

Analysis of
LAMENTATIONS

“THE PAIN OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE”

“Is it nothing to all you who pass this way? Look and see if there is any pain like my pain
Which was severely dealt out to me, Which the LORD inflicted on the day of His fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1:12

-- The City of Jerusalem, 586 B. C.

Analysis of LAMENTATIONS
Prepared by James T. Bartsch
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LAMENTATIONS

“THE PAIN OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE”

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Which was severely dealt out to me, Which the LORD inflicted on the day of His fierce anger.”
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A1 THE FIRST POEM:¹ The Distress of the City 1

B1 The Pained Perspective of the Prophet 1:1-11

C1 The Desolation of Jerusalem 1:1-2

D1 The lonely city 1:1

D2 The weeping city 1:2

D3 The betrayed city 1:2

C2 The Exile of Judah and Jerusalem 1:3-7

D1 The exiled nation 1:3

D2 The deserted city: Her empty roads and desolate gates 1:4

D3 The afflicted city: Her groaning priests and afflicted virgins 1:4

D4 The enslaved city: Her mastery by her adversaries at the hand of
Yahweh 1:5

D5 The city of departed majesty: The departure of Zion's majesty
1:6

D6 The city of dashed memories: Jerusalem's memory of past
treasures at risk with none to help 1:7

D7 The mocked city 1:7

¹ Chapter 1 is an acrostic with each of the 22 verses beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

C3 The Sin of Jerusalem 1:8-9

D1 The city of great sin 1:8

D2 The city despised in her embarrassing nakedness and filthiness caused by her sin 1:8-9a

D3 The city fallen from glory without comfort 1:9b

C4 The Plight of Jerusalem 1:10-11

D1 The city of the violated temple: The invasion of the nations into her sanctuary 1:10

D2 The city of agonized people stricken by famine 1:11

E1 Their groaning seeking for bread 1:11a

E2 Their sale of priceless heirlooms for food 1:11b

E3 Their agonized prayer to God 1:11c

B2 Soliloquy: The Anguished Cry of the City 1:12-22

C1 The plea for sympathy from passers-by for God-inflicted pain 1:12

C2 The painful discipline of God 1:13-15

D1 Fire in her bones 1:13

D2 A net for her feet 1:13

D3 Continual desolation and faintness 1:13

D4 A God-fixed yoke of alien domination on her neck for her transgressions 1:14

D5 God's destruction of Jerusalem's military might 1:15

C3 Jerusalem's sorrow 1:16-19

D1 Her weeping because of her comfortless desolation 1:16

D2 Zion's isolated comfortlessness 1:17

- D3 Her admission of rebellion 1:18
- D4 Her expression of pain: the exile of her virgins and young men 1:18
- D5 The failure of her support system 1:19
 - E1 The deceit of her [supposed] lovers
 - E2 The deaths of her priests and elders
- C4 The City's Prayer to Yahweh 1:20-22 ²
 - D1 Her expression of distress 1:20
 - D2 Her admission of guilt -- rebellion 1:20
 - D3 Her description of the scourges of war 1:20
 - E1 The sword in the street
 - E2 Death in the house ³
 - D4 Her comfortless groaning 1:21
 - D5 Her enemies' joy 1:21
 - D6 Her prayer for her enemies' demise 1:21c-22
 - E1 For the day of God's judgment against her wicked enemies 1:21c-22a
 - E2 That God might judge them as He as judged Zion for all her transgressions 1:22
 - E3 Because her groans are many and her heart is faint 1:22

² This is an advance. The desperation has been self-directed and directed towards human passers-by. Now for the first time there is communication with the covenant-keeping God!

³ Perhaps a reference to disease and epidemics that accompany war.

A2 THE SECOND POEM:⁴ The Prophet's Pain over the Judgment of God 2

B1 God's Destruction of the City and the Temple 2:1-10

C1 Adonai's anger at Zion 2:1

D1 Adonai's anger at Zion

D2 His disglorification of Israel

D3 His angry forgetting of His footstool

C2 Adonai's wrathful overthrow of the infrastructure, military, and government 2:2

D1 Infrastructure: Adonai's swallowing up of the homes of Jacob

D2 Military: His wrathful and complete overthrow of Judah's forts

D3 Government: His profaning of her kingdom and princes

C3 Adonai's engineering of Judah's defeat 2:3-5

D1 His angry cutting off of Israel's strength 2:3

D2 His permission of the enemy to conquer 2:3

D3 His fiery burning of Jacob 2:3

D4 His bending His bow like an enemy [against Zion] 2:4

D5 His setting His right hand like an adversary 2:4

D6 His killing of the promising youthful 2:4

D7 His pouring out His wrath upon the homes of Zion 2:4

D8 The stance of Adonai as an enemy 2:5

D9 His swallowing up of the nation 2:5

E1 Of Israel itself

E2 Of all her palaces

⁴ Chapter 2 is an acrostic with each of the 22 verses beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

