# Author

### Jeremiah in exile

# Style

### Acrostic

* Each verse begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet
* Each chapter begins the alphabet anew
* Chapter 3 has the verses in triplicate

### Purpose – the fullness of grieving

* Leaving nothing unsaid
* Assurance that grief is not unending

# Contrast

### Stages of Grief – Elizabeth Kuebler-Russ

* Denial
* Anger
* Bargaining
* Depression
* Acceptance / Resignation

### Chapters of Lamentations

* Chapter 1 – The Shock and Grief Chapter
* Chapter 2 – The Wrath of God Chapter
* Chapter 3 – The Community Grief Chapter
* Chapter 4 – The Reality with Dignity Chapter
* Chapter 5 – The Prayer Chapter

### Eugene Peterson –

* God’s judgment is personal, NOT impersonal
* our guilt is actual, NOT neurotic
* our misfortune is specific, NOT general

# A Closer Look at Lamentations – Chapter by Chapter

## Chapter 1 – The Shock and Grief Chapter

### This is the story of what happened – the Narration chapter

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| Highlights | Notes |
| 1 How **like a widow** is she,     She who was queen among the provinces     **has now become a slave**.  2 All her friends have betrayed her;     they have become her enemies.  4The roads to Zion mourn, |  |
| 8Jerusalem has sinned greatly     and so has become unclean. All who honored her despise her,     for they have all seen her naked; she herself groans     and turns away. | “Nakedness” is always a sign of shame in the Bible |
| 12Is any suffering like my suffering     that was inflicted on me, that the Lord brought on me     in the day of his fierce anger?  13“From on high he sent fire,     sent it down into my bones. | “God’s wrath has no equal” means our suffering has no equal |
| 14“My sins have been bound into a yoke[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lamentations+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-20325b)];     by his hands they were woven together. They have been hung on my neck,     and the Lord has sapped my strength. He has given me into the hands     of those I cannot withstand. | Awareness / admission of sins leading to public confession (even, perhaps to the point of being shamed?)  This instead of denial, blame-shifting, “spin” and cover-ups |
| 18“The Lord is righteous,     yet I rebelled against his command. |  |

## Chapter 2 – The Wrath of God Chapter

### This is the story of how God was involved – The Spiritual Direction chapter

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| --- | --- |
| Highlights | Notes |
| **2**[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lamentations%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-20334a)]How the Lord has **covered** Daughter Zion     **with the cloud of his anger** He has **hurled down the splendor** of Israel     from heaven to earth; he **has not remembered his footstool**     in the day of his anger.  **2Without pity** the Lord has **swallowed up**     all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath **he has torn down**     the strongholds of Daughter Judah. He has brought her kingdom and its princes     down to the ground in dishonor.  **3In fierce anger he has cut off     every horn**[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lamentations%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-20336c)][[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lamentations%202&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-20336d" \o "See footnote d)] of Israel. He has **withdrawn his right hand**     at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire     that consumes everything around it.  **4**Like an enemy **he has strung his bow**; **his right hand is ready**. **Like a foe** he has slain     all who were pleasing to the eye; he has **poured out his wrath like fire**     on the tent of Daughter Zion.  **5**The Lord is **like an enemy**;     he has **swallowed up Israel**. He has swallowed up all her palaces     and destroyed her strongholds. He has **multiplied mourning and lamentation**     for Daughter Judah.  **6**He **has laid waste his dwelling** like a garden;     he **has destroyed** his place of meeting. The Lord **has made Zion forget**     her appointed festivals and her Sabbaths; **in his fierce anger he has spurned**     **both king and priest**.  **7**The Lord has **rejected his altar**     and **abandoned his sanctuary.** He has given the walls of her palaces     into the hands of the enemy; they have raised a shout in the house of the Lord     as on the day of an appointed festival.  **8**The Lord **determined t**o tear down     the wall around Daughter Zion. He stretched out a measuring line     and **did not withhold his hand** from destroying. He **made ramparts and walls lament**;     together they wasted away.  **9**Her gates have sunk into the ground;     their bars he has broken and destroyed. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations,     the **law is no more**, and **her prophets no longer find     visions from the Lord.** | Compare the song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55:  ***46****And Mary said:*  *“My soul glorifies the Lord* ***47****and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,* ***48****for* ***he has been mindful*** *of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,* ***49****for the Mighty One has done great things for me—     holy is his name.* ***50His mercy extends*** *to those who fear him,     from generation to generation.* ***51****He has* ***performed mighty deeds with his arm****;     he has* ***scattered those who are proud*** *in their inmost thoughts.* ***52****He has* ***brought down rulers*** *from their thrones     but* ***has lifted up the humble****.* ***53****He has* ***filled the hungry*** *with good things     but has* ***sent the rich away*** *empty.* ***54****He has helped his servant Israel,****remembering*** *to be merciful* ***55****to Abraham and his descendants forever,* ***just as he promised*** *our ancestors.”*  Also compare the song of Zechariah in Luke 1:67-79:  *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,     because he has come to his people and redeemed them.* ***69****He* ***has raised up a horn****[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A67-79&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24963a)*] of salvation for us     in the house of his servant David* ***70****(as he said* ***through his holy prophets*** *of long ago),* ***71salvation from our enemies*** *and* ***from the hand of all who hate us****—* ***72to show mercy*** *to our ancestors     and* ***to remember*** *his holy covenant,* ***73****the oath he swore to our father Abraham:* ***74to rescue us*** *from the hand of our enemies,     and* ***to enable us to serve him without fear******75****in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*  ***76****And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;     for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,* ***77****to give his people the knowledge of salvation     through* ***the forgiveness of their sins****,* ***78****because of the tender mercy of our God,     by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven* ***79****to shine on those living in darkness     and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”* |
| **11**My eyes fail from weeping,     I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground     because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint     in the streets of the city. | Jeremiah the pastor of God’s people |
| 15 All who pass your way  **clap their hands** at you;  **they scoff** and **shake their heads**  at Daughter Jerusalem:  “Is this the city that was called  the perfection of beauty,  the joy of the whole earth?”  16 All your enemies **open their mouths**  **wide** against you;  they **scoff** and **gnash their teeth** | All these are physical signs of scorn and derision in the culture of the East |
| 17 The **Lord has done what he planned**;  he has **fulfilled his word**,  which he decreed long ago.  He has **overthrown you without pity**,  he has **let the enemy gloat over you**,  he has **exalted the horn of your foes**.  20 “Look, Lord, and consider:  **Whom have you ever treated like this?**  *Should women eat their offspring,*  *the children they have cared for?*  *Should priest and prophet be killed*  *in the sanctuary of the Lord?*  *21 “Young and old lie together*  *in the dust of the streets;*  *my young men and young women*  *have fallen by the sword.*  **You have slain them in the day of your anger;**  **you have slaughtered them without pity.** | The question is not “Why does a loving God allow these terrible things to happen to His people?” but “When such things happen, how is God involved?” |

