

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS: FUNERAL POEMS FOR JERUSALEM

Whereas all the other writings of the Divided Kingdom Period are prose - mostly orations with historical and biographical sidelights - the book of Lamentations, which closes this period, is poetry. Chapters 1 - 4 are an outstanding example of the acrostic poem, based on the letters of the alphabet. The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. In chapters 1, 2, and 4, each verse begins with a successive letter of the alphabet: in chapter 3, every third verse begins a new letter. (Note: Psalms 119, 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 145, and 112, and Proverbs 31:10-31 are also acrostic poems. This arrangement helped them in memorizing these poems.) In chapters 1-3 each stanza is a triplet; in chapters 4-5 each stanza is a couplet. The metre in Hebrew is also excellent. The Septuagint (Greek Bible) give this preface to the book, "And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation, and said "As you read these beautiful poems, seek to see in your mind what Jeremiah saw as he wrote them; and to feel all the he must have felt:"

A. The First Poem: Read Lamentations 1

1. To what did Jeremiah compare the city of Jerusalem now? Before? Lamentations 1:1

2. Who had left her? Lamentations 1:1a, 2b, 2c, 5c, 6b, 18b, 19b

3. Therefore, what did she do? Lamentations 1:2a, 3b, 8b, 17a

4. What was the cause of all this sorrow? Lamentations 1:5b, 8a, 9a, 14a, 18a, 20b, 22b

5. How did her sorrow affect all those who passed by her? Lamentations 1:12a, 2:15-16

6. Who is represented as speaking in Lamentations 1:12-16, 18-22?

B. The Second Poem: Read Lamentations 2

1. In this poem, Jeremiah compared Jerusalem to a veiled woman. What was her veil? Lamentations 2:1 _____
2. To what is God compared? Lamentations 2:4a, 5a

3. The destruction of what two things is especially lamented here? Lamentations 2:6-9 (See also 2 Kings 25:8-13)

4. Notice the description of conditions in the city now: Lamentations 2:10-12, 2-22. What had the city been called before this? Lamentations 2:15b

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C. The Third Poem: Read Lamentations 3

1. What was Jeremiah's main complaint in this poem? Lamentations 3:8, 44

2. Yet, what did he recognize that his country deserved? Lamentations 3:22a

3. What three qualities of the Lord gave Jeremiah hope even after this? Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-32

D. The Fourth Poem: Read Lamentations 4

1. What were two of the main problems during the siege of Jerusalem? Lamentations 4:4a, 4b-5, 8, 9

2. What two things did they eat because of this? Lamentations 4:5b, 10 (See also 2:20.)

E. The Fifth Poem: Read Lamentations 5

1. Notice the description of the condition of the captives after the siege, Lamentations 5:1-16. Why had this come to them? Vs. 16.

2. What was Jeremiah's prayer as he closed his laments? Lamentations 5:21

QUESTIONS FOR ME TO THINK ABOUT:

1. How could Jerusalem have avoided all this misery?

2. If I continue in my sin, what must surely come to me? (See Romans 6:23a)
