The Fulfilment of Doom?
The Dialogic Interaction between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-Exilic/Early Exilic Prophetic Literature.

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

It has long been noted that the book of Lamentations shares, at least in part, a theological outlook with the prophetic literature that the destruction of Jerusalem was the result of Yahweh’s decisive action against the sins of the nation. Too often, however, this relationship has simply been presupposed, or assumed to be a relationship of shared perspective. To date, there has been no systematic exploration of how it is that Lamentations accepts and/or modifies the theological outlook of the prophetic literature. In addition, when the theology of the prophets has been discussed in relation to Lamentations, there has been a tendency to group all the prophetic books together as if they existed as a homogeneous whole, and shared amongst themselves a singular outlook. This tendency to simplify the theological complexity of the prophetic literature coincides with a similar tendency to reduce the theology of Lamentations to simple, monolithic assertions. Drawing on the literary insights of Mikhail Bakhtin, this study aims to explore in detail the nature of the relationship between Lamentations and the pre-exilic/exilic prophetic literature. Drawing on the notions of dialogism, polyphony and double-voicing, the study argues that Lamentations enters into a dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature, a relationship which both affirms and subverts that literature. Central to the acknowledgment of the dialogic interaction between Lamentations and the prophetic literature is the recognition of Lamentations as a multivalent, polyphonic text in which unmerged viewpoints exist in a tension filled relationship.
# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1  
   1.2. History of Interpretation .................................................................................................................. 4  
   1.2.1. The Date and Authorship of Lamentations .................................................................................. 4  
   1.2.2. The Theology of Lamentations ..................................................................................................... 8  
   1.2.2.1. The Discussion Prior to 1954 ................................................................................................... 8  
   1.2.2.2. N. Gottwald: *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* ................................................................. 9  
   1.2.2.3. The Discussion after 1954 ......................................................................................................... 11  
   1.2.2.3.1. Israel’s Traditions as the Key to the Theology of Lamentations ........................................ 12  
   1.2.2.3.2. The Theology as it Emerges from within the Text .............................................................. 17  
   1.2.2.3.2.1. Defining Lamentations through a Single Theological Theme ..................................... 17  
   1.2.2.3.2.2. Lamentations as a Multi-Voiced Book ........................................................................ 24  
   1.2.3. Conclusions ......................................................................................................................................... 30  
   1.3. Method .................................................................................................................................................. 32  
   1.3.1. Bakhtin’s Dialogism, Polyphony and Double-Voicing ................................................................. 33  
   1.3.2. The Application of Bakhtin to Biblical Studies ............................................................................ 37  
   1.3.3. Bakhtin and Lamentations ............................................................................................................. 43  
   1.3.4. Approach ......................................................................................................................................... 44  
   1.4. The Structure of Lamentations ............................................................................................................ 47  
   1.4.1. The Acrostic Form and the Structure of Lamentations ............................................................... 48  
   1.4.2. Genre and the Structure of Lamentations ..................................................................................... 51  
   1.4.3. A Thematic Structure of Lamentations ....................................................................................... 57  
   1.4.3.1. The Thematic Units in Lamentations ...................................................................................... 59  
   1.4.3.1.1. Description of Misery ........................................................................................................ 59  
   1.4.3.1.2. Divine Responsibility .................................................................................................... 60  
   1.4.3.1.3. Future Fate of the Enemy ................................................................................................... 60  
   1.4.3.1.4. Confidence in Yahweh ..................................................................................................... 61  
   1.4.3.1.5. Wisdom-Like Units ......................................................................................................... 61  
   1.4.3.1.6. Call to Confession ............................................................................................................ 61  
   1.4.3.1.7. Extended Treatment of Sin ............................................................................................ 62  
   1.4.3.1.8. Praise of Yahweh ............................................................................................................. 62  
   1.4.3.1.9. Future Restoration of Jerusalem .................................................................................... 62  
   1.4.3.2. The Motifs in Lamentations ..................................................................................................... 62  
   1.4.4. The Structure of Lamentations ........................................................................................................ 63  
   1.4.4.1. Lamentations 1 ..................................................................................................................... 63  
   1.4.4.2. Lamentations 2 ..................................................................................................................... 65  
   1.4.4.3. Lamentations 3 ..................................................................................................................... 67  
   1.4.4.4. Lamentations 4 ..................................................................................................................... 70  
   1.4.4.5. Lamentations 5 ..................................................................................................................... 72
2. The Personification of Jerusalem as Female: Prophetic Motif and Literary Device ................................................................. 74
  2.1. Introduction ............................................................................. 74
  2.1.1. Personification as a Literary Device ........................................ 75
  2.1.2. The Personification of Jerusalem as Female in the Hebrew Bible and its Ancient Near Eastern Origin ........................................ 76
  2.2. The Personification of Jerusalem in the Prophetic Literature........ 78
     2.2.1. The Personification of Jerusalem in Isaiah 1-39 ...................... 79
     2.2.1.1. Summary ..................................................................... 85
     2.2.2. The Personification of Jerusalem in Micah ............................. 85
     2.2.2.1. Summary ..................................................................... 90
     2.2.3. The Personification of Jerusalem in Jeremiah ....................... 91
     2.2.3.1. Summary ..................................................................... 109
     2.2.4. The Personification of Jerusalem in Zephaniah .................... 112
     2.2.4.1. Summary ..................................................................... 116
     2.2.5. Conclusions: The Personification of Jerusalem in the Prophetic Literature ................................................................. 116
  2.3. The Personification of Jerusalem as Female in Lamentations .......... 121
     2.3.1. Lamentations 1 ................................................................... 123
     2.3.1.1. Lamentations 1:1-6 ......................................................... 123
     2.3.1.2. Lamentations 1:7-11 ....................................................... 126
     2.3.1.3. Lamentations 1:12-20 ...................................................... 128
     2.3.1.4. Lamentations 1:21-22 ...................................................... 131
     2.3.1.5. Summary ..................................................................... 132
     2.3.2. Lamentations 2 ................................................................... 132
     2.3.2.1. Lamentations 2:1-8 ......................................................... 133
     2.3.2.2. Lamentations 2:9-10 ....................................................... 135
     2.3.2.3. Lamentations 2:11-19 ...................................................... 136
     2.3.2.4. Lamentations 2:20-22 ...................................................... 138
     2.3.2.5. Summary ..................................................................... 139
     2.3.3. Lamentations 3 ................................................................... 140
     2.3.4. Lamentations 4 ................................................................... 141
     2.3.4.1. Lamentations 4:1-10 ....................................................... 141
     2.3.4.2. Lamentations 4:11-20 ...................................................... 144
     2.3.4.3. Lamentations 4:21-22 ...................................................... 145
     2.3.4.4. Summary ..................................................................... 145
     2.3.5. Conclusions: The Personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations ...... 146
  2.4. The Personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations and its Relationship to the Prophetic Literature ................................................................. 149

3. The Day of Yahweh: The Relationship between Lamentations and the Prophetic Literature ................................................................. 155
  3.1. Introduction ............................................................................. 155
     3.1.1. The Day of Yahweh as a Literary Motif .................................... 156
4. Sin and Judgment in Lamentations and its Relationship to the Prophetic Literature

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. The Task

4.1.2. Method

4.1.2.1. Comparison of Texts

4.1.2.2. The Relationship between Sin and Judgment

4.2. Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Literature

4.2.1. Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Personification Texts

4.2.1.1. Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Isaiah 1-39

4.2.1.2. Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Micah

4.2.1.3. Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Jeremiah

4.2.1.4. Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Zephaniah

4.2.1.5. Summary

4.2.2. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts

4.2.2.1. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Text in Amos

4.2.2.2. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Isaiah

4.2.2.3. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Text in Jeremiah

4.2.2.4. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Zephaniah

4.2.2.5. Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Ezekiel

4.2.2.6. Summary

4.2.3. Conclusions: Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Literature

4.3. Sin and Judgment in the Personification and Day of Yahweh Texts in Lamentations

4.3.1. Lamentations 1

4.3.1.1. Lamentations 1:5

4.3.1.2. Lamentations 1:8-9
4.3.1.3. Lamentations 1:12-20 ................................................................. 256
4.3.1.4. Lamentations 1:21-22 ................................................................. 259
4.3.2. Lamentations 2 ............................................................................. 261
4.3.3. Lamentations 4 ............................................................................. 264
4.3.3.1. Lamentations 4:6 ....................................................................... 265
4.3.3.2. Lamentations 4:13-16 ................................................................. 266
4.3.3.3. Lamentations 4:22 ..................................................................... 270
4.3.4. Summary ...................................................................................... 271
4.4. Sin in Lamentations 3 and 5 .............................................................. 274
4.4.1. Lamentations 3 ............................................................................. 274
4.4.1.1. Lamentations 3:39 .................................................................... 275
4.4.1.2. Lamentations 3:42 .................................................................... 277
4.4.1.3. Lamentations 3:64 .................................................................... 279
4.4.2. Lamentations 5 ............................................................................. 280
4.4.2.1. Lamentations 5:7 ...................................................................... 281
4.4.2.2. Lamentations 5:16 .................................................................... 283
4.4.3. Summary ...................................................................................... 284
4.5. Conclusions: Sin and Judgment in Lamentations in Relation to the Prophetic Literature ...................................................................... 286

5. Lamentations as Dialogic Text .......................................................... 291
5.1. Introduction ...................................................................................... 291
5.1.1. Voice ............................................................................................ 293
5.1.2. The Interaction of Themes .............................................................. 296
5.1.3. The Interaction of Traditions ............................................................ 297
5.1.4. Lamentations as Open-Ended Text ................................................... 298
5.2. Lamentations as Dialogic text ............................................................ 299
5.2.1. Lamentations 1 ............................................................................. 300
5.2.2. Lamentations 2 ............................................................................. 312
5.2.3. Lamentations 3 ............................................................................. 318
5.2.4. Lamentations 4 ............................................................................. 334
5.2.5. Lamentations 5 ............................................................................. 340

6. Conclusions ......................................................................................... 344

Bibliography .......................................................................................... 352
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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The theology of the book of Lamentations has long been a vexed question for biblical scholars. With its strong expression of grief, suffering and anger, and its seemingly random images of destruction and despair juxtaposed against confessions of sin and expressions of hope, the book has defied attempts to draw together a "cohesive" statement of its theological position or thrust. Conversations continue as to the nature of the theological expression within Lamentations, a conversation into which the present work enters.

Over the past fifty years, there has been an increased interest in the theological content of the book. Early studies on Lamentations gave scant attention to its theology, focussing instead on issues of provenance and form. It was not until 1954, with the publication of Norman Gottwald's monograph Studies in the Book of Lamentations, that the theology of the book became a central focus for study.\(^1\) Since this time, there has been considerable debate as to the book's theology, a trend reflected in the increased space given to the discussion of theology in both commentaries and articles concerning the book.\(^2\)

One of Gottwald's key conclusions was that Lamentations belongs within the theological framework of the prophetic literature. Gottwald identifies several features of the text which point to its prophetic orientation, including its references to the day of Yahweh, and its linking of the destruction of Jerusalem with the causal sins of the people.\(^3\) Although Gottwald's views have not been

\(^2\) By way of an extreme example, T. Meek (Lamentations [vol. 6 of The Interpreter's Bible; T. J. Meek and W. P. Merrill; New York: Abingdon, 1956], 5–6) sums up the theology of Lamentations in one brief paragraph, whereas F. Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations [IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 2002]) devotes 25 pages to his discussion of the theology of the book.
\(^3\) Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 63–89, 111–18.
accepted without debate,⁴ the link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature is frequently noted.⁵

While previous studies have identified motifs shared between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, little attention has been given to the nature of the relationship between the two bodies of literature. Too often it has been presupposed or assumed that because Lamentations uses motifs from the prophetic literature it also shares a common theological outlook. The question of what happens when prophetic motifs are taken up and used within this new context has not been asked, nor has it been explored how it is this new text differs from its prophetic predecessors.⁶

In noting the absence of detailed research on the link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, two further limitations in the discussion of Lamentations as a prophetically oriented theological text emerge. First, in arguing that Lamentations aligns itself with “prophetic” theology, there is a tendency to reduce the prophetic literature to a single theological outlook. Differences within and between the prophetic books with regard to their use of

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⁶Commenting on the frequent association made between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, I. Gous (“A Survey of Research on the Book of Lamentations,” OTE 5 [1992]: 189) asks: “do similarities and even quotations inevitably mean consent? Do commentators really take into account how a quotation from, or reference to, other literature functions in the new context?”
key motifs and themes have seldom been taken into account in relation to the theology of Lamentations, leading to a flattened interpretation of Lamentations, and, in itself, doing an injustice to the diversity of prophetic material within the Hebrew bible.  

Second, this tendency to reduce the complexity of the prophetic literature to simple assertions corresponds with a similar trend in much of the research on Lamentations. In the period following Gottwald’s publication, many attempts were made to explain the theology of the book through the identification of a single theme or argument. The text itself has, however, frustrated these attempts, as the book defies being straight-jacketed by simplistic theological statements. The attempt to find a unifying theme has only resulted in a diminished understanding of the text which does not do full justice to its theological complexity. Only in recent years has there been a movement away from the quest for the theological key to Lamentations, to an increasing recognition that various viewpoints are expressed within Lamentations, thus leading to a more nuanced interpretation of the book’s theology.  

This study enters into the debate concerning Lamentations’ theology, seeking to address some of the above issues. It aims to explore in detail the nature of the relationship between Lamentations and the eighth to sixth century prophetic literature in order to understand how it is that Lamentations makes use of the prophetic themes and motifs which occur within it. Then, having explored this relationship, it seeks to consider how this impacts upon our understanding of the theology of the book as a whole. In keeping with the recent trend of identifying a variety of viewpoints within Lamentations, the study seeks to understand how it is that the prophetic themes and motifs identified are integrated into and interact with other viewpoints within the text, and how these work together to form the

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7Gous (“Survey of Research,” 188) asks “Can one talk about ‘the prophets’ as if they were a homogeneous group with corresponding backgrounds, points of departure, points of view and messages? What are the criteria necessary to describe one as ‘prophetic’? Is the acknowledgment the the catastrophe of 586 BC was punishment for sin reason enough?”

8See the discussion below.
complex and diverse theological outlook of this book.

1.2 History of Interpretation

For ease and clarity of discussion, the history of interpretation can be divided into two broad areas: issues concerning date, authorship and poetic form; and the discussion of theology. Although the primary concern of the current study is the theology of Lamentations, it is helpful to briefly review the debate over authorship and dating in order to situate the discussion of the book’s theology. Discussion of poetic form/genre will be picked up later in the chapter when the structure of Lamentations is discussed. While it has been noted that the debate surrounding the theology of the book came to the fore following Gottwald’s publication in 1954, issues of date and authorship continue to be discussed down to the present day, and scattered reference to theology is present in the literature prior to 1954.

1.2.1 The Date and Authorship of Lamentations

Much of the discussion concerning Lamentations in the period leading up to, and in fact beyond, Gottwald’s publication is dominated by issues of authorship, date and poetic form, with the decisions made by various commentators impacting upon their interpretive position concerning the book. For current purposes, it is sufficient to outline the major trends in the discussion, noting those who support the various positions argued.

With regard to date, there is, on the whole, widespread agreement that Lamentations emerges in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. What varies in the discussion is whether any of the chapters can be considered to have emerged either earlier than 586, or significantly later.

With regard to an earlier dating for some of the material, W. Rudolph argues that Lam 1 emerges from the period following 597 B.C.E. He bases his argument
on his observation that chapter 1 does not make reference to the actual destruction of the temple and city, but reflects instead the conquest of the city.⁹ Rudolph’s view does not find wide support, but is followed by A. Weiser and P. Re’emi.¹⁰

More common is the view that all the book emerges from the period following the destruction, but that some of the chapters are later than others. Of those who argue for a later date of some of the material, chapter 3 is most frequently cited as later, followed by chapter 5. A later date for chapter 3 was proposed as early as 1898 by K. Budde, followed by M. Lühr in 1904.¹¹ This position finds many supporters, with some dating the chapter into the post-exilic period.¹² Chapter 5 has similarly been dated later,¹³ with S. Lachs pushing it as far forward as the Maccabean period.¹⁴

A number of commentators argue, however, that there is little conclusive evidence upon which to date any of the book. There are no specific references to either events or people, and while the images would point to the destruction of Jerusalem as the event behind the laments, the evidence is not conclusive. The book is informed, however, by reading it against this background.¹⁵ F. Dobbs-Allsopp has, however, provided a detailed evaluation of linguistic evidence within

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Lamentations which points to it being a product of the sixth century, dating no later than 520 B.C.E., a position followed by A. Berlin.\textsuperscript{16}

Closely related to the issue of date is that of authorship. Following the superscript in the LXX version of Lamentations, and the reference to his lament over the destroyed city in 2 Chron 35:25, the prophet Jeremiah was for many years considered to be the author of the book. That Jeremiah was not the author was first suggested by H. van der Hardt in 1712, although it is with Thenius in 1855 that the debate over authorship became central.\textsuperscript{17} Following from Thenius’ rejection of Jeremiah as author, Budde argued for multiple authorship of the book, with Löhrl, who published a number articles and/or commentaries on Lamentations between 1893 and 1923, following Budde’s lead.\textsuperscript{18} In the twentieth century only H. Weismann and W. Kaiser support Jeremiah as author.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the rejection of Jeremian authorship, many commentators note the affinity between sections of Lamentations and the persona of Jeremiah, particularly in Lamentations 3.\textsuperscript{20} Löhrl, for example, notes that in Lam 3:48-51 the speaker is Jeremiah “who has been chosen by the anonymous author to deliver a kind of penitential sermon.”\textsuperscript{21} Recent scholars have argued that Jeremiah is a persona whose voice can be heard within Lamentations. Berlin, following the work of N. Lee, states:

If we hear a speaking voice in the book, and that voice uses the language and imagery of Jeremiah, who better to imagine uttering those words than Jeremiah, the same persona of the book of Jeremiah, the prophet of the destruction and exile \textit{par excellance}.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{17}Cited Brevard S. Childs, \textit{Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture} (London: SCM, 1979), 592–93.
\textsuperscript{22}Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 32.
\end{flushright}
Although there is widespread acceptance that Jeremiah is not the author of the book, debate continues as to whether Lamentations comes from the hand of only one author or more. This discussion is closely tied to issues of date, and includes discussion on the likely background (i.e. court singer, cult, prophetic circle etc.) of the author.

Those who argue for one or more chapters coming from later time periods support multiple authorship of the book. Factors taken into account by those who argue for multiple authorship include the difference in alphabetical order of the ב and ג stanzas between chapter 1, and chapters 2, 3 and 4, the change of style in chapter 5, including the absence of the acrostic form, and the different theological outlook of chapter 3. Although Rudolph argues that chapter 1 is earlier, and that the other chapters were produced at different times, he maintains single authorship.

A number of commentators, however, argue that the book arose from the one author. In arguing for single authorship, several commentators have attempted to define a structural unity across the book, including W. Shea, who argues that the whole book is modeled on the 3:2 qinah meter, and B. Johnson who argues that the book has a carefully designed structure, with each chapter divided into a “fact half” and an “interpretation half.”

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As with the issue of date, a number of commentators acknowledge that there is insufficient evidence upon which to base decisions about authorship.\textsuperscript{27} Although the text does not allow decisions to be made as to whether it comes from a single or multiple authors, D. Hillers, Dobbs-Allsopp, K. O'Connar and Berlin argue that the book should be read as if it were a unity.\textsuperscript{28} As Berlin states, reading the book as one with unity allows it to be understood "as a coherent whole conveying a multifaceted picture of the destruction."\textsuperscript{29}

1.2.2 The Theology of Lamentations

A review of the discussion concerning the theology of Lamentations can be divided into two periods separated by the ground breaking publication of Gottwald's \textit{Studies in the Book of Lamentations}.\textsuperscript{30} This was the first time that the book's theology was discussed in any detail, and the literature subsequent to Gottwald's book reflects an increased interest in, and debate over, the nature of Lamentations' theological intent.

1.2.2.1 The Discussion Prior to 1954

Discussion of the book's theology is limited in early studies on Lamentations and, if it was discussed at all, occurs in either short introductory comments, or is to be found in scattered comments within the textual analysis. In his 1898 commentary, Budde does not discuss the theological implications of the book at all.\textsuperscript{31} Rudolph argues that the significance of Lamentations lies in the recognition that the destruction was at the hand of Yahweh, and that the book's purpose was to lead people to a proper understanding of the events, with the hope


\textsuperscript{29} Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 6.

\textsuperscript{30} Norman K. Gottwald, \textit{Studies}.

of chapter 3 intended to provide a way for the people to move through the crisis. M. Haller similarly argues that chapter 3 has central importance in providing hope, and that within the chapter the penitential motif is of prime import. These early studies emphasize the recognition of guilt by Israel, and place central importance on the third chapter with its call to penitence and message of hope.

1.2.2.2 N. Gottwald: *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*

Gottwald’s publication of *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* brought the theology of the book into the spotlight for the first time. The groundbreaking nature of Gottwald’s work was not so much what he said, but that he asked the question of theology at all. There has been considerable engagement with Gottwald’s conclusions since this time.

Locating the book of Lamentations against the destruction of Jerusalem and the unprecedented suffering in the community, Gottwald seeks to determine the theological key to the book. The theological significance of Lamentations lies in its “bold and forthright statement of the problem of national disaster and its grappling with issues of faith in light of the historical crisis.” In seeking to understand the catastrophe of 586, Gottwald argues that it was necessary for the people to look to both their past and their future in order to answer the questions raised by the destruction of Jerusalem. Gottwald suggests that behind Lamentations lies an increasing tension between the dominant theology of the Deuteronomistic (Dtr) school with its “naive theory of retribution and reward,” and historical reality. Arguing that in light of the Josianic reform the nation expected a bright future and yet history took the nation’s path in different directions, Gottwald suggests that the optimism of the Dtr reform was discrepant with the cynicism and despondency evoked by the reversal of national fortune.

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35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 50.
following the death of Josiah. The key question behind Lamentations is “why does the nation suffer more than ever before immediately after its earnest attempt at reform?”

Arising out of this tension, Gottwald argues that Lamentations interprets the fall of Jerusalem in line with the teaching of the prophets. Gottwald outlines several features of the book which place it within the theological stream of the prophetic literature. On this point Gottwald is expansive, but also somewhat contradictory. First and foremost, it is the acknowledgment and confession of sin as the ultimate cause of the people’s plight which points to the prophetic theological stance of the book. Gottwald states:

The confession of sin, not once or twice but repeatedly, not perfunctorily or incidentally but earnestly and fundamentally, suggests the reason for the calamity. All five poems which comprise the Book of Lamentations witness to the prophetic concept of sin and thus form one link in the long chain of evidence bearing out the importance of Lamentations as a justification and preservation of the teaching of the prophets.

It is here, however, that Gottwald’s argument also becomes unclear. In discussing Lam 4:6, which compares Jerusalem with Sodom, Gottwald states “The special import of the Lamentations reference is that it reasons from the punishment to the sin in keeping with the most unerring Deuteronomistic faith.” What is unclear is the distinction between the theology of the prophets and that of Dtr. Gottwald argues that both function in a retributive framework, and thus his distinction between the two bodies of literature is not clear, despite his argument that Lamentations adheres to the prophetic teaching as a response to the tension with the Dtr theology.

Gottwald finds further evidence of a link with the prophetic literature in the portrayal of Yahweh’s wrathful action against the nation, particularly as it is expressed through the description of the destruction as a day of Yahweh (1:12; 2:1, 21, 22), thus confirming the prophetic conviction that it would be a day of

37Ibid., 51.
38Ibid., 114–15.
39Ibid., 67.
40Ibid., 66.
doom for Israel.\textsuperscript{41} In addition, Gottwald argues that the call to wait passively on Yahweh (3:21-39) is the legacy of the preaching of Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah “who believed that resignation to the foe and/or quiet trust in Yahweh was the only true course of action in the light of the divine control of history.”\textsuperscript{42} This is linked with the loyalty to Yahwism demonstrated in the book, “firmly rejecting all temptations to syncretism.”\textsuperscript{43} Finally, hope within Lamentations is linked with the belief in Yahweh’s control of history.\textsuperscript{44}

In summarizing the prophetic influence on Lamentations, Gottwald argues that it is unique in its assertion of the explosive and destructive side of divine nature and “the determination and ability of Yahweh to act in history in fulfillment of his announced word.”\textsuperscript{45} Israel’s doom was a consequence of a long proclaimed and inevitable requital of disobedience and rebellion. He argues “that the book of Lamentations was the first to take up the prophet’s theme in the wake of the tragedy they announced and to vindicate their claims.”\textsuperscript{46} The acceptance of this prophetic interpretation of the national tragedy was the key to survival.

Despite his emphasis on the prophetic influence on Lamentations, Gottwald also identifies the presence of other theological strands within the book. In its grappling with the meaning of the immense suffering, Gottwald argues that Lamentations “stands at the point in Israel’s life where the tension between history and faith is, for the first time, most sharply posed.” Although it accepts the prophetic teaching, “with respect to the historical enigma of Israel’s life, it foreshadows the Wisdom literature by pointing finally to the mystery of the divine ways.”\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 83–87.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{43}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 51.
1.2.2.3 The Discussion after 1954

Gottwald’s approach to the theology of Lamentations sought to determine which of Israel’s theological traditions the book drew on, or aligned itself with, as the key to understanding the book’s theology. In the period following his publication, the discussion can be divided into two major groups: those who sought to define the book’s theology in the light of Israel’s traditions, in essence looking outside the book for the key to its understanding; and those who developed their theological insights from the text of Lamentations itself.

1.2.2.3.1 Israel’s Traditions as the Key to the Theology of Lamentations

One of the earliest responses to Gottwald came from B. Albrektson. Albrektson includes a chapter on the theology of Lamentations. Like Gottwald, Albrektson seeks to find the situational key to the book, but argues against Gottwald that the tension lies not with the Deuteronomic faith and historical adversity, but between Zion traditions and the events of history. Albrektson argues that within the Zion tradition the inviolability of Jerusalem was central, a belief which was negated in the destruction of the city. The primary task of Lamentations is, according to Albrektson, “the search for an interpretation of history which could embrace the catastrophe itself and transcend the immediate spectacle of tragedy.” The book of Lamentations responds to the questions raised by the destruction by firmly attributing the cause of the city’s downfall to the sins of the community. In this way Lamentations stands within the Dtr theological tradition. Albrektson supports his argument by outlining similarities between Lamentations and parts of the book of Deuteronomy, particularly Deut 28 with its list of treaty curses which would come upon the unfaithful people. Central to Albrektson’s argument are the

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48 Albrektson, Text and Theology.
49 Ibid., 215–39.
50 Ibid., 215.
multiple references to sin within Lamentations, references which he argues negate Gottwald’s assumption of the book’s tension with the Dtr understanding of history.

Albrektson’s conclusions have found a degree of support in the literature which followed his publication. B. Johnson argues that within Lamentations the question of how ongoing faith in Yahweh was possible following the destruction of the city is answered through the Dtr faith.\textsuperscript{51} R. Brandscheidt, whose work focuses on Lam 3 as the central chapter for understanding the book, identifies the book within the Dtr traditions, but notes also that Lamentations points to the destruction of the city as the fulfillment of the prophetic announcement of judgment.\textsuperscript{52} Others who support Albrektson’s conclusions include M. Guinan, M. Saebo, and R. Salters.\textsuperscript{53}

Gottwald and Albrektson and his followers, sought the answer to the book’s theology through identifying a single key or tradition behind the book. Although still looking to Israel’s traditions to understand the book’s theology, a number of commentators argue that Lamentations draws on more than one tradition, and that no single tradition is adequate to explain the book’s outlook.

J. Tigay identifies a number of traditions present within Lamentations, including wisdom and Dtr traditions. In direct opposition to Gottwald, however, Tigay rejects the presence of any prophetic theology within Lamentations, based on both the absence of specific reference to sin within the book, suggesting a failure on the author’s behalf to account for the calamity, and on the apparent previous reliance of the author on institutions such as the temple (Lam 1:4, 10; 2:1, 6, 7) and popular religion, a confidence condemned particularly in Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{54} Tying chapter 3 to wisdom traditions, Tigay argues that this chapter is the core of the book which reflects on the meaning of suffering and the recognition that the

\textsuperscript{51}Johnson, “Form and Message,” 59–60.
\textsuperscript{52}Brandscheidt, Gotteszorn und Menschenlied.
\textsuperscript{53}Guinan, “Lamentations.”; Saebo, “Who is ‘the Man?,’”; Salters, Lamentations, 111.
\textsuperscript{54}Tigay, “Lamentations, Book Of.”
suffering was due to the guilt of the people. This insight forms the basis of national reassessment and hope.

In two later publications, Gottwald identifies the limitation of his own earlier conclusions in emphasizing a single theological tradition behind the book.\(^{55}\) He states:

> Anyone adhering to the conventions of a single theological tradition could not have woven the web of poetic argument in Lamentations. Strict prophetic and Deuteronomic adherents viewed the covenant with God as irrevocably broken. Followers of traditional wisdom tenets had little precedent for grappling with the sociopolitical and religious ramifications of the city’s fall. Ardent Davidic-Zion loyalists could not abide the breach of the unconditional promises to the holy city, its temple and king. Those who thought that Judah’s regime and society were just (or at least) as good or better than those of other nation’s would not have understood or sympathized with the notion that “sins” explained Judah’s sad end.\(^{56}\)

In a study which bases its arguments on W. Brueggemann’s work on the streams of tradition in the Hebrew bible,\(^{57}\) I. Gous argues that Lamentations originates out of the world view of the Davidic trajectory (order is God given and people should adhere to that order), but in the light of the catastrophe had to accept the Mosaic trajectory (people contribute to order and have a responsibility to shape reality).\(^{58}\) According to Gous:

> They (i.e. the poets) and their audience, who experienced and survived the catastrophe of 586 BC, were adherents to the theology of Zion. While reflecting upon their experiences, they had to concede the Mosaic-minded explanations of the events as punishment for sins. However the motif did not function as a call for repentance. True to the thought patterns of the Davidic trajectory, it served as an affirmation of orderliness. The poems thus were intended to reaffirm the validity of the Davidic world view.\(^{59}\)

Although he uses different terminology, Gous’s argument identifies similar traditions to Albrektson. Unlike Albrektson, however, he argues that the

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\(^{59}\) Ibid.
Zion/Davidic traditions are affirmed within Lamentations.

J. Renkema also argues for multiple traditions behind Lamentations. In his commentary, Renkema identifies the importance of both the prophetic and psalmic/Zion traditions within the book. In attempting to theologically understand the “why” of the catastrophe, Renkema argues that “Their (i.e. the poets) harking back to the preaching of those prophets who had announced the fall of Jerusalem and their appropriation of some of their language and motifs shows that they had found an answer therein.” The ongoing acknowledgment of Yahweh and the expression of faith evident through the recourse to laments represents the survival of an element of Psalm theology, a theology that has within it notions of Zion’s inviolability. According to Renkema, within Lamentations “doubts were raised in prayer as to the absolute character of the prophetic announcements of doom while at the same time distance had to be taken from the notion of Zion’s unconditional inviolability.” In this context, Renkema argues, “the insight arose that YHWH had allowed his presence in their midst to be dependent on the purity of their relationship with him.” Against Albrektson, Renkema argues that there is an absence of clear Deuteronomistic influence within Lamentations.

Much of Renkema’s work is picked up and supported by J. Hunter, who similarly argues that Zion theology continues to be present in Lamentations. Against Renkema, however, Hunter identifies more emphasis on hope within Lamentations, a hope which arises from a Dtr understanding in which restoration is possible if the people confess their sin and remain faithful to Yahweh.

Although the later work of Dobbs-Allsopp will be discussed below, in his 1997 article “Tragedy, Tradition and Theology in the Book of Lamentations,”

60 Renkema, *Lamentations*.
61 Ibid., 44.
62 Ibid., 57.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 58.
Dobbs-Allsopp identifies a number of theological traditions within Lamentations, including Dtr theology, the prophetic concept of sin, the wisdom tradition and the Zion tradition. These traditions help to form the ethical vision of the book, but do so for a purpose different to that generally perceived. Dobbs-Allsopp states: “One does not doubt that Lamentations reflects a general awareness of the ethical vision as manifested in these several literary traditions. What is open to question is the nature of the poet’s use of this material.” Dobbs-Allsopp goes on to argue that the text of Lamentations undermines this ethical vision, and that the ethical vision acts as a foil for the poet’s “more tragic take on the situation.” The poet does not disparage the ethical vision as such, he “merely needs to present an aspect of the ethical vision and then suffuse it with arresting and manifold images of human suffering to make the inability of the ethical vision to contain such suffering strikingly obvious.” In a move which leads into his later work, and into the discussion below on Lamentations as a multivalent text, Dobbs-Allsopp identifies four issues central to the theology of Lamentations: The valuation of human suffering; the authentication of human defiance; the desire for human and divine compassion and the theological relevance of aesthetics; a reference to the ability of Lamentations to “heal through language.”

Finally, although acknowledging that Lamentations presents different perspectives on the destruction of Jerusalem, Berlin also looks to Israel’s traditions in her understanding of the book’s theology. In her discussion Berlin acknowledges that the book does not construct a theology, or present the theology of its day in any systematic way. Rather, it “assumes the ‘theology of destruction’ in which destruction and exile are the punishment for sin.” Berlin’s understanding of the theology of Lamentations revolves around the presence of two paradigms within the book’s understanding: the paradigm of purity; and the

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68 Ibid., 47.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 54, 58.
71 Berlin, Lamentations.
72 Ibid., 18.
political paradigm. With regard to purity/impurity, Berlin argues that this paradigm aligns itself with the Priestly material as presented within Leviticus and Numbers, and concerns the defilement of the land through the moral impurity of the community. The political paradigm draws on deuteronomistic models of covenant and suzerainty treaty relationships between Yahweh and Israel. Berlin concludes “Both the paradigm of purity and the political paradigm converge in their view that the exile is the ultimate punishment for the most serious sins. It is, therefore, easy to understand how prophets and poets could fuse the two paradigms together as they are in Lamentations.”

1.2.2.3.2 The Theology as it Emerges from within the Text

A second body of literature concerning the theology of Lamentations looks not primarily to Israel’s traditions in order to understand the book’s theology, but seeks to find the theology from within the text alone. It is possible to separate these studies into two major groups: those which seek to define the book’s theology through a single purpose or theme, and those which identify multiple themes/voices.

1.2.2.3.2.1 Defining Lamentations through a Single Theological Theme

Of those who seek to define the theology of Lamentations as it emerges out of the text itself, the most common response is to seek a single theological statement or purpose through which the book can be understood. This approach seeks to define the most dominant or central thrust/purpose of the book, although those who take this approach often recognize that a variety of viewpoints are expressed within the book. It is, however, this variety of viewpoints within Lamentations which frustrates the attempt to define its theological message.

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73Ibid., 19–21.
74Ibid., 21–22.
75Ibid., 22.
through a single theme or statement. The literature can be divided into three broad groups: those who identify the recognition of guilt and the confession of sin as the book’s primary purpose, those who identify the movement from despair to hope as the book’s purpose thus focusing on chapter 3 as the theological core of the book, and those who understand the book’s aim to reside in the expression of suffering itself. The first two themes - the recognition of guilt and the instilling of hope - are often considered as two aspects of the one purpose, that is, as the way out of the current crisis of faith to a new understanding of Yahweh.

The most common position taken on the theology of Lamentations is that its significance lies in the recognition of guilt and the acknowledgement that sin was the cause of Yahweh’s destructive action, a recognition frequently associated with an acceptance of the teaching of the prophets. Closely related to this is the identification of chapter 3 as the theological core of Lamentations, with its expression of patient waiting on Yahweh, the affirmation of Yahweh’s mercy and its call to penitence offering hope to the community and a way through the present catastrophe. While these two aspects are often seen as parts of the same theological purpose, some commentators place more emphasis on the hope than on the recognition of guilt. Frequently, when emphasis is placed on the recognition of guilt and the transition to hope, the expression of suffering and pain is relegated as being of lesser importance, or given no significance at all. This understanding of Lamentations is typified by T. Meek, who confines his introductory comments on theology to the following statement:

The book of Lamentations was written, not simply to memorialize the tragic destruction of Jerusalem, but to interpret the meaning of God’s rigorous treatment of his people, to the end that they would learn the lessons of the past and retain their faith in him in the face of overwhelming disaster. There is deep sorrow over the past, and some complaint, but there is also radiant hope for the future, particularly in chapter 3.

76 Weiser, “Klagelieder,” 304–06; McKane, Tracts for the Times, 53–57; Harrison, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 200–03; Fuerst, Lamentations, 207, 262; Otto Kaiser, “Klagelieder.”
78 Meek, Lamentations, 5–6.
In making this connection between the confession of sin and the penitential hope of chapter 3, the theology of Lamentations becomes an orthodox expression of human culpability in the face of a righteous God. As will be seen, however, there is an emerging recognition that the theology of Lamentations is more complex and multi-voiced than this interpretation would suggest.

Against this more dominant trend of identifying the recognition of guilt and the call to penitence and hope as the central thrust of Lamentations, a number of commentators place central importance on the expression of pain and suffering. Although still attempting to define the theology of the book through one central idea or thrust, this line of interpretation begins to break open the acceptance of Lamentations as an orthodox expression of the destruction as just punishment for sin. As will be seen, however, in some studies there continues to be an emphasis on both the confession of sin and the transition to hope, an emphasis which, in some cases, negates the importance of the expression of suffering.

M. Moore criticizes the previous trend in Lamentations’ research of seeking to find a single theological thrust through which to define the book.\(^{79}\) Moore acknowledges that various themes emerge when considering the theology of Lamentations, but argues that these themes are subservient to a task of larger import. First and foremost, he suggests, Lamentations’ task is to lament the national destruction, a lament which is the first step towards picking up the emotional pieces. Having completed an analysis of the “deep structure” of each of the five poems, Moore concludes that the preeminent concern of the poet was “to portray the horrifying scope of the human suffering which he had witnessed with his own eyes”\(^{80}\) and that as an expression of grief the book becomes the focal-point for the grief of the nation.\(^{81}\) The laments articulate anger, guilt, despair and stubborn hope, but their primary task remains the expression of suffering.


\(^{80}\)Ibid., 554.

\(^{81}\)Ibid.
Re’emi also argues that the expression of suffering is of central importance within Lamentations.\textsuperscript{82} He suggests that Lamentations served the survivors as a means of expressing their grief and horror. Despite this recognition of the importance of the expression of suffering, however, Re’emi goes on to stress the centrality of the confession of sin, and of chapter 3 within the book. He argues that the poet recognizes “that God waits until his disloyal people are at least aware that of themselves they are nothing, and that they cannot rescue themselves from the pit into which they have sunk. Yet God’s purpose and plan for the world through them will continue - by Grace alone.”\textsuperscript{83} As such, Re’emi’s recognition of the importance of the expression of suffering runs the risk of being overshadowed by his emphasis on guilt and hope.

Although A. Mintz emphasizes the importance of the expression of suffering within Lamentations, his discussion elevates the hope reached by the man of chapter 3 over that expression.\textsuperscript{84} Mintz defines his task as a discussion of the rhetorical measures taken within Lamentations to address three dilemmas faced by the community in the wake of the destruction: “the essentially national-collective nature of the destruction, the trauma to the set of relations determined by the covenant, and the role of poetic language and its producers in the aftermath of the event.”\textsuperscript{85} Mintz then explores the power of language, and particularly the use of the poetic device of personifying the city as female, in allowing the community to bring to expression their communal pain and grief. Despite his valuation of the expression of pain and suffering, Mintz stresses the theological import of the expression of hope by the male figure in Lam 3. Mintz defines Lam 3 as the “monumental center” of Lamentations, the place where reasoning and cognition take over in the quest to understand what has happened.\textsuperscript{86} Central to the

\textsuperscript{82} Re’emi, “Theology of Hope,” 75–76.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{85} Mintz, “Rhetoric of Lamentations,” 2.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 10–11.
reasoning and cognition of this male figure is that a connection is made between sin and the destruction. Mintz states: "Without sin the event has no meaning, God remains gladiator and beast, His persecution an eternal rejection. Chapter 3 demonstrates that precisely because a conviction of sin is at first so unnatural it must be won."\(^{87}\) Although Mintz values the expression of the pain and suffering in the face of the loss of meaning wrought by the destruction, he undervalues that expression in stating:

To deal with this threatened loss of meaning - what amounts to a threat of caprice, gratuitousness, absurdity - Zion as a figure is simply not sufficient; a woman’s voice, according to the cultural code of Lamentations, can achieve expressivity but not reflection. And now acts of reasoning and cognition are the necessary equipment for undertaking the desperate project of understanding the meaning of what has happened. The solution is the invention of a new, male figure, the speaker of chapter 3 ... whose preference for theologizing rather than weeping is demonstrated throughout.\(^{88}\)

For Mintz, then, rational theologizing, the acknowledgment of guilt and the expression of hope are the most important expressions within Lamentations.\(^{89}\)

Hillers also argues that Lamentations serves the survivors of the catastrophe as an expression of the horrors and atrocities of the fall and its aftermath. In his introduction he states that "people live on best after calamity, not by utterly repressing their grief and shock, but by facing it, and by measuring its dimensions."\(^{90}\) Important for Hillers is the poetic form of Lamentations which allows the survivors and their descendants “to remember and contemplate their loss - not coolly, not without emotion - but without unbearable and measureless grief.”\(^{91}\) Hillers goes on to define one of the dimensions measured in Lamentations as being guilt, arguing that the book is also a confession of guilt and a “testimony to a search for absolution.”\(^{92}\) Hillers argues that the poems were written to serve in ritual, and that central to the intent of the ritual is the

\(^{87}\) Ibid., 12.  
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 9.  
\(^{89}\) See T. Linzelt (Surviving Lamentations [Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000], 6–7) for a critique of Mintz’s work.  
\(^{90}\) Hillers, Lamentations, 4.  
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 5.  
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 4.
expression and strengthening of hope. Both within his introductory comments, and within the commentary, Hillers places central importance on the speech of the male figure in chapter 3, arguing that he is the representative sufferer through whom the poet “points the way to the nation, as he shows the man who has been through trouble moving into, then out of, near despair to patient faith and penitence, thus becoming a model for the nation.”\textsuperscript{93} For Hillers, then, chapter 3 is the high point and center of the book. Although Hillers values the expression of suffering, that expression becomes subservient to the expression of penitence and hope.

A similar tension can be identified in the work of C. Westermann.\textsuperscript{94} Contrary to many scholars, Westermann argues against interpreting the book of Lamentations in light of chapter 3, arguing instead for the importance of the expression of the lament itself. According to Westermann, chapter 3 was composed later than the remaining chapters, and its inclusion within the collection transforms the poems into a message for the community in the post-exilic era. He suggests that the poet of chapter 3, who is also the compiler of the collection, sought to “recommend for his own time a kind of piety that emphasizes, more strongly than do those laments (i.e. chapters 1-2, 4-5), a deuteronomic spirit of repentance and public confession.”\textsuperscript{95}

In a history of interpretation which spans a period of approximately one hundred years, Westermann argues that there has been a consistent undervaluation of the lament form of the poems, a trend which he suggests is the product of a movement in Christian piety away from lament as a “proper” form of expression before God.\textsuperscript{96} In a form critical study, Westermann maintains the importance of the lament as a means through which the suffering of the community finds its expression. He argues that the laments did not arise in order to solve a problem or answer a question, but arose as “an immediate reaction on the part of those

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{94}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}.
\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{96}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}, 24–85. See particularly pp. 81–82.
affected by the collapse." Against many commentators, Westermann argues that the recognition and acknowledgment of sin is not introduced into the laments by the speakers to persuade the community as to its truth, but is an acknowledgment which is presupposed by the poets.

Despite Westermann’s insistence that the sin of the community is presupposed by the poets, Westermann does place heavy emphasis on the references to sin and guilt throughout the book, particularly in his commentary on chapters 1 and 2. This tension in Westermann’s discussion is captured by T. Linafelt, who states:

"It is disappointing then to find that while Westermann has managed to break the hold of chapter 3 on contemporary interpretation and attempts to reclaim the value of lament language, his own reading of chapters 1 and 2 is hardly less pious sounding and conciliatory toward God than those previous scholars. Though he has indicated that laments, even though they may acknowledge sin or guilt, are not primarily concerned to convince readers or hearers as such, Westermann works to convince his own readers of the importance of sin and guilt for Lamentations."

This emphasis on sin and guilt is seen in Westermann’s discussion of chapter 1, where he argues that special emphasis is placed throughout the chapter on the motif of the acknowledgment of guilt, and the downplaying of any suggestion that elements of accusation against God (e.g. in vv. 12-18) should be read as an indictment of God. He also argues that v. 18, with its vindication of Yahweh, is the high point of chapter 1. Emphasizing his point, Westermann argues:

Just how important the acknowledgment of guilt is for Lam 1 has already been shown (with reference to vv. 5 and 9). Here, at the high point of the whole song, this motif is brought into conjunction with an acknowledgment of the justice of God’s ways such that the whole preceding lament is set off: God must act in this way, because we have transgressed against his word. When seen in this way, the clause also intimates a significant ‘nevertheless.’ That is to say, despite our lamenting we still hold fast to the conviction that God is just.

Again, in discussing chapter 2, Westermann continues to emphasize the

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97 Westermann, Lamentations, 81.
98 Ibid., 85.
99 Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 14.
100 Westermann, Lamentations, 116.
101 Westermann, Lamentations, 135–36. Italics original.
importance of the recognition of guilt, despite his acknowledgment of the almost complete absence of reference to sin within the chapter. This recognition of guilt is repeatedly referred to as being in line with the pre-exilic teaching of the prophets of judgment. In his heavy emphasis on the acknowledgment of guilt, Westermann runs the risk of himself undervaluing the lament as a valid form of expression before God.

In common amongst the commentators discussed within this section is the attempt to define the major purpose or thrust of the book through one theme or theological purpose. This attempt has, however, been unsuccessful as the text of Lamentations has frustrated the attempt to define it by a single theological statement or purpose. This difficulty is reflected by the fact that most of the above commentators have found it necessary to acknowledge that there are other theological expressions within the book, despite their giving precedence to one of those expressions. It is this insight which leads into the final section of this overview of the research on Lamentations.

1.2.2.3.2.2 Lamentations as a Multi-Voiced Book

As can be seen from the above survey of attempts to see in Lamentations a single theological purpose or thrust, the book has defied these attempts to simplify and confine many theological expressions within it. Although commentators over the past fifty years have acknowledged that a variety of theological statements are present within the text, recent studies, influenced by the move away from modernist notions of truth, resist the temptation to value one theological viewpoint over others, valuing instead the multiplicity of theological voices within the text.

The beginnings of this trend can be seen in the 1980s. E. Daglish argues that the religious significance of Lamentations lies in a number of areas, including its portrait of a “period of intense suffering, a time when multiform religious

experience developed, a time of rebellion; it was a period of contrition, penitence, and resolution." The book provides a mirror through which future generations could evaluate "essential religion," and is an admonition to avoid those practices which led to the fall of Jerusalem. Although Daglish does argue that the purpose of the book is a search for meaning, he also suggests that it gives no easy answers, and that "the meaning of the book of Lamentations is not stated. Its influence upon its readers discloses its importance and its message."

F. Landy, in his discussion of Lamentation in The Literary Guide to Bible, notes that one of the characteristic features of Lamentations is its use of parataxis. Landy states:

We come to the central dilemma of the book. It draws on ready made explanations of the calamity - Jerusalem has sinned, its prophets lied, they shed innocent blood, and so forth - without apparent question (at least until the very end, 5:20), as if bad explanation were better than no explanation, and juxtaposes them with descriptions of misery. Parataxis works to establish not connections but dissonances.

Landy argues that the tradition acts as a resource and a foil, an attempt to search through old formulas in order to comprehend a new catastrophe.

I. Provan also argues that Lamentations is a book of juxtapositions. In an interpretation which stands in contrast to much of the prior research, Provan argues that Lamentations contains debate alongside the lament, and that different perspectives on the suffering are presented within the book. The "orthodox" view that suffering is the result of sin is present, as is the view that the correct response to this suffering is repentance and trust in God's love. Against this, however, the book also contains a "turmoil of doubt." Provan argues that within the book, far-reaching questions are raised, including doubt at God's even-handedness and the appropriateness of the punishment meted out, and, according to Provan, even

\[103\] Daglish, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 147.
\[104\] Ibid., 148.
\[105\] Landy, "Lamentations."
\[107\] Landy, "Lamentations," 332.
\[108\] Provan, Lamentations, 23–25.
\[109\] Ibid., 23.
doubt as to whether God is in control of the situation at all. Provan also argues that in the speech of Zion (2:20-22) and the community (5:2-3, 5) there is reproach of God, suggesting a less than wholehearted acknowledgment of sin. Although the “orthodox” view of sin is present in the book Provan argues that it does not prevail and the book cannot, as such, be seen as hopeful. Citing Renkema, Provan argues that Lamentations is “a theology ending in doubt.”

In an article which considers Lamentations in light of psychological models of the grief process, P. Joyce notes the difficulty of trying to define the book by a single theological statement given the inconsistencies and ambiguities within the book. Joyce argues that the inconsistencies within the text can be understood in light of models of the grief process. He suggests that in times of grief it is not expected that people react with a single consistent emotion or opinion and that Lamentations reflects something of this psychological turmoil. As such, Joyce values rather than negates the inconsistencies and ambiguities within the text.

In a reading which also values the tensions within the text, T. Linafelt reads Lamentations as survival literature. In defining what he means by the term “literature of survival,” Linafelt states:

In its embodiment of paradox, the literature of survival works to keep alive the memory of death. When it has accomplished its work, it forces an awareness of the constancy of death on its readers as well. Texts of survival, at least to those who have survived, reach out beyond themselves. Survivors speak and write and fix the memory of death not just as a monument to those who died or as a record of events ensuring that the world never forgets, as important as these are for the literature. The literature of survival has a more active concern as well: to recruit the reader or hearer, to sway its audience away from neutrality and toward the concerns of the survivor.

Linafelt opens his discussion of Lamentations with a critique of previous research

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110 A thought developed in Provan’s treatment of 3:34-36.
111 Provan, Lamentations, 24. Provan cites Renkema’s work J. Renkema, ‘Misschien is er hoop...’ De theollogische vooronderstellingen van het boek Klaagliederen (Franeker, 1983).
113 Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations.
114 Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 21 Italics original.
which has valued the voice of the male figure in chapter 3 over that of the female figure in chapters 1 and 2. He argues that the preference for the male voice arises out of a male (i.e. most commentators are male) bias toward the male figure in conjunction with a devaluing of lament as a response to the catastrophe; out of a Christian bias toward the suffering man due to a perceived similarity to Christ; and a broader emphasis on reconciliation rather than confrontation with God. Linafelt’s own reading of Lamentations focuses in the figure of Zion in chapters 1 and 2, with his task set out as “attending to those elements of the poems that represent the paradox of death in the midst of life and life beyond the borders of death, the expression of pain for its own sake, and the way in which the rhetoric of the poetry is concerned to move beyond description to persuasion.” Linafelt focuses on dynamic movement within the text, noting features such as the impact of the changes in genre between elements from the funeral dirge and the lament as representing a transition in focus from death to ongoing life, the movement between expressions of guilt and pain and suffering, and the changes in perspective across the poems. In noting the movement of the text Linafelt both acknowledges and maintains the tensions.

E. Gerstenberger also argues against tying Lamentations down to a single perspective, arguing that it is not possible to draw generalized theological affirmations from the text. He notes that confession is present, but that it does not dominate the text in the same way the intense descriptions of disproportionate suffering does. The main emphasis within his discussion however is the discussion of the laments within the setting of worship.

Two recent publications by O’Connor pay particular attention to the multi-voiced nature of Lamentations. In Lamentations, O’Connor notes the interplay of voices within Lamentations, which “allows the book to approach the

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115 Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 3.
116 Ibid., 35.
117 Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 475.
118 O’Connor, Lamentations; O’Connor, Tears of the World.
massive suffering of the destroyed city from many viewpoints.” O’Connor discusses the text in terms of “intersecting perspectival discourses” in which “no single speaker, no particular viewpoint silences the others. Instead, multiple speakers try to find expression for grief,” a perspective she also develops in Lamentations and the Tears of the World where she states that Lamentations “leaves voices and viewpoints unsettled, unresolved, and open-ended.” As such, Lamentations expresses a plurality of theologies which cannot be reduced to a unifying or dominant claim. In acknowledging this multiplicity of voices, O’Connor argues that:

In its turmoil, Lamentations embodies post modern understandings of truth. The term post modern is slippery, allowing many interpretations. At the least, it reflects a loss of confidence in theories, theologies and viewpoints that can claim to speak for everyone and seek to compel agreement from everyone ... Post modernism asserts that no single voice, theory or theology is able to encompass the multiplicity of human experience. ... The voices of Lamentations speak from particular and limited perspectives. The book honors each by not resolving them into a unified vision, and it treats those multiple voices of pain as hallowed ground.

In one of the most extended treatments of the theology of Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp, in line with O’Connor, argues that Lamentations cannot be tied down to one theological statement, but is “occasional, pluralistic, equivocating, and fragmentary.” In outlining something of the book’s theology, Dobbs-Allsopp provides an “inventory of topics, ideas, and sentiments” in which he has not attempted “to systematize or integrate the poet’s thought beyond what seems justified by the poetry itself.” He suggests that the topics covered in his discussion constitute aspects of what W. Brueggemann calls “Israel’s countertestimony”.

Arising out of a context that is stridently incongruous with Judah’s past experiences of God’s beneficent sovereignty, these

119 O’Connor, Lamentations, 1020.
120 Ibid., 1022.
121 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 14.
122 Ibid., 83.
123 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 84. Italics original.
124 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 23.
125 Ibid., 24.
poems confront God with the hurt and pain of this lived grief, anger, and a sense of abandonment, question the rightness of God’s actions, and even witness, candidly, to the harmful nature of both God’s presence and absence, all as a means of mobilizing God, reactivating the Yahweh of old, and converting God’s present fury into future favor.\textsuperscript{127}

Dobbs-Allsopp’s discussion is wide ranging and detailed. His discussion is divided into sections through which he explores many facets of the book’s theology. Topics include: the consequence of style; anti/theodicy; suffering and language; grief, complaint, anger, fidelity; the face of suffering; divine violence; fragments of hope.\textsuperscript{128} Throughout his discussion Dobbs-Allsopp does not attempt to reduce the complexity of the text, but develops and discusses tensions and ambiguities within the book. By way of example, in his section “anti/theodicy,” Dobbs-Allsopp identifies the presence of both theodic and antitheodic elements within Lamentations.\textsuperscript{129} Theodic elements are present in the piety of the poems, their “unabashed fidelity to and intentional alignment with Yahweh” and by fact that in their very nature as discourse (prayers) addressed to Yahweh, Lamentations looks to Yahweh as a source of ongoing relevance.\textsuperscript{130} Significantly though, Dobbs-Allsopp also identifies anti-theodic elements. Citing Z. Braiterman, anti-theodicy is defined as a refusal to “justify, explain or accept as somehow meaningful the relationship between God and suffering.”\textsuperscript{131} So, for example, Dobbs-Allsopp argues that the “double-edged” motif of Yahweh as warrior is antitheodic in its emphasis on the perceived violence of Yahweh against Judah,\textsuperscript{132} as is Lamentation’s refusal to allow the destruction to be viewed only in terms of human sin.\textsuperscript{133} Throughout both his introductory comments and within the commentary section of his book, Dobbs-Allsopp foregrounds at all times the tensions, ambiguity and multi-voiced nature of Lamentations.

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid., 24–48.
\textsuperscript{131}Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 30–31.
Of the views argued by those who maintain a multiplicity of theological viewpoints within Lamentations, the prophetic viewpoint of the destruction of the city as the punishment for sin has been identified as one of the expressions within the book.\(^{134}\) What differs in this discussion, however, is the recognition that the prophetic viewpoint is but one viewpoint among the many expressed within the book, a viewpoint which neither dominates, nor is dominated by other opposing voices.

### 1.2.3 Conclusions

In reviewing the history of the research into Lamentations, a number of trends emerge. For current purposes, the most significant is the emergence of an increased focus on the theology of Lamentations which dates back to Gottwald’s *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* in 1954.\(^{135}\) Prior to this time issues of authorship and date dominated the discussion, and while they are still important, their relative importance for understanding the book has been superseded by the increased focus on the theology of the book.

With regard to date and authorship, this study accepts the conclusions of those who argue that there is little decisive evidence from which to draw firm conclusions about the date of the text. Despite this, along with most scholars, a dating in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. is assumed, and it is accepted that reading the book against this background informs the understanding of the theology which emerges. What is more, it will be argued that Lamentations is in turn informative with regard to the rhetorical concerns within the community in the period following this national catastrophe.

Again, there is insufficient information within Lamentations upon which to draw conclusions about authorship although, as is almost universally accepted, that Jeremiah was not the author of the book is presumed. Decisions as to whether

\(^{134}\) Ibid., e.g., 63–65; Landy, “Lamentations,” 330; Provan, *Lamentations*, 23; O’Connor, *Tears of the World*, 111.

\(^{135}\) Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies*. 

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the book comes from the hand of a single author or multiple authors cannot be made with any confidence. Throughout, I will, for convenience, refer to the poet in the singular, however this does not preclude the notion of multiple authorship. As will be seen in the discussion, however, there are signs of continuity of theme and content across Lamentations, and while this cannot be used to provide a definitive answer with regard to authorship, it does suggest that there is merit in reading the book as a unity, albeit a unity in which a multiplicity of viewpoints is present.\textsuperscript{136}

The history of the investigation into the theology of Lamentations suggested a number of strands into which the theological understanding of different writers can be divided. Initially, the concern was to identify which of Israel’s traditions influenced the book’s theology, whether this be defined as a single dominant tradition behind the book, or multiple traditions influencing it, and this has continued up to the present. Of particular import for the current study is the frequently noted influence of the prophetic theological tradition within Lamentations, developed in a sustained thesis for the first time in Gottwald’s work. As has been seen, the link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature is frequently noted. However beyond a simple association of Lamentations with the prophetic literature, and a presupposition that because Lamentations makes use of certain prophetic motifs it shares a corresponding theological outlook, the nature of the relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature has not been explored in any detail.

A second approach within the research is the quest to understand the book’s theology primarily from within the text itself, as opposed to looking primarily to Israel’s traditions. While attempts have been made to define the theology in terms of a dominant theological purpose or thrust, there has been an increasing recognition that Lamentations’ theology cannot be confined to single assertions, but that a multiplicity of theological viewpoints is present within the book. Where

\textsuperscript{136}This reading position is in line with that taken by recent commentators such as K. O’Connor (\textit{Lamentations; Tears of the World}), F. Dobbs-Allsopp (\textit{Lamentations}) and A. Berlin (\textit{Lamentations}).
the theology is sought from within the book itself there is, in both the single theme and the multiple voices approaches, a recognition that there is an affinity with aspects of the prophetic literature, in particular in the assertion that the destruction arose as a result of the sin of the people. Arising out of these observations, and drawing on the insights of Gottwald and others as to the shared motifs between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, the current study seeks to further understand the nature of the relationship which has been identified between Lamentations and the prophetic literature. It seeks to do this however, against the recognition that elements that have some relationship with the prophetic literature constitute but one expression within the theological complexity of Lamentations. In doing so, the study aligns itself with those who identify Lamentations as a multi-voiced text. This study then, seeks to explore both how the prophetic motifs interact with their use in the prophetic literature, thus drawing Lamentations into this theological tradition, and also how they interact with other viewpoints within the text of Lamentations itself.

1.3 Method

In discussing the theology of Lamentations in relation to the prophetic literature the current study has two tasks. First, it seeks to compare Lamentations' use of three prophetic motifs - the personification of Jerusalem as female, reference to the day of Yahweh, and the acknowledgement of sin as the cause of the destruction - with their use in the prophetic literature of the eighth to sixth century,\(^{137}\) as a means of exploring the theological relationship between the two bodies of literature. Second, the study seeks to explore the role and function of the prophetic motifs within Lamentations itself, focussing on the interaction of the prophetic motifs with other motifs within the book. In defining these two tasks, the study seeks to explore a number of questions: Does Lamentations simply

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\(^{137}\) As will be discussed below, this time period encompasses those texts which can be identified as either preceding or being contemporaneous with Lamentations.
borrow terms and motifs from the prophetic literature and use them in the way they were used in their original contexts, or does it use them in new ways, for new purposes? Does it do both? How does Lamentations engage with the theological understanding of the prophetic literature to speak to the post 586 community? How do the identified prophetic motifs interact with other viewpoints within Lamentations, and how do the various motifs and expressions interact within the larger work which is the book of Lamentations?

The theoretical framework within which this discussion will occur is drawn from the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin was a Russian literary theorist whose concepts find wide use in the field of literary criticism,\(^\text{138}\) concepts which have also been applied to biblical studies.\(^\text{139}\) Although Bakhtin's work primarily focuses on the novel, and particularly Dostoevsky's novels, a number of his concepts are relevant for current purposes: dialogism, polyphony and double-voicing. These concepts have the potential to provide the means of exploring the theological dialogue in which Lamentations engages, both with the prophetic literature and within the book itself.


N.B. Tull's earlier work is published under the name Tull Willey, but as more recent publications use Tull, I will use this name throughout to avoid confusion.
1.3.1 Bakhtin's Dialogism, Polyphony and Double-Voicing

A central concept of Bakhtin's is that of dialogism. Bakhtin draws a distinction between a monologic and a dialogic sense of truth, a distinction which he applies to the novel, but also to concepts of knowledge.\textsuperscript{140}

A monologic sense of truth, which typifies much of modern scientific thought, is built around the concept of the "separate thought," a statement which can be understood as being independent of the one who speaks it.\textsuperscript{141} The content of the thought is not determined by the speaker, but can, in principle, be spoken and/or comprehended by anyone with sufficient intellectual capacity. The content of the thought is independent of the speaker. As Bakhtin calls them, they are "no-man's-thoughts."\textsuperscript{142} Monologic truth has a tendency to gravitate towards a system, to being ordered systematically. "The proposition or system is structured in such a way that even if it is the product of many minds, it is represented as capable of being spoken by a single voice."\textsuperscript{143}

Against the notion of monologic truth stands dialogism. While dialogism is somewhat harder to define, its basic characteristic can be understood through the paradigm of the conversation.\textsuperscript{144} Dialogism requires a "plurality of consciousness."\textsuperscript{145} Truth, or an idea, cannot be said to exist as an abstract, independent entity. It is not "a subjective individual-psychological formation with 'permanent resident right' in a persons head; no, the idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective - the realm of its existence is not the individual consciousness but dialogic communion between consciousnesses."\textsuperscript{146} As further defined by C. Newsom:

An idea does not live in a person's isolated individual consciousness, but only insofar as it enters into dialogical

\textsuperscript{140} Bakhtin, \textit{PDP}, 78–100. See Newsom, "Bakhtin." for a discussion of both the theory of dialogism and its application to biblical studies.
\textsuperscript{141} Bakhtin, \textit{PDP}, 93.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Newsom, "Bakhtin," 292.
\textsuperscript{144} Newsom, "Bakhtin," 294.
\textsuperscript{145} Bakhtin, \textit{PDP}, 81.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 88.
relations with the ideas of others. It may attempt to displace other ideas, seek to enlist other ideas, be qualified by other ideas, develop new possibilities in the encounter with other alien ideas. That is how it lives. All of an idea’s interactions are part of its identity. The truth about an idea cannot be comprehended by a single consciousness. It requires the plurality of consciousness that can enter into relationship with it from a variety of noninterchangeable perspectives.\textsuperscript{147}

Dialogic truth is always open, and to use one of Bakhtin’s terms, is “unfinalizable.”\textsuperscript{148}

Dialogic truth, unlike monologic truth, is not independent of the individual. Bakhtin argues that “the ultimate indivisible unit is not the separate referentially bounded thought, not the proposition, not the assertion, but rather the integral point of view, the integral position of a personality.”\textsuperscript{149} It is in the interaction of different points of view that the dialogic sense of truth emerges.

A second concept of Bakhtin’s, which is potentially helpful in considering the theology of Lamentations, is that of polyphony. Bakhtin argues that it is possible to produce texts which approximate a dialogue; polyphonic texts.\textsuperscript{150} Unlike a monologic text, in which all points of view are subsumed by the author’s, a polyphonic text is able “to create several consciousnesses which will be truly independent of the author’s and interact with genuine freedom.”\textsuperscript{151} The author’s perspective is not privileged within a polyphonic work. G. Morson and C. Emerson describe a polyphonic text as one which contains a “plurality of unmerged voices.”\textsuperscript{152} Within a monologic work, the author retains ultimate semantic control, and other points of view must be measured against the “truth” of the author’s. Within a polyphonic work, the author must give up this monologic control and allow other points of view to come into genuine dialogue.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{147}Newsom, “Bakhtin,” 294.
\textsuperscript{148}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149}Bakhtin, \textit{PDP}, 93.
\textsuperscript{150}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151}Newsom, “Bakhtin,” 295.
\textsuperscript{152}Morson and Emerson, \textit{Creation of a Prosaiscs}, 236.
\textsuperscript{153}Morson and Emerson, \textit{Creation of a Prosaiscs}, 238. Morson and Emerson argue that “polyphony demands a work in which several consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in a dialogue that is in principle unfinalizable. Characters must be ‘not only objects of authorial discourse, but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse’ (citing \textit{PDP}, 7).”
The notion of polyphony is difficult to conceptualize, given our traditional understanding of the role of an author within a text. As readers, what is important in reading a polyphonic text is not the plot and the characterization, but the dialogue itself.

