldt and Albrecktson in her collective interpretation in that she sees the speaker of Lamentations 3 as the personified voice of the exile.[16] In her view, this literary persona can be explained in two ways. First, the male voice is a counterpart to the female voice of the city in Lamentations 1, which echoes from a different perspective the experience of destruction and exile. While the imagery in Lamentations 1 is feminine, in Lamentations 3 the imagery is more masculine, invoking the physical violence against the male body associated with war and exile. Taken together, Lamentations 1 and 3 give us gendered pictures of a female and male victim—the city, battered and ruined, that remained behind; and the people, entrapped and injured, who were conquered and deported.

Second, Berlin believes, the male persona is a Job-like figure, crying out to a silent God, trying to maintain his faith in the face of God's cruelty, and seeking to justify God's action. The parallels between the Man and Job are plenty: both refer to themselves as גבר (3.1; Job 3.3); both are hunted by

15. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 137.
16. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 84-85.

wild animals (3.10; Job 10.6); both are targets of God's arrows (3.12; Job 16.12-13); both are sated with bitterness (3.15; Job 9.18); both are cut off from access to God (3.44; Job 3.23); both are the objects of the enemies' taunts (3.63; Job 30.9). Like Job's friends, the Man reasons that there is hope for the wretched and that it is good to bear chastisement from God (3.24-27; Job 5.16-18); that God may hurt but will also bring healing (3.32; Job 5.18); and that God would not pervert justice (3.33-36; Job 8.3). Finally, like Job, the Man insists that both good and bad come from God (3.38; Job 2.10). Thus the Man, the voice of the nation, is a literary fiction like Job, but unlike Job he is not perfect,[17] and his sins or the sins of the nation must figure in the theodicy.

Although Berlin's view makes more sense than the other collective interpretations, since it attempts to explain the contrast between the two gendered pictures, it is still unlikely for the following reasons: First, there is no clue in the poem to help us recognize this personification. Elsewhere, the biblical writers usually provide the names of the entities being personified (for example, Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, Ephraim, Babylon, wisdom, etc.), and in Lamentations, the personification of Zion, while self-evident, is made even more explicit in 1.1, 2.1, and 4.2. If the personification of the exile is meant in Lamentations 3, we would expect at least a description like 1.3a, גלתה יהודה מעני, 'Judah has gone into exile', at the beginning of the poem. Moreover, like other collective interpretations, Berlin's does not account for the differentiation between the 'I' and the 'we' in Lamentations 3; the differentiation between the 'I' and 'my people' (3.14 and 48) would become even more untenable, since Berlin understands בת־עמי to be a personification of the people.[18] Second, while Job is a literary fiction, most of the imagery and themes the Man shares with Job in their suffering, for example, being hunted, being taunted, target of God's arrow, sated with bitterness, are typical of laments of the human sufferer (see Pss. 10.9; 7.13-14; Jer. 20.7; Isa. 38.15, 17). If the Man is to represent the exile, he would do so more naturally as a human rather than a personification, in the sense understood by Daniel Grossberg, 'The male voice may represent a survivor, perhaps one going into exile. He may also be thought of as a collective voice of the people'.[19] Third, Berlin does not seem to explain the connection between Job and Israel. Even if the Man is a Job-like figure, we still need to see how that would make him represent Israel in exile.

17. Berlin seems to imply that Job is perfect, but Job himself does not seem to claim to be so.

18. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 12.

19. Daniel Grossberg, 'Lamentations', in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1587-1602 (1595).

c. *Representative Interpretation*

The umbrella term 'representative' is here used to include all the interpretive views besides the literal and literary ones we have seen above. As a matter of fact, the positions discussed below regard the Man as a fictive yet representative persona of some sort. The Man may represent a person or a group of people in the poet's mind or he may represent a type of people or even a paradigm to which others should be conformed. The speech of the Man is not to be understood as the real speech of a historical person; rather, it is that of the poet who is disguised in a different garb. The most dominant views of the Man being a representative figure are the following:

Jeremiah. Against the collective interpretation of the Man for reasons similar to what presented above, Karl Budde suggests that a later hand, wishing to create the culmination of the book and give it a unified form, put in the figure of an individual spokesperson who is intended to be Jeremiah.[20] Supporting the same position, Max Löhr argues that with Lamentations 3, the author intended to let the prophet Jeremiah appear and address the people in a penitential sermon.[21] He claims to see the reflection of Jeremiah in all the sections of Lamentations 3. The clearest reflection is seen between the second section of Lamentations 3 (vv. 48-51) and Jer. 14.17, where we find the first-person speaker weeping unceasingly and his eyes overflowing with tears concerning the breach of 'the daughter of my people'. The third section of Lamentations 3 (vv. 52-66) and various passages in Jeremiah (11.18-23; 15.10, 15; 17.14-18; 18.18; 20.7-11) both lament about personal enemies. Lastly both the Man and the prophet are portrayed as a man of suffering, who suffers hardship and pain, and lives without enjoyment and family (cf. Lam. 3.1-24 and Jer. 20.18; 15.17, 18; 16.1). Further, Meek suggests that the author of Lamentations 3 had the experience of Jeremiah in mind and might be playing the role of Jeremiah.[22]

The strength of this view seems to lie essentially in the thematic and linguistic connection between the second section of Lamentations 3 (vv. 48-51) and Jer. 14.17, a connection that also prompts Lee to suggest that Jeremiah is the speaker of Lam. 3.46-51, as mentioned above. Yet Lee herself admits that the similarity between the Man as portrayed in the other two sections of Lamentations 3 and Jeremiah are not exclusive and therefore inconclusive. Hillers rejects the identification of the sufferer in Lamentations 3 with Jeremiah altogether, arguing along the same line that the description of the

20. Budde, 'Die Klagelieder', pp. 91-93.

21. Max Löhr, 'Threni III und die jeremianische Autorschaft des Buches der Klagelieder', *ZAW* 24 (1904), pp. 1-16 (5-7).

22. Meek, 'Lamentations', p. 23.

man's suffering is cast almost exclusively in traditional figurative language for which parallels can easily be found in the psalms of lament or in other writings of similar theme, notably Job.[23]

Everyman. Hillers adopts a different view of the Man's identity.[24] He contends that the sufferer of Lamentations 3 is indeed an individual, not a collective figure like Zion of Lamentations 1 and 2. This individual, however, is not a specific historic figure but rather the typical sufferer:

> He is an 'Everyman', a figure who may represent what any man may feel when it seems that God is against him. Through this representative sufferer the poet points the way to the nation, as he shows the man who has been through trouble moving into, then out of, near-despair to patient faith and penitence, thus becoming a model for the nation. This is the high point of the book, central to it in more than an external or formal way.[25]

Hillers explains the sense of the poem with the words of Heinrich Ewald:

> Then, suddenly, in the third place, an individual man appears! After all, an individual is able really to lament most deeply what he has experienced personally. The result is an expression of despair—the third but this is the deepest. However, it is also easier for an individual to engage in deep private contemplation of the eternal relation of God to man, and thus come to a proper recognition of his own sins and the necessity of repentance, and therefore to believing prayer. Who is this individual thus laments, reflects, and prays?—whose 'I' unnoticed but at exactly the right point changes to 'We'? O man, he is the image of your own self! Everyone should speak and think as he does. And so it comes about, unexpectedly, that just through this discourse which is most difficult at the beginning, for the first time is transformed into true prayer.[26]

Hillers's view, while accepted by many, is not without considerable weakness. We need to remember that certain features in Lamentations 3 are applicable only to certain people. For instance, the royal elements and the allusion to the Davidic covenant fit a royal sufferer better than an everyman.

Soldier or Strong Man. In Lanahan's view, the voices in Lamentations 3 and 4 express individual perceptions in concrete situations, and if one interprets certain aspects of the statements in these chapters as metaphor and convention because of parallel usages elsewhere in the scriptures, one simply

23. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 63.
24. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 64.
25. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 64.
26. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 64. Hillers quotes from Heinrich Ewald, *Die Dichter des alten Bundes*, I, 2. *Die Psalmen und die Klagelieder* (Göttingen, 3rd edn, 1866), p. 324.

shifts the level of characterization from the individual speaker to the typical or even allegorical speaker.[27] He argues that the poet of Lamentations 3 assumes the persona of a defeated soldier; whether the speaker in Lamentations 3 may or may not have been a veteran of the siege of Jerusalem, the fact is that the poet perceives his spiritual downfall through the eyes of a defeated soldier.

The defeated soldier, a veteran who has endured hard use in war, protests that he was led into defeat and subsequent pain and dishonor by his officer, but is still flexible enough to hope for an ultimate exoneration. After a reflective pause, which enables the soldier to dismiss his former sufferings since they were deserved by his past sins, the soldier turns to exhort his comrades, urging them to admit their own guilt and to seek God in prayer as he has done. Yet, while acknowledging his own guilt and the justice of God's punishment, the soldier cannot surrender to the whole truth of his own share in the responsibility for the catastrophe. Lanahan believes that the voice of the soldier echoes the voice of Jerusalem in Lamentations 1 and 2. The soldier feels himself trapped, the victim of the mockers' jeers, whereas the city feels herself fallen, the object of the scorn of the passers-by.

Lanahan's interpretation finds additional support in the semantic distinction of the noun גבר stressed by O'Connor in her commentary. O'Connor suggests that the choice of this Hebrew word and not of more generic words for 'male' or 'human' brings military connotations to the speaker's voice and hence identifies the Man of Lamentations 3 as a strong man or soldier, a man as a defender of women, children and other noncombatants.[28] She contends that although the identification of the Man as a soldier is not certain, the noun גבר, by appearing also in vv. 27, 35, 39, provides continuity in the characterization of the speaker and keeping the military connotations alive in the poem.

Lanahan's individual interpretation has the advantage of not running into the major difficulties that confront the collective interpretation. It is general enough to avoid the difficulties facing the identification of the Man with a specific historical personality. Nevertheless, this interpretation does not quite address how Lamentations 3 is connected with the book as a whole. If the chapter somehow signifies the climax of the book, as recognized by the majority of scholars, then it is probably more than just an echo of Zion's voice or another perspective on the destruction of the city. More importantly, in terms of genre and life setting, Lanahan's explanation causes one to wonder how this individual lament would speak to the original audience

27. Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice', pp. 45-46.
28. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1046.

if it was really composed with the community in mind, especially as liturgy as some would understand it; since the soldier addresses only his comrades, the people seems to be completely left out of the picture.

Varying slightly from O'Connor, Lanahan and Hillers, Owens suggests that the Man is neither a particular individual nor the human being in general. Rather, she argues, 'he is the strong man, able to fight, as distinguished from the women, children, and old noncombatant men whom he is honorbound to defend. . . . He is everyman who failed utterly in his effort to defend Jerusalem and his loved ones there. When he cries over the maidens of his city, he is mourning his own sisters, perhaps even his own intended bride. This man symbolizes the epitome of guilt and failure.'[29] She adds further that the speakers of Lamentations 1, 2 and 3 are not so much personifications of 'Mother Jerusalem' or of 'Everyman, the soldier', but of everyone's mother and father who may have been present at the catastrophe, arguing:

> Poetry is always written not only for its own generation, but also for the future generations. The poet made sure that all future generations hearing these poems, whether in Palestine, Babylonian, Egypt, or beyond, will hear of their parents' grief. Their own mother could have been the one driven to eat her own children; they or their own brothers or sisters might have been the infants devoured or the toddlers who starved. Their own father might have been that despairing defeated soldier who grieved over his failure to save his city and his family.[30]

Owens's interpretation seems deficient for two reasons. First, focusing entirely on the effect of Lamentations on future generations, she fails to address its effect on the original audience and thus disregards her own observation that poetry is also written for its own generation. Second, her quick dismissal of the importance of tropes and their rhetoric renders her reading of Lamentations 3 and identification of the Man too simplistic to be convincing.

A Prominent Inhabitant of Jerusalem. Another explanation, less popular and more perplexing, is offered by Renkema. Seeing some correspondence in the judgment inflicted on Zion and the גבר by Yahweh, he envisages this Man as a prominent inhabitant of Jerusalem residing in Zion.[31] Renkema argues that there are parallels in the judgment confronting Zion and the Man, for example, her night/his darkness (1.2a/ 3.2), her being engulfed with cloud in Yahweh's anger/him with darkness (2.1a/ 3.2b), breaking of the inhabitants of Zion/breaking of his bones (4.2/ 3.4). Renkema even sug-

29. Owens, 'Personification and Suffering in Lamentation 3', p. 83.
30. Owens, 'Personification and Suffering in Lamentation 3', p. 86.
31. Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 349-51.

gests that the darkness engulfing Zion and the Man indicates a possibility that 'he actually lived in the temple complex which has now become a dark and deathly place'. Renkema further claims that in the description of the aristocracy found in 4.7-8, there are indications that the Man in the literary sense was among them also; in addition, the Man also speaks of the city of Jerusalem as 'his city' (3.51b). However, the poets are never explicit because a direct identification would not fit their general purpose:

> Since the suffering of the גבר in Lamentations 3 is not associated with a specific individual: his suffering and affliction is in fact the same as that of his fellow citizens. This common bond between the גבר and his compatriots also constitutes the primary ground upon which they ought to follow his lead in renewing their faith and trust in God. To provide the גבר with too distinct a profile or even identify him as someone known to them would hinder such a transformation. Unique and extraordinary individuals—such as the king, for example—provide difficult role models for ordinary people to follow.[32]

Renkema finally suggests that the Man is an 'everyman':

> The figure of the גבר is both literary and historical at the same time: literary, because he does not constitute a single historical individual and historical because he embodies those devout individuals who are tormented by their experiences, questions, and doubts and who turn to God in the midst of their confusion. In this sense one can speak of a collective personality: the גבר, as he is described in Lamentations 3, represents the people who have been forced to endure all of this affliction.[33]

Renkema's comment on the Man being an everyman echoes Hillers's conclusion and is worth exploring more. Nevertheless, his rejection of the royal identification of the Man for the reason that kings provide difficult role models for people to follow dismisses too easily the features associated with royalty in Lamentations 3.

d. *Conclusion*

Surveying the leading views in the identification of the Man, one gets the impression that his identity is still very much shrouded in mystery. Although each of the aforementioned interpretations indeed addresses certain aspect of the Man and Lamentations 3, none of them is complete in itself, and some of them even entail serious difficulties. The identification of the Man specifically with the historical figures Jeremiah, Jehoiachin or Zedekiah, though each having some merit, inadvertently contradict each other. Furthermore, while these three persons lived through the fall of Jerusalem and suffered

32. Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 350.
33. Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 351.

with it, the linguistic and literary elements connecting them to Lamentations 3 are simply too scanty and inadequate to permit the likelihood of any of them being the single person behind the Man of Lamentations 3.

The collective interpretations of Lamentations 3, while correctly reflecting the communal dimension in the poem, also have their drawbacks for the specific reasons stated above. A major setback of this type of interpretation is its failure to account for the extremely important distinction between the individual 'I' and the so-called 'my people' and/or 'the daughter of my people'. In addition, there is no clue for interpreting the Man as a personification. Since a personification without being recognized as such loses its force, we would expect the author to make it recognizable at some point. Gunkel correctly maintains that in order to avoid being arbitrary, this type of interpretation should be accepted only where the poet makes it explicit (Lam. 1.1, 9, 11-16; Ps. 129.1; Isa. 40.27; 49.21), or where the meaning demands such an interpretation (Mic. 7.7; Isa. 61.10).[34] Finally, the representative interpretations, while correctly placing an emphasis on the typical features of Lamentations 3, accidentally dismiss some important specific elements in the Man's identity.

Given the situation, finding the Man's exact identity, that is, the person in the author's mind, is clearly an insurmountable task, and it would be wishful thinking to assume that it is achievable. Nevertheless, as we read Lamentations 3 and wonder who the Man might be, new ways to look at his identity are inevitable. In that spirit, I will attempt another approach, hoping to find an identification that would make use of the strengths of existing interpretations while doing away with their weaknesses as much as possible. Such identification will meet the following requirements: (1) it must be typical or representative enough since the generic elements in Lamentations 3 resist the identification of the Man with any specific figure; (2) it must be compatible with the genre of the poem; (3) it must take into account both the personal and communal dimensions of the poem; (4) it must not overlook the royal features of the Man.

2. *A New Approach: The Man as a Type Figure of Davidic Kings*

With the above objectives in mind, I analyzed Lamentations 3 as a lament to find clues about the Man's identity. The result leads me to believe that the Man should be seen as a *type* figure of Davidic kings. The word *type* in the concrete sense refers first and foremost to an object such as the shape of a relief, a coin, etc., and then the impression of a form, that is, what an object leaves behind when pressed against another, such as a trace, the impress

34. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 122.

of a seal, or a likeness; in the abstracted sense in both directions, *type* may denote both (1) an original, a pattern, and (2) a copy (also *antitypon*).[35] The LXX uses the word *typos* to render the Hebrew words תבנית, 'original, model', in Exod. 25.40.[36] The LXX's translation of תבנית thus reflects the abstracted sense of *type*. Moses was to construct a temple after a pattern shown him. The temple on earth was not a concrete imprint of the heavenly temple; rather, it was to be made according to a blueprint, the heavenly pattern. Since in the abstracted sense *type* can also be used to refer to the copy of the original pattern, we may even infer that the earthly temple is also a *type* of the heavenly one. I borrow the word in this sense and refer to the Man as a *type*, or *type* figure of Davidic kings, who is created after the model or pattern of Davidic kings.[37] I will substantiate my thesis by demonstrating that the Man is presented as a king who participates in the Davidic covenant like other Davidic kings, that he suffers like other Davidic kings and that his suffering is antithetical to the blessing a Davidic king normally expects from Yahweh.

a. *The Man Is a King and a Participant in the Davidic Covenant*

Analyzing Lamentations 3 primarily from a formal perspective, we need to return to the question of genre. The structure of Lamentations 3, as scholars have generally observed, appears to consist of four distinct sections:

> Section I (vv. 1-21): A lament in first singular person 'I'—first individual lament
> Section II (vv. 22-39): A didactic teaching in third person
> Section III (vv. 40-47): A lament in first plural person, 'we'
> Section IV (vv. 48-66): A lament in first singular person 'I'—second individual lament

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, some understand Lamentations 3 to be an individual lament essentially because in it an individual speaks in the first person singular 'I' for the most part (I and IV), and even the other sections (II and III) can be assumed to be spoken by this same individual. Others, however, view Lamentations 3 as a communal lament, since the distress unquestionably involves not only the speaker but also his community (III). If viewed as an individual lament, Lamentations 3 represents the complaint

35. Heinrich Müller, 'Type, Pattern', in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), III, pp. 903-907 (904).

36. Müller, 'Type, Pattern', p. 904.

37. Although the word *antitypon* 'copy, image, antitype' might convey the same meaning here, I avoid using it, for fear that it may lead to the misunderstanding that the Man is the opposite rather than the like of Davidic kings.

of an individual who could be anyone. Viewed as a communal lament, Lamentations 3 represents the complaint of a community spoken through the mouth of its spokesman. As we have seen, while consensus about the genre of Lamentations 3 is far from being reached, a considerable degree of reconciliation between these two major views may be achieved if we agree with Mowinckel and Ferris that a communal lament may take the I-form, in which the 'I' is a *representative* person in the cult speaking on behalf of the congregation without giving up his individual point of view.[38] Ferris himself treats the entire book of Lamentations as a communal lament.[39] Mowinckel hardly deals with Lamentations, but his argument for taking many psalms of lamentation in the I-form as national lament seems to be applicable to Lamentations 3 as well. Basically, he argues that there are two reasons for understanding some psalms in which the speaker is an individual as communal laments. First, the unquestionably national lament Psalm 89—since the distress complained is of a national and political nature—is put into the mouth of one individual.[40] Second, the I-form communal lament is not influenced by the form of individual lament; rather it is the earlier form of communal laments since Israelite psalmody is directly or indirectly derived from Babylonia, and in Assyro-Babylonian psalms of lamentation the we-form does not seem to occur, but there it is in the I-form that the king represents the people even in public distress.[41]

It is apparent that reading Lamentations 3 as a communal lament in the I-form makes the most sense. Although the speaker in the poem is dominantly an individual, the distress described undeniably involves a community, albeit in the background (that is, the 'we' section in 3.40-47), and even the grief lamented by the individual is definitely beyond private experience (3.48, 51). Those who read Lamentations 3 essentially as an individual lament (for example, Gunkel, Westermann) apparently separate the 'I' sections from the 'we' section as if they are smaller poems within a larger composite work. But such a separation is not at all sensible since in its present triple-acrostic form, Lamentations 3 must be read as the work of a single author.[42] This is especially true because the transition from the 'we' section

38. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 194, 235-36; Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14.

39. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14.

40. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 225.

41. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 194, 225; *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 182. Also Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 86-87; Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentations as Religious Documents*, p. 77.

42. In my knowledge, Cornelius Houk, 'Multiple Poets in Lamentations', is the only one to suggest that each poem of Lamentations might be the work of multiple poets, each of whom was responsible for a section of the poem. See also Introduction, n. 9.

to the second 'I' section occurs within the פ stanza (vv. 47-48). It is better to read Lamentations 3 as we would read other indisputably communal psalms of lamentation in which 'I' and 'we' alternate (for example, Pss. 44.5, 7, 16; 60.11; 74.12; 83.14; 123.1). Reading Lamentations 3 in this way also seems to be advantageous in that it would more or less capture all the individual, collective and representative senses emphasized by the literal, collective and representative interpretations of the Man's identity respectively.

One useful clue about the Man's identity we may get from reading Lamentations 3 as a communal lament in the I-form is that he is a representative of the people. Mowinckel, followed by Ferris, believes that in the I-form laments, the speaker may be the king who acts as the representative and the incorporation of the people: the cause of the people is his cause, and vice versa (for example, Psalm 89), or he may be one of the leading men of the community.[43] To be sure, in ancient Israel, it was not impossible for an ordinary citizen to occasionally get the opportunity to stand and speak before the community. This seems to be illustrated in the case of the wise woman who negotiates with Joab and then presents her wise plan to save the city with the people (2 Sam. 20.14-22). This example, however, seems to be exceptional, and one may even argue that, although the wise woman goes to the people with her plan, she is not speaking before the people as a representative. On the other hand, it is evident that national lament or prayer to God is usually spoken by a king, a prophet or a priest (1 Kgs 8.28ff.; 2 Chron. 20.5ff.; Jer. 7.16; 11.14; Joel 1.13f.; 2.17; etc.). Thus, a soldier, a strong man or an everyman (the views of Lanahan, O'Connor, and Hillers respectively) would have a very slim chance to legitimately represent the people. In contrast, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah or Jeremiah would definitely qualify to be the speaker of Lamentations 3, either literally or symbolically.

Lamentations 3 does not explicitly reveal the identity of the speaker. In this respect, it obviously mirrors the style and convention of psalms in general, and communal psalms of lamentation in the I-form in particular. Observation has been made that all the psalms have similar style, vocabulary and forms of expression even though no psalm is exactly identical, and that the psalms contain few explicit references to specific historical events or personages.[44] The psalms Mowinckel and Ferris classified as communal laments, including those in the I-form, never mention the name of the representative speaker (for example, Psalms 44, 60, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 94,

43. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 225-26; Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14; Also Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 87.

44. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, 'Psalms', in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1280-1446 (1282). Cf. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, 12, p. 29; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* I, p. 25; Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 1-2.

137, 31, 35, 42–43, 56, 59, 69, 102, 109 and 142).[45] Only in the royal psalms do we occasionally get the name 'David'; but there it is often believed to actually refer to a descendant of David or the Davidic dynasty rather than King David personally (for example, Ps. 18.51; 144.10).[46] Usually the king speaking or spoken about in the psalms is referred to by the generic terms 'anointed' or 'king' (for example, 2.2, 6; 18.51; 20.7, 10; 21.2, 8; 28.8; 61.7; 63.12; 72.1; 89.39, 52). Psalm 89 is one of the best examples. Here, though it seems rather clear that a Davidic king is speaking (vv. 39ff.),[47] his exact identity is not revealed. Whatever reasons there are for these features,[48] it remains a fact that psalms of lament are nonspecific, and as a lament, Lamentations 3 is not an exception. Consequently, the effort to identify the Man with a specific historical figure is impractical and doomed to failure. With that in mind, now we can address the strong connection between the Man and royal characters and the likelihood that he may represent a Davidic king in the abstract.

Evidence strongly suggests that the Man is thought of as a king. As Dobbs-Allsopp points out, the introduction אני הגבר ראה עני, 'I am the man who has seen affliction', resembles the self-representation formula of kings in various royal inscriptions from the ancient Near East[49] (for example, 'I am Azitiwada, blessed by Baal, servant of Baal, whom Awarku, king of the Danunians made powerful'; 'I am Kilamuwa, the son of Hayya'; 'I am Yehaumilk, king of Byblos'; 'I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'ath'; and 'I am Mesha, ruler of Moab from Dibon').[50]

Although Lam. 3.1 does not provide a specific name, as do the royal inscriptions, other aspects of the poem can be construed as pointing toward a royal genealogy. For instance, the combination of 'I' and 'we' in Lamentations 3 is reminiscent of the language of the royal psalms (for example, Psalms 44, 89, 144), where the king presumably stands in as the community's representative.[51] Additionally, there are notable resemblances between

45. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 194, 219; Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 14.

46. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 77; Berlin and Brettler, 'Psalms', pp. 1302, 1441. See also Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, p. 99; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59,* p. 259; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), p. 543;

47. Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, p. 210; Berlin and Brettler, 'Psalms', p. 1383.

48. Some believe that due to their cultic (public) nature, the psalms are designed to be general so that they might have repeated usage. But others express skepticism over that notion even though they agree that psalms were used in cultic worship.

49. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 108.

50. J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971–1982), III, pp. 34, 48, 95; II, p. 9; I, p. 71.

51. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 108.

the Man of Lamentations 3 and the Mesopotamian laments' depiction of the king, variously referred to as 'a humble man', 'the man of the offering', and 'the man who speaks the prayer', or more simply as just 'a man' or 'that man' and described as a lowly and sinful person.[52] Thus, the idea proposed by Dobbs-Allsopp that a communal figure like the king does in fact stand in the distant background of the Man is supported further by the aforementioned fact that the Babylonian psalms of lamentation and prayer are generally royal psalms, in which the king as the representative of the people addresses the gods in the I-style.[53]

Not only does Lamentations 3 use royal language to present the Man, it also hints that he is a participant in the Davidic covenant. The reference to the 'steadfast love of the LORD' (3.22; cf. 3.32) suggests the language of the Davidic covenant (cf. 89.2, 3, 24, 28, 34, 49), while the use of 'rod' (3.1) and 'transgressed' (3.42) recalls God's promise to David to punish any breach of covenant with a rod (2 Sam. 7.14; Ps. 89.34).[54] In fact, in the entire Hebrew Bible, the coupling of the motif of the rod of chastisement with the motif of steadfast love occurs only in two other places, namely, 2 Sam. 7.14-15 and Ps. 89.33-34, where the covenant of Yahweh with David is specifically in focus. The words 'rod' and 'steadfast love' can also be found together in three other passages, Ps. 23.4 and 6, Mic. 7.14 and 18, and Job 37.13. The meaning of Job 37.13 is too uncertain to be useful here. In Psalm 23, שׁבט occurs in the first section where God is depicted as a good shepherd (vv. 1-4), whereas חסד appears in the second section where God is portrayed as a host. In this psalm, the context shows indisputably that שׁבט denotes a comforting rod rather than the rod of wrath, and thus does not resemble the usage in Lamentations 3. Likewise, in Mic. 7.14, שׁבט refers to the tending rod of the shepherd God albeit occurring in a different section from that of חסד.[55] Thus, the association of royal representation, the rod of wrath and God's covenant love in Lamentations 3 firmly connects this poem to 2 Sam. 7.14 and Ps. 89.34, the two passages that center on the Davidic covenant, and suggests the identification of the Man as a Davidic king.

52. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 108. Cf. Kramer, 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur', in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3rd edn with supplement, 1969), p. 463; 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur', *Acta Sumerologica* 13 (1991), pp. 1-26 (22); M.W. Green, 'The Uruk Lament', *JAOS* 104 (1984), pp. 253-79 (276); 'The Eridu Lament', *JCS* 30.3 (1978), pp. 127-67 (128, 141).

53. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 182.

54. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 108.

55. The fact that the two words appear in two different sections is supported by the paragraph division found in three major English translations, JPS, NRSV and NIV.

b. *The Man Suffers like Other Davidic Kings*

The identification of the Man with a Davidic king consequentially gets firm support from the royal identifications of Porteous and especially of Saebø. While Porteous and Saebø have the same observation as Dobbs-Allsopp on some aspects, as already discussed, they bring our attention to additional features associated with Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. As we realize that Lamentations 3, as a lament, is nonspecific, and thus it is not necessary, or even possible, to identify the Man with any one historical figure, the observations of Porteous and Saebø may be understood in a slightly different way. I believe Saebø is partially correct when he states,

> Even though the picture of the deep misery of 'the man' also includes other traditional elements of individual lament (cf. Lam. 3.10-15), yet it may have been influenced by the tragic experience of King Zedekiah in 2 Kings 25, and this point of reference may have constituted some sort of a 'kernel' for the extended and more elaborated lament composition of Lamentations 3.[56]

Saebø correctly observes that Lamentations 3 contains traditional elements of lament and that the poem does seem to include some reference to the tragic experience of Zedekiah.[57] Because the historical event associated with Lamentations was very likely the fall of Judah and Jerusalem, and because Zedekiah was the king at that time, it is highly probable that his plight was somehow incorporated into the lament of the Man. However, it is not entirely correct to say that Zedekiah's experience constitutes the core of the entire poem. We need to remember that the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE affected not only Zedekiah but the entire Davidic dynasty at a deeper level, and the author might want to reflect that in some way. To be sure, we have seen that some evidence cited by Saebø seems to fit Zedekiah very well. It is true that the darkness and bronze mentioned in Lam. 3.2 and 3.7 (חשך ולא־אור and נחשתי) might indeed refer to Zedekiah's eyes being put out (2 Kgs 25.7) and the chains worn by him (נחשתים, 2 Kgs 25.7). Nonetheless, the imprisonment Saebø sees in Lam. 3.5-9, 52-54 would no doubt be applicable to Jehoiachin as well (2 Kgs 24.10-12). Besides, the yoke borne in one's youth indicated in Lam. 3.27 (טוב לגבר כי־ישׂא על בנעוריו) would seem

56. Saebø, 'Who Is "The Man" in Lamentations 3?', p. 303.

57. That in communal psalms of lament we have real historical conditions has already been suggested by Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 241-42: 'In the national psalms of lamentation, as well as those I-laments which are actually national, we have real historical conditions and happenings; the needs and dangers are disasters which either have already befallen or else threaten people and king from actual, foreign enemies, partly supported by internal traitors—this is so, even if the psalms in most cases use such indefinite, general, and conventional terms that we cannot now identify the historical happenings and enemies to which they may refer'.

to be more true of Jehoiachin, who was barely a youth of eighteen when he went into exile (2 Kgs 24.8). It seems prudent, therefore, not to assume that one specific figure constitutes the core of the lament of the Man.

Dobbs-Allsopp is right in maintaining that there is no need to identify the Man so specifically since it is likely that the poet is achieving in him a persona.[58] The Man as a persona may represent the quintessence of the suffering of Davidic kings or dynasty. If the poet, in adhering to the stylistic convention of lament, desired to keep his royal personage typical, and if he used the Man to represent not any specific king but a model who readily invokes royal pains, then perhaps it is not too difficult to imagine him incorporating into this persona various kinds of affliction experienced by real Davidic kings. While some traditional elements of lament in Lamentations 3 might be inspired by the suffering of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, other elements appear to contain allusions to some other Davidic kings who faced similar historical situations, where war, defeat, imprisonment, exile, shame or even death is involved. In the Man's first lament (vv. 1-21), we find reminiscence of the personal ordeals of Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah. The allusion to Hezekiah is unquestionable. First, the language and themes of Lam. 3.4-6 find close parallels in Isaiah 38, which recounts Hezekiah's lament when he suffered from his fatal illness and was at the point of death. The Man and Hezekiah have similar complaints about their broken bones, bitterness, and perhaps experience of death.

Broken Bones

Lamentations 3.4

בלה בשׂרי ועורי שׁבר עצמתי

He made my flesh and my skin worn out; he broke my bones.

The phrase שׁבר עצמותי, 'he broke my bones', in the Man's lament has a parallel in Hezekiah's lament. Whatever it is that Hezekiah experienced, his expression is almost identical:

Isaiah 38.13bc

כארי כן יׁשבר כל־עצמותי

Like a lion he breaks all my bones.

Note that the image of a lion breaking the bones in this verse makes it even more likely that it is Hezekiah's experience rather than Zedekiah's that foreshadows the image of the Man being mangled by a lion in Lam. 3.10-11.

דב ארב הוא לי אריה במסתרים
דרכי סורר ויפשׁחני שׂמני שׁמם

58. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 108.

A bear lying in ambush he is to me, a lion in hiding
He turned aside my ways[59] and tore me to pieces; he made me desolate.

Bitterness

Lamentations 3.5, 15

בנה עלי ויקף ראש ותלאה
He built [siege work] against me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship.

השביעני במרורים הרוני לענה
He sated me with bitterness; he caused me to drink wormwood.

Isaiah 38.15cd, 17a

אדדה כל-שנותי על־מר נפשי
I will walk slowly[60] all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.

הנה לשלום מר־לי מר
Behold, it was for my well-being that I had great bitterness.

The noun מרורים (Lam. 3.15), the adjective substantive מר (Isa. 38.15d) and the verb מר (Isa. 38.17a) come from the same root מרר, 'be bitter'.[61]

Experiencing Death

Lamentations 3.6

במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם
He caused me to dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.

The image of the Man living in the dark like an eternal dead reminds of Hezekiah's lament about the realm of death, after his impending death was pronounced by the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 38.10b, 11a, 11b

בשערי שאול פקדתי יתר שנותי
I am appointed to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years.

אמרתי לא־אראה יה יה בארץ החיים
I said, I shall not see the LORD in the land of the living.

59. The meaning is unclear. Literally, 'He turned aside my way', following BDB's translation of סרר, root סור. JPS translates, 'he has forced me off my way', and NRSV, 'he led me off my ways'.

60. The meaning of אדדה is uncertain. I follow BDB taking this as first singular hith-pael of root דדה 'move slowly'. Others take it as from root נדד 'flee'. JPS renders, 'all my sleep had fled', and NRSV, 'all my sleep has fled'.

61. See BDB.

לא־אביט אדם עוד עם־יושבי חדל
I will not look at human again, among the inhabitants of the world.

Besides broken bones, bitterness and death, perhaps we can also add mockery to the shared experience of the Man and Hezekiah. The Man frankly complains about being the reproach of his own people,

Lamentations 3.14

הייתי שחק לכל־עמי נגינתם כל־היום
I have become a laughingstock to all my people,
the object of their mocking music all day long

Hezekiah might have similar problem according to 2 Kings 18, an account of the king being openly insulted by the Assyrians as they besieged Jerusalem. In this account, an Assyrian official expressed his contempt of Hezekiah in the Judean language so that the common people could hear everything he said of the king and refused to speak in Aramaic even at the request of the Judean officials (vv. 26-30):

> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, 'Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall'. But the Rabshakeh said to them, 'Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?' Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, 'Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria'"' (NRSV).

Although it is not clear why the Rabshakeh insisted on speaking to the people, Ziony Zevit suggests that his speech was intended for the ears of the common people so that they would pressure their king to give in to Assyria.[62] If Zevit is right, then there is at least a possibility that the people could have been persuaded to regard their king as foolishly unrealistic. Even though we do not know for certain how the people felt, it still remains a possibility that Hezekiah suffered mockery from his own people.

Another Davidic king Lamentations 3 seems to make allusion to is Josiah. The Man refers to being the target of God's arrow in his complaint:

62. Ziony Zevit, 'Second Kings', in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 763-64.

Lamentations 3.12, 13

דרך קשׁתו ויציבני כמטרא לחץ
He bent his bow and set me up like a target for his arrow.

הביא בכליתי בני אשׁפתו
He shot into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver.

According to 2 Chron. 35.23, Josiah was shot by archers at the battle with Necho and died shortly afterward. The irony of his death can be deeply felt as it is juxtaposed against God's promise to him: 'Assuredly, I will gather you to your fathers and you will be laid in your tomb in peace' (2 Kgs 22.20). Josiah's violent death in battle can hardly be referred to as *peace* by any standard. If any king knew the real pain of being pierced, it was Josiah. If any king could complain about unfair affliction, it would be Josiah, for he was a righteous king who wholeheartedly followed God's way (2 Kgs 22.2). With the story of Josiah in the background, the Man's complaint against God's treatment becomes all the more legitimate and persuasive. Moreover, the fact that Josiah turned to the Lord with all his heart but did not effect Yahweh's forgiveness for Judah is echoed in the Man's call to repentance and his complaint of God's refusal to forgive. The similarity between the lament of Lam. 3.40-42 and the narrative of 2 Kgs 23.25-27 is remarkable:

Lamentations 3.40, 41, 42

נחפשׂה דרכינו ונחקרה ונשׁובה עד־יהוה
Let us search and examine our ways, and let us return to the Lord.

נשׂא לבבנו אל־כפים אל־אל בשׁמים
Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in heaven.

נחנו פשׁענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת
We have transgressed and rebelled. You have not forgiven.

2 Kings 23.25-27

Before him [Josiah] there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart (אשׁר־שׁב אל יהוה בכל־לבבו), with all his soul, and with all his mind, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

Still the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocation with which Manasseh had provoked him. The Lord said, 'I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, my name shall be there'. (NRSV)

What Josiah actually did, שׁב אל יהוה, 'he returned to Yahweh', becomes the Man's call, ונשׁובה עד־יהוה, 'Let us return to Yahweh'. Josiah is said to return

with all his heart, while the Man calls his people to lift up their hearts. Both passages proceed immediately from the issue of returning to the fact that Yahweh refuses to forgive. Perhaps this is no coincidence at all.

Once we see references to Davidic kings who lived before the fall of Jerusalem, then the prisoner imagery reminds us of Manasseh as well, for 2 Chron. 33.10-11 explicitly mentions his imprisonment, chains and exile, which are the very things that are said of Zedekiah in 2 Kgs 25.7; note that the same term נחשׁתים 'fetters' is used in 2 Chron. 33.11.

> The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they gave no heed. Therefore the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive (ויאסרהו) in manacles, bound him with fetters (בנחשׁתים), and brought him to Babylon (NRSV).

Even Jehoiakim, according to 2 Chron. 36.6, experienced the same thing for he too was imprisoned and taken to Babylon in chains:[63]

> Against him King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up, and bound him with fetters (ויאסרהו בנחשׁתים) to take him to Babylon (NRSV).

Finally, we wonder if the expression אני הגבר, 'I am the man', besides functioning as a royal representation, is also intended to be a response to God's judgment on David and his house after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. God's indictment of David through the prophet Nathan begins with the words אתה האישׁ, 'You are the man':

> *You are the man*! . . . Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife (2 Sam. 12.7 and 10, NRSV, my emphasis).

Both the Man's and Nathan's utterance are unique in the Hebrew Bible,[64] and their uniqueness could legitimately point to the intended correspondence in Lamentations 3. Although the two Hebrew words אישׁ and גבר may have different nuances, their basic meaning is the same, as reflected in the English translation. We might even conjecture that Nathan's expression intends to focus on David's human weakness, whereas the Man's expression is meant to highlight his powerful ability to endure overwhelming affliction. If the two utterances אני הגבר and אתה האישׁ reflect a correspondence rather than a coincidence, then the author might have thought of the entire Davidic dynasty as he created the image of the Man. At any rate, as far as his affliction is concerned, the Man cannot be too far off from the fate of the offspring of David. 2 Samuel 7 confirms that when the Davidic offspring does wrong, Yahweh

63. The Chronicler's account contradicts 2 Kgs 24.1ff.

64. According to the Masora parva אתה האישׁ is a *hapax legomenon.* My search indicates that אני הגבר is also a *hapax legomenon.*

will punish him with the rod of men, but Yahweh will never take away his love from him. That is exactly the Man's lot. Having presented himself as a king (v. 1), the Man confesses that his suffering comes from the rod of Yahweh's wrath (v. 1), and that he suffers for his sin (v. 39), but at the same time, he emphatically affirms that Yahweh's love shall never end (vv. 22, 23, 32).

c. *The Man Is the Antithesis of a King Blessed by Yahweh in Royal Psalms*

In addition to the various themes and imagery associated with the affliction of the Davidic kings we can identify, namely, Jehoichin, Zedekiah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Manasseh, Jehoiakim and David, Lamentations 3 also employs thematic elements found in the I-form communal laments identified by both Mowinckel and Ferris (Psalms 31, 35, 42/43, 56, 59, 69, 109 and 142).[65] The similarity between the Man's complaint and those found in the I-form laments is obvious since the following thematic elements are observed abundantly in both the former and latter:

Afflicted by the enemies for no reason	Lam. 3.42 Pss. 35.7; 59.5a; 69.5; 109.3
Plots and taunting from the enemies	Lam. 3.46, 61, 63 Pss. 31.12a, 14; 35.4b, 21; 56.6b; 59.4a; 69.13; 109.25
Overwhelming distress	Lam. 3.54 Ps. 31.23a
Weeping	Lam. 3.48, 49 Pss. 31.10b; 42.4a; 56.9b; 69.4b
Appeal for deliverance	Lam. 3.55-57 Pss. 31.3a, 23b; 69.17, 18; 142.2
Appeal for justice	Lam. 3.58-59 Pss. 35.1, 23; 43.1
Appeal for vengeance	Lam. 3.64-66 Pss. 31.18b; 59.13a; 69.25
Trust in God's covenantal love	Lam. 3.22, 32 Pss. 31.8a, 17b, 22a; 42.9a; 59.11a; 69.14b, 17; 109.21b, 26

Although Lamentations 3 and the communal laments in the I-form share several thematic elements, these elements do not directly support a royal

65. The superscripts associate all but one of these psalms with David. The superscript of Psalm 42/43 mentions the Korahites, musicians in the Davidic court. Thus it appears that all speakers, if kings, were Davidic.

identification of the Man, since they are more or less typical of the lament genre. The royal psalms (Psalm 18/2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 72) seem to be more helpful, however, since they allow us to see the Man as the antithesis of a king blessed by Yahweh. In its current form, Psalm 18/2 Samuel 22 is commonly considered a royal thanksgiving psalm.[66] In this psalm, the speaker, a Davidic king, praises and thanks Yahweh for delivering him from the hand of all his enemies. The king portrays God as an awesome warrior who acts benevolently on his behalf and saves him from the suffering inflicted by the enemies (vv. 1-19). The king sees himself as a person who is in favorable standing with God (vv. 19-30) and whom God supports and to whom God gives victory against the enemies (vv. 31ff.). In Lamentations 3, the situation is completely reversed. Lamentations 3 is not a thanksgiving song but a painful lament in which praises and thanks completely give way to lamentations and continuing cries for help. The Man of Lamentations 3 also describes God as an overwhelming warrior, but this time malevolent rather than benevolent toward him. Here he assumes not a favorable status before God but an extremely negative one. Instead of being supported by God, here he is fought against; and in place of victory, he is utterly defeated. The opposite acts of God are apparent in the following examples:

Lamentations 3	Psalm 18/2 Samuel 22
God's act toward the Man	God's act toward the Davidic king
Yahweh led the Man into darkness and not light (v. 2) and caused him to sit in darkness (v. 6).	Yahweh is the lamp of the king and brightens his darkness (v. 29).
Yahweh shut the Man in so he cannot escape (v. 7).	Yahweh brings the king into a broad place (v. 20).
Yahweh made the path of the Man crooked (v. 9).	God made the king's way perfect (v. 33).
Yahweh is a warrior against the Man with bow and arrow (v. 12).	Yahweh sent arrows and scattered them [against the enemies of the king] (v. 15).
Yahweh pierced the Man's kidneys with the 'sons of his bow' (v. 13) so he became the laughingstock of his people (v. 14).	God delivered the king from the contention of his people (v. 44).[67]

66. Frank Moore Cross, Jr, and David Noel Freedman, 'A Royal Song of Thanksgiving: II Samuel 22 = Psalm 18', *JBL* 72 (1953), pp. 15-34 (15); Gunkel, *Introduction*, pp. 97, 197, classifies it as both an individual thanksgiving song and a royal psalm; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* I, p. 71; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, p. 257; NRSV titles it 'Royal thanksgiving for victory'.

67. Psalm 18.44 has עם instead of עמי.

Psalm 72 is another indisputable royal psalm.[68] In this psalm, the prayer offered on the king's behalf reveals the people's concept of an ideal king, a king who rules with justice, who rescues his people, whose kingdom prospers, and who is served by the nations. Such a blessed king is also the antithesis of the Man:

Psalm 72	Lamentations 3
An ideal king	The Man
Rules with righteousness, defends the poor, delivers the needy, crushes the oppressor (v. 4)	Weeps helplessly because of the destruction and the fate of the people (vv. 48-51)
In his days righteousness flourishes and peace abounds, nations pronounce him happy (vv. 7, 17)	Is bereft of peace and happiness (v. 17)
Has dominion from sea to sea; his foes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust; nations serve him (vv. 8-10)	Is treated like filth and rubbish among the peoples, hunted and imprisoned, mocked and taunted (vv. 45, 52-53, 62-63)
Long may he live, his name may endure forever (15, 17)	Said 'I am cut off' (v. 54)

Even if some of the thematic elements in the Man's lament are found also in the lament of Jeremiah or Job, in light of other royal features, the contrast between the Man and the Davidic king of Psalms 18 and 72 seems to be intentional rather than a result of literary convention.

d. *Conclusion*

The royal elements present in Lamentations 3 are strong enough to make identifications with figures such as Jeremiah, Job or an Everyman inadequate. As a communal lament spoken by a representative of the people, Lamentations 3 obviously calls for a royal identification of the Man. At the same time, the highly typical language of the poem resists identification with a specific king such as Jehoiachin or Zedekiah. It seems that the author here created for his audience a royal figure using literary tools and historical data available to him at the time. Conforming to the convention of royal psalms of lamentation, he purposely weaved a typical rather than peculiar persona. However, by appealing to the form, language, themes, imagery, historical accounts, he allowed the Man to be understood as a king

68. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 51–100* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 179; Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 97; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, pp. 76-77; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 67-69; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, pp. 351-52.

in the tradition of royal laments. With the royal representation formula, the recollection of the Davidic covenant, the themes and imagery of defeat and imprisonment, among other things, he made sure that the Man was recognized by the audience as a Davidic king.

Since the Man is characteristically like other Davidic kings, he may be appropriately called a *type* figure of Davidic kings. To some extent, we may even think of him as representing the entire Davidic dynasty, since it appears that every kind of affliction borne by Davidic kings is found in him. While we may never know for certain what the author had in mind as he conceived his persona, it is apparent that the Man of Lamentations 3 evokes the suffering of harassed and defeated Davidic kings in the nation's struggle against the domination of neighboring or world powers throughout its history.

3. *Summary*

In this chapter, the identity of the persona the Man of Lamentations 3 is examined. By analyzing Lamentations 3 as a communal lament in the I-form, we find evidence suggesting the identification of the Man with a *type* figure of Davidic kings. The way the Man presents himself as a king and a participant in the Davidic covenant, the resemblance between his suffering and that of other Davidic kings, and the contrast between his lament and other royal laments all point to the validity of this identification.

6

The Man of Lamentations 3: Mission

The identification of the Man as a *type* figure of Davidic offspring leads to a different understanding of his significance in Lamentations 3. As a *type* figure, he may be understood as a persona even in a restricted sense of the term. Lamentations 3 uses this persona to deal with the suffering that affects every aspect of life in the aftermath of the city destruction in 587 BCE. Putting on the mask of the Man, the author was able to address the most sensitive issues confronting the survivors in order to lead them through the toughest time, so to speak, in the history of Israel. Like the personified Zion in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, the Man of Lamentations 3, as a king, is a representative of his people. Moreover, as a king, he is also the leader who must lead his people through their national crisis. In order to determine the Man's functions, again it seems prudent to analyze Lamentations 3 as a communal lament. Identifying the regular and irregular features of his complaint against the genre will enable us to recognize his particular emphasis and thus role. In general, a typical communal lament has the following components:[1]

I. Invocation
II. Hymn of praise
III. Expression of confidence and trust
IV. Lament
V. Appeal and motivation for response
   A. for deliverance
   B. for cursing
VI. Protestation of innocence
VII. Expression of confidence and hope
VIII. Vow of praise

1. For convenience, Ferris's model is adopted here (*The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 91-92). As Ferris's summary of Mowinckel's and Westermann's models shows, variations among models are very minor, mostly in the order in which elements are presented, in labeling and in the degree of detail.

While Lamentations 3 contains all but the last component, a few significant deviations from the typical lament can be observed. First, a salient element that sets Lamentations 3 apart from other communal laments is that it includes a long didactic section which seems to come from wisdom poetry rather than the genre of communal lament (vv. 26ff.).[2] Second, the invocation, while usually found very early in communal laments,[3] appears quite late in Lamentations 3. The name Yahweh is not mentioned until v. 18, and a clear direct address to God only begins in v. 23. Instead, Lamentations 3 begins with a long lament (vv. 1-18). This lament itself differs somewhat from the psalms treating the same matter in that it features Yahweh as divine adversary.[4] Virtually, none of the psalms classified by Mowinckel and Ferris as communal lament in the I-form portrays God as the enemy (Psalms 31, 35, 42/43, 56, 59, 69, 109, 142). We can infer from the above anomalies that the Man assumes more than just the normal role of a lamenter who calls upon God to deliver him and his community from a national calamity. The didactic section indicates to us that Lamentations 3 tries to influence not only God but also men. While the Man's didactic function is evidenced by his long instructive speech, the function associated with his unusual lament (vv. 1-18) is not so obvious. Since it seems to deal more with the psychological aspects of suffering, I tentatively call it psychological function and will begin with it in the following discussion.

