

Fact Sheet for **“Doom”**
Lamentations 1-5

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We have come to the book of Lamentations. The title of this book... “Lamentations”... aptly describes its content. These five chapters are filled with gut-wrenching pain and anguish over the destruction of Jerusalem and what the Jewish people had experienced and were experiencing. It’s not an easy book to wrap your heart around, but there is a small island of verses right in the middle that have long been a focus of encouragement for God’s people. But let’s begin with a little of the background of this book.

1. It is generally assumed that Jeremiah wrote it, even though its author is not identified. It was written at the right time for Jeremiah to have authored it. And many of the themes found here are also found in the book of Jeremiah.

2. Each chapter is a highly structured poem. The first four are acrostics based on the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza begins with the appropriate letter. Unfortunately, there is no way to show this in translations. This is why chapters 1,2 and 4 have 22 verses, and why chapter 3 has 66. Chapter 5 also has 22 verses, but it is not an acrostic.

Here’s a run-down of their lives.

1. Famine was an every-day threat. The Babylonians had laid siege to the city for a year and a half. They cut off the supply of food for the city. And the famine grew ever worse.

ESV Lamentations 1:11 All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. "Look, O LORD, and see, for I am despised."

NLT Lamentations 2:11-12 I have cried until the tears no longer come; my heart is broken. My spirit is poured out in agony as I see the desperate plight of my people. Little children and tiny babies are fainting and dying in the streets. ¹² They cry out to their mothers, "We need food and drink!" Their lives ebb away in the streets like the life of a warrior wounded in battle. They gasp for life as they collapse in their mothers' arms.

ESV Lamentations 4:4 The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them.

ESV Lamentations 4:9-10 Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field. ¹⁰ The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people.

2. When the walls of Jerusalem were breached many died by the sword. Some have surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and would be taken captive to Babylon. As prophesied in Jeremiah, this was the path of blessing. Those who chose to stay and defend Jerusalem were destined to die by sword, famine and pestilence.

ESV Jeremiah 21:9 He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have his life as a prize of war.

And for those who chose to stay in Jerusalem...

ESV Lamentations 2:21 In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword; you have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity.

3. The temple built by Solomon was entirely looted, then burned down (Jeremiah 52:12-24).

ESV Lamentations 1:10 The enemy has stretched out his hands over all her precious things; for she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, those whom you forbade to enter your congregation.

NLT Lamentations 2:7 The Lord has rejected his own altar; he despises his own sanctuary. He has given Jerusalem's palaces to her enemies. They shout in the LORD's Temple as though it were a day of celebration.

4. Their land and their homes were given to others.

ESV Lamentations 5:2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

5. Lawlessness came with the breakdown of their society.

ESV Lamentations 2:9 Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

ESV Lamentations 5:11 Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah. ¹² Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders.

6. And now those who remained in the land were not better than slaves.

ESV Lamentations 5:4 We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought.

ESV Lamentations 5:13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill, and boys stagger under loads of wood.

Their nation had been destroyed. This was the new reality for them.

7. And it was all due to their sin.

NLT Lamentations 1:5 Her oppressors have become her masters, and her enemies prosper, for the LORD has punished Jerusalem for her many sins. Her children have been captured and taken away to distant lands.

ESV Lamentations 1:18 "The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.

The LORD didn't enjoy bringing this on them, but their sin and His justice demanded it.

ESV Lamentations 3:31-33 For the Lord will not cast off forever, ³² but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ³³ for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.

But where is that island I spoke about earlier?

Lamentations 3:22-24

²² **The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;**

²³ **they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.**

²⁴ **"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."**

Verses 22-24 appear in one of our Scripture choruses. Verse 23 also is the basis for one of our hymns, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness".

In the midst of gut-wrenching doom the author of this book, knowing that Israel's plight was the result of her sin, also knew that God remains ever faithful to Himself and His people. This is a truth we can rely on!