A related concept from Bakhtin is that of “double-voicing.” As a preliminary to his discussion of double-voicing, Bakhtin reminds his reader that:

Dialogic relationships are possible not only among whole (relatively whole) utterances; a dialogic approach is possible toward any signifying part of an utterance, even toward an individual word, if that word is perceived not as the impersonal word of language but as a sign of someone else’s semantic position, as the representative of another person’s utterance; that is, if we hear in it someone else’s voice. Thus dialogic relationships can permeate inside the utterance, even inside the individual word, as long as two voices collide within it dialogically.154

In defining double-voiced discourse, Bakhtin argues that it proceeds in two different directions: “it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, ... and toward another’s discourse, towards someone else’s speech.”155 An utterance, or in the current case a text or parts of a text, can be defined both in terms of its relationship to a given object/event, and “in relation to other discourses within the same context of the same speech.”156 Double-voiced discourse is the intentional “sounding of a second voice” within an utterance.157 An author makes use “of someone else’s discourse for his own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own.”158 In reading a text dialogically, we read for the utterances with which it relates. The double voicing may occur with other texts, but also with the other view points in the environment into which a text was written.

Morson and Emerson define the different types of double-voicing identified by Bakhtin. Double-voicing can be passive or active. In passive double-

154 Bakhtin, PDP, 184. Bakhtin goes on to argue that dialogic interaction can even exist among images belonging to different art forms.
155 Bakhtin, PDP, 185. Italic original.
156 Bakhtin, PDP, 185.
157 Morson and Emerson, Creation of a Prosaics, 149.
158 Bakhtin, PDP, 189.
voicing the author uses another’s discourse for his/her own purpose. It is passive because the “words of the other” are a “passive tool in the author’s (or speaker’s) hands.”

Passive double-voicing may be unidirectional (the tasks of the author and the other are essentially the same), or varidirectional (the tasks are different or opposed). In active double-voicing the word of the other “actively resists the author’s purposes and disputes his intentions, thereby reshaping the meaning and stylistic profile of the utterance.”

C. Miller further defines the distinction between active and passive double-voicing. He states:

If someone else’s speech, that is the actual words spoken, remains outside of the utterance, but still strongly affects the content and structure of the discourse, then it is said to be active double-voiced discourse. It is active, because “the other’s words actively influence the author’s speech, forcing it to alter itself accordingly under their influence and initiative.” On the other hand, if someone else’s speech is reproduced in an utterance, but given an intention different than it was meant to have originally, Bakhtin terms this passive double-voiced discourse. ... It is important to note that both types are directed towards another’s speech - that is what makes them double-voiced. They are distinguished, however, by whether or not the actual words of the other are reproduced - if they are not, it is active; if they are, it is passive.

It is intended that the hearer/reader of double-voiced speech hear and interact with both voices.

1.3.2 The Application of Bakhtin to Biblical Studies

Bakhtin’s theories have only been applied to biblical studies since the early 1990s. In an article which explores the potential of Bakhtin’s notions of dialogic truth in relation to biblical theology, C. Newsom argues that the assumption of a monologic sense of truth is problematic for biblical studies as the bible itself is not inherently monologic. Newsom states:

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159 Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 150.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
163 Ibid., 396.
critical biblical scholarship was founded on the perception that the bible was not monologic. It lacked precisely those features that characterize monologic discourse. Biblical criticism used the evidence of contradiction, disjunction, multiple perspectives, and so forth, to make the case for the bible’s heterogeneity. This was not a book that could be understood as the product of a single consciousness.\textsuperscript{164}

Newsom argues however, that despite the insight into the heterogeneity of the biblical text, biblical scholarship has been driven by the claims of monologic truth, and has sought to “disentangle the various voices so that one could identify the different individual monologic voices.”\textsuperscript{165} The heterogeneity of the bible has been valued, in other words, primarily as a collection of monologic truths, with biblical scholarship lacking a theoretical framework for understanding the whole.\textsuperscript{166} This quest for monologic truth is evident in much of the previous discussion on Lamentations.

Newsom’s article considers the possibility of applying Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism and polyphony to the biblical text. She argues that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{as a descriptive category, polyphony is a useful model for understanding the nature of the biblical text, one that can avoid some of the distortions of the various attempts to grasp its unity in terms of center, system, and abstract summary. Since polyphonic texts by their very nature draw the reader into engagement with the content of their ideas, this way of reading the Bible might also lead to nonmonological forms of biblical theology.}\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

Newsom applies Bakhtin’s notions to the book of Job, and in doing so argues that Job represents one of the clearest examples of a polyphonic work within the Hebrew bible. Within this book theological dialogue occurs in which multiple voices, including Yahweh’s, are allowed their various, individual perspectives and these voices remain unmerged.\textsuperscript{168} An analysis of Job within a Bakhtinian model “resists the attempt to reduce Job to an assertion, to encapsulate its ‘meaning’ in a statement.”\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{164}Newsom, “Bakhtin,” 293.
\textsuperscript{165}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167}Ibid., 296.
\textsuperscript{169}Newsom, “Bakhtin,” 298. Mark Biddle (\textit{Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature: Re-
Bakhtin’s theories have been utilized in biblical studies in various ways. Of particular interest for current purposes are the applications of P. Tull and C. W. Miller: Tull because of her use of Bakhtin to discuss the dialogic interaction between Second Isaiah and previous texts such as Lamentations, and Miller for his application of Bakhtin to Lamentations 1.

Tull uses Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism as the starting point for her understanding of intertextuality and the notion of the rhetorical context of the text. Tull begins with a generalized description of intertextuality as a theory governing all texts. At a broad level, it is clear that no text can be composed without recourse to other texts. Any text, or utterance, can only be read by reference to previously encountered words and syntactic forms. “Intertextuality is the defining condition for literary readability. Without intertextuality, a literary work would simply be unintelligible, like speech in a language one has not yet learned.”

Beyond this broad association between texts however, new texts can make deliberate connections with previous texts. This can occur in a very precise manner, as is the case with quotation and citation where the source of the intertextual link is acknowledged. However, as Tull argues:

In between the manifestation of intertextuality described as quotation on the one hand and as anonymous and untraceable codes on the other is a wide middle ground or arguably specific, but often unspecified, intertextual relationship. This is the realm of allusion, response, appropriation, recollection, and echo. In

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Reading Jeremiah 7–20 [Studies in Old Testament Interpretation; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996]) uses the term polyphony within his work, although does not draw on the work of Bakhtin as such. Biddle does use the term however to consider the possibility of multiple voices within the text of Jeremiah.


171 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things; Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism.”; Charles W. Miller, “Reading Voices.”

172 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 57–105; Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism.”

173 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 59–60, citing Laurent Jenny.

The function of this intertextual allusion is more than just the borrowing of another’s words. It is able "to awaken in the audience a recollection of their previous context." Intertextual allusion can function to “suggest to the reader that text B be understood in the light of a broad interplay of text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed." Intertextual allusion, however, does not always imply agreement between the old and the new. A text may agree, but it can also react to, disagree with, engage with, satirize, parody, transform and so on. In alluding to the old, new texts come into relationship with the old, a relationship which can be understood through Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism.

Drawing on Bakhtin, Tull argues that all texts exist in dialogue with other texts. Texts are written into a rhetorical environment in which other words about a given event exist, and competing viewpoints are expressed. When defining the concept of a text’s “rhetorical environment,” it is useful to draw a distinction between a text’s interaction with previous texts, and its interaction with its present audience. As audience, the “hearers” of a text are surrounded by competing viewpoints concerning a given event or topic, some of which may coincide with the viewpoint of the new text, and some which may not. As Tull states, “creators of texts work not only in reference to other texts, but also in relation to an audience whose thoughts, understandings, and even actions they hope to influence. In doing so they must take into account other texts already presumed to be dwelling in the audience’s minds, with which they must negotiate in order to be

175 Ibid., 61.
176 Ibid., 62.
178 Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 169, quoting from Michael Baxandall, who argues that a new work may “draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle....Everyone will be able to think of others.”
heard.” In discussing the rhetorical environment of texts, Tull cites Bakhtin, who states:

Between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme ... Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it is directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist - or, on the contrary, by the ‘light’ of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

As Tull argues, Bakhtin’s theory provides valuable insight into the vast possibility of interconnections that can exist between texts, and between a text and its audience. The rhetorical environment of a text then, can be described as the “plurality of discourse” into which a text enters. In entering into a dialogic interaction with this rhetorical environment, the new text itself opens the possibility of future response. As part of his understanding of the “unfinalizability” of utterances, Bakhtin recognizes that utterances (texts) not only enter into dialogue with previous texts, but anticipate future utterances (texts). “Every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.”

Working from this framework, Tull considers the rhetorical environment of Second Isaiah. Within her study she seeks to trace the texts into which Second Isaiah enters into dialogue as a means of understanding the rhetorical environment of the prophet; that is “what else was being said on the subjects this prophet addressed - and thus aid in interpreting the prophet whose language is shaped by

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179 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 68.
180 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 66–67, citing Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 276.
182 Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 67 Citing Bakhtin, italics original.
these conversations." She goes on to state:

Even though these earlier texts provided Second Isaiah's imaginative matrix, making available images, phrases, and theological construction to be appropriated by prophet and audience, they did not say everything that needed to be said in the changing times. Much of the new message involved reframing the audience's understanding in relation to older words, by reiterating, revising, recollecting, and often reversing what had been said before.¹⁸⁴

The book of Lamentations is one of those texts with which Second Isaiah dialogically relates. Tull traces the intertextual precursors of Second Isaiah, seeking to analyze the significance of their reutilization, and to explore what happens to those words when reused in Second Isaiah and how they contribute to the understanding of that work.

C. W. Miller has applied Bakhtin's notion of double-voicing to Lamentations 1, specifically to explore the relationship between the voice of the narrator (vv. 1-11,17 [except vv. 9c and 11c]) and personified Jerusalem (vv. 9c, 11c, 12-16, 18-22).¹⁸⁵ Miller argues that a double-voicing of elements of the narrators speech occurs within personified Jerusalem’s speech, which help to portray her viewpoint concerning the destruction. Miller stresses the importance of recognizing the different points of view of the narrator and Jerusalem, and allowing both voices to be heard. He argues that too often the narrator’s voice is privileged, thus reducing the text to a monologic voice. Miller states:

The "meaning" of Lamentations 1, therefore, does not ultimately reside in the viewpoint of either one of the speakers, but rather in the dialogue that the two voices initiate with the reader - a dialogue, moreover, that rejects the binary hierarchizing of "either ... or" and embraces the unfinalizable interaction of "both ... and."¹⁸⁶

Although Miller uses the concept of double-voicing to unfold the relationship between the voices of the narrator and Jerusalem in Lamentations 1, double-voicing can also reflect the speech of others outside the immediate literary context. In Job, for example, Newsom argues that the speech of the friends

¹⁸³Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things, 102.
¹⁸⁴Ibid., 103.
¹⁸⁵Charles W. Miller, "Reading Voices."
¹⁸⁶Ibid., 407.
resound with the voice and style of the traditional moral discourse. Job’s speech also uses traditional discourses (i.e. psalmic discourse), but “overlays them with his own intentions.” In “listening” for the presence of double-voicing within texts, it again becomes possible to begin to understand the rhetorical environment of the text, to understand the dialogue with which the text engages.

1.3.3 Bakhtin and Lamentations

Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism, polyphony and double voicing, particularly as applied by Tull and Miller provide a conceptual framework through which to explore the theology of the book of Lamentations.

If we accept the premise that a new text (Lamentations) engages in dialogue with existing utterances/texts surrounding an event or object (the fall of Jerusalem), seeking to give voice to new possibilities, then a study of the text’s intertextual allusions can open up the rhetorical context into which the text was written. In addition, indicators of double-voicing within a text, be that passive or active, can also point to the rhetorical environment. In exploring the dialogic interactions within the text a deeper understanding of the book’s theology becomes possible.

Within the current study, the dialogic interaction will be sought in two directions.

Firstly, it will be explored in relation to relevant motifs and concepts from the prophetic literature. Previous studies which have noted the use of prophetic motifs and concepts within Lamentations have not discussed in any detail how it is that Lamentations engages with the prophetic literature. The concepts of dialogism, polyphony and double-voicing provide a useful method through which this relationship can be explored, thus allowing the function and impact of this appropriated material within Lamentations to be discussed.188

188 In focussing on the prophetic literature I am not excluding the possibility that Lamentations engages dialogically/intertextually with other bodies of biblical literature. Authors such as
Secondly, as has been argued, the interpretation of Lamentations has frequently been frustrated by the difficulty of reducing the book to a single, unified theological statement. The notion of polyphony provides a lens through which Lamentations can be newly examined. Rather than seeking to merge the various viewpoints within the text, the concept of polyphony allows us to consider whether there are different viewpoints within the text, and if so, how these viewpoints enter into a dialogic relationship with each other. This task has some similarity to the discussion of those scholars who acknowledge a multi-voiced view of Lamentations, although in using Bakhtin’s theory the conceptual framework and language used will vary. In the particular focus of the current study, special attention will be given to the way the use of prophetic motifs and concepts interact with other viewpoints within the text, viewpoints which point to the rhetorical environment into which the text was produced.

1.3.4 Approach

In order to explore the theology of Lamentations and the dialogues into which it enters, a series of interrelated issues will be considered.

Forming the basis of the following discussion, the structure of Lamentations will be outlined (see section 1.4 below). Although there is little consensus within the literature as to how Lamentations can be structured, or even if it is possible to structure these poems, the current study works from the premise that in structuring the text it is possible to better understand the dialogic and polyphonic flow of the book. Each of the poems will be divided into thematic units as a means of tracing the emergence and re-emergence of themes across the book and the interaction of those themes with each other.

Albrektson (Text and Theology) and Salters (Lamentations), for example, stress the importance of Deuteronomic traditions for the book. The Psalms are another body of texts which are clearly influential for Lamentations. For practical purposes, it is not possible to cover all this material in sufficient depth or detail within the current study, although the exploration of the dialogue with these bodies of literature has rich potential for future study.

189 Berlin, Lamentations; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations; O’Connor, Tears of the World.
Chapters 2-4 explore possible intertextual links between Lamentations and the prophetic literature. Each chapter surveys the use of one aspect of the text of Lamentations that has been identified by previous commentators as forming a link to the prophetic literature. In the search for intertextual links between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, the difficult issue of the relative dating of texts is taken into account. If it is to be argued that the new text (Lamentations) enters into a dialogic relationship with either previous texts, or with other voices within its contextual environment, then the importance of relative dating is apparent.

Understanding the rhetorical environment of a text is often made difficult given the complex redactional history of many books in the Hebrew Bible. With Lamentations however, there is relative consensus that the book emerged in the period following the fall of Jerusalem in 586, thus making it possible to draw some conclusions about the environment into which the book was written. The relative dating of the prophetic texts is, however, more complex. In order to argue that a prophetic text is one with which Lamentations enters a dialogic relationship, it is necessary to establish either that (in all likelihood) the text pre-dates Lamentations, or that it dates to the sixth century. It can be argued that texts emerging from the sixth century share the contextual environment of Lamentations, and as such have the potential to illumine the rhetorical context of the book. On the basis of these texts, it is possible to discuss how it is that Lamentations engages with voices of the eighth-sixth century prophets.

Chapter 2 considers the personification of Jerusalem as female. This literary device is used extensively in Lam 1, 2 and 4, and also in Isaiah 1-39, Micah, Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The significance of the personification of Jerusalem as a link with the prophetic literature is noted by a number of commentators. In

190 Westermann, Lamentations, 106–08; Hillers, Lamentations, 30–31; Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 476 (although Gerstenberger links the personification more to the images of Israel as divine bride as found in Hosea and Jer 2); Berlin, Lamentations, 8, 10; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 63–64. Dobbs-Allsopp (Weep, O Daughter Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible [BibOr; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993]) includes a lengthy discussion of the personified city motif in Lamentations itself (pp. 75-90) and also identifies a
exploring the relationship between the prophetic uses of the device and its use in Lamentations, each of the texts in which the city is personified in Isaiah 1-39, Micah, Jeremiah and Zephaniah will be considered in order to determine the content and function of the personification within its literary context. Against this background, the use in Lamentations will then be considered. The comparative analysis between the texts seeks to explore how it is that Lamentations engages with the prophetic literature through its personification of Jerusalem as female, as one avenue through which to understand the nature of the dialogic relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

Chapter 3 concerns the use of the day of Yahweh motif in Lamentations. Again, this motif has been identified as a link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, with Lamentations being the only place the motif occurs outside the prophetic literature.¹⁹¹ The approach within this chapter is similar to that in chapter 2. Prophetic texts from Amos, Isaiah 1-39, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel which refer to the day of Yahweh will be considered individually, forming the basis of discussion as to the nature of the engagement between Lamentations and the prophetic texts evoked by the use of this motif.

As discussed above, that Lamentations makes reference to the sin of the city/people is considered by many to be the primary theological link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature. Having explored the interaction between Lamentations and the prophetic literature established through the use of the personification device and the day of Yahweh motif, chapter 4 compares the use of the motif of sin and judgment in Lamentations with its use in the prophetic literature. The approach within this chapter differs slightly from the previous two chapters given the enormity of the task were every prophetic reference to sin and

judgment from the eighth to sixth century to be considered. Given that Lamentations establishes intertextual links with the prophetic literature through its personification of the city and its reference to the day of Yahweh, those prophetic texts considered in chapters 2 and 3 will be reexamined in order to explore their understanding of sin and judgment. The insights gained from these texts will be supplemented with an overview of the concerns of the wider prophetic books in relation to sin and judgment, and together these insights will form the basis for a comparative study of the understanding of sin and judgment in the personification and day of Yahweh sections in Lamentations. References to sin and judgment lying outside these sections in Lamentations will then be examined in terms of the specific echoes they show to prophetic motifs. Again, the aim of the discussion is to explore the nature of the dialogic relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature through the references to sin and judgment.

While chapters 2-4 concern the dialogic relationship between Lamentations and a number of prophetic texts, chapter 5 considers Lamentations as a dialogic text in its own right. The chapter explores how it is that the double-voiced prophetic motifs identified in chapters 2 to 4 interact together with each other and with other viewpoints present within Lamentations. This chapter provides a discussion of the theological concerns of Lamentations, focussing on the tensions and voices which occur within the book. Lamentations is read as a polyphonic text, understood to be reflective of the rhetorical concerns within the community into which it was produced.

1.4 The Structure of Lamentations

As a prelude to the analysis of Lamentations which follows, it is necessary to first discuss the structure of the poems within the book. The discussion of Lamentations in chapters 2 to 4, which explore the dialogic interaction between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, and within the fifth chapter which
explores Lamentations as a dialogic text, is shaped by the structure developed below. In order to understand how it is that Lamentations makes use of the identified prophetic motifs, it is important to understand how those motifs are used within their new literary context within Lamentations. The proposed structure is one means through which that literary context can be understood. Beyond this, it will be argued, primarily in chapter 5, that one of the ways the dialogic interaction of Lamentations is expressed is through the interaction of thematic units within and across the chapters of the book. The repetition of thematic units, associated with the repetition of motifs, helps to provide both a sense of unity and movement within Lamentations.

Beyond the division of the book into five separate poems, there is little agreement as to the structure of Lamentations. While issues of genre are frequently raised in both introductory articles and commentaries on Lamentations, often no discussion of the overriding structure of the poems occurs. In many studies no attempt is made to structure the text beyond a broad division of the poems into sections, with each section named according to dominant concepts, or, in the case of chapters 1, 2 and sometimes 3, according to the changes in voice. The individual poems have proved difficult to structure, a difficulty which reflects two features of the text: first, the poems do not conform to any one known form (such as the individual lament or the funeral dirge); and second, that these are poems in which a seemingly random array of images are juxtaposed against each other. Despite these difficulties, it will be argued below that it is possible to see within these poems structural divisions which help to trace the flow of thoughts and images across the book.

Before outlining the structure of Lamentations two interrelated issues require discussion: the significance of the acrostic form, and the genre of the poems. While these two features of Lamentations have frequently been discussed, there is, to date, no consensus in relation to either. Leading into the discussion of the structure developed in the present study, an overview of the research
surrounding these two areas will be briefly outlined.

1.4.1 The Acrostic Form and the Structure of Lamentations

Any discussion of the structure of Lamentations must grapple with the question of the acrostic form of the poems. The individual poems of Lamentations are defined by the acrostic form of chapters 1-4, and the corresponding twenty-two verse length of chapter 5.\textsuperscript{192} Beyond this, however, it is uncertain whether the acrostic form has any significance in the internal structuring of the poems. The acrostic strophes do not coincide with other literary features of the text such as the changes of voice or shifts in content, suggesting that they may not be significant with regard to the structure of the poems. While there may be disagreement as to whether the acrostic form was original to the poems or not, the form is not used in any commentaries as the basis by which the poems are structured.\textsuperscript{193}

What then is the significance of the acrostic form? This question has been explored at two levels: why the acrostic form was used; and the impact of the form on the flow of the poems.

There has been much speculation as to why these poems have used the acrostic form. A number of theories have been put forward: that acrostic is an aid for memory; that the poems were intended as a tool for helping to teach the alphabet; or that in using the alphabet some sort of "magical" or divine power was

\textsuperscript{192}Chapters 1 and 2 have twenty-two verses, each consisting of three lines, each verse opening with successive letters of the alphabet. Chapter 3 has sixty-six one line verses with each three lines starting with the respective letter of the alphabet. Chapter 4 returns to the pattern of chapters 1 and 2, except now with only two lines per verse. Of interest is that the ב and ג order is reversed in chapters 2, 3 and 4, suggesting an alternate alphabetic order.

\textsuperscript{193}Westermann (Lamentations, 98–100) argues that the acrostic form is a secondary artifice, added to the texts for aesthetic purposes when they were written down. Arguing against Westermann, Renkema (Lamentations, 40–47), by way of example, argues that the acrostic form was original to the initial composition of the poems. Although not concerning the internal structure of the poems, Renkema, in his article "The Meaning of the Parallel Acrostics in Lamentations," VT 45 (1995): 379–82, argues that the acrostic form marks a correspondence (what Renkema calls "song responsions") between the identical letter strophes of the parallel poems. Thus the א strophes in chapters 1-4 form external parallelisms (identical, additional or antithetical). This theory finds little support, and it is difficult to discern the links argued by Renkema.
harnessed. None of these theories find wide support. Westermann, who argues that the acrostic form is a secondary accretion added when originally oral laments were committed to writing, suggests that the form is present simply for its aesthetic value. A more widely accepted theory is that in using the acrostic form, the poems were understood to have expressed a sense of totality, the aleph to taw of grief. Closely related to this is that the acrostic also has the effect of containing the expression of grief. In her discussion of the acrostic from, O’Connor captures this sense:

Lamentations’ alphabetic devices are deeply symbolic. They expose the depth and breadth of suffering in conflicting ways. The alphabet gives both order and shape to suffering that is otherwise inherently chaotic, formless, and out of control. ... It tries to force unspeakable pain into a container that is familiar and recognizable even as suffering eludes containment. It implies that suffering is infinite, for it spans the basic components of written language from beginning to end.

The acrostic form also has a significant impact on the flow of the poems. One of the most frequently noted features of the poetry of Lamentations is its seemingly haphazard movement between ideas and images. How the acrostic form impacts on this has been variously understood.

Gottwald, for example, sees the acrostic as having a fragmentary impact, an impact which is countered by other features of the text such as the changes in voice and continuity of description. He states that “the tendency for the acrostic to break the composition into fragments is countered by skillful shifts in speaker and point of view, creating continuities of description, feeling, and thought that span several acrostic strophes in pleasingly varied ways.”

For others, the acrostic form has a more unifying impact, helping to hold together the paratactic lines, and ordering the flow from beginning to end. As

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194 Salters, Lamentations, 88–90.
195 Westermann, Lamentations, 99.
197 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 13.
199 See, for example, Grossberg, Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures, 84–85; Hillers, Lamentations, 27; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 12–13.
such, the acrostic counteracts the impact of the otherwise disordered flow of thought and emotion. By way of example, Dobbs-Allsopp, drawing on the work of D. Grossberg, identifies features of the text which have both a fragmenting and a unifying impact on the book, identifying the acrostic as one of the unifying features.\textsuperscript{200} The book is made up of a series of separate poems, and as such is composite in nature, thus projecting "a strong sense of fragmentation."\textsuperscript{201} Other features which suggest fragmentation include the shifts of voice within the poems, the suppression of time, place and order of events, the variable acrostic realizations and the mixture of generic forms within the poems. Against this, a sense of coherence is developed through repetitions, including the fourfold use of the acrostic, through the uniformity of the stanzas within each of the poems, and through the uniformity and repetition of theme and content across the book.\textsuperscript{202}

Berlin suggests that the acrostic form has both a fragmentary and a unifying impact on the poems. She argues that "The acrostical structure of four of the chapters exaggerates the sense that each verse stands as a unit unto itself - a complete thought marked by its letter of the alphabet. Yet at the same time, the acrostic structure binds the chapter into a whole, a complete alphabet."\textsuperscript{203} Berlin goes on to discuss the effect of parataxis, arguing that it "acts like a magnet that repels adjacent lines or verses."\textsuperscript{204} Other features within the poems, such as parallelism and repetition, work against the parataxis to create cohesion. "The result," argues Berlin, "is an exegetical pushing and pulling as the interpreter seeks to understand the set of relationships operating in the text."\textsuperscript{205}

1.4.2 Genre and the Structure of Lamentations

A second concern related to the issue of structure is that of the genre of the poems. Again, this is an area around which there is little consensus, and with a

\textsuperscript{201}Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{202}Ibid., 20–23.
\textsuperscript{203}Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 5.
\textsuperscript{204}Ibid.
few exceptions, decisions as to the genre of the poems rarely influence the way they are structured.\textsuperscript{206}

The discussion of the form of Lamentations dates back to the 1920's with the work of H. Jahnow and H. Gunkel.\textsuperscript{207} In a detailed, comparative study, Jahnow concludes that at least chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations can be identified as funeral dirges, although they have been modified to include elements of the communal lament. Gunkel also notes the mixture of elements within the poems, arguing that chapters 1-4 should be understood as politicized or national funeral songs which incorporate elements of the individual and communal laments.\textsuperscript{208}

Throughout the twentieth century, discussion concerning the genre of Lam 1, 2 and 4 has centered on whether the funeral dirge or the communal lament is the most dominant form within the poems, with the majority of commentators arguing that they represent mixed form.\textsuperscript{209} The discussion around the form of chapter 3 centers on whether or not the individual lament or communal lament is the guiding form, a debate which arises as a result of the changes between singular and plural voice within the chapter. Chapter 5 is the only chapter around which there is any certainty, with commentators, on the whole, agreeing that it is a communal lament which expresses the prayer of the community.

A second line of research has identified associations between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-laments. The first to argue for this link was S. Kramer, and his argument finds support in a number of publications on Lamentations, including those of Kraus, Gottwald, Hillers, P. Ferris, Westermann, O'Connor and Berlin.\textsuperscript{210} Of particular import in this area is the work of Dobbs-Allsopp, whose

\textsuperscript{205}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206}As will be discussed below, two notable exceptions are found in the works of Westermann (\textit{Lamentations}) and Gerstenberger (\textit{Lamentations}).
\textsuperscript{208}Gunkel, “Klagelieder Jeremiae.”
monograph, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, provides a detailed comparative analysis of the Mesopotamian city-laments, Lamentations and a number of associated texts from the prophets and Psalms. Dobbs-Allsopp concludes that there is evidence of a city-lament genre present in the Hebrew bible, and that this genre shares in common a number of features with the Mesopotamian laments.

Despite discussing the genre of the poetry within Lamentations, there are, on the whole, few commentaries or studies which attempt to provide a detailed structure of the individual poems that reflect genre. Notable exceptions include Westermann and Gerstenberger. More often, having noted the mixture of generic elements within the poems, each chapter is either discussed on a verse by verse basis, or the poems are broken down into broad units based on changes of voice (particularly in chapters 1-3) or on changes of content. Both these approaches have their limitations.

A number of commentaries do not provide any internal structuring of the individual poems. Exegesis proceeds on a verse by verse basis, with little or no consideration given as to how the verses might come together as units. Lost in this type of approach is an appreciation of the interplay of elements within the poetry which, as will be argued in chapter 5, contribute to the dialogic tension within the text.

A slightly more developed, but still minimal, form of structuring is


Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep*.


There are a number of opponents to the concept of a relationship between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian laments, particularly T. McDaniel (“The Alleged Sumerian Influence Upon Lamentations,” *VT* 15 [1968]: 198–209) whose article responds to Kramer’s initial work.


frequently found in commentaries and studies alike.\textsuperscript{215} Each poem is divided into broad units, based on either changes in voice or changes in content, with each unit named according to the overriding content of those verses. So, for example, Harrison divides chapter 1 into 3 units: vv. 1-7, “Jerusalem destroyed”; vv. 8-11, “destruction follows sin”; vv. 12-22, “a plea for mercy.”\textsuperscript{216} Within this approach the structure does not reflect the presence of unifying themes across the book and fails to observe movement between and across the poems in relation to the dialogue of inter-related concepts and themes.\textsuperscript{217}

A number of studies approach the structure of Lamentations from different perspectives. Johnson, as discussed above, argues that poems 1-4 can be structured into a “fact half” and an “interpretation half.”\textsuperscript{218} Using the tools of structural analysis, J. Renkema argues that the poems of Lamentations are structured according to a concentric pattern.\textsuperscript{219} He divides the poems into various levels (cantos, sub-cantos, canticles, strophes and verses) and finds correspondence between verses in concentric patterns within the poems. So, for example, correspondence is found between Lam 1:1 and 1:22, 1:2 and 1:21, and so forth. It is, however, difficult to see the connections made by Renkema, and, quoting R. Salters, “one is soon convinced that the observations are superficial.”\textsuperscript{220} Renkema’s work finds little support.\textsuperscript{221}

Westermann and Gerstenberger both undertake form critical studies of Lamentations, paying close attention to the structure of the individual poems.\textsuperscript{222} Their approaches to the text differ, as do their outcomes.

\textsuperscript{215} Kraus, Klageleieder; Rudolph, Die Klageleieder; Harrison, Jeremiah and Lamentations; Otto Kaiser, “Klageleieder.”; Daglish, Jeremiah, Lamentations; O’Connor, Lamentations, 1026; O’Connor, Tears of the World; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations; Berlin, Lamentations.

\textsuperscript{216} Harrison, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 205.

\textsuperscript{217} Recurring themes and motifs are frequently commented on in the discussion within these studies, despite not being identified through the structuring of the poems.

\textsuperscript{218} Johnson, “Form and Message.”

\textsuperscript{219} Renkema, Lamentations.

\textsuperscript{220} Salters, “Patterns in Lamentations,” 98.

\textsuperscript{221} One exception is found in the work of J. Hunter (Faces) who builds on Renkema’s observations.

\textsuperscript{222} Westermann, Lamentations; Gerstenberger, Lamentations. Ferris (Communal Lament) also considers Lamentations in a form critical study, however his concern is the communal lament form, and he does not provide a structure for the poems in Lamentations within his study.
Westermann approaches Lamentations from the perspective of the psalms, arguing that there has been an undervaluation in previous scholarship of the form and function of these poems as laments.\textsuperscript{223} Westermann's study seeks to reinstate the importance of the lament form in the interpretation of Lamentations. Westermann notes the many features of the communal lament form present in Lamentations, arguing that the understanding of the form as it has developed in psalm studies must be decisive for the understanding of Lamentations. He argues that both Lamentations and the communal lament psalms arise from the same \textit{Sitz im Leben}, "the solemn assembly convened in response to a public emergency."\textsuperscript{224} Given this \textit{Sitz im Leben}, Westermann in turn argues that the form of the poems in Lamentations must correspond to the communal lament as found in the Psalms, given that life setting and genre are interdependent. Westermann concludes that Lamentations must have existed in an original oral form which conformed to the communal lament, and that in the process of being committed to paper, and in taking on the acrostic form, a number of transpositions, alterations and omissions took place, resulting in the book's current form.\textsuperscript{225} Westermann restructures and rearranges the poems in order to interpret them against the standard form of the communal lament. Despite this, Westermann acknowledges the presence of elements from the funeral dirge within Lamentations, a recognition which stands in tension with his insistence that the poems must have conformed to the communal lament.

Westermann’s proposed structure of Lamentations ultimately fails due to his rigid application of form critical categories. Throughout his commentary he dissects and rearranges the poems in order to make them conform to the standard communal lament and, in doing so, fails to take seriously the present text of Lamentations. Westermann argues, essentially, that Lamentations can only be understood in light of a hypothetical reconstruction of its supposed original form,

\textsuperscript{223}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}, 1–105.
\textsuperscript{224}Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{225}Ibid., 100–01.
an interpretive move which attempts to reduce the dialogic tensions within the
text.

Contra Westermann, Ferris, who applies form-critical methodology in a
comparative study of the laments of the Hebrew bible and other ancient Near
Eastern cultures, concludes that form alone (i.e. structural elements) is an
insufficient basis for establishing the communal lament genre. Ferris argues that
the communal lament form can only be established by the nature and use of
distinctive themes. In discussing Lamentations, Ferris cautions that “care must
be taken not to assume an identity with the Psalms and thereby impose the
characteristics observed in the Psalter upon (Lamentations).” Again in contrast
to Westermann, Ferris concludes that the laments in Lamentations have a different
function from those in the Psalter as they seek to meet the needs of the community
in the aftermath of the events of 586.

Gerstenberger’s commentary also considers Lamentations within a form
critical framework. Unlike Westermann, however, Gerstenberger does not begin
with a presupposed form, but draws his structure from the text itself.
Gerstenberger considers Lamentations (like the Psalms) as an example of Cultic
Poetry, and applies the same terminology to the structural divisions of the poems
as he applies to the Psalms. He structures each poem individually, and a certain
degree of uniformity is noted across the five poems. For example, Gerstenberger
uses the term “description of misery” for the units 1:1-10 and 2:1-10, and
complaints are identified in 1:12-15; 3:1-18, 43-45, 46-47, 52-54. At times,
however, Gerstenberger uses a mixture of terms, which does not allow patterns to
be seen across the five chapters. For example, 1:20-22 is labelled a prayer for
help, 2:20-22 a plea, 3:55-66 and 5:19-22 petitions. No clear distinction is made

226 Ferris, Communal Lament. Ferris’s study is independent of Westermann’s work on
Lamentations, which was published in English two years after Ferris’s own work (German original
227 Ferris, Communal Lament, 103.
228 Ibid., 136.
229 Ibid., 147.
between these labels, and in fact Gerstenberger seems to use them interchangeably.\textsuperscript{231} Despite this, Gerstenberger’s structure captures something of the complexity of the Lamentations text and the movement within and across the poems in a way that is unique in modern commentaries.

One further study requires mention at this point. Although he does not provide a structure for Lamentations as such, in his book \textit{Surviving Lamentations}, Linafelt applies form critical categories to Lam 1 and 2 in a way which allows the intermixing of forms within Lamentations to be acknowledged as an inherent aspect of the text’s message. Linafelt discusses the movement between elements of the funeral dirge and lament forms within Lam 1 and 2, arguing that the two forms have not been combined in a haphazard or confused way within these chapters, but “evinces the fundamental dynamic of survival literature...: the paradox of life in death and death in life.”\textsuperscript{232} In discussing the intermixture of genre Linafelt argues that, while the funeral dirge functions to announce death, the lament, even in its description of desolation, affirms life. He states that “the genre of lament, like the dirge, arises out of pain and knows much about death. Yet unlike the dirge, its primary aim is life. The lament addresses God and expects an answer.”\textsuperscript{233} This play between genres expresses the “life in death, death in life” paradox within Lamentations. Linafelt’s study, although different in intent to the current study, points to the potential fruitfulness of considering the structure of Lamentations as an expression of the tensions and dialogic interactions within the text.

\textit{1.4.3 A Thematic Structure of Lamentations}

As the above discussion shows, a number of difficulties emerge in the attempt to outline the structure of the individual poems within Lamentations. The

\textsuperscript{231} For example, 1:20-22 is labeled in the structure as a “prayer for help” (p. 478) but is later referred to as a petition (p. 481).
\textsuperscript{232} Linafelt, \textit{Surviving Lamentations}, 37.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 38.
presence of the acrostic form, the paratactic lines in which seemingly unrelated expressions are placed side by side, and the text’s failure to conform to defined generic forms, have all hampered attempts to provide a useful structure which captures both the unitary and fragmentary nature of this text.

The approach to the text adopted here falls midway between previous approaches to the structuring of Lamentations. It takes seriously the effort to look for uniformity within the poems, and to identifying common themes, yet avoids the pitfalls of trying to fit the poems into a set form which risks failing to recognize the unique details of this text. The proposed structure uses the current text as its starting point, and divides the text into thematic units, seeking to identify common themes and content as they recur across the book. The text will be structured using common terminology across the poems, terminology which has emerged from and reflects the themes within Lamentations itself. On a more detailed level, each thematic unit will be broken down into motifs, again allowing common motifs which occur across the poems to be traced.

In structuring the text this way it is hoped to address two issues which emerged from the discussion above. First, it was noted that many commentaries divide the text into units and label each unit according to its content, but do so without attempting to identify the recurrence of common themes which emerge and re-emerge across the poems. The structure proposed here also divides the text according to thematic content, but identifies the presence of common themes which emerge and re-emerge across the poems, using common terminology to label units with common thematic content. At the same time, however, it also allows units which introduce new themes to be recognized. Second, in drawing the thematic units from the text itself, the structure avoids the pitfalls of imposing categories drawn from other bodies of literature such as the Psalms onto this new text. This is not to deny that Lamentations shares an affinity with the lament and

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234 As such, the approach is similar to that taken by Ferris (*Communal Lament*), although differences occur as the present study considers only the structure of Lamentations while Ferris’s aim was to define the communal lament genre in relation to ancient Near Eastern texts, the Psalms and Lamentations.
funeral dirge forms. However, in structuring the text this way, it seeks to reflect
the unique quality of Lamentations.

For current purposes, a distinction needs to be drawn between theme and
motif. A theme is defined as the focus of a unit of poetry which may be made up
of a number of motifs. Motifs are smaller units of meaning. The significant
distinction is that a number of motifs work together to form a theme, although the
c constituent motifs within a theme are not necessarily set. One of the complexities
of Lamentations is that the thematic units are not always homogeneous. In
structuring the text it becomes evident that, within a given thematic unit, motifs
occur which would seem to belong to a different theme. For example, in the unit
1:1-6, which is labelled here as a description of misery, a motif of divine
responsibility occurs (v. 5b). Divine responsibility also occurs as a theme in its
own right (e.g. 1:12-20; 2:1-8). In 1:5b, however, it is clearly a motif as it is not
developed into an extended treatment of this concept. This interplay of themes and
motifs across units gives a richness of expression, but also points towards the
artificiality of attempting to provide absolute boundaries to the units within
Lamentations.

1.4.3.1 The Thematic Units in Lamentations

From an examination of the text of Lamentations itself, and informed by the
work of previous commentators discussed above, the following major thematic
units have been identified as a helpful way of structuring the text.

1.4.3.1.1 Description of Misery

One of the major thematic units in Lamentations identified here is the
description of misery (1:1-6; 7-11; 2:11-19, 20-22; 3:48-54; 4:1-10, 17-20; 5:1-
18). Description of misery units are those which focus on the current misery of the
city and/or people, or the fate of the city/people, or which describe the misery
brought about by the action of the enemies.\textsuperscript{235} The description can be of both physical and emotional suffering.\textsuperscript{236} The description of misery is distinct from those units which concern the divine responsibility for the destruction/suffering. Although the two themes may share a number of common motifs (e.g. references to sin, descriptions of lament and mourning) the description of misery focuses on the state of the city/people rather than on Yahweh’s actions. A variety of motifs can be present within the descriptions of misery, including references to sin, contrast motifs, calls to lament, descriptions of lament behaviour, references to famine, exile, and the taunts of the enemy.\textsuperscript{237}

1.4.3.1.2 Divine Responsibility

Divine responsibility units depict Yahweh as the agent behind the destruction and/or suffering of both city and people (1:12-20; 2:1-8; 3:1-18, 42-47; 4:11-12).\textsuperscript{238} Within these units there is frequent attribution of active verbs to Yahweh. A number of motifs occur within the divine responsibility units, some of which coincide with those in the description of misery units. Here though, their purpose is to highlight that it was Yahweh who caused the destruction and/or misery. Motifs within the divine responsibility units include references to the day of Yahweh, descriptions of lament, references to sin, descriptions of the impact of Yahweh’s actions, and appeals to Yahweh to notice the suffering. Descriptions of misery may occur as a motif within divine responsibility units (e.g. in 1:12-20, vv. 12, 16, 17a, 18, 19-20). At times it is difficult to clearly distinguish between divine responsibility and description of misery, with the suffering described within

\textsuperscript{235}Westermann (Lamentations, 119, 121–23, etc) uses the term “description of misery” within his structuring of the individual poems. He argues that the description of misery is a development of the basic lament, and surveys the state of affairs which has resulted from the disaster. Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 518) defines the description of misery/suffering as a complaint element, and applies it to Lam 1:1-10; 2:1-10, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{236}Ferris (Communal Lament, 95) argues that external circumstances and descriptions of mental anguish are two elements which constitute the lament proper.

\textsuperscript{237}See below for a discussion of the motifs within Lamentations.

\textsuperscript{238}Dobbs-Allsopp (Weep, 55–65) argues that “the divine agent of destruction” is a key motif within the city-lament genre. Westermann (Lamentations, especially 91–93) refers to the “accusation against God” (Anklage Gottes).
Lamentations arising out of, and compounded by, the recognition that it was Yahweh who was responsible for Jerusalem’s fate.

1.4.3.1.3 Future Fate of the Enemy

Three units have as their central theme the future fate of the enemies (1:21-22; 3:55-66; 4:21-22). All three contain precative wishes that Yahweh act against the enemy. A number of motifs are associated with this theme, including references to sin, descriptions of misery, descriptions of lament and divine responsibility.239

1.4.3.1.4 Confidence in Yahweh

Two units in chapter 3 (vv. 19-24, 31-33) contain expressions of confidence in Yahweh’s enduring goodness, an expression unique to chapter 3.

1.4.3.1.5 Wisdom-Like Units

Again in chapter 3 (vv. 25-30, 34-39) two units appear which reflect wisdom-like themes.240 The language and concepts within these units form a theodicy which Dobbs-Allsopp compares to the speech of the friends in the book of Job.241 3:25-30 calls upon the individual to wait patiently on Yahweh, and extols the virtues of waiting for Yahweh’s salvation. 3:34-39 focuses on the omniscience and omnipotence of Yahweh, concluding with an entreaty not to complain about the punishment of sin. These units are closely related to the confidence in Yahweh units (vv. 19-24, 31-33).242

240 The link between these verses and Israel’s wisdom traditions has been noted by Westermann (Lamentations, 175–82), Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 494), Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 119–22) and Berlin (Lamentations, 92–94).
242 Westermann (Lamentations, 175–82) suggests that all these units are part of a midrashic-like expansion which contains both admonition and instruction (vv. 26-41).
1.4.3.1.6 Call to Confession

3:40-41 is a transitional unit in which a call to confession occurs. This unit is distinct from the surrounding units, switching as it does from the 1ps voice of vv. 34-39 to 1cpl voice, anticipating the communal lament of vv. 42-47.

1.4.3.1.7 Extended Treatment of Sin

4:13-16 contains an extended reference to sin and can therefore be treated separately from the surrounding units (vv. 11-12: divine responsibility; vv. 17-20: description of misery). This is the only time that reference to sin is developed into a thematic unit within Lamentations.\(^{243}\)

1.4.3.1.8 Praise of Yahweh

5:19 contains an isolated word of praise, the only such occurrence in Lamentations.\(^{244}\)

1.4.3.1.9 Future Restoration of Jerusalem

5:21-22 contains a theme which explores the possibility of restoration for Jerusalem, although this hope is superseded by the doubt expressed in 5:22. Motifs within this unit include an appeal to Yahweh to notice the suffering and an appeal for restoration.

1.4.3.2 The Motifs in Lamentations

The motifs in the structural outline which follows are: contrast motif; famine motif; references to sin; reference to day of Yahweh; description of

\(^{243}\)Westermann (*Lamentations*, 198) argues that vv. 11-13 form an accusation against God, while vv. 14-16 are a continuation of the complaint of vv. 1-10. Gerstenberger (*Lamentations*, 497–98) sees vv. 11-16 as a subunit of a larger descriptive lament (vv. 1-16), and labels the subunit
mourning/lament; reasons for mourning/lament; call to mourn; description of misery; divine responsibility; recollection of past glory; Yahweh’s actions; vindication of Yahweh; reason for Yahweh to act; rhetorical questions; incomparable suffering; action of the enemy; appeal to Yahweh and/or passersby; mockery motif; reason for confidence; Yahweh’s steadfast love; injustice portrayed; Yahweh’s omniscience; Yahweh’s omnipotence; futility of complaint; description of past behaviour; downfall of the king; limited hope; punishment motif; servitude; unjust suffering; appeal for restoration; possibility of no hope. These are self-explanatory except for the contrast motif which occurs predominantly in chapters 1 and 4. The contrast motif is an element which often occurs in the funeral dirge and compares the often glorious past to the dismal present. In Lamentations, it is used to compare the past glory of either Zion (e.g. 1:1) or groups of people (e.g. 4:7-8) to their present state.

1.4.4 The Structure of Lamentations

Within the structure below, the thematic units are marked with Roman numerals with the motifs listed below.

1.4.4.1 Lamentations 1

IA Description of Misery (3ps) v. 1-6

- Opening cry (יהוה) v. 1αα
- Contrast motif v. 1αβ-ε
- Descriptions of mourning with reasons v. 2-5α
- Divine responsibility, sin motif v. 5β
- Reasons for mourning v. 5ε-6

"Yahweh’s castigation."

Westermann (Lamentations, 212) likewise treats this verse as a separate element. Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 501) includes 5:19 as part of the final petition to Yahweh (vv. 19-22).

Jahnow, Das hebräische Leichenlied, 97–99; Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 53–62; Dobbs-Allsopp, Weep, 39; Westermann, Lamentations, 6–8, 118; Linafelt, Surviving
IB Description of Misery (3ps) v. 7-11

- Opening formula, recollection of past glory v. 7a
- Description of misery, mockery motif v. 7b-c
- Sin motif v. 8-9bα
- Description of misery v. 9bβ
- Appeal to Yahweh to notice suffering (1ps) v. 9c
- Description of misery, action of enemy (3ps) v. 10
- Famine motif v. 11a-b
- Appeal to Yahweh to notice suffering (1ps) v. 11c

II Divine Responsibility (1ps) v. 12-20

- Appeal to passersby to notice suffering v. 12a-b
- Day of Yahweh motif v. 12c
- Yahweh’s actions, sin motif v. 13-15
- Description of mourning v. 16
- Description of misery (3ps) v. 17a
- Divine responsibility, Yahweh’s actions v. 17b-c
- Vindication of Yahweh, sin motif (1ps) v. 18a
- Appeal to peoples to notice suffering v. 18b-c
- Description of misery v. 19
- Appeal to Yahweh to notice suffering, sin motif v. 20

III Future fate of the Enemy v. 21-22

- Description of misery, enemy’s actions v. 21a-b
- Day of Yahweh, sin motif v. 21c-22b
- Reason for Yahweh to act v. 22c

Notes:

1:1-6: This unit is in the voice of the narrator and centers on a description of Jerusalem’s present plight. The unit opens with a contrast motif which describes Zion’s past and present states (v. 1), with vv. 2-6 building on the description of her present state.

Lamentations, 37–38.
1:7-11: A change of focus occurs in vv. 7-11. Although the narrator continues to speak, he now describes the causes of Zion’s plight, and there is an increased reference to sin and to the events of the destruction.\footnote{Westermann (Lamentations, 115) similarly divides vv. 1-11 into two units, vv. 1-6, 7-11, with Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 478) treating vv. 1-6 as a subunit of the larger unit vv. 1-10. The most common division of this chapter follows the voice change between the narrator and Zion, dividing the text into two units, vv. 1-11, 12-22 (for example Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 53; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 18, 24; Berlin, Lamentations, 49).}

1:12-20: A change of thematic unit coincides with a change of voice in vv. 12-20. Zion speaks, and her focus is the divine responsibility for her plight. Descriptions of misery occur frequently within this unit, and dominate in the 16, 18b-20. When read in conjunction with vv. 12-15, the description of misery functions to reinforce the impact of Yahweh’s action against the city.\footnote{Westermann (Lamentations, 117, 132–36) argues that the unit ends at v. 18a, thus making the vindication of Yahweh’s actions the high point of the unit. There are, however, signs of continuity between vv. 12-18a and 18b-20, including a continued focus on the fate of groups within the city (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19), pleas for notice (vv. 12, 18, 20) and repeated use of הַרְאָה (vv. 18, 20).}

1:21-22: Zion continues to speak in the final unit, however her focus shifts to the future fate of her enemy.

1.4.4.2 Lamentations 2

I Divine Responsibility (3ps) v. 1-8

- Opening cry (יהי) v. 1αα
- Yahweh’s actions vv. 1αβ-7b
- Enemy’s actions v. 7c
- Yahweh’s actions v. 8

II Transitional Unit (3ps) v. 9-10

- Description of misery v. 9αα
- Divine responsibility v. 9αβ
- Description of misery vv. 9β-10
1:7-11: A change of focus occurs in vv. 7-11. Although the narrator continues to speak, he now describes the causes of Zion’s plight, and there is an increased reference to sin and to the events of the destruction.\(^{246}\)

1:12-20: A change of thematic unit coincides with a change of voice in vv. 12-20. Zion speaks, and her focus is the divine responsibility for her plight. Descriptions of misery occur frequently within this unit, and dominate in the 16, 18b-20. When read in conjunction with vv. 12-15, the description of misery functions to reinforce the impact of Yahweh’s action against the city.\(^{247}\)

1:21-22: Zion continues to speak in the final unit, however her focus shifts to the future fate of her enemy.

1.4.4.2 Lamentations 2

I Divine Responsibility (3ps) vvv. 1-8

- Opening cry (אלהים) v. 1ac
- Yahweh’s actions vvv. 1aβ-7b
- Enemy’s actions v. 7c
- Yahweh’s actions v. 8

II Transitional Unit (3ps) vvv. 9-10

- Description of misery v. 9ac
- Divine responsibility v. 9αβ
- Description of misery vvv. 9b-10

\(^{246}\)Westermann (Lamentations, 115) similarly divides vv. 1-11 into two units, vv. 1-6, 7-11, with Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 478) treating vv. 1-6 as a subunit of the larger unit vv. 1-10. The most common division of this chapter follows the voice change between the narrator and Zion, dividing the text into two units, vv. 1-11, 12-22 (for example Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 53; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 18, 24; Berlin, Lamentations, 49).

\(^{247}\)Westermann (Lamentations, 117, 132–36) argues that the unit ends at v. 18a, thus making the vindication of Yahweh’s actions the high point of the unit. There are, however, signs of continuity between vv. 12-18a and 18b-20, including a continued focus on the fate of groups within the city (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19), pleas for notice (vv. 12, 18, 20) and repeated use of פָּשַׁת (vv. 18, 20).
III Description of misery (1ps and 2ps)  v. 11-19
  - Description of lament (1ps)  v. 11a-bα
  - Reason for mourning  v. 11abβ-12
  - Rhetorical question/incomparable sorrow (2ps)  v. 13
  - Sin motif  v. 14
  - Mockery motif  v. 15-16
  - Divine responsibility  v. 17
  - Call to mourn  v. 18-19bα
  - Reason for mourning  v. 19bβ-c

IV Description of Misery (2ps address to Yahweh)  v. 20-22
  - Appeal to Yahweh to notice suffering  v. 20a
  - Description of misery (rhetorical questions)  v. 20b-21b
  - Day of Yahweh motif, divine responsibility  v. 21c-22

Notes:

2:1-8: The initial unit is in the 3ps voice of the narrator, and focuses on the divine responsibility for the destruction. Yahweh’s actions are described in every verse and follow a formulaic pattern “Yahweh did x.” The unit describes Jerusalem’s destruction as a day of Yahweh.248

2:9-10: The material in vv. 9-10 is difficult to classify as it is closely related to the divine responsibility material in 2:1-8, and to the description of misery in 2:11-19. 2:9-10 contains both themes and is best understood as a transitional unit between the two thematic sections.249

2:11-19: The narrator continues to speak in vv. 11-19, however the theme changes to a description of misery.250 Initially the narrator describes his own lament (vv. 11-12), followed by direct address to Jerusalem (vv. 13-19).251

248 The unity of vv. 1-8 is widely recognized, although the unit is often extended to v. 10, whereas vv. 9-10 are here defined as a transitional unit. Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 78–79) divides the text at v. 8, while Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 458) defines vv. 1-8 as a subunit of a larger description of misery (vv. 1-10).
249 So also Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 78–79).
250 This division is also identified by O'Connor (Tears of the World, 31) and Berlin (Lamentations, 67).
251 Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 485–89) identifies a divine lament in vv. 11-16. Gerstenberger is
2:20-22: The voice changes to that of Zion, who appeals to Yahweh in conjunction with a description of misery. Zion refers to the day of Yahweh (v. 22), thus forming an inclusio with the opening verse.

1.4.4.3 Lamentations 3

I Divine Responsibility (1ps) v. v. 1-18
- Introduction v. 1
- Yahweh’s actions v. v. 2-13
- Impact of Yahweh’s action/description of misery v. 14
- Yahweh’s actions v. v. 15-16
- Impact of Yahweh’s action/description of misery v. 17-18

II Confidence in Yahweh (1ps) v. v. 19-24
- Description of misery v. v. 19-20
- Reason for confidence v. 21
- Yahweh’s steadfast love v. v. 22-24

III Wisdom-like unit (3ps) v. v. 25-30

IV Confidence in Yahweh (3ps) v. v. 31-33

V Wisdom-like unit (3ps) v. v. 34-39
- Injustice portrayed v. v. 34-36a
- Yahweh’s omniscience v. 36b
- Yahweh’s omnipotence v. v. 37-38
- Futility of complaint v. 39

VI Call to Confession (1cpl) v. v. 40-41

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alone in identifying the divine voice within Lamentations.
VII Divine Responsibility (1cpl)                      vv. 42-47

- Confession/sin motif                             v. 42a
- Yahweh’s action                                  vv. 42b-45
- Impact of Yahweh’s action                         vv. 46-47

VIII Description of Misery (1ps)                   vv. 48-54

- Description of lament                            vv. 48-51
- Description of misery                            vv. 52-54

IX Future Fate of the Enemy (1ps)                  vv. 55-66

- Cry to Yahweh                                    vv. 55-59a
- Appeal for action                                v. 59b
- Reason for Yahweh to act                         vv. 60-63
- Appeal to Yahweh to act against the enemy        vv. 64-66

Notes:

3:1-18: The initial unit is a divine responsibility unit in the 1ps voice of a man (ךצו) who introduces himself as one afflicted (v. 1) and describes Yahweh’s actions against him (vv. 2-18). Yahweh is not named directly until v. 18. Verses 17-18 close the unit with a description of the impact of Yahweh’s actions, and the reported loss of hope.\textsuperscript{253}

3:19-24: Although vv. 19-20 continue to describe the misery of the man, vv. 21-24 portray a shift in the man’s perspective from loss of hope to a new sense of hope, expressing confidence in Yahweh. In vv. 19-20 the man recalls his suffering which leads into the expression of hope.\textsuperscript{254}

3:25-30: The first wisdom-like unit is introduced in vv. 25-30, reflecting on the

\textsuperscript{252}Reading in the precative.
\textsuperscript{253}The boundary of the opening unit is uncertain. Both Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 492) and Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 109) identify vv 1-18 as the initial unit, while O’Connor (Tears of the World, 46-47) and Berlin (Lamentations, 86) conclude the unit at v. 21, and Westermann (Lamentations, 189) at v. 25.
\textsuperscript{254}So also Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 116).
goodness of Yahweh and emphasizing the merit of waiting patiently on Yahweh.\textsuperscript{255}

3:31-33: These verses return to an expression of confidence in Yahweh.

3:34-39: Sapiential concerns return in vv. 34-39 which focus on both the omniscience and omnipotence of Yahweh, arguing that suffering is just punishment for sin.

3:40-41: These verses form a transitional unit. The male voice calls on the community to confess their sin, switching to 1cpl verbs.\textsuperscript{256}

3:42-47: This unit contains divine responsibility material in 1cpl voice. The unit opens with a confession of sin (v. 42a), followed by a description of Yahweh’s actions against the community (vv. 42b-45) associated with description of misery motifs (vv. 46-47).

3:48-54: The voice again changes to 1ps. The unit contains a description of misery, which describes the lament of the speaker and the reasons for that lament.

3:55-66: The final unit is an extended future fate of the enemy unit using the precative form.\textsuperscript{257} The voice continues in 1ps, with the unit containing an initial cry for help (vv. 55-59a), an appeal (v. 59b), the reasons for the appeal (vv. 60-63) followed by a second appeal for Yahweh to act against the enemy (vv. 64-66).

\textsuperscript{255}The divisions of the text within vv. 25-39 are variously understood. Westermann (\textit{Lamentations}, 189) defines vv. 26-41 as a didactic expansion and, with many commentators, notes the wisdom influences on these verses (see for example Gerstenberger, \textit{Lamentations}, 494; Dobbs-Allsopp, \textit{Lamentations}, 119–22; Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 92–95).

\textsuperscript{256}So also Hillers (\textit{Lamentations}, 124).

1.4.4.4 Lamentations 4

I Description of Misery (3ps) v. 1-10
- Opening cry (נור) with reasons v. 1a
- Contrast motif v. 1b-2
- Famine motif v. 3-5
- Punishment motif v. 6
- Contrast motif v. 7-8
- Famine motif v. 9-10

II Divine Responsibility (3ps) v. 11-12
- Yahweh’s action v. 11
- Impact of Yahweh’s action v. 12

III Extended Treatment of Sin (3ps) v. 13-16
- Sin motif v. 13
- Fate of priests and prophets v. 14-16

IV Description of Misery (1cpl) v. 17-20
- Description of past behaviour v. 17
- Action of the enemy vv. 18-19
- Downfall of the king v. 20

V Future Fate of the Enemy (2ps) v. 21-22
- Contrast motif v. 21
- Limited hope for Jerusalem/punishment for Edom v. 22

Notes:
4:1-10: The opening unit focuses on descriptions of misery which move between reference to the city and to groups within the city. The pinnacle of the description occurs in v. 10 with its reference to the cannibalism of the women.
4:11-12: The theme changes in these verses from description of misery to divine responsibility. The boundaries between vv. 1-10, 11-12 and 13-16 are difficult to define. However in tracing the changes in theme, it is possible to divide the text as has been suggested here. Nevertheless, it must be note that vv. 11-12 relate closely to both the preceding and following units, thus linking divine responsibility with both.\textsuperscript{258}

4:13-16: These three verses form the only extended treatment of sin within Lamentations. It centers on the sins and the fate of the priests and prophets.

4:17-20: Within these verses the lcp1 voice of the community is heard. The content of these verses differs from that seen elsewhere in Lamentations, and does not appear to fit within its current literary context. The unit reports something of the siege of the city and the flight and capture of the king. Verse 17 does not flow naturally from v. 16 which reports the scattering of the priests among the nations, nor is there any close connection between the report of sorrow over the king’s capture and the following unit which concerns the future plight of Edom.

4:21-22: Echoing chapter 1, vv. 21-22 concern the future fate of Jerusalem’s enemy, here defined as Edom. Again the preceptive hope for the enemy’s downfall is expressed.

\textsuperscript{258}Various suggestions have been made as to the divisions within these verses. Westermann (\textit{Lamentations}, 199) proposes a radical rearrangement of the verses in order to keep vv. 14-15 and 16b with the opening description of misery. O’Connor (\textit{Tears of the World}, 59) divides the text into two units, vv. 1-10, 11-16, as does Berlin (\textit{Lamentations}, 109). Gerstenberger (\textit{Lamentations}, 497) and Dobbs-Allsopp (\textit{Lamentations}, 130) both suggest vv. 1-16 as the first unit.
1.4.4.5 Lamentations 5

I Description of Misery (1cpl) v. 1-18

- Appeal to Yahweh to notice suffering v. 1
- Divine abandonment motif v. 2-3
- Famine motif v. 4
- Servitude motif v. 5
- Famine motif v. 6
- Unjust suffering v. 7
- Servitude motif v. 8
- Famine motif vv. 9-10
- Description of suffering vv. 11-14
- Contrast motif vv. 15-16a
- Sin motif v. 16b
- Description of misery with reason vv. 17-18

II Praise of Yahweh (1cpl) v. 19

III Future Restoration of Jerusalem vv. 20-22

- Opening questions/appeal to notice v. 20
- Appeal for restoration v. 21
- Possibility of no hope v. 22

Notes:

5:1-18: This is an extended description of misery unit in the 1cpl voice of the inhabitants of the city. The unit opens with an appeal for Yahweh to notice the suffering, followed by a description of what Yahweh should notice (vv. 2-18).259

5:19, 20-22: Although these verses are treated separately within the present

259So also O'Connor (Tears of the World, 72–73). The opening appeal is often treated as a separate component within this chapter (Westermann, Lamentations, 212; Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 501; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 142–43).
structure, they are closely related, as is reflected in the fact that many commentators treat these verses as a unit.²⁶⁰

Chapter 2
The Personification of Jerusalem as Female:
Prophetic Motif and Literary Device

2.1 Introduction

Lamentations opens with a vivid portrayal of the city, an isolated woman, alone and rejected, a grieving widow, distressed and mourning (1:1-6). This portrayal of the city as female is sustained throughout Lam 1, 2 and 4, making this a significant literary device within the book. Through the personification the poet is able to transform the description of Jerusalem’s destruction into a literary experience which evokes with great pathos the plight of the community and the deep impact of the loss of the city on the people.

Beyond its power of literary expression, the personification of Jerusalem is a device which links Lamentations with the prophetic literature. Within Lamentations, the city is personified through the use of specific designations such as נָבְרָי צְזִי and נָבָר שְׁמֹר, and through language which casts her in feminine roles, describes her embodiment and attributes to her speech, action and emotion. Outside Lamentations, personification of Jerusalem using נָבְרָי titles occurs almost exclusively in the prophetic literature,¹ and there are also a number of descriptions of Jerusalem as a female figure. That personification is a shared literary device between Lamentations and the prophetic literature has been noted,² but the nature of the relationship between the two bodies of literature through the personification has not been explored in any detail.³

³Three uses of נָבְרָי titles occur in the Psalms (9:14; 45:13; 137:8).
²Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 45; Hillers, Lamentations, 30–31; Berlin, Lamentations, 10–12; Guest, “Behind the Naked Woman,” 413; Xuan Huong Thi Pham, Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible (JSOTSup; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 48.
³F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp (Weep, 110–56) notes various prophetic texts which share the generic features of the city-lament with Lamentations, including the personification of the city as female. J. Galambush (Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife [SBLDS; Atlanta:
The purpose of the current chapter is to explore the relationship between the prophetic literature and Lamentations with regard to the personification of Jerusalem as female. As background, the nature of personification as a literary device will be discussed, followed by a brief description of the origins of personifying cities as female. In order to explore the relationship between the usage of the personification of Jerusalem in the prophetic literature and Lamentations, those texts which personify Jerusalem in prophetic poetic texts which emerge from the eighth century through to the mid-sixth century BCE will be considered, followed by a comparative analysis of the use in Lamentations. It will become clear that Lamentations does evoke the prophetic literature through its personification of Jerusalem as female, but in doing so uses the device for its own purposes. Lamentations magnifies and sustains the personification in order to evoke audience empathy and pathos in the aftermath of the events of 586 BCE.