1. *Psychological Function*

In his first lament, the Man complains about his affliction in personal terms. In doing so, he not only gives voice to the communal suffering but also establishes solidarity with his people in order to prepare them for his teaching in the didactic section.

a. *The Man as a Voice of Communal Suffering*

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, suffering is experienced primarily on the individual and personal level. Only a person can actually have feelings of pain, grief, helplessness, anger or despair. Also already discussed is the pressing need of survivors of disaster to present their misery before they can move on and become whole again. The Man's expression of personal affliction therefore can serve as a voice for the suffering experienced by

2. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 308; Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 176-77.

3. Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 85; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* I, pp. 195-96; Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 92-93.

4. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 140-41.

other members of the community. His physical and emotional agonies as well as his theological struggle are reported mainly in the first lament:

Physical Suffering. On the physical level, the Man endures enormous pain. He complains that his flesh, skin and bones are being waste away and broken (v. 4) and that he is being torn to pieces (v. 11). Perhaps we can infer from these symptoms that he is one who is dying because of a disease, a fatal wound or hunger in the aftermath of destruction. Saying that he is pierced by an arrow (v. 13), being hunted (v. 10), being walled in, sitting in darkness like the dead and in desolation (vv. 5-9), he sounds very much like a wounded warrior who has fought a lost battle and who, after having been chased, is taken captive and imprisoned.

Emotional Suffering. On top of his physical pain, the Man must endure mockery from his own people and taunting from the enemy (vv. 14, 46). He feels depressed and without peace (v. 17), and completely separated from God (v. 8). And although a strong man, he completely gives in to tears and weeping because of the suffering he sees around him (vv. 48, 49, 51).

Theological Struggle—God as the Enemy. While Lam. 3.1-18 describes the Man's physical and emotional misery in unambiguous terms, it covertly presents the theological struggle he is experiencing. This struggle is comparable to the struggle we see in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, where God is portrayed as the wrathful destroyer of Zion. Although his accusation of God is intense, the Man withholds God's name until the very end of his complaint where he is ready to transition into a positive note on God's character (v. 18). The ultimate agent of affliction and destruction is first and foremost God, albeit unnamed. That God is the implied enemy in vv. 1-17 is indisputable, but why his name is not mentioned is not readily understood. O'Connor seems right in her suggestion that withholding God's name is a literary strategy to avoid blasphemy by charging him directly with the extreme cruelty described.[5] Since the suffering of the Man, a human, must be truthfully expressed, preferably in a pious way, the author of Lamentations 3 might choose not to mention God's name. This is quite consistent with the attitude of the lamenter of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, as previously discussed. It has been shown in Chapter 4 of this study that there is a distinction between the languages of Zion and of the lamenter. Whereas Zion is very blunt in her accusation against God, the lamenter displays a considerable observation of human piety in that he never describes the common populace as the direct object of God wrath, and he accuses God to be *like*

5. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1048.

the enemy rather than to be the enemy.[6] While describing profusely God's brutal acts upon the personified Zion (2.1-9), he never charges God directly with afflicting his people.

Not accepting O'Connor's suggestion, Berlin seeks another explanation for the withholding of God's name.[7] She believes that 'the literary strategy here is to name God just at the turning point, when, on the one hand, God seems most remote and, on the other hand, just as he is about to become the main topic of the discourse'. God's remoteness is even accentuated to ruthlessness in Mintz's view as he writes, 'In the absence of the name, we, like the sufferer, are forced to meet God in a space in which he is reduced to existing as nothing other than a bloodthirsty soldier, a ruthless archer, even a vicious wild beast'.[8] To be sure, one does not need to agree with Mintz to understand the Man's frustration and resentment against God, feelings that were shared perhaps by all survivors after the fall of the nation.

While some believe that the Man portrays God against the image of a good shepherd, I think he also reverses the image of God as the helper of the Davidic kings. It is possible that the first verses of Lamentations 3 contain some remote reference to the metaphor of a sheep and shepherd.[9] It is quite conceivable that the Man here perceives God as the reversal of the good shepherd we encounter in Psalm 23. Berlin offers the most elaborate explanation of what seems to go on in Lamentations 3.

> A good shepherd, exemplified in Ps 23, guides his sheep with his rod, leads the sheep to good pasture and water, helps them through narrow, dark, and twisting mountain paths, and protects them from wild animals. God, the shepherd of this chapter, is the antithesis of the good shepherd. He has a rod that harms, that forces the sheep into dark places. The sheep feels walled in, imprisoned, caught in a maze, unable to find a straight path. God himself is bear and lion endangering the sheep. Instead of shooting at the wild animals, God shoots at the sheep. . . . Where is the bad shepherd leading his sheep? Into exile. These verses are best understood as a poetic representation of the forced march into exile.[10]

6. Elizabeth Boase observes that both the lamenter and Zion in Lamentations 1 stand closest to the prophetic viewpoint, with the lamenter expressing an orthodox view that the destruction is just punishment for Zion's sin. The lamenter mentions sin only once in Lamentations 2 and Lamentations 4 (*The Fulfillment of Doom?* pp. 174, 190).

7. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 92. Objecting to O'Connor, Berlin says, 'But the poet of chapter 2 had no such compunctions—the Lord is clearly named as the destroyer in 2.1-2—and there is no reason to think that the poet of chapter 3 was less bold'.

8. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 34.

9. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 65-66; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*, p. 129; Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 86-88; Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 84-85.

10. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 86.

The rod of wrath (3.1) evokes more explicitly the rod of divine chastisement used against the wayward Davidic descendants (2 Sam. 7.14; Ps. 89.32). The God of Lamentations 3 is clearly the reversal of the God who supports David and his descendants in Psalm 18/2 Samuel 22, as discussed earlier. Whether God in Lamentations 3 is thought of as a cruel shepherd or the king's enemy, the reference to an unfavorable and unexpected change in the relationship is unmistakable. In either case, trust is clearly at stake as the relationship with God is perceived to have gone sour. In the covenantal relationship with Israel, God is supposed to act as a good shepherd or a helper against the enemy. But now he has become the divine adversary, before whom the sufferer is completely helpless. What has become of the covenant? Portraying God as the enemy, the Man reveals not only the sufferer's resentment but also a deep anxiety about God's relationship with him.

b. *The Man as a Means to Establish Solidarity*

Persuasion in Lamentations 3 is obtained through the union the Man establishes with the people. There is no doubt that he is tightly bonded with the community by his personal experience of extreme suffering by God and the enemies and by his deep concern about the covenantal relationship. It is not hard to imagine that the surviving audience of Lamentations 3 was undergoing the toughest time in their lives. Their wretched condition was pervasive, nowhere near its end, and even worse, their situation appeared to come from God. They suffered physical, emotional and theological distress: death, shameful defeat and harsh imprisonment, frustration and anger at God, and anxious perplexity about his relationship with them. To this smitten audience, the Man appears to be a leader with complete solidarity since his expression of suffering demonstrates that he intimately understands the indescribable misery they are now experiencing. This commonality consequently gains for him instant trust and involvement from the people.

Through his lamentation, the Man shows that his suffering is nothing short of what the survivors have undergone. As we have seen, he is wasting away just like those who are dying in the aftermath. He is among the defeated soldiers who have been taken captives and led to exile. Like people in defeat, he too suffers mockery and taunting. If any sufferer feels depressed, he does. If any heart is disturbed, he himself knows no peace. If anyone is alienated from God, so is he. If anyone grieves his losses, the Man is filled with tears and weeping.

The people's anger at God seems to find its exact reflection in the Man's lengthy accusation of him (vv. 1-17). The Man's blaming God automatically puts him on the people's side. This, though it may not amount to vindication, engenders at least some sort of consolation. Whether the people are guilty or not, they desperately need to have someone on their side, a truth testified by Job when his friends turned against him (19.1-4). The Man, like

Zion, is their truthful spokesperson who voices their unspeakable grief, a grief caused by destruction, imprisonment, helplessness and alienation from their God.

If the Man obtains the people's trust because he is on their side, that trust is doubly buttressed because of the kindred spirit he inspires by his unrestrained compassion for them. The Man, like Zion, is not an uninvolved representative of the people. On the contrary, he is deeply affected by the people's plight. As Zion weeps because of the destruction of the city, so the Man weeps unceasingly for the city and its vicinity (vv. 48-51). Here, the two phrases בת־עמי, 'daughter of my people', and בנות עירי, 'daughters of my city', are understood to denote the city and its surrounding villages with the view that the Man does not weep merely because of the destruction of building structures but does so more likely because of the fate of the people who live in them. An examination of the two phrases בת־עמי and בנות עירי in Lamentations 3 shows that they refer to the city Jerusalem and its suburbs rather than to men and women respectively.[11] In showing that the language of 3.46-51 is similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah, Lee notes the phrase בת־עמי as Jeremiah's peculiar appellative for Jerusalem (see Jer. 8.11, 21; 14.17).[12] In Lee's analysis, the phrase 'daughter of my people' obviously refers to Jerusalem, and that opinion is by no means hers alone.[13]

The second phrase בנות עירי is very confusing in the context of Lam. 3.51

עיני עוללה לנפשי מכל בנות עירי

The entire verse is not easy to understand, and commentators often regard one or several words in the second half as corrupt.[14] If it is difficult to determine the meaning of v. 51a, it is even more so with v. 51b. BDB translates v. 51a as 'my eye deals severely with me', which to them means 'it gives me pain'.[15] Understanding v. 51a more or less along the same line, scholars differ widely, however, in their opinions concerning v. 51b. On the one hand, Albrektson maintains that the MT is perfectly intelligible as it stands and reads, 'What I see grieves me, because of all the daughters of my city'.[16] On the other hand, BHS editors suggest reading בכות, 'weeping', for בנות, 'daughters', and deleting עירי, 'my city', altogether. Westermann partly agrees with BHS editors, emending the former without deleting the latter

11. See also discussion on בת־עמי in Chapter 4.

12. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 178.

13. See Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 183; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 424.

14. Albrektson, *Studies*, p. 161; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 167; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 59.

15. BDB, p. 759. See JPS, NRSV, ASV.

16. Albrektson, *Studies,* p. 162. Also NIV, JPS; and Gordis, *Lamentations*, pp. 185-86.

to read, 'My eye makes my soul miserable from much weeping over my city'.[17] Most radical of all is Hillers's emendation. Stating that MT is corrupt and yields no acceptable sense, he emends the entire verse to עני עלל לנפשי מכללה בנות עיני, 'the affliction done to me, has consumed my eyes'.[18] Hillers's emendation is conjectural and probably goes too far. Provan correctly asserts that the MT is not unintelligible, for the verse, in spite of its difficulty, seems to say what other scholars have suggested,

> The thought is either that the eyes have become sore as a result of weeping (Peshita, Jerusalem Bible), or that the eyes, as the medium by which the man gains knowledge of the terrible events happening around him, are a source of emotional pain to him (RSV, NIV).[19]

Provan, however, is incorrect to refute Re'emi for hinting at another way to understand בנות עירי in his commentary: 'some commentators may be right in suggesting that"the maidens of my city" may refer to the open towns around Jerusalem'.[20] As a matter of fact, with בת־עמי referring to the Jerusalem, בנות עירי makes more sense if it also refers to the villages around Jerusalem for three reasons. First, this understanding finds a close parallel in Ps. 48.12, where תגלנה בנות יהודה is understood to mean the villages of Judah are rejoicing in the context of Mount Zion being glad (ישׂמח הר־ציון) by the NRSV, NIV and JPS. Second, this interpretation eliminates the circumstantial problem associated with the reading 'maidens of the city', for one cannot avoid wondering what kind of national disaster would involve only the women of the city. The description of the city destruction in Lamentations 1, 2, 4 and 5 is much more imaginable and believable because it involves everyone, the young and the old, the men and the women. Third, although the focus of Lamentations is Jerusalem, suffering is not confined to the city alone. Apart from Lamentations 1, which focuses entirely on Jerusalem, other chapters do include suffering outside the city. Lamentations 2 mentions 'the dwellings of Jacob' and 'strongholds of Judah' (vv. 2, 3). Lamentations 4 mentions the enemy's pursuit on the mountains and the ambush in the wilderness (v. 19). Lamentations 5 talks about the women who are raped not only in Zion but also in the towns of Judah (v. 11). Since the Man weeps for the city (3.48), he might as well weep for the surrounding villages that also suffer when the city is attacked (3.51).

17. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 163.
18. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 52, 59.
19. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 103.
20. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 103; S. Paul Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis: A Commentary on the Book of Amos/R. Martin-Achard and A Commentary on the Book of Lamentations/S. Paul Re'emi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 112-13.

The fellowship between the Man and the people is not limited to shared suffering but extends beyond it to include a shared goal: to overcome despair, find explanation for the crisis at hand and garner hope about the future. Widely identified as the theological center of the book, Lamentations 3 is believed to be about an internal struggle to understand or explain suffering.[21] In sharing his understanding of the matter, the Man assumes the role of a teacher in the didactic section 3.19-42.

2. *Didactic Function*

It has long been observed that through the Man the author of Lamentations 3 attempted to show the nation a way to deal with its immense suffering.[22] The way out of suffering modeled by the Man, however, is also rather convoluted.[23] We would, however, expect a person with a didactic purpose to present his lesson in a manner as straightforward as possible. Therefore, to understand the didactic function of the Man, we need to examine both his instruction concerning the way and the manner in which it is presented. When both the principles of the Man's remedial program and its feasibility have been analyzed, the purpose of Lamentations 3 will become more apparent to us.

a. *Instruction*

In fact, as we listen to the Man's instruction, the principles he presents seem rather unambiguous. They include (1) recognition of the critical situation; (2) action required to alter the state of mind; (3) reflection on God's nature and his relation to man; (4) identification of the cause of suffering; (5) action required to resume a favorable relationship with God. A perusal of these principles will confirm that they are unambiguous and that complication begins only when we try to understand their compatibility.

(1) *Recognition of the critical situation*

To show that his instruction is good for extreme cases of torment, the Man situates himself at the very bottom of his abysmal experience. The last words of his lament testify about a person who no longer knows peace, happiness and hope (vv. 17-20):

ותזנח משלום נפשי נשיתי טובה
ואמר אבד נצחי ותוחלתי מיהוה

21. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1048; Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 33.
22. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 64.
23. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1046; Paul Joyce, 'Lamentations and the Grief Process: A Psychological Reading', *BI* 1.3 (1993), pp. 304-20 (305-306); Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 84; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 95.

זכר־עניי ומרודי לענה וראש
זכור תזכור ותשׁוח[24] עלי נפשׁי
My soul is bereft[25] of peace; I have forgotten happiness.
And I say: 'My endurance has vanished, and my hope from the LORD'.
To remember[26] my affliction and my straying, it is wormwood and bitterness.
My soul continually remembers and sinks down upon me.

Here is a man who has talked at length about his affliction, and finally acknowledges that he is a wretch. He realizes that the thought of his affliction is bitter, and the more he thinks of it, the more depressed he becomes. So far the Man's lamentation has earned for him a fellowship with the people, but now he starts signaling that enough is enough. From these verses, the first principle of the Man's teaching may be drawn out: a sufferer needs to recognize when mourning is enough and that surfeit only does more harm than good.

(2) *Action Required to Alter the State of Mind: Remembering God's Goodness*

From a despairing state, the Man progresses to a remarkable recovery by the simple act of calling to mind something (v. 21):

זאת אשׁיב אל־לבי על־כן אוחיל
This I bring back to my heart, therefore I have hope.

Considering the dramatic change from hopelessness to hopefulness, this act of recalling is nothing short of a miracle, in other words a sudden enlightenment. Mintz calls the suddenness of this move 'an act of will that is indeed unprepared for, in the sense that it is nourished by nothing but its own

24. Read with the *qere* root שׁוח 'sink down'; *kethib* ותשׁיח. The subject of תזכור and תשׁיח may be either the soul or God. If the soul is understood to be the subject then the *qere* of the second verb (תשׁוח, qal) would make better sense. NRSV and most commentators opt to read with the *qere*. The LXX seems to read root שׂיח 'talk' (Albrektson, *Studies*, pp. 142-43), but the rendering 'My soul will remember and talk concerning me' does not seem to make good sense here in the context. נפשׁי is *tiqqun* for נפשׁך (BHS editorial note), which in turn allows Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 13, and Albrektson to translate this verse along the line of 'You will surely remember and your soul will consider me'. Hillers, however, strongly opposes the idea that נפשׁך is the original reading (*Lamentations*, pp. 55-56).

25. I follow the Vulgate, pointing ותזנח as niphal (as do Berlin and NRSV).

26. זכר may be construed either as an imperative or as an infinitive construct. Here I take it as an infinitive construct denoting the act of remembering that is elaborated in 3.20. In my understanding, 'wormwood and bitterness' can modify either 'to remember' or 'my affliction and my straying' or even both. See also the discussion of Deut. 29.17 later in this study.

desire'.[27] The reason for hope is unquestionably the Man's calling to mind something, but the text does not actually identify it for us. Since the demonstrative pronoun זאת, 'this', may refer to either what precedes or follows it,[28] there are two ways to understand it. On the one hand, if 'this' refers to the preceding verse(s) then it would seem to make no sense (with the translation provided above, especially of v. 20): the Man cannot possibly gain hope by recalling his hopeless state, particularly after asserting that the thought of it presses him down. However, if one understands v. 20 the way Gottwald and Albrektson do, which takes נפשׁי as *tiqqun* for נפשׁך and reads, 'You will surely remember and your soul will consider me',[29] then what brings hope to the Man is his confidence that God will remember his affliction and consider him. On the other hand, if 'this' points to the following verses, then the Man hopes because he remembers God's covenantal kindness recounted in vv. 22-24.

חסדי יהוה כי לא־תמנו כי לא־כלו רחמיו
חדשׁים לבקרים רבה אמונתך
חלקי יהוה אמרה נפשׁי על־כן אוחיל לו

It is the steadfast love of the Lord,[30] for we have not come to an end,
for his compassions have not been spent.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will wait for him.

Although it seems reasonable to take v. 20 without unnecessary alteration from the MT, and consequently 'this' (v. 21) in the second sense, it is clear that either way we choose to understand it, God's mercy is unmistakably implied to be the cause of the Man's hope. The second principle according to the Man's testimony, then, is remembering God's mercy in the midst of despair, for this alone can alter a sufferer's state of mind. If a sufferer ever hopes to get past his desperation, this willful act, as Mintz calls it, is not an option, it is imperative. God's covenantal goodness, even if it requires a willful mind to remember, provides a stark contrast to a man's transient suffering. Just as Job recognizes how insignificant his personal ordeal is in God's vast scheme of things (38.1–42.6), the Man comes to realize that no

27. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 35.
28. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 311.
29. See p. 162 n. 24.
30. I read חסדי יהוה as a reference to זאת at the beginning of 3.21. I also retain the MT reading תמנו 'we have not come to an end' following Albrektson (*Studies*, 145). Several translators prefer reading תמו 'they have not come to an end' with the Peshitta and the Targum (NRSV, JPS, Hillers, Berlin, BDB) because 'we' seems unfit in the context of the Man's personal lament. However, in my opinion, the Man can say 'we' without losing his personal perspective. In addition, the translation 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases' (NRSV) also skips over the particle כי.

matter what, Yahweh's eternal love and mercy is always his choicest portion (vv. 19-24).

(3) *Reflection on God's Nature and his Relation to Humans*
To buttress his reason for hope in God, the Man makes several observations about God's nature and how he deals with humans (vv. 25-39).

(a) His first observation is that Yahweh is good to everyone who seeks him (v. 25). He realizes that God's goodness is not limited to Israel but to all humankind, an additional assuring fact that God cannot deal badly with his covenantal people:

טוב יהוה לקוו לנפשׁ תדרשׁנו
The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the soul that seeks him.

(b) The appropriate response of the person who seeks God's favor, it seems to him, is to be completely submissive even in the face of affliction from God (vv. 26-30):

טוב ויחיל ודומם לתשׁועת יהוה
טוב לגבר כי-ישׂא על בנעוריו
ישׁב בדד וידם כי נטל עליו
יתן בעפר פיהו אולי ישׁ תקוה
יתן למכהו לחי ישׂבע בחרפה
It is good that one waits quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.
Let him sit alone and be silent for he has laid [it] upon him.
Let him put his mouth in the dust; perhaps there is hope.
Let him give a cheek to his smiter and be filled with disgrace.

This recommended attitude places emphasis overtly on silence and perhaps covertly on humility. Whether silence in vv. 26 and 28 implies nonspeech is not entirely clear. The words דומם, 'silence, in silence, silently' (root דום), in v. 26 seems to have the connotation of patience rather than dumbness since waiting is involved, presumably for an extended period of time. On the other hand, since 'mouth' is mentioned in v. 29, it is possible that וידם in v. 28 actually refers to nonspeech. It is worth noting that nothing within the text forbids the line of interpretation advanced by Hillers and Re'emi, in which the phrase 'putting the mouth in the dust' implies not silence but a deep humiliation in prostration before a superior (cf. Mic. 7.17; Ps. 72.9).[31] In that case, then וידם perhaps expresses the kind of silence one has in grief, as suggested by BDB,[32] rather than a command not to speak anymore. The sense of humility conveyed in prostrating before the deity is strengthened by the phrase אולי ישׁ תקוה, according to Hillers and Re'emi:

31. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 70; Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, p. 109.
32. BDB, p. 198. Cf. Job 2.13.

> This phrase is not so much an expression of wavering faith as a recognition that God is sovereign and free; it is the voice of piety, not of doubt. Ancient Israelites rather often said 'Maybe' about the possibility that Yahweh will act favorably in a given case (Exod 32.30; Num 23.3, 27; Josh 14.12, etc.) or for similar reasons they say 'Who knows?' (2 Sam 12.22; Joel 2.14; Jonah 3.9).[33]

(c) Yahweh does not act vindictively or whimsically, and his compassion always prevails at the end (vv. 31-33):

כי לא יזנח לעולם אדני
כי אם־הוגה ורחם כרב חסדיו[34]
כי לא ענה מלבו ויגה בני־איש

For the Lord will not reject forever.
For though he causes grief,
he will show compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
For he does not afflict from his heart and grieve the sons of man.

(d) God is absolutely just. He is sovereign and nothing happens without his consent (vv. 34-38)

Lamentations 3.34-36

לדכא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ
להטות משפת־גבר נגד פני עליון
לעות אדם בריבו אדני לא ראה

Lamentations 3.37-38

מי זה אמר ותהי אדני לא צוה
מיפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב

Who is this who spoke and it came to pass if[35] the Lord did not command it?
Does not evil and good come from the mouth of the Most High?[36]

The translation of vv. 34-36 is quite difficult. The difficulties involve not only the interpretations of the construction ל plus infinitive in vv. 34-36 and the clause אדני לא ראה in v. 36b, but also the interpretation of the relation of vv. 34-36 to the preceding and following verses. The main options in translation include the following:

33. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 70-71; see also Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, p. 109.

34. *Qere*; *kethib* חסדו.

35. I follow NRSV and Berlin (*Lamentations*, pp. 80, 83) in supplying the word 'if' to make the sentence intelligible and consistent with my translation of 3.38.

36. I also follow most translators in carrying the interrogative force of 3.37 into this verse (see NRSV, JPS, Gottwald, Berlin).

When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot,
When human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High,
When one's case is subverted—does the Lord not see it? (NRSV).

The crushing underfoot of all the prisoners of the land,
The perverting of a man's justice before the presence of the Most High,
The subverting of a person in his lawsuit—does not the Lord see it?
(Berlin).

To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth,
To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High,
To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not (ASV).

Crushing under his feet all the prisoners of the earth.
To deny a man his rights in the presence of the Most High,
To wrong a man in his cause—this the Lord does not choose (JPS).

By crushing under foot all the prisoners of the earth,
By denying a man justice before the Most High,
By twisting a man's case without the Lord seeing (Hillers).

