

New Every Morning

Lamentations

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Introduction

New Every Morning Introduction

- Sometimes we just need to grieve.
- Grief is the natural response that all of us have to loss.
- The bigger the loss, the bigger our need to grieve.

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Some causes of grief:

- Death of a loved one
- Loss of job or retirement
- Loss of safety after a traumatic experience
- Loss of a cherished dream
- Major changes in life, even when they aren't purely sorrowful

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- The Book of **Lamentations** is the Bible's poetic written response to the universal experience of grief.
- We might call it a hymn for the funeral of a city.

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- **Jerusalem** was once proud and powerful, full of royal glory.
- Now it is destroyed, ruined by the invading armies of Babylon.

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The Bible finds room for every element of human experience, including overwhelming human sorrow. This can come to the individual (e.g., Job) or to the nation as a whole ...

The modern reader may wonder at the extremes of sorrow expressed in the book and may be puzzled ... It is in fact hard for us to realize how complete the destruction was.

*– H. L. Ellison,
Old Testament commentator*

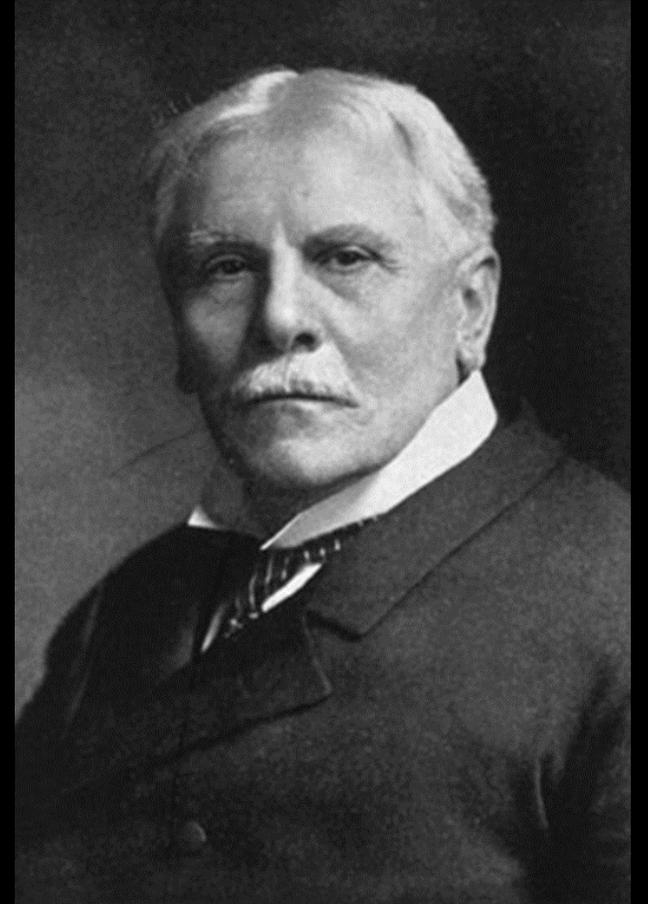
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- **Jeremiah** is traditionally considered the author.
- He was the prophet and priest who once preached to the city in an effort to avoid this destruction.

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The touching significance of this book lies in the fact that it is the disclosure of the love and sorrow of Jehovah for the very people He is chastening – a sorrow wrought by the Spirit in the heart of Jeremiah.

*– C. I. Scofield (1843 – 1921),
Scofield Reference Bible*



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- After the downfall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah expressed his sorrow in this poetry.

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- **Lamentations** is written using a pattern known as **acrostic**.
- This is an alphabetical pattern sometimes used in the Hebrew poetry of the Bible.
- This is how it works:

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- The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters.
- The simplest kind of acrostic would have 22 lines and each line would begin with a different letter in alphabetical order.

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- This is the pattern we see in **Lamentations 1, 2 & 4**, each of which have **22 verses**.
- **Chapter 3** has **66 verses**, made up of groupings of three verses for each letter.

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- **Chapter 5** has **22 verses**, but does not follow an acrostic pattern.
- It's as if Jeremiah's sadness did not permit him to pay attention any longer to such details as he poured out his grief in his poetry.