2.1.1 Personification as a Literary Device

Given the dominance of personification in Lam 1, 2 and 4, it is important to briefly discuss the nature and purpose of this literary device. Personification can be defined as "a manner of speech endowing things with life," or "to treat as a person that which is not a person."4 Personification is a form of metaphor whereby "we speak about one thing in terms of another."5 In using metaphor we are "spotting a thread between two dissimilar objects, events, or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better known one as a way of speaking about the

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lesser known." Personification, as a form of metaphor, brings to expression something which cannot be expressed in plain language.\textsuperscript{7}

The power of personification in Lamentations is its ability to express that which cannot be expressed otherwise. K. Heim and A. Mintz discuss the dilemma facing the poet/community following the destruction of Jerusalem given the widespread suffering of the whole community.\textsuperscript{8} Pain and suffering are individual experiences and find their expression in the language of the individual. Heim argues:

when disaster strikes a whole community, pain is elevated to a different and more complex level. It needs to find an expression that is both individual and corporate in order to help individuals express their own personal pain while at the same time addressing the agony experienced by the other members of the community.\textsuperscript{9}

According to Mintz, the authors of Lamentations solved the dilemma of how to express the communal pain and suffering by transferring "to the collective the attributes of individual experience and to view the nation as a whole in the aspect of a single individual; simply put: personification."\textsuperscript{10}

2.1.2 The Personification of Jerusalem as Female in the Hebrew Bible and its Ancient Near Eastern Origin

Jerusalem is personified as female in Lam 1, 2 and 4. The personification is achieved through the application of the title "daughter + Zion/Jerusalem/my people"


\textsuperscript{9}Heim, "Personification of Jerusalem," 130.

\textsuperscript{10}Mintz, "Rhetoric of Lamentations," 2.
as well as through the city being addressed and described as a female figure. The use of the title "daughter" to personify cities is found in other poetic literature within the Hebrew bible, predominantly the prophetic literature, and also in other ancient Near Eastern literature. Evidence suggests that the term has its origins in Western Semitic languages and dates back to at least the second millennium B.C.E. However the use of the title in the Hebrew bible is shaped according to its monotheistic theology.\footnote{Aloysius Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," \textit{CBQ} 34 (1972): 403–16; Mark E. Biddle, "The Figure of Jerusalem: Identification, Deficitation and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East," in \textit{Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective}, vol. 4 (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger; Scripture in Context; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 173–94.}

Several studies have explored the use of אֶֽזְרֵי in as titles for the personified city in the Hebrew bible.\footnote{Aloysius Fitzgerald, "BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities," \textit{CBQ} 37 (1975): 167–83; Elaine R. Follis, "The Holy City as Daughter," in \textit{Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry}, vol. 40 (ed. E. R. Follis; JSOTSUp; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 173–84.} This designation is confined to poetic texts, predominantly in the prophetic literature and in Lamentations.\footnote{There is some discussion as to the grammar of the אֶֽזְרֵי + city name designation. See W. F. Stinespring, "No Daughter of Zion: A Study of the Appositional Genitive in Hebrew Grammar," \textit{Encounter} 26 (1965): 133–41; Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 30–31; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Syntagma Of Bat Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning and Grammar," \textit{CBQ} 57 (1995): 451–70; Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 10–12. The designation will be read here as an appositional genitive "daughter Zion."} The earliest biblical usage occurs in material from the eighth century, with its use peaking in the sixth century.\footnote{The distribution of the title according to Fitzgerald is: Amos (x1) 1 Isaiah (x10) Micah (x6) Zephaniah (x2) Jeremiah (x23) Lamentations (x20) Ezekiel (x3) 2-3 Isaiah (x5) Zephaniah (x4) and Psalms (x5).} The term is strongly associated with those texts which draw on Zion theology in association with Jerusalem.\footnote{Fitzgerald, "BTWLT and BT," 169; Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 30; Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 10.} The specific term אֶֽזְרֵי occurs twenty-six times, occurring in both pre and post-exilic literature.\footnote{Follis, "Holy City as Daughter," 183, note 5. Texts listed are 2 Kgs 19:21 parallel with Isa 37:22; Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 52:2; 62:11; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14; Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; Lam 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13; 18; 4:22; Zech 2:10; 9:9; Ps 9:14. The אֶֽזְרֵי designation is used sixteen times with cities other than Jerusalem (Isaiah [x6], Jeremiah [x5], Lamentations [x2], Zechariah [x1]).} The use of the designation coincides with descriptions of the city which has already suffered disaster, or will do so in the imminent future. As a literary device the personification allows the poet to
convey something of the extent and impact of the violence against the city.\textsuperscript{17}

The representation of cities as female occurs in other ancient Near Eastern material, and has its origins in Mesopotamian and Western Semitic literature. Archaeological and documentary evidence suggests that from the middle of the second millennium onwards capital cities in the Western Semitic area were regarded as goddesses married to the patron god of the city.\textsuperscript{18} M. Biddle considers the association of the city as female in Mesopotamian, Western Semitic and Israelite usage, arguing that the way the city is named, and the association of the city with the patron god, is shaped by the language and theology of the different cultures concerned.\textsuperscript{19} In Mesopotamian languages, the terms for city are either masculine or neuter, with the relationship between the city and the god/goddess expressed as that of a patron/protege.\textsuperscript{20} By contrast, in Western Semitic languages, the terms for city are feminine, and as a result the city becomes deified as a goddess married to the patron god.\textsuperscript{21} In Israel however, with its monotheistic theology, the deification of the city is not possible, although the city can be portrayed as a feminine, personal entity. Thus although related to the ancient Near eastern customs, the personification of the city in the Hebrew bible occurs in a modified form.\textsuperscript{22}

2.2 The Personification of Jerusalem in the Prophetic Literature

Having established that the personification of the city as female, particularly where the נו designation is used, is found predominantly in Lamentations and the prophetic literature, it remains now to explore how the literary device is used and

\textsuperscript{17} Fitzgerald, “Mythological Background,” 415–16.
\textsuperscript{18} Fitzgerald, “Mythological Background,” 405. Fitzgerald bases his argument on evidence drawn from coins and texts in which names for capital cities and goddesses are used.
\textsuperscript{19} Biddle, “The Figure of Jerusalem,” 174.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 175, 179.
\textsuperscript{22} Biddle, “The Figure of Jerusalem,” 175; Fitzgerald, “Mythological Background,” 415–16; Follis, “Holy City as Daughter,” 174.
developed in the prophetic literature as a prelude to the discussion of its use in Lamentations. A number of texts from Isaiah 1-39, Micah, Jeremiah and Zephaniah will be considered, each of which personify Jerusalem as female. Only those texts which can be reasonably assumed to pre-date or be contemporaneous with Lamentations will be considered. For each text, issues such as the form and function of the literary unit will be briefly discussed, followed by an exploration of the means by which the city is personified and how it is that the personification is developed. Evidence of common patterns of usage across the texts will be sought, and changes in the use of the device over time will also be noted.

2.2.1 The Personification of Jerusalem in Isaiah 1-39

The earliest examples of the personification of Jerusalem as female in the prophetic literature occur in Isaiah 1-39. The city is personified using "אֱלֹהִים" (titles four times (1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22), and addressed or described as female in 1:21-22; 3:25-4:1 and 22:1-14. Within these texts the personification is more developed in those passages which do not use the "אֱלֹהִים" designation. There is a strong association between the personification of Jerusalem and references to military destruction, and a trend towards lament language being used in conjunction with the personification.

Jerusalem is named as "עֵין יְרוּשָׁלַיִם" in 1:8; 10:32; 16:1 and 37:22. Of these texts, the references in 10:32 and 16:1 are clearly geographical terms, occurring in the extended phrase "רֵדָם בֶּן (mount of daughter Zion). The reference in 1:8 also stands closer

23 Although Ezekiel 16 and 23 personify Jerusalem as female, they will not be considered in the following discussion. These texts are in prose form, and are akin to allegorical descriptions. As such, they are less useful in the discussion of the dialogic relationship than other poetic texts.
24 Personification is present in Hosea 2 and Amos 5, but of the nation as a whole and not Jerusalem in particular.
25 While the term "Mount Zion" can be a designation for the temple (W. Harold Mare, "Zion [Place]," in ABD, vol. 6 [ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992], 1097), that these references occur amongst a listing of towns suggests that a geographical reference is more likely.
to a geographical reference to the city, while 37:22 is a more developed
personification. Each of these texts is associated with reference to the survival of
Jerusalem against all odds, reflecting the Zion theology present in Isaiah.

Although the reference to מַגְרוֹן מָרוֹן (מָרִים) in 1:8 is closer to a geographical reference
than a true personification, it is worth considering briefly as the wider unit (1:4-9\(^26\))
shares features common with other texts which personify Jerusalem. With the
possible exception of v. 9, 1:4-9 can be dated to the eighth century.\(^27\) The unit
contains an indictment of the nation which opens with a זָרָה oracle, thus introducing
lament language. The woe cry introduces the indictment of the nation, which is
chastised for its ongoing sinful behaviour (vv. 4-6). Verses 7-9 refer to past military
action against the nation, a probable reference to the events of the 701 B.C.E.
invasion of Sennacherib.\(^28\) The usage occurs in v. 8, which describes
Jerusalem’s tenuous survival in the midst of the desolated country. The use of בֵּית יְרוּשָׁלַיִם as part of a contrast between the fate of the countryside and the city which suggests
that the designation is more a geographical reference than a true personification as
such. It is the use of בֵּית יְרוּשָׁלַיִם in association with lament language (זָרָה) and the
description of military destruction which aligns this text with other prophetic
personification texts.

The בֵּית יְרוּשָׁלַיִם reference in 37:22 occurs in a unit whose setting is the Assyrian
conflict of 701 B.C.E., but whose literary context is much debated.\(^29\) This is the only

\(^{26}\) The boundaries of this unit are defined by the לָא הָרָע of v. 4 and the introductory clause בֵּית יְרוּשָׁלַיִם of v. 10.

\(^{27}\) See J. A. Emerton, “The Historical Background of Isaiah 1:4–9,” Eerdmans (Malatam Volume) 24

\(^{28}\) Ronald E. Clements, Isaiah 1–39 (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 30; Hans Wildberger,
Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 21; Marvin A. Sweeney, Isaiah
1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 76;
Joseph Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1–39 (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 183; Brevard S. Childs,
Isaiah (Louisville: John Knox Westminster, 2001), 17.

\(^{29}\) See Sweeney, Isaiah 1–39, 476–85 for a detailed discussion. The narrative of Isa 36-37 is
paralleled in 2 Kgs 18:19-36, and contains several anachronistic references, including the murder
of Sennacherib by his sons (37:38) and reference to Tidakah as pharaoh in Egypt. Proposed dates
range from the eighth century (Stuart A. Irvine and John H. Hayes, Isaiah: The Eighth Century
Prophet [Nashville: Abingdon, 1987], 371–76) into the exilic period (Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13–39: A
text in Isaiah in which the designation is used in a developed form, which may suggest it post-dates the eighth century. Personified Jerusalem is called both הב צוז in 37:22, and is attributed with action, emotion and possibly implied speech. She is said to despise and scorn Assyria (באי לֹא לֵעָג אֶל), and to toss her head behind their back (ראֵץ לְאִשָּׁה יֵעֲדוּ), a reference to deriding or mocking. This is the only verse in the unit which mentions Jerusalem, and leads into an oracle against Assyria (vv. 23-29). This unit, then, contains a short but developed personification of Jerusalem.

All four uses of הב צוז in Isaiah 1-39 are associated with notions of Jerusalem being preserved, or being inviolable. In 1:8, the city is left standing despite the surrounding destruction, in 10:32 the enemy invasion stops at Mt Zion and in 16:1 the city is portrayed as a place of refuge. Similarly in 37:22 the personified city stands in defiance of Sennacherib, taunting him for his failure to conquer the city. It seems therefore, that the designation as used in Isaiah 1-39 is associated with Zion theology and its underlying assumption of Jerusalem’s inviolability as the dwelling place of Yahweh.

A number of passages in Isaiah 1-39 personify Jerusalem as female without using the הב צוז designation (1:21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14). The personification of Jerusalem is more developed in these passages, attributing action, emotion or speech to the city. Lament language occurs within all these units and there is a strong association with descriptions of military destruction.

1:21-26 is a judgment oracle in which Jerusalem is described in feminine roles and addressed using 2fs forms. The boundaries of the unit are marked by the inclusio

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30 K. Pfisterer Darr (Isaiah’s Vision, 124–64) identifies a wider number of passages in which Jerusalem is personified than is used here. Some of her references involve only a single verse or part verse (e.g. 3:8 where Jerusalem is described as having stumbled), and although these are examples of personification they are fleeting and do not further the understanding of Isaiah’s use of personification.
The city is indicted (vv. 21-23) and a judgment which results in the cleansing of the city is announced (vv. 24-26). The unit opens with the cry אֲלָהִי, language which belongs to the funeral dirge. Further lament language occurs in the ḥevir of v. 24. Although it evokes lament forms, this language is subservient to the indictment and announcement of judgment.

V. 21 contrasts the past and present states of the city using 3fs forms. The once faithful city has become like a whore (לון), thus casting the city in a feminine role. Verses 22-23 switch to 2fs address to the city. Both the city and her residents are described as impure (v. 22) and corrupt (v. 23). The 2fs address continues into the announcement of judgment (vv. 24-26), the result of which will be the purification of the city and her return to righteousness and faithfulness (עָזֵר אָדָם קָרָיָה נַעֲמָנוּ).

Although the city is personified, there is movement between references to the city and her inhabitants. The initial metaphor of the city in a feminine role (whore) is interrupted when groups of citizens are referred to. Mention is made of murderers (v. 21), princes (v. 23), orphans and widows (v. 23), judges and counselors (v. 26). This movement between images of the city as a feminine entity and as a community of people occurs frequently where the city is personified, highlighting the metaphorical character of personified Zion. In discussing this movement, K. Pfisterer Darr suggests that in Isa 1:21-26 Jerusalem is portrayed as a victim not a perpetrator. She argues that the rapid movement from the accusation of Jerusalem as whore to the indictment of the leaders (v. 23) "foregrounds the prostitute as victim." It is, however, difficult to clearly separate the personified figure of the city and the inhabitants as Darr attempts to do. The personification functions as a representation of the community which is highlighted in the movement of the text. By separating these entities the metaphoric nature of the personified city as representative of the inhabitants is lost.

31Sweeney, Isaiah 1–39, 85; Wildberger, Isaiah 1–12, 62; Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 35.
The personified city has character attributes given to her, but not speech, action or emotion. She is described as having been faithful in the past (v. 21), and a return to this state is projected in the future, as is a return to righteousness (זְרֶם v. 26). She is cast in the role of a whore and her impurity is implied throughout, an impurity that will be reversed in the coming judgment.

Jerusalem is again personified in 3:25-4:1, a text attributed by many to the eighth century. Lament language is used within this announcement of judgment, describing the response of the city to military defeat (vv. 25-26). Again there is movement between the singular city and plural residents within the city.

The personified city is addressed using 2fs forms (vv. 25-26), and is one of the most developed in Isaiah. Her personification reaches its peak in v. 26, where the city is described as a ravaged, grieving woman (званת לאַירָא חוֹשֵׁב). As woman, the men and warriors belong to her (v. 25), suggestive of the role of mother. As a literal city Jerusalem has gates which are also personified as lamenting and mourning (אוֹמִי אָבְּלֵל v. 26).

The personification disappears in 4:1. The extent of Zion’s devastation is described through the shortage of eligible men, and the referent changes to the plural women of the city. Although the personification is undermined, the shift to the plural women brings this unit back into alignment with the literary context of 3:16-24.

The city is again personified in 22:1-14, signalled through 2fs address and through the attribution of actions to Jerusalem. This is a composite unit in which an indictment of the city in the wake of the events of 701 B.C.E. (vv. 1-4, 12-14) is combined with material concerning the day of Yahweh (vv. 5-11, to be considered in

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33 Verse 25 is generally identified as the beginning of a new unit, although it is closely tied to the indictment of the women of Jerusalem in 3:16-24 (Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 52–53; Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1–12 [trans. John Bowden; OTL; London: SCM, 1983], 81–84; Wildberger, Isaiah 1–12, 157–61).
chapter 3). Verses 1b-4, 12-14 are widely accepted as coming from the eighth century prophet.35

Following an introductory superscript (v. 1a), v. 1b addresses the personified city using 2fs forms. That the personified city represents the community is evident as an awkward reference is made to the populace (ךלָּלֵ֖ר all of you) in the midst of the singular reference. That the city is intended is reinforced in v. 2 (.SQLite הקְרִיה עַלְיוֹן tumultuous city, exultant town). Verses 1b-2a indict the city for her inappropriate celebration in the wake of the Assyrian retreat. Verses 2b-3 look back to the events of the siege describing, with 2fs suffixes, the military attack against the city and the fleeing of the community leaders and their subsequent capture. In v. 4 the prophet announces a lament over the people. Reference is made to the destruction (שׁד) of the city. This term is used elsewhere only in Jeremiah and Lamentations and can be read as a designation for the city. While it has been argued that the use of this term points to v. 4 being a sixth century redactional addition to the unit,36 it is more often argued that the verse is original.37 In this context the designation could denote either the people or the city. Verse 12 provides a contrast to vv. 1-3, describing the expected, appropriate behaviour (weeping, mourning, baldness and the putting on of sack cloth). That the city is the addressee is only implied through the continuity the unit. Verse 13 again describes the inappropriate behaviour, including a direct quote of the people in plural voice (אֵאוֹלָה לְשׁוֹת יַכְּמוּ נָמוּת Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die). The use of the plural voice conforms with the pattern seen in the Isaian texts considered. The communal nature of the city lies close to the surface in its personification. Verse 14 concludes the unit with a word of judgment, also in plural form.

This is a developed personification of Jerusalem in that action (vv. 1, 13) and speech (v. 2) are attributed to her, as is responsibility for her own actions and their consequences. As with other passages considered, there is associated use of both lament language and description of battle, and there is movement between the singular personification of the city and the plurality of the inhabitants that constitute the city.

2.2.1.1 Summary

The personification of Jerusalem in Isaiah 1-39 is not extensively developed. In those passages which use בַּת ציון (1:4-9; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22) the personification is minimal, and the term is closer to a geographical designation for the city. Only in 37:22 is speech or action attributed to בַּת ציון, however this material is probably a redactional addition to the book. The use of בַּת ציון occurs in association with reference to the inviolability of Zion, and is congruent with the Zion theology present in Isaiah 1-39.

The personification of the city is more developed in those texts which describe or address the city as a personified figure (1:22-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14). Attributes, action or speech are attributed to the city. These texts are all associated with indictment and/or judgment and all make use of lament language to reinforce this message. Reference to military action against the city is also present. Finally, in all these texts there is movement between reference to the singular city and the community, thus highlighting the metaphorical character of personified Jerusalem.

2.2.2 The Personification of Jerusalem in Micah

The בַּת ציון designation occurs four times in the book of Micah: 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13, with no other examples of personification occurring within the book. An eighth
century dating is doubtful for each of these texts; all possibly coming from the late
monarchic period onwards and thus close to Lamentations chronologically. While it
may be difficult to suggest that these texts pre-date Lamentations, they may give some
indication of the use of בָּבֶרֶךְ in the intellectual environment of the sixth century.

The first reference (1:13) occurs within a lament which announces future
destruction over various Judean towns (vv. 8-16). Micah 1 belongs to that section of
the book most frequently attributed to the eighth century prophet, although it has
been argued that v. 13b, which contains the בָּבֶרֶךְ reference, may be a sixth century
insertion into the text based on differences in style and content. Verses 10-16
contain a list of towns whose names are used in word plays which relate potential
disaster for the towns. The בָּבֶרֶךְ designation occurs midway through the series of
word plays, interrupting the literary flow. There is no word play on the name of
Jerusalem, no reference to lament, and the text changes from shorter statements to a
"woody prose style." A full appreciation of this text is, however, difficult due to the
seeming lack of coherence in the passage and the poor state of the text.

It is significant that reference to בָּבֶרֶךְ occurs in the context of lament and

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38 These four texts are the only ones considered from Micah. While it is possible that 7:1-7, 8-10
also personify the city as female, it is debated whether or not Jerusalem is the speaker in this
material. Moreover, these texts are most frequently dated in the post-exilic period (Leslie C. Allen,
The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 393; James L.
Mays, Micah [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 150, 158; Hans Walter Wolff, Micah: A
Commentary [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990], 204, 218; Ehud Ben Zvi, Micah [FOTL; Grand

39 Allen, Micah, 277; Mays, Micah, 48; Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 48–49; Ben Zvi, Micah, 38.
The boundaries of the unit are either vv. 8-16 (Ben Zvi, Micah, 23; Mays, Micah, 50; Marvin A.
Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets [vol. 1 of The Twelve Prophets; Berit Olam; Collegeville:
Liturgical Press, 2000], 344, 348), or vv. 10-16 with vv. 8-9 as a transition from vv. 1-7 (Francis I.
Anderson and David Noel Freedman, Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and
Commentary [Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 182; Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 48;

40 See R. Mason (Rex Mason, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah [OTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991], 27–42) for
an overview of the issues surrounding the dating of Micah.

41 Mays, Micah, 58; Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 50; William McKane, Micah: Introduction and
Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 47.

42 Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 50.

43 See Wolff (Micah, 41–45) and McKane (Micah, 38–48) for detailed discussions of the textual
issues.
military action. Verse 8 announces the speaker’s intention to lament using a variety of images: ספים (wail/lament x2), ילל (howl), אבל (mourning), going barefoot and naked (חציו וחרום). Verses 10-11 also use a variety of words for lament in relation to the towns listed, and in v. 16 an unspecified feminine figure is called to lament. Who this verse refers to is unclear, although in the final text it could be בָּתְּךָ of v. 13.44

Although personification does occur in 1:13b, the figure is not strongly developed, with no emotion or action portrayed of בָּתְּךָ בְּצְיוֹן.45 If, however, v. 16 is taken as referring to בָּתְּךָ בְּצְיוֹן, then the potential for emotion is portrayed with the city called to represent herself as a grieving mother figure. The personification occurs in association with reference to imminent military attack, a pattern seen in the Isaiah texts considered.

Three uses of בָּתְּךָ בְּצְיוֹן occur within Micah 4 (vv. 8, 10, 13), belonging to three sub-units of a section which runs from vv. 6-14 (vv. 6-8, 9-10, 11-13, 14).46 Linking each of these units is the theme of Yahweh’s future salvation, a salvation which speaks into a current situation of distress. Chapters 4-5 have been considered secondary to the original Mican material, based largely on their hopeful content which stands in contrast to the pessimism of chapters 1-3. The material in these verses is seen to date to the late monarchical period at the earliest, particularly given the reference to Babylon (v. 10), and the implication of (imminent) exile and dispersion (vv. 6-7, 10).47

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44 Mays (Micah, 52) does argue that v. 16 is a secondary insertion. Against this, however, v. 16 contains specific references to lamenting, and uses animal imagery which forms an inclusio with v. 8 (Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 50).
45 The meaning of the verse, where Lachish is declared to be the beginning of sin of בָּתְּךָ בְּצְיוֹן is unclear. Wolff (Micah, 62) suggests this may be an indictment on reliance on military might, while Anderson and Freedman (Micah, 230) argue it is a reference to apostasy.
46 The units identified in Micah 4 vary between commentators. Anderson and Freedman (Micah, 427–40), McKane (Micah, 127) and Allen (Micah, 328) propose vv. 6-8, 9-10, 11-13, 14. cf. Ben Zvi (Micah, 88), who sees v. 8 as a transitional verse between vv. 6-7, 9-14 and Wolff (Micah, 126) and Mays (Micah, 111) who both extend the unit into chapter 5 (5:5 and 5:3 respectively).
The reference in 4:8 is more a geographical designation for the city than a true personification. No action or emotion is attributed to the city. נַחַל לֹא זְכָר occurs in the phrase נַחַל בּוֹ נֶס (hill/ophel of daughter Zion) which by the time of Chronicles and Nehemiah, referred to the region of Jerusalem between the temple and the old city of David. 48 Two other designations occur within the verse; מֵהֶבָר דָּוִד וּבְכֶרֶשֶׁלָם. 49 The verse, then, contains three designations for the city, used in a vocative sense. נַחַל זְכָר is best understood as a reference to Jerusalem in its geographical (and perhaps political) sense.

The personification of the city in 4:10 is more developed with action and emotion attributed to the city. Verses 9-10 describe a situation of distress into which a promise of salvation is given. Based on the references to exile and to Babylon, the unit is dated around the fall of Jerusalem. 50

נַחַל בּוֹ נֶס is addressed with both rhetorical questions and imperatives. The designation is not used until v. 10, however the feminine singular verbs and pronouns of v. 9 and the continuity of imagery in reference to the pains of childbirth support נַחַל נֶס as referent throughout. Verses 9-10a describe the apparent distress of the city. In v. 9 נַחַל בּוֹ נֶס is said to shout (חרו יָד) and be seized with pangs/anguish like a woman in labor (כְּכַחַלָם הֲלֹא צַלְעֹד), and in v. 10 is commanded to writhe and groan like a woman in labor (וּשְׁלוֹדוּ נָגִית נַחַל בּוֹ נֶס צַלְעֹד). 51 This then represents a developed personification of the city. Although lament language is not present, it is significant that the personification again occurs in the context of distress and imminent defeat of

48 Mays, Micah, 102; Anderson and Freedman, Micah, 439; Hillers, Micah, 56; Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 125.
49 While "daughter Jerusalem" is clearly a reference to the city, the meaning of נַחַל לֹא זְכָר is less obvious. It is used as a place name in Gen. 35:21, and literally means "citadel/tower of the flock". Mays (Micah, 102) and Sweeney (The Twelve Prophets, 383) translate as a place name, while Hillers (Micah, 56), Wolff (Micah, 125) and Anderson and Freedman (Micah, 427) translate using the more descriptive "tower of the flock."
50 Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 137–39; Allen, Micah, 245; Mays, Micah, 104.
51 This imagery is close to Jer 4:31 and 6:24. The meaning of נַחַל is uncertain but the literary context suggests it is connected with childbirth. Wolff (Micah, 129) translates it as "come forth" and Mays (Micah, 104) as "howl."
The reference in 4:8 is more a geographical designation for the city than a true personification. No action or emotion is attributed to the city. מבית ציון (hill/ophel of daughter Zion) which by the time of Chronicles and Nehemiah, referred to the region of Jerusalem between the temple and the old city of David. The verse, then, contains three designations for the city, used in a vocative sense. מבית ציון is best understood as a reference to Jerusalem in its geographical (and perhaps political) sense.

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the city (v. 10b) which is most naturally linked to the context of the exile. The unit closes with a promise of rescue following exile.

There is some consternation as to the use of the בַּלַּת ציון designation within this unit. Wolff argues that the reference to daughter Zion is not to the personified city herself, but to one of the residents of the city, although he does not explain the reasons for this observation. Anderson and Freedman state that "there is a seeming incongruity if the city of v. 10b is Jerusalem herself. How can Daughter-Zion go out from herself?" They resolve this apparent incongruity by identifying that "when the prophets address Daughter-Zion, they are talking to the people as residents of the city." This is however an unnecessarily pedantic distinction. The power of the metaphor is that it points into itself. Daughter Zion is the city, but she is also its inhabitants, and as such she can portray the agony of the inhabitants and still be the grieving mother of those inhabitants.

The final use of בַּלַּת ציון occurs in 4:13 and is again a developed personification. Verses 11-13 parallel vv. 9-10 in that the title is not used in the opening verse of the unit, but the 2fs reference in v. 11 and 3fs references in vv. 11-12 together with the designation of v. 13 support Jerusalem as referent throughout. Again, a word of salvation is given into a situation of distress, although בַּלַּת ציון is now transformed into the instrument of her own salvation (v. 13). Reference to lament is absent but military action is implied.

Verse 11 describes the situation of distress. The assembled nations address Zion as woman, announcing their intent to profane (חֲגוּרָה) and shame her (כָּעִין), possibly a reference to the destruction of the temple, although the rape of the woman is also implied. Verse 12 refers to the ignorance of the nations as to Yahweh’s

54 *ibid*.
plan: Yahweh has gathered the nations “as sheaves to the threshing floor.” The announcement of salvation occurs in v. 13. Two imperatives are given to thus assigning potential action to her (ךָרַמְיָר וַרְתֵּשׁ arise and thresh). The imperatives are a call to battle, and Zion called to act as Yahweh’s agent against the enemy. The imagery changes in v. 10b, with Zion described as an ox trampling the peoples (ךָרָמְיָר). Zion is thus transformed from victim to victor. This is an unusual association for בַּזָּר, who is, in the texts considered here, portrayed as a grieving victim. The triumphant imagery may suggest that this text belongs to a later tradition, possibly late exilic or post-exilic.56

2.2.2.1 Summary

The personification of Jerusalem through the use of the designation is, on the whole, more developed in Micah than it was in Isaiah 1-39. The term is used four times. The references in 4:10 and 13 are developed with the city having action and emotion attributed to her. She is cast in different roles; as a mother in 4:10 and a rape victim in vv. 11-13. If 1:16 is taken as a reference to בַּזָּר, she is also cast as a lamenting woman. The use in 4:8 is a geographical designation of the city.

The association of the personification with lament language is not as strong in Micah, although the term is associated with situations of distress. Reference to military action is also present. Reference to the communal nature of the city is present in 4:9-10.

That בַּזָּר becomes a more developed figure in Micah suggests a development of the device over the references seen in Isaiah. It is likely however, that the references in Micah are chronologically later than the Isaiah references, possibly from the late seventh or sixth century. As will be seen, the features of the personification

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56 This is in line with the transformation of בַּזָּר present in Second Isaiah. For a detailed discussion see Tull (Remember the Former Things).
noted in Micah coincide with the use in Jeremiah.

2.2.3 The Personification of Jerusalem in Jeremiah

The personification of Jerusalem as female occurs more frequently in Jeremiah and with a greater degree of development than in Isaiah 1-39 and Micah. The motif occurs primarily in chapters 4-10 (4:11-18, 19-21, 29-31; 5:7-11; 6:1-8, 22-30; 8:10-12, 18-23; 10:17-21) but also in 13:20-27; 14:1-6, 17-18; 15:5-9 and 30:12-17. The identification is marked through the הב נשים designation, through the related הב צעירים designation, and through address or description which portrays the city in explicitly feminine roles. The personification occurs predominantly in judgment texts, and is associated with reference to military invasion. Lament language or form frequently co-occurs with the personification. In many cases there is movement between reference to the singular city and the plural community of the city, pointing to the metaphoric function of the personification.

The issue of the relative date of Jeremiah and Lamentations is complex, more so given the redactional complexity of Jeremiah. Unless specified, it will be assumed that the texts are contemporaneous with Lamentations and reflective of the rhetorical environment in the period surrounding the fall of Jerusalem.

The personification of Jerusalem is marked through the הב נשים designation three times in Jeremiah (4:31; 6:2, 23). All three uses occur within judgment oracles which warn of or announce imminent military attack and refer to the fear that attack engenders. Each text contains either a cry of or call to lament.

The first occurrence is in 4:29-31 (v. 31), an announcement of judgment in which the city is depicted in anguish before the onslaught of her enemies.57 The

57 These three verses may not have been originally connected (Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah [OTL; London: SCM, 1986], 172), but taken together clearly concern judgment, including indictment and warning (Douglas R. Jones, Jeremiah [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 29; Walter Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down: Jeremiah 1–25 [ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 58)
personification is developed in that action, speech and emotion are attributed to Zion. Zion is addressed (2fs) as a woman preparing for her (illicit) lovers (v. 30), is described in anguish before her foes (v. 31) and as crying out in anguish (v. 31). Each verse is in a different voice with v. 29 a third person description of panic before an attacker, v. 30 a second person address and v. 31 a first person description. Despite the differences in voice, vv. 29-31 form a distinct unit, with the reference to sound (ךְִעוּר) in vv. 29 and 31 forming an inclusio.58

Verse 29 opens with a description of an invading army and a report of the response of the people within the targeted cities. It is the nation which is being invaded as seen by the reference to כל האערים (every town). From this broad reference, v. 30 narrows down to a specific entity, an unnamed female figure. The depiction of the invading forces in v. 29 provides the context for what follows in v. 30 which opens with direct address (תִּאֲחָי, and you) and a vocative (שרוד) desolate one59, followed by a series of rhetorical questions indicting the unnamed female figure. The woman’s behaviour (dressing in finery, applying make-up) is portrayed as inappropriate and strange against the backdrop of invasion.60 Zion is courting as lovers (עָבוֹד) those who are attacking her and seek to take her life.61 The identity of the figure is not revealed until v. 31 where, in 1ps form, the speaker describes the anguish of הבַּת צִוְיָה. She cries out like a woman in labor (מלחילה) bringing forth her first child (מַמְחֹלְרָא).62 In an ironic twist, desolation and death become a reality for הבַּת צִוְיָה,

58 Angela Bauer, Gender in the Book of Jeremiah: A Feminist Literary Reading (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 67.
59 A lack of grammatical cohesion occurs here. The pronoun is feminine singular, as are the remaining verbs in the verse, however the vocative is a masculine singular participle.
60 This verse is frequently associated with Jer 2-3 which describe the nation’s apostasy in terms of harlotry (2:20, 25, 33; 3:1-5) (Bauer, Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 69; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 58; William L. Holladay, Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1–25 [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], 168; William McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV [vol. 1 of A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986], 112; Peter C. Craigie et al., Jeremiah I–25 [WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1991], 83; Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 172). It is more likely that this is a reference to political not religious infidelity.
61 Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 84.
62 A number of commentators fail to recognize that the reference here is to the intensity and quality
who is pictured gasping for breath and stretching out her hands before the very lovers she courted. The unit closes with a cry of lament (וֹאֲנִי קוֹלִי הַרְפָּךְ לְפַלְעוֹת). Woe is me! I am fainting before killers).

The second בַּת צִוְיָּֽן use occurs in the judgment oracle 6:1-8. The personification is less well developed as no emotion or speech is attributed to the city, and only one action. Lament language occurs (v. 4), as does the threat of imminent military attack against the city.

The unit opens with a series of imperatives commanding the children of Benjamin to flee and to raise signals in the face of impending attack, followed by a warning about destruction to be wrought by the foe from the north. The remainder of the oracle has this context of looming destruction as its setting. The designation occurs in v. 2, however its significance is difficult to determine due to textual issues within the verse. What is important for current purposes is that despite the apparent beauty of the city, war is to be waged against her. Verse 3 describes the massing of shepherds and their flocks around the city. While the scene may be reminiscent of an idyllic pastoral scene, it is in fact the opposite. In the context of the unit the shepherds represent enemy forces moving in to lay siege (or attack) on the city. Verses 4-8 make it clear that it is military threat which is intended through the reported dialogue of the invading army and Yahweh. Verse 4 opens with an imperative (קֹרֶאָה עֵלֶיה יְהוֹ הַמַּלְאָךְ), which leads to a report of a

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of the cry, and is in fact a simile. Bauer (Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 71) argues that the cry of pain described is a cry for the sake of life, and that death has been introduced into the struggle for new life. Jones (Jeremiah, 118) suggests that the use of birth imagery introduces the possibility of hope and new life emerging out of the present situation, a hope that is "partly canceled out by the last line" (i.e. "Woe is me"). This fails to take into account the function of the simile. The cry heard is not the cry of a woman in labor, but is a cry that is likened in intensity to a woman in labor.

63This unit is widely accepted as a judgment oracle (John Bright, Jeremiah [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965], 43–44; John A. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 253; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 202; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 99; Jones, Jeremiah, 131).

64See McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 140–41) and Holladay (Jeremiah 1–25, 202–03) for detailed discussion.

65The verb used here is literally "sanctify" and is often associated with the context of Holy War, here inverted as the target is Jerusalem herself (Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 192; Jones,
decision by the enemy to attack the city at noon. Verse 4a is reported speech of the
enemy and further speech is reported in v. 4b, however the speaker is unclear; it may
be speech of the enemy,\textsuperscript{66} or of the residents of the city.\textsuperscript{67} Verse 4b opens with a
lament cry (לֹא לוֹא Woe to us), with the speakers lamenting the approach of night.
Given that v. 4a is speech of the enemy, and that v. 5 is a report of the decision to
attack at night, there is some support for this being the voice of the enemy. Within vv.
6-8 the voice of Yahweh is heard. In v. 6 Yahweh commands the army to lay siege on
the city which is named specifically as Jerusalem. Indictment of the city occurs in v.
6b-7, describing the oppression and wickedness within the city. Verse 7 contains the
only action attributed to the city, who is described as "keeping fresh her wickedness."
The unit closes with direct speech by Yahweh to the city, urging her to take heed or
face rejection and desolation at the hand of Yahweh.

The personification of the city in this unit is minimal. Limited action is
attributed to Jerusalem, along with the negative qualities of oppression and
wickedness. Throughout the unit direct references to Jerusalem and "the city" are
made (vv. 1, 6, 8) which point to her physical/geographical entity and de-emphasize
her personified nature. Lament language is used, not of the city itself, but in the voice
of the enemy. As with 4:29-31, the בַּּעַת צַיִּיר designation is used in conjunction with
imminent military threat.

The final use of בַּּעַת צַיִּיר occurs within the unit 6:22-26, a judgment oracle which
warns of imminent military threat against the city.\textsuperscript{68} The personification is developed,
although movement between the city and the community does occur, again

\textsuperscript{66} Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 66; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 136; Craigie et al.,
Jeremiah I-25, 98.

\textsuperscript{67} Holladay, Jeremiah I-25, 206; Jones, Jeremiah, 133.

\textsuperscript{68} Although sometimes extended through to v. 30 (Craigie et al., Jeremiah I-25, 107), the unit is
widely accepted as a judgment oracle (Bright, Jeremiah, 46; Thompson, The Book of
Jeremiah, 253; Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 202; Holladay, Jeremiah I-25, 220; Jones,
Jeremiah, 138; Craigie et al., Jeremiah I-25, 109).
emphasizing the metaphoric nature of the personification. As person, the city is called to lament in light of her imminent destruction.

Three voices are heard within the unit: Yahweh (vv. 22-23), the people (v. 24) and Jeremiah (v. 26).\(^6^9\) The speaker in v. 25 is ambiguous. Either Yahweh or Jeremiah gives the city/people instructions to remain in the city to avoid the enemy.\(^7^0\) Verse 26, in the voice of Jeremiah, issues further commands, which lends support to v. 25 being in the voice of the prophet.

Verses 22-23 describe the coming army ( foe from the north), warning of their imminent attack against the city. The target is the who is addressed at the end of v. 23. Verse 24 gives the response of the people to the news of the impending attack. The verbs and pronouns are plural, indicating this as a communal voice. That the people speak when the personified city has been addressed highlights the underlying corporate nature of the personified city. Despite the plural voice, the personified city continues as the subject. The verse uses language reminiscent of 4:31, reporting the anguish and fear of the city.\(^7^1\) Following the commands of v. 25, the city (addressed as and in 2fs forms) is called to lament (v. 26), using conventional lament language (sack cloth and ashes). The depth of the lament is intensified in the command to mourn as for an only son and make "bitter lamentation" (). The unit closes with further reference to imminent destruction.

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\(^6^9\) Following on from the formulaic introduction ( ), Yahweh can be identified as speaker in vv. 22-23 (Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 264; Holladay, Jeremiah I–25, 203–04; Jones, Jeremiah, 138). Against this view McKane (Jeremiah I–XXV, 151–52) argues that as Jeremiah is the speaker in v. 26 he must also be the speaker in vv. 22-23. That Jeremiah is the speaker in v. 26 need not be an obstacle to Yahweh as speaker in vv. 22-23 as voice can and does change within poetic literature.

\(^7^0\) The ambiguity of reference between people and city is highlighted in v. 25. The Kethib uses 2fs forms, while the Qere uses plural forms.

\(^7^1\) Both 4:31 and 6:24 refer to anguish (דרון) and pain/cry of childbirth (ל.Dimension in 6:24; ד.With in 4:31). In both references a simile which likens the pain/cry of the people to that of a woman in childbirth is used. D. Hillers ("A Convention in Hebrew Literature: The Reaction to Bad News," ZAW 77 [1965]: 81–82) argues that the reference to a woman in labor is a conventional image used to described the reaction to bad news (also Jer 50:43; 49:28; Isa 13:7-8).

\(^7^2\) There is some debate as to whether can be understood as a designation for the city. See discussion below.
Each of the references to תֵּבֹת אֱלֹהִים in Jeremiah (4:31; 6:2, 23) then, occur in the context of judgment in which imminent military threat is announced. All three passages show some development of the personification, and there is an association between the personification and the language of lament.

A second group of texts in Jeremiah uses a תֵּבֹת designation, this time however in the title תֵּבֹת אֱלֹהִים (4:11; 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21, 23; 9:6; 14:17). The term is used in Lamentations (2:11; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10), and occurs elsewhere only in Isa 22:4. Within Jeremiah studies, this term is most often considered a designation for the people, as opposed to the city. A case can be made, in at least some texts, however, for interpreting תֵּבֹת אֱלֹהִים as a designation for Jerusalem, which functions in a similar way to the תֵּבֹת designation. Where it is used of the city however, the tension between the city as individual and the city as a metaphorical representation of the people is heightened.

The case for reading תֵּבֹת אֱלֹהִים as a personification of the city is made by Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald argues that the designation can be translated as “daughter/capital of my people,” and is a continuation of the term’s usage in the more readily recognizable תֵּבֹת plus city name usage. There are, he suggests, five instances in which the city is clearly intended (Jer 6:26; Lam 2:11; 4:3, 6, 10), eight where the referent is ambiguous (i.e. may refer to either the people or the city: Isa 22:4; Jer 4:11; 8:19, 21, 22, 23; 14:17; Lam 3:48), and two examples which are textually problematic (Jer 8:11; 9:6). With regard to the ambiguous references, Fitzgerald notes that in each case reference to Jerusalem occurs within the immediate context. He states:

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73 Where the meaning of תֵּבֹת אֱלֹהִים is discussed in commentaries on Jeremiah, it is most often understood as a term of endearment for the people (Bright, Jeremiah, 32; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 224, note 10; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 156; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 53). Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 162) argues that the term is an appositional genitive which addresses the people as personified Jerusalem. While he does not labor this point in his exegesis, he is alone in identifying this designation as a representation of the city.

74 Fitzgerald, “BTWLT and BT,” 172–77. That the city is intended by this designation is assumed by Dobbs-Allsopp (“The Syntagma Of Bat,” 454, note 13) and mentioned in passing by Follis (“Holy City as Daughter,” 183, note 5).

75 The two textually problematic examples cited by Fitzgerald (Jer 8:11; 9:6) do not have reference
The difficulty, of course, is created by the fact that the interpretations (i.e. daughter my people vs. daughter/capital of my people) are semantically very close. The notion of the personification of the city includes the buildings, walls, people, activities of the city, and thus in symbolic language can be practically equivalent of Jerusalemites. Since Jerusalem is the capital of Judah, “the daughter/capital of my people” can ultimately serve as a symbol for Judeans too.76

On the basis of Fitzgerald’s argument, there is merit in considering the references in Jeremiah as possible references to personified Jerusalem. Within each text attention will be paid to syntactic or semantic clues which may point to being a representation of the city, or suggest an ambiguity between the people and the city as referent. It will be seen that where the personification is indicated a pattern similar to that seen with טֵב וּבֵרֵב emerges. The references occur primarily in judgment material and there is an association with the language of lament. Often it is the speaker who laments over the personified city who is threatened with the destruction associated with military invasion. The city, when personified as טֵב וּבֵרֵב, is not a well developed figure. In many cases the voice of the people is also heard in relation to the figure, suggesting that even when טֵב וּבֵרֵב is a personified reference to Jerusalem, the close association of city and populace remains in the foreground.

טֵב וּבֵרֵב is first encountered in the unit 4:11-18 (v. 11), an oracle announcing military action against the city as judgment from Yahweh.77 The identity of טֵב וּבֵרֵב is ambiguous in vv. 11-12, but in the wider context of vv. 11-18 can be seen as Jerusalem, particularly given the feminine singular forms used throughout vv. 14-18. There is slippage between reference to the city and to the population of the city. The personification is developed in that actions and attributes are given of Jerusalem.

76Fitzgerald, “BTWL and BT,” 174. Fitzgerald also argues on a semantic/syntactic basis that טֵב וּבֵרֵב is best understood as a reference to the city. He notes that in using טֵב וּבֵרֵב together a mismatch occurs. In Hebrew, cities are feminine, as of course are daughters. The noun טֵב however is masculine, as are the proper names of peoples. Fitzgerald states “if טֵב וּבֵרֵב is ever a title for וּבֵרֵב, it must be admitted that the phrase is a bold one that runs contrary to the psychology of the Hebrew language.”
77Bright, Jeremiah, 29; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 147; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 53; Craige et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 76; Jones, Jeremiah, 112.
Verse 11 opens with a report of speech to "this people" (לעם הזה) and to Jerusalem. This is followed by a metaphoric reference to a strong wind of judgment that will come against הבת עמי. The identity of הבת עמי is initially ambiguous. The opening address refers to both the people and to Jerusalem allowing either, or both, to be the referent. Verse 12 concludes with a plural pronoun (אזרחים), a clear reference to the people who are the target of Yahweh's judgment. If the city is the referent, her communal nature is emphasized in the pronouncement of judgment against the people.

Verses 14-18 more clearly identify the city as referent. Verse 13 describes the speed and ferocity of the approaching invader, to which the people respond with a cry of lament (איה לנהיכר שדנן). Verse 14 contains a call to repentance addressed specifically to Jerusalem using 2fs forms. The call to repentance also functions as an indictment of the city, accusing her of wickedness. Verses 15-17 contain cries warning of approaching enemies. That the city is being addressed is evident given the reference to Jerusalem in v. 16, and the 3fs forms in v. 17. The cause of the action against the city is her rebellion against Yahweh. This is reinforced in v. 18 which addresses the city using 2fs forms.

Within its literary context, הבת עמי (v. 11) can be read as a reference to the personified city. The city is clearly intended in vv. 14-18, and Jerusalem is mentioned in v. 11 (and 16). There is some slippage between the city and the people throughout the passage and it is only the plural people, not the city herself, who lament. Both attributes and actions (vv. 14-18) are implied of the city. She can potentially repent and in the past she is described as having acted against Yahweh. As such, this is a developed personification of Jerusalem.

The second designation occurs in 6:22-26 (v. 26) and is clearly a personification of the city. This text has already been considered in relation to the הבת זייר designation (v. 23) and is the only occurrence in Jeremiah where both
designations occur within the one unit. 

occurs in v. 26 which contains a series of feminine singular imperatives calling the city to lament. The figure is called to put on sack cloth (חורי עמי), roll in ashes (חורי עמי) and make mourning as for an only son (אומל וודי עמי). Although 

is addressed, the concluding reason for the lament includes a lcp suffix (עליו). The prophetic voice uses the plural suffix emphasizing his role as part of the community.

The designation occurs again in 8:11 (the wound of the daughter of my people), but it is not possible to argue that this is a reference to the city. The material in 8:10b-12 is a close variant of 6:13-15 and in that context the designation is not used, referring only to (6:14). It would appear that has been imported into the text on the basis of its use (four times) in 8:18-23. Within 8:10-12 there is no indication that the city is being personified as no feminine singular references are made, nor is there reference to Jerusalem in the near context.

Four references to 

occur in the lament of 8:18-23 (MT v. 19, 21, 22, 23). A clear cut case cannot be made for representing the city. Given that the unit is a lament the link between the use of the designation and lament language is maintained, however there is no reference to military destruction. The wider literary context is that of judgment and indictment.

A decision as to the identity of is influenced by the identification of the speaker within the unit, an issue around which there is little agreement. Carroll argues that the city is the speaker throughout, however the speaker is more commonly identified as either Yahweh and/or Jeremiah, either of which are possible.}

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78 It is widely accepted that this is a lament (Bright, Jeremiah, 65; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 304; Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 235; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 290; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 138; Jones, Jeremiah, 161).
80 Ernest W. Nicholson, The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1–25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 88–89; McKane, Jeremiah I–XXV, 195; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 304. Holladay (Jeremiah 1–25, 288) argues that it is possible to delineate the voices of Yahweh, Jeremiah and the people: Yahweh in vv. 16-17 (which Holladay includes as part of the unit), 19c and 22a; Jeremiah in vv. 18-19a, 21, 22b-23; the people in vv. 19b, 20. Jones (Jeremiah, 162) also allows for more than one voice, with Jeremiah in vv. 18, 21 and 23 and
The unit opens with a cry of lament, the first person speaker reporting grief and heart sickness. The cause of the lament is identified in v. 19: the speaker hears the cry of the people across the land (v. 19a). In v. 19b the speech of יָהウェָה across the land is quoted. The quote contains two questions which refer to Jerusalem/Zion in the third person, suggesting that it is the people speaking, and thus that יָהウェָה is a reference to the people. Verse 19c is clearly the voice of Yahweh and makes mention of the people using 3cpl forms.\(^8\) Verse 20 shifts back to the voice of the people, who lament that they have not been saved (הָאָבָרֵב לְאָבָר נַחְשָׁנָה), with vv. 22-23 returning to 1ps lament. The two uses of יָהウェָה in vv. 22-23 could equally refer to the people or the city, particularly given the closing phrase אָבָרֵב לְאָבָר נַחְשָׁנָה (the slain of daughter my people) which could refer to the slain amongst the people or to the slain of the city. It seems likely, however, that it is the people who are the referent of the יָהウェָה designation, given the plural voice quoted in vv. 19 and 20, and the third person reference to the city. While the references to יָהウェָה in vv. 22-23 could refer to the city, in the context of the unit maintaining the people as the referent gives the smoother reading. Although the unit shares the feature of close association between the יָהウェָה designation and lament, this is not an example of the personification of the city.

וּבָשָׂא יָהウェָה also occurs in 9:6, however this example is clearly a reference to the people and no mention of Jerusalem is made in the near context.

The final occurrence to יָהウェָה is in 14:17, again in association with lament language which announces inevitable judgment and destruction, presumably through military invasion. There is some support for this being a reference to the personified city, although, as has been seen elsewhere, the language is ambiguous enough for one not to be able to draw firm conclusions.

\(^8\)Verse 19c is often identified as a secondary Dtr addition to the text (Carroll, \textit{Jeremiah [1986]}, 235; McKane, \textit{Jeremiah I-XXV}, 193; Bright, \textit{Jeremiah}, 62).
Jeremiah 14:17-18 contains a lament in 1ps voice.\textsuperscript{82} Verse 17 opens with an imperative from Yahweh, directing the prophet to articulate a lament to the people (אֶל תֵּרָה). The lament is for בּוֹרֶת חַבָּלָה (virgin daughter my people), the only time בּוֹרֶת is appended to the designation in Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{83} Carroll argues that the imagery is intended to portray the city as ravished by disaster,\textsuperscript{84} however evidence for this being a reference to the city is again ambiguous. One feminine singular verb is used (שָׂרָה), suggesting that the city may be in focus. Verse 18 describes the extent of the destruction and death both within the city and in the surrounding countryside. The fact that the city is mentioned lends some support to the designation referring to the city. If this is a reference to the city, the personification is not developed.

A case can be made for identifying בּוֹרֶת חַבָּלָה as a designation for the city in 4:11; 6:26 and 14:17. The references in 8:22 and 23 could also refer to the city, although the wider literary context suggests that the people are the most likely referent. The references in 8:11, 19, 21 and 9:6 are more clearly references to the people. Reference to בּוֹרֶת חַבָּלָה occurs in the context of judgment over the people/city and often concerns imminent military destruction. Lament language and/or form occurs in association with this designation, functioning to drive home the severity of the coming judgment. The personification, where it occurs, is not well developed and there is a close link between the city and the people. As a designation בּוֹרֶת חַבָּלָה points to the community within the city in such a way that even where the city can be identified as the referent, the community lies close to the surface of the metaphor.

\textsuperscript{82} There is little consensus as to the boundaries of the unit which incorporates 14:17. The material in 14:1-15:4 (or 9) appears to form an editorial unit, although material within this block may well have come from divergent sources. Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 315–16) is alone in considering vv. 17-18 separately. Other divisions include 14:11-18 (Bright, Jeremiah, 98–99), 14:17-22 (Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 132; Jones, Jeremiah, 221), 14:17-15:4 (McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 328–29; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 384) 14:17-15:9 (Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–23, 195) and 14:1-15:4 (Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 419–21).

\textsuperscript{83} בּוֹרֶת is omitted by some commentators on the basis of its absence in LXX (Bright, Jeremiah, 99; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 239; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 420).

\textsuperscript{84} Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 316.
A number of texts in Jeremiah personify Jerusalem as female without using specific הנב designations. In these passages feminine singular forms are used in a context in which the city is the intended focus (5:7-11; 13:20-27; 14:1-6; 15:5-9; 30:12-17), or the city herself speaks (4:19-21; 10:17-21). With the exception of 5:7-11, all the passages have some lament language within them (4:19-21; 10:19-21; 13:20-27; 14:1-6; 15:5-9; 30:12-17), generally in relation to imminent military destruction as Yahweh’s judgment. The personification functions to drive home the extent and the inevitability of the judgment.

Jeremiah 4:19-21 is a lps lament which describes anguish and panic (v. 19) in the face of military onslaught (v. 20), concluding with a “how long” question typical of the lament form. In its literary context the lament anticipates imminent and catastrophic destruction.

The speaker in this passage is not specified, but can be read as Jerusalem. The identification of Jerusalem is suggested by the reference to “my tents” (ארתי) and “my curtains” (ירשלתי) v. 20, terms which are paralleled in 10:19-21 in which personified Jerusalem refers also to “my children.” In addition, the opening cry of v. 19 is more appropriate to a female speaker (מ DISCLAIMS אוחלו my belly, my belly, I writhe in labor). The imagery of the city in labor as an expression of anguish also occurs in

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85 There are passages in Jeremiah which use feminine singular forms but do not have the city as their referent and as such are not relevant for current purposes. For example, two passages in chapter 2 (vv. 17-25 and 2:33-3:5) both use feminine singulars but in their literary context imply that the nation is the subject due to multiple references to Israel (vv. 4, 14, 26, 31).
86 Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 167.
87 So also Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 167), O’Connor (“The Tears of God and Divine Character in Jeremiah 2–9,” in Troubling Jeremiah [ed. P. R. Diamond et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 393) and B. Kaiser (“Poet as ‘Female Impersonator’: The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering,” JR 67 [1987]: 167). Bauer (Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 64) and Polk (The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self [JSOTSup; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984], 69) both argue that the voice of the poet/prophet merges with the voice of the city, so that it is the city who is heard. Other commentators identify Jeremiah as speaker in this text, although they often acknowledge that the prophet speaks as a representative of the people (Bright, Jeremiah, 34; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 227; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 141–43; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 78; Jones, Jeremiah, 116).
88 As translated by Bauer (Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 64).
4:31 and 6:24. 4:19-21 is a developed personification of the city. Jerusalem speaks and describes both her emotions and actions.

A personification of Jerusalem as female also occurs in 5:7-11. Although they form separate units, vv. 7-11 are linked back to 5:1-6, with the reference to Jerusalem in v. 1 providing the context for understanding vv. 7-11.\(^8^9\) Verses 1-6 describe a quest to find a righteous person in Jerusalem that the city might be pardoned, while vv. 7-11 announce to Jerusalem that no pardon is possible due to the sinfulness within her.

This unit is a judgment oracle and contains no lament language, although imminent military destruction is implied (v. 10).\(^9^0\) The personification of Jerusalem is minimal. Verse 7 addresses Zion as mother using 2fs forms. Reference is made to "your children" (казалось), a reference appropriate in an address to the city.\(^9^1\) Beyond this identification as mother no action, emotion or speech is attributed to the city. Verses 7-8 indict the children of Jerusalem with v. 9 announcing judgment against them (v. 9a) and against the nation (v. 9b). Verse 10 contains imperatives to an unknown 2mpl group, directing them to carry out the judgment, while v. 11 gives further reasons for the judgment.

A more developed personification of Jerusalem as female occurs in 10:17-21.\(^9^2\) Within this unit Jerusalem cries out a lament (vv. 19-20) in response to a judgment oracle which announces military destruction (vv. 17-18). The speaker in vv. 19-20 has possessions, children and is able to voice her own grief.

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\(^8^9\) So Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 178) and McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 117). Both units use יִזְכּוּ (pardon vv. 1 and 7) and יָשֵׁב (swear vv. 2 and 7).

\(^9^0\) Holladay, Jeremiah I–25, 176, 184.

\(^9^1\) Against Bright (Jeremiah, 36) who argues that the oracle is addressed to the people, and against Thompson (The Book of Jeremiah, 236) who argues that the leaders are being addressed.

\(^9^2\) 10:17-20 contains frequent changes of voice. The personification of Jerusalem occurs in vv. 19-21, although the 2fs address in v. 17 implies the city also. While it is possible to consider vv. 19-21 on their own (so Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 260 and Polk, The Prophetic Persona, 60–72), the context for understanding these verses is provided in vv. 17-18, the oracle to which the lament responds. Many commentators consider vv. 17-25 as a unit (Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 332; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 102; Jones, Jeremiah, 178; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 228; Craigie et al., Jeremiah I–25, 162).
Verses 17-18 contain a judgment oracle in the voice of Yahweh, announcing exile and military action against the city (as seen in the 2fs address in v. 17). Verse 18 refers to the inhabitants of the land, reinforcing the close relationship between the personified city, the nation and the people within both. In language close to 4:19-21, the city responds to the oracle in vv. 19-21, using the familiar woe cry (אָוֵר לָּךָ) so also 14:17 and severe hurt (מַחֲצִית) of the city. The identification of the city as referent is reinforced through the use of “my tents” (קְּרֵיתֵי) “my cords” (דְּרֵיתֵי), “my children” (בָּנֵי) and “my curtains” (רֵיצִיתֵי) in v. 20. Exile is again referred to as Jerusalem cries “my children have gone from me, and they are no more” (בְּנוֹי צָאֵין אֲרוֹרֵם).

Arguing that it is the city who speaks in vv. 19-21 creates some tension, primarily in v. 19b. Throughout Jeremiah the city/people are portrayed as being unaware of the severity of their situation, yet this passage portrays the city seeing her destruction as just punishment. While it has been argued that there is a change of voice at this point, it is more helpful to recognize the function of the personification as a poetic device within this unit. As part of the judgment oracle, the voice of the personified city is heard in order to again reinforce the severity and the inevitability of the coming judgment in keeping with the focus of Jer 11-20. As a literary device the personification drives home the message of judgment, more so as the city offers a lament over her plight. Within this unit then, the personified city responds to an

934:19-21 and 10:19-21 both refer to “my tents” (קְְרֵיתֵי) being destroyed (רָשֶׁד), along with references to “my curtains” (רֵיצִיתֵי).
94So also Polk (The Prophetic Persona, 64, 199 note 26). Many commentators argue that the prophet is the speaker in vv. 19-21, not the city (Bright, Jeremiah, 73; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 335; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 230; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 103; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 163; Jones, Jeremiah, 178).
95Polk, The Prophetic Persona, 70–71.
96McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 230) touches on a similar perspective when he states “the prophet Jeremiah takes to himself the shattered body politic and experiences the reality of it as his own pain and incurable sickness...the prophet makes the community speak these words not because it is aware of such a hard destiny but because he knows and feels that this is the future that will eventuate.” McKane, however, maintains that it is Jeremiah’s voice throughout which underplays the poetic subtlety of the text.
announcement of judgment using lament language. While the imagery centers on the personified city in a context of imminent military invasion, the reference to the inhabitants of the land in v. 18 points towards the representative nature of the personified figure. Jerusalem as female speaks for herself, but also represents the pain and fate of the inhabitants of both city and nation to which she is capital.

The judgment oracle of 13:20-27 contains an extended personification of Jerusalem in the context of an announcement of military action against the city. Jerusalem is addressed using 2fs forms (vv. 20-22, 25-27), with a change to plural forms in vv. 23-24. The personification occurs in association with lament language (v. 27) which, in this case, functions as an indictment.

Verse 20 opens with a call for Jerusalem to see the foe from the north. Jerusalem is portrayed as a shepherdess whose flock has gone astray (v. 20b). Verse 21 continues the theme of military invasion (v. 21a) rhetorically questioning Jerusalem as to her likely response to this attack (v. 21b). Again, the pain of the city is described as that of a woman in labor (4:19-21, 29-31; 6:24). Verse 22 quotes Jerusalem’s speech, detailing her likely indignation and surprise at the invasion, a quotation which provides the opportunity for indictment. The attack is the result of great iniquity/guilt (ברור עתות). The language of v. 22 and vv. 25-27 shifts to that of sexual violence against the city. Although it has been argued that the reference is to the rape of Zion, the text argues that the public stripping and exposure of the city is

97 Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 372; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 412; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 191; Jones, Jeremiah, 199.
98 Jerusalem is widely recognised as the recipient of the 2fs address within this passage (Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 304; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 306; Bauer, Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 100; Jones, Jeremiah, 202; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 373; Nicholson, Jeremiah I–25, 127; Craigie et al., Jeremiah I–25, 192).
99 MT has plural masculine form (your eyes), possibly under the influence of vv. 18-19. LXX uses the 2fs form, and makes this an explicit reference to Jerusalem through the addition of a vocative “Jerusalem” (McCane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 306). Within the context the singular form is the most appropriate.
90 Bauer, Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 100–05; Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 304. McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 311) argues against reading the metaphors as rape, suggesting on the basis of the practices described in v. 27 that the judicial punishment of public stripping and humiliation of an adulterous woman is intended (so also Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 192). Given that this is
a just consequence for the behaviour of the city, a punishment in which Yahweh is involved (v. 26). In vv. 25-27, the indictment of the city becomes more specific, with reference to the city forgetting Yahweh (שבייתMana), trusting in lies (והבריה בשתפ), and practicing idolatrous worship, described in terms of sexual promiscuity (v. 27). Verses 23-24 interrupt the feminine singular forms, utilizing masculine plural forms in relation to the community/city.\footnote{Although v. 24 refers to those to be scattered using 3mpl forms, the text is frequently read as 2fs, thus bringing it into line with vv. 20-22, 25-27 (Carroll, 
Jeremiah [1986], 203; Craigie et al., 
Jeremiah 1–25, 188; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 371; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 306).} The verses continue the theme of the intractability of the community/city and its fate as a consequence of this. That plural reference occurs within a passage in which the city is personified again points to the collective nature of the community portrayed through the personified figure of the city. The unit closes with lament language in the mouth of Yahweh, who cries ארי לך ירושלם (Woe to you Jerusalem). This cry is followed by a “how long” question typical of the lament form. Although lament language is used, the function of v. 27b is indictment, with the lament reinforcing the severity of the judgment.

This is one of the most developed personifications of Jerusalem within Jeremiah. Speech and actions are attributed to the city who is portrayed not only as wrongdoer but also as a victim through her punishment. Although portrayed as victim, the text implies the punishment is just, and as such, no sympathy for the city is suggested.

A brief personification of Jerusalem occurs in 14:1-6.\footnote{14:1-15:4 is a composite, editorial unit (Carroll, 
Jeremiah [1986], 312–13). Verses 7-9 follow this opening unit closely, voicing a communal lament of the people who acknowledge their sins and call on Yahweh not to forsake them. In the juxtaposition of material, the voice of the people is again closely associated with the personification of the city.} In 14:2, Jerusalem is described as crying out (زهرת ירשלם עלתה), a mourning action which stands parallel to the mourning of Judah in v. 2a. The remainder of the unit is a description of the drought conditions in the land. While speech is attributed to Jerusalem, the personification of the city in this context is brief and not developed.
In 15:5-9 Jerusalem is personified in a divine lament which announces judgment against the city/nation.\textsuperscript{102} The personification is sustained in vv. 5-6, which uses 2fs address to the city. Verses 7-9 switch from reference to the city to the fate of the people, and there is a narrowing down of focus from the whole community (v. 7) to the women (v. 8) and to an individual woman (v. 9), although there is nothing to suggest that this woman is herself Jerusalem. Again, the close relationship between the personified city and her residents is evident. The events described are in past tense and are a reflection on the disaster that has befallen the city.\textsuperscript{103} Through the lament, however, the city/people are indicted.

Verses 5-6 contain 2fs address of Yahweh to personified Jerusalem. Three questions are asked of the city (v. 5) who is addressed explicitly in vocative form. Each question focuses on the isolation of Jerusalem who is portrayed as having no-one concerned for her welfare. This isolation is similar to that portrayed in Lam 1. Verse 6 attributes action to Jerusalem who is accused of rejecting Yahweh, and this rejection in turn becomes the cause of the action against the city. In the context of vv. 5-6 Jerusalem not only lacks human comforters, she also lacks divine comfort. Jerusalem has no voice within this unit; only her isolation and former rejection of Yahweh are described. Verses 7-9 continue to describe Yahweh’s actions, no longer against Jerusalem specifically, but against Yahweh’s people (זאת צון v. 7). Verses 8-9 describe the fate of the wives and mothers of the city/land, who lose their husbands and sons. The women are described as being anguished and terrorized (עליה פראית ערי), as languishing (אמרתה נפשות), and swooning away (נפשה נפגשה), and of being shamed and disgraced (בشاشة ופשעים). Although mention is made of the enemy (vv. 8-9) Yahweh remains the responsible party behind the destruction.

Given the action attributed to the city this is a developed personification, again

\textsuperscript{102}Bright, Jeremiah, 111; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 389; Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 322; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 426; Craigie et al., Jeremiah 1–25, 199; Jones, Jeremiah, 216.
\textsuperscript{103}Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 322.
occurring in the context of a lament and associated with the destruction of the city. That both the personified city and the residents of the city are referred to continues the pattern seen within the texts considered.