Two observations can be made from the above translations. First, with respect to the construction ל plus infinitive, translators basically choose one among its possible uses. The NRSV seems to understand it in a temporal sense, which is doubtful in this case, since temporal clauses introduced by ל are chiefly associated with the verb פנה, 'to turn', or with עד, 'up to, until'.[37] The ASV and Berlin choose to give the infinitive construction a nominal role, while Hillers opts for the gerundive use in which the construction explains the circumstances of a preceding action.[38] Second, with respect to the second half of v. 36, אדני לא ראה, opinions also vary. Construing the infinitives at the beginning of each verse as its objects, the NRSV, Berlin and others read it as a question, although that is not explicit in the Hebrew text, while the ASV and JPS read it as a statement along the line 'the Lord does not approve it'.[39] Hillers rejects such an interpretation, since he believes it 'requires the assumption that the word order is odd, with the series of infinitives preceding the verb on which they depend'.[40] Moreover, he argues that 'the Hebrew would be odd even if לא ראה preceded, since ראה is not normally followed by an infinitive with ל. Hence it seems preferable to explain the infinitives as dependent on the parallel verbs in the preceding verse (v. 33 ויגה … ענה). אדני לא ראה is then under-

37. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 607.
38. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 605, 608.
39. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 79; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 162; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 401; Gordis, *Lamentations*, p. 143.
40. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 57-58.

stood to be a circumstantial clause (see GKC, para. 156d-g)'.[41] While one may realize that oddity in word order alone would not be sufficient to rule out a possibility, and although ראה is followed by an infinitive with ל in a few places (Deut. 4.35; 2 Sam. 17.17; Est. 2.9), Hillers's translation nevertheless reflects another way to understand the Hebrew. The JPS's translation is a mixture of the others. It breaks up the flow of the Hebrew by interpreting the first infinitive (v. 34 לדכא) as dependent on the verbs of the preceding verse (v. 33 ויגה … ענה) like Hillers, but interpreting the next two infinitives as objects of אדני לא ראה like the ASV.

Before making a final evaluation of the translations available, let us also consider how vv. 37-38 follow from vv. 34-36. In the view of Provan, vv. 37-38 seem to be the response to an objection to the Man's speech.[42] He argues that the Man has maintained throughout that God is responsible for what has happened, and vv. 37-38 apparently reaffirm this in the face of an assertion to the contrary. Thus to him, vv. 37-38 do not follow entirely happily from vv. 34-36 if אדני לא ראה is interpreted either as the question, 'does not the Lord see?', or the statement, 'the Lord does not approve'. Provan suggests understanding vv. 34-36 instead as the objection implied by vv. 37-38 and translating אדני לא ראה as a statement, 'the Lord does not see'. Following Rudolph, he understands this as a denial that God is concerned about the matters under discussion; it asserts otherwise that events are taking place of which God has no knowledge and over which he has no control, an assertion that vv. 37-38 try to refute. While Provan's reading is certainly an option, it is not necessarily the only reading that makes sense. Verses 37-38 obviously do not have to be a response to an objection to God's sovereignty to be intelligible in the context, given the existence of several other translations.

Taking into consideration the pertinent concerns, I would like to suggest the following: (1) With respect to the clause אדני לא ראה, since it is not marked as a question, I think it should not be translated as such; (2) since ראה in many cases omits the accusative, with the object implicitly understood (for example, Gen. 18.2; 1 Sam. 24.16; 2 Sam. 24.3; Deut. 24.3), the constructions with ל plus infinitive in vv. 34-36 do not have to be the object of this verb. 1 Samuel 24.16 provides an excellent example in which ראה means looking at/considering a matter without an explicit object:[43]

והיה יהוה לדין ושפט ביני ובינך וירא וירב את ריבי וישפטני מידך

41. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 57-58.
42. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 97.
43. BDB, 7b, p. 907.

> And let the LORD be judge, and let him judge between me and you; let him consider, and let him take my case and vindicate me from your hand (NRSV).

As a result, the infinitive construction may be free to take on the gerundive function, modifying the verbs in v. 33 (ויגה … ענה), and the implied object of ראה would then be the idea presented in the preceding clause (that is, to take delight in afflicting people). Therefore, I prefer to translate vv. 33-36 as follows:

> For he does not afflict from his heart and grieve the sons of men
> By crushing under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,
> By perverting justice of a man before the presence of the Most High,
> By subverting a man in his case. The Lord does not choose [it].

At any rate, the intention to affirm God's justice in these verses is obvious, regardless of one's preference in translation.

(4) *Identification of the Cause of Suffering (v. 39)*

The Man gives the first hint about his understanding of the cause of suffering in v. 39.

> מה־יתאונן אדם חי גבר על־חטאיו[44]
> Of what shall a living man complain? A man of his sins?[45]

The Hebrew is problematic with respect to its exact meaning. Some regard it as corrupt, and emendation has been proposed to replace חי גבר, 'living, a man', with יהי גביר, 'let him be lord'.[46] Westermann, for instance, reads, 'Of what do human beings complain? Let us all master our own sins!' and understands the point being made by the verse is the disallowance of further lamentation. Since Westermann takes the didactic section (vv. 26-41) as an expansion later attached to the units immediately preceding and following it,[47] the resumption of lamentation in vv. 42ff. probably would not be a concern for him. Most scholars, however, retain the MT, and take 'sins' in the sense of 'punishment', the consequence of sins.[48] This interpretation is

44. Read with the *qere*; *kethib* חטאו.

45. Other translations: Berlin (*Lamentations*, p. 80) translates חטאו 'his punishments'; Gottwald (*Lamentations*, p. 14) renders 'why should a living man murmur, a man because of his sins?'; JPS, 'Of what shall a living man complain? each one of his own sins!'; and Hillers (*Lamentations*, p. 51) 'why should a man complain over his sins, as long as he is still alive?'

46. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 163, 166; BHS editorial note.

47. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 168.

48. Albrektson, *Studies*, p. 153; Meek, *Lamentations*, p. 27; Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 51, 58; Gordis, *Lamentations*, pp. 143, 183-84; BDB, p. 308; also NRSV, KJV, NIV, ASV.

probably as good as it gets, given the difficulty involved, for it is consistent with the call for self-examination and repentance that follows. Since God has been shown to be merciful, not arbitrary but just, creating both good and evil and in control of all things, the Man in effect confirms the idea that suffering may be the consequence and punishment of sins. From Mintz's perspective, the conviction of sin, a self-understanding, is deeper than mind and cognition, unnatural but necessary and must be won, since it provides the linkage between the ordeal thrust upon one and his own actions; without it the event is meaningless and God remains a gladiator and beast.[49] Whether the idea here voiced representatively by Mintz[50] is invariably true or not, it is necessary to note that v. 39 does not explicitly say that one should not complain about his suffering because it is *unquestionably* the punishment of his sins; the suffering implied here is essentially that which resulted from sins, since the emphasis is on sins rather than suffering. To acknowledge sin as the possible cause of suffering then is a monumental principle a sufferer must learn, according to the Man. With that conviction, a sufferer now can proceed to the final step in the course of recovery.

(5) *Action Required to Resume a Favorable Relationship with God (vv. 40-47)*

The final action unmistakably is self-examination, confession and acknowledgement of divine intention (vv. 40-47):

נחפשׂה דרכינו ונחקרה ונשׁובה עד־יהוה
נשׂא לבבינו אל־כפים אל־אל בשׁמים
נחנו פשׁענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת
סכתה באף ותרדפנו הרגת לא חמלת
סכותה בענן לך מעבור תפלה
סחי ומאוס תשׂימנו בקרב העמים
פצו עלינו פיהם כל־איבינו
פחד ופחת היה לנו השׁאת והשׁבר

Let us search and examine our ways, and let us return to the Lord.
Let us lift up our heart with our hands to God in heaven.
We have transgressed and rebelled. You have not forgiven.
You have covered yourself in anger and pursued us; you killed without pity.
You have screened yourself with a cloud, without the passing of prayer.
Offscouring and refuse you have made us in the midst of the peoples.
All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.
Terror and pitfall have been ours, crashing[51] and crushing.

49. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 36.
50. See also O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1053.
51. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

This is the only passage in Lamentations 3 that contains the first person plural speaker. While vv. 40-41 are largely considered to come from the same speaker as the preceding verses, the situation is a little different with vv. 42-47. Except for Lee, who believes that Zion and Jeremiah are the speakers of these verses,[52] others interpret the speaker to be either the voice of the community or the voice of the Man addressing his audience.[53] The assignment of vv. 40-47 or only vv. 42-47 to the community, though possible, is too disruptive,[54] especially when the singular voice returns in vv. 48ff. Thus, the preferable choice is clearly reading the entire passage as the Man's address to his audience. If the passage is read as such, then vv. 40-41 consist of the Man's exhortation and vv. 42-46 contain what he believes his people should say to God. That their waywardness would be found in the act of self-examination is assumed (v. 40a), since the exhortation proceeds immediately to repentance (v. 40b), and to reaching out to God wholeheartedly (v. 41). Following the communal admission of guilt (v. 42a) is a description of divine action (vv. 42b-45). The intent of this description is rather perplexing. It is unclear whether God's response to the people's confession or his punishment prior to that confession is in focus. The issue at stake, fundamentally, is whether God does his part. A negative answer is overwhelmingly given by scholars: God does not forgive even when the people have confessed their sins. Judged by the form, as shown by Westermann, vv. 42-51 are very likely a regular communal lament rather than a penitential prayer whose intention is to acknowledge God's just punishment for sins like Ezra 9 or Nehemiah 9.[55] Others have concurred that

52. Lee thinks the Man speaks only vv. 1-24 and 52-66; vv. 25-41 come from another speaker; vv. 42-45 come from Jerusalem/Zion; and vv. 46-51 come from Jeremiah (*The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 168). Lee's assignment is based essentially on the difference in attitude toward Yahweh (pp. 180-81). Such an assignment is probably due to the faulty assumption that there cannot be inconsistencies in a person's attitude toward Yahweh. Joyce's psychological reading of Lamentations shows otherwise ('Lamentations and the Grief Process', pp. 304-20).

53. Of the opinion that the Man speaks here are Lanahan, 'The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations', pp. 45-56; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, pp. 421-23; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 95; Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 100-101; Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 27; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', pp. 1053-54; Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, p. 112. Those who believe that the community speaks here include Mintz, *Hurban*, pp. 36-37; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 65 (the Man's voice in vv. 40-41, and the people's voice in vv. 42-47).

54. Westermann also notes the communal lament beginning at v. 42 as abrupt (*Lamentations*, p. 182).

55. Westermann, *Lamentations,* p. 182. Cf. Boda, 'The Priceless Gain of Penitence'; Bautch, *Developments in Genre*. A major difference between confession in communal

vv. 42-45 are clearly an accusation against God. Lee identifies Zion as the speaker in these verses for the very reason that it resembles her angry tone in Lamentations 1 and 2.[56] Dobbs-Allsopp criticizes the NRSV for missing the accusatory force of v. 42b by supplying the conjunctive 'and' in 'and you have not forgiven', which is absent in the Hebrew.[57] He contends that the pronounced adversative sense being communicated through the antithetical use of the pronouns 'we' and 'you' and the contrast set up between the positive confession and the negative framing of God's action would be better captured by the translation 'but you have not forgiven!' Dobbs-Allsopp elaborates further the force of the accusation:

> The cultural assumption that sin triggers divine anger and punishment was matched in antiquity by an equally strong assumption that repentance should bring about divine compassion and forgiveness (cf. Ps. 32.5). The God to whom loyalty and obedience are owed on pain of punishment is also the God who undertakes to care responsibly for his (or her) human subjects. Thus the man comes to the brink of being consoled by the sentiments of 3.25-39 only to have them dashed by the continuing reality of God's silence and absence and the awful persistence of suffering, which forms the chief focus of the man's words for the remainder of the poem.[58]

Berlin carries the point even so far as to assert that v. 42 contains the most disturbing idea in the chapter and in the entire book,

> The old theology has proved to be false. Contrary to Jer. 18.5-12, which teaches that if the people repent God will change his mind about punishing them, our poet concludes that there is no direct relationship between repentance and forgiveness … repentance would be effective if only it could reach God and that it does not reach him is God's fault.[59]

That vv. 42-45 are basically an accusation gets additional support from the verb סכך, 'to overshadow, screen, cover', which is used in both v. 43 and v. 44. The connotation seems clear in both verses that God covers himself

laments and confession in penitential prayers is that in the latter the lamenters never blame the enemy for their suffering; they know the enemy is only God's agent to carry out his sentence.

56. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, pp. 176-77.

57. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 123. Similarly, Westermann claims that v. 42b presupposes that the people have admitted their guilt and have prayed for forgiveness (*Lamentations*, p. 182).

58. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 123. In the same vein, Renkema suggests that the Man is playing Yahweh off against himself, and his basis for confronting Yahweh with his refusal to forgive is found in 3.33, 'the oppression of human persons is not according to Yahweh's heart' (*Lamentations*, p. 432).

59. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 96.

with anger (v. 43) and with clouds (v. 44).[60] The reflexive sense is unmistakable in v. 44, where God is said to cover himself so as not to let prayers get through. If this is indeed the case, unless one wishes to distinguish different kinds of prayer, then the only way for sinners to return to God is blocked by God himself.

While others opt to read vv. 42-45 as an accusation against God, a few scholars seem to see in vv. 42-45 some kind of penitential prayer. Though not making the point directly, Hillers nevertheless understands these verses as stating the basic situation that can arouse Yahweh to pity: 'we have rebelled, and you have not forgiven, as is evident from what has happened and still is happening to us'.[61] More explicit is Re'emi's remark,

> The prayer that the poet puts into the mouth of the people begins with a confession of sin: 'we have transgressed and rebelled'. Yet this great poet of ours does not count on cheap grace. There is a hidden regret noticeable between the verses that show 'the people have not repented' and 'thou have not forgiven' (v. 42). For the barrier of sin is still there. The poet wants to show his brethren that complaint and even fervent prayer will not help, until they return to the Lord with all their hearts. It is their sins that have caused God's anger (v. 43).[62]

Here Re'emi undoubtedly appeals to the distinction among different kinds of prayer mentioned above. Moreover, he explicitly considers the repentance mentioned in v. 41 as a part of the poet's advice to his people, a fact that truly matters as House elaborates on the importance of true repentance, 'repentance mentioned by a true penitent may not necessarily signal repentance of the whole group'.[63]

The above discussion shows the unlikelihood of an easy solution to the difficult problem inherent in the semantics of the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, given the theological significance of the passage, a few comments are in order. First of all, it is obvious that the Hebrew of v. 42 permits reading it as an accusation (preferred by Dobbs-Allsopp and others) or a statement of fact (proposed by Hillers). It is equally clear that the advocates of both sides lean heavily on their perception of what is going on in the text rather than hard facts. For instance, to presuppose that admission of sin and plea for forgiveness take place implicitly between v. 42a and v. 42b fails to take into account the fact that the Bible mentions not only the kind of forgive-

60. BDB, p. 697; Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 27; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 101; Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 433. Hillers reads v. 43 in the non-reflexive sense, with the object pronoun on ותרדפנו serving for both verbs (cf. 3.2, 5, 66), thus 'you covered us with anger and you pursued us' (*Lamentations*, p. 59).

61. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 72-73.

62. Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, p. 112.

63. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 422.

ness resulting from repentance, but also the kind of forgiveness initiated by God because the human is incapable of the kind of repentance he looks for (for example, Ezek. 16.59-63).[64]

Second, Lamentations 3 is an acrostic poem, and as such the editorial intent must not be overlooked. Even Westermann, who maintains that vv. 42-45 are the accusatory component of an abbreviated communal lament, acknowledges that the compiler of the poem displayed an acute power of association in placing v. 42 next to vv. 39-41.[65] Whether that association supports the view that the Man is accusing Yahweh for not acting as he should is an entirely different matter. The plausibility of that view at least seems doubtful for it largely fails to differentiate the Man and his audience. Given the didactic intent of vv. 39-41, even if the speech of vv. 42-45 comes directly from the community rather than the Man, it would appear very much out of context as an accusation against God's vindictiveness. The given context simply does not provide sufficient evidence to suggest that the community is objecting to the Man's principle, which leads him to plead with his people to self-examine and repent. Moreover, if the people are objecting to the Man, then the repentance mentioned in vv. 40-41 very likely remains his personal conviction rather than theirs. If vv. 42-45 are the Man's speech, as understood in this study, to assume that he negates his own wisdom teaching and exhortation is clearly without basis. There is no need to appeal to psychological reason, since the Man here speaks from a slightly different perspective. We need to remember that before calling his people to return to God, the Man himself has never addressed God directly. Now after the call to repentance (vv. 40-41), together with the community he begins to address God. Mintz offers an insightful comment:

> There is also no turning without someone to turn to. The fact that God is at last addressed directly in these lines must be counted as a breakthrough. The sufferer has spoken in his own voice until now, but his speech has been turned back into the reflexive loneliness of soliloquy. God has been spoken *about* in the sufferer's discourse but never the one spoken *to*. The brutalization of spirit had gone so far that the very possibility of turning toward God had ceased being imaginable. The recognition of sin and the commitment to repentance now permit the sufferer to think of himself once again as a participant in a covenantal relationship, and, as such, as one who possesses rights of entreaty and appeal. The recovery of God as an addressable other is rendered in an echoing of lines from the victimization scene … and their transposition in direct address…: 'And when I cry and plead, he shut out my prayer' (v. 8) now becomes '*you* have screened

64. See Jeremiah Unterman, *The Relationship of Repentance to Redemption in 'Jeremiah'* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1983), pp. 60-77.

65. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 182.

> *Yourself* off with cloud, that no prayer may pass through' (v. 44). The act of denial and repudiation is the same, but the rhetorical direction of the two utterances is not—and that makes all the difference. Deflected, reflexive discourse has become prayer; complaint become supplication.[66]

I completely agree with Mintz that the focus of vv. 40-42 is not on God's vindictiveness. Rather, it is about the letting out a pent-up feeling toward God that the Man just now finds possible.

Third, rejecting the notion that the Man blames God for being vindictive (v. 42) does not require accepting the view that God blocks himself only from insincere prayers (vv. 43-44). To be sure, at the outset of the poem, before reaching the conviction that his suffering is a consequence of sin, the Man already complains about God shutting out his prayers (v. 8), thus we cannot rule out the possibility that the prayer mentioned in vv. 43-44 is of the same kind, namely, complaining prior to conviction. However, nothing in these two verses warrants that only insincere prayers are screened by God.[67] If the author did not make any distinction between sincere and insincere prayers, then the theological idea being made probably goes deeper than allowed by Re'emi and House. I agree with Berlin on one point: it might be true that in the author's perception, human action might not be the primary factor that ensures the outcome of events. If God blocks out prayer, then how can humans, repentant or not, ever reach him? In a sense, a deep anxiety is being reflected in our present passage that seems somewhat contrary to the theology projected by the Man up to this point, an anxiety that is probably rooted in the complex interplay of transgenerational and generational/individual culpabilities. The Man begins his teaching by asserting not his own action but God's mercy as the source of his hope (vv. 21-22). Yet, while having confidence in God's goodness and mercy, he acknowledges his inability to move God to action. Penitential prayer is as far as humans can go but it is not the final say. Humans may utter prayers, but, as frustrating as it might be, the freedom to listen and respond rests entirely with God. After all, Josiah's most sincere reform and repentance could not change the consequence of Israel's long history of rebellion and transgression. The last principle proposed by the Man, therefore, is that his people take the appropriate action toward God with a keen awareness that their action is a required rather than controlling factor.

b. *Theory vs. Feasibility: Is the Man's Instruction Practicable?*

As the communal lament ends with complaints about the enemy (vv. 46-47), the Man resumes his personal lamentation in the remainder of the

66. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 37.

67. God explicitly says he would not listen to Jeremiah's prayer for the people (Jer. 7.16; cf. 14.11).

poem. The resumption of lamentation in the first person singular stirs up scholarly debate that either the Man is not the speaker here since he previously resolved to be silent in the face of agony, or he must be a conflicting person. Evidently, there is no compelling reason to posit another speaker. Besides a few exceptions, it is generally agreed that it is the same Man who speaks here. Therefore, we need to address the apparent contradiction in the Man's teaching and practice. In more recent studies, an observation commonly made about Lamentations 3 is that it depicts an inner struggle of the Man to persuade himself and others about the proper behavior in suffering.[68] Provan describes the Man's struggle as follows:

> He, too, when faced with the reality of suffering, struggles to explain what is happening in terms of his faith, to find hope in the midst of despair. Like most sufferers, he swings from one extreme to the other. He complains, he is driven to doubt. He immediately expresses hope and affirms that silence and patience are good, exhorting himself and others to prayer; and then falls back within himself, complaining and hoping for revenge on his enemies. The central poem of the book does not, then, give us news of the triumph of faith over doubt, as has often been claimed by commentators. It gives us only an interim report on a battle in progress.[69]

Surely, to a certain extent, Provan's description of the battle between faith and doubt might be applicable to almost anyone who earnestly wishes to understand the ways of God and human suffering. The Man would probably be no exception in the context of Lamentations 3. However, while agreeing with Provan that Lamentations 3 gives us only an interim report on a battle in progress rather than news of *complete* triumph of faith over doubt, and that the Man's mood swing is perceivable, I believe it is not entirely accurate to say that he swings from one extreme to the other *extreme*. Although the mood swing helps explain why the Man continues to complain and hope for revenge on his enemies after affirming that silence is good, we need to remember the fact that the complaints at the outset and at the end of the poem differ fundamentally. The fundamental difference between the first and second personal laments resides in the subject of complaint. In the first personal complaint (vv. 1-20), the object of complaint is God, whereas in the second (vv. 48-66), the object is the enemies. To be sure, the intricate relationship between the divine and human agents of destruction, already touched upon in Chapter 4 of this study, perhaps will always seem incomprehensible to us and thus cannot be spoken of in simple and definite terms. Nevertheless, the biblical writers, especially the psalmists, do distinguish

68. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1051; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 84; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 123.

69. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 84.

God and their human enemies. Lamentations 3 is a lament. To equate its complaint against God with its complaint against the enemies is basically erroneous, and we would definitely not do so in our reading of the lament psalms.[70] Otherwise, we would inevitably conclude that the lamenters of the psalms, like the Man, do not have viable faith in God. Nothing is further from the truth, for the lamenters in psalms often claim to be the righteous, who seek and trust God, while condemning their enemies (for example, Psalms 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, etc.). The Man's complaint against the enemies after his deliberate resolution to be silent before God, therefore, is not inconsistent with the behavioral pattern of typical pious Israelites. On the contrary, calling upon God for deliverance from the enemies exhibits a marked evolution in his faith, for God not only ceases to be his enemy but also becomes his ally, or at the very least is asked to be one. As far as the way out of despair is concerned, the Man's instruction and its practicality are basically sound, since it effectively removes the cause of despair, which is God being the ultimate enemy who has no mercy. If the loss of fellowship with God is the most painful aspect of suffering, as Mintz suggests, the Man demonstrates that it can be restored. In the first lament God is the enemy rather than the God of the covenant. There he is kept remote and not even mentioned by name. Conversely, in the second lament, God is the addressable God of the covenant, who sharply distinguishes his covenantal people and their enemies. Here, confidence in him is expressed in no ambiguous terms (vv. 55-58). In Mintz's view, the complaint against the enemies even seems indispensable, since relationship with God cannot be reconstructed if God remains the direct source of affliction.[71] At any rate, the Man's faith at the end of the poem is definitely not at the same level as it is at the outset.

Although his faith grows significantly, whether the Man in resuming his personal lament goes against his own advice to be silent is still an issue that needs to be addressed. To be sure, faith does not necessarily mean silence; otherwise the laments of the Psalter would not have existed or been sung in community worship. In any case, the challenge remains as to why the Man talks about silence whereas he knows there is much more to say. There are at least two possibilities. First, as already touched upon, we might explain silence in the sense of patience, grief and humiliation before God and that it is only applicable to accusations against God. Or second, we may ascribe the

70. It is only in the penitential prayer, which emerged in the Persian period, that there is no appeal for vengeance against the enemy. Although the penitential prayer is viewed as an evolved form of the genre of communal lament, it is not exactly the same as the communal lament (e.g., Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9). Boda ('The Priceless Gain of Penitence') and Bautch (*Developments in Genre*, pp. 70-71) view Lamentations as transitional between the communal lament and the penitential prayer.

71. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 40.

Man's behavior to his human nature, a nature that cries out in pain no matter how much he trusts in God. Although a few can refrain from complaining and appealing for justice, people in general cannot and are not expected to do so. The book of Job puts the most acute complaints and cries for justice in the mouth of the most pious person on earth. Judged by the superscript, most of the laments of the psalms are believed to have come from the most faithful followers of Yahweh, for example David or Moses.[72] Even the New Testament, which often calls for passivity, encourages a persistent cry for justice until it is granted (Lk. 18.1-8). The Man may truly believe that silence is the better option, a belief pervasive in the Christian church but severely criticized by Westermann,[73] yet under the yoke of his affliction, he finally succumbs to the second best. After all he does not have to be different from David, whose offspring he seems to represent. Let us recall David's response in the scenario involving Shimei's insults in 2 Sam. 16.5-13,

> When King David came to Bahurim, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out whose name was Shimei son of Gera; he came out cursing. He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; now all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left. Shimei shouted while he cursed, 'Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! The LORD has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, disaster has overtaken you; for you are a man of blood.'
>
> Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.' But the king said, 'What have I to do with you, you son of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David', who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on my distress, and the LORD will repay me with good for this cursing of me today.' So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, throwing stones and flinging dust at him (NRSV).