- D10 His multiplication in the citizens of Judah of mourning and moaning. 2:5
- C4 Adonai's overthrow of the temple 2:6-7
 - D1 His violence against the temple 2:6
 - D2 His destruction of the meeting place 2:6
 - D3 His eradication from Zion the memory of religious observances 2:6
 - E1 *The appointed feast*
 - E2 *and sabbath in Zion.*
 - D4 His indignant despising of king and priest 2:6
 - D5 Adonai's rejection of His altar 2:7
 - D6 His abandonment of His sanctuary 2:7
 - D7 His delivery of the palace into enemy hands 2:7
 - D8 The enemies' desecration of the house of Yahweh on the appointed feast day 2:7
- C5 Adonai's destruction of the city's wall and gates 2:8-9a
 - D1 Of the wall 2:8
 - E1 Yahweh's determination to destroy the wall of Zion 2:8
 - E2 His measured and ceaseless destruction of the wall 2:8
 - E3 His causing the reinforced wall to lament and languish 2:8
 - D2 Of the gates 2:9a
 - E1 Her sagging gates
 - E2 Her broken bars

C6 Yahweh's decimation of different segments of Israeli society 2:9b-10

D1 Of the officials 2:9b-10b

E1 The deportation of her king and princes among the nations 2:9b

E2 The disappearance of the law 2:9c

E3 Yahweh's silence toward the prophets 2:9d

E4 The silence of Zion's elders 2:10a

E5 The mourning of Zion's elders 2:10b

D2 Of the virgins: *The virgins of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.* 2:10c

B2 The Prophet's Grief 2:11-22

C1 The description of his grief 2:11a

D1 *My eyes fail because of my tears,*

D2 *My spirit is greatly troubled;*

D3 *My heart is poured out on the earth,*

C2 The cause of his grief 2:11b-12

D1 The destruction of the Israeli citizenry: *because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,* 2:11b

D2 The pathetic plight of infants and children 2:11c-12

E1 Their fainting: *when little ones and infants faint in the streets of the city.* 2:11c

E2 Their plaintive request for food: *They say to their mothers, "Where is grain and wine?"* 2:12

E3 Their fainting: *As they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city,*

E4 Their expiration: *as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom.*

C3 His despondent conversation with the city 2:13-17

D1 His helplessness to console Jerusalem 2:13a

D2 The vastness of Zion's ruin 2:13b

D3 The failure of her [false] prophets 2:14

D4 The incredulity of her passers by 2:15

D5 The mocking of her enemies 2:16

D6 His recognition of Yahweh's judgment 2:17

C4 His discussion of prayer 2:18-22

D1 His description of Zion's tearful prayer 2:18

D2 His urging the people to cry aloud to God for the horror caused to their children 2:19

D3 The city's response of a prayer of horror to Yahweh 2:20-22

E1 At the cannibalism in the besieged city 2:20a

E2 At the killing of priest and prophet in the temple 2:20b

E3 At the corpses in the streets 2:21a

F1 Of young and old

F2 Of virgins and young men

E4 At Yahweh's unsparing slaughter 2:21b

E5 At Yahweh's calling the terrors of war to feast upon the city 2:22a

E6 At the thoroughness of Yahweh's angry destruction 2:22b

E7 At the annihilation of the city's young 2:22c

A3 THE THIRD POEM:⁵ The Prophet's Painful Personal Involvement in the Destruction of Society 3:1-66

B1 God's Opposition to the Prophet 3:1-18

- C1 The prophet's experience of affliction from God's wrath 3:1
- C2 God's having driven him into darkness 3:2
- C3 God's relentless opposition toward him 3:3
- C4 God's physical pummeling of him 3:4
- C5 God's having surrounded him with bitterness and hardship 3:5
- C6 God's having placed him in death-like darkness 3:6
- C7 God's imprisonment of him 3:7
- C8 God's silence 3:8
- C9 God's opposition to his steps 3:9
- C10 God's opposition as a beast of prey 3:10-11
 - D1 The identification of the beasts 3:10
 - D2 The description of the attack 3:11
- C11 God's opposition as an enemy archer 3:12-13
- C12 The prophet's disrespect from all his people 3:14
- C13 God's opposition through (metaphorical) diet 3:15-16
 - D1 God's bitter potion 3:15
 - D2 God's painful meal 3:16

⁵ Chapter 3 is an acrostic with 22 units of three verses. Every verse in a unit begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the 22 units represent successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