The final text to be considered is 30:12-17 which contains both indictment (vv. 12-15) and salvation (vv. 16-17) material. The speaker is Yahweh and the lament form is evoked in the description of Zion’s suffering. Yahweh is the one who has acted against the city, with the suffering portrayed as the consequence of Jerusalem’s sin. Again, although the lament form is evoked, it is done in the context of judgment against the city.

The identity of the one addressed in this passage is not made explicit until the final verse. Following the introductory formula the unknown recipient is addressed using 2fs forms. The language used is encountered elsewhere in Jeremiah in relation to the personified city, immediately suggesting that Jerusalem is the referent. The hurt/wound of the city is referred to using שבר (vv. 12, 15; and 4:6, 20; 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21; 10:19; 14:17) and פמה (vv. 12, 15, 17 and 6:7; 10:19; 14:17). The wound of the city is grievous and incurable (vv. 12, 13, 15). As in 15:5-9 the isolation of Jerusalem is mentioned as is the divine responsibility for the devastation of the city (vv. 14, 15). Jerusalem is given no voice in this unit, but action and responsibility for the consequences of those actions is attributed to her. In vv. 14 and 15 both iniquity/guilt (עזמה החטאות) (ריב עונן) and sin (עון) are attributed to the city and are the cause of Yahweh’s actions. In v. 15 Jerusalem is described as crying (עון) over her hurt. Verses 16-17 continue to address Jerusalem, however there is a shift from indictment to an oracle of salvation.104 Verse 16 describes Yahweh’s intent to destroy Jerusalem’s enemies bringing against them the consequences of their own actions. The unit closes with Yahweh’s promise to restore health (בר אｽלאת ארבה לאל) to the city.

104 These verses may be a secondary addition to the text (Bright, Jeremiah, 285; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 380), or could indicate that the unit belongs in the exilic period (Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 581).
and to heal her wounds (וה▌י ת▌י א▌י). This is a developed personification of the city as both action and responsibility are attributed to her. This is the only use of the personified city motif in Jeremiah in association with a salvation oracle.

2.2.3.1 Summary

The personification of Jerusalem as female is more frequent, diverse and developed in Jeremiah than was seen in either Isaiah 1-39 or Micah. The personification of the city occurs more frequently and there is a greater diversity in the way the figure is developed. As a literary device, reference to the personified city occurs most frequently in association with judgment oracles in which either lament language or form is used to drive home the severity and the inevitability of the announced judgment. In most cases the judgment is in the form of military attack against the city. Within Jeremiah the personified city is clearly a metaphoric representation of the community who lives within the city, evident in the frequent slippage between reference to the city as a singular entity and plural references to the people within many of the passages considered.

The personification of Jerusalem in Jeremiah occurs through the use of הבמדת designations and/or the address and description of Jerusalem in feminine roles. Where the designation is used (4:29-31; 6:1-8, 22-26), the personification occurs in the context of judgment and the announcement of impending military action against the city. In each case one of the voices within the texts utters a lament.105 הבמדת is cast in the role of lover and woman in labor in 4:29-31 heightening the development of the personified figure.

Personification of the city also occurs through the use of הבמדת as a designation for the city in a number of texts (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 14:17-18). This

105 In 6:1-8 it is the attacking army who laments a missed opportunity to attack the city by day.
designation is used elsewhere in Jeremiah as a designation of the people (8:11, 18-23; 9:6). Even where it can be argued that חמה is a designation of the city there is close association with reference to the people as community. Although this designation also shares the common features of the חמה usage in that it is often associated with reference to military attack as judgment from Yahweh (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 14:17-18) and with lament for, or over, the city (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 8:18-23; 14:17-18) the personification is less well developed. At best, it is possible only to note that in some cases there is an argument for חמה being a personification of the city, but as a title it is more strongly a designation which personifies the people as community.

The city is also personified in Jeremiah without the use of חמה designations. Of the seven texts considered, five demonstrate strong development of the personification (4:19-21; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 15:5-9; 30:12-17) and two are less well developed (5:7-11; 14:1-6). The city takes on a variety of roles including mother (5:7-11; 10:17-21), woman in labor (4:19-21; 13:20-27), punished adulteress (13:20-27) and shepherdess (13:20-27) as well as being described as being isolated (15:5-9; 30:12-17). Again, the personification of the city occurs most often within judgment texts, although 30:12-17 also contains a salvation oracle. In 4:19-21 and 10:17-21 (vv. 19-21) 1ps laments anticipate the impending destruction, while in 14:1-6 (v. 2) Jerusalem is described as crying out in mourning. Lament form again occurs in 15:5-9, however now as a divine lament used to announce the impending judgment. Yahweh also utters a lament over the city in 13:20-27 (v. 27). Again, these references to lament reinforce the message of judgment. As was the case when the personifications was marked by the use of the חמה designations, that the personified city represents the community is evident in 5:7-11, 10:17-21; 13:20-27 and 15:5-9.

Although Jerusalem is personified through various techniques (the application of חמה titles, or portrayed female through 2ps address or 3ps description, or given 1ps voice) and given different roles, the personification of Jerusalem in Jeremiah is
confined to discreet units within the text. The personification is neither maintained across units nor sustained within whole chapters of the book, the one exception being the successive personification of the city in the units 4:11-18, 19-21 (and again in 29-31). When roles are assigned to Zion only one or two of these occur within a given unit, for example in 4:29-31 where she is described as both a lover and a woman in labor. Thus although the personification of Jerusalem is a frequently used device within Jeremiah it cannot be argued that this is a sustained device.

It is significant that, with the exception of 30:12-17 which contains indictment followed by a salvation oracle, there is such a strong association between the personification of Jerusalem as female, judgment and reference to lament and/or use of lament form within these texts. As a poetic device, the personification of the city allows the impact of the impending judgment, which is often in the form of military attack against the city, to be expressed in a powerful way. The personified city is described as suffering, in pain and anguish, and the femininity of this figure heightens the expression of the suffering. This suffering would be less vividly portrayed were the personification absent. Despite the presentation of suffering, it cannot be argued that the figure is presented in a sympathetic fashion. The personified city represents the judged city, and although the enactment of the judgment is in the imminent future, her plight is seen as the inevitable consequence of Yahweh’s decision to act against the sinful people. The use of lament language and/or form similarly drives home the severity and inevitability of the judgment. The lament reinforces the irrevocable plight of the city and in preempting the destruction points to its inevitability.

Finally, it must again be reinforced that the personification of the city is a poetic device and its function as such is often transparent in Jeremiah. That there is constant slippage between reference to the city and the people keeps to the fore that the personified city represents those people who reside within her.
2.2.4 The Personification of Jerusalem in Zephaniah

Jerusalem is personified as female throughout the third chapter of Zephaniah, explicitly through the use of בת ציון in 3:14 which also uses בת ירושלים, and through address or description portraying the city in feminine roles. Zephaniah 3 is primarily salvation material although judgment co-occurs in vv. 1-13. The personification of the city is well developed in that a variety of actions, emotions and attributes are ascribed to her. Lament language is not a prominent feature of the chapter, a contrast to the pattern noted in Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah.

Zephaniah’s significance as a tradition upon which Lamentations drew is ambiguous given ambivalence as to the dating of this prophetic book. The book itself makes no explicit reference which would allow firm conclusions to be drawn about its date, and dates from the early days of Josiah’s reign through to as late as 200 B.C.E. have been proposed.106 As with Jeremiah however, if we are to assume that at least some of the material comes from the late seventh and sixth century, Zephaniah can provide information about the intellectual world of this period.

For ease of discussion this time the בת ציון material, which occurs in 3:14-20, will be considered after the material in vv. 1-13 which refers to the city without designation. Although the material in vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-20 are considered to be separate units, there is a clear progression of thought running across the units, making it easier to consider them sequentially.107


107 There is a recognition that 3:1-20 have a compositional unity to them despite the possibility that the material within these verses may have originally existed as separate oracles (Marvin A. Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets [vol. 2 of The Twelve Prophets; Berit Olam; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000], 518). J. Roberts (Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah: A Commentary [OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991], 204), who argues that vv. 1-20 can be divided into two units, states: “It is extremely difficult to isolate the individual oracles in the third chapter of Zephaniah, as even a cursory look at the commentaries will indicate. .... The reason for this is that a compositional unity has been imposed upon the whole chapter so that whatever elements in
Zephaniah 3:1-13 presents a prolonged and developed personification of Jerusalem as female. With the exception of v. 6, which uses 3cpl verbs and 3mpl suffixes, and v. 13 which also switches to plural forms, feminine singular forms occur throughout. The unit contains an indictment of the city (vv. 1-5, 7b, 11aβ), an element of judgment (v. 11) and a promise of future transformation (vv. 6-13). Actions and attributes of both the city and groups of people within the city are described. With the exception of the opening יְהֹוָה lament language is absent from the unit.

Verses 1-5 constitute an indictment in which the negative attributes of both personified Jerusalem and of groups within her are detailed. Verse 1 opens with an וּוְאֶלֶף יִשְׂרָאֵל, followed by an indictment of an unnamed city (Woe, rebellious/soiled, defiled, oppressing city). Verses 2-4 fill out the initial description of the city referring to her failure to listen, accept discipline and trust in Yahweh (v. 2). The public and cultic leadership of the city are indicted in vv. 3-4. That the city is in its current state is largely attributed to the failure of the leadership. The movement between the city as entity and the populace of the city follows the recurring pattern seen elsewhere in the prophetic literature. Verse 5 starkly contrasts the oppressive city and Yahweh. Yahweh is described as being in the midst of the city (בּקַרְבּוֹ), uncorruptable, despite the city’s corruption. A final indictment occurs in the closing phrase of v. 5 (לא יִדְעוּ צְרִיךְ עַל בְּשָׁם but the unjust know no shame). Verses 6-7 change to the 1ps voice of Yahweh, with v. 6 describing Yahweh’s past actions against other nations in the form of military action. These actions were intended as a warning for Jerusalem (v. 7), however the people failed to heed that warning.

the chapter may have once existed as independent oracles have lost much of the clarity of their original contours. The boundary marks between these original units have been largely obscured by the compositional editing. 108 In MT v. 8 opens with a 2fpl imperative, however LXX uses the singular form. 109 Yahweh is described as righteous (דָּודֵי), as doing no wrong (לא יֶשֶׂם עַל) and as showing forth justice (מָשְפַּר תְוִי).
The unit closes with the promise of future transformation for Jerusalem (vv. 8-13). This involves Yahweh acting against the nations (v. 8) and for the city (vv. 9-13). Although the unit focuses on the transformation of Jerusalem, judgment and indictment are also present, as seen in the reference to the removal of proud ones within the city. The city will no longer experience shame because the proudly exultant ones will be removed from the city. The city herself will no longer be haughty (v. 11), with the humble and lowly forming the remnant in the city’s midst (vv. 11-12). The unit is thus transformed into a message of salvation for Zion.

The personification of Jerusalem as female continues through vv. 14-20 which concludes the book of Zephaniah. The unit is concerned with salvation and no lament language is used within it. The personification of the city is both extended and developed as emotion and implied action and speech are attributed to her. There is some reference to groups within the city again emphasizing the corporate entity behind the personification.

Two אֶת הָא designation open the unit. Jerusalem is referred to as נָתוּן נָתוּן יְהוָה and as נָתוּן יְהוָה נָתוּן יְהוָה. Between these two designations is reference to Israel. The context dictates that it is Jerusalem who is the primary addressee, as is reinforced by the feminine singular forms throughout. The reference to Israel reinforces the representative function of the capital city within the wider nation. Michael Floyd discusses the significance of these נָתוּן יְהוָה designations, arguing that they function not to represent the current generation of Jerusalemites, but to distinguish between the present and future generations. He writes:

There is not just a feminine personification of Jerusalem here, but a feminine personification of both the city’s inhabitants and their descendants. It is Jerusalem “herself” (i.e. the present generation) who, as “the oppressing city” (3:1b), will experience Yahweh’s punishment; it is her “daughter” (i.e. the next generation) who will form the “remnant of the house of Judah” (i.e. Judah’s descendants, 2:7; cf 2:9b) and be restored as the new Israel (3:13a). Thus a personification of the younger generation (i.e. the “daughter”) is
being urged in 3:14 to rejoice over the possibility that they will some day constitute the new Jerusalem, to whom the prospect of salvation will be even more fully pronounced (3:16).  

Floyd’s argument cannot be sustained. There is no evidence in any of the prophetic uses of the הָנָה designations that this sense of generational difference was ever intended. If the origins of the designation are to be found in titles for capital cities, this usage is even less probable. Where specific groups of people are intended as the focus different terminology is used. For example, in Isaiah 3:26-4:1 reference is made to the daughters (plural) of Zion, which distinguishes the reference to the women of the city from reference to the city herself.

Following the specific designations of the city in v. 14 feminine singular forms occur throughout. Verse 15 continues the 2fs address to the city describing a time in which judgment has been removed from the city, the enemy turned away, and Yahweh dwells within the city. Verse 16 shifts from 2fs address to 3fs description quoting what will be said to Jerusalem “on that day.” 2fs address resumes in v. 17 and continues until the end of the unit with the voice of Yahweh in 1cs voice being heard specifically in vv. 18-19.

Implied action, emotion and potential voice are attributed to personified Jerusalem. In the imperatives to rejoice in v. 14 the city is attributed with the potential to sing (םָנַה), shout (רֹעֲשׁ), rejoice (שָׁמְחָה) and exult (עָלֹל). These imperatives in themselves also imply action on behalf of the city. Emotion is portrayed through references to Jerusalem’s fear (vv. 15, 16). Verses 19-20 make mention of Yahweh dealing with various groups of people within the city; the oppressors within the city (אוֹתָם לְמלְכָיו), the lame (אֲבָדִים) and the outcast (רֹדֵנְתָה). The fate of groups within the city is integral to the fate of the city herself. Again, we are reminded of the communal reality behind the personified Jerusalem.

110Floyd, Minor Prophets, Part 2, 238.
111The outcome for the oppressors is negative while it is positive for the lame and outcast.
2.2.4.1 Summary

The personification of Jerusalem as female is restricted to chapter 3 of Zephaniah and utilizes both the בת ציון designation and feminine address and description of the city. This personification is associated with both judgment and salvation oracles and the roles taken on by the city are tied to the context of these two forms of oracles. Thus, in the judgment material, Jerusalem is described as an oppressor, an unjust or rebellious figure, while in the salvation material she is described as a potentially joyous, celebrating figure who is both saved and healed. There is limited lament language used and it is confined to the opening ויהי. Reference to military action does occur, however it is in relation to nations other than Judah. The pattern in Zephaniah 3 then differs from that seen in Isaiah 1-39, Micah and Jeremiah.

2.2.5 Conclusions: The Personification of Jerusalem in the Prophetic Literature

There is a pattern of personifying Jerusalem as female within the pre-exilic and early exilic prophetic literature. Although each of the prophetic books considered use the personification of Jerusalem slightly differently, some general trends do emerge. Those texts in which the primary means of personification is the use of the title "בת" exhibit less development of the figure than those which don’t use the title. There is an overall trend of later texts, particularly Jeremiah, demonstrating increased development of the figure. Where the personification is developed - whether the personification is marked through the use of designation or through other means - action, speech, emotion or attributes are applied to the city, and she is portrayed in a variety of different roles. Most of the texts which use the personification are judgment texts; almost always judgment associated with imminent military action against the
city. There is a strong association between the personification of the city and the use of lament form or language. Although lament is used, it functions as a rhetorical device aimed at driving home the message of impending and inevitable judgment. Finally, in many cases the nature of the personification as a literary metaphor is made transparent. Many texts slip between singular references to the city and plural references to the inhabitants of the city. This slippage reminds the audience that as metaphor, the city represents the community which dwells within her.

The personification of the city is a literary device which occurs in discrete units within the prophetic texts considered and is not, on the whole, sustained across units or chapters. In the five texts considered from Isaiah (1:4-9, 21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14; 37:22-29), the personification of the city occurs as an isolated motif within these specific units. In Micah, references to the personified city occur in chapters 1 (vv. 8-16) and 4 (vv. 8, 10, 13), and again the device is not applied in a sustained manner. Within Jeremiah the personification of the city occurs more frequently, but is mostly confined to discrete units (5:7-11; 6:1-8, 22-26; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 14:1-6, 17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). The only time the personification comes close to being sustained is in chapter 4, with Jerusalem personified in three units, including two successive units (vv. 11-18, 19-21, 29-31). The personification is marked differently in each unit, with הב Н כל, vv. 19-21 no designation, and vv. 29-31 using הב נ כל.

The book of Zephaniah is the one book which does not conform to the observed pattern. In Zeph 3 the personification is sustained over the entire chapter, marked through the use of the הב נ כל designation (vv. 14-20) and through address and description in feminine roles (vv. 1-13). Other differences occur within this material. There is minimal reference to lament, limited to the opening י bás. Reference to military attack occurs in relation to other nations, but not in relation to Jerusalem. The differences are dictated in large part by the transformation which occurs within this unit, which opens with an indictment of the city, an indictment which is transformed

117
into a salvation oracle.

Reference to the city as נַבֶּה צִיּוֹן is one of the ways Jerusalem is personified. In comparing Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, there is an increasing development of the personified figure over time, although it is never as well developed as the personification without any designation. When used in Isaiah (1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22), there is minimal development of the figure, and it is close to a geographical designation for the location of the city in 1:4-9. The only time the personification is developed is in 37:22, which is most likely a late text. The city does not take on any roles when referred to as נַבֶּה צִיּוֹן in Isaiah. There is limited use of lament language in association with the term, although the term is used in association with reference to military campaigns. In Isaiah, the term is associated with reference to the inviolability of Zion. In Micah, the נַבֶּה צִיּוֹן figure is more developed, but still limited, and evidence suggests that the texts using this term are probably later redactional additions (1:8-16, 4:8, 10 13). In three of the four texts some development occurs, with speech, action or emotion given to the city (1:8-16; 4:9-10, 11-13). In Mic 1:8-16, which contains judgment material and reference to military destruction, lament language is used, with the prophet announcing his own lament in v. 8 and calling on an unnamed feminine figure to lament in v. 16. The references in chapter 4 are all within salvation oracles, although some reference to military action occurs. Micah does assign roles to the city, including a grieving mother (1:16), a woman in labor (4:9), possibly a rape victim (4:11), and finally as a military aggressor (4:13). This last role is unusual, as typically the personified city is portrayed as a victim, or as afflicted in some way. The נַבֶּה צִיּוֹן figure is more fully and more consistently developed in Jeremiah (4:29-31; 6:1-8, 22-26). In all texts some form of speech, action, attribute or emotion is given to the city, and she is portrayed in a variety of roles. In 4:29-31 the city is cast in two roles, that of lover and of a woman in labor. In 6:1-8 and 22-26 she is cast in single roles, as a

\[112\] Also in 10:32 and 16:1 which were not considered as personification examples.
lamenting woman (6:22-26) and a victim of warfare (6:1-8). In all cases, reference to lament behaviour occurs (4:31; 6:4, 26), as does reference to military destruction.

The personification of the city as צותא is, at best, ambiguous. The term occurs primarily in Jeremiah (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 8:11, 8-23; 9:6; 14:17-18) but also once in Isaiah (22:4) where it is most likely a late addition to the text. Where it can be argued that the designation is a term for the personified city (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 14:17-18), there is frequent slippage into portrayal of the community, a slippage which is not as evident in the use of צותא. Both 4:11-18 and 6:22-26 refer to lament behaviour while 14:17-18 uses the lament form. All three texts make reference to military destruction in the context of impending judgment. The city does not take on different roles when this designation is used, although Zion is called on to mourn in 6:22-26; a text which also uses the צותא designation.

A final means of personifying Jerusalem occurs without the application of specific titles ( Isa 1:21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14; Jer 4:19-21; 5:7-11; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 14:1-6; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). In some cases, Jerusalem is named in conjunction with described or addressed as female (Jer 13:20-27; 14:1-6; 15:5-9; 13:12-17). In other examples, the name Jerusalem does not occur as such, and it is only the context which suggest that it is Jerusalem who is the referent ( Isa 1:21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14; Jer 4:19-21; 5:7-11; 10:17-21). On the whole, these texts show the strongest development of the personified figure. The city has a variety of actions, speech, attributes or emotions given to her, and she is cast in a wider variety of roles. Again, the personification becomes stronger in the sixth century texts. In all the texts there is continued association with lament language or form, alongside reference to military destruction. In Isaiah, in all three passages (1:21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14) there is some development of the figure. The city has action, speech, attributes and emotion given to her, and she is cast in the role of whore (1:21-26) and a ravaged and grieving woman (3:25-4:1). Isa 1:21-26 evokes the lament form in order to drive home the
indictment of the city, while 3:25-4:1 and 22:1-14 both make reference to lament behaviour. Within Jeremiah, there is extensive development of the figure, with five of the seven texts demonstrating strong development. There is a wide variety of actions, speech and emotion portrayed, and the city is described in a variety of different roles. These include a grieving woman (10:17-21; 14:1-6), a woman in labor or writhing in pain (4:19-21; 13:20-27), mother (10:17-21; 5:7-11), shepherdess (13:20-27), promiscuous woman (13:20-27) and also as being isolated (15:5-9; 30:12-17). It is significant that in a number of these texts the city figure is cast in more than one role (10:17-21; 13:20-27), again indicating a higher degree of development of the personified figure. In many cases, the personhood given to the city carries with it responsibility for her behaviour and the subsequent consequences of those actions, which is Yahweh’s judgment upon her (5:7-11; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 15:5-9; 30:12-27). Of these texts, 4:19-21, 15:5-9 and 30:12-17 evoke or use the lament form to announce the indictment and/or judgment, while 10:17-21, 13:20-27 and 14:1-6 make reference to lament behaviour within the unit.

The majority of texts considered from the prophetic literature concern the indictment and/or judgment of Jerusalem/Israel, with the texts in Mic 4, Zeph 3 and Jer 30:12-17 being the exceptions as they contain salvation material (although indictment co-occurs in both Zeph 3:1-8 and Jer 30:12-17). In most texts there is either reference to lament behaviour (Isa 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14; Mic 1:8-16; Jer 4:11-18, 29-31; 6:1-8, 22-26 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 14:1-6), or the lament form is evoked/used (Isa 1:21-26; Jer 4:19-21; 14:17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). The use of the lament language or form functions rhetorically within, and contributes to, the message of impending judgment. As an effective rhetorical device, the prophetic literature makes use of familiar forms in order to help drive home its message. The lament, familiar from communal worship settings, or from funeral practices, becomes a powerful tool to emphasize the gravity of the impending peril facing the community. In uttering the
lament, the prophet announces the judgment as if it had already happened. This points to the inevitability of the judgment and is a powerful way of announcing that judgment.

Finally, one of the most significant features within these texts is the frequent change of grammatical form and voice, shifting from feminine singular reference to the city to plural reference to the residents of the city. Given the nature of the literary personification of the city, this should come as no surprise. The city, although personified as a single female entity, is more than this. The city represents not only the physical aspects of buildings, roads etc, but is, more importantly, the sum of the people who live within her. The slippage between the singular and plural references points to the corporate nature of the city itself. The personified city is the populace, and the movement between the singular and plural means, in a sense, that the literary device looks into itself, and in fact implodes the metaphor.

2.3 The Personification of Jerusalem as Female in Lamentations

Having established how it is that the personification of Jerusalem is developed in the relevant prophetic literature, it remains now to consider the use of the device within Lamentations.

The personification of the city is sustained throughout chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations, making this one of the key literary devices within the book. It is, however, absent in chapter 5, and is only briefly alluded to in chapter 3, which refers to בָּתָםֵךְ in v. 48. Where the personification is present, it is marked in ways familiar from the prophetic literature. בָּתָםֵךְ is used eight times (1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; 4:22) and five times (2:11; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10). The city is also

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113 The significance of the changes of voice and the absence of personification will be discussed in chapter 5.
114 A number of variants of the בָּתָםֵךְ designations also occur: בָּתָם יָהֹורָד (1:15); בָּתָם יָהֹורָד (2:2, 5); בָּתָם יָהֹורָד (2:13, 15).
addressed and described as female, and is cast in a variety of different roles (chapters
1, 2 and 4). That the personification occurs in this way immediately suggests that
there is a relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, however the
nature of that relationship is yet to be established.

Similar questions will be asked of Lamentations as of the prophetic literature.
After an initial discussion of the form and function of Lamentations, a detailed
discussion of the nature and the development of the personification will occur,
proceeding on a unit by unit basis. Arising out of this, conclusions can be drawn as to
the use of the device within Lamentations, which in turn allows for a discussion of the
relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature with regard to the
personification of Jerusalem as female.

At the outset, it is worth first discussing the issue of the form and function of
Lamentations. It was noted throughout the discussion of the prophetic texts that the
personification of the city occurred most often within judgment oracles. The
personification, often used in association with lament language or form, is used as a
literary device to heighten the rhetoric of the texts, driving home the severity and the
inevitability of the judgment. The situation is, however, very different in
Lamentations as the overriding purpose differs from that of the prophetic literature.
Lamentations seeks not to announce judgment, but to give voice to the pain and
suffering of the community in the aftermath of destruction. The primary function of
these poems is to lament, and the book uses lament language, and evokes or uses
lament forms for this purpose.115 Arising out of this observation, it remains to be seen
how this difference in function influences the use and development of the
personification device within Lamentations.

115 In referring to lament language and lament forms, I am not presuming that these poems exist as
pure forms of the lament, as is argued by C. Westermann (Lamentations). See section 1.4.2, pp.
51-57 for fuller discussion.
2.3.1 Lamentations 1

The personification of Jerusalem opens Lamentations, and is maintained throughout the first chapter. Within the first two units (vv. 1-6, 7-11) the narrator speaks of the city, first describing her current desperate plight (vv. 1-6), moving then to describe its causes (vv. 7-11). In vv. 12-20 the voice of Jerusalem takes command, describing Yahweh’s action against her, along with further description of misery. Both Jerusalem and the narrator interrupt the other’s speech (vv. 9c, 11c, 17), interspersing their own concerns. The unit closes with Jerusalem appealing to Yahweh to act against her enemies (vv. 21-22).

This personification of the city is strongly developed, with a variety of actions, attributes, emotions and speech given to Jerusalem. Lament language predominates, as does the language of destruction and military defeat. Although the most dominant portrayal is of the personified city, the community within the city is also mentioned. In addition, reference is made to aspects of the physical city, such as roads and gates, also personified as lamenting. These various images work together to provide a powerful portrayal of suffering and devastation.

2.3.1.1 Lamentations 1:1-6

The opening unit of the book (vv. 1-6) is a description of misery using contrasting images which describe Jerusalem’s former glory and present state. Zion’s personification is strong. She has emotions and actions attributed to her, and has possession over aspects of the physical city and groups of people within the city. Through simile and metaphor, Zion is cast in various roles; widow, princess, vassal, mourner and mother. Although v. 5 names Yahweh as the one who caused the suffering, Zion is given responsibility for her own plight as Yahweh is said to have responded to her sin. The portrayal of the city is dominated by images of her grief,
lament and isolation.

Lament language opens the book with the cry איכה (how lonely/isolated sits the city). Verses 1-2 portray the extent of the city’s plight and the depth of her lament. Images of isolation and emptiness introduce the figure: איכה שמה בור ודפק (how lonely/isolated sits the city). Her isolation is reinforced in the next phrase רבתי עם (once full of people), and in v. 1b, which likens her to a widow (בלאמנה). The simile increases the human like quality of the city, comparing her to the most vulnerable in society. Zion’s widowhood is maintained in the report of her grief (vv. 2, 4) and compounded through the loss of her children (v. 5). Zion’s stature as widow is contrasted with her former “greatness” amongst the nations (רבית בניו). A final contrast in v. 1 further humanizes the city. Simile is lost, and Zion is described metaphorically as a princess (לタイム), now become a vassal (למס).

Verses 2-6 contain descriptions of mourning followed by the reasons for that mourning. Verse 2 opens with the image of the intense weeping of Zion. The poignant phrase אין למדה נמש (no-one to comfort her, also vv. 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21) highlights the loneliness of the city, but also forms a jarring note against the image of Zion as widow. Where it would be expected that a widow be comforted in her grief, Zion is isolated in hers. Within v. 2, reference is made to the city’s former lovers ( rallav) and friends (ידעו), casting Zion in a new role. Verse 3 shifts from the personified

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116 איכה is most frequently translated as “how” and is associated with the funeral lament genre (Hillers, Lamentations, 80; Westermann, Lamentations, 120; Hunter, Faces, 92–93).
117 רבתי is most often translated in the sense of “full” or “great,” a translation challenged by T. McDaniel (“Philological Studies in Lamentations,” Bib 49 [1968]: 29–31), who argues that the word should be read as a nominal epithet “mistress” or “princess” of the people (i.e. a feminine form of רב “ruler”), forming a word pair with שליחית in the third line. He bases his argument on parallel terms in Phoenician and Ugaritic poetry (followed by Hans Gottlieb, A Study on the Text of Lamentations [ACTA Jutlandica; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1978], 11). Against this, support for an adjectival reading is found in the use of רבתי in v. 1b.
118 In discussing Zion as a widow, the limitation of the metaphor must be noted. Although Zion is described as a widow, she mourns her own downfall and there is no actual husband. While Yahweh is described as “husband” in texts such as Hosea 2 and Jeremiah 2:2-4, the death of the husband is not being portrayed here. Rather, it is the depth of emotion and vulnerability of the city that is being described as akin to that of a widow (cf. Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 55).

119 Westermann, Lamentations, 125.
120 Refer chapter 4, footnote 131 for a discussion of this verse as a possible reference to Zion’s sin.
city to personified Judah, thus focusing on the nation as a whole and reminding the audience of the city’s status as capital.\textsuperscript{121} The nation is personified as female, described as going into exile, as having no resting place, and being overtaken by her pursuers.\textsuperscript{122}

Focus returns to Zion in v. 4, where she is named for the first time. Named with feminine singular suffixes, aspects of the physical city and groups of people within her are described as mourning. Her roads mourn (שֶׁמֶר), and her gates are desolate (ἔρημον), and although gates and roads refer to the physical city, the fact that they take on human activity maintains the personification.\textsuperscript{123} As is common in the use of the personification device, the communal nature of the city lies close to the surface, as is seen through reference to groups of people within the city; her priests groan (ἔναντι) and her young girls grieve (ὄρεξεν). The cause of the grief is the absence of people coming to celebrate appointed feasts. Verse 4 closes with further reference to the emotional state of the city figure (יוֹם מִר לְלָה), and she herself, it is bitter to her.

Verse 5 continues to describe Zion’s misery, again using a contrast motif to depict the reversed status of the enemies in relation the city. A divine responsibility motif is introduced in v. 5b (כִּי יָדַעְתָּ), however Zion is given responsibility for her own suffering on account of her great sin (עַל רְבָּה גִּנָּה). The verse concludes with

\textsuperscript{121}K. O’Connor (\textit{Tears of the World,} 20–21) captures the relationship between Judah and Jerusalem, stating:

As Zion sits weeping, the nation of Judah goes into exile and servitude (1:3). In some ways Judah and Zion refer to the same realities of land and people but with the geographic breadth of the nation or with the geographical narrowness of the capital city. Here the narrator distinguishes between Judean exiles sent away and survivors remaining in Zion. The exiles are oppressed, cast out among the nations, and overtaken by pursuers (1:3), but the grim conditions facing Zion remain the narrator’s primary concern.

\textsuperscript{122}Verse 3 is textually difficult. R. Salters (“Lamentations 1:3: Light from the History of Exegesis,” in \textit{A Word in Season: Essays in Honor of William McKane}, vol. 42 [ed. J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies; JSOTSup; Sheffield: JSOT, 1986], 73–89) provides a comprehensive summary of the debate surrounding this verse.

\textsuperscript{123}The personified mourning of parts of the inanimate city is a feature of the city-lament genre (Dobbs-Allsopp, \textit{Weep}, 89).
a return to description of misery, with Zion cast in the role of mother. Zion mourns because her children have gone into captivity, continuing the themes of isolation and emptiness. Verse 6 again names the city, now with the designation בָּתָר צִיּוֹן. The majesty of בָּתָר צִיּוֹן is said to have departed,\textsuperscript{124} and her princes have fled.

2.3.1.2 Lamentations 1:7-11

Description of misery continues in vv. 7-11, but with a change of focus, and a change in the way the personified city is named. The causes of the plight of the city are explored in more depth, both in terms of the behaviour of the city herself, and also the actions of her enemies against her. Where vv. 1-6 may have evoked reader sympathy through their images of the lamenting, isolated woman, vv. 7-11 are more harsh, portraying the city as mocked, despised, naked, unclean, raped and alone. The images used are more personal and embody Zion, particularly as reference is made to her exposure, to menstruation and to rape. Action, attributes and emotion are given to the city, and her voice is heard, interrupting the narrator in an effort to be noticed. Responsibility for her own fate is again given to the city.

The city is named as Jerusalem in vv. 7 and 8, where previously she had been called Zion (v. 4) and בָּתָר צִיּוֹן (v. 6). Verse 7 opens with Jerusalem remembering her past in the midst of her current distress.\textsuperscript{125} The fate of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are referred to as “her people” (לבָּנָה), is again close to the surface in the personification. Verses 8-9 work together to present an extended treatment of

\textsuperscript{124} The meaning of בָּתָר צִיּוֹן is ambiguous, and may refer either to the children of v. 5 (Hillers, Lamentations, 85), the city’s treasures (Westermann, Lamentations, 126) or the princes mentioned in the next line (Mitchell Dahood, “New Readings in Lamentations,” Bib 59 [1978]: 175–76).

\textsuperscript{125} Verse 7 is difficult in terms of the time frame intended within the verse, and the perspective of the speaker. Following Westermann (Lamentations, 127) and O’Connor (Tears of the World, 19) the text is read as the poet looking back on the events of the fall of the city (Jerusalem remembers the days of her affliction and wandering). For an alternate argument see Albrektson (Text and Theology, 62) who argues the text contains a temporal accusative, translated “in the days of her affliction and wandering.”
Jerusalem as a despised and shamed woman. Jerusalem is portrayed as responsible for her own fate, a motif interwoven with further descriptions of misery. Jerusalem’s sin (לֶגֶד הַשָּׁמַע) is linked directly to her fallen state (לֶגֶד הַיְּתוֹם) can be translated as either “abhorrent/filthy,”126 or “to move about,” read as “an object of scorn.”127 While v. 8 allows for either reading, “filthy” links more closely with images of Jerusalem’s nakedness (וְרָדָו) in v. 8 and her uncleanness (סַמָּא) in v. 9, which introduces notions of impurity.128 The meaning of v. 9a is uncertain, with Zion’s uncleanness said to be “in her skirts” (בְּשָׁרָיו). This may be a reference to menstrual blood, thus indicating ritual impurity,129 but may also be a reference to sexual immorality.130 Taken together, these images convey the shame and dishonor of Jerusalem. Her response to her plight is to groan (אָנוּחַ) and turn away (וְהָשַׁב אֲחָר).131 Jerusalem’s uncleanness is linked with an indictment (לֹא תָּכֹֹה אָדוֹּתָה) she gave no thought to her future). While the exact connotation of this indictment is unclear,132 the consequence of Jerusalem’s sin is her appalling downfall (וְרָדָו פֶּלָּאֵם) and her isolation (i.e. her lack of any comforter). Verse 9c introduces the voice of the city for the first time, with Jerusalem calling upon Yahweh to notice her suffering. Unlike the narrator, Zion does not refer to her sin as the reason for her suffering, simply noting that the enemy has triumphed over her. The appeal is echoed in v. 11c. In v. 9, Jerusalem simply calls on Yahweh to look (רָאָה), while this is expanded in v. 11 to look and behold (רָאָה וְהָבֵרִית). In v. 11, Jerusalem’s misery again forms the basis

126 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 22; Provan, Lamentations, 44.
127 i.e. an object of head nodding based on Jer 8:16 and Ps 44:15 (Rudolph, Die Klagelieder, 206–07; Westermann, Lamentations, 110; Hillers, Lamentations, 70; Hunter, Faces, 127).
128 Westermann, Lamentations, 129; Hillers, Lamentations, 86.
129 Pham, Mourning in the ANE, 75 Berlin, Lamentations, 55 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 22. See chapter 4, pp. for a full discussion.
130 Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 63) translates “groan” in the sense of “screaming aloud,” a reaction to her sexual assault as portrayed in vv. 8-10.
131 Westermann (Lamentations, 129) suggests that Jerusalem failed to heed the words of the prophets, and Hillers (Lamentations, 86–86) and Provan (Lamentations, 45) that she failed to consider the consequences of her behaviour.
of the appeal (כ ידויי יז אללה). That Jerusalem interrupts the narrator unannounced is in keeping with the change of voice noted in many of the prophetic texts considered. The 3ps voice returns in v. 10, acknowledging the triumph of the enemies over Zion. Language of violation and invasion pervade this verse, and while the more conventional reading takes this as a reference to the invasion and sacking of the temple, in light of the sustained personification of Jerusalem, the language can be read as that of rape. The 3ps personification of the city closes with further description of Jerusalem’s misery, making reference to the groaning (محاولة) of the inhabitants of the city as they search for food (v. 11a-b), again pointing to the communal nature of the personified city. The voice of the city closes the unit, forming a transition into the 1ps speech which follows.

2.3.1.3 Lamentations 1:12-20

The personification of Jerusalem is further extended in the divine responsibility unit of vv. 12-20. The 1ps voice of Zion is heard throughout, with the exception of an interruption by the narrator in v. 17. Verses 12-15 focus on the divine responsibility for Zion’s suffering, described in the context of an appeal by Zion for passersby to notice her suffering (v. 12). Description of misery motifs begin to prevail in vv. 16-20 as Jerusalem tells of the impact of Yahweh’s actions upon her. This is a highly developed personification of Jerusalem which builds on her portrayal in the previous

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133 Various attempts have been made to account for the 1ps appeals within this third person unit. Hillers (Lamentations, 87) argues that vv. 9c and 11c are a preparation for the change of voice in v. 12; Westermann (Lamentations, 130) that the two lines form a structural parallelism, and the appeal, typical of the lament form, transforms the description of misery (i.e. vv. 7-11) into a plea. Provan (“Lamentations,” in A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation [ed. R. J. Coggins and J. C. Houlden; London: SCM, 1990], 33) considers the rhetorical force of the interruptions, arguing that in these lines the sidelined voice of the personified city is heard, thus showing her desperation to make her own statement.

134 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 22–23.


units.

Having appealed without success to Yahweh (v. 11c), Zion now appeals to passersby to take note (v. 12). The precise meaning of the opening appeal \( לא אלים \) is difficult to discern, but in combination with the imperative to notice her suffering (v. 12b) portrays Zion’s urgent need for a comforter, emphasizing the enormity of her suffering. In vv. 12c-15, Zion attributes her suffering to Yahweh, whose actions against the city are described as a day of Yahweh (see chapter 3). The personification of Jerusalem intensifies as the divine responsibility is described. Zion has not only voice, but also body parts, which are inflicted by Yahweh. She has bones (רעלין), feet (עצמותיה), and a neck (נשῇ), and in v. 20 bowels (מיטת) and a heart (לב). She describes a range of emotions of herself: she is stunned (שמע), faint (רזרע), Yahweh has caused her strength to fail (ה步של כתי) and she was unable to withstand the enemy (לא ואכל קרה).

Despite her increasingly human self portrait, Zion describes the fate of individual groups within the community, again breaking open the metaphor (v. 15). Verse 15 uses a אבר title, with Zion referring to herself as הערית בח יוהירה. This designation reaffirms the city’s relationship with the nation; she is the capital of Judah, and her suffering is the suffering of the nation. In v. 16 Zion also refers to my children (בנים), thus describing herself in the role of mother. Verse 16 shifts from divine responsibility motifs to description of misery. Because (על אלים) of Yahweh’s actions against her, Zion weeps (בהב) and her eyes flow with tears (עין עניי יזרע).

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137 Literally “not to you,” which makes little sense. It has been variously translated, either as a question (Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 8; Provan, Lamentations, 48), or as a statement (Albright, Text and Theology, 68–69; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 16–17; Hillers, Lamentations, 71). It is the seeking of the attention of the passersby which is central to this verse, along with the reference to the incomparableness of Zion’s suffering.
138 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 25.
139 Although generally translated as faint, Provan (Lamentations, 50), B. Kaiser (“Female Impersonator,” 176) and Hillers (Lamentations, 72–73) link מזרע to menstrual impurity on the basis of Lev. 15:33 and 20:18. This reading echoes 1:8, although now it is Yahweh who has made Zion impure.
140 Zion talks of her warriors (אבנים) and her young men (בוגרי).
Zion's tears are linked to the absence of a comforter to revive her courage, and to the desolation of her children.

The narrator interrupts Zion in v. 17. Zion is further embodied, described as stretching out her hands in a gesture of mourning or supplication. The shift to third person voice provides a poetic vehicle for the repetition of the core of Zion's speech. The city has no-one to comfort her (v. 17b) and it is Yahweh who is responsible (v. 17b). In v. 17b the personification of the city as female is abandoned for a male personification with reference to Yahweh acting against Jacob, and using masculine singular suffixes. This shattering of the personification shifts the focus to the level of the nation, however feminine forms return in v. 17c, where Jerusalem is again described in terms of ritual impurity (מָזוֹן filthy/menstrual rag). This concern with impurity is a primary concern of the narrator (vv. 8-9, 17), but not of Zion herself.

Verse 18 returns to the 1ps voice of Zion, and contains three motifs; a vindication of Yahweh, linked with a confession of sin, and a further appeal to the nations to notice the suffering. Having described Yahweh's actions against her, v. 18a vindicates Yahweh, stating that Yahweh has acted in response to the city's own sinfulness (מִרְבֶּה rebel). The confession is not dwelt upon and Zion moves immediately back to an appeal for someone to notice her suffering, this time linked to the absence of her young women (בְּתוֹנָה) and her young men (בְּתוֹנָה) who have gone into captivity. Verse 19 continues the description of misery motifs, with Zion referring to her own plight and to the plight of individual groups within the city.

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141 O'Connor (Tears of the World, 27) notes that Zion implies that her devastation might be borne were she to have a comforter.
142 O'Connor, Tears of the World, 27. Berlin (Berlin, Lamentations, 58–59) argues that in describing Zion as מַרְבֶּה, the intent is not to describe her as abhorrent and needing to be separated from others, but rather that she is ritually impure, and others are not able to enter into a relationship with her. As such, the metaphor reinforces Zion's isolation.
143 O'Connor (Tears of the World, 27) likens Zion's confession to that of an abused wife: "Like a woman in an abusive relationship, she agrees that YHWH is justified in his treatment of her because she has "rebelled against his word."
Zion’s isolation is again emphasized, with a report of Zion calling to her lovers (משה) and being deceived (רמיה), a reference reminiscent of Jer. 4:29-31. The remainder of the verse describes the priests and elders perishing (ברע) due to the effects of famine.

The unit closes with Zion appealing to Yahweh, a return to her cry of vv. 9 and 11. Zion refers to her distress (ייעוץ) which is described through physical symptoms. The description of distress leads Zion to yet another confession, again using מנה (rebel).\(^\text{144}\) Zion ties her suffering to the impact of both military destruction (i.e. reference to the sword) and famine (reference to death within the house). Within this unit, with its concentration on the actions of Yahweh and descriptions of her own suffering, Zion has shifted from an appeal to passersby back to an appeal to Yahweh (so also vv. 9c, 11c). However Zion has had no response from either the divine or the human, and so remains uncomforted.

2.3.1.4 Lamentations 1:21-22

Verses 21-22 form a tightly woven conclusion to the chapter, focusing on an appeal to Yahweh concerning the future fate of Jerusalem’s enemies. Zion reinforces her primary complaint - her suffering and lack of comforter (v. 21a) - followed by reference to the joy of her enemies over her fate (v. 21b). Verses 21c-22b call on Yahweh to treat the enemies as Zion herself has been treated, paralleling the evil (רצח) of the enemy with her own transgression (פשע). While the city does not ask for reprieve there is an implication that were Yahweh to act against her enemies, Zion’s suffering might well be alleviated in some way, or at least acknowledged. This is emphasized in Zion’s final words (כי רגמות אוסף ילבי ועי (for my groans are many, and my heart is faint). Again, Zion does not dwell on her sin, but draws attention back to her current suffering, the notice of which is her primary concern.

\(^{144}\)See chapter 4 for a discussion of the sin references in v. 20.
2.3.1.5 Summary

The personification of Jerusalem is sustained within Lam 1 with the city being the focus of attention throughout. Within the first two units (vv. 1-6, 7-11) the narrator both names the city (as Zion in v. 4; בת ציון in v. 5; as Jerusalem in vv. 7 and 8) and describes her in 3ps speech. The narrator assigns action, emotion and attributes to the city throughout these verses and casts her in a variety of roles, including widow (v. 1), princess (v. 1), vassal (v. 1), lover and friend (v. 2), mother (vv. 5-6), sinner (v. 5), despised and shamed woman (vv. 8-9), menstruant (v. 9) and violated rape victim (v. 10). Alongside this description of the city and her plight, the narrator also describes the plight of groups within the city (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 11). In vv. 9c, 11c, 12-20, 21-22 the city herself speaks, continuing and developing the personification. In speaking, Zion describes her own pain and suffering (vv. 9c, 11c, 12-14, 20, 21-22) along with the suffering of groups within the community (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19). Zion is embodied within this speech (vv. 13, 14, 16, 20), as she is also in the narrator’s words in v. 17 (previously also in vv. 2, 8). Zion casts herself in a number of roles, including mother (v. 16), grieving woman (vv. 12, 16) and lover (v. 19). Within the chapter there is movement between reference to the personified city, the nation, and groups within the city, highlighting the metaphoric nature of the personification.

2.3.2 Lamentations 2

The personification of Jerusalem as female continues throughout chapter 2. בת designations are used far more frequently than in chapter 1 (בת ציון in vv. 1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; בת ירושלים in vv. 2, 5; בת עמי in v. 13; בת יי in v. 11) coinciding with an increased focus on the physical destruction of the city, and the loss of the cult (vv. 1-8). The personification of the city gains intensity as the chapter develops. In vv. 1-8, a
divine responsibility unit focusing on Yahweh’s destructive actions, the city is neither addressed or described in feminine roles, the personification marked only by the בת designations. After v. 8 however, when description of misery predominates, the description and address of the city as a female figure re-emerges. There is strong use of the language of military destruction within the chapter with Yahweh as the primary agent of the destruction, and in vv. 9-22 there is frequent reference to lament and mourning.

2.3.2.1 Lamentations 2:1-8

Verses 1-8 form a divine responsibility unit in the voice of the narrator. Over thirty verbs are attributed to Yahweh whose destructive activity, defined as a day of Yahweh (v. 1
145), is directed at various aspects of the nation, city, people, and cultic tradition. Five בת designations occur; three for the city as בת ציון (vv. 1, 4, 8); and two for the nation as בת ירושלים (vv. 2, 5). Minimal development of the personified city occurs outside the designations. The narrator is concerned with the nation and the city as political and cultic entities, and only once is any emotion or action associated with the city, and even then it is actual parts of the city - the ramparts and walls - which are mourning. The city and nation are the object of Yahweh’s anger, but in contrast to the previous chapter there is little emphasis on the emotional impact of the destruction. In the absence of descriptions of emotional suffering, the narrator’s speech appears dispassionate. However, in the accumulation of verbs and phrases which describe Yahweh’s destructive action the narrator reveals his own indignation at the events which have occurred.

The unit opens with the cry אים (see also 1:1; 4:1), which leads to a description of Yahweh acting in anger (הא) against בת ציון.146 Verse 1b refers to Yahweh casting

145See the discussion in chapter 3 below.
146The opening verb (pee), which is *hapax legomena*, is ambiguous, and could mean either “humiliate” or “becloud.” See Albrektson (*Text and Theology*, 86) for a detailed discussion. If the
down the splendor of Israel (תפארת ישראל) and not remembering Yahweh’s footstool (ה𝑓ום יسرائيل), both references to either Jerusalem as capital or to the temple, which reinforces Zion’s role as cultic center of the nation. Verses 2-5 have their primary focus on Yahweh’s action against the nation. In v. 2 reference is made to all the dwellings of Jacob (מחוץ בבא), the strongholds of daughter Judah (ממלכת ירשיה) and to the kingdom and all its rulers (מלכו תרשיה). Verse 3 again makes mention of Israel and Jacob, focusing on the destruction which occurred. Verse 4 refers to בֶּית ציון in the construct phrase בֶּית ציון (tent of daughter Zion), an ambiguous phrase whose meaning is uncertain. Finally, v. 5 refers to the destruction of Israel and of palaces and strongholds. Yahweh’s actions resulted in the multiplication of mourning and lamentation in הב ביהודה.

The movement between designations for the city and the nation focuses attention on the plight of a larger entity than Jerusalem herself. The narrator’s concern in these five verses is to portray the extent of the devastation wrought by Yahweh, not just on the city, but on the whole nation. That reference is made to strongholds, the kingdom and the rulers further reduces the personification of the city. There is an emphasis on physical destruction, all of which is associated with loss of pride and glory (vv. 1, 2, 3).

Verses 6-8 center attention back on to Jerusalem, however now in her role as cultic center of the nation. References to the destruction of the cult occur in vv. 6a, 6b, 7a and 7c. References to physical aspects of the city occur in vv. 7b and throughout v. 8. Personification of the walls and ramparts of the city occurs in v. 8, which are said to lament and languish. Apart from this no development of the personified city occurs.

The use of the ב designations within this unit is significant. ב designations

more difficult “becloak” is read, a contrast between Yahweh’s glorious presence in the cloud (Ex. 19:19; 1 Kgs. 8:10-11) and Yahweh’s current absence may be intended. 147Berlin, Lamentations, 68; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 80.
are used far more frequently here than anywhere else in Lamentations, a usage which coincides with an emphasis on the destruction of the physical city, and on the wider nation. It was noted in the prophetic literature that where בַּת designation were used as the means of marking the personification, the figure was less well developed, a trend reflected in Lam 2:1-8.

2.3.2.2 Lamentations 2:9-10

Within these transitional verses the personification of Jerusalem begins to re-emerge in its more developed form. בַּת ציון is again used (v. 10), now with feminine suffixes to denote the city’s possession of aspects of the physical city and of groups of people within the city. There is an increased concern with groups of people within the city, both in terms of their fate and also their mourning and lamentation. The unit continues the 3ps speech of vv. 1-8, but helps to form a transition to the 1ps description of misery which follows, shifting from divine responsibility (v. 9a) to description of misery (v. 9b-10).

Verse 9 opens with reference to physical aspects of the city (שעריה her gates,148 שעריה her bars), both described as possessions of the city, and as being destroyed by Yahweh. Description of misery motifs dominate the remainder of the unit. Verse 9 concerns the fate of different groups within the city; the king, princes and prophets, all named using feminine suffixes. With the exception of the priests, the leadership of the city is described as being either exiled, or having their roles disrupted. Verse 10 continues to focus on individual groups within the city; the elders of daughter Zion (כבדת ירושלים) and the young women of Jerusalem (בתות ירושלים). Both are described as lamenting and mourning. Again, in the personification of the city there is a focus on the inhabitants of the city.

148 The gates are described as having sunk into the ground (מכיקל בואר), which may be read as a literal description of the physical destruction of the gates (Hillers, Lamentations, 105) or as a metaphorical reference to the mourning of the gates (Provan, Lamentations, 68).
2.3.2.3 Lamentations 2:11-19

Verses 11-19 form a description of misery in the voice of the narrator, who expresses his own grief in response to the destruction he has witnessed, and then moves to address Zion directly for the first time. In voicing his own grief and in addressing Zion, the narrator attempts to provide some comfort for Zion, a role he has thus far avoided in his reporting of Zion’s plight.\textsuperscript{149} Reference to lament frames the unit (vv. 11, 18-19) and the personification of Zion is once more complex and developed. Zion is named using אֲדֻמֵי designations (vv. 13, 15, 18), and described and addressed as a female figure, and, as in chapter 1, is embodied (vv. 18-19). Mention is also made to groups of people within the city (vv. 11, 14, 19).

The narrator expresses his own grief in v. 11, describing his weeping and emotional distress.\textsuperscript{150} The cause of the distress is the destruction of אֲדֻמֵי. This is the first use of this designation in Lamentations and in the context of the unit (vv. 11-19) is best understood as a reference to the city itself. As with the אֲדֻמֵי references in Jeremiah, mention of groups within the city co-occurs with this reference. Verses 11c-12 contain an extended description of the fate of infants and children within the city. It is the plight of the children, the most vulnerable in the city, who epitomize and magnify the extent of the suffering.\textsuperscript{151} Verse 13 sees the narrator address the city for

\textsuperscript{149} So also O’Connor (Tears of the World, 37), who states: “The narrator’s own response to Zion’s wounds now becomes part of his lament (2:11-13). For the first time, he speaks to her directly (2:13-19). ... his tone moves from rage against God to empathy for her. His altered attitude could hardly be more remarkable in view of his cool, unengaged stance in chapter 1. Now Zion’s pain affects him so deeply that it becomes his as well.”

\textsuperscript{150} References to bowels being in tumult and the heart being poured on the ground is reminiscent of Zion’s self description in 1:20.

\textsuperscript{151} cf. Westermann (Lamentations, 153–54) who suggests that the lament over the children is an expression of the incomprehensible severity of Yahweh’s actions: “The precipitating event was the ‘day of wrath’ on which Israel experienced the punishment of God. Although the event was recognised as punishment, it remained incomprehensible in its severity. The severity of the event was nowhere more evident than in the suffering and death of small children.” In the suffering of young children, the explanation of divine punishment does not suffice.
the first time, picking up Jerusalem’s need for a comforter. Two designations are used, הבשלה ית צור ו הבשלה. The verse contains three rhetorical questions, all of which point to the enormity of Zion’s suffering and the impossibility of comfort for her. That the narrator makes reference to his attempt to comfort Zion is a change from the previous chapter where he did not assume this role. The narrator acknowledges the extent of Zion’s suffering, comparing it with the vastness of the sea (כי גורל כים שבכ). The implication is, however, that comfort and healing (v. 13cβ) are not possible. Verse 14 contains the only reference to sin within chapter 2. The prophets are indicted and are excluded as a source of comfort or healing for Zion because of their failure to expose iniquity, and because of their false and misleading oracles.152

Personified Jerusalem is again given a בת designation in v. 15 (בת רוחלם). Within vv. 15 and 16, Jerusalem is portrayed as a victim of mockery and taunting by passersby and enemies alike. That the passersby mock Zion excludes them as a source of comfort and adds to Zion’s suffering. Jerusalem is taunted with ironic words of contempt, throwing back at her the Zion theology which led to a belief in her own inviolability (v. 15).153 The narrator continues to address the personified city in v. 17, confirming the divine responsibility for the destruction. Key motifs of vv. 1-8 are repeated: [This word is not visible] (Yahweh has done what he proposed) strongly echoes v. 8, reinforcing not only that Yahweh was responsible for the destruction, but that it happened to a set plan, or more accurately, purpose.154 Yahweh’s lack of mercy (v. 17c) also echoes motifs vv. 1-8.

152 See discussion in chapter 4.
154 B. Albrektson (History and the God: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and Israel [Lund: Gleerup, 1967], 87–89) urges caution in the application of the concept of a “divine plan” to OT material, arguing that it is not possible to speak of a “plan” for history in terms of some predetermined master goal. Rather, the OT notion is that of a chain of events and goals in and through which Yahweh acts purposefully. He states “the view that Yahweh acts purposefully in what happens is not necessarily identical with the idea that history as a whole is heading for a definite goal along a road laid out according to a fixed plan.” Rather, “Yahweh pursues certain aims, a divine purpose is discernable in all that happens.” In this context then, the poet recognises the purposeful action of Yahweh in the events described.
The final two verses of the unit return to motifs of lamentation and mourning in the form of a call or exhortation to the city to mourn.\textsuperscript{155} The walls of Zion are also called to lament, again emphasizing the physical reality of the city's being (1:4; 2:8, 9). The use of mourning motifs echo those in vv. 11-12, thus framing the unit. The call to lamentation is best understood as a call to continue lamenting, and Westermann is perhaps correct when he argues that in this call to lament, the poet is challenging the people "to dare once again to call upon Yahweh."\textsuperscript{156}

Throughout this unit the personification of the city is strongly developed. Framed by the lament of the narrator and the call for Zion to lament, the incomparable suffering of Zion is portrayed. The fate of the city's children is given special focus, casting the city in the role of mother and portraying her as a figure to be pitied. Throughout the whole chapter, city/mother Zion is portrayed as a victim at the hands of Yahweh and, with the narrator's empathetic response, the poem's audience is likewise drawn into sympathy with Zion.

2.3.2.4 Lamentations 2:20-22

Zion speaks for the first time within this chapter, appealing to Yahweh to notice her suffering. Zion's speech continues her role as mother of the inhabitants of the city, but also as supplicant, coming before Yahweh in the hope of evoking a response to her plight. The unit contains both description of misery and divine responsibility motifs. Although the appeal in itself contains no lament language, it reflects the horror of the military destruction, and arises out of the call to lament in vv. 18-19.

\textsuperscript{155}The initial line of v. 18 is problematic and lengthy debate surrounds it (see Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 35–37 and Albrektson, Text and Theology, 116–18 for detailed discussion of the textual issues). Despite much conjecture, there is little certainty as to the sense of this opening line. However in the light of the remainder of vv. 18-19, the line should be read as an imperative, calling on the city to lament (with Albrektson, Text and Theology, 116; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 36; Provan, Lamentations, 75; Hillers, Lamentations, 95; Westermann, Lamentations, 143).

\textsuperscript{156}Westermann, Lamentations, 157.
Zion’s appeal to Yahweh echoes her appeals in 1:9, 11 and 20, asking that Yahweh look and see (ראה ידיה והبسيות). Three questions follow the appeal, designed to evoke response from Yahweh, attempting to goad Yahweh into responding through the description of the extreme suffering inflicted on the people. Zion asks למל הערלתי וה (To whom have you done this?), thus reminding Yahweh of their past relationship and leading into the next two questions which challenge Yahweh to respond, describing as they do the cannibalism of the mothers who eat their own children,\(^\text{157}\) and the death of priests and prophets in the sanctuary. Zion continues to build her case in vv. 21-22, describing the death of various groups within the city. All aspects of society are encompassed through the reference to the old and the young (יוצר והן). Reference to the youth is repeated (v. 21b), portraying the sense of lost future for Zion. Returning to the theme of vv. 1-8, Zion names Yahweh as the cause of all that has happened (vv. 21c-22). The chapter closes with a final reference to the destruction of Zion’s children, which in the context is not only the infants, but all the inhabitants of the city.\(^\text{158}\) As such, Zion is again cast in the role of mother.

2.3.2.5 Summary

Although divided into distinct units, Lam 2 forms a tightly woven whole in which the personification of the city is sustained throughout, although it is limited in vv. 1-8. The speech of the narrator dominates the unit (vv. 1-19), with Zion speaking only in vv. 20-22. Within vv. 1-8 the personification is minimal, with the narrator referring to the city and nation with ה-double designations (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8), and with only one emotion or action attributed to parts of the city (the walls and ramparts of v. 8).

\(^{157}\) The reality or extent of cannibalism is not known. Hillers (Lamentations, 108) suggests that reference to cannibalism may be a literary motif common to ANE famine reports, as opposed to a historical reference. In this context it is strongly expressive of the horrors faced by the city.

\(^{158}\) This imagery draws on the ANE notion of the city as nurturer for those that live within her walls (Tikva Frymer-Kensky, In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth [New York: Free Press, 1992], 172).
The emphasis within this unit is on the destructive action of Yahweh against city, nation and cult. The personification of the city begins to strengthen in vv. 9-10, with feminine suffixes applied to denote Zion’s possession of both physical aspects of the city and of groups of people. In vv. 11-19 the narrator addresses Zion, again intensifying the personification, with the narrator attempting to comfort the city for the first time. Zion is again named using בות designation alongside her description and address as woman. Zion is cast in the role of mother (v. 19), the victim of taunts (vv. 15-16) and as a lamenting woman (vv. 18-19). The personification of the city continues in Zion’s speech in vv. 20-22, with Zion appealing to Yahweh to notice her suffering and to respond. Zion again casts herself in the role of mother (vv. 21-22). As in chapter 1, there is movement between reference to the city as woman and to groups within the city (vv. 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21). While the content of this chapter is similar to chapter 1 (i.e. descriptions of misery and divine responsibility motifs are used in both), the portrayal of the city is more sympathetic within chapter 2. The narrator describes Zion as a victim of Yahweh’s anger, and is himself drawn into lament over the destruction. Although sin is mentioned (v. 14) it is not as primary a concern as in chapter 1, thus increasing the sense of Zion as victim.

2.3.3 Lamentations 3

The personification of Zion is all but absent in chapter 3, replaced in vv. 1-39 by a male figure (v. 1 אורי נבר). Within v. 48 the designation בות עמי occurs, where, in language similar to 2:11, a 1ps voice describes his tears over the destruction of בות עמי. Whether this is a reference to the city or the people is difficult to determine, and it may be that both are intended. Verses 42-47 are a communal lament in the voice

159 Those who recognize 3:48 as a reference to the city include: Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 125; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 54; Westermann, Lamentations, 183); O. Kaiser (“Klagelieder.”) and H. Boecker (Klagelieder, 70).
of the people, while reference is made to the city in v. 51. If the city is intended, this is not a developed personification, although the unit (vv. 49-51) shares some features in common with other personification texts. There is reference to lament over the destruction of the city/people, and there is co-occurring reference to groups of people within the city (v. 51).

2.3.4 Lamentations 4

The personification of the city resumes again in chapter 4, although in diminished form. The primary focus of the chapter is the miserable state of various groups within the city. However, personification of the city is suggested through the use of four חט designations; חט צני in vv. 3, 6 and 10, חט צני in v. 22. Groups of people are also described as belonging to the city (vv. 7, 13). The personification is, however, less unequivocal than in chapters 1 and 2. Beyond the opening אב, lament language is not present in the chapter, although in the extended descriptions of misery, lament form is evoked. Behind all the images are the realities of military invasion and its consequences.

2.3.4.1 Lamentations 4:1-10

Verses 1-10 form a description of misery in the 3ps voice of the narrator. The חט designation is used three times (vv. 3, 6, 10), and there are some grounds for arguing that these are a personification of the city. In v. 7, the princes are named with 2fs suffixes, further suggesting that the personified city is present.\textsuperscript{160} Zion is described as mother (vv. 1-2, 3-4), albeit a mother who has failed in this role. Direct lament language is absent.

\textsuperscript{160} That personification is present in chapter 4 is not always recognized, arising largely out of a reading of חט צני as a designation of the people, not of the city (for example Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 145). As will be argued, there is some case for recognizing the personified city within this chapter.
In the opening verses (vv. 1-2) the children of Zion are likened to tarnished gold and scattered stones. Verse 1 describes gold growing dim and changing, a metaphor developed in v. 2 as the children of Zion are said to have been, in the past, worth their weight in gold, but now reckoned as invaluable as everyday earthen pots. The problematic metaphor of v. 1, with its reference to sacred stones scattered in the street, is best read as another reference to the children having become worthless. These children are explicitly named as Zion's children (בֵּיהי צִיּוֹן), thus introducing the personified city.

Verses 3-4 continue to focus on the fate of the children. In v. 3, בֵּיהי עָמִי is compared to two animals: jackals, often portrayed negatively, but here positively as feeding their young; and ostriches, portrayed negatively, by implication not caring for their young. can be read as either a reference to Zion as mother, thus continuing the reference in v. 2, or equally as a reference to the actual mothers of Zion who are no longer able to care for their children due to the extremity of the famine. It may be that the images of actual and metaphorical mother/s overlap. Verses 4-5 continue the famine theme, describing the famished children begging for, and not receiving, food (v. 4), and the hunger of even the wealthiest in society (v. 5).

Verse 6 again refers to בֵּיהי עָמִי. In this verse, however, the referent is more clearly the city as opposed to the people. The verse compares the fate of Jerusalem with the fate of Sodom, and it is this reference to the city of Sodom which confirms that Jerusalem is the intended referent of בֵּיהי עָמִי. In comparing the two cities, the

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161 Hillers (Lamentations, 135, 137) argues that the images of vv. 1-2 are nonsensical as gold is known for its quality of not tarnishing. However, as argued by Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 130), that is precisely the point: "the occurrence of the impossible pointedly underscores the severity of the situation."

162 Verse 1b reads יָם, generally translated "the sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street." There is however debate over the meaning of יָם. J. A. Emerton ("The Meaning of Qds 'N' in Lamentations 4:1," ZAW 79 [1967]: 233–36) provides a comprehensive summary of the relevant issues.