Blameless as he was here in his pious attitude and instruction to his men, David could not resist the desire to see justice done as he charged his son Solomon with the retribution recorded in 1 Kgs 2.8-9.

> There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the

72. Psalm 90 contains hymnic and general complaint attitudes as well as communal complaint (Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 95).

73. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 81-82.

> Lord, 'I will not put you to death with the sword'. Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol (NRSV).

Calling for silence, the Man, like David, wishes to surrender judgment to God and relinquish his own effort to solve the problem of his suffering. Again, like David, he wishes to see those who wrong him punished, but unlike David, he appeals to the God of justice and mercy rather than mere men. Though consensus might never be reached, I hope this suggestive answer allows us to see human limitation manifested in the Man's contradiction with respect to his call for silence and his continuing lament. In a way, it is this human limitation that prevents the Man from being a superhero and consequently a difficult role model for ordinary people to follow. Renkema thinks kings are too unique and extraordinary individuals to be good models, and he might be right most of the time.[74] Nevertheless, as we look at humanity at a deeper level as in this case, the Man and King David are only ordinary people.

Excursus: Past Suffering vs. Present Suffering: The Tenses of Lamentations 3.52-61

Before discussing the next function of the Man, I would like to address briefly the interpretive difficulty related to the perfects of vv. 52-61. The chief concern is whether they are used to express a past experience or one at the present, since the perfective form of fientive verbs may refer to any block of time, past, present or future.[75] The passage is reproduced below for ready reference:

(52) צוד צדוני כצפור איבי חנם
צמתו בבור חיי וידו־אבן בי
צפו־מים על־ראשי אמרתי נגזרתי
(55) קראתי שׁמך יהוה מבור תחתיות
קולי שׁמעת אל־תעלם אזנך לרוחתי לשׁועתי
קרבת ביום אקראך אמרת אל־תירא
רבת אדני ריבי נפשׁי גאלת חיי
(59) ראיתה יהוה עותתי שׁפטה משׁפטי
ראיתה כל־נקמתם כל־מחשׁבתם לי
שׁמעת חרפתם יהוה כל־מחשׁבתם עלי

> Those who were my enemies without cause have hunted me like a bird (52).
> They flung me alive into a pit and hurled stones at me.
> Water closed over my head; I said, 'I am lost'.
> I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit (55).

74. Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 350.
75. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 486.

You heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!'
You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!'
You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life (58).
You have seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge my cause.
You have seen all their malice, all their plots against me.
You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me (61) (NRSV)

The above NRSV interpretation of the perfects seems to project the following scenario: the Man describes the event that leads to his present distress (vv. 52-54); he recounts how he called to God for help in the past (vv. 55-58); he appeals to God for deliverance from his current situation (vv. 59ff.). The RSV translation, closely resembling the NRSV above, is already deemed unsatisfactory for the most part, especially by Provan. Yet scholarly opinions on what is satisfactory vary widely and agreement seems nowhere in sight.[76] Westermann, followed by House, compares the structure of Lam. 3.52-58 to that of a thanksgiving psalm and understands vv. 52-54 to be the retrospection on a prior state of distress and vv. 55-58 a report of being rescued. Gordis and Hillers interpret the verbs in vv. 57-62 and vv. 56-61 respectively as precative perfects.[77] Gordis argues that rendering the verbs as imperatives gives a natural and unforced meaning to the passage, while Hillers appeals to Ps. 130.1-2, a parallel passage where he believes such interpretation is confirmed:

ממעמקים קראתיך יהוה
אדני שׁמעה בקולי תהיינה אזניך קשׁבות לקול תחנוני

Since קראתי in Lam. 3.55 parallels קראתיך in Ps. 130.1, Hillers thinks שׁמעה בקולי in Ps. 130.2 also parallels קולי שׁמעת in Lam. 3.56, which must then be 'Hear my voice'. While his interpretation of Psalm 130 is clearly correct, the normal use of the perfect allows Lam. 3.56 to be understood legitimately as either past or present.[78] A past interpretation of the perfect in Lam. 3.56, however, would require taking the imperative clause (אל־תעלם אזנך) following it as a citation (see NRSV). In that case, we have a unique

76. Albrektson, *Studies*, p. 163; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 97; Gordis, *Lamentations*, pp. 186-87; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 59; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 426; Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 103-106; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 449-52; Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 185-87.

77. Hillers acknowledges that the use of the perfect to express a wish or request is disputed (*Lamentations*, p. 15). It does not seem to be a disputed issue for Waltke-O'Connor, since they do not even list precative among the uses of the perfect.

78. Expressing a present situation, the perfects in Lam. 3.55, 56 may as well be translated in the indicative: 'I call', 'you have heard' (see Waltke-O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 486-87).

form since a statement that God has heard a petition followed by the citation of that petition occurs in no other address to God in the Hebrew Bible, according to Provan.[79] Provan, like Hillers, thinks it is preferable to take the perfects of Lam. 3.56-61 as precatives, since there are many parallels to pleas to God in the present in which verbal or nominal forms of אזן are used (for example, Pss. 10.17; 71.2; 86.1; 130.2; 141.1; 143.1), and the imperatives are also used in Lam. 3.59[80] and 3.63. Unlike Hillers, who translates all the perfects of Lam. 3.52-54 in the past tense, Provan follows the RSV with a slight modification to v. 54, translating the perfect there as 'has closed' to emphasize a current distress. Also echoing Gordis in his concern about a natural reading of the text, Provan argues that without a convincing transition between the two situations, that is from present (vv. 52-54) to past (vv. 55-62) back to present (vv. 63-66), the distinction between the two situations cannot plausibly be made.

Understandably, the motivation behind these analyses is the scholarly desire to penetrate into the psyche of the Man in his present distress. What does it really mean if the Man recalls a past deliverance, or not? Unfortunately, a different take on the tense of the perfects does not necessarily dictate a different perception of the Man's mind. For an illustration, let us consider suggestions from Provan, Renkema and House. Provan and Renkema both insist on taking the perfects in vv. 52-66 as present (perfect precatives and present indicatives respectively), yet their conclusions about the Man's consciousness cannot be farther apart. Maintaining that the point at which God takes notice is the point at which lament ceases, Provan points to v. 63, 'behold their sitting', as indication that the Man does not believe that God has seen his plight, and concludes, 'we are entitled to see in vv. 52-66 … a retreat from the confident position adopted in the middle of the poem. Faith and reason have for the moment been overwhelmed by experience'.[81] Inversely, Renkema asserts that understanding the perfects

79. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 105. Renkema, however, does not agree that the imperative clause constitutes a citation. He comments, 'If YHWH does not hear then it is not because he cannot but because he does not want to hear. Thus—contra Provan—one should not simply interpret אזנך אל־תעלם as a repetition of קולי שמעת. Hearing need not mean the same thing as "listening" which in YHWH's case ultimately boils down to salvific intervention. The prohibitive constitutes an appeal to YHWH . . . not to stop his ears and cut himself off from the appeal for help which he actually hears' (*Lamentations*, p. 452).

80. Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 105-106. For Lam. 3.59, the LXX reads שׁפטת (ἐκρινάς) for שׁפטה in MT (BHS). Albrektson points to the possibility that the LXX translator is influenced by the perfect in the verse (*Studies*, pp. 166-67), thus in a way trying to resolve the difficulty under discussion.

81. Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 82, 83-84.

as signifying present meaning allows us 'to understand the entire text as a prayer beginning with the expression of faith on the basis of which the גבר has consistently appealed to the heart of YHWH. He is confident that YHWH will hear, see and save.'[82] On the other hand, House, interpreting the perfects as past tense, comes to a conclusion more similar to Renkema's:

> The speaker faced horrible circumstances in the past … but God delivered him. . . . This fact helps him hope that God will punish those who punished him and his people (vv. 64-66). He is still here, still alive, and that in itself proves that God's current kindness builds on God's past mercy, however severe that mercy may have been.[83]

The meaning of the passage under discussion is obviously elusive and it is doubtful if any additional suggestion will change that fact. Nevertheless, some remarks are needed at this point. It seems to me that the views held by Provan on the one hand and Renkema on the other represent two extremes of the spectrum, with Provan being too pessimistic while Renkema is overly optimistic. Earlier I touched on the idea that humans can go as far as praying, but they cannot determine God's response, and I think it still operates in the present passage. Not hearing God's voice does not necessarily mean faith and reason are drowned in painful experience, as Provan thinks. Neither does believing that God hears mean absolute certainty that he will act, as Renkema suggests. I completely agree with Provan that the point where we perceive God's notice is the point where our suffering ceases, but while waiting and uncertainty are painful the recalling of past deliverance is a source of comfort and hope.[84] Psalm 143 provides an excellent illustration of a situation where overwhelming distress, trust, hope and comfort in God's past intervention are intermingled. There the psalmist talks about his life being crushed (v. 3) and his spirit failing in waiting (v. 7), but at the same time recalling God's wonderful deeds he can reach out to God (vv. 5-6) and say, 'in you I put my trust' (v. 8). I believe that House's view represents a more balanced understanding of the Man's state of mind since it fits the context better. In his first lament (vv. 1-21) the Man says he has hope because he remembers God's kindness; here in the second lament (vv. 52-66) he may as well turn to that practice again. Like other sufferers, he has hope as a powerful impetus to prayer, for without hope, prayer would probably cease to exist. Since hope realized is no longer hope (Rom. 8.24), it is only in the midst of uncertainty that hope matters the most. The Man can pray like the psalmists because he possesses hope rather than lacks it,

82. Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 450.

83. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 426.

84. It is very clear that Yahweh's wonderful deeds in the past are a source of comfort for the troubled sufferer in Psalm 143 (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, p. 537).

and that makes all the difference in his outlook. Needless to say, House's view has its own difficulty, because clear transitions between the two situations, past and present, appear to be completely lacking in the text. This is not detrimental, however, since a clear delimitation has neither been found by scholars who advocate reading the perfects as present tense (for example, Gordis, Hillers and Provan each applies that reading to a different section).

3. *Theological Function*

Often regarded as the theological center of the book, Lamentations 3 vests its theological significance in its key persona, the Man. Through the Man, Lamentations 3 deals with theological issues that are of paramount importance to survivors in the face of total destruction. As the people fear that the misery is here to stay, the Man helps get them out of despair by showing them his concept of God. The Man's conception of God sees no situation that is beyond repair. It boldly affirms that even in the darkest time, place and circumstance, where all hope seems shattered, God is hope. It declares that God's great faithfulness is renewed each morning and never ends. The Man testifies not only about God's universal goodness but also about his personal concern for his covenantal people. Even if he sees the futility of complaining about the punishment of one's sins, his lamentation in a way confirms the age-old belief that inspires communal and individual laments in Israel: in time of distress, they may present their suffering to Yahweh and call on him for deliverance. The gist of the theological function of the Man, however, is deeper and more subtle than the foregoing ideas. To be sure, those are very important, but at the same time they are general rather than specific to Israel. Israel's specific concerns center on two issues: the Deuteronomic indictment and the status of the covenant.[85]

a. *Deuteronomic Indictment*

It is hardly necessary to repeat again that according to the Deuteronomic belief, national catastrophe is a sign of divine displeasure, and in order to restore God's favor repentance must take place (for example, Deuteronomy 28; 30; 1 Kgs 8.22-53).[86] Lamentations 3 indicates clearly that the disaster now confronting the Man is not personal but nationwide (vv. 48-51), and the

85. Cf. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 33; Jill Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentation III', *VT* 56 (2006), pp. 505-25 (521).

86. The prophets see national disasters as divine punishment and often demand national repentance if disaster it to be averted (e.g., Amos 5.4-6; Hos. 5.15; Jer. 3.12-18). However, Thomas Raitt, *A Theology of Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 35-37ff., 57-58, and Jeremiah Unterman, *The Relationship of Repentance to Redemption in 'Jeremiah'*, show that both Jeremiah and Ezekiel stop calling for repentance because

rational explanation for it is divine punishment; thus repentance is imperative (vv. 40-47). The Man is the author's vehicle to foster an impression that the national repentance has taken place, meaning Israel has done its part toward restoration. In Lam. 3.40-47, the returning to God and the acknowledgement of sin are explicitly confessed by the Man and implicitly by the people he represents. As discussed earlier, some read the statement אתה לא סלחת, 'you have not forgiven' (v. 42), as an accusation of God and interpret consequently that it is an indication of the Man's rejection of the theologies of his time. For instance, K. O'Connor states:

> Since he believes God to be good, the strong man adopts the prophetic and Deuteronomistic view that catastrophe must be the result of human sinfulness (3.39-41). Yet he cannot convince himself of this view. The communal confession of sin is perfunctory and is followed by blame of God for failing to forgive (3.43-46). . . . The strong man's prayer, therefore, is a prayer of protest and resistance.[87]

As already mentioned, the text of Lamentations is too complex to be reduced to one single correct reading. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the context of Deuteronomic curses and blessings (Deuteronomy 28–30) and the use of the word סלח, 'forgive', I believe that a very different reading may be given to Lam. 3.42 (נחנו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת, 'We have transgressed and rebelled, you have not forgiven'). In the Hebrew Bible, the word סלח is used forty-five times. Of those, sixteen are used in the books of Leviticus and Numbers and pertain to something or someone forgiven by Yahweh.[88] Another sixteen are used in prayers to Yahweh for forgiveness.[89] Nine are used in statements to affirm God's intention to forgive.[90] In only four cases, the word is used to signal God's unwillingness to forgive (Deut. 29.19; 2 Kgs 24.4; Jer. 5.7; Lam. 3.42). Yahweh refuses to forgive Judah for the sins of Manasseh in 2 Kgs 24.4, and in Jer. 5.7ff. he indicates that Israel's unfaithfulness cannot be forgiven. In both cases, God's refusal to forgive comes before the destruction of the nation. The most interesting case is Deut. 29.19. Following Deuteronomy 28, which spells out the curses entailed by disobedience, many of which are realized in Lamentations, and preceding Deuteronomy 30, which assures restoration once the punished have returned from their sins, Deuteronomy 29 restates God's intention to

they realize, at the reality of calamity, that the people are incapable of it and start to advocate unconditional redemption.

87. O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1058.

88. Lev. 4.20, 26, 31, 35; 5.10, 13, 16, 18, 26; 19.22; Num. 15.25, 26, 28; 30.6, 9, 13.

89. Exod. 34.9; Num. 14.19; 1 Kgs 8.30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Kgs 5.18; 2 Chron. 6.21, 25, 27, 30, 39; Ps. 25.11; Dan. 9.19; Amos 7.2.

90. Num. 14.20; 2 Chron. 7.14; Ps. 103.3; Isa. 55.7; Jer. 5.1; 31.34; 33.8; 36.3; 50.20.

carry out the terms of his covenant with 29.19 affirming Yahweh's unwillingness to forgive those who violate those terms. Thus in the context of Deuteronomy, God's unwillingness to forgive also comes before punishment and the ensuing repentance.[91] If the author of Lamentations 3 was familiar with the Deuteronomic tradition, then the likelihood is that he was also aware of God's unwillingness to forgive before the curses are fulfilled. After all, it might not be accidental that the juxtaposition of the two Hebrew words לענה and ראשׁ are found in both Deuteronomy 29 and Lamentations 3. Even though לענה is used eight times in the entire Hebrew Bible, and five times it occurs in close proximity with ראשׁ, only in Deut. 29.17 and Lam. 3.19 are they found next to each other, albeit in reversed order.[92] In Deut. 29.17 ראשׁ ולענה is used as part of the description of a rebellious person whom Yahweh is not willing to forgive. In Lam. 3.19 לענה וראשׁ is used in the description of the condition which in recollection drives the Man to despair. If the author of Lamentations 3 had in mind the context of Deuteronomy 28–30, as evidence suggests, then Lam. 3.42-47 would fit very well the Deuteronomic scheme:

Deuteronomic Scheme	Lamentations 3
Deuteronomy 28 Curses entailed by disobedience	v. 42a 'We have sinned and rebelled' (= a statement acknowledging violation of covenantal terms)
Deuteronomy 29 Yahweh will not forgive before punishment	v. 42b 'You have not forgiven' (= a statement of fact before punishment)

91. In his study of human repentance and divine forgiveness in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Thomas Raitt rightly remarks, 'a call to repentance necessarily included some promise of mercy from God if the people heeded it. And it is difficult to imagine what happened in a covenant renewal ceremony unless there were included calls to repentance and promises of forgiveness. Exod. 34.6-7 and Num. 14.18 support this; but Josh. 24.19; Exod. 23.21; and Deut. 29.20 warn that the people cannot count on God's forgiveness in the event of substantial covenant-breaking sins. In the Old Testament as a whole there is nothing approaching a normative understanding of how accessible God's mercy or forgiveness is, nor how far forgiveness when granted goes in removing the stain of guilt and the burden of punishment. This warns us against generalizations, and forces us to deal with specific situations on an individual basis' (*A Theology of Exile*, p. 57).

92. לענה is found in Deut. 29.17; Jer. 9.14; 23.15; Lam. 3.15, 19; Amos 5.7; 6.12; Prov. 5.4. It occurs in the same or in the contiguous sentence with ראשׁ in Jer. 9.14; 23.15; Amos 6.12; Deut. 29.17; Lam. 3.19.

Deut. 29.19 Yahweh's intention to carry out the punishment	v. 43ff. 'You covered yourself with anger and' pursued us (= punishment)
Deuteronomy 30 When the *punished* return, restoration will follow	vv. 40-41 'Let us return to the LORD…' (=act of repentance now while being punished; restoration will follow)

Although the intention to repent is mentioned first in vv. 40-41, we need to remember that the prayer only begins in v. 42. If we understand vv. 40-41 as describing the Man/people's resolution to repent, while their actual act of turning to God starts in vv. 42-47, then v. 42 confirms the Man's belief in, rather than his protest of, the Deuteronomic tradition. Whether the Man likes it or not, the fact remains that God does not forgive before the sentence is somehow carried out, just as 2 Kings 23 makes clear that Josiah's repentance cannot prevent Yahweh's wrath. Mark Boda correctly remarks that in the Deuteronomic tradition, repentance is not presented as a human response to avoid judgment, but rather as a human response to bring an end to judgment (that is, exile) based on the mercy of God.[93] The Man's faith in the Deuteronomic tradition convinces him that repentance is necessary before restoration can take place, even if restoration itself must be initiated by God. At any rate, as far as repentance is concerned, the Man indicates clearly that he and his people have tried to meet God's requirement.

b. *Status of the Covenant*

The second idea that Lamentations 3 seems to impress upon its audience is the confirmation of the covenant, and again the Man proves to be the major impetus to secure such impression. We cannot overemphasize the theological crisis Israel went through when the nation's autonomy was utterly lost at the hands of foreigners and Israel's kings were taken into exile. Mintz accurately describes the situation:

> It was the despairing conclusion of the people that the fall of Jerusalem was more than an act of divine retribution. The fall, it was feared, was not a moment of strain in an eternal relationship between God and Israel but the end of that relationship. The abandonment of the Davidic line and the destruction of the Temple were taken as signs that God had indeed turned away, abdicated his protectorship, and returned Israel to the chaos

93. Mark Boda, 'Renewal in Heart, Word, and Deed: Repentance in the Torah', in *Repentance in Christian Theology* (ed. Mark Boda and Gordon T. Smith; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), pp. 3-24 (19-20).

> of history. God, in sum, had unleashed a destruction that was more than a punishment.[94]

Seeing the surviving remnant on the verge of relinquishing hope in a covenant that is so central to Israel's existence as a nation, the author of Lamentations 3 tried to save it. Through his persona, the Man, the author seemed to accomplish his three purposes: (1) fostering the idea that the Davidic line is not lost; (2) confirming the perpetuity of the Davidic covenant; (3) assuring a future beyond the present misery.

First of all, perhaps understanding that unless the voice of a Davidic king is heard all efforts to bring back hope would be futile, he presented the Man as a *type* figure of Davidic kings, as established earlier in this study. For ancient Israel, the presence of a king has a special import that we cannot overlook. H. Wheeler Robinson argues that in the Hebrew conception of corporate personality, the whole group, including its past, present and future members, might function as a single individual through any one of those members conceived as representative of it.[95] The role of the king in such conception cannot be overstated, as Robinson writes:

> When the monarchy emerges, the king is Yahweh's son, which is exactly what Hosea calls the nation [II Sam 7.14; Hos 11.1]. The king represents the people to Yahweh; he was in C.R. Noth's words, 'a Priest in and through whom the people were brought near to God, rather than a Prophet through whom God was mediated to the people'.[96]

The king is 'more than what we nowadays mean by the word representative'; as Mowinckel asserts, 'in a mystical way he *is* what he represents. The people acts, receives, and lives in and through him.'[97] It appears then that a people cannot truly exist without their king. By presenting the Man as a king, the author assured his people that their world, no matter how difficult and chaotic, had not come to an end.

94. Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 20.

95. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, rev. edn, 1980), p. 25. Gordis refers to the same concept as 'fluid personality' (*Lamentations*, pp. 172, 174).

96. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, pp. 35-36. Similarly, underlining the practice of substitution in Mesopotamia was the feeling of the absolute primacy of the king, who was conceived as the country's head, master, director, shepherd and father. Because of the king's absolute primacy, once danger was perceived to be upon him, a substitute had to be found to bear the king's fate; it is only upon the death of his substitute that all danger was believed to have been averted from his person and therefore from his people and country (Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writings, Reasonings, and the Gods* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], pp. 144, 153).

97. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 61.

Second, through the Man, the author assured the people that the Davidic covenant was still in effect. While most scholars attend only to the notion of God's universal mercy encoded in the noun חסד (v. 22), a few have correctly drawn attention to the idea of covenant loyalty. Dobbs-Allsopp, Re'emi and Berlin see the term as an obvious reference to the covenant God made with Israel.[98] Dobbs-Allsopp specifically stresses the importance of the Davidic covenant as the basis for the Man's hope,

> The references to 'steadfast love', 'mercies', and 'faithfulness' in 3.22-23 allude to God's covenant loyalties as stipulated according to the Davidic grant (e.g., 2 Sam 7.15; 1 Kgs 8.23; Ps 89.2, 14, 24-37; Isa 55.3). Among the differences between the Davidic and Mosaic covenants, one stands out: the Davidic covenant is promissory in nature, an oath undertaken by God obligating God to Judah irrespective of the latter's behavior. . . . It is this overt promissory aspect of the Davidic covenant that renders the man's hope more than a simple affirmation of confidence in God.[99]

Asserting that God's covenantal love for him never ends, the Man gives the people the assurance that the Davidic covenant is still valid. This means that the fall should be construed as temporary chastisement rather than the end of the relationship between God and Israel.

Lastly, through the Man, the author pointed toward a future by attributing the present misery to God's higher purpose for Israel rather than to his vindictive wrath. The Man, even in his peril, can still testify that Yahweh is *good* to those who wait for him, and that it is *good* for one to bear the yoke in his youth. Gottwald stresses the point further, 'in fact it is good that the yoke of suffering be born patiently, for even in adversity Yahweh displays his goodness. . . . The grief that Yahweh has dealt out is not willful or perpetual but a seasonal chastening and tempering that is bound to give way to his compassion and love (3.31-33)'.[100] Since the present chastisement testifies that God acts according to his words, the king and the people may count on his faithfulness concerning his compassion and love for them in the future.

4. *Summary*

This chapter discusses the significance of the Man of Lamentations 3. As a *type* figure of Davidic kings, the Man assumes three different functions in Lamentations 3. Psychologically, as a representative of his people, he

98. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 118; Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, p. 107; Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 93.

99. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, pp. 118-19.

100. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 105.

allows the voice of communal suffering to be heard. Assuming the same fate with the people, he expresses frustration concerning God's treatment on their behalf. Didactically, he guides the people step by step to move out of their despair and regain hope in God's goodness. Theologically, he confirms the belief that God acts consistently with his words with respect to both the Deuteronomic tradition and the Davidic covenant. Concerning the Deuteronomic belief, he helps the people take the right action by returning to God, thus urging him to bring an end to their suffering according to his words. Regarding the Davidic covenant, he affirms that it is perpetually effective and that the present punishment is a discipline carried out according to God's promise. This discipline is proof that God will also honor his promise of perpetual love for David and Israel in the future.

7

Chorus in the Dark: Will There Be a Future?

Up to this point, the personified Zion and the Man have been examined only in connection with the individual chapters in which they appear. Given the significant roles these two personae play in Lamentations, it seems obvious that we cannot hope to understand the book as a whole unless the relationship between them is understood. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to examine this relationship in the context of Lamentations, and how it shapes the meaning of Lamentations in the present form.