C14 The prophet's reaction 3:17-18

D1 His deprivation of peace and happiness 3:17

D2 The departure of his strength and hope 3:18

B2 The Prophet's Resolution of God's Justice in Meting Out Punishment 3:19-42

C1 His petition for God to remember his affliction 3:19

C2 His depressing memories 3:20

C3 His theology of hope 3:21-30

D1 Introduction: His hope-producing memories 3:21

D2 Thesis: Yahweh's faithfulness 3:22-23

E1 Yahweh's unceasing loyal love and compassion 3:22a

E2 Yahweh's fresh acts of compassion as demonstrating His great faithfulness 3:22b-23

D3 Application: The prophet's personal encouragement in the goodness of Yahweh 3:24-25

E1 His hope in Yahweh 3:24

E2 The goodness of Yahweh to those who wait on Him 3:25

D4 Application: The prophet's resignation to enduring trouble 3:26-27

E1 The goodness of waiting silently on Yahweh' deliverance 3:26

E2 The goodness of bearing the yoke in one's youth 3:27

- D5 Exhortation: The prophet's exhorting others to endure trouble 3:28-30
 - E1 The instruction to bear quietly God's [yoke of suffering] 3:28
 - E2 The instruction to prostrate oneself [before God] to obtain hope 3:29
 - E3 His instruction to endure the abuse of men 3:30 ⁶
- C4 His theodicy: A defense of God's ways in meting out judgment 3:31-39
 - D1 Reluctance: A perspective on God's disciplinary policies 3:31-33
 - E1 The temporariness of Adonai's rejection 3:31
 - E2 His causing of grief followed by His compassion 3:32
 - E3 His non-enjoyment of His affliction of mankind 3:33
 - D2 Disclaimer: Though God allows wicked men to be His disciplinarians, He does not approve of their evil 3:34-36
 - E1 Their cruelty to prisoners-of-war under His feet 3:34
 - E2 Their depriving others of justice in His presence 3:35
 - E3 Their defrauding others through litigation 3:36

⁶ Cf. Job 16:10; Is . 50:6; Mic. 5:1; Mt. 26:67; Mar. 14:65; 15:19.

D3 Certitude: Whatever happens, God sovereignly controls 3:37-39

E1 The impossibility of human dictates violating Adonai's will 3:37

E2 The Most High's commanding of both good and ill ⁷ 3:38

E3 Conclusion: The impropriety of mere man complaining to God concerning judgment for his sins 3:39

C5 His plea to the people for revival 3:40-42

D1 His exhortation for self-examination and return to Yahweh 3:40

D2 His vicarious address of God 3:41

D3 His vicarious confession 3:42

E1 *We have transgressed and rebelled,*

E2 *Thou hast not pardoned.*

B3 The Prophet's Painful Experience of God's Judgment 3:43-54

C1 God's hostile stance toward Judah 3:43-45

D1 His angry mission to "search and destroy" 3:43

D2 His embargo against prayer 3:44

D3 His rubbishing of Judah internationally 3:45

⁷ The Hebrew *ra'* (7451) often denotes moral evil, but here, that which is disagreeable, unpalatable, unpleasant, causing pain, unhappiness and misery. See Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. God causes unpleasantness, but never moral evil.

C2 The prophet's despair 3:46-52

D1 The cause of his despair 3:46-48

E1 The onslaught of inimical verbal abuse 3:46

E2 The onset of panic and pitfall, devastation and destruction
3:47

E3 His weeping because of Judah's destruction 3:48

D2 The depth of his despair 3:49-52

E1 His ceaseless tears 3:49

E2 His desire for Yahweh's response 3:50

E3 His painful weeping over Jerusalem's defenseless young
women 3:51

C3 The prophet's harrowing personal experience ⁸ 3:52-54

D1 His having been hunted down by his enemies 3:52

D2 His having been placed in a pit 3:53

D3 His despair at drowning 3:54

B4 The Prophet's Prayer 3:55-66

C1 His cry for help 3:55-57

D1 His calling on Yahweh's name 3:55

D2 Yahweh's having heard 3:56

E1 The statement of His hearing

E2 The plea that Yahweh would not avert His ear

⁸ This most likely refers to Jeremiah's being lowered into a cistern to starve to death (Jer. 38:1-6). Even though it was Israelis who placed him there, it was because of his God-ordered commands to capitulate to the Babylonians.