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As regards its external structure, the composition of the book, both as a whole and in its several parts, is so artistic, that anything like it can hardly be found in any other book of Holy Scriptures.

– Johann Peter Lange (1802 – 1884)



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- Lament 1: Jerusalem's Grief
- Lament 2: God's Righteous Anger
- Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope
- Lament 4: Details of the Tragedy
- Lament 5: A Prayer for Restoration

Lament 1: Jerusalem's Grief

Lament 1: Jerusalem's Grief

- Lamentations 1:1-2

Lament 1: Jerusalem's Grief

- **Lamentations 1:1-2**
- These words express the stunning reversal Jerusalem has experienced.
- When things are going well, we may begin to believe that they will always go well for us.

Lament 1: Jerusalem's Grief



Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose.

– Bill Gates

Lament 2: God's Righteous Anger

Lament 2: God's Righteous Anger

- Lamentations 2:5-6, 13-14

Lament 2: God's Righteous Anger

- Lamentations 2:5-6, 13-14
- When we are grieving we may begin to think that nothing good can ever happen again.
- This, of course, is not true.

Lament 2: God's Righteous Anger

- **Lamentations 2:5-6, 13-14**
- In Jerusalem's case, the destruction was the direct result of persistent disobedience.
- That may not always be the case.
- In a fallen world it is impossible to avoid the fallout.

Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope

Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope

- Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-33, 37-41

Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope

- **Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-33, 37-41**
- These are the key verses in the book.
- If you are going to hold onto anything, hold onto these.

Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope

- **Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-33, 37-41**
- Grief causes us to stop and look closely at ourselves.
- One of the best things we can do while we are grieving is examine our ways.

Lament 3: Personal Grief and Hope

- Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-33, 37-41
- It is also a time to look firmly at the Lord.
- As we seek him we can call to mind those things mentioned in 3:21-26.

Lament 4: Details of the Tragedy

Lament 4: Details of the Tragedy

- Lamentations 4:1-2, 12-13

Lament 4: Details of the Tragedy

- **Lamentations 4:1-2, 12-13**
- The destruction was complete.
- It was worse than anyone would have believed before it actually happened.

Lament 5: A Prayer for Restoration

Lament 5: A Prayer for Restoration

- Lamentations 5:1, 19-22

Lament 5: A Prayer for Restoration

- Lamentations 5:1, 19-22
- In the midst of the worst kind of grief, the prophet prays for restoration.
- We can do the same.

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Conclusions

New Every Morning Conclusions

- When it comes to grief and mourning – the foundation of all lament – the Jews may be the world's experts.

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*I know, I know. We are Your chosen people.
But, once in a while, can't You choose
someone else?*

– Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof



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- They read **Lamentations** in synagogues each year on **Tisha Be'av** – the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av.
- It comes in the middle of summer.
- This commemorates the day the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jeremiah's lifetime in 586 B.C.

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- It is also the day the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 A.D.
- And the day the Jews were expelled from England in 1290.
- And from Spain in 1492.

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- Religious Jews commemorate the ninth of Av with fasting and abstaining from joyful activities.
- During the evening service it is customary to sit on the floor rather than seats, and to wail or cry out during the reading to intensify the atmosphere of mourning.

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- Culturally and religiously, the day becomes a constant reminder that we have a need to grieve.
- By learning to lament in the context of God's love and faithfulness, we are reminded that our grief is also a new beginning.

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Conclusions



Lamentations contains more than just laments. The author realizes the importance of reflecting on his own suffering and that of his people. He seeks, and finds, the reasons for suffering and misfortune ...

– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast

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The book thus models meditation on and during suffering so as to understand its place in the scheme of things, adopting the right attitude towards suffering and recognizing that suffering is not the end of everything.

– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast

New Every Morning Conclusions

- The Book of **Lamentations** is the Bible's poetic written response to the universal experience of grief.
- Please remember to make good use of it when you are personally in the midst of grief.

New Every Morning Conclusions

- Sometimes we just need to grieve.
- Grief is the natural response that all of us have to loss.
- The bigger the loss, the bigger our need to grieve.
- Still, God's mercies are **new every morning**.

New Every Morning Conclusions

John 11:23-27 (ESV)

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”