1. *Zion and the Man in the Context of Lamentations*

Before discussing the relationship between Zion and the Man, it seems logical to become familiar with the other voices that contribute significantly to the textual world of Lamentations first. As mentioned in the introduction, both the number of voices in the book and the boundary of their speeches vary from one view to another. At present, it appears that no one has convincingly identified any other than the four principal voices, namely, the lamenter (s), the personified Zion, the Man and the community. The purpose of the inclusion of these different voices in the book is to present the catastrophe from a variety of perspectives. Indeed, as we have seen, Zion, the Man and the lamenter(s) each has a slightly different story to tell. Although we have not discussed the voice of the community proper (4.17-20; 5.1-22), this voice will be addressed shortly after we take another look at the lamenter(s)'s perspective.

a. *The Lamenter's Voice*

The lamenter (s)'s speech is commonly understood as consisting of the following passages:

Lam. 1.1-11, 17 (vv. 9c and 11c constituting a reported speech of or an interruption by Zion)[1]
Lam. 2.1-19 (with a few reported speeches)[2]
Lam. 4.1-16, 21-22[3]

As mentioned before, the order of ע־פ used in Lamentations 1 suggests that this acrostic poem was not written by the author(s) of Lamentations 2–4. Therefore, it is not advisable to assume that the lamenters in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 are identical. Nevertheless, in the present shape of Lamentations, I think we can speak of a generalized lamenter's voice, since the lamenters of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 do not seem to disagree with each other. While the lamenter of Lamentations 1 might appear to stand closest to the prophetic viewpoint, explicitly holding an orthodox view that the destruction is just punishment for Zion's sin,[4] as we have seen, the lamenters of Lamentations 2 and 4 never actually oppose that view. On the other hand, although the lamenter of Lamentations 1 does not openly express his personal grief over the suffering of Zion's children like the lamenters of Lamentations 2 and 4, he nowhere denies having such grief. Since it makes little difference whichever lamenter is speaking, I will refer to the lamenters of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 as 'the lamenter', as if they are one.

Although it is difficult to speak of a progression in Lamentations, in the present order of the poems, Lamentations does give us the impression that the lamenter's speech gradually takes over Zion's speech and becomes her spokesperson. As the voice of Zion fades out, the voice of the lamenter fills its place. Zion pours out her lament in chapter 1, but she grows quieter in chapter 2 where the lamenter's voice becomes dominant. Zion presents only her resentment against God again in this chapter when the lamenter urges

1. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 48, 57; Grossberg, 'Lamentations', pp. 1589-91; Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', pp. 147-50; Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 16-17; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 342; Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 6; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1027; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 33; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, p. 83; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 90, 138-39, 150-51.

2. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 67; Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', pp. 150-53; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 42; Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 16; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1036; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 57; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, pp. 91-92; Renkema, *Lamentations*, pp. 208-212. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, pp. 375, 385, interprets vv. 11-19 as coming from someone like Jeremiah.

3. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', pp. 164-65; O'Connor, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 1059; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 109. A few scholars do not identify the speaker of these verses (4.21-22) as the lamenter of Lamentations 1 and 2. Hillers calls him a survivor, while others simply name him 'a speaker'.

4. As observed by Elizabeth Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?*, pp. 174, 190.

her to pray for the sake of her innocent children (2.20-22). As we come to chapter 4, we no longer hear Zion's voice but only that of the lamenter. It is also noticeable that the substance of the lamenter's complaint in chapters 2 and 4 reflects considerably the content of Zion's lament in chapter 1, as the chart below clearly shows. This thematic resemblance goes beyond the themes common to the genre of lament, for it includes specific ideas such as the lack of a comforter, the incomparability of Zion's ruins and the expression of kinesthetic pain.

Zion's speech in Lamentations 1	The Lamenter's speech in Lamentations 2 and 4
Zion's incomparable pain (v. 12)	Zion's incomparable ruins (2.13) Zion's shocking downfall (4.12)
God's unrelenting wrath (vv. 12-15)	God's unrelenting wrath (2.1-10; 4.11)
The children's fate (vv. 18-19)	The children's fate (2.10, 19) The people's vicissitudes (4.1-10)
Zion was deceived by her lovers (v. 19)	The prophets' false and deceptive visions failed to warn Zion (2.14)
Zion is without a comforter (vv. 16, 17, 21)	Zion's vast ruins are beyond comfort (2.13)
Zion's kinesthetic distress (v. 20)	Lamenter's kinesthetic distress (2.11)

To some extent, we have observed the lamenter's attitude toward Zion in the preceding discussion of this persona. In Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, the lamenter seems to understand Zion's situation from her perspective most of the time. He agrees with Zion throughout that it is her sin that brought her downfall (1.5b, 8a; 4.6, 22; cf. 1.14a, 18a, 20b, 22b). He understands clearly that her ultimate punisher is God (for example, 1.5b, 17; 2.1-8; 4.11; cf. 1.12c-15). Even if it is true that the lamenter in Lamentations 1 once wishes to focus on Zion's filthiness to draw forth outrage and contempt from the audience (1.8-9a),[5] he generally displays considerable sympathy for her.

5. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 53-55; C.W. Miller, 'Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1', pp. 405-406. In a note on Zion's shame, Berlin remarks, 'The image of the city as widow leads to the idea of mourning and abandonment, and it evokes pity. But almost immediately a different set of associations impinges: this apparent pitiful woman had taken lovers, she had acted immorally, and she deserves her punishment'; 'worse than nakedness is the sexual abuse . . . at this point, disgust for the immoral Jerusalem turns to sympathy'; 'her impurity results from her sexual immorality. She is not a menstruant; she is a whore.' Similarly, Miller draws his conclusion on the lamenter's intention based on the type of reaction his portrayal of Zion elicits; he cites H.L. Ellison's comments on Lam. 1.8-9, 'Here she is compared to

He definitely pays attention to her need of a comforter (1.2b, 9b; 2.13b; cf. 1.16b, 17a, 21a). He feels a distress similar to Zion's distress when he sees the suffering of her children (2.11; cf. 1.20b). Ultimately, he admits with Zion that her destruction is incomparable and shocking (2.13; 4.12).

The principal difference between the lamenter and Zion lies in the way they make accusations against God. We have seen how the lamenter's attitude toward Yahweh is markedly different from Zion's in Lamentations 2. His language closely resembles that of the pious psalmists in their distinguishing God and the enemies, whereas her language makes no such distinction. Although the lamenter recognizes that God is the ultimate destroyer, nowhere does he directly place the common people as the direct object of God's violent acts. Except for a few places where he describes God's anger against the elite (2.4b, 6c; 4.16), the lamenter throughout portrays the suffering of the people as inflicted by the human agency or the result of war (for example, 1.5c, 6c, 11b, c; 2.11c, 19c; 4.10). While Zion confronts God with indiscriminate crushing and killing (1.15b; 2.21c), the lamenter seems to confine the object of God's wrath to the personified Zion, her institutions and the national leadership alone. He apparently does not seem to sympathize with the false prophets and priests (2.14; 4.13), whose suffering Zion considers undeserved (2.20), but instead holds them responsible for the nation's defiled state and Yahweh's rejection (4.14-16).[6] Nevertheless, he unmistakably indicates that the suffering of the children presents injustice on the part of God (2.18). The disagreements between Zion and the lamenter seem to add a rhetorical effect to the role of the lamenter since they clearly present the lamenter as an objective party, and thus give more weight to his agreement: Zion may be subjective in her outlook, but when it comes to protesting the undeserved suffering of her children, she is absolutely right. The lamenter's approval thus gives credibility to Zion's voice in this respect.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the lamenter is not an outsider. The lamenter has been widely identified as a member of the surviving community. His communal membership becomes obvious in Lamentations 2 and

a debased, slatternly harlot, shamelessly exposing her nakedness and indifferent to the marks of menstrual blood—"filthiness"—on her garment'; and Gottwald's comment, 'The daughter of Zion appears in a shocking image of a brazen harlot whose filthiness is publicly known'.

6. Although the majority of scholars interpret the subject of 4.14-15 to be priests and prophets, some have proposed the possibility of considering the subject of these verses to be the community, which has become defiled because of the action of the religious leaders (Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 117-18; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 90). In spite of the identity of the subject of 4.14-15, v. 16 clearly indicates that as a result Yahweh has now rejected even the most respectable among the people.

4 as he addresses Zion as 'daughter of *my* people' (2.11b; 4.3b, 6a, 10b). Even in Lamentations 1, where he talks only about Zion without revealing anything about himself, his direct address to Yahweh in 1.10c apparently indicates that he belongs to the congregation.

ידו פרשׂ צר על כל־מחמדיה
כי־ראתה גוים באו מקדשׁה
אשׁר צויתה לא־יבאו בקהל לך

The enemy spread out his hand over all her precious things.
For she saw nations enter her sanctuary
Which *you* commanded not to enter into *your* assembly.[7]

The fact that the lamenter does not offer any prayer to God, except for a very brief address in 1.10c, seems to distinguish him and the other three voices. While the personified Zion, the Man and the community each represents the people of Israel in a different way, the lamenter speaks only from his individual perspective. In a way, this reinforces the impression that Lamentations is all about the relationship between the community and its God. Perhaps it reveals the author's belief that even if the fall of Israel may be felt and described from an individual point of view, the individual is insignificant as far as national reconciliation and restoration are concerned. As a member of the community, the lamenter's prayer therefore can be heard only within the voice of his community.

b. *The Surviving Community's Voice*

Two extended 'we' passages are found in Lam. 4.17-20 and Lamentations 5. There is no consensus on the identity of the speaker of Lam. 4.17-20. Lee surprisingly identifies the speaker with Zion.[8] Westermann goes against the majority in assigning vv. 1-10 and 14-16 to the community, but vv. 17-20 to some eyewitness, some escort of the king who accompanied him on his flight.[9] Provan prefers to assign 4.17-20 instead to the people of Zion to preserve the distinction between the lamenter and the sufferers.[10] The best reading, however, is that of Hillers, Berlin and Re'emi. These scholars suggest that the speaker is the same lamenter who now moves from being an

7. There are two ways to understand the sentence לא יבאו בקהל לך. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 42, Gordis, *Lamentations*, p. 131, and Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 2, take it as a direct command from God, that is, 'They shall not enter your assembly'. NRSV, JPS, ASV, NIV, Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 11, and Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 8, take it as indirect speech. The latter seems to be more consistent with the overall mood of the poem and of the book of Lamentations as a whole, which sees God as remote and silent.

8. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 182.

9. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 199, 204.

10. Provan, *Lamentations*, pp. 120-21. Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, pp. 133-34; Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', p. 165.

objective observer to being a member of the suffering community.[11] This reading accords with my understanding, which sees the lamenter as a member of the surviving community, and as such, the community's voice is also his voice, albeit from a slightly different perspective.

Lamentations 4.17-20 turns away from the description of the present misery to recount the final days of Jerusalem's siege, the flight from the enemies and the capture of the king. Westermann thinks that the passage is transposed from another context because its language is not in the style of the rest of Lamentations; it begins abruptly, and its transition to the following section is just as abrupt.[12] His comment on the language may be arguable, and the fact that no one else seems to address these abrupt moves shows that the moves may not be so abrupt after all. The transition from the present distress (vv. 1-16) to the immediate cause of it (that is, help failed to arrive in v. 17; the escape did not succeed in vv. 18-19; and the king was captured in v. 20) does not seem at all unusual:[13]

עודינה תכלינה עינינו אל-עזרתנו הבל
בצפיתנו צפינו אל־גוי לא יושע
Our eyes still pined away[14] [watching] for help in vain.
In our outlook post[15] we watched for a nation that could not save (17).

צדו צעדינו מלכת ברחבתינו
קרב קצינו מלאו ימינו כי־בא קצינו
They hunted our steps so that we could not walk in our squares.
Our end drew near; our days were fulfilled for our end came (18).

קלים היו רדפינו מנשרי שמים
על ההרים דלקנו במדבר ארבו לנו
Swifter were our pursuers than eagles in the sky.
On the mountains they hotly pursued us, in the desert they lay in wait for us (19).

11. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 112; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 91; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, p. 123.

12. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 203-4.

13. This seems to be true regardless of the exact meaning of Lam. 4.16. See p. 191 n. 5 above.

14. The phrase תכלינה עינינו is an idiomatic expression which means 'to long for something, to wait anxiously' (Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 102).

15. צפיה is a *hapax legomenon,* the meaning of which is uncertain even though its root צפה 'to look out, spy, keep watch' is well known. BDB and Albrektson suggest the translations 'outlook post' and 'outlook' respectively. Albrektson basically follows the LXX, which renders the phrase בצפיתנו צפינו as ἀποσκοπευόντων ἡμῶν 'in our watching', perhaps reading בצפותינו, which is preposition + infinitive + suffix (Albrektson, *Studies*, p. 192). Understood in this sense, בצפיתנו צפינו would be better conveyed by the NRSV's translation 'we were watching eagerly'.

רוח אפינו משיח יהוה נלכד בשחיתותם
אשר אמרנו בצלו נחיה בגוים
The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was captured in their pits.
The one of whom we said, 'In his shadow we will live among the nations' (20).

שישי ושמחי בת־אדום יושבת בארץ עוץ
גם־עליך תעבר־כוס תשכרי ותתערי
Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz.
Also unto you the cup will pass, you will get drunk and strip yourself naked (21).

תם-עונך בת-ציון לא יוסיף להגלותך
פקד עונך בת־אדום גלה על־חטאתיך
The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no longer keep you in exile.
He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will reveal your sins (22).

The people's disappointment in their ally[16] and in the loss of an 'anointed' one has received sufficient scholarly attention. Although it is not obvious who the 'Lord's anointed' is, Hillers convincingly demonstrates that he is the king, pointing to the fact that not only is the king called 'the breath of our nostril' in the Amarna letters, but both 'bread' and 'shadow' are terms ultimately related to Egyptian language concerning Pharaoh, the divine king.[17] Thus in using the term 'shadow' (cf. Pss. 17.8; 91.1) the

16. Several commentators (e.g., Meek, 'The Book of Lamentations', p. 34; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 91; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, p. 124; Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 205) believe that the nation v. 17 refers to is Egypt, since several passages support the idea. Examples include Isa. 30.7, 'Egypt's help is worthless and empty'; Isa. 36.6, 'Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it'; Jer. 37.7-8, 'Pharaoh's army, which set out to help you, is going to return to its own land, to Egypt. And the Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city; they shall take it and burn it with fire'. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 121, however, argues that such an idea is reading into the text from other documents. He suggests instead that 'the only nation mentioned by name in the poem is, in fact, Edom, which is attacked by the lamenter in vv. 21-22. It seems natural to connect vv. 17 and 21-22, the former giving the background for the sudden diatribe of the latter, and the latter supplying the name missing from the former (cf. Targ.)'.

17. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 92; cf. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, p. 53. The Targum interprets the king to be Josiah (C.M.M. Brady, 'Targum Lamentations' [http://targum.info/meg/tglam.htm]). Some modern commentators identify him as Zedekiah (Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 113; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 92); others simply assume that he is a Davidic king (Dobbs-Allsopp, Re'emi, Westermann), or just 'one prominent individual among the people, who must be their ruler' (Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 122).

author seemed to ascribe a nearly divine status to the king. The lofty language used to describe the king in v. 20 is subsequently seen by scholars as marking the contrast between the people's high expectation of him and the harsh reality.[18] Since the people depended on their ruler as 'the breath of their nostrils',[19] and since the king had a huge impact on their lives as the phrase 'under his shadow we shall live' indicates,[20] there is no question that their disappointment was profoundly deep when the king was captured by the enemies.

It becomes rather clear that the lamenter, the speaker of 4.20, is totally persuaded by the king's status before God; or to use Re'emi's language, he identifies with the people who felt very confident in God's choice of king as upholder of the covenant God had granted them.[21] If this is indeed the case, as it seems to be, then I believe scholars have failed to make a very important distinction in their comment on the disappointment conveyed by 4.20. No one has attended to the fact that there is a sharp distinction between the disappointments in the king's capture and in the king himself. Even if 4.20 speaks of a past thought that has turned out to be a delusion, the absence of any blame on the king indicates that the lamenter's trust in him is still very much alive, in spite of his capture. Westermann actually misses the point when he considers the transition from 4.17-20 to 4.21-22 as abrupt. If the capture of the king constitutes a great disappointment, then only the return of the exiled king could reverse the situation, and that seems to be the basis for the curse and the hope expressed in 4.21-22. According to Ezekiel 35, Edom was the first to benefit from its neighbor's misfortune. Yahweh accuses Edom not only for its lust of the land of Israel in vv. 10 and 12, 'you said, "these two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them. . . . They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour"', he also charges them for rejoicing over the desolation of Israel in v. 15: 'As you rejoice over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you, you shall be desolate'. In Ezekiel, the judgment on Edom (ch. 35) immediately follows God's promise to restore Israel to their land and give them one shepherd, David (ch. 34). From that fact, perhaps we can infer that Edom's joy mentioned in Lam. 4.21 results from the capture of the king and the exile, and that judgment on Edom intricately links to the king's and the exile's return, as implied in 4.22.

18. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 113; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 92; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, pp. 124-25; Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 204-205.

19. Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 122.

20. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 205.

21. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 125.

In contrast to Lam. 4.17-20, Lamentations 5 is unanimously understood as a communal lament, a prayer of the community to Yahweh. Whereas Lam. 4.17-20 laments only about the disappointing reality, Lamentations 5 addresses God from the very beginning. The poem opens by imploring Yahweh to look and see the people's disgrace (v. 1) and continues with a long description of the misery inflicted on the people as a whole (vv. 2-10, 15-17), on different sectors of the population (vv. 11-14) and on the desolation of the land (v. 18). The end of the poem consists of praise (v. 19), some typical 'Why?' questions (v. 20) and a petition for restoration (vv. 21-22).

The poem poses two important issues that require our attention. First, like Zion and the lamenter, the community confesses that their suffering is the result of their sins. Earlier, in Chapter 3 of this study, I argued that the sin of Zion must be distinguished from the sin of the common survivors. The sin of Zion understandably includes transgressions committed by all generations that ever lived in her, of which the current generation is only one. While the idea is implicit in Lamentations 1, 2 and 4, where Zion's sin is attributed to herself and to the false prophets and priests only, Lamentations 5 explicitly differentiates between the sin of the fathers (v. 7) and that of the survivors (v. 16). This differentiation constitutes at least a protest of divine injustice not unlike the protests of the lamenter and Zion concerning the suffering of the children in Lamentations 2.19-22. Even if the survivors sincerely believe that God's judgment on Zion is justified with respect to the destruction of her material culture and institutions, they apparently have different sentiments concerning their own suffering. The city with its temple and palaces, religious and political establishments, and a way of life is an indisputable mark of a long history, and its destruction might be said to justifiably match its accumulated sin.[22] However, as far as people are concerned, the fact is that all the culprits of previous generations have escaped judgment unscathed, while the survivors, sinful or innocent, must bear the entire consequence of the city's destruction alone.

We might ask how the survivors' sentiment fares with their sense of corporate responsibility. The ancient Israelites' sense of corporate responsibility is summed up nicely in Mowinckel's words:

> To the Israelites, a species, e.g. an animal species, was not a combination of individuals, an abstraction, or a sum. The species was the original entity, which manifests itself in the single specimen. Likewise with human beings: the tribe—'Israel', 'Moab', etc.—was not looked upon as a sum of

22. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Lamentations 5 differs from other psalms lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem (i.e., Psalms 74, 79, 89 and 137) in that it focuses deeply on the human suffering rather than the physical ruins. Could this be another clue that the people accepted that the destruction of Zion is just?

> individuals who had joined together, or who enjoyed an existence of their own apart from the whole to which they belonged; it was the real entity which manifested itself in each separate member. . . . One sees this from the general attitude to the traditional blood revenge. The responsibility lay on all, not so that each one had a part in it, but placing the whole responsibility on each individual.
>
> When the individual Israelite brought the first-fruit to the holy place he said a prayer beginning like this, 'My father was a wandering Aramean' (Deut 26.5). He is thinking of his progenitor, Jacob. And he goes on, 'The Egyptians afflicted us with burdens and made us to serve with rigor'. The suppliant is identified at the same time both with the progenitor and with the Israelites in Egypt; he is a part of the body everlasting and incorporates it within himself.[23]

The collective sense of responsibility was not limited to Israel, but in general strongly developed among ancient Semites.[24] The idea that the individual is responsible for the acts of his family expressed in the following Akkadian prayer is quite similar to Lam. 5.7:

> On account of a sin of my father (or) my grandfather,
> a sin of my mother (or) my grandmother,
> On account of a sin of my family,
> of my kinsfolk (or) of my clan . . .
> The wrath of god and goddess have impressed upon me.[25]

As mentioned before, this understanding of collective responsibility, however, does not prevent the individual from wishing to be released from the consequences of it, as illustrated in the following prayer:

> The sin of my father (or) my grandfather,
> (or) my mother (or) my grandmother,
> (or) my family (or) my kinsfolk (or) my clan,
> myself may it not approach, elsewhere may it go.[26]

23. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, pp. 42, 44.

24. Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents*, p. 171. Widengren makes a comment similar to Mowinckel's in his study: 'This sense of responsibility was due to the whole family-life's being common. A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life. The members of one kindred looked on themselves as one living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones, of which no member could be touched without all the members suffering. When any member of the group had sinned against his god, the whole group ran the risk of punishment, as the group was identified with each other.'

25. Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation*, p. 171.

26. Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation*, p. 171.

Apparently, nobody wants, whether bound by his sense of corporate responsibility or not, to suffer the consequence of someone else's sin.[27] It is not too difficult to understand why the Israelite survivors resent God's treatment. If they could hardly endure the portion of punishment due to their own sin, to bear additionally the consequence of their ancestor's sin is indeed out of the question.

The second issue raised by Lamentations 5 is the attitude of the community toward the end of the poem (vv. 19-22):

אתה יהוה לעולם תשב כסאך לדר ודר
למה לנצח תשכחנו תעזבנו לארך ימים
השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשובה[28] חדש ימינו כקדם
כי אם־מאס מאסתנו קצפת עלינו עד־מאד

You, O Lord, sit enthroned to forever; your throne endures to all generations.
Why have you forgotten us forever? Why have you forsaken us these many days?
Bring us back, O Lord, to you, and let us return; Renew our days as of old
Unless you have utterly rejected us, [unless] you are exceedingly angry with us.

In Linafelt's view, the last line of Lamentations 5 indicates the book's refusal to move beyond lament to praise.[29] At first sight, Linafelt seems to have in mind a different concept of praise when he skips over 5.19. Contra Linafelt, 5.19 has often been construed to be a praise that essentially indicates Israel's faith, for they did not forget God's nature even in the deepest trouble and could see the contrast between the stability of God's throne and the destructibility of things on earth, including the temple.[30] However, Dobbs-Allsopp's response to Westermann's comment on the same verse may provide an explanation for Linafelt's overlooking it. Westermann actually thinks 5.19 is praise of God, but he qualifies it with additional comments as follows:

27. Kaminsky, 'The Sins of the Fathers', p. 327, argues that this is the reason that causes many scholars to erroneously consider the idea of exact justice exhibited in Ezekiel 18 more superior than the larger corporate idea in the Hebrew Bible. He writes, 'The most plausible explanation is that although moderns are not opposed to the idea of benefiting from the merits of one's ancestors, or from one's own earlier righteous deeds, the thought of suffering for other peoples' misdeeds, or others suffering for our sins is so distasteful that we reject any theology that implies such a linkage'.

28. *Qere*, *kethib* ונשוב.

29. Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations', p. 343.

30. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 125; Gunkel, *Introduction*, p. 34; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 105; House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, p. 468; Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, p. 193; Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 133; Re'emi, *Lamentations*, p. 131; Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 623.

> This sentence gives the effect of being a singularly isolated word of praise. It stands in the place customarily occupied by an avowal of confidence—an element noticeably absent here[31] . . . it is important to note that this verse is not spoken with straightforward jubilation. One must hear this verse in conjunction with the accusation against God that follows in v. 20. The perpetual enthronement of God in heavens locates God so far away that God's view from above apparently does not reach all the way down to the level of the human misery which just has been described. The exalted glory in which God sits enthroned, in other words, also places God at an unfathomable distance from the human scene. The survivors have not forgotten to praise God. When they do offer praise, however, a note of bitterness intrudes.[32]

Following Westermann, Dobbs-Allsopp believes that the poet effectively undercuts and isolates the hymn of praise and that God is imagined very literally as being spatially separated from and other than God's people. Interesting enough, both Westermann and Dobbs-Allsopp place a critical emphasis on the spatial separation between God and humans based on the assumption that God's throne is in 'heaven', a word not found in the text but supplied by them. Berlin's understanding of the verse may sufficiently serve as a cogent counterargument:

> God remains enthroned forever even though his throne, the temple, is physically destroyed. God is not physically or spatially limited to his temple, and his existence does not depend on a physical structure … the temple may be destroyed but God's throne is indestructible.[33]

At any rate, Linafelt's overlooking the praise in 5.19 must be understood in conjunction with his interpretation of 5.22, the last line of the poem and, in effect, of Lamentations as a whole. In fact, Linafelt cites Gordis on the paramount importance of the verse in the interpretation of the book:

> The closing verse in Lamentations is crucial for the meaning and spirit of the entire poem. In spite of the simplicity of its style and the familiarity of its vocabulary, it has long been a crux.[34]

The line is controversial due to the ambiguous meaning of its first two words כי אם:

כי אם־מאס מאסתנו קצפת עלינו עד־מאד

A summary of possible ways to translate the two words from BDB seems helpful here:[35]

31. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 212.
32. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 216.
33. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 125.
34. Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations', p. 340; cf. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, p. 196.
35. BDB, pp. 474-75.