163 Provan, Lamentations, 111.

164 O'Connor, Tears of the World, 61.
plight of Jerusalem is seen as worse than that of Sodom. The understanding of this
verse hinges on the translation of two words, הָמָא and עֹרֶר, traditionally understood
as references to sin or iniquity, but better translated as references to punishment. 165
The long, drawn out punishment of Jerusalem is described as far worse than the
speedy overthrow of Sodom. Verses 7-10 explicate what was implied in v. 6. The
prolonged suffering of groups within the city is described, including the reduction of
healthy princes to shrivelled, blackened victims of famine (vv. 7-8). The princes
belong to בֵּית צֶמֶר (v. 6), as is indicated by the use of a 2fs suffix (נִוָּרָיו). Verse 9
more explicitly draws out v. 6 in its statement that those pierced by the sword were
happier than those pierced by hunger. 166

The climax of the description of misery, which focuses on the effect of famine,
is reached in v. 10. As with 2:20, the horror of cannibalism is described. That
compassionate women boil their own children reinforces the cruelty motif of v. 3, and
again within v. 10 human mothers and Zion as mother overlap. The unit closes with a
third reference to Zion הֵיה לֶבּוֹרַת לָמָּא בֵּית צֶמֶר (they became their food in
the destruction of בֵּית צֶמֶר)

There is grounds for understanding the בֵּית צֶמֶר references in 4:1-10 as
designations for the personified city. There is, however, some ambiguity, and in vv. 3
and 10 there is a likely overlap with reference to the people. The ambiguity of
reference, however, conforms with the pattern seen in Jeremiah. Where the city is
named as בֵּית צֶמֶר, the communal nature of the city lies close to the surface of the
metaphor, making it difficult to distinguish between the city and the community.

165 See chapter 4 for a full discussion of this verse.
166 The exact sense of the second line is problematic. The verb הָלַךְ means “to flow,” with Gottlieb
(Text of Lamentations, 64) arguing that the sense is of a slow death from hunger. The participle
דָּשְׁנָה is also difficult. Hillers (Lamentations, 135–36) and R. Gordis (Lamentations, 29) argue
that it refers back to the מָלַל of v. 9a and means “was pierced/wounded,” a reference to those
wounded by the sword. More commonly this is understood as a reference to the famine
(Albrektson, Text and Theology, 183; Westermann, Lamentations, 194; Provan,
Lamentations, 116; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 64; Berlin, Lamentations, 108).
2.3.4.2 Lamentations 4:11-20

Three units are found within these verses; a transitional unit (vv. 11-12), an extended sin motif (vv. 13-16), and a description of misery (vv. 17-20). The personification of the city is minimal within these units. In vv. 11-12, the city is named as Zion, thus forming a link back to the personification of vv. 1-10. Although Zion is named, no further personification is present. Rather, the focus of v. 11 is on the outpouring of Yahweh’s wrath on the city, the result of which is a fire in Zion that consumes even the foundations. Verse 12 reports the amazement of the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the world that Jerusalem could have been destroyed, reflecting a view of Zion's inviolability that is unlikely to have been held anywhere but within Jerusalem and Judah.\textsuperscript{167} Verses 13-16 concern the guilt of priests and prophets and their subsequent impurity and exile.\textsuperscript{168} The personification of the city continues only in as much as possessive feminine singular forms are used to describe the relationship of the priests and the prophets to the city. They are her prophets (כהנים) and her priests (כהנים) and they are in her midst. In the focus on specific groups within the city, the pattern of movement between the personified city and the inhabitants which she encompasses is continued. Finally, vv. 17-20 form a description of misery unit in the 1cpl voice of the inhabitants of the city. Again, the shift to the plural voice is a common feature in those texts which personify the city, particularly in those that use the הב sınır designation. These verses give an account of events around the fall of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{169} v. 17 describes the futile hope of the people that another nation would come to their aid; v. 18 refers to the oppressive presence of the enemy during the siege; while vv. 19-20 suggest the flight of the king from the

\textsuperscript{167} Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 149; Provan, \textit{Lamentations}, 117.

\textsuperscript{168} See chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of this difficult unit.

\textsuperscript{169} Westermann (\textit{Lamentations}, 205) and Hillers (\textit{Lamentations}, 151) note that vv. 17-20 bear close resemblance to the account of the fall of Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 25:4-7.
city and his final capture.

2.3.4.3 Lamentations 4:21-22

The personification of Jerusalem as female has its final expression in Lamentations in 4:21-22. The voice returns to that of the narrator, who addresses both Edom and Zion using feminine forms and refers to both using נב designations. Verse 22 contrasts the future fate of Zion with that of Edom, and while it is debatable as to how hopeful this verse is, at least limited hope for Zion is suggested.

The primary focus is the future fate of Edom, expressed through an ironic contrast motif in v. 21. Edom is personified through the application of נב designations and the use of feminine singular forms to address her. She is called on to rejoice and be glad (نشاطי נבמה), the implication being that the rejoicing is over the fall of Jerusalem. The verse concludes, using precative verbs,\textsuperscript{170} with reference to the future judgment and humiliation of Edom. In v. 22 the fate of Edom and Zion, both addressed with נב designations, are contrasted. Limited hope is expressed that Zion’s suffering is complete (ותי) and that she will be exiled no more/longer (v. 22a).\textsuperscript{171} Against Edom, the precative wish is that her iniquity will be visited (אשא) upon her, and her sins uncovered (חל).

The personification of both cities is developed within this unit. Through the personification of Jerusalem, the city herself becomes the one who is exiled, and as such, the community behind the metaphor is not emphasized.

2.3.4.4 Summary

The personification of the city is present within chapter 4, although it is not as sustained or as developed as in chapters 1 and 2. Three times references is made to נב

\textsuperscript{170}Following Provan, Lamentations, 123; Hillers, Lamentations, 269; Westermann, Lamentations, 196; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 68; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 196.
and a case can be made for identifying this as a designation for the city, albeit one in which the community is close to the surface of the metaphor. In vv. 3-4 and 10 an overlap between reference to the metaphorical mother, Zion, and the actual mothers of the city occurs. Zion is again portrayed in different roles, primarily as mother (vv. 1-2, 3-4, 10) and as the victim of famine and warfare (vv. 6-9). Zion also has possession over groups of people within the city (vv. 7-8, 13-16). She is addressed as female in vv. 21-22, where she is also named as בת ציון, portrayed as an exiled and punished city. Within this chapter there is movement between personified Zion and reference to the actual (not personified) city, and as such the personification is less intense and sustained.

2.3.5 Conclusions: The Personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations

The personification of Jerusalem as female is a significant device within Lamentations. As a literary device it is most developed in chapters 1 and 2, and is present with diminished intensity in chapter 4. Apart from one brief use in 3:48, it is absent in chapters 3 and 5. The sustained personification in chapters 1, 2 and 4 allows the city to be portrayed in a detailed and complex way. Zion is cast in different roles, and her plight portrayed from a variety of perspectives. The personification of Jerusalem is a rhetorical device which serves the purpose of the poems well, allowing the expression of different dimensions of sorrow, pain and suffering in a rich and powerful way.

The personification of the city is marked a number of ways. בת designation (בת and בת עמי) are applied to the city, who is addressed and described as a female figure, cast in a variety of roles, and given voice to express her own suffering. Throughout the poems, Zion is embodied, and has action, attributes, speech

177 Again, the verbs are best read in the preceptive, and as such the reference to the suffering being complete and the exile over are preceptive wishes, not promises as such.
and emotion given to her. As a development of the sustained nature of the personification in Lamentations, the various ways of marking the personification are mixed both within individual units, and across whole chapters. Despite this mixing, some patterns of usage can be defined, particularly in relation to the תֶּב designations.

In 2:1-8, the primary means of marking the personification is through the application of תֶּב designations to the city and nation, with almost no other development of the figure within the unit. The focus is on the political and cultic function of the city, and there is a decreased development of the personified figure when compared to other units. In chapter 4, which uses predominantly שמימ designations to mark the personification (vv. 3, 6, 10), the personification is again less developed, and there is greater ambiguity as to whether the referent is the city or the people. Both these trends conform to the usage in the prophetic literature.

In the remaining material (chapter 1, 2:9-22, and also 4:21-22), where the תֶּב designations are less prominent, the personified figure is highly developed and presents as a complex and detailed figure. The personification of the city is maintained both within the chapters, occurring in all units in chapters 1 and 2, and in large sections of chapter 4 (vv. 1-10, minimally in vv. 11-20, and again in vv. 21-22), and across chapters, making this one of the most sustained and important literary devices within these chapters. The sustained nature of the personification helps to build the empathetic portrayal of the city. Zion is cast in a variety of different roles, primarily by the narrator, but also within her own speech. Roles include widow (1:1), princess (1:1), vassal (1:1), mourner (1:12, 16, 2:18-19), lover and friend (1:2, 19), menstruant (1:9), shamed and despised woman (1:8-9), rape victim (1:10) and sinner (1:5, 21-22; 4:21-22). Her paramount role is, perhaps, that of a mother who grieves over the loss of her children (1:5, 16; 2:19, 21-22; 4:1-10) although she is also portrayed as failing within that role (4:1-10). Chapter 1 assigns the greatest number of roles to Zion. In chapters 2 and 4, her primary portrayal is as a victim of war (military
destruction) and famine, and as mother.

Zion is given extended speech within Lamentations, particularly in chapter 1 (vv. 12-20, 21-22), but also in chapter 2 (vv. 20-21), which drives home the impact of the destruction upon her as person. Zion presents her pain and suffering, and pleads constantly for her suffering to be noticed. In this portrayal of Zion’s longing for notice and comfort the reader is drawn into her plight, and as audience, is led to view Zion as a victim of unspeakable horror. In this way Zion’s plight is portrayed with great empathy.

The speech of the narrator about and to Zion also evokes sympathy for the city. In chapter 1, the narrator describes the plight of the city, casting her in different roles (particularly in vv. 1-6), but also describing her extreme grief and the enormity of her shame and degradation. Initially, the narrator reveals none of his own reaction to the city’s plight, although in the roles he casts her in, and in his reference to her isolation and comfortless state, empathy is hinted at.\textsuperscript{172} It is only in chapter 2 (vv. 11-19) that the narrator allows his own grief to be fully expressed, standing with Zion in his mourning, and attempting, to no avail, to comfort her. The portrayal of the suffering of the city and the community in chapter 4, reaching its peak in the reference to cannibalism in v.10, further reinforces the narrator’s empathy for the city in her desperate plight.

Zion’s empathetic portrayal is, in part, a function of the poetry itself. Although not strictly adhering to the individual and/or communal lament forms, the function of these poems is the expression of grief and pain in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem. The lament form is evoked throughout, and elements of the funeral dirge (e.g. the opening הַנָּשָׁה, use of the contrast motif) are also present. Multiple references are made to the city, the people and the narrator crying out in lament and mourning.

\textsuperscript{172}As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5, this empathy of the narrator stands in tension with his reference to her sin (vv. 5, 8-9), and in fact with Zion’s own references to her sin (vv. 14, 18, 20, 21-22).
The personification of Zion heightens the expression of the grief, and the use of the figure within this context heightens audience affinity with her grief and pain. As will be seen in the discussion which follows, it is this empathetic portrayal of Zion which marks one of the biggest contrasts between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

2.4 The Personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations and its Relationship to the Prophetic Literature.

The personification of Jerusalem as female is a literary device which is used almost exclusively in the prophetic literature and Lamentations. The personification of the city as female predates Lamentations, and in using this literary device it can be argued that Lamentations situates itself in relation to this prophetic tradition, and evokes associations from this tradition to enrich its audience’s reading of the poetry. The use of personification within Lamentations is not, however, a mindless borrowing from a known tradition. Lamentations uses the device for its own purpose, evoking some aspects of the tradition, but also modifying and shaping it to help portray the depth and horror of the suffering which occurred in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem. In contrast to the prophetic literature, Lamentations’ use of the figure evokes audience sympathy for the city, an empathy largely absent in the prophetic literature.

A number of similarities do occur between the use of the device in the prophetic literature and in Lamentations.

The properties of Jerusalem’s personification are essentially the same. The prophetic literature and Lamentations both use the title ירושלם to name the city and to identify her special status. Both describe and address the city as a female persona, and give the city different roles.

References to the city using ירושלים titles occurs outside the prophetic literature and Lamentations in Pss 9:14; 45:13; 137:8.
Within both Lamentations and the prophetic literature, there is movement between the personified figure of the city and the community which inhabits the city. This is an important feature of the personification. As argued, personification is a powerful rhetorical device, allowing the pain and suffering, whether imminent or realized, to be expressed. In the slippage between the city and the community, this function of the metaphor is repeatedly exposed. The city is both a woman, with her many and varied attributes and behaviours, but as city, she is also the sum of the inhabitants within her walls.

Within Lamentations, movement also occurred between reference to the personified city and the actual, physical city. While the city represents the people, it also has a physical being, made up of walls, roads and so forth. It was noted that the title in much of the prophetic literature is closer to a geographical/geopolitical designation for the city, which, in the case of Isaiah, evokes the associations of Zion theology. This is true to some extent in Lamentations. In 2:1-8, which uses a high proportion of daughter titles, the focus is almost entirely on the destruction of either the physical city, or the cult within the city. Despite the personification of the city, and the attribution of human characteristics, the physical aspect of the city’s existence does not entirely disappear in the application of the metaphor. Both the human and the physical city are encompassed in the one metaphor.

Significant differences also occur in Lamentations’ use of the personification device.

Unique to Lamentations is the inter-mixing of the various means of personifying Jerusalem within individual units, across chapters and the book. Lamentations uses the personification in a more extended manner. In the prophetic literature the personified city appears, on the whole, only in individual units or parts of units. Although Zion is cast in a variety of roles (mother, woman in labor, mourner, rape victim, lover, whore/promiscuous woman, military aggressor, victim of warfare,
shepherdess, ravaged), the texts most often portray the city only in a single role. Exceptions do occur, particularly in Jeremiah, where a number of texts portray the city in more than one role (4:29-31; 10:17-21; 13:20-27), and in Jeremiah 4 the personification occurs within three units, two of which are successive (11-18, 19-21, 29-31). Within Jeremiah 4, however, other units in which the city is not personified interrupt the portrayal of the personified city, and as such the device is not as sustained. Only one of the prophetic texts considered provided a sustained personification of Jerusalem; Zephaniah 3, which contains primarily salvation material. The texts from Jeremiah and Zephaniah taken together, however, do indicate that there is an increased development in the use of this motif in the early sixth century, a trend followed by Lamentations.

Lamentations however, develops the personification beyond both Jeremiah and Zephaniah. In its sustained development of the personified city the figure is portrayed in a diverse range of roles in a very concentrated way, often with multiple roles applied to the city within the one unit (e.g. 1:1-6). Within Lamentations, Zion is portrayed as mother, widow, mourner, princess, vassal, rape victim, shamed and despised woman, menstruant, lover (or perhaps adulteress\textsuperscript{174}) and friend. Over and above these specific roles she is presented as isolated, humiliated, mocked, taunted and shamed. All these aspects are held together in the one figure in a way that is unique to Lamentations.

The sustained personification within Lamentations allows a deeper affiliation with the figure on behalf of the audience. A variety of emotions and actions are attributed to Zion, giving her human-like qualities. Zion is given her own voice and speaks passionately of her plight. Her suffering is viewed from a multitude of angles, through both the voice of the narrator and her own voice. This variety of attribution and description is not as developed in the prophetic literature and its extended use in

\textsuperscript{174}Berlin's (Lamentations, 50–51) interpretation of Lam 1:2.
Lamentations allows the audience to enter more fully into the emotion and despair of the figure.

As discussed, the purpose of the texts also marks a point of distinction between Lamentations and the prophetic texts. In nearly all the prophetic material considered the intention was to announce judgment. Lament language was used, or lament form evoked, but the purpose was almost exclusively to announce imminent and often inevitable judgment upon the city and/or people. In echoing the personification of Jerusalem in the prophetic judgment texts, Lamentations alludes to the city now as judged city, but does it in such a way as to transform the motif. In Lamentations' use of the motif, judgment is not its primary purpose, but rather the primary intent is to give voice to the depth and complexity of the suffering following the fall of Jerusalem. And this complexity is served by the personification of the city and the sustained and varied images that could be evoked through this figure. 175

It can be argued that the personification of Jerusalem is its most intense in Lam 1. It is here that she is cast in the most roles (widow, mother, princess, vassal, mourner, menstruant, lover, friend, rape victim, despised woman), and Zion has her most extended speech within this chapter. Within Lam 2 the personification is minimal in vv. 1-8, although it is intensified in vv. 9-19. Zion’s speech is restricted to 3 verses within this chapter (vv. 20-22). The personification is significantly diminished in Lam 4. Lamentations 1 also contains more references to sin than any of the other chapters, with both the narrator and the city assigning ultimate responsibility for the destruction to the city’s own behaviour (vv. 5, 8-9, 14, 18, 20, 21-22). A powerful dynamic is established within chapter 1. In its use of the personification device the text immediately situates itself in relation to the prophetic literature, a

175 As will be discussed in chapter 4, one of the aspects of the prophetic texts considered is their frequent indictment of the city/people and the strong link made between sin and judgment. It will be shown that the differences in relation to sin and judgment between Lamentations and the prophetic literature helps to develop the sympathetic portrayal of Zion.
relationship reinforced in the way responsibility is assigned to the city. Through these motifs Lamentations aligns itself with the prophetic notion that the destruction of the city is Yahweh’s judgment on sin, however that judgment is now in the past. Despite this alignment with the prophetic literature these poems express lament not judgment. Through the sustained portrayal of the city, the casting of her in different roles, especially as mother, widow and victim, the text subverts Zion’s figure from her negative portrayal in the prophetic literature to a figure who is to be pitied. In the wake of the destruction it is sympathy not judgment which is appropriate.

The personification of Jerusalem as female in Lamentations is one aspect of this book which forms a link with the prophetic corpus. Lamentations shares a number of distinct features in its use of the personified city figure with its prophetic predecessors, particularly in relation to its power to evoke images of suffering, whether this be impending, as in the prophets, or realized as in Lamentations. In Lamentations however, the device is magnified and shaped for the purposes of the book itself. Through the use of the personification device, Lamentations evokes a range of audience associations which place it within the trajectory of the prophetic tradition and its emphasis on judgment, an association reinforced in chapter 1 with its frequent reference to Zion’s guilt. In contrast to the prophetic literature however, Lamentations does not announce judgment against the city but laments its destruction, expressing pain and suffering over what is, for both city and people, fulfilled judgment. To facilitate the expression of pain and suffering the personified city is presented as a more diverse and rich figure within Lamentations and her portrayal is sustained more widely across the book. The use of this device within Lamentations provides a vehicle through which the depth of pain and suffering experienced within the Jerusalem community could be explored, and the very humanizing of the city allows the audience to enter into that suffering. In this way, Lamentations moves beyond the concerns of the prophetic literature. While the prophetic concern with
judgment may lie behind Lamentations, it is in the background only. Through the very focus on the personified figure of the city, Lamentations gives priority to the expression of the pain and suffering of the community/city, a suffering that could most richly be explored through the figure of the personified city itself.
Chapter 3

The Day of Yahweh:

The Relationship between Lamentations and the Prophetic Literature

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was argued that the personification of Jerusalem as female is one of the ways through which Lamentations enters into a dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature. This literary motif is confined almost exclusively to Lamentations and the prophetic literature, and in using the motif, Lamentations evokes in its audience associations with that literature. Within this current chapter, a second motif, the day of Yahweh, also used only within the prophetic literature and Lamentations, will be examined, again seeking to explore the nature of the dialogic relationship between the two bodies of literature.

In *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, Gottwald argues that the day of Yahweh motif forms a significant link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.¹ In defining the prophetic concept of the day of Yahweh, Gottwald suggests that it can be understood as a “radical ‘root and branch’ destruction of evil, regardless of national boundaries, that is perpetuated and restated by a long succession of prophets.”² Gottwald argues that within Lamentations, the prophetic conviction concerning the day of Yahweh is borne out, identifying the fall of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh “in confirmation of the prophets’ firm faith that it was to be a day of doom for Israel.”³ Gottwald identifies references to the day of Yahweh in Lam 1:12, 21; 2:1, 21, 22, although the phrase, in a typical form, only occurs in

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¹Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies*, 82–89.
²Ibid., 83.
³Ibid., 84.
2:22 (ברוך אֲלֵיךַ יְהוָה). He argues that within Lamentations the day of Yahweh is not considered as a singular event which marks the end of time, but has a twofold character, described as a past event against Jerusalem, but envisioned as a future event against Israel’s enemies. In both this past and future perspective, the day of Yahweh is to be understood as an expression of Yahweh’s wrath.\(^4\) Gottwald then goes on to compare some of the characteristics of the day as understood in Lamentations with its expression in the prophetic literature. He identifies a number of shared images, such as the day being a day of battle and a day of sacrifice, but also notes that other elements, such as images of darkness, are less emphasized in Lamentations.\(^5\)

Although the link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature through the day of Yahweh motif has been noted by other commentators, there is, again, a lack of systematic exploration as to the nature of the relationship between the use of the motif in Lamentations and the prophetic literature.\(^6\) While the shared motif is often noted, there is little or no discussion as to how the motif is taken up and used within Lamentations, or how the use is similar to or different from that seen in the prophetic literature. The aim of the current discussion is to consider the use of the day of Yahweh motif in those prophetic texts that can be argued as being either prior to or contemporaneous with Lamentations as a basis for understanding how the motif is used within Lamentations and to explore the nature of the dialogic interaction entered into through the use of this motif. As a prelude to the textual discussion, an overview of the history of the research into the day of Yahweh motif will help to situate the current discussion in the larger field of study which explores this motif.

3.1.1 The Day of Yahweh as a Literary Motif

The twentieth century discussion of the day of Yahweh in the Hebrew bible revolves around three key issues; the origin of the motif, its key constituents, and the

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\(^4\)Ibid., 87.
\(^5\)Ibid., 86.
\(^6\)Hillers, Lamentations, 89; Dobbs-Allsopp, Weep, 63; Berlin, Lamentations, 77; O'Connor, Tears of...
relationship of the motif to Jewish eschatology. At the outset, it is worth noting that there is little consensus as to which texts should be understood as day of Yahweh texts. The texts used as a basis for discussion range in number from the twelve texts of Y. Hoffmann or thirteen of G. von Rad, to the twenty-nine of L. Cerny and M. Weiss. The differences between the studies are dictated, in large part, by the writer’s understanding of the day of Yahweh, and the parameters set by each of the writers. Hoffmann, by way of example, argues that only those texts which use the exact phrase ייִים יְהוָה should be used to define the basic character of the day, whereas others are prepared to use those texts which use variants of the basic phrase. As will be seen, only some studies include the Lamentations references within their discussion, and those which do often limit the references to 2:22, which uses the phrase יִים אֲדֻחָה.9

K. Cathcart provides an overview of a number of early studies which initiated

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the World, 43; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 79–81.
L. Cerny (The Day of Yahweh and Some Related Problems [Prace z Vedlechchchchv Ustavu; Prague: Filosoficka Fakulta University Karlovy, 1948]) considers Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; 58:5; 61:2; Jer 46:10; Ezek 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18 (x2), 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 8, 14 (x2), 18; 2:2, 3; Zech 14:1; Mal 2:23; Lam 2:22.
8 Variations on the phrase include ייִים יְהוָה, ייִים אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִים אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדֻחָה, ייִם אֲדו... (taken from Weiss, “Day of the Lord,” 64–65). While Weiss’ list includes Lam 2:22, it does not take into account the other four references in Lamentations, (1:12, 21; 2:1; 2:21).
the discussion on the day of Yahweh. In 1899, R. Charles argued that the concept of the day of Yahweh existed prior to its earliest eighth century use in Amos 5:18-20 as a popular expectation of a day when Yahweh would act against Israel’s enemies. The nature of this day was a day in which Yahweh went into battle. M. P. Smith (1901) similarly argues that in Amos there is a transformation from the day of Yahweh understood as a day when Yahweh would lead Israel in battle against her enemies, to a day of Israel’s punishment and humiliation by Yahweh. In 1905, H. Gressmann rejected the conclusion that the day was a day of battle, arguing instead that the concept reflected a cosmic understanding and that, from the pre-exilic period forward, it had an eschatological character. According to Gressmann, the concept, as developed in Israelite thought, was borrowed from an already existing Babylonian eschatology. Then, in 1917, S. Mowinckel first published his theory concerning the importance of the New Year festival in the Israelite cult, a theory which places central importance on the enthronement of Yahweh. Mowinckel links the origins of the day of Yahweh with this cultic festival, and, as expanded in a later work, he argues that in its original meaning the day of Yahweh

is really the day of His manifestation or epiphany, the day of His festival, and particularly that festal day which was also the day of His enthronement, His royal day, the festival of Yahweh, the day when as king He came and “wrought salvation for his people.” As the people hoped for the realization of the ideal of kingship, particularly when reality fell furthest short of it, so, from a quite early period, whenever they were in distress and oppressed by misfortune, they hoped for and expected a glorious “day of Yahweh” (cf. Amos v, 18ff.), when Yahweh must remember His covenant, and appear as the mighty king and deliverer, bringing a “day” upon His own and His people’s enemies (cf. Isa. ii, 12ff.).

Mowinckel does not associate an eschatological view with this original cultic concept, but argues that it was a later development within prophetic circles. The term is associated with a transformation brought about through Yahweh’s epiphany in the cult.

\(^{10}\) Cathcart, “Day of Yahweh,” 84–85.

\(^{11}\) Cited Cathcart, “Day of Yahweh,” 84.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., 132–33.
Discussion of these three concepts - the day of Yahweh as a day of battle, the day of Yahweh as an eschatological concept, and the link with the enthronement festival as a day of Yahweh’s epiphany - dominate the discussion throughout the twentieth century.

In 1948, Cerny rejected Mowinckel’s conclusion that the day was linked with the enthronement festival. 14 He suggested that in its original form, the day was a day decreed by Yahweh in which Yahweh will act to shape the future of the nation. Over time the concept developed such that the day came to be understood as a day which would change the existing world order, initiating a new and better order. 15 In its “pure” form, the day of Yahweh was expected in the indefinite future, and could be defined as a day of wrath, fierce anger, vengeance and darkness. Important in the day of Yahweh is a description of what would happen on the day (although Amos 5:18-20 is an exception), with the reasons for the day sometimes given. Frequently changes in cosmic or natural phenomena are also included in the description. 16 Finally, Cerny argues that although the concept of the day of Yahweh could originally be applied to more than one day, over time it developed such that the day became more and more singularized and attached to the future. As a result the day increasingly became international, global and cosmic in its import. 17

In 1954, in what proved to be a watershed in the discussion of the day of Yahweh, von Rad published his study “The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh.” 18 Von Rad argues that the concept has its origins in the old Israelite traditions of holy war, and can be defined as a “pure event of war” in which Yahweh rises up against Yahweh’s enemies in battle. 19 Von Rad completely rejects Mowinckel’s enthronement festival as the origin for this concept. In its original form the constituents of this event/war included the following: the personal entry of Yahweh, experienced as something like a theophany; the mustering of an army by

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14 Cerny, Day of Yahweh, 74.
15 Ibid., 102.
16 Ibid., 19–20.
17 Ibid., 79.
18 Rad, “Day of Yahweh.”
19 Ibid., 103.
Yahweh; before the war even started, the enemy experienced fright, confusion and panic; during the battle, changes occurred in the natural sphere, including earthquakes, clouds, thunder and darkening of the stars; the end is marked by the ban, "the sacral taking over of the spoil of Yahweh."\textsuperscript{20} The concept was not originally eschatological, supported, von Rad argues, by the fact that the day of Yahweh could be spoken of in relation to events which were clearly non eschatological, such as the fall of Jerusalem (citing Lam 1:12 and 2:22 as examples).\textsuperscript{21} Finally, von Rad argues that although there is no mention of the day of Yahweh in the ancient traditions, the conception is present and it is simply accidental that the terminology is not represented.\textsuperscript{22}

In formulating his understanding of the day of Yahweh, von Rad limited the texts on which he based his discussion to those he saw as providing an unequivocal and broad conception of the day. For his core texts he used Isa 13 and 34, Ezek 7 and Joel 2.\textsuperscript{23} As will be seen, however, this limiting of the texts has led to some criticism of von Rad’s work, particularly as he does not take into account the two earliest occurrences of the concept (Amos 5:18-20 and Isa 2).\textsuperscript{24} Despite the methodological limitations of von Rad’s study, his theory has formed the background against which all subsequent discussion of the motif occurs.

K. Schunck, in a discussion of the link between eschatology and the day of Yahweh, accepts von Rad’s conclusion concerning the holy war origin of the motif.\textsuperscript{25} Schunck suggests that there were two lines of development in the pre-exilic use of the day of Yahweh, one eschatological, the other noneschatological. He argues that not all examples of the motif can be seen as eschatological, with the understanding of the day being tied to, or varying with, different historical events. As evidence, he considers those texts which see the event in the past, for example Isa 22:5.\textsuperscript{26} By
contrast, other texts view the day as a future, unique and singular event, and hence can be seen as eschatological.\footnote{Schunck, “Tag Jahwes,” 328–30. Texts identified include Amos 5:18-20; Isa 2:6-22; Zeph 1:14-18.}

Three studies related to the day of Yahweh were published in 1966, those of F. Cross, F. Fensham and M. Weiss.\footnote{Cross, “Divine Warrior.”; Fensham, “A Possible Origin.”; Weiss, “Day of the Lord.”}

Cross’ study, “The Divine Warrior in Israel’s Cult,” adopts an eclectic view in relation to the day of Yahweh. Cross considers the works of both von Rad and Mowinckel, and argues that the two approaches are in fact complementary. Cross criticizes von Rad for his failure to consider mythological elements contributing to the holy war motif, and for his failure to adequately account for the origin of the motif.\footnote{Cross, “Divine Warrior,” 17.} Cross argues that the day of Yahweh reflects a blending of traditions of both the kingship and the conquest of Yahweh. The day is both the day of Yahweh’s holy warfare and the day of Yahweh’s royal festival, and as such is a day of victory and manifestation. It is the motifs from these two traditions which provide the specific metaphors for eschatological passages in general, and for the day of Yahweh in particular.\footnote{Ibid., 30.}

Fensham notes that von Rad’s article provides an important step forward in the understanding of the day of Yahweh motif, and agrees with von Rad that the concept originally had nothing to do with eschatology, but is a traditional prophetic expectation that the enemies of Israel would be defeated in the end by Yahweh.\footnote{Fensham, “A Possible Origin,” 90.} Fensham argues, however, that von Rad’s thesis does not solve all the problems concerning the day of Yahweh as it fails to explain why holy war is waged against Israel, and does not account for the fact that holy war imagery is not present in all the day of Yahweh texts. In addition, von Rad’s thesis fails to account for the increasingly universal influence of the day.\footnote{Ibid.} While many of the concepts associated with the day of Yahweh can be accounted for by a holy war origin, not all can. Concepts such as the changes in nature are more closely related to reports of a
theophany experience, which leads Fensham to suggest that terminology from two or more strands of tradition come together in the day of Yahweh motif. Drawing his observations together, Fensham suggests that the descriptions of the day of Yahweh should be understood against the background of the ancient Near Eastern tradition of curses associated with treaties. The day is thus defined as a day of punishment in which curses are exacted against an enemy. The day is one of judgment and punishment, with war being only one of the ways that the curses could be executed.\textsuperscript{33} For Israel, the curses are those associated with the covenant treaty while for other nations, general curses are enacted.\textsuperscript{34}

In direct opposition to von Rad, Weiss rejects the holy war origin of the day of Yahweh motif.\textsuperscript{35} Weiss argues that the concept of holy war is in fact present in many OT prophecies which are not day of Yahweh texts. In addition, holy war imagery is absent in texts such as Amos 5:18-20 and Isa 2, texts excluded from von Rad’s study. Weiss proposes instead that the day of Yahweh has a wider meaning and context than just holy war, and that the factor common to \textit{all} day of Yahweh texts is the theophany of Yahweh. Weiss goes on to argue that the phrase “the day of Yahweh” cannot be understood as a fixed term, given that there are numerous variants in the way the term is used.\textsuperscript{36} Weiss argues that the phrase was coined for the first time by Amos in the eighth century.\textsuperscript{37} The day of Yahweh was not conceived as a specific day, but was an indefinite concept which could be used with divergent interpretations and applications, although the primary concern for all the texts is the self-manifestation of Yahweh.

In an article which is primarily an overview of previous research on the day of Yahweh, R. Klein provides a critique of the theses of both von Rad and Weiss.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{33} In a similar argument, Robertson (\textit{The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah} [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 268) links the day of Yahweh passage in Zephaniah with specific covenants, such as the Noaic covenant (Zeph 1:2-3), the Abraham covenant of Gen 15 (Zeph 1:7-8) and the Sinai covenant (vv. 15-16). He argues that the day of Yahweh is a day of covenant establishment and enforcement.

\textsuperscript{34} Fensham, “A Possible Origin,” 93–95.

\textsuperscript{35} Weiss, “Day of the Lord.”

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 45.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{38} Klein, “Day of the Lord.”
Klein notes initially that many of the titles for the day of Yahweh (a day of wrath, anger, fierce anger, jealousy, rage, indignation) portray it as a day of Yahweh’s displeasure, and that a number of images, such as darkness and thick clouds, also suggest a theophany of Yahweh.\footnote{Klein, “Day of the Lord,” 517–18.} Klein notes that von Rad’s argument as to the traditional sequence of holy war events can be found in some day of Yahweh passages, but also notes, with Weiss, that not all the passages fit this schema.\footnote{Klein, “Day of the Lord,” 519. In footnote 12, Klein argues that Weiss’s rejection of von Rad goes too far, but he does support Weiss in noting that the holy war schema is not as universal as is implied by von Rad.} Klein goes on to consider the constituent elements of the day of Yahweh texts. With regard to the impact and effect of the day, Klein notes that the enemy, who are either the nations or Israel, are often described as being mesmerized and unable to act, and as Yahweh is the one who goes into battle, there are few survivors. A persistent theme in many passages is that the day is imminent. Klein also notes that while the offenses which have led to the threatened day are sometimes described, this is not a universal feature of the texts, although the general context of the prophetic book usually makes this clear.\footnote{Klein, “Day of the Lord,” 521–22.} Finally, Klein, who disagrees with Gressmann regarding the link with Babylonian mythology, argues that whether or not the pre-exilic concept of the day of Yahweh is seen as eschatological depends on one’s definition of eschatology. If it is defined in a narrow sense to refer to doctrine concerning the end of the world, then the day of Yahweh cannot be understood as eschatological, particularly given the past tense references in passages such as Lam 1:12; 2:1, 21-22. If, however, eschatology is defined as “the end of present world order, and the creation of a new order, thus emphasizing the intra-historical character of many of the happenings,” then the day of Yahweh can be seen as eschatological.\footnote{Klein, “Day of the Lord,” 523. Italic original.}

In a study which is helpful for understanding the relationship of Lamentations to other day of Yahweh texts, A. Everson offers a differently nuanced definition of the day.\footnote{Everson, “The Days of Yahweh.”} Everson begins his study with a brief review of the works of
Mowinckel, von Rad, Fensham and Weiss, arguing that all these studies are limited as they identify the characteristics of the day of Yahweh from traditions outside the prophetic literature in which the concept is transmitted.\textsuperscript{44} Everson identifies eighteen texts which he argues properly form the field of study for the day of Yahweh tradition.\textsuperscript{45} However, the focus within his study is the five texts in which the day of Yahweh is described as a past event (Lam 1 and 2; Ezek 13:1-9; Jer 46:2-20; Isa 22:1-14). Everson argues “In striking contrast to the thesis that the Day of Yahweh is always set forth as a singular event in the future, these texts demonstrate that it is not only appropriate but extremely helpful to speak of a sequence of historical days of Yahweh when speaking of the prophetic interpretation of history.”\textsuperscript{46} This accounts for the fact that the day of Yahweh can be applied to past as well as future events. Everson also notes that the prophetic use of the day of Yahweh occurs in relation to events of war, either past or future. Thus, the day of Yahweh is, according to Everson, a concept used to “interpret momentous events of war,” which mark turning points in the history of Israel.\textsuperscript{47}

In a brief study, D. Stuart argues that the day of Yahweh motif shares features with ancient Near Eastern texts in which a sovereign is described as accomplishing a decisive military intervention in a single day.\textsuperscript{48} While supporting the holy war origin of the motif, Stuart argues, against von Rad, that the motif is not to

\textsuperscript{44}Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” 329–30. For example, von Rad looks to the conquest traditions to find evidence of the holy war motif, and Weiss looks to texts in which theophany reports occur.
\textsuperscript{45}Everson makes a distinction between texts with different wording. The range of references cited include:
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{46}]Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” 331. Each of the past tense texts considered by Everson relate to a major event of war. Isa 22 concerns Sennacherib’s invasion, Jer 46 the battle of Carchemish, and Ezekiel and Lamentations the events of 587.
  \item[\textsuperscript{47}]Douglas Stuart, “Sovereign’s Day of Conquest,” BASOR 221 (1976): 159–64.
\end{itemize}
be understood as a uniquely Israelite concept. Following Fensham, Stuart concludes that the day of Yahweh as described by the prophets is an outworking of the sanctions against Israel after it is found guilty in the course of a covenant lawsuit. The day of Yahweh is a time of victory for Yahweh over Yahweh’s enemies which occurs not merely in isolated battles, but in a complete war. Yahweh’s universal power and authority is such that the victory is accomplished swiftly and suddenly, i.e. in a “day.”

Finally, in an article which argues methodologically against von Rad, Weiss and Everson, Y. Hoffmann concludes that the day of Yahweh should be understood as a theophany, that is as a “special and exceptional intervention in the current stream of events.” Hoffmann argues that only those texts which use the foundation phrase יְהֹוָה יָדַע, should form the core from which the basic understanding of the motif be developed, and in this he criticizes both von Rad and Everson who develop their understanding through the use of texts which use variants of the phrase. Hoffmann argues that “only after a careful philological examination of the proper phrase can one proceed to evaluate the significance of the related phrases, for a comprehensive understanding of the concept.” Drawing on those texts which use the basic phrase, Hoffmann disagrees with Weiss’ conclusion that the phrase does not reflect a fixed concept. He suggests that the nature of the question asked in Amos 5:18 (לֹא צָאַל לָבֶם יִהְיֶה), assumes that the people obviously do desire the day of Yahweh, and that the perception of the day was one of a positive outcome for Israel. The use in Amos assumes that the concept was well known, even if the exact wording of the phrase itself was not fixed. The concept is broader than that of holy war, and is to do with the theophany of Yahweh. Finally, Hoffmann notes the motif of judgment is important within the day of Yahweh texts.

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49 Ibid., 163.
50 Hoffmann, “Day of the Lord,” 44.
51 Ibid., 38.
52 An observation which in fact speaks against Hoffmann’s own methodological argument of using only those texts in which the foundation phrase occurs to formulate an understanding of the motif.
By way of summary, the discussion of the day of Yahweh has centered around a number of key issues, however there is no general consensus concerning any of these. The most frequently discussed issue is that of the origin of the motif, which has been situated in the holy war traditions,\(^{54}\) the theophany of Yahweh traditions,\(^{55}\) the enthronement of Yahweh,\(^{56}\) the enactment of treaty curses,\(^{57}\) or a combination of two or more of the above.\(^{58}\) The diversity of opinion with regard to origin is compounded by the lack of consensus as to which texts properly constitute the pool to be used in defining the concept. Although there is little agreement as to the origin of the motif, there is more consensus as to the constituent elements within the motif complex, including features such as: the appearance of Yahweh; descriptions of battle; descriptions of the events of the day, including changes in the natural sphere; reference to the scope of the day (i.e. against Israel, the nations, the world or the cosmos); the reasons for the day; descriptions of the impact of the day; and references to time, either past, imminent or more distant future. Also discussed is whether or not the concept can be understood as eschatological, an understanding which is again influenced by the texts included within the study, and on how eschatology is defined. Those who include the Lamentations references, which refer to the day of Yahweh in the past, are more likely to argue that the concept was originally non-eschatological.

3.1.2 Method

Although there is not a universal consensus that the day of Yahweh motif is present in Lamentations, there is merit in further exploring the link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature through this concept. There is sufficient acknowledgment within both the literature concerning Lamentations, and concerning


\(^{56}\)Mowinckel (cited Cathcart, “Day of Yahweh.” and Mowinckel, He That Cometh).

\(^{57}\)Fensham, “A Possible Origin.”

\(^{58}\)Cross (“Divine Warrior.”), who combines the holy war and enthronement traditions, and Klein (“Day of the Lord.”) who combines holy war and theophany traditions.
the day of Yahweh, to accept that there are day of Yahweh references within Lamentations.\footnote{See footnotes 7 and 9 above.} However, the nature of the relationship between the motif as used within the prophetic literature and Lamentations requires further exploration.

The history of interpretation as discussed above points to a number of areas which can be pursued in order to explore this relationship. Although there is much concern within the day of Yahweh literature as to the origin of the motif, this is less relevant to pursue for current purposes. More helpful is the related area of the imagery and elements which constitute the day of Yahweh texts as they appear within the prophetic literature and Lamentations. As a way of comparing the use in Lamentations, those prophetic texts which can be considered as either pre-dating or being contemporary with Lamentations will be explored, seeking to outline how the day of Yahweh is understood and described in each of these in comparison with how the day of Yahweh is understood and described in Lamentations. Issues such as the language used to announce the day and the imagery used to describe it - military reference, theophany reports, national, global or cosmic elements - will be outlined. In addition, the time frame related to the day will be discussed, noting whether the day is understood as a past, imminent or distant future event. Descriptions of the reasons behind the day and the consequences of the day for its recipients will also be noted.

In comparing Lamentations and the prophetic literature, it is again worth noting the form and function of each of the texts. As was argued in the previous chapter, the key function of Lamentations is the expression of grief and suffering in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem, and while these poems are not “pure” examples of the lament form, are best understood as laments. In relation to the personification motif, it was noted that most of the prophetic texts considered were judgment oracles, but included within them were either elements which evoked the lament form, or references to lament by different voices/persona in the texts. Does this same pattern hold true when those texts which refer to the day of Yahweh are considered? Again,
it is relevant to explore whether the day of Yahweh motif is adapted and taken up in new ways as it is used within a text whose function differs from that of the prophetic literature.

3.2 The Day of Yahweh Motif in the Prophetic Literature

Reference to the day of Yahweh occurs in the prophetic books of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Joel, Obadiah, Zechariah and Malachi. Of concern for current purposes are those texts which either pre-date or are contemporaneous with Lamentations. As such, texts from Amos, Isaiah 1-39, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel will be considered.

3.2.1 The Day of Yahweh in Amos

Mention of the day of Yahweh occurs in Amos 5:18-20, which is the earliest use of this motif, dated to the eighth century. The phrase יָהָ֣וֶה יְהֹוָֽהִ֑י occurs three times, twice in v. 18 and once in v. 20. The general character of the day is described as a negative event for Israel, and beyond the description of the day as a day of darkness there is no further development of the expected events or features of the day. A contrast is, however, established between what appears to be the popular conception of the day of Yahweh and that of the prophet. The reason for the day of Yahweh is not specified within the unit but in the literary context of Amos 5 sins in both the social domain (vv. 2-27) and in the cult (vv. 21-27) are specified. It is into

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this context that the announcement of the day of Yahweh occurs.

Verse 18 opens with a הוהי (יִרְאוֹן) רָעָה (מְאֹדָה) a cry addressed to those who desire the day of Yahweh (ראה, המאוד, 어, yim צְרָה), followed immediately by a question, and a statement that the day will be a day of darkness (כַּשָּׁבֶת) not light (לֹא אָרֶץ). The opening הוהי is associated with the lament, and Jeremias argues that Amos was the first to evoke this form as a rhetorical device for announcing Yahweh’s judgment against Israel. The verse clearly opposes the expectation that the day of Yahweh will be beneficial for the audience, arguing instead that it will be a negative event. Verse 19 expands on the contrast in v. 18, using “sentence parables” to drive home the point that disaster is inescapable for the nation. Verse 20 then reiterates and intensifies the content of v. 18, that the day of Yahweh is darkness and doom, not light.

The day of Yahweh is thus a future event within Amos, and is associated with inescapable judgment. The reference to darkness suggests some form of theophany is associated with the day, although this could also suggest cosmic upheaval. While it has been argued that this text reflects eschatological expectations, the description of the day is too brief to draw any firm conclusions.

3.2.2 The Day of Yahweh in Isaiah 1-39

Four texts within Isaiah 1-39 have been identified as examples of day of Yahweh texts; 2:6-22; 13; 22:1-14 (vv. 5-11); 34. While parts of 2:6-22 may emerge from an eighth century setting, the remaining texts would appear to belong to later redactional layers of Isaiah. As chapter 34 dates from the late sixth century or beyond, it will not be discussed, however the remaining three texts are relevant for the current discussion. The picture of the day of Yahweh is not consistent across

61 Jeremias, Amos, 99.
62 Shalom M. Paul, Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 186; Mays, Amos, 103.
64 Hans W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, 225; Sogg in, The Prophet Amos, 95.
Isaiah 1-39. 22:1-14 contains a reflection on a past event, the battle of Carchemish, and the day is described in images of human warfare. While military images are present in the remaining texts, which refer to the day of Yahweh in the future, there is a stronger emphasis on the theophany of Yahweh. Cosmic and/or universal dimensions are introduced, and there is reference to the reasons for the day. Lament language and/or form are present in chapter 13 and 22:1-14.

Isaiah 2:6-22 is an announcement of judgment. The primary day of Yahweh material occurs in vv. 12-17, and while there is much debate over the unity and redactional history of vv. 6-22, there is some consensus that vv. 12-17 are an original unity dating to the eighth century. The announcement of the day of Yahweh occurs in v. 12 (ךָֽיֶשׁ יִהְיֶה עברא). An indictment of the people occurs in vv. 6-8, listing specific sins such as the use of necromancy (v. 6), the amassing of wealth and military might (v. 7) and the worship of idols (v. 8). Verses 9-11, which anticipate the proclamation of the day of Yahweh, announce that the people will be humbled and laid low (v. 9), and introduce a refrain like element which calls for the people to enter the rock and hide from the terror of Yahweh and the glory of Yahweh's majesty (also in vv. 19, 21). Further indictment occurs in v. 11, accusing the people of being haughty and proud.

The day of Yahweh is described in vv. 12-17 as a day against all that is proud and lofty, lifted up and high (ךָֽלָּל גַּאֲה וּרְדִּי גַּאֲה וכָּלֶּמֶה). Verses 13-16 list symbols of human pride. The consequence of the day is the humbling of the people, and the exaltation of Yahweh (v. 17, a refrain like element related to v. 11). The day of Yahweh description is primarily concerned with the fate of the people (i.e. their humbling) rather than the nature of the day itself. This is emphasized in the repeated reference to the exaltation of Yahweh and the humbling of the people (vv. 9, 11, 17). In addition, recurring mention is made to the majesty (ךָֽאָזְוָה) and terror (ךָֽוַיָּמ) of


67 Sweeney, Isaiah 1–39, 102.
Yahweh (vv. 10, 19, 21). No reference is made to Yahweh’s wrath or anger. Holy war motifs are absent from Isa 2, and the emphasis on Yahweh’s majesty and terror indicates that this passage is concerned with the theophany of Yahweh.  

Isaiah 13 is an oracle against Babylon which contains an extended treatment of the day of Yahweh motif. The unit incorporates worldwide and cosmic elements, and uses of images of both warfare and the theophany of Yahweh. While this passage is one of the key texts in the study of the day of Yahweh as a literary complex, its function as a tradition behind Lamentations is, at best, uncertain. There is considerable debate as to the date and redactional history of Isa 13, and despite some attempt to defend an eighth century setting, evidence from within the text would indicate that its historical setting is the sixth century. As such, this text is indicative of the rhetorical environment of Lamentations.

In contrast to Isa 2:6-22, the day of Yahweh is vividly portrayed as a day of wrath and anger (vv. 3, 9, 13), and the enemy is Babylon not Israel. The emphasis of the passage is the nature of the day, and its impact upon Babylon, and there is only brief mention of the reasons for the day (v. 11). The passage opens with Yahweh calling upon a consecrated army to execute the day (vv. 2-5), and the description of the army has strong associations with the holy war traditions. Following this summons, the day of Yahweh is announced, opening with a call to lament (יִלָּעָה), tied to an announcement that the day is near. The lament cry drives home the ominous nature of the coming day. The destruction described is that of warfare, with universal elements introduced in references to making the earth a desolation (לַשּׁאָם v. 9) and punishing the world for its evil (פּוֹרַשְׁהוֹת על תּוֹלֶד רָעָה v. 11). Reference to cosmic changes and the theophany of Yahweh predominate in vv. 10-

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70 Oswalt (Book of Isaiah, 300–01) defends an eighth century setting. Those supporting a later dating include Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 122; Childs, Isaiah, 115–16, 125; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1–39, 277–78; Sweeney, Isaiah 1–39, 229–31; Wildberger, Isaiah 13–39, 7. The portrayal of Babylon is as a dominant world power, the epitome of all evil, at a time when the Medes were their opponents. That there is reference to the Medes as the ones consecrated by Yahweh to bring about the destruction of Babylon, and also to the razing of the Babylonian capital, suggests that the conquest by the Persians had not yet taken place. The suggested date of this text is the mid sixth century, prior to 539.
13, however, in vv. 14-18, the language returns to description of warfare, giving graphic detail as to the fate of various groups within the community, including infants. Throughout the passage there is vivid description of the impact and consequences of the day on those who experience it (vv. 6-22). This includes descriptions of lament (v. 6), fear (v. 7), agony (v. 8), humbling (v. 11), fleeing (v. 14) and death (vv. 15-16).

In bringing together elements of warfare and theophany, and in the emphasis on the anger and wrath of Yahweh, the focus of this passage is both the fearsome nature of Yahweh’s day and the impact of that day on the enemy.

22:1-14 is the final day of Yahweh text in Isaiah, and has been considered already in chapter 2. As argued there, there is debate as to the redactional development of this text, and while it is generally accepted that vv. 1-4, 12-14 arose out of an eighth century context, it seems likely that vv. 5-11 come from the period following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587, thus making this contemporaneous with Lamentations, a significant observation given the past tense reference to the day of Yahweh within this passage.

Verses 1-4 form an indictment of Jerusalem, pictured in the midst of celebrations, presumed to be following the failed campaign of Sennacherib in 701. The city is reproached for her inappropriate celebration, which leads to the prophet’s lament in v. 4. Verse 5 marks the beginning of the announcement of the day of Yahweh, named in an extended phrase which describes the day as one of chaos and confusion. The nature of the day is filled out in vv. 5b-7 which describe the military campaign against the city. The announcement of the day of Yahweh is applied to this past military campaign, and concludes with a reference to Yahweh having taken away the cover of Judah. Verses 8b-11a form an indictment of the

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73 “For a day of tumult and trampling and turbulence is the Lord’s, Yahweh Seboath.” (Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 137).

74 The meaning of v. 8 is not entirely clear, although Clements (Isaiah 1–39, 185) suggests it refers to Yahweh’s withdrawal of protection which allowed the Babylonians to defeat Jerusalem in 587.
people who failed to turn to Yahweh in their preparation for the invasion, relying instead on their own military resources. Verse 11b announces that it was Yahweh who was the agent of the people’s defeat. Finally, vv. 12-14, which are linked with the day of Yahweh material through the repetition of בָּיְמֵי הַהוֹדוֹגָה, return to the condemnation of Jerusalem’s inappropriate celebrations.

The nature of the day of Yahweh described in this passage is one of war and the confusion associated with it. There is no evidence of a cosmic dimension within the description, nor is there any strong indication of a theophany. Rather, the description is of human warfare, in the past tense. This past tense reference, which clearly reflects a completed military campaign, is decisive for understanding the nature of the day of Yahweh described. In the completed battle the text interprets the events as being momentous enough to be understood as a day of Yahweh, and as with Isaiah 2, the day is not described as a day of anger or wrath. Within the literary context of the unit (vv. 1-14) what is significant is the discrepancy between the prophet and people. The wider unit is clearly applied to the events of 701, and the prophet indicts the city/people for their failure to understand the significance of what had occurred.

3.2.3 The Day of Yahweh in Jeremiah

Only one text is generally identified as belonging to the day of Yahweh texts in Jeremiah, that of Jer 46:3-12. Belonging to the oracles against the nations material, there is some support that this text could originate from Jeremiah, or at least have been produced close to the fall of Jerusalem. Given this possible proximity to

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75 The chronological sequence of events in this section is difficult to determine. The action, including Yahweh’s role within it, is described in the past, however the description of preparations would most naturally precede the siege/battle descriptions of vv. 5-8a. The possibility of this being a separate redactional layer cannot be excluded (Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13–39, 139; Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 132).
77 Gerald L. Keown et al., Jeremiah 26–52 (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1995), 286; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 687; Duane L. Christensen, Prophecy and War in Ancient Israel: Studies in the Oracles Against the Nations in Old Testament Prophecy. (Berkeley: Bibal Press, 1975), 217. Debate surrounds the authenticity and function of the OAN in Jeremiah (see Carroll, [Jeremiah 1986], 751–58) and Jones [Jeremiah, 486–90] for argument against the oracles having any connection with Jeremiah, and Holladay [Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet]
Lamentations, it is a useful text to consider.

The oracle in Jer 46:3-12 is tied, at least by the editor, to the historical events of the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.E. (v. 2). It is unclear, however, if the oracle arose before, during or after the events, although given the taunt form of the passage a dating after the defeat seems most likely. Significant for current purposes is that this oracle is tied to a military campaign, which is interpreted as a day of Yahweh. The battle of Charchemish is described as a significant event in which the power of Yahweh to act within history, and as ruler of all nations, is evident. Although some attempt has been made to identify cosmic elements within this oracle, the description of this particular day of Yahweh is firmly grounded in the reality of human warfare, albeit one in which Yahweh is identified as the ultimate enemy.

The poem opens with a summons to prepare for battle, full of terse commands involving the paraphernalia of warfare (vv. 3-4). Without the reference of v. 2, a historic superscript, the identity of the army would be unspecified. Verses 5-9 depict the defeat of the summoned army, who is driven back, and unable to escape their enemy. The army is summoned to battle in vv. 3-4, however in v. 5 an ironic question (מדוע ראתים מה 제ussen) leads to a description of the panicked fleeing of the defeated army. Verses 7-9 taunt the Egyptian army, whose aim was to dominate and destroy all the cities of the earth, but whose plans were destroyed by Yahweh who, in v. 10, is identified as the agent behind the military defeat of the Egyptians. The unit closes with a description of the army as defeated and shamed (vv. 11-12).

The battle of Carchemish is identified as a day of Yahweh, a day of retribution and vindication (והוים והוהי יהוה יצאו והם נקפ(cls). The conception of the

\[Jeremiah\ Chapters\ 26–52\] [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 312–14] for argument supporting their authenticity).

78 Jones, Jeremiah, 492; Keown et al., Jeremiah 26–52, 286; Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 318; Christensen, Prophecy and War, 217; Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” 334. The conventional language within the passage does make it difficult to determine the text’s relationship to the actual events (Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 163).

79 והי is absent in LXX, resulting in the translation “why are they terrified?” (William McKane, Jeremiah XXVI-LII [vol. 2 of A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996], 1113-14; Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 315). If MT is retained, the sense is “what do I see?” (Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 685; Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 762). Either translation reflects ironic surprise at the change of fortune.
day as being tied to warfare is modified in v. 10b by the description of the day as one of Yahweh’s sacrifice (כְּיָוָּד לְאָדָם יָהּוָה לְצָבָאֹת), a concept also present in Zeph 1:7-13 (see below). Within this passage, Egypt’s defeat is defined as a theological event, “attesting to the decisive power and purpose of Yahweh.”

This passage functions as part of the Jeremianic rhetoric against opposing Babylonian suzerainty over Judah, emphasizing that Egypt is vulnerable, and cast in the role of Yahweh’s enemy. Babylon, on the other hand is portrayed as Yahweh’s agent.

3.2.4 The Day of Yahweh in Zephaniah

One of the most dominant themes within the book of Zephaniah is that of the day of Yahweh. It is the central concern of chapters 1 and 3, and forms the backdrop to the oracles against the nations in chapter 2. Within Zephaniah, the day of Yahweh is a future, although imminent, event which is transformed in chapter 3 from a day of judgment against Judah/Jerusalem to a time of salvation. The portrayal of the day is diverse and multifaceted, incorporating imagery of both theophany and warfare, also introducing language from cultic and covenant traditions. Zephaniah stands chronologically close to Lamentations, emerging as it does from the sixth century.

The primary day of Yahweh material occurs in the judgment oracle 1:2-2:3. The announcement of the day of Yahweh occurs in 1:7-2:3. Verses 2-6 contain an announcement of judgment, which concerns syncretistic worship (vv. 4-6), in which there is a narrowing of focus from a cosmic dimension (vv. 2-3), to a concern with

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81 Jones, Jeremiah, 493; Brueggemann, To Build, to Plant, 220; Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 318.
82 There is some debate as to the status of 2:1-3 in relation to both chapter 1 and the remainder of chapter 2, which is seen either as the conclusion of 1:2-18 (Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 458; Floyd, Minor Prophets, Part 2, 201; Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 166), or as the introductory component of the remainder of chapter 2 (Marvin A. Sweeney, “A Form-Critical Reassessment of the Book of Zephaniah,” CBQ 53 [1991]: 392–93; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 497; Robertson, Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 288–89). As day of Yahweh material is contained within these verses, and the remainder of chapter 2 is OAN material, the unit 1:2-2:3 will be considered.
83 It is widely recognized that vv. 2-3 represent a reversal of either the order of creation as per Gen 1 (Robertson, Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 257–58; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 500) or is related to the flood narrative (Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 167; Ben Zvi, Zephaniah, 81).
Judah and Jerusalem (v. 4) and to specific groups of people (vv. 5-6). Integral to the understanding of this unit is the notion that the cult and the Jerusalem temple are the center of creation, and that the corruption of the cult leads to the endangerment of all of creation.84 The judgment involves the sweeping away (אץ: vv. 2-385) of all the creatures of creation, and the cutting off (כרות) of humanity. The day of Yahweh material in 1:7-2:3 can be divided into three subunits, vv. 7-13, 14-18 and 2:1-3. The announcement of the day occurs in v. 7, and alludes to a cultic setting through the imperative for silence before Yahweh (הָשֹׁם מְסִיר אֶלֻב בּוֹדֵק) and the reference to a day of sacrifice (יָדַּר בּוֹדֵק, כָּל הָבֶּן יָדַּר בּוֹדֵק). The imagery changes in v. 8 to that of Yahweh’s judgment. The sacrifice becomes the punishment of those who represent the corrupt leadership (v. 8) and those who participate in syncretistic worship.87 The nature of the day of Yahweh is such that it results in mourning and lament by those who fall under Yahweh’s punishment (vv. 10-11). Reference to lament includes קֹל צָעַק (a cry of distress) and ילל (wail, x2), with the call to lament in v. 11 reminiscent of the communal lament form. Verses 11-13 further specify the target of the judgment; the traders (v. 11), and those who are complacent in their wealth and do not acknowledge the power of Yahweh (vv. 12-13). Verse 12 also emphasizes the thoroughgoing nature of the day in its description of Yahweh searching Jerusalem with lamps (הָיְתָה בְּתֵית הָיוֹת אֲוֹפָה ראשָן וְרָשָׁן).

Verses 14-18 describe the nature of the day in more detail, using imagery of Yahweh’s theophany and of war. The day is described as a great day, imminent and approaching fast (קרוב יים הוהו הגדולה קרוב ים מואר) v. 14). It is also a day of wrath (ים באב) v. 15). The language of theophany occurs in the references to darkness and

85The verbs of v. 2 are unusual in that roots of two different verbs are used in an infinitive absolute (ינדנ) + infinitive construct (ָונדנ) chain. Current scholarship maintains MT, suggesting that the phrase may be idiomatic (Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 499; Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, 72; Robertson, *Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 257).
87Within v. 9, the meaning of the phrase “all who leap over the threshold” (כל הזרע לע מספת) is unclear, but is most likely a reference to superstitious practices associated with the worship of Dagon (Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 175).
thick clouds, while war imagery occurs in the images of devastation (v. 15) and attack (v. 16). Verses 17-18 elaborate on the consequences of the day of Yahweh for humanity (האומ), which includes distress ( PROCUREMENT) and walking around like the blind (והלכ ...) in vv. 7-18, or the whole earth, in vv. 2-3. Either reference is possible, and the possibility of a deliberate ambiguity cannot be dismissed.

2:1-3 moves from the pronouncement of judgment to an exhortation or call to repentance. While there is some textual uncertainty, the unit clearly calls on the nation to gather in the hope that the consequences of Yahweh’s wrath might be averted. The imminence of the day is again stressed, emphasized by the threefold call to act “before” the day occurs (v. 2). Three times the day of Yahweh is referred to as the day of Yahweh’s anger, or fierce anger (ה *__ _ז__א *) in vv. 2-3), or fierce anger (ה *__ _ז__א *) within this unit, an element of hope is introduced, with the possibility raised that those who seek righteousness and humility might be hidden from Yahweh’s anger. However, the inclusion of * __ _ז__ל__י * within v. 3 does suggest that avoiding the wrath is not a certainty.

The understanding of the day of Yahweh is complex and multifaceted within 1:2-2:3, incorporating images from a variety of literary traditions. There is a strong link in the text between the cult and the day of Yahweh with the rhetorical impact of the unit arising from a play on the meaning of the day as it might function in the cult

88 V. 15b כו לש הגלע הדוק אוס ודועלו The language is reminiscent of the theophany on Mt Sinai (Robertson, Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 282).
89 Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 183; Robertson, Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 282.
91 See Ben Zvi, Zephaniah, 137-44.
92 Robertson, Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 292.
93 Berlin, Zephaniah, 100; Ben Zvi, Zephaniah, 296; Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 190; Floyd, Minor Prophets, Part 2, 217.
to its larger meaning of a day of judgment. As such, the day of Yahweh “moves from a day of supplication to a time when Yahweh acts.”94 The imagery within the chapter can be linked with the theophany of Yahweh and with holy war traditions. Lament form is evoked in order to strengthen the impact of the judgment, and while the day of Yahweh is viewed as both an inevitable and imminent event, the possibility of avoiding the consequences of the day is not totally excluded.

Although not a text considered in the day of Yahweh studies discussed in the introduction to this chapter, it is possible to read Zeph 3 as a continuation of the motif introduced in Zeph 1. Within chapter 3 there are references to a day in which Yahweh will act (vv. 8, 11, 16, 18) and references to time (vv. 9, 19, 20), which, in the context of the book itself, are a continuation of the day of Yahweh theme.95 The day of Yahweh references occur within both the judgment and the salvation sections of chapter 3, suggesting that the day of Yahweh is perceived as more than just a day of judgment for Judah/Jerusalem, but also holds the hope of salvation.

The general outline of Zeph 3 was discussed in the previous chapter. In brief, the reference to the day of Yahweh which occurs in v. 8 follows the indictment of Jerusalem (vv. 1-4) and the description of Yahweh’s righteousness in the midst of the city (v. 5). Verses 6-7 describe Yahweh’s actions against the nations, and bewails Jerusalem’s failure to take heed of the lesson that should have been learned through Yahweh’s actions. The day of Yahweh material occurs in vv. 8-13. While the nature of the day continues to be presented as a day of gathering (ָעָבְרָהָא96) and of anger (v. 8), this day is primarily against the nations. The projected result is that the speech of peoples will become pure, and all will serve Yahweh (vv. 9-10). Verse 11 again refers to the day (בְּיוֹם הָיָה צוֹדָק), with vv. 11-13 continuing, and consolidating, the theme encountered in 2:1-3; that the humble will be saved and only Yahweh’s enemies, the proud and haughty (v. 11) will be removed. The scope of the day is thus significantly reduced from the cosmic proportions of 1:2-3.

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94 Floyd, Minor Prophets, Part 2, 198.
95 Ibid., 233; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 522.
96 Also Zeph 1:2-3.
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94 Floyd, Minor Prophets, Part 2, 198.
95 Ibíd., 233; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 522.
96 Also Zeph 1:2-3.
Verses 14-20 conclude the book of Zephaniah with a salvation oracle for Jerusalem. The salvation is understood in the context of a day of Yahweh, as is evidenced through the use of הבאת הדהה (Hebrew uncertain, but often translated as a day of festival\textsuperscript{97}) in v. 18. Verses 19 and 20 also refer to הבאת הדהה (at that time). A transformation of the day of Yahweh thus occurs in Zephaniah, as it now represents a day of salvation for Jerusalem through which she will have her fortunes restored.

The notion that the day of Yahweh represents successive days on which Yahweh acts finds support in the texts considered from Zephaniah. In its present form, it is difficult to maintain that the day of Yahweh references refer to only one event in the book, given the differences in consequences of the day between chapters 1 and 3. The day is strongly associated with judgment, but in chapter 3, this lacks the dire consequences for the entire nation and/or cosmos, and in fact becomes the process by which Judah and the nations are transformed.

3.2.5 The Day of Yahweh in Ezekiel

Reference to the day of Yahweh occurs three times in the book of Ezekiel (7:19, 13:5, 30:3). Of these passages, only chapters 7 and 30 need be considered. Although the phrase הבאת הדהה is used in 13:5, the passage is an oracle concerning false prophecy, and mentions the day of Yahweh only in passing. The material in Ezekiel stands in close relationship to the book of Lamentations, dating as it does from the sixth century. It is difficult to determine the influence, if any, of Ezekiel on Lamentations, given that it is thought to have arisen in the Babylonian exile following the first deportation in 597.\textsuperscript{98} As with material in Jeremiah, Ezekiel is informative as to the understanding of the day of Yahweh in the intellectual world into which Lamentations was written.