## Chapter 3 – The Community Grief Chapter

### The Story of how this affected Jeremiah personally, and all God’s people together

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| Highlights | Notes |
| I am the man who has seen affliction     by the rod of the Lord’s wrath. **2**He has driven me away and made me walk     in darkness rather than light; **3**indeed, he has turned his hand against me     again and again, all day long. | Verses 1-20 are the words of Jeremiah personally; but they are also the words of each individual Israelite. Jeremiah speaks for himself and as a representative of each survivor of the calamity. This is not “misery loves company” but an acknowledgment that all have suffered alike in this disaster. |
| 21 Yet this I call to mind  and therefore I have hope:  22 Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,  for his compassions never fail.  23 They are new every morning;  great is your faithfulness.  24 I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion;  therefore I will wait for him.” | Beginning at verse 21, the rest of this chapter are still the words of Jeremiah both personally and also as the representative of the entire community. These words of promise and hope are not self-motivational, but an acknowledgment that despite the Lord’s hand in bringing on the calamity He still is their merciful God and they still are His people.  Compare I Kings 19:14-18 |

## Chapter 4 – The Reality with Dignity Chapter

### The story of how God’s people began to live through these terrible circumstances realistically, without platitudes and trivialities

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| --- | --- |
| Highlights | Notes |
| 6 The punishment of my people  is greater than that of Sodom,  which was overthrown in a moment  without a hand turned to help her. |  |
| 9 Those killed by the sword are better off  than those who die of famine;  racked with hunger, they waste away  for lack of food from the field.  10 With their own hands compassionate women  have cooked their own children,  who became their food  when my people were destroyed.  11 The Lord has given full vent to his wrath;  he has poured out his fierce anger.  He kindled a fire in Zion  that consumed her foundations. | *http://voiceseducation.org/sites/default/files/images/rwandan-genocide.jpg*It’s hard to trivialize these kinds of images, like it’s hard to trivialize scenes like these:  *http://en.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com_ponygallery&func=watermark&id=710&Itemid=17*Auschwitz  Rwanda  *http://delinapr.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/tumblr_mxw6dqxc431sxve1mo5_500.jpg*  Vietnam  *http://ows.edb.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/users/mjoseph/ut-vietnam-girl.jpg*USA |
| 13 But it happened because of the sins of her prophets  and the iniquities of her priests,  who shed within her  the blood of the righteous.  14 Now they grope through the streets  as if they were blind.  They are so defiled with blood  that no one dares to touch their garments. | Why did all this happen? Here is the answer. |

## Chapter 5 – The Prayer Chapter

### Even though there is every recognition in the previous chapters that the Lord has been the one who has brought about this calamity and destruction to His people, this is where His people still find comfort, and this is why they pray:

## Because His promises transcend His wrath,

## Because His mercy is greater than their sin, and

## Because His recollection of His covenant is longer than His recollection of their offenses.