(1) Each particle retaining its independent force, and relating to a different clause:
  (a) *that if*
  (b) *for if*, *for though* (to be distinguished from *unless*)
(2) The two particles being closely conjoined, and relating to the same clause:
  (a) Limiting the preceding clause (after a negative, or an oath, or question, the equivalent of a negative): *except, unless, but*. BDB suggests translating Lam. 5.22 as '*unless* thou have utterly rejected us (and) are very wroth with us'.
  (b) The 'if' is being neglected, and treated as pleonastic, so that the clause is no longer a limitation of the preceding clause but a contradiction of it: *but rather, but* (= slightly strengthened כי).
  (c) After an oath: *surely*.

Scholarly opinions vary widely as to how כי אם in Lam. 5.22 should be translated. The possibilities include the following:

1. The LXX and Syriac omit the אם, but they may have simply glossed over the difficulty.[36]

2. Rudolph, NRSV: *unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure* (based on such passages as Gen. 32.28, 'I shall not let you go unless you bless me'). Several reject this translation since the sense is obtained only after a clause containing or implying a negative; the clause following כי אם states a condition that must be fulfilled before the preceding statement can or should be in effect.[37] The tricky thing is whether Lam. 5.21 does not constitute an implied negative, as the objectors believe. BDB obviously takes Lam. 5.21 as the equivalent of a negative in its translation of 5.22.[38] If we understand Lam. 5.21 as containing conditions that

36. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 207; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 100.

37. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 206; Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, p. 197; Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 100-101; Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion', p. 341.

38. Waltke and O'Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 671, include one of the most open statements regarding the restrictive use of כי אם: 'the combination כי אם can be used to restrict generally preceding material', even if the example they provide contains a negative in the preceding sentence, 1 Sam. 8.19, 'They said "No! *Rather*, let there be a king over us"'. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. David Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), IV, p. 389, also suggests the translation *unless* for the reason that כי אם is followed by a finite verb (Gen. 32.27; Lev. 22.6; 2 Kgs 4.24; Amos 3.7; Ruth 3.18; Lam. 5.22; Est 2.14) and used as a conjunction.

have not been fulfilled, which is obviously the case, then '*unless*' would also be the correct translation according to GKC 163b.[39] Even Westermann, who has a different translation, believes that *unless* is the meaning that best corresponds to the context of Lam. 5.21-22, and that the same thrust is captured in the traditional, interrogative rendering, 'or have you totally rejected us?'[40] (see no. 5 below).

3. Hillers (following the Vulgate, Luther, the KJV and Paul Volz): *but instead you have completely rejected us; you have been very angry with us.*[41] Hillers appeals to GKC 163b for the assertion that occasionally כי אם is used as an adversative conjunction even when there is no explicit negative in the preceding context; he cites as examples 2 Sam. 13.33 (*kethib*), Num. 24.22, and 1 Sam. 21.5. Although objections to Hillers's translation exist, they do not seem to hold much force. Linafelt contends that כי אם is used as an adversative conjunction only when preceded by a negative, either explicit or implied, which in his opinion is not the case with v. 21.[42] But Linafelt's contention is completely against the opinion of not only GKC but also BDB, Waltke and O'Connor (see no. 2 and notes above). Gordis also rejects Hillers's translation based on semantics rather than syntax, regarding Hillers's understanding of the verse (that is, 'merely restates the present fact: Israel does stand under God's severe judgment') as incompatible with the questions 'why?' in v. 20 and the plea in v. 21, 'turn us back to you'.[43] However, Gordis seems to be too rigid in his judgment, for the understanding that God has completely rejected Israel is not at all incompatible with not understanding why God has done so, as v. 21 may imply.

4. Gordis: *even though you had despised us greatly and had been very angry with us*.[44] Gordis believes that this meaning of כי אם has been

39. GKC 163b states, 'Sometimes the negation is only virtually contained in the preceding sentence, e.g. in the form of a rhetorical question (Mic. 6.3ff.) or of conditions which are to be regarded as not having been fulfilled (Job 31.18); כי or כי אם in such cases becomes equivalent to *nay, rather*'. Section 163c also states, 'Exceptive clauses, depending on another sentence, are introduced by אפס כי *except that*, and (again after negative sentence, see above) כי אם *unless*'.

40. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 217-18.

41. Hillers, *Lamentations*, pp. 96, 101. Cf. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 206.

42. Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion', p. 341.

43. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, pp. 197-98. Cf. Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 101.

44. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, p. 151.

overlooked in several passages (for example, Jer. 51.14; Isa. 10.22; Amos 5.22). Of the three passages Gordis cites, his understanding of Isa. 10.22 and Amos 5.22 coincides with BDB (1b, 474), *for though*. With respect to Jer. 51.14, Gordis cites Ewald, Keil and Cheyne as found in BDB (2c, 475).[45] Yet, according to BDB, Ewald, Keil and Cheyne treat the particles as separate (כי as separate from אם), contra the common understanding of כי אם as *surely* following an oath (BDB 2c, 475). In effect, Gordis completely omits כי in his translation of Lam. 5.22. Furthermore, Westermann, followed by Linafelt, rejects Gordis for a good twofold reason: first, taking the verbs as pluperfects is objectionable since 'from the standpoint of those engaging in lament, the display of Yahweh's wrath is hardly something in the past'; and second, the syntactic arrangement in which the main clause consists of a petition and the subordinate clause states the attendant circumstances is without parallel in the psalms of lamentations.[46]

5. RSV, Westermann: *Or have you totally rejected us, are you indeed so angry with us?*[47] Gordis, Meek and Hillers reject this translation because כי אם is not elsewhere used to introduce a question or translated as *or*.[48] Westermann admits that this is not a strictly literal rendering, but contends that reading the colon as an interrogative best captures the sense it carries in the text.

6. Linafelt: *for if truly you have rejected us, raging bitterly against us* . . . (a protasis without an apodosis).[49] Linafelt believes that by leaving a conditional statement dangling, the book 'is left opening out into the emptiness of God's nonresponse'. His interpretation is rejected by Berlin, and rightly so, since it 'may resonate with the modern reader, but it is likely too modern for the ancient author'. [50]

None of the above options is without difficulty, and all take into consideration an understanding of the context (Lam. 5.20-22). Without following House's evaluation of the available options I agree with his

45. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, p. 198.

46. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 218.

47. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 210-11. RSV has the same translation as Westermann, but the NRSV changes it, as seen above.

48. Meek, 'Lamentations', p. 38; Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, p. 197; Hillers, *Lamentations*, p. 101.

49. Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion', pp. 342-43.

50. Berlin, *Lamentations*, pp. 125-26. Berlin herself supports Hillers's translation, *but instead*.

decision to eliminate the options that contain clear textual or syntactical problems. In my judgment, that would rule out LXX's omission of אם and Gordis's omission of כי, for these seem to avoid the difficulty involved. Linafelt's rendering of כי אם as *for if* should also be eliminated because it is not plausible in the present context. Westermann's question should not be considered either, for it is not a literal rendering.[51] Between the two remaining choices (that is, Hillers's and Rudolph's translations, *but instead* and *unless* respectively), it is difficult to say if one is clearly more correct than the other for both legitimately lean on the same interpretation that the preceding verse implies a negative condition. Nevertheless, a few tentative remarks may be due at this time. At first sight, the possible advantage of the translation of כי אם in the restrictive sense *unless* is that it might be a little more compatible with the praise expressed in v. 19, its close proximity, for it expresses a feeling of uncertainty rather than anger. Addressing God in the normal communal lament form, the people indicate their resolution to turn to God as their savior and to hope that he will again respond favorably, but they are not sure how God would actually respond. By restricting their hope in God's favorable response to a dire situation, the community shows that their confidence, though it exists, is only conditional. After all, just as the Man blames God for blocking out prayer (3.8, 43-44), implying that it is not in his power to reach God on his initiative, the community explicitly states in 5.21 that their return to God can only take place after God himself initiates it:

השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשובה[52] חדש ימינו כקדם
Bring us back to you, O LORD, and let us return; renew our days as of old.

Gottwald observes that in the Hebrew Bible repentance is described not only as the work of men but also the work of God, as a number of prophetic passages clearly show (for example, Jer. 3.12-14; 4.14; 7.3; 18.11; 29.13; 35.15 and 15.9; 24.7; 31.18, 31ff.; Ezek. 14.6; 18.21; 33.11 and

51. House and Garrett, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, pp. 471-72, eliminates all but the translations of Hillers and Gordis. He opts for Gordis's but removes the difficulty associated with the pluperfects by translating the whole verse as 'even though you have indeed rejected us, and have been exceedingly angry with us'. House gives three reasons for his preference for Gordis's translation: (1) Gordis's translation maintains Hillers's view of what the people pray, for it allows the people to state their current situation while showing faith in God's eventual favor; (2) it expresses the contrast between what the people experience now and what they will eventually experience, like Lam. 3.32; and (3) it is in keeping with the term's usage in passages Gordis cites (Jer. 51.14; Isa. 10.22; Amos 5.22).

52. *Qere*, *kethib* ונשוב .

11.9f.; 36.25ff.; 37.23; and Isa. 46.12; 55.3 and 44.21f.).[53] Although repentance may be the work of both God and men, the divine and human aspects do not always coexist, as Thomas Raitt reminds us in his study of the judgment messages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[54] Nevertheless, the coexistence of the human and divine aspects of repentance seems to be present in Lam. 5.21, as Gottwald suggests.[55] Gottwald's comment, however, is somewhat confusing:

> In herself, she [Israel] knows no power to return to Yahweh . . . if the Jews are to turn to Yahweh then he must initiate the process of returning.[56]

With the people knowing no power, it is unclear exactly how the human aspect operates in Lam. 5.21 from Gottwald's perspective. In any case, Lam. 5.21 unquestionably indicates that the people wish to return to God and beg him to take them back. The people have done all in their power, but nothing will happen without the consent of the divine. As said above, while the people are hopeful that God will consent, they are aware of the fact that there still exists the possibility of one condition that would shatter all hope and express their awareness of that possibility with the restrictive sense of כי אם, *unless*. Indeed, they believe that God will take them back and let them return *unless* he has utterly rejected them and is angry with them beyond measure, which they hope might not be the case.

On the other hand, the adversative force of *but instead* seems to convey an angry tone that is consistent with the other four chapters of Lamentations. Lamentations 1–4 all end with either a bitter curse against the enemy or a harsh accusation against God:

> Lamentations 1.22
>
> תבא כל־רעתם לפניך ועולל למו
> כאשר עוללת לי על כל־פשעי
> כי־רבות אנחתי ולבי דוי
>
> Let all their evil come before you, and deal severely with them

53. Gottwald, *Studies*, pp. 102-103. Gottwald suggests also that the author of Lamentations 3 is aware of the need for a new heart when through the Man he calls the people to lift their hearts to God in repentance in 3.40-42.

54. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, pp. 35-37ff., 57-58, 107, 109, 112. Raitt argues that repentance was called for while calamity could still be averted by it, but after the exile began, God's forgiveness was promised utterly without suggestion that it had the people's repentance as its precondition. Several passages on the divine aspect cited by Gottwald are considered exilic by Raitt (e.g., Jer. 24.4-7; 31.31-34; Ezek. 11.16-21; 36.22-36; 37.19-28).

55. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 103.

56. Gottwald, *Studies*, p. 103.

As you have dealt severely with me because of all my transgressions
For many are my groans, and my heart is faint.

Lamentations 2.22

תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב
ולא היה ביום אף־יהוה פליט ושׂריד
אשׁר־טפחתי ורביתי איבי כלם

You invited like a day of festival my terrors from all around.
And no one, on the day of the anger of the LORD, escaped or survived.
Those I carried in the palms and brought up my enemy has destroyed.

Lamentations 3.64-66

תשׁיב להם גמול יהוה כמעשׂה ידיהם
תתן להם מגנת־לב תאלתך להם
תרדף באף ותשׁמידם מתחת שׁמי יהוה

Return to them a recompense, O LORD, according to the works of their hands.
Give them a covering of heart, [give] your curse to them.
Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heaven of the LORD.

Lamentations 4.22

תם־עונך בת־ציון לא יוסף להגלותך
פקד עונך בת־אדום גלה על־חטאתיך

The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion.
He will no longer keep you in exile.
He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will reveal your sins.

Let us remember that Lamentations 5 is the only poem in the book with a regular communal lament form, a form used when the people call upon God for deliverance from calamity. Lamentations 5 is indisputably comparable to the communal laments of the Psalter. In fact, Lamentations 5 echoes the lament of Psalm 44 in its inclusion of confession of undeserved suffering (v. 7; Ps. 44.18), praise (v. 19; Ps. 44.1-9), 'Why?' questions (v. 20; Ps. 44.24-25) and petition for restoration (v. 21; Ps. 44.26). Due to their severe affliction, some lamenters end their laments with an expression of despondency or a cry for help rather than praise or thanksgiving (cf. Psalms 38; 39; 40; 44; 70; 74; 80; 88). In this respect, it is completely understandable if Lam. 5.22 ends with a despondent accusation encapsulated in the meaning *but instead* for כי אם.

c. *Zion and the Man in the Context of Lamentations*

As Zion and the Man appear in different poems, the relationship between these two personae in the book of Lamentations as a whole may be conceived quite differently. There are at least two major ways to look at their relationship. On the one hand, among those who consider Lamentations 3 a later insertion, contention has been made that the Man actually responds to Zion's

response to the fall of Jerusalem. On the other hand, to those who think of Lamentations as all about the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, Zion and the Man seem to contribute two different responses to this catastrophic event.

i. *The Man as a Response to Zion.* Advanced by Jill Middlemas, this hypothesis claims that the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah forms the backdrop of the Man of Lamentations 3 for the purpose of providing an alternative way to respond to disaster as opposed to that found in the rest of Lamentations.[57] Following Westermann, Middlemas argues that the intention of Lamentations 3 is determined by an expansion attached to the lament of the individual that occurs at vv. 26-41.[58] Adopting the idea that the renunciation of further lament which occurs in this expansion is a deliberate correction stemming from a later time, Middlemas however believes that the provenance is to be found within the exilic community rather than Judah around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, as Westermann suggests.[59] Contra Westermann, Middlemas believes the expansion is not limited to vv. 26-41 but includes vv. 1-39 also.[60] Nonetheless, she appeals almost exclusively to vv. 22-39 and contends that the message of the Man embodied in these verses acts as a response and a rebuttal to Zion.[61] She cites as strongest evidence for such contention a number of examples. One of them is the reversal that occurs with respect to the use of the image of the yoke.[62] Whereas Zion complains 'My transgressions were bound into a yoke, by his hand they were fastened together' (1.14), in his wisdom sermon the Man responds to her complaint and admonishes as follows: 'It is good for a man that he bears a yoke in his youth', and 'Let him sit alone in silence when he laid (it) upon him' (3.27). Additionally, the message of silent submission as rebuttal to prior rhetoric occurs a second time with respect to the interaction between the narrator/lamenter and Zion.[63] The narrator urges Zion to cry out to Yahweh in Lam. 2.18-19, using a combination of the verb נתן and דמם in his speech, as Middlemas observes:

> Cry out heartily to Adonay! O wall of daughter Zion! Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest (*'al-tittnî*), do not let be silent (*'al-tiddōm*) the pupil of your eye! Arise, cry out in the night,

57. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 512, 524.

58. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 511. Cf. Westermann, *Lamentations*, p. 192.

59. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 524.

60. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 514, 522. Cf. Westermann, *Lamentations*, pp. 168-69, 192-93.

61. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 515.

62. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 516.

63. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 516-17.

> at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of Adonay! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children.

Middlemas points out that the verb דמם, 'to be silent', occurs in only two places in Lamentations (2.18 and 3.28) along with the adverb דומם from the semantically related root דום (3.26). Thus whereas the narrator advises Zion not to silence the pupil of her eye, that is to weep tirelessly until Yahweh hears and responds, the Man insists that one should 'sit alone and be silent (וידם) when he has laid the yoke on him' (3.28), and 'it is good that one should wait silently (ודומם) for the salvation of Yahweh' (3.26). Although the root נתן occurs quite frequently in the Hebrew Bible, Middlemas thinks it is useful in this context nevertheless, because it occurs in the same corrective section as well as in Lam. 2.18. Instead of 'give yourself no rest', one in dire straits is to 'put (יתן) his mouth in the dust' (3.29) and 'give (יתן) his cheek to the smiter' (3.30). Thus, Middlemas maintains, by all accounts, the wisdom voice in Lamentations 3 suggests that Zion and the narrator be silent and accept punishment.

Furthermore, she argues that vv. 22-39 provide a portrait of the deity that is at odds with that found elsewhere.[64] For example, in the area of divine image, while Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 depict Yahweh as actively participating in the downfall of his people (1.15; 2.1, 2, 5, 7; 4.11, 16), Lam. 3.22-39 downplays the portrait of the divine warrior to the point that he makes no appearance here.[65] Instead, the positive attributes of Yahweh as the divine savior are highlighted there (vv. 22-24, 31-39). In the area of divine vision, whereas the other four poems implore Yahweh to look and see, Lamentations 3 emphasizes divine omniscience and sovereignty.[66] In the area of culpability, Lamentations 3 puts an emphasis on human response and responsibility. Since the implication made by the presentation of Yahweh elsewhere as an active participant in the downfall of his people is that he is in some respects culpable, Lamentations 3 directly counters it by stating outright that this is not so, for God does not willingly grieve or afflict anyone (v. 33). The experience of suffering is implied to be directly related to divine punishment for sin (v. 39), and the proper posture of someone experiencing divinely inspired suffering should be one of silent submission rather than uninterrupted complaint.[67] Interestingly, Middlemas also remarks,

> What is ironic is that the *geber* of vv. 1-21 is not a silent witness of his personal tragedy. After all, he interjects his voice with a lengthy individual lament. Nevertheless, the poet-sage uses his persona in order to insert into

64. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 517-21.
65. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 518.
66. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 519.
67. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 520-21.

> the book of Lamentations a sanctioned way to respond faithfully to disaster.[68]

The above remark obviously reveals an unfavorable aspect of her reasoning that we cannot overlook. But at least we need to acknowledge that Middlemas correctly attends to the reversal correspondence between Zion and the Man with respect to their use of the image of the yoke, an image that is not found anywhere else in the poetic section of the Hebrew Bible. This detail does not allow us to brush off immediately the idea that the Man responds to Zion's complaint. Nevertheless, before such an idea can be positively accepted, more evidence will be required, for the other data presented by Middlemas are not convincing. First, with respect to the use of the verb דמם in 2.18 and 3.28, the correspondence is not strong semantically since it denotes two entirely different acts. The act in 3.28 is one of being silent, whereas tireless weeping is seen in 2.18. Although Lamentations 3 does not use the same verb, it does express unceasing weeping in vv. 48-49:

> פלגי־מים תרד עיני על־שֹבר בת־עמי
> עיני נגרה ולא תדמה מאין הפגות
> My eyes flow with streams of water because of the breaking of the daughter of my people.
> My eyes pour out and will not stop for there is no cessation.

That Lamentations 3 opposes Zion's tireless weeping with its message of silent submission but afterwards allows the Man to weep unceasingly is untenable. Lamentations 3 is an acrostic poem, which means that the poet of vv. 1-39 has the opportunity to change the reused materials to make his message coherent before he superimposes the acrostic form on them. Second, the image of God as a divine warrior is not absent in Lamentations 3, as Middlemas claims, since his wrath, rod, bow and arrows are fully put to use in the individual lament of the Man (vv. 1-18, esp. vv. 1, 11, 12, 13). Third, the recognition of suffering as divine punishment in Lamentations 3 is not a new revelation designed to shift the culpability from the divine to the human in response to other poems, since human responsibility is unequivocally proclaimed in the other four poems (1.5b, 8a, 14a, 18a, 20b, 22b; 2.14; 4.6, 22; 5.16); for that reason, Lamentations 3 is not necessarily intended to educate the sufferers of Lamentations 1, 2, 4 and 5 that they suffer for their own sin and thus must learn the proper response. In fact, the message of silent submission has always been observed to contradict other elements within Lamentations 3, as already discussed in the preceding chapter of this study and as Middlemas herself remarks above. Middlemas needs to address this internal contradiction even before the claim can be made that the Man responds to Zion. A final weakness of Middlemas's thesis lies in

68. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', pp. 521.

the criteria she uses to differentiate between sixth-century Judah and *golah* literature. She names five features that mark the sixth-century Judah literature: (1) a concern with general and persistent communal suffering; (2) the lack of articulation of confidence in future possibilities; (3) the half-hearted acknowledgment of the efficacy of sin; (4) the emphasis on vocalizing a painful present; and (5) the concern to formulate the expression of tragedy in such a way as to provide boundaries around it.[69] She claims,

> Not only are these features not present in the distinctive chapter 3, the parenetic section that appends the individual lament provides a contradictory message that accepts the association of sinful behavior with personal tragedy, stifles the validity of complaint by advocating silent submission and provides reasons to return to the hope expressed by the *geber* in v. 21.[70]

Without going into detail, it suffices to note here that Middlemas's major source for sixth-century Judah literature is the book of Lamentations, and Heath Thomas rightly notes,

> Not all will agree with Middlemas' delineation of the themes of Lamentations, and this impacts her understanding of theology of the period. In this regard, the theology of Lamentations is much more ambiguous and equivocating, especially in regards to sin.[71]

Thus, from another perspective, it may be argued that all five features are present in Lamentations 3. Moreover, in light of the identification of the Man as a *type figure* of Davidic kings, even the silent submission can be traced back to the pre-exilic king David (2 Sam. 16.5-13). In short, more evidence is required before the thesis proposed by Middlemas can be embraced as more than just a possibility. In the meantime, there is another way to look at the relationship between Zion and the Man.

ii. *Zion and the Man as Two Responses among Others.* Among the champions of this view is K. Heim. Heim argues, as mentioned before, that the different voices in Lamentations are equally authoritative and concludes that the book 'is a consciously "open" text which gives multiple answers to the complex questions related to Jerusalem's destruction'.[72] Alan Cooper resonates Heim in his comment,

> Lamentations has no univocal theological message. It is in its very essence a book that speaks with many voices, and conveys many messages—dis-

69. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 521.

70. Middlemas, 'Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?', p. 521.

71. Heath Thomas, 'Review of *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* by Jill Middlemas', *European Journal of Theology* 16.1 (2007), pp. 60-61 (61).

72. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem and her Bereavement', p. 169.

> quieting and even subversive ones alongside those that seem to confirm the most conventional sort of piety. Ultimately, of course, the message of Lamentations abides where it always has: in the minds and hearts of its devoted readers.[73]

While it is true that interpreters through the ages vary greatly in their interpretations of the book and that Zion and the Man legitimately represent two different perspectives from which to understand the fall of Jerusalem, I am not convinced that the editor of the book of Lamentations intended to give multiple answers to his original audience. To be sure, the use of different voices can serve to reflect various points of view in the communal discussion of the events of 587 BCE. Ultimately, the multiple voices of witnesses give us a realistic reflection of the complexity of the situation. Nevertheless, while individuals may have irreconcilable opinions concerning certain details, the whole can still speak a meaningful and unified message about the city's destruction. In order to hear that message, first, we need to identify and separate the consistent and inconsistent elements provided by the individual testimonies, and second, seek an explanation for the discrepancies. Since the laments of Lamentations revolve around three subjects, that is, the sufferer, God and the enemies, we will focus on what our speakers have to say about these three subjects specifically.

The Sufferer

Agreement

The speakers appear to agree completely with one another that the sufferer suffers for his/her own sin, and that the punishment seems to be too much to bear. Zion confesses her sins but at the same time resents the magnitude of her punishment, especially concerning her children. The Man confesses that he and his community have transgressed and rebelled but expresses disappointment at the impossibility of returning. The lamenter says Zion suffers for her own sin, but at the same time, the extent of her punishment surprises him. Finally, the community confess that they have sinned but resent the fact that they have to bear the consequence of others' sin too.

	One Suffers for One's Sin	Unfair Punishment
Zion	The yoke of my transgressions has been under watch; in his hand they intertwine themselves (1.14a).	Is there any sorrow like my sorrow? (1.12b)

73. Alan Cooper, 'The Message of Lamentations', *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 28 (2001), pp. 1-18 (18).