\textsuperscript{97}Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, 220.
\textsuperscript{98}See H. McKeating (Ezekiel [OTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 22–61) for a full discussion of the history of interpretation of Ezekiel.
The editorial unit 7:1-27 contains a number of sub-units (vv. 1-4, 5-9, 10-27) focussing on the judgment of Israel, within which the day of Yahweh is a dominant motif. The chapter contains a series of prophetic proof sayings, as seen in the repeated recognition formulas of vv. 4, 9 and 27. Although there is some evidence of material which emerged post 587 (i.e. vv. 21-24), the text can be regarded as coming from the period prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The central focus is the inevitability of the coming judgment, described as a day of Yahweh, an inevitability which has arisen as a consequence of the sinfulness of the people/nation. The day is described as a day of anger/wrath, and of doom and tumult, and there is some association with military destruction. As described, the day of Yahweh leads to the collapse of societal and religious structures.

Verses 1-4 announce the coming end (קְさえ עֵלִיָּה; v. 2; קְさえ בַּא חַיָּה; v. 3), an end which is characterized by Yahweh’s anger (v. 3). These verses do not refer specifically to the day of Yahweh, but establish a context in which judgment and punishment are associated with the coming end (vv. 3-4). These two verses introduce themes which recur throughout the chapter. Yahweh announces that the people will be judged (מִרְמָנוּ; v. 3, 8, 9, 27) and punished for all their abominations (כְּלָל הֶחְוֵרוֹנִים; v. 3, 4, 8, 9, 20). The judgment which comes from Yahweh comes as an inevitable outcome of the behaviour of the people. Although the recipient of the judgment is Israel (v. 2a), v. 2b could imply a more universal judgment through the words על ארבעת נֶפֶם אֲרָמִי (upon the four corners of the earth/land). The literary context, however, implies only the judgment of Israel, and as such it is unlikely that this is a reference to the whole of the earth. Verses 5-9 parallel and develop vv. 2-4. While these verses continue to focus on

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100 Hals, Ezekiel, 41–42; Walter Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24 (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 201.
101 Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 202–03; Hals, Ezekiel, 44.
102 Expanded in v. 20 to include עָלָיָה, “abominable images.”
104 Brownlee, Ezekiel, 106; Vawter and Hoppe, Ezekiel, 56; Hals, Ezekiel, 44.
105 Wevers (Ezekiel, 61), argues that two versions of the same short poem are contained within vv. 2-9.
the coming end (ךֵּלֶל), the nature of the day is more fully defined, and there is specific reference to “a day” on which Yahweh acts (v.7). This day is described as disaster (瑪חמה), and doom (זארית), and as a day of tumult (בֶּן), and as having awakened (ךֵּלֶל) against the nation. As in vv. 2-4, vv. 8-9 outline the day as one of Yahweh’s anger (זעם) and wrath (זעם), and repeat that the judgment is a consequence of the ways and abominations of the people.

The final unit (vv. 10-27) continues the major themes, but expands them considerably, both in terms of the causal “ways” and “abominations” of the people, and of the nature of the day. The consequences of the day for the nation are also detailed. The sins of the people are defined in terms of pride (vv. 10, 11), violence (v. 11, 23), the accumulation of and reliance on wealth (v. 11, 19, 20), and false worship (v. 20). The judgment is carried out through military invasion, as evidenced through references to both the famine and the sword (v. 15). There is considerable detail as to the impact of the day upon the nation. It results in the paralyzing fear of the people (vv. 14, 17), and leads to their engaging in lament (v. 18). Previously cherished wealth will become worthless (vv. 19-20), the temple will be sacked (vv. 21-24), and there will be a breakdown of all societal and religious structures (vv. 25-27). Throughout the whole unit, there is repeated emphasis that Yahweh’s actions are the result of the behaviour of the people (vv. 10, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 27), and that the judgment is both inevitable and irrevocable (vv. 10, 13, 25). As in the previous two units, the end result is that the people will know Yahweh (וְיֶרֶד וְיָכְרָע לְאֵין יְהוָה).

This passage then, can be seen to be tied to the specific reality of the Babylonian dominance and invasion of Israel, which is explained in terms of a judgment day of Yahweh’s wrath. More fully than in previously considered passages however, the judgment is defined as being in accordance with the behaviour of the people, and is an unavoidable consequence of that behaviour.

while Zimmerli (Ezekiel 1, 205) argues that vv. 5-9 are a variant in which there is an increased focus on the inhabitants of the land as the recipients of the judgment.

Specific reference to ‘Verse of the Day of Distress’ does not occur until v. 19 in the expanded phrase (a day of Yahweh’s wrath).
The day of Yahweh is also described in 30:1-19, an oracle against Egypt. This is the only oracle against Egypt in Ezekiel which is not dated, however, future reference to Nebuchadrezzar’s campaign against Egypt (vv. 10-12) suggests a date prior to 568 B.C.E. The unit can be divided into three sub-units, vv. 1-9, 10-12, 13-19, based on the introductory formulas in vv. 1, 10 and 13.

Following the formulaic opening (vv. 1-2a), vv. 2b-9 open with an imperative to wail (הָיוֹלָּל) addressed to an unnamed community. The motive for the imperative is the proximity of a day for Yahweh (v. 3). The initial description of the day is a day of clouds (יִוָּמָן), introducing an element of theophany not picked up again until v. 18. The focus of the judgment is specified in vv. 3-4, initially with an enigmatic announcement that the day of Yahweh would be a time of nations (עֲצַת גוֹיִים וּיהוֹדִים), which is then narrowed down to a judgment against Egypt and its allies (vv. 4-9). The judgment comes through military action, and is described as a time of anguish (חֲלַזְתָּל). Verses 7-9 describe in greater detail the impact of the day, which would result in Egypt and its allies being desolated among desolated countries (נֶעָרַבְתָּן וְאֶרֶץ נֶשֶׁם) and her cities lying waste (נֶהָרְבוּת). Verse 8, which includes a recognition formula, names Yahweh as the agent of the destruction, described as setting fire to Egypt (הַמָּרְטֵה אֶת מִצְרַיִם).

Verses 10-12 are more historically specific than the remainder of the unit. Although Yahweh continues to be the one responsible for the action, the agency of the Babylonians is specified in a description of a campaign led by Nebuchadrezzar against Egypt (vv. 10-11). Verse 12, however, returns again to Yahweh as the actor, describing the total devastation of Egypt at the hands of foreigners. The sub-unit

109 Hals, Ezekiel, 213; Wevers, Ezekiel, 163; Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 627–28; Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 127. Verse 6 also contains an introductory formula, however, this is out of place in that it interrupts the description of the collapse of Egypt and its helpers (Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 622), and looks to be a secondary addition to the text. Blenkinsopp (Ezekiel [IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1990], 133) does divide vv. 6-9 as a sub-unit, however this division fails to recognize the continuity of vv. 1-9.
110 The exact meaning here is uncertain. It could refer to a world wide uprising (Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 128) or may be more restricted to the allies of Egypt listed in vv. 4-9 (Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 621).
closes with the formula אֲנִי יְהוּדָה יְהֹוָה (I Yahweh have spoken). Verses 13-19 intensify the portrayal of the day of Yahweh, listing all the places in Egypt which will be destroyed, and applying a range of active verbs to Yahweh (vv. 13-16). In first person speech, the actions of Yahweh include destroy (אֲבֵרָה), put an end to (נְתַנְתֶּךָ), make a desolation (שָׁמַם), set fire to (תְּאָשׁ), execute acts of judgment (פָּשְׁפָּתִים), pour wrath (חֲרָדָה) and cut off (רָדָה). Verses 18-19 re-introduce elements of Yahweh’s theophany through the reference to darkness and clouds. A recognition formula closes the unit.

Within this unit there is no possibility of diverting Yahweh’s actions, nor is there any specificity as to what has led to Egypt’s judgment. Rather, the focus is on the imminence and the inevitability of the judgment as a clear expression of Yahweh’s action in history on the day of Yahweh.

The description of the day of Yahweh in Ezekiel is diverse, with chapter 7 directed against Israel and chapter 30 against Egypt. Ezekiel 7 gives little specific detail as to the nature of the day, although it is clearly linked with military action against Israel, and is associated with Yahweh’s wrath. Much more emphasis is placed on the reasons for the day, and its impact on the people. In chapter 30 the day of Yahweh is also linked with military action, although elements of theophany are also present. The primary concern is the impact of the day on the people, and there is no focus on the sins of Egypt. The day of Yahweh in Ezekiel is not confined to one singular future event given that days against Israel and Egypt are described.

3.2.6 Summary

Reference to the day of Yahweh occurs in a range of prophetic texts which can be argued to either pre-date or be contemporaneous with Lamentations. While there is much diversity within these texts, some trends do occur in the way this motif is developed.

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111 These verses contain a list of cities and plays on words similar to that seen in Mic 1:1-16 (Wevers, Ezekiel, 163; Blenkinsopp, Ezekiel, 135).
In the texts considered, it cannot be argued that the day of Yahweh is conceived as a singular event. In two cases the day of Yahweh is described as a past event (Isa 22:1-14; Jer 46:3-12), both in relation to past military campaigns. In Isa 22:1-14, the prophet calls on celebrating Jerusalem to recognize the events of 701 as a day of Yahweh, while Jer 46 announces the defeat of Egypt at the battle of Carchemish as a day of Yahweh. Within Isa 1-39, the day of Yahweh is applied in different contexts; once to Jerusalem as a past event (22:1-14), once to Israel as a future event (2:6-22) and again to Babylon as a future event (Isa 13). Similarly, Zephaniah describes days against Israel and against the enemies, one with a negative outcome for Israel (1:2-2:3) and one in a more positive light (chapter 3). Finally, Ezekiel describes days against Israel (chapter 7) and Egypt (30:1-19).

The reasons for the day of Yahweh are almost always described in the passages considered. The sins of the people are named in those texts which announce a day of Yahweh against Israel, and center on common prophetic concerns with social injustice (Zeph 3), syncretism (Zeph 1:2-2:3, Ezek 7) and a failure to rely on Yahweh (Isa 22, Zeph 1:2-2:3). When other nations are the focus the emphasis on the causes which have led to the day of Yahweh is not as strong, and where it is mentioned generally concerns pride (Jer 46:3-12, Ezek 30:1-19).

Only two of the texts considered can be argued to come from the eighth century: Amos 5:18-20 and Isa 2:6-22. These judgment oracles share a number of common features with regard to the day of Yahweh. The day is directed against Israel/Judah, and is portrayed as a future day with negative consequences for the nation. In neither text is the day of Yahweh understood as a day of war, nor is it described as a day of Yahweh’s anger or wrath. Rather, elements suggestive of Yahweh’s theophany occur in both, although this is more detailed in the Isaiah text. No cosmic or universal consequences of the day are present in either text. Isaiah 2:6-22 is significantly more developed than Amos 5:18-20, and its emphasis is on the impact of the day on the people. The day is described as evoking terror in those who experience it, and the result is the humbling of the people and the exaltation of
Yahweh. While reference to lament is absent in Isaiah 2, the Amos text does evoke the lament form through its opening ḥūnī cry.

The remainder of the texts considered date from the late seventh to the mid sixth century. The day of Yahweh is either against Judah (Isa 22:1-14; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 7), or against other nations (Isa 13 against Babylon; Jer 46:3-12 and Ezek 30:1-19 against Egypt; Zeph 3:8-20 against the nations). All the passages are judgment oracles except Zeph 3, which opens with an indictment of Jerusalem but then shifts to a salvation oracle, albeit one in which the nations are judged. Within these later texts, there is a consistent trend of describing the day of Yahweh through images of war (with the exception of Zeph 3), and to describe the day as a day of wrath (Isa 13; Zeph 1:1-2:3; 3:1-20; Ezek 7; 30:1-19). Imagery of Yahweh’s theophany occurs in only three of these texts (Isa 13; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 30:1-19). In addition, Zeph 1:2-2:3 and Jer 46 also refer to the day of Yahweh as a day of sacrifice, thus introducing cultic terminology.

There is a strong emphasis in these later texts on the impact of the day of Yahweh on those who experience it. Within Isaiah, chapter 13 emphasizes the fear, agony and anguish experienced by the Babylonians and 22:5 refers to the day as one of tumult and confusion. Jer 46 describes the terror of the warriors. Zeph 1:2-2:3, particularly 1:14-18, describes in great detail the anguish and distress of the people, while both passages from Ezekiel describe terror and/or anguish. Reference to lament behaviour also occurs in Isa 13; 22:1-14; Jer 46:3-12; Zeph 1:2-3:1; Ezek 7; 30:1-19. In addition to the descriptions of the terror and anguish of the people, the outcome of the day is, in some cases, described in terms of those afflicted recognizing the sovereignty of Yahweh (Zeph 3; Ezek 7; 30:1-19).

It is significant that there is a development in the way the day of Yahweh is described between those texts from the eighth century and those of the later time period. The increased use of war imagery, the emphasis on the wrath of Yahweh and the graphic descriptions of the impact of the day on the people is consistent in those

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112 Note also that Jer 46:3-12 refers to a day of retribution, although specific reference to wrath does not occur.
texts which stand chronologically closest to Lamentations. It remains now to explore how the references to the day of Yahweh in Lamentations compare with this trend.

3.3 The Day of Yahweh in Lamentations

Reference to the day of Yahweh occurs within four units in Lamentations, identifiable through the use of a phrase in which a specific day of Yahweh’s activity is named (1:12-20, v. 12; 1:21-22, v. 21; ב CHIP קראת, v. 12; 1:21-22, v. 21; ב CHIP קראת, v. 22). Although other references are made to Yahweh’s destructive action within the book, these units are the only ones which refer to the day of Yahweh. In each case the day of Yahweh is applied to a past event within Lamentations, except for 1:21 which implies a possible future day of Yahweh against Jerusalem’s enemies. The language used to describe the day is that of military warfare against the city, and while the agency of the Babylonian army is present (1:14, 2:3, 7) Yahweh is understood as the one who both initiates and acts on this day. The day of Yahweh references in 1:12-20 and 2:1-8 occur within divine responsibility units, while 1:21-22 concerns the future fate of the enemy, and 2:20-22 is a description of misery unit in which divine responsibility motifs also occur. Although this material stresses the identity of Yahweh as the one responsible for Jerusalem’s plight, the impact of Yahweh’s action on both city and people is emphasized, particularly in 1:12-20, 21-22 and 2:20-21, an impact described in terms of extreme suffering.

3.3.1 Lamentations 1:12-20

1:12-20 is a divine responsibility unit in which personified Jerusalem describes Yahweh’s action against her (vv. 12-15) and stresses the impact of these actions in terms of her personal suffering (16-20). Although the unit contains elements common to the day of Yahweh texts considered from the prophets - description of Yahweh’s actions, reference to the impact of the day along with reference to sin as
the impetus for Yahweh’s action - the priority of this material differs from the prophetic day of Yahweh texts. Much greater emphasis is placed on the suffering caused by Yahweh’s actions, with a corresponding decrease in emphasis and detail concerning sin. Like Isa 22:1-14 and Jer 46:3-12, this text describes a past event, however it, along with 1:21-22 and 2:20-22, is unique in its first person description of the day of Yahweh. The first person voice personalizes the description in a way not evident in previous texts considered.

The unit opens with a reference to Jerusalem’s pain (v. 12). The ambiguous phrase לָא אַלְכָּם כִּלְכָּמָה יְרָעָל (which was brought upon me, which Yahweh inflicted), an infliction which is understood as a day of Yahweh (בְּיִמּוֹ הָרָעָל for the day of his fierce anger). The reference to Yahweh’s anger is a common feature of the sixth century texts considered, and is reminiscent of Zeph 2:2-3 and 3:8, both of which use the terms יָרָעָל and אַלְכָּם to name the day of Yahweh.

Yahweh’s actions are detailed in v. 13, with four verbs describing Yahweh as acting against Jerusalem in a personal attack. Emphasizing Yahweh’s elevated position, the verse opens with the preposition מִמְשָּׁרָה (from on high), followed by a description of Yahweh sending fire into Jerusalem’s bones. Hunter imagery is introduced, with Yahweh described as setting a net (פָּרָשַׁת) for Jerusalem and causing her to turn back (יָשֹׁב אֶחָד). Jerusalem then describes the direct impact of

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113See chapter 2, footnote 137 for discussion.
114This is the only pual occurrence of עֵצָל in the OT (Albrektson, Text and Theology, 70). Hillers (Lamentations, 72) suggests that as Yahweh is the subject of an active verb in the next line, MT may have been emended to the passive form to avoid attributing to Yahweh the responsibility of the suffering, a conclusion that has some validity given that some MSS render the verb as active (Albrektson, Text and Theology, 70). Given the day of Yahweh attribution in the next line, the presence of an active verb is likely.
115The full phrase here is שָׁלֵל אָשָׁא הָעָצְמָמָו יִרְדָּה. The verb רָדָה (to prevail), however, LXX is based on the root רָדָה (to descend). If רָדָה is read, then Yahweh is the subject of both verbs, the sense being that Yahweh caused the fire to descend into the bones. If MT is maintained, the referent for רָדָה is the fire, which prevailed against the bones. Given the day of Yahweh context, Yahweh is best maintained as the subject (Westermann, Lamentations, 111, 113; Hillers, Lamentations, 72; Provan, Lamentations, 49; Albrektson, Text and Theology, 72).
Yahweh's actions against her (חַנָּנִי שָׁמַם כָּל חָוָם רֹדָה; he has left me stunned, faint all day long).\(^{116}\) Verse 14 refers to Jerusalem's sin in conjunction with further divine responsibility motifs. The transgressions of Zion are bound into a yoke (שַׁמָּנָה עַל), fastened together by Yahweh's hand (כְּנֶדֶר נָשִׂיאָא).\(^{117}\) Jerusalem's sin is thus described as the cause behind Yahweh's action, an association present in the day of Yahweh complex. In v. 14 (and in vv. 18 and 20), the nature of the sin is not specified, despite Jerusalem being given the responsibility for her plight.\(^{118}\) Yahweh's control over the fate of Jerusalem is emphasized in the final clause of the verse, which introduces a divine abandonment motif in which Yahweh is described as handing Jerusalem over to her enemies. Although divine responsibility is maintained, the agency of Jerusalem's enemies is also present within this verse. Day of Yahweh motifs continue in v. 15, although Yahweh is now described as acting against various groups within the city and against the nation as a whole. Yahweh has rejected (שָׁבֵר) the warriors, crushed (רָדָד) the young men, and has "trod (צָנָה) the wine press of virgin daughter Judah."\(^{120}\) Only one more verb is given of Yahweh within the unit (v. 17) which again names Yahweh as the one responsible for the actions of the enemy. Yahweh is said to have commanded (מֹלֵךְ) Jacob's neighbors to become his foe.

Alongside the descriptions of Yahweh's actions against the city/people, the unit also describes the impact of those actions and as the unit progresses the descriptions of misery begin to dominate the attribution of divine responsibility. Verses 16-17 describe Jerusalem lamenting in the wake of her destruction. She weeps (בִּכְכָּה) and her eyes flow with tears (עֲנִי עָנִי יְהוֹדָּה מִלְּמָה). Zion also describes the

\(^{116}\) Although translated as faint in the NRSV, a euphemism may be implied here, as דָּם refers to menstrual impurity in Lev 15:33 and 20:18 (Provan, Lamentations, 50; Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Female Impersonator," 176; Hillers, Lamentations, 72–73).

\(^{117}\) See discussion in chapter 4 regarding textual issues within 1:14.

\(^{118}\) See chapter 4 for a full discussion of this verse.

\(^{119}\) This verb is rare, and is best translated as "reject" (Albrektson, Text and Theology, 76; Provan, Lamentations, 51). Hillers (Lamentations, 74) argues that "reject" is not appropriate in a reference to warriors, and reads "heaped up." However, the use of cult language in the next phrase (קָא יָּעַל מַדָּעָה) supports "reject" as a valid translation.

\(^{120}\) Hillers, Lamentations, 63; Westermann, Lamentations, 111. NRSV makes this line comparative "The Lord has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter of Judah," however as no comparative preposition is used, this translation is to be rejected.
impact on her children, who are desolate (שומרים) because the enemy has prevailed (כִּי בַּר アירב). In v. 17 the narrator describes Zion holding out her hands in supplication. The final consequence for Zion is that she has become filthy (לֹנֵד). Twice within these two verses the lack of a comforter for the city is mentioned, reinforcing one of the primary concerns of Jerusalem within this chapter (vv. 2, 9, 16, 17, 21). Further descriptions of misery occur in vv. 18-20, interwoven with motifs of divine vindication, sin and appeal. Verse 18, which declares Yahweh’s righteousness, vindicates Yahweh on the basis that it was Jerusalem’s sin which brought about the divine action. Jerusalem names her sin in general terms, stating that she has rebelled (מָרַע) against Yahweh’s word. The same verb is repeated in the confession of v. 20.121 In neither verse is the confession dwelt upon, with Jerusalem returning again to the description of misery. In v. 18, Jerusalem appeals to other nations to notice her suffering (מַעַצְּבֶּה), which is linked to the captivity of her young women and men. Verse 19 reports the desertion of Jerusalem by her lovers (מַעַזרב), and describes the fate of the priests and elders. A final appeal in v. 20, now to Yahweh, returns to the language of personal suffering. Jerusalem describes her churning stomach and heart, a condition brought about by her rebelliousness. The unit closes with reference to both military action and famine.

Within this unit Jerusalem names Yahweh as the one responsible for her plight, and describes her suffering in personal terms. The reference to the day of Yahweh’s fierce anger in v. 12 directs the text’s audience to consider Jerusalem’s description against the backdrop of the day of Yahweh, a motif known from the prophetic literature. Although this link with the prophetic literature is made, the emphasis of the unit differs from its prophetic counterparts due to the priority given to the descriptions of suffering. The unit shares motifs with the prophetic literature - the description of Yahweh’s action, reference to Yahweh’s anger, the references to sin and the focus on the impact of the day - however the language used to describe the day differs from that seen in the prophetic literature. As in the prophetic literature,

121 See chapter 4 for further discussion.
the emphasis is placed on Yahweh acting on the day, however the description of those actions is more personalized within this unit. Yahweh is described as acting against Zion personally in contrast to acting against Israel/Judah, or against other nations. This sense of personal attack is driven home by the first person speech of Zion, and by Zion’s self description through which her embodiment occurs. As a result, the impact of Yahweh’s actions is no longer described in general terms such as terror, anguish and distress, but is grounded in Zion’s physical and personal description of being faint, stunned, sapped of strength and full of internal churning. In addition, instead of focusing on Yahweh’s judgment, as happens in the prophetic literature, Jerusalem’s embodiment and the first person voicing of her suffering work together to draw attention away from Jerusalem’s sin and towards the description of the suffering with the impetus of this emphasis increasing as the unit progresses. By the end of the unit descriptions of misery have replaced the divine responsibility motif, centering attention firmly on the personal plight of Jerusalem.

3.3.2 Lamentation 1:21-22

Further reference to a day of Yahweh occurs in the unit 1:21-22, a future fate of the enemy unit in which the desired fate of the enemy is paralleled with Zion’s. The reference to the day of Yahweh occurs in v. 21, which refers to the day you (Yahweh) have announced (יִוְמָהּ֥ תִּשָּׁדַ֖ה). Parallel wording and chiastic structure within the unit suggests, if only by implication, that Zion’s hope is for the enemy to experience a future day of Yahweh against them.

Within vv. 21-22 there is a high degree of repetition and some chiasm. The unit opens and closes with a report of Zion’s groaning (אַנְגָּפְתּוּ). The initial groan (v. 21) is followed by a complaint by Jerusalem concerning her enemies who were glad (שֵׁאָה)

122 Verse 20 opens with the statement (They heard how I was groaning). Based on the Syriac, Kraus (Klagelieder, 18), Westermann (Lamentations, 114, 137) and Hillers (Lamentations, 63, 77) translate the opening verb as an imperative, reading “listen how I groan.” The emendation is unnecessary as the perfect is coherent, the referent being the enemies of the next line (Albrektson, Text and Theology, 83; Provan, Lamentations, 55; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 20–21).
that Yahweh had acted against her. On this basis, Jerusalem appeals to Yahweh to act against the enemy. Verse 21c reads "הָבֵאתָ יָדֶךָ הַרְאָא וַיִּלָּהֶר הָמָּה כְּמוֹר, the translation of which is debated. The Syriac translates the opening verb in the imperative, thus rendering the line "bring on the day you have announced, let them be as I am," a reading followed by NRSV and a number of commentaries.123 It is more likely that the first verb refers to Zion’s present situation (you have brought on the day that you announced),124 and that the second is a precative wish for the future (let them be as I am).125 In a tight chiastic structure, v. 22 parallels the hoped for fate of the enemies with Jerusalem’s own. The wish is for the enemies to be punished in accordance with their behaviour, just as Jerusalem had been for hers. Through this parallel structure, Zion, by implication, expresses the wish that the enemy too experience a day of Yahweh.126 Read this way, the day of Yahweh in Lamentations refers not only to the destruction of Jerusalem, but is potentially applied to the future punishment of Zion’s enemies.

3.3.3 Lamentations 2:1–8

The most detailed description of Yahweh’s actions against Jerusalem occurs in 2:1–8, a divine responsibility unit. The day of Yahweh motif is introduced in v. 1, and the entire unit can be read within this context. Although the day of Yahweh is applied to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the agency of the Babylonians is all but lost given the attribution of over thirty verbs to Yahweh who is described as carrying out the destruction.127 The day is clearly a day of Yahweh’s wrath, with repeated description of the heat and intensity of Yahweh’s anger (vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6). The major emphasis is the destruction of the city and cult, however brief mention of

123 Kraus, Klagelieder, 18; Hillers, Lamentations, 78; Westermann, Lamentations, 119; Berlin, Lamentations, 45.
124 Provan, Lamentations, 56.
125 Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 21–22; Hillers, Lamentations, 78.
126 That Zion calls on Yahweh to punish the enemy through a day of Yahweh is recognized by Provan (Lamentations, 56), Hillers (Lamentations, 91), Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 73), and Everson (Everson, “The Days of Yahweh.”).
127 Only two references to the enemy are made in vv. 3 and 7.
the impact of the destruction is made in vv. 5 and 8.

The images and motifs in 2:1-8 work together, building on each other to create a sustained portrayal of Yahweh’s role in the destruction. The unit is in the 3ps voice of the narrator, and although the description initially seems dispassionate in that the narrator describes the destruction with little emphasis on the impact on the people, the accumulation of verbs applied to Yahweh does suggest a sense of outrage at what has occurred. A formulaic pattern is followed, each clause beginning with the verb attributed to Yahweh. This repetitive pattern forces attention onto the actions of Yahweh, and as the verbs are mostly active, Yahweh’s active destruction is emphasized.

Verse 1 opens with a cry of lament (איכה איכה תוע ימי אבון הו אנה ית ציון), How the Lord in his anger has beclouded daughter Zion). The verb יצי is difficult, but in its translation as “beclouded” evokes the prophetic images of darkness and cloud within the day of Yahweh material. Reference to Yahweh’s anger, wrath or fury occurs six times in the opening six verses (vv. 1 (x2), 2, 3, 4, 6), making this a dominant motif. In v. 3, the anger is qualified as being fierce (חרות), and in v. 6 as (literally “in the indignation of his anger”). Yahweh’s elevated position is brought to the fore in the reference of Yahweh throwing down (שלח) from heaven the splendor (ה吆) of Israel and not remembering his footstool (כוה אפור). The day is named specifically as a day of Yahweh’s anger.

Verses 2-3a focus on Yahweh’s destruction of both city and nation. Many of the verbs involve a sense of downward movement: 129 (devour), (break down) and (bring down [to earth]). Yahweh acts against the inhabitants of Jacob (מצביר בה ירוש), the strongholds of the daughter of Judah (את כל נאשまとめ), the kingdom and its rulers (מלכם שרי) and, in v. 3a, Yahweh cuts down all the might of Israel (כל שיא). Yahweh is described as acting without mercy (ללא מלח), and in anger and wrath.

128 See chapter 2, footnote 146 for discussion.
129 Repeated also in vv. 5 (x2) and 8.
In vv. 3b-5 the imagery shifts, describing Yahweh’s failure to support the nation in the face of the enemy (v. 3b), and as acting like an enemy (vv. 4-5). In addition, Yahweh’s actions are described as being like fire (vv. 3c, 4c). Yahweh is portrayed as not only destroying the city, but also of killing (רזר) the pride of the nation (כל המפארды עין). Something of the impact is given in v. 5, where Yahweh is described as multiplying (רבד) mourning and lamentation (הנשא ואнятие). Far from being the protector of Judah, Yahweh’s portrayal in these verses graphically describes the reversal of the holy war motif with the full brunt of Yahweh’s anger being directed against Yahweh’s own people.

Verses 6-7 focus on the destruction of the cult, again emphasizing Yahweh’s responsibility. The opening of v. 6 is problematic, both in terms of the verb used (ходим) and the imagery (הכין שלב). This is the only time this verb is applied to Yahweh, its general sense being the wrongful application of violence. The LXX and Syriac do not reflect the same verb, which could suggest a different vorlage. However, given the overriding portrayal of Yahweh as enemy, the verb is appropriate. The imagery intended by הכין שלב (literally “like a garden, his booth”) is difficult, but is best understood as a reference to fragility, and applied to the temple. Various aspects of the cult come into focus in vv. 6-8, including מועדים (appointed feasts, vv. 6[x2], 7), שבת (Sabbath, v. 6), מלך וכהן (king and priest, v. 6), ומקדש (sanctuary, v. 7), and הבית הוה (house of Yahweh, v. 7). The verbs attributed to Yahweh include שלח (lay in ruins, v. 6), חהל (bring to an end, v. 6), נאש (spurn, v. 6), זמר (scream, v. 7), נוא (scorn, v. 7), and באמר ויד אתי (delivered into the hand of the enemy, v. 7). The final verb in v. 7 (.fecha יאני) is not attributed to Yahweh, although in the

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130 Verbs attributed to Yahweh include בשר (burn), נצר (bending his bow), זרוע ימינו (bending his right hand), שמש (pour out like fire), ותא (destroy [x2]).
131 These two words as a pair occur only here and in Isa 29:2.
132 E.g. Jer 22:3; Ezek 22:26; Zeph 3:4 (Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 27).
133 Albrektson (Text and Theology, 95) provides a summary of all the major positions with regard to the line. McDaniel (“Philological Studies,” 36–38) argues that של should be translated as “branch,” and emends the line to read “he has stomped from the vine its branches.” Gottlieb (Text of Lamentations, 28–29) argues that while של was originally understood as a fence or thorn hedge, it is now generally accepted to mean “booth.” He suggests that the translation should be “like a booth in a garden” (as do Albrektson, Text and Theology, 95–96; Westermann, Lamentations, 141; Hillers, Lamentations, 93; Provan, Lamentations, 64).
context of the verse, that this happened within the temple is clearly Yahweh’s responsibility. These two verses describe the total dismantling of the cult in Jerusalem.

Verse 8 stresses the intentionality of Yahweh’s actions against Jerusalem, focusing on Yahweh’s destruction of aspects of the physical city. The verb בָּלַע (to plan/determine) is used in the description of Yahweh laying in ruins (חָדֹשׁ) the walls of the city. Hillers argues that this points to the perception that Yahweh acted “not through inadvertence, but deliberately.” 134 Verse 8b uses imagery generally associated with building, but points to the intentional destruction by Yahweh. 135 The final verb attributed to Yahweh is used in a negative construction; לא חָשָׁב יְהֹוָה מִכָּל (he did not withhold his hand from destroying), again highlighting the intent of Yahweh’s actions. The unit closes with reference to walls and ramparts being caused (הָבַל) to lament and languish. Within this unit Yahweh is held responsible for all aspects of the destruction that occurred.

Throughout this unit the day of Yahweh is portrayed in images which reflect the reality of the destruction of Jerusalem. Yahweh is described as the one who carries out the destruction, portrayed as being like an enemy to the nation/city, thus reversing the concept of Yahweh as warrior acting on behalf of Israel. Although the destruction is described as a day of Yahweh, a number of the characteristics of the day as described in the prophetic literature are absent from this passage. There is no reference to the cause of Yahweh’s action against the city, with sin not being mentioned in chapter 2 until v. 14, and even then only briefly. In addition, within vv. 1-8 there is minimal stress placed on the impact of Yahweh’s actions on the people/city. Rather the focus remains firmly on the terrifying destructive activity of Yahweh.

3.3.4 Lamentations 2:20-22

The final unit of chapter 2, which draws together themes from across the chapter, contains two references to Yahweh’s day (vv. 21, 22). The unit contains

134 Hillers, Lamentations, 99.
both description of misery and divine responsibility motifs, and, as with vv. 1-8, assigns responsibility to Yahweh for the destruction and suffering. The focus, however, is more on the suffering of the community. Reference to the day of Yahweh again reflects the reality of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

The unit opens with an appeal similar to those in 1:9, 11 and 20. Verse 20 implores Yahweh to notice the suffering and to consider whom it is that has been afflicted. There is an “intimation of reproach” within this appeal to Yahweh which implies that Yahweh should not have acted in this way.136 Two rhetorical questions point to the extent of the disintegration within the community, with reference to the cannibalism of the women, and the death of priests and prophets in Yahweh’s sanctuary. This theme is continued into v. 21, which describes the fate of the young and the old, both of whom are the victims of warfare. The destruction of Jerusalem is again named as a day of Yahweh (בַּיֵּי יָהֳウェָה), with Yahweh accused of killing (רָעָה) and slaughtering (מָכַבְת) without mercy (לָא חֲמֶלָה). Verse 22 introduces themes reminiscent of the day of Yahweh material in Zeph 1. Yahweh is accused of inviting Jerusalem’s enemies for a day of festival, yet in this context this is a day of killing and slaughter, not of the enemy, but of Jerusalem herself. Again, the day is described as one of Yahweh’s anger (בִּי יָהֳ 예수님 אֶחָד) in which no-one escaped. Those destroyed were the children of Zion. Although the enemies are mentioned within this unit, it is clearly Yahweh who is held responsible by the personified city.

3.3.5 Summary

The day of Yahweh within Lamentations is, primarily, applied to a past event, described in images which reflect the reality of the destruction of Jerusalem. Within this description, Yahweh is the one who is portrayed as the enemy, a warrior actively working to destroy the city and cult, but also as the one who inflicts personal suffering on personified Zion. The day of Yahweh, as it is described in Lamentations,

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135 רָעָה he stretched the line (Hillers, Lamentations, 99).
136 Westermann, Lamentations, 158.
is tied to the historical concerns of the city/nation, and lacks any cosmic or universal dimension, although the possibility is open that a future day of Yahweh may occur against the nation’s enemies.

Past tense descriptions interpret the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh. The texts considered all focus on Jerusalem and three of the passages (1:12-20, 21-22; 2:20-21) are in the voice of the personified city herself. When Jerusalem describes Yahweh’s actions, she describes them as a personal act against her very being, and her words portray her emotion, pain and suffering. In 2:1-8, where the narrator speaks, there is less concern with the emotion of the suffering city, the focus of this voice being the physical destruction of the city/nation and the dismantling of the cult in Jerusalem. The description of the day of Yahweh is shaped by the Babylonian destruction of the city, and makes frequent reference to destruction and other acts of war, as well as some references to the famine which arose as a consequence of the prolonged siege of Jerusalem. This is particularly evident in 2:1-8. Within this unit there is some reference to the Babylonians as Yahweh’s agent (vv. 3, 7), however, their agency virtually disappears behind the description of Yahweh acting against the city. The description in 2:20-22 similarly reflects the reality of warfare, focussing on the death of individuals and groups through both sword and famine.

In 1:12-20 there is less direct reference to military events. Within this unit, which focuses on the suffering of the personified city, the language has more to do with personal affliction. Yahweh is described as acting upon the city, and against groups within the city, using images which suggest the overwhelming breaking down of the individual. Yahweh is portrayed as an oppressive force which has come against the weaker individual, albeit one who acknowledges that she has responsibility for her own fate, an acknowledgement which jars against the pathos of her description.137

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137O’Connor (Tears of the World, 27) suggests that Jerusalem’s acceptance of responsibility is like that of a woman in an abusive relationship, justifying the violence against herself.
In 1:21-22, where Jerusalem appeals to Yahweh to act against her enemies, past events continue to be described as a day of Yahweh. However, the possibility is left open that a future day may come against Zion’s enemies. The nature of this day is not described in any detail. Jerusalem looks to Yahweh to act against her enemies, both on account of their treatment of her and in accordance with their own behaviour. While Jerusalem does not describe how Yahweh should act, the parallels within the unit suggest that the fate of the enemies should be akin to those of the city herself. In describing her own destruction as a day of Yahweh, Jerusalem lays the basis for the appeal to Yahweh to act against her enemies.

The focus of the day of Yahweh descriptions in Lamentations is the destruction and the suffering it wrought. The descriptions either center on the suffering (1:12-20, 21-22; 2:20-22) or on the destructive action of Yahweh (2:1-8). Against this, the description of sin in relation to the day is ambivalent. The two units in chapter 1 make reference to sin, however, they do not describe in any detail the nature of the sin, and move immediately back to the descriptions of suffering. In chapter 2 there is no mention of sin within either day of Yahweh unit. The cause of the day is of lesser import than the nature of the day and its impact on those who experienced it.

The day of Yahweh in Lamentations is not of universal significance, nor is it associated with cosmic changes. It does not appear to be confined to a single event, nor can it be defined as an event to end time. In interpreting the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh, it is apparent that this day was viewed as a day of Yahweh’s intervention in history. The events may have had epochal significance in that they marked the end of life as it was known, but life continued after the event and hope existed for future decisive action by Yahweh.

3.4 The Day of Yahweh in Lamentations in Relation to the Prophetic Literature

Day of Yahweh as it is described in Lamentations has some affinity with prophetic day of Yahweh descriptions which come from the late seventh and into the
sixth century. In particular, it stands closest to the past tense references to the day of Yahweh in Isa 22:1-14 and Jer 46:3-12. The day of Yahweh is described in terms of military warfare, is directed against both Israel/Judah and other nations, and is not viewed as a singular future event. In all texts Yahweh is held responsible for the actions on the day, whether these be the direct actions of Yahweh, or through the agency of human armies.

Despite these affinities, some clear distinctions are evident, distinctions which emerge as a result of this prophetic motif being taken up into a new text for a new purpose. Through these differences further dimensions of the dialogic interaction between Lamentations and the prophetic texts emerge.

Within Lamentations there is an increased emphasis on the impact of the day of Yahweh on both individual and community, associated with a decrease in detail as to the causes of the day. While it was noted that Isa 2:6-22 and the prophetic texts from the seventh to sixth century do focus on the impact of the day of Yahweh, they do so in terms of the anguish, terror and distress that the day engenders, and that in some cases (Isa 2:6-22; Zeph 3; Ezek 7; 30:1-19) this results in those inflicted recognizing the sovereignty of Yahweh. Within Lamentations, however, the impact is described in a manner which personalizes the impact, primarily on Zion, but also on groups within the Zion community. This is achieved in a number of ways. In 1:12-20, 21-22 and 2:20-22, the description of the day occurs in the first person voice of Zion herself. In the prophetic literature it is Yahweh or the prophet who describes the day, not the one inflicted on the day as it is in Lamentations. Within this personal speech, Zion is embodied, and reports her suffering in terms of its physical as well as its emotional impact. The emphasis is placed not on terror and anguish, but on suffering and the breakdown of the individual. Yahweh is described as an oppressive force which acts against Zion as an individual. In addition, Zion describes her personal lament over her own plight and over the plight of groups within the community. In describing the fate of groups of people, Zion takes on the role of mother, further emphasizing her pathos and personal suffering. Lamentations thus reflects the
prophetic trend of describing the impact of the day, but greatly extends this through the personalization of the impact. In doing so, Lamentations highlights the suffering of the city far beyond that seen in the prophetic literature and as a result focuses audience attention on the suffering of the city and not on the content of the judgment as is inherent in the prophetic day of Yahweh texts.

This highly personalized description of the impact of the day of Yahweh is associated with a decrease in detail as to the cause of the day. In chapter 1 there is repeated reference to the sin of Zion as the reason for Yahweh’s action (1:12-20 vv. 14, 18, 20; 1:21-22), thus aligning the text with the prophetic literature. In contrast to the prophetic texts, however, there is a lack of specificity as to the nature of the sin, a lack of specificity which stands in tension with the extent of the suffering described. This tension is even more evident in chapter 2 which makes no reference to sin in either of the day of Yahweh units (vv. 1-8, 20-22). Through both the lack of specificity in chapter 1 and the absence of sin references in the day of Yahweh material in chapter 2, the description of the suffering of the city is given priority within the text.

In contrast to the prophetic literature, Lamentations does not suggest any universal consequences of the day of Yahweh and there is a lack of reference to cosmic events or consequences. Within the sixth century prophetic texts which view the day of Yahweh as a future event, there is an emphasis on images of warfare as the lens through which the day is understood, as is evident in Lamentations. Elements suggestive of the theophany of Yahweh do occur within a number of the prophetic texts (e.g. Isa 13; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 30:1-19), and there is a movement towards understanding the day of Yahweh as one of universal consequence (Isa 13; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Zeph 3; Ezek 7; 30:1-19). These elements are absent in Lamentations, even in Lam 1:21-22, which implies a possible future day of Yahweh.

As with Isa 22:1-14 and Jer 46:3-12, the day of Yahweh in Lamentations is referred to as a past event. The destruction of Jerusalem is understood within this

\[13^8\text{See chapter 4 for further discussion of the sin references in Lamentations.}\]
framework in Lam 1:12-20, 21-22; 2:1-8, 20-22. As a past event, the description is reflective of the reality of the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city. Both Isa 22 and Jer 46 also reflect the realities of the battles which they describe. Within Lamentations however, there is, as argued above, an increased emphasis on the suffering of the city, introducing an empathetic element absent in the related prophetic texts. In Isa 22:1-14, the prophet is indicting the city for its inappropriate response to Yahweh’s past actions, and as such this text is not sympathetic in its portrayal of the city. In Jer 46, which refers to the defeat of the Egyptians, the concern is the recognition of Yahweh’s role in this battle, and the text functions as a warning for the Jerusalem community about relying on Egyptian might. Despite their past tense reference to the day of Yahweh, both Isa 22:1-14 and Jer 46 remain judgment texts, a function which differs from that of Lamentations.

Within the sixth century prophetic texts considered, reference is made to lament behaviour (Isa 13; 22:1-14; Jer 46:3-12; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 7; 30:1-19). In these texts, however, the presence of the lament language serves to drive home the severity of the announced judgment. Within Lamentations the suffering is paramount, tied in chapters 1 and 2 with the desire of the personified city to find either comfort for or acknowledgment of her pain. The priority given to the expression of lament distinguishes Lamentations from the related prophetic literature.

The similarities and differences between the use of the day of Yahweh motif in the prophetic literature and Lamentations support there being a dialogic relationship between the two groups of texts.

In referring to the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh, Lamentations directs the audience to consider the descriptions of misery and divine responsibility against the prophetic understanding of this motif. As such, it can be argued that Lamentations names the destruction of Jerusalem as an example of a momentous intervention of Yahweh in history, and that in the destruction Yahweh’s judgment can be seen.
However, due to the differences in the way the motif is developed in Lamentations, it can also be argued that Lamentations subverts the prophetic understanding of the day of Yahweh, and creates in its audience a sense of tension in the interpretation of the event.

In chapter 1, which names Yahweh as the one who caused the city to suffer on account of her sin, the prophetic motif is undermined in two ways. In its emphasis on the personal suffering of the personified city the severity of the attack is driven home, reinforced by the first person speech of the city. Of the texts considered, Lamentations is unique in portraying the description of the day in the first person voice, and in this way the emphasis on the impact of the day is heightened. In addition, although the city confesses her sin as causing Yahweh to act, the absence of detail and the continued stress on the suffering undermines the motif, and the audience, like the city, is left wondering where comfort can be found for the bereaved city. Verses 21-22 imply that some comfort may occur should the enemy be punished as Jerusalem was. However, this is expressed only as a wish and is not realized.

Chapter 2 continues to subvert the motif, but does so through different strategies. In 2:1-8, the emphasis moves away from the description of suffering to the attribution of responsibility for the destruction to Yahweh, portrayed through an amassing of verbs applied to Yahweh. Although the day is described in detail, and in this way conforms to its prophetic counterparts, the total absence of reference to sin within the unit and the sheer weight of the description imply a sense of outrage over Yahweh’s actions. In the closing unit of chapter 2 (vv. 20-22), which returns to a description of the extreme suffering within the community, including the reference to cannibalism, the horrific impact of the day is reinforced. The day of Yahweh within Lamentations thus subverts the judgment motif present in the prophetic use of the complex and becomes instead a way of driving home the horrific implications of Zion’s suffering.

It can be argued that reference to the day of Yahweh is a significant link
between Lamentations and the prophetic literature, but, as was seen in the use of the personification device, the day of Yahweh motif is picked up and shaped within Lamentations for its own purposes. The past tense description of the day provides a framework within which the destruction of Jerusalem could be understood, and also within which implied hope could be placed for future action of Yahweh against her enemies. The perceived judgment is in the past in Lamentations, which focuses on the painful consequences of Yahweh’s actions for both city and community. Through the emphasis on the pain and suffering of the city, the day of Yahweh motif is subverted, and becomes a motif which stresses the extent of the suffering within the stricken city.
Chapter 4

Sin and Judgment in Lamentations and its Relationship to the Prophetic Literature

4.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters have argued that the book of Lamentations evokes various prophetic texts through its personification of Jerusalem as female and through its use of the day of Yahweh motif. When Lamentations uses these motifs however, it does so for its own purpose, asking the text’s audience to consider this new text in light of other texts, but in a way that does not necessarily assume that the present text adopts without modification the outlook of the previous texts. In this way, Lamentations comes into a dialogic relationship with those prophetic texts to which it alludes.

These two motifs - the personification of Jerusalem and the day of Yahweh - occur outside Lamentations almost exclusively within the prophetic literature, thus making the allusion to the prophetic texts relatively transparent. Alongside these two motifs, previous literature on Lamentations has also suggested that it shares a third motif with the prophetic literature, the theological understanding that Jerusalem/the people’s sin was the cause of Yahweh’s action against the city.\(^1\)

The association between sin and judgment, though not exclusive to the prophetic literature, is arguably a central concern of this body of texts. The purpose of the current chapter is to explore whether or not Lamentations can be said to share a common understanding of the relationship between sin and Yahweh’s actions within the prophetic literature.

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4.1.1 The Task

A prevailing opinion concerning Lamentations is that because it makes reference to the sin of Jerusalem and/or the people the book accepts an orthodox view that human sin was the cause of Jerusalem's downfall.² This in turn is understood to form a strong link with the prophetic literature. Often, these conclusions are drawn without a close examination of the interaction of the sin motif within the wider unit in which it occurs, or without any detailed exploration of either similarities and/or differences that occur between Lamentations' references to sin and those of the prophetic texts to which it alludes. Again, presuppositions need to be put aside, and the texts examined afresh.

Sixteen verses within Lamentations make direct reference to sin (1:5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 22; 2:14; 3:39, 42, 64; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:7, 16). Thirteen of the sixteen references concern the sins of Jerusalem and/or the people, while 1:22, 3:64 and 4:22 refer to the sins of Jerusalem's enemies. With the exception of 4:13, the references occur as motifs within larger thematic units: seven references occur within descriptions of misery (1:5, 8, 9; 2:14; 4:6; 5:7, 16); four within divine responsibility units (1:14, 18, 20; 3:42); and three within future fate of the enemy units (1:22; 3:64; 4:22). 4:13-16 forms an extended treatment of the sin motif and, as will be discussed below, becomes a thematic unit in itself.

Sin motifs are voiced by various persona within the text: that of the narrator (1:5, 8, 9; 2:14; 3:64; 4:6, 13, 22); Zion (1:14, 18, 20, 22); the singular (vv. 39, 64) and communal (v. 42) voices of chapter 3; and the communal voice of chapter 5 (vv. 7, 16).

In Lam 1, 2 and 4, the sin motif occurs in conjunction with either or both of the previous prophetic motifs considered. In these three chapters all the references occur in the context of the personification of the city. In addition, four references in chapter

1 also occur within day of Yahweh passages (vv. 14, 18, 20, 22). The references in
Lam 3 and 5 are not linked with the two prophetic motifs already discussed.

Gottwald’s discussion of the sin motif in Lamentations treats all the references
to sin as confessional. An initial examination of the distribution of references across
Lamentations, however, raises questions as to the uniformity of the motif’s use. Does
the motif vary as it is used by different voices? Does the understanding of sin vary
when it is used in different thematic units, and how is its use influenced by the
surrounding material? Do the references to sin differ when used in conjunction with
other prophetic motifs as opposed to those units in which the personification of
Jerusalem and/or the day of Yahweh are not used? In asking these questions of the
text, the presupposition that all the references are confessional is abandoned, leaving
open the possibility that the text itself may hold varying points of view concerning
sin.

The task of the present chapter is to explore whether or not the references to sin
within Lamentations form a dialogic link with the prophetic literature, and, if so,
what the nature of that relationship is.

4.1.2 Method

Having defined the task, the question of appropriate method emerges.

4.1.2.1 Comparison of Texts

Unlike the prophetic use of both the personification and the day of Yahweh
motifs where it was possible to identify a defined number of texts that function as
possible dialogic antecedents of Lamentations, the range of texts available within the
prophetic literature in relation to sin and judgment is innumerable. It is neither

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4 In using “judgment” I am not presupposing a juridical and/or retributive understanding of the
relationship between sin and Yahweh’s actions (see discussion). Despite its loaded meaning, this term
is both the most standard and the most convenient way of referring to Yahweh’s actions in the context
of the prophetic literature.
possible, nor practical, to consider every eighth to sixth century prophetic reference to sin and Yahweh’s judgment, all of which could arguably be considered as intertextual links with Lamentations. If, however, we begin from Lamentations itself, a number of possibilities emerge.

It was noted that the sin motif occurs in some of the units which already allude to prophetic texts through either the personification of the city and/or the day of Yahweh (Lam 1, 2 and 4). Given that outside Lamentations these two motifs are largely limited to the prophetic literature, one possible approach is to compare Lamentations’ use of the sin and judgment motif within the context of the personification of the city and/or the day of Yahweh texts with the use of the sin and judgment in the specific range of prophetic texts discussed in chapters 2 and 3 above.

This provides a useful beginning, but proceeding from this the discussion needs to be broadened in two respects.

First, it cannot be reasonably argued that those texts in which reference to sin and judgment occurs in the context of personification and day of Yahweh are the only antecedent prophetic texts to which Lamentations alludes when it makes reference to sin. References to sin are common within the prophetic literature, and the references to sin in the personification and day of Yahweh passages form part of a network of sin references in the wider literary context of the prophetic book itself. In its references to sin, Lamentations draws into dialogue not only the sins which are named in the personification and day of Yahweh passages in the prophetic books, but also other sin references which occur within the wider literary context. Although every individual reference to sin in the prophetic literature cannot be discussed, an overview of the concerns of each of the prophetic books regarding sin and judgment can help provide insight into that literary context, and in turn help fill out how it is that Lamentations interacts with the prophetic literature in relation to the sin motif. For example, although some of the prophetic texts considered in relation to the day of Yahweh do not list any specific sins (e.g. Amos 5:18-20), the literary context does specify sins. If the audience can be assumed to be familiar with the prophetic texts,
that context helps to form the dialogic background of Lamentations. Again, it is not assumed that because Lamentations alludes to specific texts, which in turn belong within their own literary context, that Lamentations adopts that viewpoint unquestioningly. The aim of considering the wider literary context of the prophetic texts in relation to sin and judgment is to explore how Lamentations dialogues with those texts, a dialogue in which agreement cannot be assumed.

Second, references to sin in Lamentations do not all occur in the context of personification and day of Yahweh units. The sin references in Lam 3 (vv. 39, 42, 64) and 5 (vv. 7, 16) occur within units which do not use the previously identified prophetic motifs. The role and function of these references to sin within their respective units will be explored, and, where relevant, related dialogic links with the prophetic literature will be considered. So, for example, 5:7 makes reference to the Jerusalem community being punished for the sins of the previous generations, an issue also discussed in Ezek 18 and 33:10-20, and in Jer 31:27-30. In the same way, links to prophetic texts other than through personification and day of Yahweh will also be identified, for example the references to false prophecy in 2:14 and 4:13. While no attempt is made to trace every possible prophetic link, some of the more transparent links will be discussed in order to provide further insight into Lamentations’ use of the sin motif.

In reviewing the references to sin in Lamentations and the prophetic texts identified in this way, issues such as the nature of the sins cited, the relationship of those sins to the actions of Yahweh, and the role of sin in the wider unit of material in which it occurs will be considered. Arising out of the observation in chapters 2 and 3 that within the personification and day of Yahweh texts Lamentations gives precedence to the expression of suffering, the relative weight of the description of sin against the description of the judgment/suffering and its impact on the people will also be noted. In this way the nature of the dialogic relationship between the sin references in Lamentations and the prophetic literature can be explored.
4.1.2.2 The Relationship between Sin and Judgment

Before beginning to consider specific texts in relation to sin and judgment, it is necessary to first consider the debate regarding the nature of the relationship between the behaviour of the people and the actions of Yahweh in the Hebrew bible, particularly as found in the prophetic literature. This relationship is often defined in terms of sin and judgment.

The starting point for the current discussion is Gottwald’s understanding of the theology of sin in Lamentations.5 In discussing sin, Gottwald lays down his understanding of the relationship between the people’s sin and Yahweh’s actions. He argues that Lamentations portrays a concept of retributive justice. He states:

to attempt to rationalize sin in terms of its social consequences is not to equate the punishment thereof with a troubled conscience, or with the slow working out of requital through the process of moral “sowing and reaping.” The interventionist ethos of Hebraism is more vivid and direct than that. The book of Lamentations is distinguished by the repeated emphasis on the wrath of Yahweh which acts directly in dealing out retribution.6

Gottwald’s study assumes a set framework in which to understand the relationship between sin and judgment, that of retributive justice. Gottwald’s use of this term implies that Yahweh functions as a judge who metes out punishment, albeit punishment that is commensurate with the crime.7 This notion of retributive justice is not, however, the only possible framework through which to understand the link between sin and the events of history. A series of articles and monographs have appeared since the publication of Gottwald’s work which debate the understanding of the nature of sin and its consequences/judgment, both within the Hebrew bible as a whole, and more specifically within the prophetic literature.8 The following

5Norman K. Gottwald, Studies.
6Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 72.
7See Gottwald’s references to the sin being equal to the suffering (68-69).
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\(^5\) Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies.*

\(^6\) Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies,* 72.

\(^7\) See Gottwald’s references to the sin being equal to the suffering (68-69).

overview of this debate is a prelude to, and the basis for, the discussion of the sin references in both Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

In 1955 Klaus Koch published his much debated *Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament*. The starting point of Koch's study is the observation that "ideas about retribution or even an explicit OT doctrine of retribution are ordinarily used as if everyone already knows exactly what is meant." Koch cites statements by H. Gunkel and W. Eichrodt which both presume that "the relationship between actions and their consequences is described on the OT as being determined by the retribution of Yahweh." Koch objects, however, to the view that an essential element of the concept of retribution is that of Yahweh as judge. In opposition to this prevailing opinion, Koch advocates that there is no concept of retributive justice within the Hebrew bible, dissociating any connection between Yahweh and a juridical setting.

Koch argues that Yahweh should not be seen in the role of a judge dealing out reward or punishment on the basis of a preestablished norm, but more in terms of a midwife facilitating a process which previous human action has set in motion. This argument is based on Koch's understanding of the relationship between deeds and their consequences. He argues that actions have inbuilt consequences, and that those consequences come back upon the doer. Koch's argument is summarized concisely in the work of P. Miller, who writes:

In an extensive treatment of Old Testament texts Koch argues that there is no doctrine of retribution in the Old Testament. Where it

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9 Klaus Koch, "Vergeltungsdogma." Quotes and references in the current discussion will be taken from the English translation (Klaus Koch, "Theology of Retribution.").

10Klaus Koch, "Theology of Retribution," 57.

11Klaus Koch, "Theology of Retribution," 57. Koch cites Gunkel's article "Vergeltung im Alten Testament (1931)," in Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments (ed. Klaus Koch; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 1 (reprinted from the original found in Die religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für theologie und Religionswissenschaft. Fünfter Band [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931] 1529-1533) which opens with the words "From the very beginning Israelite religion maintained a belief in retribution." Koch also cites W. Eichrodt who refers to the Israelite "deeply rooted belief in retribution" (Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament [trans. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1961–67], 382) and states that "the Israelite is certain that God in his turn will act towards him in accordance with those principles of law which he himself is well acquainted." (Eichrodt, Theology, 242–43). See also pp. 371-74.

speaks of Yahweh’s judgment, that must not be understood as retribution according to prescribed norms. Yahweh does not in this context function as judge. There are no judicial norms or prescribed punishment that determine the judgment. The judgment is not independent of the crime or sin. Rather it is rooted directly in the sin in a relationship of deed and its consequences. The evil that one does comes back upon the sinner even as the good comes on the righteous. There is connection between the deed and its results. One may speak of the fate one creates for oneself out of one’s actions (“menschlicher Tat entspringendes Schiskal”).

Koch does not exclude Yahweh from acting within the act-consequence relationship. Yahweh acts, not as judge, but as the one who sets the consequences into action, thus ensuring that the in-built consequences are brought to bear on the actor. As such, Yahweh is seen to maintain the ethical order of the world. Even when acting against the whole nation, Yahweh is not understood as judge, but has the role of triggering the natural results of human action.

Koch’s thesis in its entirety has not found wide acceptance, due, in large part, to its extremity in rejecting any notion of retributive justice within the Hebrew bible. J. Barton argues that, if taken in its fullest sense, Koch’s argument leads to the conclusion that “God does not act in history for the ancient Israelite, and that the notions of law and covenant are far less to the fore in the prophets than is commonly supposed.” However, it has been acknowledged that some of the texts covered by Koch within his study do in fact reflect an act-consequence framework, and that this

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15 A. Campbell (The Study Companion to the Old Testament: An Approach to the Writings of Pre-Exilic and Post-Exilic Israel [Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989], 415) argues that Koch’s claim for the absence of retributive language in the Hebrew bible was “based on the mistaken priority of etymology over context in the determination of the meaning of the word.”
16 Koch was strongly influenced by the work of K. Fählgren (K. H. Fählgren, “Die Gegensätze von sedaqa im Alten Testament,” in *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testament* [ed. Klaus Koch; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972], 87–129) who noted that the central words for sin included within their scope notions of punishment, or the consequences of the sin.
17 Barton, “Natural Law,” 11.
may well be one view of the relationship of sin and judgment within the Hebrew bible.\(^{18}\)

Although he makes no mention of Koch’s work, C. Westermann’s *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* presents a thesis whose underlying premise can be seen to be the polar opposite to Koch’s.\(^{19}\) The primary concern of Westermann’s work is to develop a form-critical understanding of the prophetic judgment speech.

The book opens with an overview of previous research into the forms of prophetic speech. Key within this history is the influential work of Gunkel who described the two basic types of prophetic speech as being threat and promise.\(^{20}\) The threat was, according to Gunkel, supplemented by the reproach or reason, such that over time the reproach took on increasing dominance.\(^{21}\) According to Gunkel, the threat (and promise) are the actual words of Yahweh, while the reproach represents the prophet’s own words on the reason for the threat.\(^{22}\) Gunkel argues that the setting of the prophetic oracle lies in the personal ecstatic experience of the prophet.\(^{23}\) Westermann criticizes Gunkel’s understanding of the prophetic judgment speech on the basis that his terminology lacks clarity, and because of the separation of the reproach from the threat within Gunkel’s framework. For Westermann, the two elements belong together to form the announcement of judgment.\(^{24}\)

Also important in Westermann’s history of interpretation are the works of J. Linblom and L. Köhler who recognized that the prophetic oracle should be understood as a messenger speech.\(^{25}\) Building on this recognition, and on the basis of


\(^{23}\) Clements, *One Hundred Years*, 61.

\(^{24}\) Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 29.

his critique of Gunkel, Westermann analyzes the form of the prophetic judgment speech, both of the individual (JI) and of the nation (JN). The prophetic judgment speech has two basic elements, the accusation and the announcement. In the JN, which is the prime concern for current purposes, the prophetic judgment speech can be divided into two sections: the reason, which consists of the accusation and its development; and the announcement of judgment, consisting of the announcement of the intervention of Yahweh and the results of that intervention. The prophet functions as Yahweh’s messenger, announcing the judgment of Yahweh.

Westermann argues that both JI and JN reflect a legal setting. This setting defines Westermann’s understanding of the relationship between sin and judgment as being retributive. He argues that JI and JN have their roots in the language of the courts, and that the judgment assumes a legal setting in which Yahweh functions as judge over the people. He states:

> With the terms “announcement of judgment”, “reason”, and “accusation”, a decision about the understanding of the prophetic speeches so designated has also, of course, taken place. This definitely draws them into a certain proximity to court procedure. That which happens in these speeches between God and his people (through the mediation of the messenger) can be seen in the manner of a court action. ... In addition to that, however, it would be presupposed that the content of that which is announced to the people of God by the messenger should be understood essentially as an act of the judgment of God upon his people.

Key to Westermann’s view is the retributive model that Yahweh intervenes in history to bring about the punishment of sin. Although Westermann’s structure of the prophetic judgment speech is widely accepted, the legal setting of the speeches is not always supported. Koch, in his 1969 *The Growth of Biblical Tradition*, rejects

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*Forms*, 36–40.
27Ibid., 169.
28Ibid., 70.
the legal setting proposed by Westermann, labelling the basic form "prophecy of
disaster." This is in keeping with Koch's earlier work on the act-consequence
framework. Rather than locating the prophetic oracle in the judicial system, Koch
maintains Gunkel's setting of the speeches as arising out of the prophet's private
experience.

Both Westermann and Koch's studies are limited in that they attempt to
develop a single model to explain the relationship between sin and judgment. More
balanced are those approaches which argue for a more multi-faceted understanding
of the relationship between sin and Yahweh's actions.

