

Lamentations: Good Grief

Lesson Two

Introduction:

1. Review the background material for the book of Lamentations by circling the correct answers in bold font. Question 1 continues on the next page.

In the Hebrew text, Lamentations is named after its first word, אֲכָלָה (*echah*), meaning “Ah, how!” / “What’s up?”

The Septuagint, an ancient **Greek / Latin** translation of the Old Testament, gives the title Θρήνοι (*threnoi*) meaning “tears.”

Lamentations is a skillfully structured book of five **poems / stories**. All share the same overarching theme of sorrow over the destruction of **Jerusalem / Samaria** by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Early traditions name **Jeremiah / Isaiah** as the author of Lamentations, though his name does not appear in the book.

This prophet ministered in Jerusalem for over forty years (c. 627 – c. 580 B.C.). He was the son of a **priest / farmer**.

The most striking literary feature of Lamentations is the use of **acrostics / limericks**, which employs the Hebrew alphabet as a key organizing principle. For example, Chapters 1 and 2 begin every three-line verse with the successive letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet.

Using the entire Hebrew alphabet matches the poet’s intent to give full expression to the **suffering / joy** of his people and the sorrows of his own soul—in effect to offer a lament from A to Z.

The highly structured form may also be an attempt to impose some sense of **order / complaint** on a tragic and chaotic situation.

The narrator also wanders from sadness to anger, disbelief to hope, and then back to sadness. He’s bitter, then repentant, then bitter again. We see that suffering is not always **linear / beneficial**, and it’s definitely not pretty.

One more interesting literary feature is the use of the **qinah / quinoa** meter, a type used to mourn the dead. This rhythm is based on lines of two unequal parts. The first part normally consists of three words and the second part usually includes two words. This pattern creates a cadence that mimics a **limp / dance** as one might do while walking haltingly behind a funeral procession. The 3/2 meter may also convey the idea of something being cut off or a sense of dying away.

question 1 continues on the next page

Circle the correct answers in bold font.

This is the outline for the book of Lamentations.

Theme: Good **Grief / God**

Lament 1: Jerusalem's **Plight / Prayer**

Lament 2: Jehovah's **Anger / Angst**

Lament 3: **Jehovah's / Jeremiah's** Heartache & Hope

Lament 4: Jehovah's **Anger / Angst**

Lament 5: Jerusalem's **Plight / Prayer**

Lamentations 2 Jehovah's Anger

2. Like an obvious “Danger! High Voltage!!” sign, Deuteronomy 28 had warned the Israelites about taking proper care of their relationship with their holy God. God himself was now reacting to their sin. What consequences of sin described in Lamentations 2 do you find the most appalling? List two.

3. “What can I say...that I may comfort you?” asked the poet as he regarded Jerusalem’s plight. But there was no helpful word. Jerusalem’s wound was “as deep as the sea,” who could heal her? (Lam. 2:13) While human words fail, God’s Word does not. God’s love is bigger, deeper, stronger than our hurts...and our sins. Find verses in the following chapters that confirm this truth.

Romans 8

Psalm 103

Jeremiah 33

Ephesians 3