	My heart is turned over within me, because I have been very rebellious (1.20b).	Should women eat their fruit, the children they have carried in the palms? (2.20b)
	As you have dealt severely with me because of all my transgressions (1.22b)	Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? (2.20c)
Man	Of what shall a living man complain? A man of his sins? (3.39)	Even when I called and cried for help, he shut out my prayer (3.8).
	We have transgressed and rebelled (3.42a).	You have not forgiven (3.42b).
		You have screened yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through (3.44).
Lamenter	Because the LORD made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (1.5b)	What can I testify for you, to what can I compare you, O daughter Zion? (2.13a)
	Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become impure (1.8a).	Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint in hunger at the head of every street (2.19cd).
	They did not reveal your iniquity to restore your captivity (2.14b).	The kings of the earth could not believe, nor could all the inhabitants of the world.
	For the iniquity of the daughter of my people has been greater than the sin of Sodom (4.6).	That foe and enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem (4.12).
Community	The crown of our head has fallen; woe to us for we have sinned (5.16).	Our fathers sinned, and they are no more; and we have carried their iniquities (5.7).

Disagreement:
Among the speakers, the lamenter is the only one who differentiates between the priests/prophets and the rest of Zion's children and insists that the former are responsible for the downfall of Zion.

> Your prophets saw for you empty and tasteless visions.
> They did not reveal your iniquity to restore your captivity.
> But they saw for you oracles worthless and misleading (2.14).
>
> Because of the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests
> Who poured out in her midst the blood of the righteous (4.13).

God

Agreement

With respect to God's role in the destruction of Jerusalem, every speaker in Lamentations believes that he is the ultimate punisher of Zion/Israel. This belief is clearly reflected in the following laments:

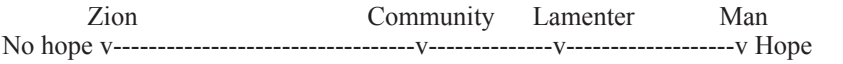
Zion	Let it not come unto to you, all you passers-by; look and see If there is any pain like my pain, which he severely dealt out to me Which the LORD inflicted on the day of his burning anger (1.12).
	Look, O LORD, and see. To whom you have acted so severely? (2.20a)
Man	I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath (3.1).
	You have covered yourself in anger and pursued us; you killed without pity (3.43).
Lamenter	Because the LORD made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (1.5b)
	How the Lord in his anger beclouded the daughter of Zion (2.1a)
	The LORD brought his wrath to pass, he poured out his hot anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations (4.11).
Community	The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will keep you in exile no longer (4.22a).
	Bring us back to you, O LORD, and let us return; renew our days as of old Unless you have utterly rejected us, and are exceeding angry with us (5.21-22).

Disagreement

While the speakers agree that God is the ultimate cause of Jerusalem's destruction, they all have a different attitude toward God and the future of Israel with him. Zion, while admitting that God is in the right (1.18a), does not seem to believe that God has paid enough attention to her suffering, for she asks him to look and see four times (1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.22a). Neither does she look forward to a future with God, since she never explicitly prays for restoration, and asks only for vengeance on her enemies (1.22a). Even if one thinks Zion's presentation of God's cruelty serves as a motivation for God to end his judgment and bring salvation (2.20-22),[74] she seems too angry to move beyond accusation. In contrast, the Man is the most hope-

74. Heim, 'The Personification of Jerusalem', p. 153.

ful about a future with God. He is the only one who expresses confidence about God's steadfast love, goodness and justice (3.22-39). He is also the only one who recalls God's previous deliverance and trusts that God has heard (3.55-61).[75] The lamenter and the community to which he presumably belongs are more positive than Zion but less confident than the Man about deliverance. Urging Zion to pray for the sake of the children (2.19) and confident that her punishment is completed (4.22a), the lamenter seems to hope that God will hear and deliver Zion from her suffering soon. Likewise, the community, though still believing that God has not paid attention to their affliction (5.1, 20), are able to bring themselves to offer God a brief praise (5.19) and to openly appeal to him for their deliverance (5.21). Even if they are not sure how God will respond or if they are disappointed about his current response to their request (5.22), the request for restoration shows their hope for a renewed and continued relationship in the future. Perhaps we can tentatively locate the speakers' positions on the no hope–hope continuum as follows:



The Enemies

Agreement

With respect to the enemies, we find no disagreement among the speakers. They all believe that God uses the human enemies to afflict them, and that the enemies are wronging them one way or another.

	Enemies Are God's Agents	Enemies Are Wrong
Zion	The Lord gave me into the hands of those I cannot withstand (1.14). You invited like a day of festival my terrors from all around (2.22a).	Let all their evil doing come before you and deal severely with them (1.22a).
Man	Offscouring and refuse you have made us in the midst of the peoples. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us (3.45-46).	My enemies for no reason have hunted me eagerly like a bird (3.52).

75. See Chapter 6 for the interpretation of the tenses in these verses.

Lamenter	Her foes have become the master; her enemies are at ease Because the LORD made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (1.5ab). He withdrew his right hand before the enemy (2.3b). He delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces (2.7b). He made the enemy rejoice over you; he exalted the horn of your foes (2.17c).	All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies (1.2c). All your enemies have opened their mouths against you. They hissed and gnashed their teeth, they said: 'We have devoured her! Ah, this is the day we had longed for; we have found [it]; we have seen [it]!' (2.16) He will punish your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will reveal your sins (4.22b).
Community	Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our houses to aliens (5.2).	Slaves have ruled over us; there is no one to deliver from their hand (5.8). Women have been afflicted in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah (5.11). Princes by their hands have been hung up; the faces of elders have not been honored (5.12).

Now, having identified the areas where our four voices agree and disagree, we can suggest that the message of Lamentations consists of two parts: a positively confirmed part and an ambivalent part. On the one hand, based on the agreement of all the speakers, we may say that Lamentations clearly confirms that the destruction of Israel is an act of divine punishment for the crime the nation has committed. The enemies, though definitely God's instrument in the process, are themselves wicked people who deserve no less punishment than Israel. While admitting that God is in the right, Lamentations also voices a deep resentment concerning the extent of the destruction and the suffering of the people who experience it. Lamentations testifies that the severity of punishment is unprecedented. It implies that there is an element of injustice in the suffering of those who bear punishment because the current generation has to absorb a portion unquestionably more than they deserve and the innocent are not spared.

On the other hand, the speakers also display some disagreements. First of all, we see the lamenter fervently accuse the false prophets and priests while the other three are completely silent regarding the matter, with Zion even protesting God's treatment of prophets and priests among others. Since the Man and the community do not seem to focus on the difference between the innocent and guilty survivors, we cannot conclude that they really disagree

with the lamenter. The same is more or less true with Zion, for she never differentiates her children. It is interesting to note, as already discussed, that the lamenter alone is speaking from an individual point of view whereas the other three witnesses are doing so from a communal viewpoint.[76] From this fact, perhaps we may conjecture that it is appropriate and even important for the lamenter to make a distinction between the guilty and the innocent individuals, as we remember that he specifically singles out the fate of the innocent children as a legitimate cause to appeal to God.

Another discrepancy we find among the four major voices lies in the attitude they have concerning the future relationship between God and Israel. It is unlikely that the editor of Lamentations purposely presented various optional answers so that his audience might pick and choose whichever they liked. On the contrary, the message the book sends is that ambiguity is the general feeling among the survivors, for apart from Zion, which we need to address separately, the other three all show some level of ambivalence. The difference in attitude about the future among the Man, the lamenter and the community is essentially a matter of degree rather than kind. Like the Man, the lamenter is also positive about the restoration of Israel in the near future. By asking for restoration, the community indicates too that they still want to hold on to the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. At the same time, we can see that, even with confidence in God's love, the Man is still very much under grief, just like the lamenter and the community, because of his wretched condition and his helplessness, evidenced by his lengthy laments.

Despite the fact that individuals may vary, the same ambivalent mindset in the Man, the lamenter and the community plausibly reflects the way we respond to calamity. I agree with Paul Joyce that the assumption that people react to events with a single consistent emotion or opinion is unrealistic. While Joyce's judgment is based on the study of Kübler-Ross, which shows that a person can experience a gamut of emotions within a short period of time,[77] the idea that people can have ambivalent or conflicting dispositions all at once has been understood at least since antiquity. In late antiquity, the rabbis obviously noticed our opposing tendencies in their interpretation of the word לבבך, 'your heart', in Deut. 6.5, in which the two ב imply the two inclinations of the heart.[78] The New Testament offers another illustration as it also describes the human inner struggle as a battle between the flesh and the spirit (for example, Romans 8; Gal. 5.16). More recently, a popular

76. The Man also speaks from his individual point of view; however, as a representative of the community, he speaks for all of the people. If he makes any distinction, it is between him and the community rather than between factions within the latter.

77. Paul Joyce, 'Lamentations and the Grief Process: A Psychological Reading', p. 313.

78. *Sifrei Deuteronomy,* pp. 32, 55.

movie based on J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings* graphically portrays the character Smeagol as constantly tortured by his so-called split personality. Lastly, the kind of depiction in which an indecisive person is being persuaded by two competing inner voices, for example, one likened to that of an angel, the other of a demon, is seen quite often in commercial advertisements. Thus, while the ancient Israelites are still under enormous affliction, their ongoing battle between faith and doubt, between hope and despair, between praise and resentment must be expected as nothing unusual. Depicting responses from three main characters as ambivalent, Lamentations conveys the idea that the battle is still very much in progress and any conclusion at the time would be premature.

The response from Zion does not easily fall in the category of ambivalence, however, and remains to be understood. What message is being conveyed to the audience with Zion's despairing stance? It is doubtful that Zion just represents another perspective. Being essentially communal in nature, it would make no sense for Zion to entirely contradict the sentiment of the community represented overtly by the community's voice (Lamentations 5) and covertly by the Man's voice (Lamentations 3). Perhaps the difference in Zion's response and that of the other speakers may be explained as we probe into Zion's distinctiveness. Among the things that might grasp our attention immediately is her being a personified figure, being a woman or being the city as opposed to the human survivors. We have seen that, as a literary device, the personified Zion is employed to express the otherwise inexpressible, such as the personal aspect of communal suffering. Nonetheless, it does not help explain why Zion does not voice the communal hope which is found at various degrees in the other speakers. Since Zion being a literary device does not help us in our quest, we will proceed to consider Zion being a woman. As a woman, also discussed already, Zion's mourning has a quality most suitable for the funerary mood in the aftermath of the city's destruction. But there seems to be no basis for believing that Zion represents the entire female population with her pessimistic outlook. With the next option, that is, Zion being the city, it is necessary to consider the theological traditions associated with Zion as the city of God.

Albrektson rightly suggests that in Lamentations there can be found two theological traditions: one is Deuteronomic faith; the other is the belief in the inviolability of Zion, the abode of God.[79] The ample parallels between Deuteronomy 28 and Lamentations, including exile, cannibalism, decree, punishment for sins, etc., testify positively to the presence of the Deuteronomic tradition in the background of Lamentations. The book also reveals a particular attitude with respect to the Zion traditions. Albrektson demon-

79. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, pp. 214-39.

strates cogently that the Zion traditions are in the background of Lamentations.[80] The Zion traditions, whose leading themes are the election of David and of his house and the idea of Zion and its temple as the abode of God, are found predominantly in the so called Psalms of Zion. These psalms give special stress to the idea that Zion is the city of God and that it is unconquerable (46.6-8; 48.2-9; 76.2-7, 13). Those principal ideas unmistakably underscore the expressions found in Lam. 2.15c and 4.12. We have in Lam. 2.15c a remark about Jerusalem from the passers-by:

הזאת העיר שׁיאמרו כלילת יפי משׂושׂ לכל־הארץ
Is this the city that they call the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?

The phrase משׂושׂ לכל־הארץ, 'the joy of all the earth', occurs almost exactly in Ps. 48.3.

יפי נוף משׂושׂ כל־הארץ
הר־ציון ירכתי צפון קרית מלך רב
Beautiful in elevation, the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion in the far North, the city of the great King (NRSV).

The resemblance in language prompts Albrektson to conclude that 'the expression in Lamentations must be a direct quotation from or a direct allusion to the psalm's description of Jerusalem.[81] Similarly, he finds that Lam. 4.12 seems not only to have adopted the idea of the inviolability of Jerusalem, but also has been influenced by the language of Ps. 76.13, since the same phrase מלכי־ארץ, 'kings of the earth', is found in both passages:[82]

Lamentations 4.12
לא האמינו מלכי־ארץ וכל ישׁבי תבל
כי יבא צר ואויב בשׁערי ירושׁלם
The kings of the earth could not believe, nor could any inhabitant of the world
That foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

Psalm 76.13
יבצר רוח נגידים נורא למלכי־ארץ
He cuts off the spirit of princes, he is terrible to the kings of the earth (NRSV)

The shock over the destruction of Jerusalem might shed some light on Zion's distinctive response. It invites us to ponder again the profound impact this city had on the heart and mind of its inhabitants. Dobbs-Allsopp writes,

80. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, pp. 220-29.
81. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, p. 224.
82. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology*, pp. 225-26. Concerning Lam. 4.12, Provan clarifies further that the people of Israel shared the belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem (Ps. 48.2-7) whether it is true or not that the world subscribed to such a belief (*Lamentations*, p. 117).

> A city however beloved remains an inanimate object. Once destroyed, it can always be rebuilt, even, at least potentially, better than before. But a person can never fully erase the scars of radical suffering.[83]

While appropriate in explaining the personification of Zion, this statement no longer operates with respect to the matter under discussion here. As we look at a city from a neutral point of view, a rebuilt city may indeed be better than before. However, if we consider the city as an entity intimately connected with every piece of memory people have about their lives, the removal of a neighborhood, some landmarks, cultural style or friends may make a place never the same again, let alone the destruction of the entire city. This is probably the reason why most people who live in exile are not compelled to return to the city they left behind. Perhaps it is also the reason why Zion is not hopeful of restoration. While it is true that some people might not fully erase the scar of radical suffering, many may experience restoration at different levels. Thus, as human beings, the lamenter, the Man and the community may have some hope for a new life and consequently have equivocal feelings about the future. But for Zion the city, there is little hope that she will ever be the same again, especially in the minds of the survivors, and therefore restoration is out of the question. If this interpretation is correct, then Lamentations is sending a twofold message: while the survivors feel ambivalent about their future, they feel certain that Zion will never be restored to her former glory. The survivors may resent their suffering, but their greatest loss and disappointment are the destruction of Zion, the beloved city that they believed indestructible. This is not to say that the people think Zion does not deserve her punishment, for Lamentations in different ways indicates that God is just in punishing the city for the sin accumulated in her. Rather, the emphasis is on the sense of loss the people feel when Zion is destroyed, and great losses are always devastating whether justified or not.[84]

2. *The Meaning of Lamentations*

It is apparent that the meaning of Lamentations as a whole is linked to the way one understands the relationship between Zion and the Man. On the one hand, if we, like Middlemas, believe that the Man is there to reprove Zion, then we would see Lamentations as the means to correct an undesir-

83. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 51.

84. An example will illustrate my point. Sometimes we may receive something that is not rightfully ours by mistake (e.g., inheritance). Once we become comfortable with it, if the mistake is discovered and the thing is taken away, it is so easy to sense a loss and to feel disappointed even though we know such a loss is fully justified.

able response to the fall of Jerusalem. Viewed this way, the book in its present form is essentially meant to suppress presentation of suffering and encourage silent submission in its stead. In that case, even if chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 once existed for the purpose of expressing an inexpressible pain, that purpose was basically overridden by the co-presence of chapter 3. Subsequently, to give significance to the expressive and representative quality of those four chapters is to misread the meaning of the book as a whole, since it is the very thing that is to be corrected and suppressed by the silent submission advocated in chapter 3. However, it seems that such a meaning, if it ever existed, has virtually been lost to modern readers and for the right reason. In the book's present form, the final impression it gives the audience is one of lamentation and despondency rather than silent submission and sure hope. Observation has been made that after chapter 3, hope seems to wane considerably in Lamentations. Instead, chapters 4 and 5 continue once again with painful laments. In fact, the last line of chapter 5 has been considered too despondent, and in order not to conclude on a dire note, it is the Jewish custom at any public reading of Lamentations to repeat the last positive phrase (that is, the penultimate 5.21).[85] So, unless we can explain how and why the chapter intended to discourage lamentation ends up in the middle of the book, to think of Lamentations as aiming at correcting an erroneous attitude towards God and suffering does not seem to be a very sensible choice.[86]

On the other hand, if we construe the responses of Zion and the Man, among other voices, to be equally authoritative, then Lamentations may be seen as a book that prizes, rather than prohibits, lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem. In this case, it becomes apparent that we need to understand why the book stands, as it is, apart from the psalms of the same topic. The fact that the book is separated from the Psalter suggests that it was formed early for a specific purpose, otherwise its poems could have been easily incorporated into the Psalter, which was formed rather late.[87] In searching for that purpose, we may begin by comparing the poems of Lamentations with the psalms lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem. The latter may include Psalms 44, 69, 74, 79, 89, 102 and 137.[88] However, since commentators

85. Daniel Grossberg, 'Lamentations', p. 1602.

86. Middlemas nowhere gives her explanation for the location of Lamentations 3 in the book. In her discussion of Lamentations, Middlemas does not even consider chapter 3 (*The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, p. 184).

87. In Mowinckel's estimation, the compilation of the Psalter is dated to 350–300 BCE (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, p. 201). Gunkel dates the lower limit for the time of origin for the Psalter to 200 BCE, and the upper limit to 350–300 BCE (*Introduction to Psalms*, pp. 337, 339).

88. Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 25.

generally agree that Psalm 44 contains no clear historical allusions, it will not be considered here.[89]

In essence, the burden of our task falls on Lamentations 3 and 5 only, for the genre and subsequently the mood of Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 immediately differentiate them from the psalms. The presence of elements from the dirge gives Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 a distinctive funerary mood, which has already been discussed and is briefly summarized here. First, a woman's voice is present in these poems. Second, the word איכה, 'How!', is employed there. It is notable that of the sixteen times this interjection is found in the Hebrew Bible, it denotes a mourning cry over the devastation of Jerusalem only in Lamentations (1.1; 2.1; 4.1, 2).[90] Third, as Ferris correctly observes, Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 contain no appeal for deliverance, an element of the genre that is found in all the psalms lamenting the fall of Jerusalem except Psalm 137.[91] Additionally, we may note that of all the communal psalms analyzed by Ferris, Lamentations 4 is the only one containing no invocation of God.[92]

The dirge is not present in Lamentations 3 and 5 and there seems to be no clear indication of the distinctiveness of these two poems against the psalms of the same topic. From Ferris's analysis of the main structure of communal laments, we can see that variation among the poems occurs with respect to hymn of praise, appeal for deliverance, appeal for cursing, confession, expression of hope and vow of praise, as the table below shows.[93]

	Ps. 69	Ps. 74	Ps. 79	Ps. 89	Ps. 102	Ps. 137	Lam. 3	Lam. 5
Hymn of praise		2		1	3			
Lament proper	1, 3, 5	1	1	2, 3	2, 4	1	1, 4	1
Appeal & motive: deliverance	2, 4, 7	1b, 3	2	3	1		3	3
Appeal & motive: cursing	6					2	5	

89. Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50*, p. 265; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I*, p. 185; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, p. 445.

90. It denotes mourning cry only six times, here in Lamentations, and in Isa. 1.21 and Jer. 48.17. Isaiah 1.21 mourns over the unfaithfulness of the city rather than its destruction, and Jer. 48.17 mourns the doom of Moab.

91. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 93.

92. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 93.

93. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 93.

	Ps. 69	Ps. 74	Ps. 79	Ps. 89	Ps. 102	Ps. 137	Lam. 3	Lam. 5
Confession			?				?	2
Expression of confidence/ hope					5		2	
Vow of praise	7b		3	4				

Numbers indicate order of components

A few observations need to be made regarding the data. First, it is notable that Ferris views the statements about God's nature in Lam. 3.22ff. as expressions of confidence and hope rather than praise, since it is the second element that appears in the poem.[94] Since there is no fixed definition of praise or confidence, we need to keep in mind that the difference here is terminology rather than content. Second, as discussed before, the presence or absence of hymn of praise in Lamentations 5 is quite debatable, and we can see that Ferris does not consider its presence. In aiming at finding the difference between Lamentations and the psalms, to strengthen the validity of any result, it is better to place the doubtful item where it would narrow the difference. Therefore, Lam. 5.19 should be treated as praise here. Third, the confession of sin included in the appeal and motive for deliverance in Lam. 3.40-42 and Ps. 79.9 does not show in Ferris's table.

With the above observations, it becomes obvious that we cannot separate Lamentations 3 and 5 from all the psalms based on formal components. In terms of praise, Lamentations 3 and 5 are similar to all but one of the psalms. Like all the psalms, Lamentations 3 and 5 contain laments. With respect to appeal for deliverance, again Lamentations 3 and 5 are similar to all but Psalm 137. With respect to cursing, Lamentations 3 and 5 differ from each other and from some of the psalms. Finally, the confession in Lamentations 3 and Psalm 79 also renders this component inconclusive in setting off Lamentations 3 and 5.

Since formal features do not help us, I suggest we look further at a thematic element that Ferris observes to be accentuated in Lamentations, that of the divine adversary. He states,

> Lamentations speaks of Judah's circumstances and their causes in a way somewhat different from those Psalm laments which appear to be treating the same or similar circumstances. I am referring to the role of the divine adversary. This is true especially of chapters 2 and 3. The subsequent poems (chapters) develop the theme struck in chapter 1.[95]

94. Both Gunkel (*Introduction to Psalms*, p. 34) and Westermann (*Lamentations*, p. 175) think Lamentations 3 contains praise.

95. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, pp. 140-41.

A closer look, however, shows that the above statement is not entirely accurate in our case. Not only does Lamentations 5 lack direct accusation of God, but a harsh accusation of God being the enemy can also be found in Psalms 89 and 102.

> Psalm 89.39-41
>
> But now you have spurned and rejected him; you are full of wrath against your anointed.
> You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust.
> You have broken through all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins (NRSV).
>
> Psalm 89.43-46
>
> You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice.
> Moreover, you have turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not supported him in battle.
> You have removed the scepter from his hand, and hurled his throne to the ground.
> You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame (NRSV).
>
> Psalm 102.10-11 and 24
>
> For I eat ashes like bread, and mingle tears with my drink,
> Because of your indignation and anger; for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
> He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days (NRSV).

The theme of the divine adversary nonetheless is helpful in leading us to a related theme that may yield an answer to our search: the relationship the people claim to have with God. Apart from Psalm 137, all other psalms, despite their accusations of God, depict the people as having a sense of belonging to their God. The sufferer is said to be God's servant in Psalm 69 (vv. 17, 35), God's sheep, congregation, and dove in Psalm 74 (vv. 1, 2, 19), God's servant and people in Psalm 79 (vv. 2, 10, 13), God's servant and anointed in Psalm 89 (vv. 51, 52) and God's servant in Psalm 102 (v. 15).[96] In contrast, in Lamentations 3 and 5, similar terms are nowhere used to depict the relationship between the sufferer and God. Moreover, in a solemn tone, Lamentations 3 and 5 acknowledge that the relationship with God has

96. Bautch notices that in the psalms of communal lament, the speaker's people are innocent even when God is portrayed as an opponent (*Development in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament*, p. 120).

been broken and in dire need of reparation (3.40-42; 5.21). While Psalm 137 is in a neutral position for it does not mention the people's perception of God and their relationship with him, its silence more or less indicates to us that the issue is not among its main concerns. Besides, its setting is clearly Babylon and not Judah. Thus, Lamentations 3 and 5 separate themselves from the psalms because of their despairing attitude concerning the covenantal status. A final check with Lamentations 1, 2 and 4 confirms that the same attitude is implied in these poems, for Zion and the people are not at all portrayed to be in a personal relationship with God. In these poems, God appears only as the brutal enemy to whom no appeal for deliverance can even be made.[97]

If the above analysis has merit, then the people's uncertainty about the covenantal relationship constitutes the determining factor that unites the five poems of Lamentations. This unity in turn shows that the editor of Lamentations did not randomly compile his book, but carefully chose the poems that reflected the mentality of his time. As a result, the significance of Lamentations is that it documents the darkest time in the history of Israel, when the people who mourn over the fall of their city and nation no longer have any idea where they stand before God. Even the Man, who claims that God's covenantal love will never come to an end, cannot describe himself and God in any relational terms. For a nation whose entire existence is based on a covenant, this is a grave matter indeed. In light of this relational limbo, Lam. 5.21-22 provides a very appropriate ending, for it summarizes the essence of the entire book, especially with the translation of כי אם as *unless*:

> Bring us back to you, O LORD, and let us return; renew our days as of old
> Unless you have utterly rejected us, and are exceedingly angry with us.

Linafelt is intuitive in sensing the refusal of a conclusion in Lamentations even if he does not succeed in proving it.[98] The people desperately need to know if they are still in relationship with God, and conclusion comes only with God's response. Lamentations reveals the heart of a people still anxiously waiting to hear from their God. Until God responds, the people's lamentations go on.

97. See also Ferris's chart (*The Genre of Communal Lament*, p. 93).

98. Linafelt, 'The Refusal of a Conclusion', pp. 342-43. See also the discussion of כי אם on p. 200ff.

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