In his 1979 article J. Barton explores whether or not the concepts of natural
law and poetic justice can be applied to aspects of OT literature, and particularly to
the prophetic literature. Significant for the current discussion is Barton's criticism
of Koch's act-consequence framework. As seen above, Barton argues that Koch's
thesis is too extreme, and postulates a world-view that cannot be fully supported.
Barton argues that the focus of investigation should shift from a concern with how
the mechanism of "retribution" works, to a concern for the theological position
portrayed within various utterances. Barton notes that in many prophetic texts a
poetic justice is portrayed in which the punishment is shown to fit, or be appropriate
to, the sin committed. A clear example of this can be seen in Isa 5:8-9. In speaking
of poetic justice, Barton in effect shifts the focus from the thought-world of the
ancient Israelite to the expression of a given viewpoint within the text. In expressing
this poetic justice, Barton argues a theological viewpoint is expressed as to the moral
character of Yahweh. He states:

To say that the sinner is punished in a way that fits his sin is to say
that God is as consistent and rational in his dealings with men (sic)
as one would expect a human judge to be; he gives men (sic) back

31 Koch's task is even more ambitious than Westermann's in that Koch considers the entirety of the
OT, while Westermann only considers the prophetic literature.
32 Barton, "Natural Law."
33 Ibid., 10-11.
34 Ibid., 12.
what they deserve, pays them back in their own coin, makes the punishment fit the crime. ... The ethical consistency of God, rather than the method by which retribution is effected, is the point at issue: God’s judgment is never capricious, but wholly consistent, and he acts according to moral principles which are essentially the same as those recognized among men (sic).36

Barton’s argument leads into and informs the work of P. Miller.37 In one of the most extensive treatments of sin and judgment in the prophetic literature, Miller argues for the importance of recognizing the literary/rhetorical expression of a correspondence between sin and judgment in many prophetic texts. Miller defines correspondence as “the prophetic announcement that punishment will be according to, in some way like, or appropriate in either a literal or symbolic fashion to the sin committed.”38 Correspondence, as defined by Miller, is different from the notion of act-consequence proposed by Koch in that it is not confined to only those consequences which are internally linked to the deeds. Rather, the correspondence is such that there is a sense of appropriateness of the consequences to the deeds.39

Miller sees correspondence as being a literary/rhetorical style within prophetic literature.40 He states:

that the correspondence pattern as a dimension of style involving figures of speech, paranomasia, and repetition and conveying irony and poetic justice belongs to universal patterns of speech and stylistic modes so that they cannot always be connected to some source outside the canons of literary and artistic achievement. The correspondence devise in a sense belongs to the storeroom of material available to the prophet, poet, or speaker, whoever he or she might be.41

Miller argues that Israel had a multifaceted and multidimensional perception of the relationship of sin and judgment.42 He acknowledges that the fate-effecting deed (Koch’s act-consequence) dimension is present in the prophetic literature, but argues, against Koch, that the relationship is not always or necessarily internal to the

37Also important for Miller is the work of H. Wolff and N. Lohfink. See Patrick D. Miller, Sin and Judgment, 2–6.
38Patrick D. Miller, Sin and Judgment, 1.
39Ibid., 134.
40Thus in contrast to Koch who explores the thought-world of the ancient Israel, and Westermann who examines the texts from a form-critical perspective, including the attempt to define the Sitz im Leben.
41Patrick D. Miller, Sin and Judgment, 97.
42Ibid., 121.
deeds. Divine decree can bring about those consequences.\textsuperscript{43} Unlike Koch, Miller does not see that the fate-effecting deeds exclude a juridical framework, but in fact grows out of a juridical understanding.\textsuperscript{44}

Miller notes that the act-consequence model cannot fully explain the sin/judgment relationship in all prophetic texts. He suggests that there are examples of correspondence but not consequence in which the punishment is a response to the deed, but that the relationship is not internal to the deed itself but rests within the divine decision. This relationship is developed through word play which correlates the deed to the action of Yahweh. He states that “the emphasis on correspondence appears to point to something other than the mechanism of cause and effect. It points rather to a concept of retributive justice.”\textsuperscript{45}

Miller, then, does acknowledge Koch’s argument that act-consequence is one relevant model through which to understand some, but not all, prophetic judgment speeches. Unlike Koch, however, Miller maintains that a retributive model is also supported within the prophetic speeches. With regard to the correspondence pattern, which is the focus of his study, Miller states:

There is clearly a causal dimension, but the link is made by Yahweh’s decision to punish because of disobedience. The dimension of correspondence serves to do two things. It sets at the center of Yahweh’s judgment the affirmation of appropriate justice. What Yahweh requires of all human beings - mišpāt. The correspondence pattern also serves to sharpen or heighten the relation between sin and punishment ... By various devices for demonstrating correspondence, direct and indirect, with figures of speech and what some have called “linguistic magic” the prophet focuses the attention of addressee(s) and all others who listen on the character of the sinful deed by announcing a punishment like unto it (whether it is an inherent consequence of it, which it may be, or not).\textsuperscript{46}

Finally, it is important to see that the prophetic understanding of judgment is tied to, and played out in, the events of history, events in which Yahweh acts.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 132–34.
\textsuperscript{44}Patrick D. Miller, \textit{Sin and Judgment}, 136. He thus supports Westermann’s understanding of Yahweh as judge.
\textsuperscript{45}Patrick D. Miller, \textit{Sin and Judgment}, 134.
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 136–37.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 138.
G. Tucker similarly argues for a nuanced understanding of sin and judgment in the prophetic literature which allows for more than one model to account for the relationship, although his main emphasis is to argue for the recognition of a dynamistic understanding in some prophetic judgment speeches. Although Tucker argues for the presence of dynamistic thought, he does not deny that the juridical framework of understanding is also present within the prophetic literature.\footnote{Tucker ("Sin and ‘Judgment’ in the Prophets," 378, 382–83) argues that Westermann and Koch stand at opposite ends of the spectrum with regard to the relationship between sin and judgment. Koch's view does not account for those texts in which a legal setting is clearly reflected, while Westermann fails to account for those passages which do not fit the legal mold.}

Tucker suggests that there are numerous prophetic texts which do not fit the juridical model in that disaster follows from the deed without divine intervention, or that the distinction between the sin, guilt and punishment is difficult, or even impossible, to perceive. He states that "the general interpretation of the prophets as pronouncing Yahweh’s intervention to punish is not fundamentally wrong, it is just incomplete."\footnote{Tucker, “Sin and ‘Judgment’ in the Prophets,” 383. Elsewhere, Tucker ("Prophecy," 337) states his position clearly "My own investigation of prophetic speech (1978) in general supported Koch’s terminology (i.e. that prophetic oracles are announcements of disaster); it recognized that, while often the structure of prophecy includes the elements identified by Westermann (namely, reasons followed by announcement), the structure is quite variable. Prophetic address is not necessarily rooted in juridical practices, and the consistent features that define the genre are the presentation of a communication from God announcing future events."} Some texts reflect a dynamistic point of view, that is "a point of view that sees actions - whether good or bad - as entailing or setting into motion their own consequences."\footnote{Tucker, “Sin and ‘Judgment’ in the Prophets,” 374–75.} Dynamistic thought is reflected linguistically in a number of prophetic texts. For example, in texts such as Isa 1:19-20 and 5:8-10, the relationship between acts and their consequences are presented ironically, but divine judgment is not present, thus suggesting dynamistic thought. Similar thought is reflected in passages such as Hos 8:7 in which the crime is portrayed as sowing the seeds for the negative consequences. There are also references which imply that the people "got what they deserved," thus suggesting an underlying assumption that there is "justice built into the very structure of reality."\footnote{Ibid., 385.}

Tucker notes the use of ambiguous language within the prophetic literature
which blurs the distinction between sin, guilt and its "punishment."\textsuperscript{52} For example, the word רע, which is frequently translated as "punish" is better read as "visit," and, in conjunction with the preposition על, has the meaning of "visit upon." Yahweh intervenes in order that the crime "comes upon, confronts, and has its effects upon the criminal."\textsuperscript{53} Similarly, words such as ידע may refer to either the sin or its punishment, making it difficult to distinguish which meaning is intended.

Tucker, then, concludes that there is more than one strand of thought with regard to sin and judgment within the prophetic literature. While the juridical perspective is certainly present, so too is the dynamicistic. Both exist and contribute to the prophetic view of sin and judgment.

As can be seen, there are a number of possible frameworks within which the relationship between sin and judgment/punishment/consequences can be understood. Whereas Gottwald understood all the references to sin in Lamentations to point towards a theology of retributive justice, the above survey opens the possibility of viewing the texts in other frameworks. In approaching texts from both the prophetic literature and Lamentations, the possibility of models other than the retributive one proposed by Gottwald will be explored.

The aim of the following discussion is to come to a clearer understanding of the role sin and judgment plays within the various texts to be considered. The nature of the sins and the language used to describe them will be considered in conjunction with a discussion of the relationship between the sins and Yahweh’s actions.

\textsuperscript{52}Koch also discusses this ambiguity of language, drawing on the work of Fählgren (Fählgren, "Die Gegensätze.") to support his argument. Fählgren notes a number of words, such as רע, which have a double meaning and can describe both the action (sin) and its consequences. Fählgren argues from his findings that Hebraic thought encompassed the notion of a "synthetic view of life," a concept similar to Koch’s act-consequence framework. See also Rad, Old Testament Theology, 262–66. Useful word studies also include: Rolf Knierim, Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament (Gutersloher Verlagshaus, 1965) and entries from Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., ידע - ב לע (vol. 2 of Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament; Peabody: Hendrikson, 1997): חטא (pp. 406-11), רע (pp. 862-66), ידע (pp. 1018-1031), ב לע (pp. 1033-37), עם (pp. 1249-54).

4.2 Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Literature

That there is a great concern within the prophetic literature with the sins of Israel/Judah and with Yahweh's activity in history is beyond doubt. While it cannot be argued that this was the only concern of the prophetic literature, the focus on sin is tied closely with the Hebraic understanding of Yahweh's justice and righteousness, and the role of the community in reflecting these attributes.\(^{54}\) When the prophets spoke of sin and announced Yahweh's future response, they spoke of the "need for or the failure of justice and righteousness"\(^ {55}\) within the community.

Closely tied to concepts of justice and righteousness was the belief that Yahweh was the Lord of Israel, and over all the earth. Given this lordship, "the prophets condemned any effort to practice polytheism, whether in the form of the worship of idols or in the form of giving less than full allegiance to Yahweh."\(^ {56}\) Central to the prophetic message is the notion of Yahweh being active in history, not only in the life of Israel, but of all nations. The prophetic message is concrete, tied to the reality of everyday human life, and the reality of the social, political and religious arena of the nation.\(^ {57}\)

4.2.1 Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Personification Texts

Of the sixteen verses which refer to sin within Lamentations, eleven occur in association with the personification of the city as female (1:5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 22; 2:14, 4:6, 13, 22). As one basis for comparing the references to sin in Lamentations with the prophetic literature, the understanding of sin and judgment in the prophetic personification texts discussed in chapter 2 will be explored, taking into account

\(^{54}\) Gene M. Tucker, “The Role of the Prophets and the Role of the Church,” in Prophecy in Israel (ed. David L. Petersen; London: SPCK, 1987), 162–64. Tucker argues that the understanding of justice and righteousness was fundamental to the understanding of community. He states “Justice and righteousness are not empty terms, nor are they vague concepts. They refer to concrete and specific actions of persons in relationships when they accord others what is due to them. They are the foundations of society at its best” (164).

\(^{55}\) Tucker, “Role of the Prophets,” 164.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 165.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 164–65.
their wider literary context.

4.2.1.1 Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Isaiah 1-39

Five texts from Isaiah 1-39 were identified as possible antecedent texts in which the personification of Jerusalem as female occurred (1:4-9, 21-26; 3:25-4:1; 22:1-14; 37:22-29). Of these five texts, only one (22:1-14) also contains the day of Yahweh motif.

Two of the Isa 1-39 texts personified Jerusalem through the use of the motif (1:4-9; 37:22-29). 1:4-9 lists specific sins of the nation, while 37:22-29 is an oracle against Assyria. In both texts there is a correspondence between the sin and its consequences, with 1:4-9 suggesting an act-consequence relationship.

1:4-9 describes the sinfulness of the nation using both general and specific terms. The nonspecific indictment accuses the nation of being sinful (חטא) and laden with iniquity (נברך זון v. 4), and of continuing to rebel (תרשף מאר) (v. 5). More specifically, the people are accused of being evildoers (מזרחים), dealing corruptly (שבת), forsaking (עב) and despising (אใו) Yahweh (v. 4), and of being utterly estranged (נזור איזור) v. 4. In addition, the state of the nation is described using sickness imagery (vv. 5-6), which suggests an all encompassing sense of illness and corruption. That the sinfulness of the nation is the cause of her fate is established in v. 5, which asks why the nation continues to seek further beatings and to rebel. The sickness images of vv. 5-6 lead into a description of the country devastated by military invasion, a past tense reference to the 701 invasion of Sennacherib. The sickness images suggest both the sinfulness of the nation, but also the state caused by the invasion, thus linking the sin and its consequences (v. 7). The personified city is not herself described as being sinful, but is left in a state of tenuous survival due to the invasion of the country. Yahweh’s ultimate responsibility for the nation’s fate is made clear in v. 9 which introduces a remnant motif. A remnant remains because Yahweh allowed such to survive. Within this passage there is an equal balance between the descriptions of sin (vv. 4-6) and destruction (vv. 7-9).
37:22-29 personifies Jerusalem briefly (v. 22) as part of an oracle against Assyria who is accused of pride and arrogance and whose consequent humbling is announced, again with equal weight given to the indictment and the judgment. The punishment corresponds to the sin as seen in the contrast between the present pride and the future humbling of Assyria. Within this unit, Yahweh’s control over history is emphasized, with vv. 26-28 extolling Yahweh as the agent behind Assyria’s military success. The indictment of Assyria does not center on its military success as such, only on its excessive pride and arrogance. This oracle is consistent with the conception of Yahweh’s sovereignty in Isaiah 1-39. Yahweh is understood to have absolute sovereignty over the world, the nations, and Israel.\footnote{Oswalt, Book of Isaiah, 32–35; Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1–39, 109; Joseph Jensen, Isaiah 1–39 (Old Testament Message; Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1984), 31, 34; Donald E. Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 61.} All that happens is according to Yahweh’s plan, with foreign nations being Yahweh’s tools in the working out of this plan.

1:21-26 and 3:25-4:1 do not use specific designations to personify Jerusalem, but address her using 2fs forms. 22:1-14 does use the בת צemi designation, but this appears to be a late addition to the text, hence its treatment at this point.\footnote{Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 182.} 1:21-26 and 22:1-14 lists specific sins of the city, while no reference to sin is made in 3:25-4:1. Sins are, however, specified in the wider literary context (3:16-4:1).

The sins in 1:21-26 are specified, and revolve around the contrasting of former righteousness with present failing. The unit opens with the indictment that the faithful city has become a whore \(\text{אֲוָהָה} הָיְתָה לְחֶרְבָּה קֶרֶד נֵאמָן} \), followed by a list of sins such as the righteous being murderers, and princes being rebels and thieves. The people seek bribes and gifts, and fail to defend both orphan and widow (vv. 21, 23). Notions of impurity are introduced in v. 22 through images of silver becoming dross and wine mixed with water. This imagery is directly related to the outcome of the announced judgment. Yahweh promises the pouring out of wrath \(\text{נָחָשׁ} \), the avenging of foes \(\text{אָשֶׁר הוּא מָזִירָיו} \) and the turning of Yahweh’s hand against the people \(\text{אֲשֶׁר לוּא הָיְתוּ} \).
in order to purify the city (v. 25) and restore it to its former state of faithfulness and righteousness (v. 26). In this way a clear correspondence between sin and Yahweh’s actions is established. While there is numerical balance between the description of sin (vv. 21-23) and the consequent judgment (vv. 24-26), the reference to sin is more specific. The judgment is described metaphorically, with the outcome for the city being emphasized.

3:25-4:1 does not list any sins as such, but simply announces judgment in the form of military defeat which results in the death of men (v. 25), the mourning of both city and women (v. 26), and a consequent scarcity of men to insure the security of the women (4:1). The emphasis lies on the impact of the judgment on the city (vv. 25-26). In its wider literary context (3:16-4:1) however, this announced judgment corresponds to an indictment of wealthy women for their luxurious lifestyle at the expense of the poor. An act-consequence relationship cannot be argued, as the described punishment does not arise out of the sins themselves, but a clear sense of correspondence is present in which Yahweh’s action can be seen to relate directly to the sins described.

22:1-14 is a composite unit in which the city is chastised for her inappropriate response to her survival after the military campaigns of 701 B.C.E.60 In the non-day of Yahweh material (vv. 1-4, 12-14) the city is indicted for celebrating (vv. 1-2, 13) when lament and mourning was called for (v. 12). This inappropriate celebration is named as iniquity (נש) in v. 14. Within this material (vv. 1-4, 12-14), no specific judgment or action of Yahweh is announced, only that the iniquity will not be forgiven “until you (2mpl) die.”61 Although reference to judgment occurs in the day of Yahweh material (vv. 5-11), within the non-day of Yahweh material the concern is only with the sins of the city.

These passages point to some of the concerns of the wider literary context of Isa 1-39. Described broadly, Isaiah’s message with regard to sin and judgment can be

60 Day of Yahweh material, which is a separate layer to the non day of Yahweh material is introduced in vv. 5-11, and will be discussed later.
61 The day of Yahweh material does introduce descriptions of military campaign, and will be discussed below.
divided into two spheres - the social and the political. Isaiah’s social critique centers on justice and righteousness, with sin understood as rebellion against Yahweh (1:1-2) and a failure to acknowledge Yahweh and Yahweh’s word/law (1:4; 5:24). Beyond this, Isaiah condemns specific sins, particularly unjust actions in judicial and social spheres, primarily by the leaders and the wealthy in society. These include the corruption of the legal system and the taking of bribes (5:23; 10:1-4), the building up of large land holdings (5:8-10), denying the rights of the poor and a failure to look after the dispossessed, widows and orphans. The cult is criticized on the basis that the people trust in the ritual of worship without seeking justice and righteousness in their dealings with others. Much of Isaiah’s preaching is centered on political affairs. The details of the message changes according to the political situation, but can be defined as a call to trust in Yahweh rather than relying on political alliances. Throughout Isaiah 1-39 there is an emphasis on the absolute holiness of Yahweh and the sense of otherness that stands over against humanity. Yahweh, who is frequently referred to as the Holy One of Israel, or the Holy God, is both transcendent and powerful. As seen in the call narrative (6:1-13), Isaiah’s sense of sin lies in the recognition of this ultimate difference between humanity and Yahweh. Central to all the judgment is the condemnation of human pride which stands in conflict with the otherness and holiness of Yahweh.

4.2.1.2 Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Micah

Only one of the previously considered texts from Micah is relevant in relation to sin and judgment (1:8-16). While Jerusalem is personified in Mic 4, the material


During the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis Isaiah counselled Ahaz not to form an alliance with Assyria, while during Hezekiah’s reign he counselled against forming alliances opposed to Assyria (of whom Israel was a vassal) (Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 17). Isaiah’s opposition was based on the perceived failure of the respective kings to trust in Yahweh, and the belief that as Yahweh had a “plan” for Israel, these alliances led to nothing other than a false sense of security (Clements, Isaiah 1–39, 17;
contains salvation oracles which refer to past judgment, but not to sin as such. 1:8-16 contains brief reference to sin in v. 13, which refers to Lachish as the beginning of sin (בַּתי זָרִי) to transgressions (מַעְשֵׂים) of Israel. Reference is also made to the transgressions of Israel. The sin reference is nonspecific, and within the context of the unit it is not clear how it is that Lachish could be the beginning of sin to Jerusalem. Within the literary context of chapter 1, reference is made to false worship (vv. 1-7), which is linked to vv. 8-16 through the causative רָאָשׁ. The focus of vv. 8-16 are the word plays which announce the potential disaster for each of the successive towns listed, however these are not linked to sin as such.66

In the wider book, Micah’s preaching centers on social injustice, specifically on the abuse of the poor by the leaders of the land.67 The secular and religious leaders are condemned for their exploitation of the poor. The leadership are indicted in both general terms, and through the listing of specific wrongdoings. General terms for transgression include (מַעְשָׁה) and sin (חֲטָא 1:5, 13). The language of the indictments draws on Israel’s legal tradition, and the precise deeds listed include taking away houses and fields (2:2, 4, 8, 9; 3:10), driving women and children out of their homes (2:9), treating the poor violently (2:2; 3:2-3, 10) and the taking of life’s necessities from the poor (2:8, 10).68 The leadership is condemned for “hating good and loving evil” (3:2). Prophets are accused of deceiving the people with false prophecy, and false worship is also alluded to (1:7).

The concept of justice (מַעְשָׁה) and its rejection by the leaders is an important theme in Micah.69 As Koch states “What God expects from man (sic) above all is this, מַעְשָׁה - the preservation and promotion of institutional ordinances which are vitally necessary to the community. God does not see this as payment in advance for some reward to be given by him; מַעְשָׁה is the natural echo of his own faithful acts in

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Jensen, Isaiah 1–39, 3; Tucker, Isaiah, 40)  
Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books, 62.  
66See chapter 2, p. 86 for a discussion of the textual complexity of this unit.  
68Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, 16.  
69Mays, Micah, 14, 19.
salvation history (6:1-8). Mays notes that there is a close correlation between the sin and its punishment within Micah. The punishment comes against those who transgress, and corresponds to the deed. According to Mays, the announcements can be seen as expressions of the formula “what you have done, YHWH will bring upon you.”

4.2.1.3 Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Jeremiah

Twelve texts were considered in relation to personification from the book of Jeremiah (4:11-18, 19-21, 29-31; 5:7-11; 6:1-8, 22-26; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 14:1-6, 17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). The day of Yahweh motif does not occur in any of these texts. Within these texts there is an increased emphasis on the nature of the imminent military destruction, and on the impact of that destruction on the city/people.

In those texts which personify Jerusalem using the יִרְמָיָה designation (4:29-31; 6:1-8, 22-26), the description of sin is either absent (6:22-26), expressed metaphorically (4:29-31) or combines general description with more specific detail (6:1-8).

Reference to sin is absent in 6:22-26, which describes the approach of the foe from the north (vv. 22-23), followed by a report of the anguish of the people (vv. 24-25) and a lament by Jerusalem (v. 26). The strength and cruelty of the approaching army in vv. 22-23 is paralleled with the consequent terror and anguish that their approach evokes in the people (vv. 24-26), emphasizing throughout the nature and impact of the judgment. The following unit (vv. 27-30), which shifts to a 1ps address of Yahweh to Jeremiah, defines the people’s sins of stubbornness, rebellion, slander and false worship. The coming judgment functions to purify the people (so Isa 1:21-26). Although there is reference to sin in vv. 27-30, no direct causal link is marked between vv. 22-26 and 27-30, despite their juxtaposition.

70Klaus Koch, The Prophets: The Assyrian Period, 94–95.
71Mays, Micah, 20. Koch (The Prophets: The Assyrian Period, 97) maintains that this represents a sphere of action inherent within the deeds which determines destiny.
The sin in 4:29-31 is expressed metaphorically rather than directly stated. Jerusalem is described as adorning herself for her lovers (עבדים v. 30), a description which evokes the apostasy/adultery motif of Jer 2-3 (2:20, 25, 33; 3:1-5). The sense in 4:30 is that the preparations of הבת ציוון are inappropriate given her perilous situation (i.e. the approach of the invading army described in v. 29). No further description of sin is provided. A sense of irony pervades the portrayal of Zion’s fate. Although she prepares herself as for a lover, Zion is described as being despised (מַעֲטָרָה) by the lovers who seek to take her life. The imagery of v. 31 portrays Zion crying out like a woman in labor before her foes. The use of feminine imagery suggests a correspondence between the sin and its consequences. An element of act-consequence is also suggested in that the woman prepares for her lovers who turn against her. Description of the impending destruction (v. 29), the indictment (v. 30) and the impact on the city (v. 31) are given equal weight, with the graphic description of Zion’s anguish forming the pinnacle of the unit.

6:1-8 provides a more specific description of personified Zion’s sins. Following description of an invading army’s preparations for war at Yahweh’s behest (vv. 1-5), Yahweh announces that the city must bepunished,” but more accurately understood in terms of “visited upon” (נַחֲרָא הפשק). Expanding on these oppressions, Zion is said to keep fresh her evil (ךָכָא רַחֲמָא) Violence (שָׁדָא) and destruction (שָׁטָא) are heard within her (v. 7). Imagery of sickness (חלָא) and wounds (מַחֲרָא) is also applied to Zion (v. 7). The unit closes with Zion warned to take heed, else Yahweh be alienated (יַכָּא) from Jerusalem who will be made desolate (שָׁמָא) and the land uninhabited (לָא נַחֲרָא). Within this unit an act-consequence relationship is established through the use of the verb פָּשָׁק. The sins are visited upon the city, sins which also have consequences for the land. It is, however Yahweh who brings about the consequences (v. 8). Given that military destruction is described in vv. 1-6, the description of the sin (violence, destruction) correspond to the nature of the action against the city. A greater proportion of the unit is taken up
with description of the army’s preparation against the city than on the sin itself, thus emphasizing the judgment over the indictment.

Several texts from Jeremiah personify the city through the בֵּיתָם designation (4:11-18; 6:22-26; 14:17-18). The sin is described using general terms in 4:11-18, and specifically in 14:17-18.

4:11-18 is an announcement of judgment to both the people and Jerusalem, in which an indictment of sin using general terms occurs. Again the nature of the impending judgment is given greater emphasis than the indictment. The passage describes imminent judgment from Yahweh (vv. 11-12), and refers to military action against the city (vv. 13-17). Verse 14, which contains a call to repentance, refers to the city’s wickedness (מַעֲשֵׂה), and her evil schemes (mְַעֲשֵׂה). A causal relationship is established in vv. 17 and 18. Verse 17 describes the besieging of the city because (כִּי) she had rebelled (מִרְמָה) against Yahweh. In direct address to the personified city, v. 18 announces that Jerusalem’s “ways and doings” (ורְכֵּב וְעֶשֶׁלָּד) had brought this upon her (הַלָּדֵל). This passage portrays Yahweh’s direct action against the city in response to sin. It cannot, however, be argued that this represents an act-consequence relationship. Rather, this passage stands closer to a juridical understanding of the relationship between sin and judgment. An announcement of upcoming disaster is linked to the besieging of Jerusalem. Together with the reference to מִרְמָה, which implies rebellion against a superior, the decision of a higher authority to act is implied.

14:17-18 contains an imperative from Yahweh to Jeremiah, who is directed to announce a lament for the fallen city (בַּהֲלוֹאָת בֵּיתָם), thus driving home the city’s impending peril. Verse 18b indict the religious leadership. The priests and prophets are described as “plying their trade” (מְסַרְּזֵה) throughout the land,” and having “no

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72 Discussed above.
73 Although Jer 8:10-12, 18-23 both use the בֵּיתָם designation, it was argued in chapter 2 that the designation could not be understood as a personification of the city in either unit, but acts as a reference to the people. As such, they need not be discussed here.
knowledge” (לא ידע). This indictment is only loosely linked to the previous lament (vv. 17-18a) through ו. The meaning of the phrase הָעַרְבֵּי הָעַרְבֵּי is difficult to determine, and it would appear that the whole phrase is a secondary addition to the lament.\(^{75}\) Despite this difficulty, it is clear that the religious leadership is its focus, a theme common within Jeremiah (Jer 27-28). The language of this unit has close similarity to parts of Lamentations, emphasizing as it does the lament over the city. The reference to eyes running down with tears night and day is echoed in Lam 2:18, while reference to death by both sword and famine occurs in Lam 4:9.

Seven further passages were considered from Jeremiah in which the city was personified without the use of specific designations. Of these passages, two contain no reference to sin (4:19-21; 14:1-6), two contain general references (15:5-9; 30:12-17) and three list specific sins (5:7-11; 10:17-21; 13:20-27). The two passages which make no reference to sin do, however, contain indictments within their close literary context.

4:19-21 describes, in first person speech, anguish and panic in the face of military onslaught, and includes elements of the lament form in the “how long” questions of v. 21. Verse 22, which changes speaker to the voice of Yahweh, contains an indictment which is loosely linked to vv. 19-21 through ו.\(^{76}\) Here the people are described as being foolish (לא ידע), of not knowing Yahweh (לא נב网站地图), of being stupid (סכלים), having no understanding (לא נב网站地图), and of being skilled in doing evil (עבודה וֹדֵיה).\(^{77}\)

14:1-6 makes no specific reference to the sin of Jerusalem. The unit describes the mourning of Judah and Jerusalem in response to a drought afflicting the nation. Within the literary context, however, reference to sin is made. Verses 7-9 contain a confession within a communal lament. Within the confession (v. 7), two general references to sin are made (עָבֶד and עַבֵּד), alongside one specific reference to apostasy

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\(^{75}\) See McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 328–33) for a full discussion of the issues.

\(^{76}\) Some commentators treat v. 22 as part of the preceding unit (Bright, Jeremiah, 30; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 227; Jones, Jeremiah, 115; Brueggemann, To Pluck up, to Tear Down, 57; Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 167; McKane, Jeremiah I-XXV, 102). McKane (Jeremiah I-XXV, 102) and Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 167) note that the link between the verses is only loose.
Two passages contain general references to sin (15:5-9; 30:12-17). 15:5-9 depicts the imminent downfall of Jerusalem and the impact on the people is described (vv. 5, 8-9). Reference to sin occurs in vv. 6 and 7. Jerusalem is described as having rejected (אחת תלב) Yahweh, and as going/walking backward (כִּית בַּשָּׁב) v. 6. Verse 7 indicts the people for their lack of repentance (את עמי מחריבים ולא שבע). As a result, Yahweh is described as having stretched out a hand against the city to destroy it. This action is portrayed as a consequence of the failure on the city/people’s behalf, thus making the destruction the consequence of sin. An act-consequence relationship in which the consequence grows out of the deed cannot be maintained. Rather, Yahweh acts in response to the people’s rejection. Significantly, v. 5 speaks of the isolation and lack of comforter for the city, a motif present in Lam 1 and 2. 78

30:12-17 addresses Jerusalem using 2fs forms, and contains both judgment and salvation material. A causal link is made between sin and its consequences, with Yahweh depicted as the agent of those consequences. Verses 12 and 15 make reference to the hurt/pain (שבר) and the wound (מכה) of Jerusalem, references to her suffering. 79 The seriousness and the incurability of Jerusalem’s pain and wounds are emphasized (vv. 12, 13, 15) as is her isolation (vv. 13, 14). Indirect reference to sin is made through the mention of lovers (מ folls) in v. 14, which alludes to the adultery references of Jer 2-3. More explicit, but still general reference to sin occurs in v. 14. Yahweh has dealt Jerusalem the “blow of an enemy” (כי מנה את ידיה הרעה), and the “chastisement of a merciless foe” (מרו אכר), this was on account of (על) her great iniquities and numerous sins (רבח בני עמודים ויהא). The accusation is repeated in v. 15, which reinforces Yahweh’s responsibility for Jerusalem’s suffering (ಡוטינוא). In the final text, then, the lament over the drought is linked to this confession, although a causal relationship is not overtly defined. 77

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77 The material in 14:1-15:4 form a composite, editorial unit (Carroll, Jeremiah [1986], 312–13).
78 The word comforter is not used specifically in this verse but through rhetorical questions the city is asked who will have pity (יתן) on her, bemoan her (יよい), or ask after her welfare (מלל).
Yahweh’s action, then, is directly attributed to the behaviour of Jerusalem, thus establishing a causal relationship. Verses 16-17, which look to be a secondary addition to the text, more explicitly expound both act-consequence and correspondence. In a salvation oracle, Yahweh promises to act against Jerusalem’s enemies, returning to them their own behaviour. Therefore, those who devour Jerusalem will themselves be devoured, the foes taken into captivity, the plunderers plundered and those who prey upon Jerusalem preyed upon themselves (v. 16). The unit concludes with Yahweh’s promise to heal Jerusalem, a response to her isolation (v. 17). Although sin is named, the weight of this unit lies in the description of Jerusalem’s suffering.


5:7-11 contains a judgment oracle announcing imminent and inevitable destruction. Jerusalem and the people are indicted for their apostasy. Zion’s children are said to have forsaken (עָזַז) Yahweh, and sworn (שָׂבַע) by false gods (v. 7). Imagery of adultery and apostasy expand the description of sin in vv. 7b-8. Yahweh’s action in response to these sins is described in v. 9. Through rhetorical questions, Yahweh asks “shall I not them for all these things (זֶרֶע אלָה), shall I not avenge myself?” (לֹא חֲרַמְתִּי נֶפֶשׁ). The verse suggests that Yahweh acts against or visits the people as a consequences of their behaviour and, together with the reference to כָּסֶף, suggests retributive action by Yahweh. The destruction is described in v. 10, with a final indictment in v. 11, which accuses the people of being utterly faithless (בֶּדְרִי) to Yahweh. The emphasis within this passage is the indictment which leads to the punishment, with no mention of the impact of the announced judgment on the people.

In contrast, 10:17-21 describes and emphasizes the impact of the judgment on
Jerusalem. The unit correlates sin and its consequences in a way that suggests both correspondence and act-consequence. Following an announcement of judgment in which both exile and distress are promised, v. 19 changes voice to a 1ps woe cry of Jerusalem. Jerusalem bemoans her wound (וַתִּהוֹלֵךְ מַעֲבָדְתָּ) of יָשָׁבַי (But I said, “Truly this is my wound/punishment, and I must bear it”). יָשָׁבַי can be read as either wound or punishment (so NRSV), and Yahweh is understood to have brought about the suffering. Following the description of her destruction (v. 20), a 1ps indictment of the religious leadership occurs. The shepherds (הַנְּבֵלָיִם), described as stupid (בֹּשֶׁר), and accused of not inquiring after Yahweh (רָאָה יְהוָה לְלָדְּךָ), have not prospered (עֲלֵיךָ), and their flock has been scattered (פָּרִים). In describing the religious leadership as shepherds, the consequences of their behaviour (the loss of the flock) is shown to correspond with and grow out of the sin, establishing a causal, act-consequence relationship.

The final unit, 13:20-27, lists specific sins, and establishes a strong causal relationship between sin and its consequences. An act-consequence relationship in which Yahweh acts to bring about the consequence is indicated, as is a correspondence between sin and its consequences. In language close to Lam 1:7-11, Jerusalem’s fate is described in terms of the sexual abuse of the city, an abuse which is linked to the city’s adulterous behaviour in worshipping other gods. Although the description of the city’s punishment/suffering is graphic (vv. 21, 22, 26), greater emphasis is placed on the indictment (vv. 22, 23, 25, 27). Verses 20-21 announce the coming foe from the north, and rhetorically questions Jerusalem as to her response in being conquered.81 Verse 22 depicts Jerusalem as questioning her fate, to which the response is made that her fate is the consequence of greatness of her iniquity (הַרְבוּא) יָנוּנֵךְ. Jerusalem is described as being shamed through the exposure of her genitals, and suffers violence (חַמָּם). Verses 23 and 24, which shift to 2mpl address, indict the people for the intractability of their sin, and describe them as those accustomed to

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81 Note that the verb פָּרִים is used here to describe the enemy being appointed as leaders over Jerusalem. The sense of “visit upon” is not intended.
doing evil (רע). Verse 24 describes imminent exile. Indictment continues, and the language of sexual assault returns in vv. 25-27. Divine responsibility for the violation of Jerusalem is announced in v. 25a. Verse 25b accuses the city of forgetting (שכחה) Yahweh, and trusting in lies (רבדותיך בفشل). This reference to apostasy is further developed in v. 27, which describes Jerusalem’s adulteries (זאה), neighings (מצללות) and prostitutions (为导向). Between these verses lies further description of Jerusalem’s exposure and violation (v. 26). The language of these verses likens Jerusalem’s apostasy to sexual infidelity, and in describing her exposure and rape suggests, in terms of Hebraic law, a correspondence between the sin and its consequences. The unit closes with a woe cry which introduces the language of impurity into the unit “アイר כל ירושלים אל תטוריה ויוריה מגי乐园 (Woe to you Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are made clean?”).

The references to sin within the personification texts considered are congruent with the concerns of the wider book of Jeremiah. The book uses a range of general terms to describe the people’s sin: ענ (guilt/iniquity); מתח (rebellion); מצא (sin); and זאר (evil). Beyond these general references, the book’s polemic can be separated into interrelated concerns with social justice, cultic life and political relationships.

The critique against social ills is less prevalent in Jeremiah than in Micah and Isaiah. Reference is made to unjust gains (6:3), oppression and deceit (9:5-6) and the shedding of innocent blood (19:14). Both religious and secular leaders are singled out. The critique of the cult dominates. Indictment centers on apostasy which is understood as the basis of moral decline within the community. There is frequent use of relational terms, including references to Judah as Yahweh’s errant wife

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82 A. Bauer (Gender in the Book of Jeremiah, 105) argues that Yahweh’s direct action in violating the female figure is emphasized through the use of הר שكسب (v. 26) as subject.

83 As stated by R. Carroll (Jeremiah [1986], 304) “for sexual-religious offenses the city has been raped,” an unpalatable image in any age, and one to be challenged. Similar imagery occurs in Hos 2.

84 Koch (The Prophets: The Babylonian and Persian Periods [vol. II of The Prophets; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 20) notes that ירש נ voi is used ninety times in Jeremiah, and is used to denote both human transgression and Yahweh’s action. In keeping with his act-consequence framework, Koch argues that this reflects the people’s action being visited upon them.

85 Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books, 104.

86 Blenkinsopp, History of Prophecy, 104; Bright, Jeremiah, xc Jones, Jeremiah, 42.
(chapters 2-3), a use similar to that of Hosea. Verbs such as “forsake,” “forget” and “be faithless” occur often, thus depicting Judah’s sin in terms of broken relationship. The book argues that there should be an exclusive bond between Yahweh and the people, and as such apostasy represents a breach of relationship. Beyond this, apostasy is described as being contrary to common sense. Why should a people abandon their God given the salvation history of the nation (2:1-13)? Against the language of the faithlessness of the people stands that of the loyalty of Yahweh (9:24).

Although elements of hope are present within the book, destruction and defeat are both imminent and inevitable. This is seen particularly in the diatribe against false prophets who preached a bright future for the nation (23:9-40; 27:28). Hope comes only after the judgment, but the judgment itself is inevitable. The form of judgment depicted is military. In those texts thought to come from the early period, the foe is identified only as the “foe from the north” (chapters 2-6), however in later material this foe is specified as Babylon. The Babylonians are Yahweh’s agents of destruction, depicted as defeating, plundering and destroying both city and nation. This understanding of the Babylonians as Yahweh’s agents underlies the counsel not to resist Babylon, thus shaping passages concerning the political life of the nation. To resist Babylon was to resist Yahweh.

4.2.1.4 Sin and Judgment in the Personification Texts in Zephaniah

Personification of Zion as female occurs in the third chapter of Zephaniah, which is primarily a salvation oracle. The first unit (vv. 1-13) does contain references to sin, both of the city and of particular groups within the city, and the nature of the

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89 Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 108.
90 Ibid., 112; Rad, Prophets, 167; Bright, Jeremiah, xcvi–xcvix, civ.
91 Bright, Jeremiah, ci; Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books, 112; Brueggemann, “Portrait of the Prophet,” 114.
92 Bright, Jeremiah, cvi.
sin is specified. The salvation described results in the purification of the city and its subsequent restoration to a state in which Yahweh resides within her.  

Verses 1 describes Jerusalem as soiled (מְבֹדֶל), despoiled (מאָל) and oppressing (הירוה). Verse 2 further specifies Jerusalem’s sinfulness. She has listened to no voice (לא לִשְׁמַע בְּכָל), accepted no correction (לא קֹרֵא מָסַר in Yahweh or drawn near to God. Verses 3-4 switch from indictment of the city to indictment of the leadership, singling out officials and judges (who are likened to animals of prey), prophets and priests. The religious leadership are reckless (מות), faithless (בוד), profane (חול) what is sacred, and do violence (חמס) to the law. The thought progression of these opening verses suggests that Jerusalem has taken on the characteristics of her leaders. Both city and leadership are contrasted to Yahweh, who is described as just and righteous (v. 5).

Verses 6-7, which shift to 1ps speech of Yahweh, continue to indict the city. Verse 6 describes Yahweh’s actions against other nations in the form of military devastation. Verse 7 describes this action as having the intent of being a correction for Jerusalem. That Jerusalem has missed the import of Yahweh’s activities is reinforced in v. 7c, which states that the people of Jerusalem were “more eager to make all their deeds corrupt” (אֲנָכָּה חֲשֵׁוֹת וְשַׁחְוָת כָּל עַלְיוֹזָה).

Verses 8-13 shift to salvation material, describing Yahweh’s intent to act against the nations, and all the earth in indignation (לְעִנֵּן), the heat of anger (כל הרוּח) and the fire of jealous wrath (בְּמַעַת כְּנַעַת נֶאֶל). Verses 11-13 conclude the unit, describing the cleansing of Jerusalem. Yahweh announces that the city will not be put to shame (בְּשָׁם) because of the deeds (מְכָל עַלְיוֹזָה) by which she rebelled (פָּשַׁת) against Yahweh, because those who corrupted the city will be removed from within her (v. 11). These people are described as being her proudly exultant ones (עַלְיוֹזָה) (בְּנֵיה). As a result, Jerusalem will no longer be haughty (בַּזָּה). Verses 12-23 describe the remnant which will remain in the city, whose characteristics stand in contrast to those described in vv. 1-5. They will be humble and lowly and seek refuge in

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93 Purification as the outcome of Yahweh’s actions also occurs in Isa 1:21-26 and Jer 6:27-30.
94 Ben Zvi, Zephaniah, 138.
Yahweh’s name (v. 12), and will have Yahweh-like characteristics of honesty (v. 13).

The purification described in the text suggests correspondence between the sins listed and the outcome of Yahweh’s actions against the proud and haughty within the city. Although Yahweh acts against those responsible for Jerusalem’s impurity, Jerusalem herself does not have to face the consequences of her behaviour (v. 11). Within the literary context of the larger book, the use of the phrase שד אֶלֶף ties this unit to the day of Yahweh material in 1:2-2:3, which not only specifies the nature of the day (see below), but also raises the hope that a righteous remnant will remain in the city/land.

4.2.1.5 Summary

The passages considered from the prophetic literature which personify Jerusalem demonstrate a varied pattern of usage with regard to the sin motif. Of the nineteen passages considered, all except five make reference to sin, and those five all have reference to sin within their immediate literary context (Isa 3:25-4:1; Jer 4:19-21, 29-31; 6:22-26; 14:1-6). Of the texts which do refer to sin, over half list specific sins (Isa 1:4-9, 21-26; 22:1-14; 37:22-29; Jer 5:7-11; 6:1-8; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 14:17-18; Zeph 3:1-13), with the remainder using general terms to describe the sins of the city/people (Mic 1:8-16; Jer 4:1-18; 15:5-9, 30:12-17). The sins specified vary both within and across the prophetic books considered.

When considering the relationship between sin and judgment, the most common pattern found was that of correspondence (Isa 1:4-9, 21-26; 3:25-4:1; 37:22-29; Jer 4:11-18, 19-21; 5:7-11; 6:1-8; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 15:5-9; 30:12-17; Zeph 3). Of these, five also suggest an act-consequence relationship in which the consequences follow inherently from the deeds (Isa 1:4-9; 6:1-8; 10:17-21; 13:12-17; 30:20-27). In all of the act-consequence passages however, Yahweh is described as bringing about those consequences. In establishing correspondence and/or act-
consequence, each of these passages makes reference to both the sin and to the judgment which follows.

Correspondence and act-consequence are indicated in many of the texts considered, however there is little to suggest either a juridical or a retributive framework behind these passages. While Jer 4:11-18 could suggest a juridical setting, and retributive language is present in Jer 5:7-11 and 15:5-9, these notions do not dominate these texts.

The balance and emphasis of the texts in relation to the sin versus the judgment varies from passage to passage.

A number of passages give equal weight to the description of the sin and judgment. Within Isaiah 1-39, three of the five passages balance reference to sin and judgment (1:4-9, 21-26; 37:22-29), all of which list specific sins. All three texts describe Yahweh as the agent of destruction. Within Jeremiah, two texts give equal weight to the sin and the judgment (4:29-31; 5:7-11). Within 4:29-31, the announcement of the judgment, the indictment and the impact on the city all occur in separate verses, with the reference to the impact of the judgment forming the pinnacle of the unit. In 5:7-11 the indictment and the judgment are balanced, with no reference made to the impact on the city.

Within a number of texts the emphasis lies on the indictment of the city/people. This occurs in a number of ways. In the non-day of Yahweh material in Isa 22:1-14, there is no mention of judgment, only the indictment of the city for her inappropriate behaviour. In Jer 13:20-27, a text in which both correspondence and act-consequence occurs, the emphasis lies on the indictment of the city for her apostasy/adultery which in turn has led to her sexual exposure and humiliation.

In only one of the texts considered from Isaiah is the judgment emphasized over the indictment (3:25-4:1). This unit itself makes no reference to sin, however the literary context does (3:16-24), and the judgment in 3:25-4:1 corresponds with the indictment. Within the Jeremiah texts however, there is an increased emphasis on the description of the judgment and on its impact on the city/people (4:11-18, 19-21;
6:1-8, 22-26; 10:17-21; 14:1-6, 17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-27). Of these texts, three do not refer to sin within the unit, although sin is present in the immediate literary context (4:19-21; 6:22-26; 14:1-6). In 4:19-21 and 14:1-6 the impact of the judgment on the city/people is emphasized, expressed through images of lament and mourning. 6:22-26 emphasizes the nature of the coming judgment, described as military attack by the foe from the north, and reports the impact on the people in terms of pain and anguish. The remaining texts from Jeremiah do include references to sin, but emphasize either the nature of the coming judgment (4:11-18; 6:1-8) or the impact on the city/people (10:17-21; 14:17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). Throughout all these texts from Jeremiah there is graphic portrayal of the nature and impact of the judgment, which is both imminent and inevitable. The impact of the judgment is expressed in terms of pain, anguish and lament/mourning.

The two texts considered from Micah and Zephaniah do not conform to the patterns noted in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Micah 1:8-16 is difficult, making only brief mention of sin. The emphasis lies on the future disaster for the towns named. In Zeph 3 there is more extensive description of the sin of the city and people, and reference to military destruction for the nations. For Jerusalem however, the judgment is transformed into salvation, thus setting this reference apart. Although Jer 30:12-17 does refer to salvation for Jerusalem, the hope comes only after the judgment has been completed.

Within all the texts considered, Yahweh is the one who will, or who has, brought about the judgment. In some texts, particularly in Jeremiah, reference is made to armies or foes who will be the agents of that destruction, however it is still clearly Yahweh who is responsible for the fate of the city/nation. Even where act-consequence is established, it is Yahweh who is responsible for bringing those consequences to bear (Isa 1:4-9; 6:1-8; 10:17-21; 13:20-27; 13:12-17).

The analysis would suggest that where Jerusalem is personified as female in the prophetic texts there is a strong emphasis on both the agency of Yahweh in responding to the sins of the city and the people, and the correspondence between the
sins and Yahweh’s response. Sin is generally specified as being at the base of Yahweh’s decision to act, and although the sins could be described either generally or specifically, a specific listing of the sins is the more common pattern. An act-consequence relationship was present in some, but not all, texts. The strong use of the correspondence pattern points to an acceptance of a theology of Yahweh’s righteousness which underlies the response to the sins of the city and people. It is also evident that within Jeremiah there is an increased emphasis on both the nature and the impact of Yahweh’s judgment on the city/people, an emphasis which is developed through graphic descriptions, including the portrayal of the lament and the anguish of the city/people.

4.2.2 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts

Within the book of Lamentations, references to sin in 1:12-20 (vv. 14, 18, 20) and v. 22 occur in conjunction with reference to the day of Yahweh. The recognition of the fall of Jerusalem as an expression of a day of Yahweh is one of the motifs which links Lamentations with the prophetic literature.\(^95\) Chapter 3 considered a range of prophetic texts dated from the eighth to sixth century in which the day of Yahweh motif occurs. The purpose of the current discussion is to more fully consider the relationship of sin and Yahweh’s actions within these passages as a means of further understanding how it is that Lamentations comes into a dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature through its references to sin and judgment in the context of the day of Yahweh.

4.2.2.1 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Text in Amos

Reference to the day of Yahweh in Amos occurs in 5:18-20, which describes the day as being a negative day for Israel. The description suggests some form of theophany, and is portrayed as being unavoidable. Within the unit, no mention of sin

\(^95\)Day of Yahweh also occurs in Lam 2:1-8 and 21-22 however there are no sin reference within those units.
is made, with the emphasis placed on the inevitability of the day and its negative consequences. The literary context of Amos 5 does, however, specify a range of sins against which the prophet speaks. In 5:2-17 the prophet pronounces a funeral dirge over Israel, a lament which drives home the message of doom for the nation. An editorial continuity occurs with vv. 18-20 which open with a נאך cry, thus continuing the lament theme. Verses 10-12 list a range of sins which center on issues of social injustice. Included is the indictment of those who hate truth (v. 10), exploit the poor (v. 11), corrupt the righteous and take bribes (v. 12). Verse 12 adds a general indictment to the list of specific sins, and emphasizes the extent of the sinfulness (לכם “for I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins”). In its placement after vv. 2-17, the day of Yahweh announced in vv. 18-20 is linked to the indictment, although the sins are not overtly marked as the cause of the day. Following vv. 18-20, vv. 21-27 contain a judgment oracle which condemns cultic practice on the basis of the people’s failure to live out justice and righteousness. The cult is, as such, seen as an empty and false expression of piety.

In terms of the wider literary context, the primary concern of Amos is the action of Yahweh which will bring about the end of the nation of Israel. Despite debate as to the redactional history of Amos,96 there is much consensus as to the theological concerns of this book. Yahweh is described as being at work with all humanity, both Israel and the nations (1:2-2:5). Monotheism is presumed, and references to other deities absent.97 The book is dominated by the portrayal of Yahweh’s destructive activity, with twenty-eight different verbs describing Yahweh as warrior or destroyer used within the book.98 Yahweh’s activity encompasses both war-like activities (1:4, 7, 10, 12; 2:2, 3, 5, 9, 11; 5:3 4:10; 6:14; 9:1, 8) and those in the natural sphere (4:6-11). Where destruction due to an enemy is mentioned, that

96E. Hammarskjöld (Amos, 14), for example, attributes almost all the book to Amos the prophet, while H. Wolff (Joel and Amos) would argue for a more complex redactional history. 97Hammarskjöld, Amos, 12; Hans W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, 101; Soggin, The Prophet Amos, 19; Paul, Amos, 3; Mays, Amos, 6–7; Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books, 31. 98Donald E. Gowan, Amos (vol. VII of NIB; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 345.
enemy is at Yahweh's command.\textsuperscript{99}

The indictment in Amos centers on social injustice, with 3:10 encapsulating the motivation for the message: "They do not know how to do what is right."\textsuperscript{100} The rich are targeted for their luxurious and indulgent life style which comes at the expense of the poor (3:10; 4:1; 5:11).\textsuperscript{101} The poor are denied justice through the courts (5:7, 10-12; 6:12), and the judicial system is corrupted through bribes. The innocent are afflicted and the needs of the poor no longer safeguarded (5:10-12).\textsuperscript{102} Amos also criticizes the cultic practice of his day, arguing that the cult had become a way for the people to justify their lifestyle. Sacrifice is not rejected, only the carrying out of ritual without consideration of what was expected in daily life.\textsuperscript{103} Morality and worship are thus linked within Amos.\textsuperscript{104}

Central to these issues is the notion of justice and righteousness. While Amos does not draw strongly on Israel's traditions, the election of Israel is seen to invoke upon the nation special responsibility in maintaining Yahweh's justice and righteousness.\textsuperscript{105} In failing to live up to these expectations, Israel has forfeited its position as the elect amongst the nations, and faces expulsion from the land.\textsuperscript{106}

4.2.2.2 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Isaiah

Three day of Yahweh texts from the book of Isaiah were considered; 2:6-22; 13; 22:1-14. Two of the texts concern Judah, while chapter 13 is an oracle against Assyria. All three texts make reference to specific sins, although the focus is more to
do with the nature of the day and/or its impact upon the people.

In the editorial unit 2:6-22, the day of Yahweh material is contained primarily in vv. 12-17. Preceding the announcement of the day is an indictment of the people (vv. 6-8). The House of Jacob is accused of forsaking (נָשַׁנְתָּם) its people, followed by a listing of specific sins including necromancy and consorting with foreigners (v. 6), the amassed wealth and military might (v. 7), and the worship of idols (v. 8). Verses 9-11 lead into the announcement of the day of Yahweh. Verse 9 announces that the people (אתם) will be humbled (שוהים) and made low (שפל), followed by a 2ms imperative “do not forgive them” (רואה תשים להם). Verse 10 introduces a refrain-like element which calls for the people to enter the rock and hide from the terror of Yahweh and the glory of his majesty (vv. 19, 21).\footnote{Reading the מַדִּיק of v. 9 as a reference to humankind.} Verse 11 indicts the people for being haughty and proud.

The day of Yahweh announcement proper centers on the bringing down of all that is proud and lofty (אתה ורומ v. 12), and the exaltation of Yahweh (נָשְׁבָנ v. 17). Verses 13-16 describe a variety of symbols of pride which will be brought down. Verses 18-21 echo motifs introduced earlier in the unit, including that the day of Yahweh is a day of terror and the majesty of Yahweh. Verse 20 picks up the accusation of idol worship found in v. 8, arguing that on the day the people will throw away those idols.

Although the day of Yahweh described here functions as an announcement of judgment against both pride and idol worship, the central focus is the proclamation of the exaltation of Yahweh. The outcome of the day, the humbling of the people and the exaltation of Yahweh, corresponds to the sins of pride and worship of idols, reversing the position of the people against Yahweh. Although clearly related, it is difficult to sustain an act-consequence understanding within this passage, particularly as the nature of Yahweh’s action on the day is not specified. While some form of theophany is portrayed, it is the outcome and impact of the day which is emphasized rather the means of achieving that result.
The day of Yahweh material in 22:1-14, which is contained in vv. 5-11, develops both a correspondence and an act-consequence relationship between the sin and its results. The material refers to the day as a past event and is an interpretation of the Assyrian campaign of 701. Equal weight is given within the passage to the description of the day (vv. 5-8a) and to the indictment (vv. 8b-11). Verses 5-8a describe the military defeat of Judah. Verses 8b-11 describe the people’s failure to turn to Yahweh in the defense of the city, relying instead on their own military resources. Verse 11 ties this unit into the surrounding material (vv.1-4,12-14) in its declaration that the people failed to recognize Yahweh’s agency and planning of their defeat. Correspondence and act-consequence can be found in the correlation between the people relying on their own military might and their subsequent military defeat at the hands of Yahweh.

The oracle in Isa 13 is primarily a description of the nature and impact of a day of Yahweh against Babylon which contains minimal reference to sin. Verse 11 refers to Yahweh visiting (מָקַד) upon (על) the world its evil (רֶעֶן), and upon the wicked (רְשָׁעִים) their iniquities (רֶעֶן). Yahweh will also put an end to the pride of the arrogant (גַּאוֹן רְדִים) and lay low the insolence of tyrants (רְעֹת עֲרוּיִם אֲשֵׁפֵי). The use of מָקַד in itself suggests that the consequences of their deeds is being brought to bear on the sinners by Yahweh. The remainder of the passage describes pain and agony for Babylon and its loss of glory.  

4.2.2.3 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Text in Jeremiah

The only day of Yahweh reference in Jeremiah occurs in the oracle of Jer 46. This text is an interpretation of the fall of Egypt in the battle of Carchemish in 605 as a day of Yahweh. The battle is described, with Yahweh identified as the agent behind Egypt’s fate. No reference to sin is made within this passage, the focus being the

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108 A motif found in Lam 5 in relation to Jerusalem.
description of the battle and its consequences for Egypt, and the identification of Yahweh as the cause of its defeat.

4.2.2.4 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Zephaniah

The book of Zephaniah is dominated by the day of Yahweh motif. As argued above, chapter 3, with its indictment of both the city and its leaders, is read against the backdrop of the day of Yahweh material in Zeph 1:2-2:3. Within chapter 1, the announced day of Yahweh is a response to the sins of the people which are specified in vv. 5-12. The passage is dominated by the announcement of judgment (vv. 1-4, 7-13), and on the terrifying impact of the day on the people (vv. 14-18).

The unit 1:2-2:3 details a complex and multi-faceted picture of the day of Yahweh which includes elements of both the theophany of Yahweh and Yahweh as warrior. The theology of Zephaniah reflects an understanding of Yahweh as sovereign lord over all the earth.109 There are descriptions of both cosmic (1:2-3) and national catastrophe (1:4), although the primary focus is on the destruction of Jerusalem. Human agency is not specified with Yahweh described as bringing about the destruction. The destruction, while primarily military, is depicted through a variety of images including the reversal of creation (1:2-4; 2:4), the denial of the fruits of labor (1:13),110 and as a day of sacrifice for Yahweh (1:7-8).111

The indictment of Judah in 1:2-2:3 is specific, and focuses on syncretistic religion (1:4-6). Cultic practice is described as including the worship of Baal, the host of heaven, Milcom and Molech alongside worship of Yahweh (vv. 4-5).112 The ruling elite are the primary focus of the indictment, and are further condemned for adopting foreign customs and dress (vv. 8-9).113 The presence of violence and fraud within the community is also mentioned (v. 9). In addition, an accusation of what

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111 Klaus Koch, *The Prophets: The Assyrian Period*, 159; Bennett, *Zephaniah*, 664. This imagery is close to Lam 1:15 and 2:22.
Gowan calls “practical atheism” occurs (1:12 Against those who say “The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm”). An element of social critique is also present. The leaders stand in contrast to the humble of the land who fulfill the requirement of divine justice and seek righteousness (2:3). The merchant class and the wealthy also come under Yahweh’s judgment. A correspondence between sin and its consequences is developed in v. 13, which states that those who build houses will not inhabit them, and those who plant vineyards will not drink the wine.

The concept of the sin being visited upon the sinner is present in Zeph 1:2-2:3. The verb פֶּסֶח occurrences (v. 8, 9, 12). A further causal link is specified in v. 17, which states לֶחֶם כַּעֲנֵר (because they have sinned against Yahweh, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung).

4.2.2.5 Sin and Judgment in the Day of Yahweh Texts in Ezekiel

Two passages from the book of Ezekiel were discussed in relation to the day of Yahweh: 7:1-27 and 30:1-19. 7:1-27 is an oracle against Israel in which an act-consequence relationship is established, while 30:1-19 is an oracle against Egypt, and contains no specific reference to the sin of Egypt which initiated the judgment. The day described is an act of judgment, as is specified in vv. 14 and 19 through the phrase עֲשֵׂרֵי תְּמוֹם (acts of judgment).

7:1-27 declares a day against the land of Israel (v. 2). The emphasis of this passage is on the inevitability and imminence of the coming day, and that the day is one of judgment. Throughout the passage the judgment is understood as being the result of the sins of the nation which are described in both general and specific terms. An act-consequence relationship is established, with the consequences portrayed as arising out of the sins. Yahweh, however, is clearly instrumental in executing those consequences. The day is one of anger and wrath, with elements of military

114 Gowan, Theology of the Prophetic Books, 81.
115 Blenkinsopp, History of Prophecy, 114.
destruction introduced. The outcome of the day is that the people will know that Yahweh is Lord.

Emphasis is placed upon the notion that Yahweh will act against the people because of and in accordance with their sins. The verb ונהר (v. 3, 4, 8, 9), best translated as Yahweh “bringing upon” the people their abominations. An act-consequence relationship is thus suggested with Yahweh integral in bringing about the consequences. That Yahweh responds and acts in accordance with the sin is also reinforced through the reference to the people being judged (שפט) according to their ways (דרא v. 3, 8). In v. 27 Yahweh is said to deal (ששה) with the people according to their ways (מדרש) and judge them according to their own judgments (בכמאת הדין אשמסם). Yahweh’s actions not only bring about the consequences of the sin, but the consequences correspond to that sin. Verse 10 further supports an act-consequence relationship. Although there is some uncertainty as to meaning, the phrase הנדה רצר חמשה פרה וחדר can be translated “your doom has gone out. The rod/injustice has blossomed, pride has budded,” suggesting that the sin of the people has initiated its own consequences, in this context, the day of Yahweh.117

Within this chapter sin is most frequently referred to in terms of ways (זרעים) and abominations (זעבות) (v. 3, 4, 8, 9, 27). צע is used as a general description of sin in v. 13, 16, 19. In addition, mention is made of pride (חרד) and injustice (המשה v. 10), violence (חרם) which has grown into a rod of wickedness (רעה v. 11), worship of false images (v. 20), bloody crimes (蜢סים רמי v. 23), and arrogance

116 NRSV consistently translates this verb as “punish,” which may render the implied meaning, but obscures the nature of Yahweh’s actions. A more accurate translation is suggested by D. Clines (The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], v. 4, 802) who suggests that in this context זע has the sense of “bring upon” or “bring over.”
117 M. Fishbane (“Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel,” Int 38 [1984]: 148–49) argues against an act-consequence framework being present within Ezekiel. He states “The persistent theme of divine judgment of Jerusalem (and Judea) for her sins makes it clear that the punishment to come is the personal justice of Israel’s covenantal God, not simply the working out of some impersonal principle of natural balance or retribution. ... [E]ven where we have the use of such talionic expressions as ‘I shall recompense their ways upon them’ (7:3-4; 9:8; 11:21; 16:43), which would appear to convey the attempt to establish some precise correlation between sins and judgments, the rhetorical strategy appears more designed to demonstrate the reality of divine providence and the logic of sin-judgment than any strict principle of legal retribution or equivalence.” (italics original) Despite Fishbane’s argument, the language of this unit does point to an act-consequence relationship.
(v. 24). The wealthy and the merchant classes are also singled out for special attention (vv. 11–20), with the promise that wealth and treasures will not save them on the day of Yahweh.

This unit shares a number of motifs concerning Yahweh’s actions with Lamentations. Reference is made to the rape/plunder of the temple (vv. 21–22, Lam 1:10; 2:7), and to death by the sword outside (the city) and by famine within (Ezek 7:15; Lam 4:9). Verse 16 makes reference to the fate of those who fled the city being found on the mountain, which coincides with Lam 4:17–20. Ezek 7:26 announces that the people will keep seeking visions from the prophets, and that instruction from the priests shall perish, which is echoed in Lam 2:9 with its reference to guidance (משימה) being no more and the prophets obtaining no visions ( telefono) from Yahweh.

This text highlights some of the main concerns with regard to sin and judgment in Ezekiel. The primary focus in the indictment of Judah are those sins which reflect the religious shortcomings of the people, particularly idolatry. Other sins include the failure to keep the Sabbath, and purity offenses. Sins in the social domain include oppression, violence and bloodshed. The outcome is that Judah/Jerusalem has rendered herself (land and temple) unclean. The call narrative (Ezek 1–3) defines the nation as “rebellious” (משחית), an indictment which concerns the nation over the full spectrum of its history. Ezekiel depicts a fundamental resistance to Yahweh which began even in the period before leaving Egypt, and the entire history of the nation is defined by its refusal to obey Yahweh’s laws, and by its syncretistic religious practice. Despite this overwhelming history of rebellion, each generation is still held responsible for their own sin, and the accusation that Yahweh was punishing the current generation for the sins of the ancestors is rejected (chapter 18;

119 For example, intercourse during a woman’s menstruation (McKeating, Ezekiel, 86).
120 McKeating, Ezekiel, 85; Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, Ezekiel (vol. VI of NIB; Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 1084.
121 Rad, Prophets, 193.
Punishment in Ezekiel is both inevitable and irrevocable. The prime catastrophe is military, with Babylon portrayed as Yahweh’s agent of destruction. Famine, pestilence and fire are also described, with deportation being the fate of those that survive the onslaught. Despite the totality of the judgment, destruction is not the last word for the nation, with consolation and restoration depicted in chapters 33-48. As such, the judgment takes on a purifying function. The hope for Judah’s future lies in Yahweh’s treatment of her history. Despite their years of faithlessness Yahweh remained with the people for the sake of Yahweh’s name, and it is this that grounds the belief in a future for the nation.

4.2.2.6 Summary

Although there is much diversity in the day of Yahweh texts considered from the prophetic literature, some general observations can be drawn. The relationship between sin and Yahweh’s response is more uniform in the day of Yahweh texts than in the personification texts. In almost all the texts sin is mentioned, and the nature of the sin is specified (Isa 2:6-22; 13; 22:1-14; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 7:1-27). Over and above this, general terms for sin are also used. Of the three texts that do not mention sin (Amos 5:18-20; Jer 46; Ezek 30:1-19), the Jeremiah and Ezekiel texts are oracles against other nations while Amos 5:18-20 has sins specified in its immediate literary context. In all texts Yahweh is depicted as the agent behind the people’s fate, an observation that is not surprising given that these texts are day of Yahweh texts. Correspondence occurs in five of the texts (Isa 2:6-22; 22:1-14; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 7:1-27), with an act-consequence relationship established in Isa 13; 22:1-14; Zeph 1:2-2:3; Ezek 7:1-27.

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123 Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 173; McKeating, *Ezekiel*, 84. This aspect of Ezekiel will be returned to later in the chapter.
126 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 57.
One of the features of these day of Yahweh texts is the emphasis on the outcome of the day of Yahweh and its impact on those who experience it. These descriptions are often graphic, and concern the exaltation of Yahweh, and the terror and anguish of the people. Despite this emphasis on the impact of the day, where a day of Yahweh is announced against Judah, it is announced in response to the specific, as well as the general, sins of the people.

4.2.3 Conclusions: Sin and Judgment in the Prophetic Literature

Although there is much variability across the prophetic texts considered, it is possible to draw some common observations about the nature of sin and judgment within these references. Common to all texts is the portrayal of Yahweh as being active in history and as responsive to sin within the community. Moreover, Yahweh’s activity is not confined to the interaction with Judah, but to all nations. Other nation’s come under Yahweh’s judgment, but also function as Yahweh’s agents in response to Judah/Jerusalem’s sin. Yahweh’s actions emerge from, and are expressive of, divine righteousness and justice.

The nature of the sin described encompasses all aspects of life - social, cultic and political. Any or all of these aspects of the community’s life could be included in the indictment. The language used to describe sin ranges from the use of general terms, to the listing of specific sins of either the whole community or groups within the community.

Within the texts considered, differences occurred in the relative weight given to the references to sin over against the references to the judgment and its impact on the city/people. Broadly, the day of Yahweh texts are, on the whole, more concerned with the nature and impact of the day than on the naming of the sins which initiated the day. Despite this emphasis, all the day of Yahweh announcements directed at Judah do include specific references to sin, and portray the day as a day of Yahweh’s action against those sins. The relative weight of the sin versus the judgment is more

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\(^{128}\)See the discussion in chapter 3, p. 185.
variable in the personification texts. In some texts there is a balance between the references to sin and its judgment (Isa 1:4-9, 21-26; 37:22-29; Jer 4:29-31; 5:7-11), while others emphasize either the sin (Isa 22:1-4, 12-14; Jer 13:20-27) or the nature and impact of the judgment (Isa 3:25-4:1; Jer 4:11-18, 19-21; 6:1-8, 22-26; 10:17-21; 14:1-6, 17-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-27). As a general trend, however, the personification texts from Jeremiah in most cases emphasized the judgment and its impact, with the judgment described graphically as the military attack by the enemy at Yahweh’s behest, and the impact described in terms of anguish, suffering and lament. References to sin tend to be absent or brief in those texts which concern Yahweh’s judgment of other nations.