- D3 Yahweh's positive response 3:57
 - E1 His nearness
 - E2 His comfort
- C2 His recognition of God's efforts on his behalf 3:58-63
 - D1 In saving his life 3:58
 - E1 *O Lord, You did plead my soul's cause;*
 - E2 *You have redeemed my life.*
 - D2 In viewing his enemies' oppression 3:59
 - D3 In viewing his enemies' vindictive schemes 3:60
 - D4 In hearing his enemies' reproachful schemes 3:61
 - D5 In hearing his enemies' ceaseless slander 3:62
 - D6 His request that God would continue to view their movements and hear their mockery of him 3:63
- C3 His belief in God's vengeance against his enemies 3:64-66
 - D1 Yahweh will repay them for their work 3:64
 - D2 He will curse them with hardness of heart 3:65
 - D3 He will angrily destroy them 3:66

A4 THE FOURTH POEM:⁹ The Siege of Jerusalem 4

B1 The Terrors Experienced by Different Levels of Society During Jerusalem's Siege 4:1-11

- C1 The deterioration of the city 4:1-2
 - D1 Of the gold of the temple 4:1
 - D2 Of the sons of Zion 4:2
- C2 The plight of the infants and children 4:3-4
 - D1 The inability of mothers to nurse their young 4:3
 - D2 The starvation of the little ones 4:4
- C3 The trauma of the wealthy 4:5
- C4 The reason for the judgment -- the sin of the citizens 4:6
- C5 The plight of the nobles 4:7-8
 - D1 Their former glory 4:7
 - D2 Their present state of malnutrition and starvation 4:8
- C6 The severity of the famine 4:9-10
 - D1 Those slain in battle better off than those left to starve 4:9
 - D2 The cannibalism of previously compassionate mothers 4:10
- C7 The reason for the tragedy -- the wrath of Yahweh against Zion 4:11

⁹ Chapter 4 is an acrostic with each of the 22 verses beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

B2 The Reasons for The Siege of Jerusalem 4:12-20

- C1 The false belief in the impregnability of Jerusalem 4:12
- C2 The judgment on the religious leaders (priests and prophets) 4:13-16
 - D1 The reason for the judgment: The evil committed by the spiritual leaders 4:13
 - E1 The statement of their guilt 4:13a
 - F1 *Because of the sins of her prophets*
 - F2 *And the iniquities of her priests*
 - E2 The description of their guilt: *who have shed in her midst the blood of the righteous,* 4:13b
 - D2 The isolation of their judgment caused by their guilt 4:14-16
 - E1 Their blind wandering in the streets 4:14a
 - E2 Their untouchable defilement with blood 4:14b
 - E3 Their leper-like recognition of their own guilt 4:15a
 - E4 Their self-exile 4:15b
 - E5 Their rejection among the Gentiles [nations] 4:15c
 - E6 Their scattering by Yahweh 4:16a
 - E7 Their dishonor by their enemies 4:16b
- C3 Judah's vain reliance on other nations 4:17-20
 - D1 Her vain attempts to secure help from other nations 4:17
 - D2 The relentless pursuit of her enemies 4:18-20
 - E1 The peoples' inability to walk safely in their own streets 4:18
 - E2 The swiftness and ubiquity of their pursuers 4:19
 - E3 The capture of Israelis - God's anointed people - in pits 4:20

B3 The Prophet's Warning to Edom 4:21-22

- C1 His awareness of Edom's glee at Jerusalem's judgment 4:21
- C2 His prediction that Edom will also taste of judgment 4:21
- C3 His statement of the completion of Zion's punishment 4:22
- C4 His promise of God's punishment of Edom 4:22

A5 THE FIFTH POEM: The Prophet's Vicarious Prayer On Behalf of His People 5

B1 His Recounting to Yahweh Zion's Despair 5:1-18

- C1 The plea to Yahweh to look upon Zion's reproach 5:1
- C2 The depiction to Yahweh of Zion's reproach 5:2-18
 - D1 The confiscation of their lands and houses 5:2
 - D2 The loss of fathers and husbands 5:3
 - D3 Their economic servitude: their forced payment 5:4
 - E1 For water
 - E2 For wood
 - D4 Their desperation and exhaustion from battle 5:5
 - D5 Their loss of national sovereignty 5:6
 - D6 Their payment for their ancestors' sins 5:7
 - D7 Their subjugation as slaves 5:8
 - D8 Their life-threatening search for food 5:9
 - D9 Their physical distress amid famine 5:10
 - D10 The rape of their women 5:11
 - D11 The torture of their princes and elders 5:12
 - D12 The forced labor of their young men 5:13

- D13 The cessation of societal routines 5:14
 - E1 The departure of city / national government
 - E2 The departure of fine arts
- D14 The national mourning 5:15
- D15 The reproach upon Zion because of national sin 5:16-18
 - E1 Zion's surrender of sovereignty and dignity 5:16a
 - E2 The cause of the reproach: national sin 5:16b
 - E3 The depression and sorrow of the citizens 5:17
 - E4 The cause of despair: The desolation of Mount Zion 5:18

B2 His Plea to Yahweh for Restoration 5:19-22

- C1 The ascription of sovereignty to Yahweh 5:19
- C2 The agony over Yahweh's abandonment of Zion 5:20
- C3 The plea to Yahweh for restoration and renewal 5:21
- C4 The despairing agony lest Yahweh's abandonment be irreversible 5:22

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