A number of texts made either no reference to sin (Isa 3:25-4:1; Jer 4:19-21; 6:22-26; 14:1-4; Amos 5:18-20), or did so only using general terms such as מִשְׁגַּף, נַעֲרָא, מְדִינָה and מֵרָא (Mic 1:8-16; Jer 4:11-18; 15:5-9; 30:12-27). As the discussion has shown, however, the sin references in both the day of Yahweh and the personification texts are part of a wider nexus of references to sin within each of their respective prophetic books. This is significant. Even where sin is not named within a passage, or where the sin is named only generally, the wider literary context of the prophetic book provides multiple and specific references to sin. These references to sin within the literary context inform those texts in which the naming of sin is either absent or is only general. As such, the reason for the announced judgment is known to the text’s audience.

The relationship between the sin and Yahweh’s response was most frequently expressed in terms of correspondence in such a way that the punishment is seen as fitting the sin. An act-consequence relationship was portrayed in some, but not all, of the texts considered, suggesting that the consequences grew out of the deeds themselves. In no case, however, was divine agency absent. In all texts considered, Yahweh is presented as integral in bringing about the consequences of the deeds.

Yahweh’s decision to act against the people/nation is based in the recognition of sin within the community. As such, sin is identified as the cause of Yahweh’s
decision. This causal relationship between sin and Yahweh's decision is central to
the prophetic theological perspective.

4.3 Sin and Judgment in the Personification and Day of Yahweh Texts in
Lamentations

The majority of references to sin in Lamentations occur within units in which
the personification of Jerusalem is also present (1:5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 22; 2:14; 4:6,
13, 22). The references in 1:14, 18, 20 and 22 also occur in the context of reference
to the day of Yahweh. Against the background of the preceding discussion, it is now
possible to compare the use of the sin motif in the personification and day of
Yahweh texts within Lamentations with its use in the personification and day of
Yahweh texts from the prophetic literature.129

Immediately a number of significant observations stand out when considering
Lamentations. First, the distribution of the sin references is variable across the three
chapters to be considered. The majority of the references occur in chapter 1 (seven of
eleven references, vv. 5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 22), while only one reference occurs in
chapter 2 (v. 14), and three in chapter 4 (vv. 6, 13 22). This imbalance in itself opens
the possibility that the different chapters of the text might treat the sin references
differently, a possibility that is borne out in the analysis.

Second, there is on the whole a lack of specificity in the references to sin in
Lamentations. Gottwald offers two alternative possibilities to account for this: either
that "the incisive teaching of the prophets, contained in the denunciatory oracles of
Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, is here presupposed as the content of the
disobedience;" or that this "may be a deliberate omission expressive of the poet's
conviction that the sin of Judah was much more serious and deep-rooted than the
combination of many overt acts."130 The following discussion will test and offer a

129 Although personification and the day of Yahweh texts were discussed separately in relation to the
prophetic literature, this is not possible in Lamentations given the co-occurrence of these motifs in
Lamentations.
130 Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 68.
critique of these remarks. The sin references in Lam 1, 2 and 4 will be discussed on a chapter by chapter basis. The references will be considered in their immediate literary context (i.e. the unit) and as part of the larger chapter. Only then will conclusions be drawn about the use of the sin motif in the personification and day of Yahweh texts in comparison with the prophetic literature.

4.3.1 Lamentations 1

More references to sin occur in chapter 1 than in any other chapter of the book (vv. 5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 22). References occur in all units (vv. 1-6, 7-11, 12-20, 21-22) and are voiced by both the narrator (vv. 5, 8, 9) and Zion (vv. 14, 18, 20, 22), making this an important motif within the chapter. The prevalence and use of the sin motif suggests that an orthodox view of sin being the cause of Yahweh’s actions is held, and it can be argued that Lam 1 does evoke strong associations with the prophetic understanding of sin. Despite evoking these associations however, the sin references in chapter 1 are, on the whole, non-specific, although an allusion to sexual immorality is one possible reading of vv. 8-9. The lack of specificity, which occurs in conjunction with graphic expressions of suffering and divine causality, has the effect of de-stabilizing the centrality of the sin motif, and creates tension for the reader. The chapter does express the view that Jerusalem’s suffering is a consequence of her sin, but the relative weight of this insight must be held in balance with the over-riding dominance of the suffering portrayed.

4.3.1.1 Lamentations 1:5

The first direct reference to sin in Lamentations (1:5) occurs within the opening description of misery unit (vv. 1-6).\(^\text{131}\) This unit introduces the personified city,

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\(^{131}\) It has been argued that v. 2 alludes to the sin of Jerusalem with its reference to the city’s “lovers” (אֲבֵדָיו), based on references such as Hos 1-3 (although Hosea is concerned with the personified nation rather than the city) and Jer 2:1-4:2 (O'Connor, Tears of the World, 20; Berlin, Lamentations, 49; Meek, Lamentations, 7; Hillers, Lamentations, 81). This view is rejected by I. Provan (Lamentations, 36), who argues that the reference is more to those “who loved” the city (i.e. held her in high regard), particularly as the verse is focussed on her trauma and loss. If this is a
describing her desperate plight using images of widowhood, grief and exile. Through the personification motif, an intertextual link with the prophetic literature is immediately established. Verse 5b introduces a divine responsibility motif alongside a sin motif, both of which stand in the context of the larger description of misery. This sin reference functions to exonerate Yahweh who is named as the one responsible for Jerusalem’s plight. It does not, however, dominate the unit as such.

Verse 5 contains two description of misery motifs which surround the divine responsibility and sin motifs. Although the foes are mentioned at both the beginning and end of v. 5,\textsuperscript{132} it is Yahweh who is held responsible for Jerusalem’s plight (יְהֹוָה הַמָּר). Yahweh’s actions are defended within the text, however, as ultimate responsibility is given to the city as Yahweh is said to have acted “on account of her many sins” (עַל רֹב פְּשָׁטֵיהּ). The word for sin (פשע) has the general meaning of rebellion against an overlord in either a political or religious sense.\textsuperscript{133} The narrator is expressing an orthodox view that the destruction is just punishment for Jerusalem’s sin.\textsuperscript{134}

This verse represents the narrator’s interpretation of the cause of Zion’s destruction.\textsuperscript{135} Although both Gottwald and Westermann group together the 3ps (vv. 5, 8, 9) and 1ps (vv. 14, 28, 20, 22) references to sin within Lam 1 as confessions of communal guilt, this collapsing of the multivoicedness of the chapter is to be avoided.\textsuperscript{136} While both third person and first person references attribute sin as causal in the destruction, it is difficult to argue that the 3ps voice functions as confession, unless the poet and the people are seen as inseparable.\textsuperscript{137} Truer to the text is to

\textsuperscript{132}O’Connor (Lamentations, 21) notes that foes (ךָך) “surround and capture” Jerusalem within this verse.
\textsuperscript{133}Hillers, Lamentations, 84. A. Berlin (Lamentations, 49) argues that while Judah can be seen to have rebelled against her political overlord Babylon, hence the destruction, the religious sense of rebellion against Yahweh is intended.
\textsuperscript{134}T. Meek (Lamentations, 8) states of this verse “in this verse Yahweh is represented in regular prophetic fashion as using a foreign people as his instrument of punishment - a punishment which was the result of sin.”
\textsuperscript{135}O’Connor, Tears of the World, 21.
\textsuperscript{136}Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 67–69; Westermann, Lamentations, 140.
\textsuperscript{137}So also Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 14–15.
distinguish the voices of the narrator and Zion.

The placement of this sin reference, and its lack of specificity, are both significant. The sin reference occurs amongst various description of misery motifs, which describe Yahweh making Jerusalem suffer (יהלנ v. 5b), and the children going into exile as captives (v. 5c). The lack of specificity as to the nature of the sin is highlighted against the harshness of the surrounding images. As audience, the hearer/reader of the text has to work to fill the gaps left by the writer through the use of such a general term for sin. We hear of the multitude of Zion’s ( RENDER) transgressions, and the use of the preposition (על) within the verse suggests that Yahweh’s actions were in “accordance with” those sins. What those sins are, however, has not been specified. The reference to many transgressions in a context in which the prophetic literature has already been alluded to opens the possibility that the reference to sin should be understood against the prophetic literature, but the writer only points the audience in this direction. We see the judgment, but have only clues as to the crime. The causality of sin is established, but precisely what the end result corresponds to is left opaque. As will be seen repeatedly in the Lamentations references to sin, the lack of specificity creates tension in understanding the extreme nature of Yahweh’s treatment of the city.

4.3.1.2 Lamentations 1:8-9

These two verses work together to present a series of images of Jerusalem as a despised and shamed woman. While frequently read as an extended reference to the sinfulness of the city, the images are tension filled, and can be interpreted through different lenses. References to the sexual humiliation of the city (which continue in v. 10) evoke passages such as Jer 13:20-27 and Ezek 7 which similarly describe the city’s fate through sexual imagery.139

138 Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 61) argues that the reference to sin is “flattened” within v. 5 in light of the surrounding images of suffering and exile.
139 It is likely that these texts emerge from a similar period to Lamentations, in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem.
Occurring as part of a description of misery unit which focuses on the causes of Jerusalem’s desperate plight (vv. 7-11), v. 8 opens with a clear reference to Zion’s sin (יה והֶשֹּׁאָה יְרוֹשְׁלָם) Jerusalem has sinned grievously). The extent of her sin is emphasized through the infinitive absolute construction. This attribution of guilt leads to a description of the degradation of the city using a number of sexual images, the meanings of which are by no means clear.

The attribution of sin is linked directly (על כ) to Jerusalem becoming הירדית. The meaning of הירדית, which is *hapax legomena*, is debated. Three possible translations have been suggested. The first two meanings take the root of the word to be ירד, which can be translated as either “to move about, shake (the head)”, or “to wander.” The first meaning has been translated as an object of scorn, based on Jer 8:16 and Pss 44:15. Alternatively, the meaning can be read as “wanderer,” or “banished.” A third possible reading comes from the root ירד, translating as “filthy” or “menstruant.” The uncleanness implied is that of ritual impurity (Lev 15:19-30). The effect of this impurity is that Zion is excluded from participation in worship, and from contact with others, thus highlighting the isolation of the city.

Verses 8b-9a do not help to decide the intended meaning, as images of shame, of being despised by others, of nakedness and impurity all occur. These images would, however, seem to exclude the concept of wanderer or banishment. Verse 8b uses a contrast motif to describe Zion’s degradation. Those who honored her (מלביה) now despise her ( профессиональн) as they have seen her nakedness (יתר简化). The language moves into that of sexual assault, which draws on similar prophetic images where reference is made to nakedness and exposure in relation to military assault against a city (Jer 13:22, 26; Ezek 7:21-22). Verse 8c describes Zion’s own pain;

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140 Albrektson, *Text and Theology*, 63–64.
143 O’Connor, *Tears of the World*, 22; Provan, *Lamentations*, 44. Berlin (*Lamentations*, 54) does not accept this reading, arguing that a double dalet and no yod would be expected in the word based on this root. She does acknowledge that a play on words may be intended.
146 Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 63. Ezekiel 16 and 23 both use the language of sexual assault to
she groans (אנה) and turns away (ווחה). The language also evokes the
prophetic images of Jerusalem crying out in pain and anguish (Jer 4:29-31; 6:22-26;

Further reference to impurity occurs in v. 9a, again in a phrase whose precise
meaning is debated. Zion’s uncleanness (כימתה) is said to be “in her skirts”
(בהשכלה). Is this, however, an image of Zion’s carelessness and impurity depicted
through the image of her bloodied skirt, or evidence of sexual assault, or of her own
sexual impropriety? The first reading, that of impurity, understands the uncleanness
to be menstrual blood on the woman’s skirt, thus signalling her ritual impurity.148
This reading is supported if נידה in v. 8 is read as “filthy/impure.” Against this,
O’Connor asks how it is possible that the woman be held responsible, and therefore
guilty, for her natural bodily functions,149 a relevant question if this is taken to be
indicative of moral impurity. Hillers raises the possibility that the blood may be
innocent blood.150 Dobbs-Allsopp argues that vv. 8-9 depict the sexual assault of
Zion, and similarly argues that the reference to bloodied skirts could be related to
either menstrual blood, or blood from an attack.151 A third alternative is proposed by
Pham.152 The lower part of the garment is understood to be associated with modesty.
On this basis the “uncleanness in her skirts” is a reference to sexual immorality. This
reading fits well with the following line “she took no thought of her doom/future,”
another ambiguous phrase which seems to refer to Zion’s failure to consider the
consequences of her behaviour.153 Again, Jer 13:20-27 is evoked. If this association
is maintained, the reference in Lam 1:9 is an indirect reference to apostasy, which in

147 Provan (Lamentations, 45) suggests Zion’s pain is so great she cannot even look at herself.
148 Westermann, Lamentations, 129; Hillers, Lamentations, 86.
149 O’Connor, Lamentations, 1030.
150 Hillers, Lamentations, 86.
151 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 64.
152 Pham, Mourning in the ANE, 75. Followed by O’Connor (Tears of the World, 22) and Berlin
(Lamentations, 55).
153 Provan, Lamentations, 45.
turn can lead to a reading back of apostasy in v. 2.

This is a complex section of text that is filled with possibilities and ambiguities. Is this an extended reference to sin, or is the focus the sexual assault and degradation of the city? If the assault is the focus, a sense of blame may well be intended. As stated by Dobbs-Allsopp:

it may be assumed, insofar as the poem is culturally situated in a context where adultery is defined asymmetrically in terms of the rights of the husband as head of the household, that the poet means to tap into the motif's cultural symbolism, including the idea that the assault results from and is (partially) justified by Jerusalem’s sin.\textsuperscript{154}

Again, it must be noted that there is not a clear delineation of the nature of the sin by Jerusalem. The general word רוח is used, but it is unclear whether the references to nakedness do or do not refer to the city's sin. The prospect must also be left open that the varied meanings possible for these verses need to be held in tension. In noting the ambiguity and the lack of clear detail within this text, Dobbs-Allsopp argues:

all the details surrounding the exposure of the city’s “nakedness” have been suppressed, and as a result, the image swells with potential connotations, perhaps referring to the prophetic motif, but maybe calling attention to the shame or disgrace that the exposure of the naked body triggers in many cultures, including that of ancient Judah, or to the plain fact that Jerusalem has been raped or sexually abused. Or perhaps all three are meant to resonate.\textsuperscript{155}

The language of nakedness, sexual assault and the abuse of woman’s bodies can certainly be seen to be associated with some of the images within the prophetic literature. If the uncleanness is a reference to sin, then we have a similar sense of correspondence between sin and its consequences as was seen in Jer 13:20-27. Is the intent the same here though? It was argued in chapter 2 above that the use of the personification devise evoke a greater degree of sympathy for the city figure than do the uses in the prophetic literature considered. This passage is one of the key ones which point to this difference. Personified Zion’s sin is raised, and her plight is certainly related to her sinfulness. However, the play on words and images highlight

\textsuperscript{154}Dobbs-Allsopp, \textit{Lamentations}, 63.
\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., 64.
not only the sinfulness, but also the shame, the degradation, and the pain of the city. While it can be argued that the shame and the consequences of the sin are one and the same, the emphasis on the shame in the presence of ambiguous reference to sin takes some of the focus away from the sin.

4.3.1.3 Lamentations 1:12-20

Three references to sin occur in the divine responsibility unit 1:12-20 (vv. 14, 18, 20).¹⁵⁶ These references are in the lps voice of personified Jerusalem, and, as such, are confessional. The primary focus of this unit is the divine responsibility for the destruction of the city, with vv. 12-15 containing a series of finite verbs which attribute the destruction to Yahweh. The context of this description of divine responsibility is that of the day of Yahweh. Sin within this unit is portrayed as being the cause of Yahweh’s actions against the city. Although divine responsibility is emphasized, the primary responsibility lies with Jerusalem and her behaviour (vv. 14, 18, 20). Standing closer to the prophetic viewpoint than other passages in Lamentations, vv. 12-20 are still dominated by images of Jerusalem’s defeat and pain. Tension between the extent of the suffering and a lack of specificity in naming the sin continues, the result being that the focus remains on the suffering of the city.

Verse 12 opens with an appeal to passersby to notice Zion, and reference to the incomparability of her suffering. Verse 13 contains images of Yahweh as a hunter pursuing and overpowering the prey, Zion. Verse 14 continues with the divine responsibility theme, opening with the textually difficult נשקד על מים בירחי ירחא. The verb נשקד is *hapax legomena*, with its meaning generally understood to refer to the fashioning of a yoke.¹⁵⁷ The sense of the next part of the line is also difficult. On the basis of some of the versions (Symm., Syr.) the text has been emended to insert על “yoke” before על “to set,” thus making this a clear

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¹⁵⁶ Commentators such as Berlin (*Lamentations*, 59) and O’Connor (*Tears of the World*, 27) argue that the reference to lovers (כתובת) in v. 19 may also be an indirect reference to Zion’s sin.

¹⁵⁷ So Provan, *Lamentations*, 50–51; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 46; Meek, *Lamentations*, 13. An alternate reading is “watch,” as in Yahweh watching over the transgression (“Watch” is used by Hillers, who also amends מ.vertex to read my “steps” [*Lamentations*, 73]).
reference to a yoke being set upon the neck. The intent is that Zion’s transgressions have been placed upon her as a form of burden. The verse then refers to the strength of the city being sapped by the burden of her sins. Yahweh is portrayed as integral within this process, having both bound (יַעֲמָל) the transgressions, and placed them (וַיַּלְכָּל) onto Zion’s neck.

The sin reference here is indirectly confessional. Zion acknowledges that her sins have contributed to her downfall, and it is those sins which are coming to bear. The imagery establishes an act-consequence viewpoint of the relationship between sin and its consequences. The city is portrayed as bearing the consequences of her sin, and it is Yahweh who is responsible for bringing those consequences upon Jerusalem.

Verse 18 contains a confessional statement on Zion’s behalf (v. 18ab) in conjunction with a vindication of Yahweh’s actions (v. 18a). Although it is Yahweh who has acted against the city, Yahweh’s actions are deemed righteous or just, with מִיְּדָם given emphasis by being placed at the beginning of the verse. The emphasis on divine righteousness is in keeping with the prophetic conception of Yahweh. Yahweh stands in contrast to Zion, who states “for I have rebelled against his word.” Again, the nature of the transgression is general, with the verb מָרָד often associated with breach of treaty.

The importance of this confession is variously understood. Westermann, who argues for a unit consisting of vv. 12-18a, suggests that this confession is the zenith of the poem. He states “Here, at the high point of the whole song, this motif is brought into conjunction with an acknowledgement of the justice of God’s way such

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158 Meek, Lamentations, 13; Albrektson, Text and Theology, 74.
159 References to yoke within the prophetic literature frequently refer to servitude under the rule of foreign oppressors/leaders (Isa 9:4; 10:27; Jer 27:8, 11, 12; 28:2, 4, 11, 14; 30:8). The references in Jer 27-28 refer to the symbolic action of Jeremiah concerning the rule of Babylon and the length of the exile. Jer 2:20 and 5:5 both use yoke imagery to refer to the people refusing to live by Yahweh’s ways. The use in Lam 1:14 is thus evokes other images, but is somewhat unusual given the implication of the city being burdened down by her own behaviour.
160 The opening phrase could be translated either as “Yahweh is right,” thus stating that Yahweh is justified in the actions against the city, or it may be a statement concerning Yahweh’s attribute of justice/righteousness (Provan, Lamentations, 53; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 71).
that the whole preceding lament is set off: God must act this way because we have transgressed against his word.”162 Westermann, in a sense, negates the importance he places on the lament form at this point, arguing that “despite the lament” the community still held fast to the conviction that God is just. Westermann’s stress on this element is highlighted by his choice to end the unit at v. 18a. If, as is proposed here, the unit continues to v. 20, the force of the confession is weakened.163 Zion moves again into an appeal to the “peoples” to notice her suffering, and to describe both exile, famine and death. The juxtaposition between the confession and the description of extreme suffering functions as a protest against the suffering.164 O’Connor provides perhaps the harshest critique of Zion’s confession, likening her words to the self-blame of a woman in an abusive relationship.165

The images of suffering and pain contrast with the confessional element, effectively de-emphasizing the confession. The reader’s focus is drawn back to the images of the suffering, and the language of pain encourages the audience to view with empathy the deplorable sight of the city. Empathy is again emphasized in the final reference to sin (v. 20). An appeal to Yahweh to notice the suffering is followed by a description of the physical stress and turmoil of the city. The turmoil is the result of Zion’s rebellion (בי מרא מזרחי). There is debate whether the root מָרָה is intended here. Seow suggests מָרָה (to be bitter) is intended, basing his argument on what he sees as an incongruity between references to physical turmoil and rebellion.166 However, his argument is not convincing given the many descriptions of suffering, both physical and emotional, within this unit, and the co-occurrence of sin motifs. Given the reference to rebellion in v. 18, the same word is likely here.

Sin is accepted as causal within this unit, and in v. 14 an act-consequence

162 Westermann, Lamentations, 135. Italics original.
163 Signs of continuity exist across vv. 12-20. A list of how the destruction affected various groups in the city is started in v. 15, and continues to v. 19. Use of the verb מָרָה occurs in vv. 18 and 20, and there is also a repeated use of imperatives in vv. 12, 18 and 20, all pleas for notice of the city’s suffering.
164 Meek, Lamentations, 14; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 71; Berlin, Lamentations, 59.
165 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 27.
relationship between the sin and its consequences is established. Yahweh is also firmly identified as the one responsible for Jerusalem’s fate, albeit in response to her sin. In this, the unit is in line with prophetic texts, particularly given the co-occurrence of both personification and day of Yahweh motifs. What is not established is a sense of correspondence between the sin and Yahweh’s response. The descriptions of Yahweh’s anger and of the misery it caused dominate, and while portrayal of Yahweh’s anger is common in the day of Yahweh texts, caution must be exercised in over-stressing the sin to the detriment of the other motifs. As Dobbs-Allsopp states “Here, then, through careful attention to phraseology the poet is able to recognize God’s rightness while at the same time making a strong claim for the need to respect human suffering and to effect divine compassion.”

4.3.1.4 Lamentations 1:21-22

The final sin motif in chapter 1 occurs within the concluding future fate of the enemy unit (vv. 21-22). This is a tightly woven unit, with frequent use of repeated words across the two verses. The sin motif occurs in v. 22, following description of misery and appeal elements in v. 21 in which Zion describes her groaning and suffering and the absence of a comforter (v. 21a). A complaint about the rejoicing of the enemy over her downfall then follows (v. 21b). Divine responsibility is again emphasized in v. 21.

The appeal concerning the enemy begins in v. 21c, which is in the form of a precative perfect, wishing that Yahweh act against the enemy. Verse 22 continues the appeal, and, in chiastic structure, includes reference to the sin of both Jerusalem and the enemy. The structure of the verse is such that the future fate of the enemy is paralleled to that of Jerusalem.

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167 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 72.
168 Repetitions include: אָנִי (groan x2); וָאֶשֶׁר (trouble/evil x2); זָאֵם (come/bring).
169 Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 21–22; Provan, Lamentations, 56.
170 A כָּל נַכַּר let all their evil before you
B וַעֲנִי יִלָּכָה and deal with them
B1 כָּכָהָה הָעֲנִי as you have dealt with me
A1 because of (in accordance with) all my transgressions.
The sins of both the enemy and Jerusalem are referred to using general terms. Jerusalem refers to all the enemy’s evil (בַּלַּת וּמָחָשְׁם), which is paralleled with all her own transgressions (כְּלֵל פָּשְׁנִים). A correspondence between sin and Yahweh’s response is described. Yahweh has dealt (עֶלְלוֹ) with Jerusalem in accordance with (עֶלְלוֹ) her sins, and in the same way is asked to deal (עֶלְלוֹ) with the enemy in accordance with their sin. What constitutes the evil of the enemy is not specified, and in the context could be the destruction of the city, the rejoicing over Jerusalem’s fate, or their evil in general. More important is that they be dealt with in a manner which echoes Yahweh’s treatment of the city herself. This correspondence between sin and action is in line with many of the prophetic texts considered.

The appeal, with its identification of wrongdoing by the enemy, introduces further tension into the chapter. Zion has previously acknowledged her own sin as the cause of the destruction (vv. 14, 18, 20), and has also acknowledged Yahweh’s righteousness (v. 18). The appeal for Yahweh to act against the enemy suggests that Zion perceives a degree of unfairness in Yahweh’s treatment of her. The wish that Yahweh act against the enemy implicitly questions Yahweh’s evenhandedness, and the implication of the unit is that Zion’s suffering would be alleviated, at least to some extent, were Yahweh to act against Zion’s enemies. Despite Jerusalem’s repeated identification of her own sin as the cause of Yahweh’s actions against her, a question about Yahweh’s fairness is introduced into the chapter, a questioning which stands in tension with the more orthodox view expressed within chapter 1. Verse 22 closes by returning to a description of misery, an expression of ongoing suffering.

171 Hillers, Lamentations, 91; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 73.  
172 Rudolph, Die Klagelieder, 215.  
173 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 73.  
174 It has been argued that the appeal suggests that the enemy have overstepped the mark in their treatment of Jerusalem, suggesting an excess of suffering on Zion’s behalf (Norman K. Gottwald, “Lamentations Reconsidered,” 169; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 73). In discussion this tension, Dobbs-Allsopp states: “there is one significant difference between the phrasing here and in the other places in the Bible where the punishment is made to mirror the crime. Here Jerusalem is inveighing against the enemy literally for what ‘you, God, have done to me.’ This way of phrasing things suggests something of the imprecation’s larger purview. The enemy is only the most obvious and immediate target of the poem’s anger. For to utter imprecations against the enemy is to implicate God as well.” The tension in the text, however, is more to do with the lack of punishment of the enemy, and not the excess of suffering as such.
which leaves the plight of the city in full view.

Again we have a sin motif in chapter 1 which introduces a sense of ambiguity. Zion does acknowledge that her transgressions have contributed to Yahweh’s action, but in the wish that Yahweh act against the enemy there is an implicit questioning of Yahweh’s evenhandedness. Following this appeal, the return to description of misery leaves Zion's suffering both unresolved and central. Suffering is the theme which has dominated this opening chapter, and although references to sin do occur, they voice neither the central nor the final word within this text.

4.3.2 Lamentations 2

In contrast to Lam 1, sin motifs are notably absent in Lam 2. Chapter 2 opens with a divine responsibility unit (vv. 1-8) which names the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh, but there is no sin motif connected with this. The one reference to sin in the chapter occurs much later in v. 14, and this reference is non-confessional, occurring as part of a wider complex which considers the absence of suitable comforters for Zion (vv. 13-16). While guilt is attributed to prophets and people, no syntactic link occurs to emphasize the sin as cause of the suffering. It is acknowledged that there is sin in the community and that a failure to expose those sins by the prophets is linked to the fortune of the community.

Verse 14 follows a series of rhetorical questions in the voice of the poet concerning the incomparability of Zion’s suffering and the absence of a suitable healer for her (v. 13). Verse 14, with its use of the sin motif, effectively excludes the prophets as a source of healing for Zion. The prophets are accused of seeing false and deceptive visions (בניאי ויהי יִרְאָה ותַחְפַּס). As a consequence, they have failed to expose the iniquity of Zion (הַדַּרְךְּ מִלְּעָלָּו), an indirect indictment of the city. Had the iniquities been exposed, her fortunes would have been restored (לָאֵשׁ בִּי

\[\text{[Footnotes]}\]

175 So also Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 78 Berlin, Lamentations, 73.
176 Can mean “emptiness and whitewash” or “emptiness and tasteless things.” On the basis of Ezek 13:10-16 the meaning of “whitewash” is suggested, pointing to false prophecy (Hillers, Lamentations, 100; Provan, Lamentations, 73).
Verse 14c again indictsthe prophets for their false and misleading prophecy.

It is uncertain whether this reference is to past or present prophets. Provan argues that this is a reference to the prophets after the fall of the city, suggesting that the lack of vision from Yahweh is a crucial factor in the plight of the city not being alleviated. There is some merit in this argument as the reference to the restoration of fortune appears to presuppose the catastrophe. More common, however, is the view that this is a reference to a pre-exilic group of false prophets who failed to expose Zion’s iniquity. The reference to the restoring of fortunes presupposes that had the city repented, her present fate would have been averted.

The reference to false prophets in Lam 2:14 points to one of the concerns of the community in the period surrounding the fall of Jerusalem, reflecting one possible explanation for the destruction of the city. That this was of concern during this period is supported by reference to false prophecy in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 2:8; 5:12-13, 30-31; 6:13-15 = 8:10b-12; 14:13-16; 23:9-40; chapter 28-29; Ezek 13:1-14:11). The primary concern of the prophetic material centers on the content of the message of the false prophets, and on their failure to turn the people from their ways. Although some of the material in Jeremiah concerns prophets who prophesy in the name of Baal (2:8), the more substantial concern is on the content of the message, and its inadequacy to meet the needs of the historical age (5:12-13, 30;

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177 The translation of this phrase is debated. Most commentators read with the qere נrollback, translating “to restore your fortune.” LXX however takes the root to be נrollback (to take captive), thus translating “to turn back your captivity.” See Albrektson (Text and Theology, 111) for a full discussion.
178 Provan, Lamentations, 74. Provan bases his argument on similar phrasing in Jer 31:23; 32:44 and Job 42:10. Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 97) also follows this reading.
179 Albrektson, Text and Theology, 111; Hillers, Lamentations, 107; Westermann, Lamentations, 155; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 39. Westermann (Lamentations, 189) even suggests that this verse contains “an indirect reference to the pre-exilic prophets of judgment. They did indeed carry out their proper task, but they went unheeded.” Westermann links this with v. 17 (which makes reference to Yahweh carrying out a preordained plan) to argue that both aspects of the prophetic word of judgment, the accusation and the announcement of punishment, are reflected within these verses. The negative portrayal of the prophets, however, makes Westermann’s conclusions difficult to sustain.
180 Reference to false prophets is minimal in other pre-exilic prophetic literature. Included are Isa 9:15; Mic 2:11; 3:5. There is concern with false prophecy in the Deuteronomic tradition also (Deut 13:1-5; 18:14-22). R. Carroll (When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature [London: SCM, 1979], 194; From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah [London: SCM, 1981], 159–87) argues that much of the emphasis on false prophecy in the Jeremiah material reflects Dtr concerns.
6:13-15; 14:13-16; 23:9-40\textsuperscript{181}; 27-29).\textsuperscript{182} T. Overholt argues that Lam 2:14 is in line with the Jeremiah material concerning false prophets who misled the people and failed to call their behaviour to account.\textsuperscript{183} R. Carroll, who argues that much of the material on false prophecy reflects the concerns of the Deuteronomistic school, states:

that the exilic traditions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the two foci of the material on prophets against prophets (the motif of prophetic conflict only appears occasionally in the other traditions) is a pointer to the problem of prophecy in the period just before the collapse of the Judean state.\textsuperscript{184}

While it is difficult to argue that the material in either Jeremiah or Ezekiel pre-dates Lamentations, all the texts taken together point to one viewpoint within the community at the time. The failure of the prophets to turn the people from their transgressions was one explanation for the fall of Jerusalem, a viewpoint expressed in Lam 2:14.

While the false prophets are indicted within this passage, the indictment of Zion herself is indirect, although present. The nature of her sins are not specified, with only the general term הָיוֹן being used. The absence of any other references to sin in chapter 2 is notable. Westermann, in keeping with his analysis of the importance of the guilt motif in chapter 1, argues that within this chapter the guilt of the city is implied throughout. He suggests that with the focus on the wrath of Yahweh which dominates the chapter, particularly vv. 1-8, there is an implicit reference to the cause of that wrath, Israel’s guilt.\textsuperscript{185} This argument, however, is difficult to maintain. Chapter 2 marks a significant change in tone from the first chapter. Although the voice of the poet is heard, the barrage of verbs attributed to Yahweh suggest not only that Yahweh was angry with Zion, but that the poet, (and Zion?) was also angry with

\textsuperscript{181}Accusations of immorality also occur within this passage, however the emphasis still remains on the content of the message (Thomas W. Overholt, The Threat of Falsehood: A Study in the Theology of the Book of Jeremiah [SBT Second Series; London: SCM, 1970], 71).
\textsuperscript{182}Overholt, Threat of Falsehood, 25–85.
\textsuperscript{183}Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{184}Carroll, Chaos to Covenant, 170–71. With regard to the Dtr link, Carroll (164) states “For the Deuteronomists, with their heavy emphasis on the divine word as mediated by the prophets, the debacle of the exile required reflection and explanation, and they saw in the activity of the prophets of the period one of the chief causes of the community’s failure to change its course.”
\textsuperscript{185}Westermann, Lamentations, 155.
Yahweh. To over-emphasize the passing indictment of Zion in v. 14 is to do an injustice to the stridency of the divine responsibility motif. That the sin is no longer the focus of the narrator is further reinforced by the shift in his stance in relation to Zion herself. Throughout chapter 1 the narrator commented on both suffering and sin, and on the absence of a comforter for the city. No overt attempt was made, however, to comfort Zion. This changes in chapter 2, with the narrator acknowledging both the enormity of the suffering, and his own, and other’s, inability to heal the city. Zion is portrayed as the suffering and inconsolable victim of divine wrath. The causality of sin is not central to this chapter, and to place heavy emphasis on this aspect of the chapter does disservice to its central theme - the outrage at Yahweh’s treatment of Zion.

In itself, the sin reference in Lam 2 does evoke the prophetic concern over false prophecy, although it is difficult to assert that this pre-dated Lamentations. The motif is most likely reflective of the rhetorical environment in the period surrounding the fall of Jerusalem. Although chapter 2 contains similar thematic units to chapter 1 (divine responsibility, description of misery) and also names the destruction of the city as a day of Yahweh (1:12-20; 2:1-8), in contrast to Lam 1 this chapter shows a marked decrease in the attribution of sin as the cause of Yahweh’s actions. As such, chapter 2 does not evoke the prophetic concern with sin as strongly as did chapter 1.

4.3.3 Lamentations 4

Three references to sin occur in Lam 4 (vv. 6, 13-16, 22). Verses 6 and 13-16 both contain some ambiguity. The first reference (v. 6) may either be read as an indictment of the city, or, as will be argued here, a complaint about the severity of Yahweh’s action against the city. Verses 13-16 contain an extended sin motif, implicating the priests and prophets as being a major cause of the city’s current plight. Verse 22 concerns the future fate of the enemy, and is similar in content to 1:21-22.

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186 Berlin, Lamentations, 67.
4.3.3.1 Lamentations 4:6

Verse 6 is traditionally seen to incorporate a sin motif alongside a comparison in which Jerusalem is compared to Sodom. The understanding of this verse hinges on the translation of two words; עָשַׂת and תַּנַּאי. Two possibilities exist. First, and perhaps more traditionally, the two words are understood to be a reference to the sinful deeds of the cities, and translated along the lines of “iniquity” and “transgression.” Alternatively, the words can refer to Yahweh’s actions against the cities, thus translating “chastisement” or “punishment.”

In comparing the פָּרְצוּת and עָשַׂת of Jerusalem and Sodom, the fate of Sodom is detailed in terms of the speed of the destruction of the city, and the lack of human agency which was overthrown in a moment, no hands were laid on it. By implication, Jerusalem’s fate is described as worse than that of Sodom. 4:1-10 makes repeated reference to famine (vv. 4, 5, 9, 10), which leads to a comparison between the rapid destruction of Sodom and the protracted suffering of Jerusalem. As such, פָּרְצוּת and עָשַׂת are best understood as references to “punishment.” This reading is supported by v. 9 which suggests that those who died quickly by the sword were better off than those who died the protracted death by famine.

This reading stands in contrast to that of Gottwald, for whom 4:6 is a pivotal verse in the development of his “theology of doom.” Gottwald, who translates the nouns as “iniquity” and “sin,” argues that the verse “boldly links unparalleled suffering with unparalleled sin.” As Sodom and Gomorrah were proverbial representations of great sinfulness and divine judgment, the poet’s comparison points

\[\text{References:}\]
- Westermann, Lamentations, 194; Hillers, Lamentations, 135; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 60.
- Provan, Lamentations, 113; O’Connor, Lamentations, 1062; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 132; Berlin, Lamentations, 99; Meek, Lamentations, 31.
- The exact meaning of this line is unclear due to uncertainty as to the translation of the verb יָצַר. Alternatives include “laid against” (Westermann, Lamentations, 194; Hillers, Lamentations, 139; Provan, Lamentations, 113–14) “turn against” (cited Westermann, Lamentations, 196) or “turned to help her” (cited Provan, Lamentations, 113). “Laid against” is adopted here.
- Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 65.
to the extent of Jerusalem’s sinfulness. The old metaphors, he argues, have been blown away in the destruction of Jerusalem, and, for the first time, the depravity of Jerusalem is seen as greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. For Gottwald, this theological step falls in line with the Dtr framework, reasoning from the suffering to the sin. The suffering has been great, therefore the sin must have been great.

In understanding this verse as a reference to the punishment of the city, the verse is not confessional, but functions as a complaint about the severity of Yahweh’s actions against Jerusalem. As such, it is a continuation of the description of misery theme which occupies the larger unit (vv. 1-10).

The attribution of sinfulness however cannot be completely denied because of the very use of עפר and תַּאַסַּרְתָּ which most often refer to sinful actions. The verse has elements of both attribution of guilt and description of misery. In the language used, the ambivalence of the sin motif in Lamentations is emphasized. That the people contributed to their fate by their actions is not denied, and yet that insight is held in tension with the extent of Yahweh’s destructive actions and the magnitude of the suffering. That the poetry moves immediately back into description of misery again suggests that the poet is struggling to come to terms with both the suffering and the role of sin. As in all cases discussed thus far, the attribution of sin does not have the final say in the poetry.

4.3.3.2 Lamentations 4:13-16

This unit contains an extended treatment of a sin motif in which the fate of the community is attributed to the guilt of the priests and prophets. The direct reference to sin occurs in v. 13, with vv. 14-16 expanding on the nature and consequences of the failings of the religious leadership. It is this extended treatment of the sin motif which has led to the treatment of these verses as a thematic unit, the only time that sin becomes a theme in its own right within Lamentations. In its treatment of sin, a causal relationship is established between the sins and their consequences which
draws on notions of impurity. The indictment of the religious leadership echoes concerns of the prophetic literature, particularly that of Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{192}

These four verses have a notorious reputation for being the most difficult in Lamentations. Alongside textual issues (see below), the relationship of these verses to each other and to their surrounding material is ambiguous. Verse 13 opens with a prepositional phrase beginning with מָּן, which cannot stand alone. Westermann links v. 13 with vv. 11-12, arguing that the phrase “it happened” (i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem) is implied.\textsuperscript{193} However, on the basis of textual links between vv. 13 and 14-15, as well as on continuity of content, it is preferable to see v. 13 belonging with what follows. If the opening clause is translated “on account of the sins of her prophets ...”,\textsuperscript{194} v. 13 becomes continuous with v. 14. Other signs of continuity include the use of מַכָּל בֶּרֶשֵׁים (רֹומֵיהֶם) in v. 13 and מַכָּל בֶּרֶשֵׁים in vv. 14 and 15, and there is repeated use of בֶּרֶשֵׁים plus noun in all three verses; בֶּרֶשֵׁים (v. 13), בֶּרֶשֵׁים (v. 14), and בֶּרֶשֵׁים (v. 15). If v. 13 is not attached to vv. 14-15 the referent of “they” (והנה they wandered v. 14) is not clear.

The identification of subjects within these verses is the key to their interpretation. Verse 13 opens with a sin motif, indicting the religious leadership. General terms are used, referring to the sins of the prophets (מַכָּל superclass) and the transgression of the priests (וְהָעָבְדוּ כּוֹרֵכִים).\textsuperscript{195} The indictment is qualified by the phrase מַכָּל בֶּרֶשֵׁים (who shed the blood of the righteous in their midst). Just what is meant here is uncertain. Reading literally, Gottwald argues that the religious

\textsuperscript{192}Jer 2:8; 5:12-13,30-31; 6:13-15=8:10b-12; 14:13-16; 23:9-40.
\textsuperscript{193}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}, 197. Westermann (198, 202-02) argues that vv. 11-12 contain an accusation against Yahweh in 3ps voice which is tied to an attribution of guilt focusing on the priests and prophets. He suggests that the accusation against God (v. 11) is bound to the acknowledgment of guilt (v. 13), bridged by a reference to unprecedented judgment in v. 12. Westermann’s division however fails to recognize the unity in vv. 13-16, a lack of recognition which is compounded by his radical rearrangement of the text. Westermann suggests that vv. 14-16 belong to the description of misery found in vv. 1-10, based on their description of the fate of a specific group (the priests and prophets) being in common with the description of various groups in vv. 1-10. He argues that the text has been interrupted under the influence of the acrostic, and should be ordered vv. 9, 10 16b, 14-15 (priests and elders), 16a (the esteemed are despised), 14-15 (considered unclean, they must flee), 11-13. It is difficult to justify such a rearrangement of the text, or to account for how it is that the acrostic could have had such a radical impact on the ordering of the text. Recognizing the flow and signs of unity between vv. 13, 14-16 resolves the need to rearrange the text in this way.
\textsuperscript{194}Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 149.
\textsuperscript{195}This same word pair was used in Lam 4:6.
leadership had participated in the oppression of the righteous to the extent of
sheddng their blood. Alternatively, in failing to fulfill their religious duties, the
priests and the prophets precipitated the catastrophe and therefore were effectively
guilty of bloodshed. Berlin argues that the reference to bloodshed is a cipher for
idolatry, linking this with the references to impurity in the following verses.
Given the absence of any other explicit reference to idolatry in Lamentations, Berlin’s
interpretation seems unlikely. In keeping with 2:14, the failure of the religious
leaders to fulfill their role and to point out the sin of the community is the most likely
meaning. This is in keeping with concerns of the books of Jeremiah (6:13-15 = 8:10-
12; 23:11, 14; 27-28) and Ezekiel (13-14).

The identity of the subjects of vv. 14-15 is unclear. One reading is that the
verses concern the community, and thus describe their impurity and exile. More
likely, however, is that the priests and prophets continue as subject. It is their
defilement which is described. Verse 14b could imply either the people being
unable to touch the clothing of the priests lest they too become contaminated, or
the ongoing contamination of the priests and prophets. Either is possible, and both
reflect the extremity of the defilement of the religious leaders. The subject of v. 15 is
again problematic. The verse opens with a cry which evokes Lev 13:45 concerning
the impurity of lepers. The priests and prophets are likened to lepers, and either cry
out warnings themselves, or the community cries out concerning them. Verse 15b

\[\text{Lamentations, 117. Hillers (Lamentations, 149) suggests that by “whitewashing injustice”}
(Lam 2:14) the prophets were responsible for the bloodshed.}

\[\text{Berlin, Lamentations, 110.}

\[\text{Ibid., 100; Hillers, Lamentations, 142.}

\[\text{Albrektson, Text and Theology, 107; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 187.}

\[\text{So NRSV, O’Connor, Tears of the World, 64; Berlin, Lamentations, 101.}

\[\text{Albrektson, Text and Theology, 107.}

\[\text{It has been argued that אֲרוּד בְּרֵיתָם and אָפְרֵד בְּרֵיתָם are explanatory glosses, included to show that}
quotations shouted at the priests are intended here. This is possible given the increased length of this}
verse, although as with all proposals of glosses within Lamentations, there is not universal acceptance.}
Albrektson (Text and Theology, 188) suggests that both segments are glosses, while Gottlieb (Text of}
Lamentations, 66) argues that אֲרוּד בְּרֵיתָם and אָפְרֵד בְּרֵיתָם are glosses. Provan}
(Lamentations, 118) rejects there being any glosses present, while Hillers (Lamentations, 143) simply}
suggests that on the basis of its length the text may not be in order.
The meaning of דְּלֵךְ is uncertain, but commonly understood to be a reference to wandering

268
is more problematic. Is it the priests/prophets or the community who have become wanderers and fugitives? The meaning of “They say among the nation ‘They shall stay here no longer,’” is uncertain. The reference to the nations suggests that v. 15b concerns Judah as a whole, not simply the priests and the prophets. It may be that the referent slips here. Following Berlin and Dobbs-Allsopp, the verse suggests that the nation has become contaminated, a pariah, and is thus isolated by its neighbors.

Verse 16a introduces a divine responsibility motif in which Yahweh is described as scattering (גָּפַר) “them,” which could again refer to either the people (following v. 15b) or the religious leaders (following vv. 13-15a and 16b). The unit closes with a description of the changed circumstances of the priests and elders who are no longer honored.

In the progression of the unit then, we have an extended attribution of guilt concerning the priests and prophets, in which both their fate and the divine responsibility for that fate is explored. The four verses refer primarily to the sins of the priests and prophets, which led them to become unclean, and to be treated as lepers. A causal relationship is built between the sins and their consequences linked, through reference to blood and the likening of the leaders to lepers, to notions of purity and contamination. Behind their fate lies the action of Yahweh, who is ultimately responsible for all that befell the priests and prophets/elders.

Ambiguity as to subject occurs throughout the unit, and in v. 15b it would appear that the referent changes and moves into a reference to the nation as a whole.

(Albrektson, Text and Theology, 188; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 66; Berlin, Lamentations, 100).

204 Debate surrounds the translation of עיפה. Albrektson (Text and Theology, 188) suggests it be translated not form עָיָה I “to dwell,” but עָיָה II “to attack, assail.” Thus he translates “they flee and stagger, they will no longer be able to assail.” Dwel is taken as the preferred reading here.

205 Berlin, Lamentations, 110 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 133. O’Connor (Tears of the World, 65) maintains that the priests and prophets continue as subject and that the sense is that the failure of the priests and prophets is such that it has made the entire world contaminated. This is a rather grandiose reading, but one that could well reflect a Zion theology in which Jerusalem and the cult is seen as having a salvific role for the world (4:13).

206 M. Dahood (“New Readings,” 190 followed by McDaniel, “Philological Studies,” 48 and Hillers, Lamentations, 150) argues that the verb should be translated as “destroyed” rather than “scattered.” While either translation is possible, within the context of the chapter it is the fate of the survivors which is emphasized, and as such “scattered” seems the more likely translation (with Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 61).
It may be that the ambiguity points to an intentional mirroring of the fate of the community with the fate of the priests and prophets. The nation has become impure, an outcast, through the sins of priest and prophet alike.

4.3.3.3 Lamentations 4:22

The final reference to sin in chapter 4, and the final reference in association with the personification of the city as female, occurs in 4:22. The sins of both Jerusalem and Edom are referred to, and an act-consequence relationship in which Yahweh may act to bring about Edom’s fate is introduced. 4:22 resounds with syntactic and semantic parallelism between Zion and Edom, yet the fate of the two personified figures is opposite. Limited hope is expressed for Zion while doom is wished upon Edom.

4:21-22 form a future fate of the enemy unit whose preceptive wishes echo the future fate units at the end of chapters 1 and 3 (1:21-22; 3:55-66). Verse 21 establishes an initial contrast between the present and future fate of Edom with an ironic note. The poet calls to Edom to rejoice and be glad (שיהיזי נשמה) over Jerusalem’s downfall, but concludes with the preceptive hope of future judgment and humiliation for Edom. The language used, גמש עליון תועד מב תקריר וחורפיהם, but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare) not only echoes similar usage in prophetic literature (Jer 25:15-29; Ezek 23:30-34; Isa 51:17-22; Obad 16) but also reflects the narrator’s description of Zion’s fate in Lam 1:8-10 with its reference to nakedness and shaming.207

Sin references occur in v. 22, which continues the theme of Edom’s downfall. Verse 22a-b expresses limited hope for Zion, although ambiguity surrounds the translation. The verse opens חם צורן בלא צרכן, which can be translated as

207 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 137; Berlin, Lamentations, 114; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 68 While the imprecation is unpalatable when read against Zion’s own lament as to her treatment, Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 137) points out that the imprecation “gives voice to and channels the community’s raw rage and suffering’s deep hurt such that the fragile flame of life may continue to smolder.”
declarative,²⁰⁸ but is better read in the precative, as is the reference to the exile being complete.²⁰⁹ Reading in the precative fits better with the focus on the portrayal of Jerusalem’s ongoing suffering throughout the chapter.

Edom’s fate is contrasted with this limited hope for Zion. Using both syntactic and semantic parallelism, the fate of בֵּית אֲבֹתָם בֵּית ציון and בֵּית ציון בֵּית אֲבֹתָם are opposed. The completion (בֵּית qal 3ms) of Zion’s ציון is contrasted with the פֶּסֶר (qal 3ms) of Edom’s ציון. The word play on ציון contrasts the punishment of Zion with the sin of Edom, effectively highlighting the conceptual proximity between the sin and its consequences as reflected in Hebrew word usage. Continuing the parallelism, Zion is told she will be exiled (הָלַל) no longer, while Edom is told her sins (חָמַת) will be uncovered (לָלַל). Though structurally similar, the future of the two is opposite.

This is the only time that the verb פֶּסֶר is used in Lamentations, and suggests an act-consequence relationship in which Edom’s sins are visited back on her. In visiting Edom’s sins upon her, correspondence is also implied. In light of the parallelism in the verse this correspondence can, by implication, be applied to Zion’s completed punishment. That it is Yahweh who is responsible for initiating the visitation of the sins is not directly stated, but is implied through the 3ms form of the verbs.

The nature of the sins is not specified for either Zion or Edom. This general reference is in keeping with much of Lamentations, and as seen elsewhere, the references to sin must be kept in balance with the dominance of the motifs which describe Zion’s pain and suffering. Even where there is limited hope as expressed within 4:21-22, that hope is transitory as seen in the return to descriptions of misery in chapter 5.

4.3.4 Summary

Drawing together the texts considered thus far, what can be said about the sin references in those texts which use the personification and day of Yahweh texts in

²⁰⁸Berlin, Lamentations, 102.
Lamentations in comparison with those used in the prophetic literature? Broadly, the sin references in chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations both evoke and stand in tension with the related prophetic texts. They evoke the prophetic literature through the very association of sin references used in conjunction with the personification and day of Yahweh motif, and through the common link that Yahweh acted against Jerusalem on the basis of sin. In addition, references to the failings of the false prophets also link these texts with specific texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Beyond this, however, tension emerges in Lamentations as a result of the lack of specificity in the references to sin in contexts of graphic descriptions of suffering. This lack of specificity weakens the sense of correspondence between the sin and its consequences as is frequently developed in the prophetic literature, and leaves the audience in doubt as to what it is that led to such a catastrophic response from Yahweh. Within Lamentations there is a sustained focus on the pain and suffering of the community. While a number of the prophetic texts considered also focus on the nature of the judgment and its impact on the city/people, Lamentations lacks the focus on specific sins and their consequences which is evident either within the prophetic texts considered or within their wider literary context. This absence adds to the disjunction between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

Chapter 1 contains more references to sin than any other in Lamentations, and can be said to stand closest to the prophetic viewpoint. Both the poet and the personified city give voice to the orthodox view that the destruction was Yahweh’s just response to Zion’s sinfulness, and in expressing this strongly evoke the prophetic literature. Despite this, the lack of specificity in the sin references belies the graphic detail given as to the enormity of Zion’s suffering. Although a number of the personification texts from Jeremiah and the day of Yahweh texts also emphasize the nature and impact of the judgment on the people, with the Jeremiah texts emphasizing the suffering and lament of the city/people, those texts did at the same time refer to specific sins either within the actual passages (i.e. all the day of Yahweh

or had specific references to sin in the immediate literary context (4:11-18, 19-21;
6:22-26; 14:1-6; 15:5-9; 30:12-17). In addition, the presentation of the suffering
evokes sympathy from the audience within Lamentations, through the images used to
portray the city (see chapter 2), an element not present in the prophetic literature
given their function of announcing judgment for the city/people. Over and above
this, the attribution of sin is not the focus of Lamentations 1, again leading the
audience away from a too close association of the text with the prophetic literature.
While the text does evoke the prophetic literature allowing the sins portrayed there to
form the rhetorical background for its understanding, that viewpoint is not adopted
without modification, and the attribution of sin must be held in tension with the
disproportionate enormity of the suffering conveyed.

The decentralization of the sin motif is strengthened in Lam 2 which makes
only one reference to sin. The prophets are singled out for their failure to expose the
sins of the community, thus giving voice to one explanation for the suffering. That
this explanation was within the rhetorical environment in the period following the
destruction is evident through associated references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The sin
reference in 2:14 is, however, overpowered by the repeated emphasis on the
destructive wrath of Yahweh within the chapter, which presents Zion as the
inconsolable victim of Yahweh’s excessive actions. As was argued in chapter 3
above, although 2:1-8 does name the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh,
and shares with the day of Yahweh texts the graphic description of Yahweh’s
activity, the complete absence of reference to sin in vv. 1-8 subverts the prophetic
motif, which always names specific sins when the day is directed against Judah.

Lamentations 4 continues the tension filled relationship with the prophetic
literature as established in Lam 1 and 2. The prophetic literature is again evoked
through the association of the personified city with reference to the city/people’s sin,
but that relationship is not unequivocal. Lamentations 4:6, which uses common
words for sin, is more a reference to the severity of Zion’s suffering, and is thus a
description of misery not a confessional attribution of guilt. Verses 13-16 more strongly evoke the prophetic literature in the reference to the failings of the priests and prophets, and establishes a causal link between the failure of the leadership and the fate of the community. Finally, v. 22 refers to sin in the context of limited hope for Jerusalem, and the wish for the downfall of Zion’s enemy. Correspondence between the sin of the enemy and the desired punishment is stated in 4:22, and it can be argued that this relationship is implicitly applied to Jerusalem’s sin. Through the juxtaposing of these different elements within the chapter, the orthodox understanding of sin and the reality of present suffering are again held in tension.

Used in association with the personification of Jerusalem and reference to the day of Yahweh, chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Lamentations do evoke the prophetic concept that Yahweh acts in history against the sin of the nation. Across all these references however, lies a tension introduced by the general references to sin in Lamentations and the need to counterbalance the sin motif against the more dominant detailed and graphic descriptions of suffering and pain. The prophetic concept is evoked, but done so in a way that uses this association for the purposes of this new text whose intent is to lament the fate of the city and its populace.

4.4 Sin in Lamentations 3 and 5

Five references to sin occur in Lam 3 (vv. 39, 42, 64) and 5 (vv. 7, 16) which are not associated with either personification or the day of Yahweh motifs. The references do, however, evoke some associations with the prophetic texts, thus contributing to the dialogic interplay between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

4.4.1 Lamentations 3

Three references to sin occur in chapter 3: the first in v. 39 in the wisdom-like middle section of the poem (vv. 34-39), followed closely by v. 42, both of which
refer to the sins of Judah. The final reference occurs in v. 64 within a future fate of
the enemy unit (vv. 55-66), but concerns the enemies' misdeeds. As has been noted
in association with Lam 1 and 2, the references to sin do not dominate chapter 3,
with many more verses concerning divine responsibility (vv. 1-18, 42-47) and
description of misery (vv. 19-20, 48-54). The sin references must again be held in
balance with other motifs within the chapter. The sin motifs in chapter 3 evoke some
links with the prophetic literature, but also co-occur with texts which evoke other
traditions such as the wisdom literature (3:39) and psalmic texts (vv. 42 and 64).

4.4.1.1 Lamentations 3:39

The first reference to sin in Lam 3 occurs in v. 39, a verse whose meaning is
much debated. Verse 39 concludes a 1ps wisdom-like unit (vv. 34-39) which can be
divided into four subsections: injustice portrayed (vv. 34-36a); Yahweh's
omniscience (v. 36b); Yahweh's omnipotence (v. 37); the futility of complaint (v.
39). The meaning and progression of this unit is difficult due to a variety of syntactic
issues, with v. 39 also containing textual uncertainties. It can, however, be argued
that vv. 34-38 provide the rationale for the assertion in v. 39. While vv. 34-39 have a
wisdom-like tone, the unit does evoke prophetic concerns in its reference to sin in the
social domain.

Verses 34-39 follow closely from vv. 31-33, which describe Yahweh's
compassion and love. Verses 34-36 describe situations of human suffering and
injustice. These verses are grammatically difficult. A series of infinitive verbs
preceded by ה occur, but the finite verb is lacking, making Yahweh's relationship to
this injustice difficult to determine. The verbs may refer to actions that God does not
do willingly (i.e. attached to v. 33) or they may refer to v. 36b, around which there
is also debate. MT reads דוד חותא which yields the seemingly straight forward

210See chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of the unit.
211Berlin (Berlin, Lamentations, 92), who argues that vv. 34-39 are part of a larger section consisting
of vv. 22-39, suggests that this section of Lam 3 develops from the assumption that "knowledge of the
true nature of God will bring comfort and hope to the sufferer."
212Hillers, Lamentations, 116.
translation “the Lord does not see.” While commentators such as O’Connor, Provan and Rudolph have argued that this is the correct translation, the line is often rendered as a rhetorical question in order to continue the hopeful progression of this section of the poetry. Although ambiguous, a reading which stresses Yahweh’s knowledge is the more likely given vv. 37-38 which assert that all things, both good and bad, come from Yahweh. This assertion leads to the question of v. 39.

It has been suggested that v. 39 is corrupt due to the presence of the unusual expression רַאֵשׁ, and the absence of a verb in the second half of the verse. The expression can be translated to emphasize “a living man” suggesting that while there is life there is hope, or simply as “man.” The line expresses the futility of complaint, followed by the sin motif (עלָו נפש). The reference is frequently translated as “about his sin,” but can equally, and more appropriately, be translated as “punishment of sin.” The verse thus counsels against complaint, arguing that the perceived suffering (which has been the subject of the preceding material in the chapter) is just punishment from a God who will not reject forever (vv. 31-33). The progression through this unit is, however, awkward if vv. 34-38 are read as a description of the suffering undertaken either by the speaker, the community, or humanity in general. In reading vv. 34-38 as a description of suffering, the introduction of suffering as punishment for sin is somewhat abrupt. It is possible, however, to argue that the sins referred to in v. 39 are those listed in vv. 34-36a, thus providing a more coherent progression through the unit.

213 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 53; Provan, Lamentations, 97; Rudolph, Die Klagelieder, 240–41. Provan argues that there is a change of speaker here, who raises an objection that Yahweh in fact does not see oppression, an objection which is rejected in the following verses. This is, however, an awkward reading, and there is no textual support to mark the change of voice here.
214 Westermann, Lamentations, 166; Berlin, Lamentations, 83.
215 See Gottlieb (Text of Lamentations, 51–52) and Albrektson (Text and Theology, 181) for full discussion.
216 Kraus, Klagelieder, 53; Hillers, Lamentations, 117; Berlin, Lamentations, 95; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 52; Provan, Lamentations, 99.
217 Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 51.
218 Berlin, Lamentations, 80; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 120 Provan, Lamentations, 99; Meek, Lamentations, 27. Others translate as “sin,” for example O’Connor, Tears of the World, 52; Gottlieb, Text of Lamentations, 52. A third alternative, supported by Westermann (Lamentations, 166) reads the וַיִּמְנֹא as וַיִּמְנַוא וּניִּמְנַוא as transliterating “Let us all master our own sins.” As MT can be read as it stands, this final reading is rejected.

276
Verses 34-36 describe a scene of injustice, over which Yahweh is omniscient. Verses 37-38 stress the omnipotence of Yahweh, proclaiming that Yahweh has control over all that happens, and that both good and evil (הלאות ההמכות) stem from Yahweh’s command. If הפסא (v. 39) is then read as “punishment for sin,” reference to the omniscience and omnipotence of Yahweh leads to an admonition to cease complaining over punishment of sins. In the progression of vv. 34-39 it is possible to argue that the injustice described in of vv. 34-36 are an indictment of the complainants of v. 39. Hence the admonition to cease complaining. If this reading is correct, then we have a statement of a causal relationship between sin and Yahweh’s actions. By implication, the suffering was deserved due to the nature of the sin (as listed in vv. 34-36).

In reading the text this way, the sin metaphor here can be seen as different from other references in Lamentations due to the specificity given concerning the nature of the sin. That the nature of the sin is tied to justice in the social domain links it to the prophetic literature, despite its occurrence within a unit which is otherwise dominated by wisdom-like language.

4.4.1.2 Lamentations 3:42

Verse 42 contains a confession of sin in 1cpl voice, following immediately after a call to repentance in vv. 40-41. The confession in v. 42 is nonspecific. A divine responsibility unit follows in vv. 42b-47. Yahweh is accused of not heeding the confession of the community, and the hope achieved in the wisdom-like material of vv. 25-39 is dashed.

Although taken as the beginning of a new unit (vv. 42-47), v. 42 stands in close relationship to the preceding material. Verses 40-41 form a transition unit between the wisdom like material of vv. 34-39 and the divine responsibility unit of vv. 42-47. Following the statement about the futility of complaint (v. 39), there is a change to communal voice with the speaker calling on the community to confess their sins. The
shift from singular to plural voice within these verses has raised much debate as to whether this represents a change of speaker. While it has been argued that the 1ps voice in vv. 1-39 is in fact a communal voice, it is more likely that the voice of a single speaker in vv. 1-39 makes way for a communal voice within this section. This pre-supposes an audience, which may suggest a liturgical setting for the chapter, but also, in its written form, functions rhetorically to draw the reader into the world of the text. In a rising crescendo, the speaker moves from the statement as to the futility of complaint (v. 39), to a call for confession (vv. 40-41) which leads into the confession (v. 42).

The sins of the community are referred to using the general terms מָרָא and מָרָא. The confession follows naturally from the call to repentance (vv. 40-41), but is neither dwelt upon or expanded. Rather, a sharp contrast occurs in v. 42b, which switches to an accusation against Yahweh, announcing Yahweh’s abandonment of the people and failure to live up to community expectations that forgiveness follows repentance. Although sin is acknowledged, the words “You have not forgiven” (יִהְיֶה לְאִם מִלְתָּה) implicates Yahweh as one of the causes of the people’s suffering, a theme which parallels the divine responsibility material of 3:1-18, although now in the communal voice. This blunt statement forms the basis of the lament of vv. 43-47 in which Yahweh’s inaccessibility is stressed.

Although linked to the preceding material (vv. 34-39, 40-41), the confession functions as an introduction to the lament on the inaccessibility of Yahweh. The motif of Yahweh’s failure to respond to the confessions of the people echoes the content of Jer 14-15 (14:7-9, 10-12, 19-22; 15:1-9). It is difficult to argue however that the Jeremiah passages precede the Lamentations text. More likely is that both

219 Albrektson, Text and Theology, 127–28; Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 41. Berlin (Lamentations, 84–86), argues that the speaker is the personified community of the exile. The identity of the speaker will be explored in more detail in chapter 5.
221 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 53; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 123.
texts reflect a post-destruction viewpoint in which divine inaction/inaccessibility was seen to have contributed to the city’s/nation’s demise. As it stands, Jer 14-15 is an editorial unit in which a theodicy is presented, accounting for the destruction as being the irreversible and inevitable consequences of the sins of the nation. Although written after 587, the text describes Yahweh’s abandonment in the voice of the pre-exilic community, exonerating Yahweh on the basis of the ongoing sin of the people, reinforcing the inevitability of the judgment.  

Lamentations 3:42 expresses a similar viewpoint (that Yahweh is responsible for the fate of the community), however as an expression of the post-destruction community the passage suggests that Yahweh’s inaccessibility is contributing to the ongoing suffering of the community, despite its confession. Although similar, Jer 14-15 accounts for the actual destruction, while Lam 3:42 refers to the ongoing suffering, pointing to a fundamental difference in function between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

4.4.1.3 Lamentations 3:64

The final reference to sin in chapter 3 occurs in v. 64, referring to the actions of the enemies rather than to Jerusalem/Judah. Verse 64 occurs as part of a larger unit (vv. 55-66) in which an extended appeal to Yahweh to act against the enemy occurs, using the precative form as seen in 1:21-22 and 4:21-22.

Verse 64 develops both an act-consequence and a correspondence relationship through the appeal for Yahweh to act in accordance with the nature of the deeds perpetrated by the enemy.  

The boundaries of this unit are debated, as is the intent of the verbs in vv. 64-66. Following Provan (Provan, Lamentations, 108; Provan, “Past, Present and Future.”; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 126-27; Berlin, Lamentations, 97) the verbs in vv. 55-66 are read in the precative. In vv. 64-66 the verbs are in 2ms imperfect form, and as such are most naturally translated in their future sense and can be read as an expression of confidence in Yahweh’s future action (Westermann, Lamentations, 188). In keeping with the future fate of the enemy material in 1:21-22 and 4:21-22 there is valid grounds for reading the material in the precative form.

223 Carroll, Jeremiah (1986), 309.
224 The boundaries of this unit are debated, as is the intent of the verbs in vv. 64-66. Following Provan (Provan, Lamentations, 108; Provan, “Past, Present and Future.”; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 126-27; Berlin, Lamentations, 97) the verbs in vv. 55-66 are read in the precative. In vv. 64-66 the verbs are in 2ms imperfect form, and as such are most naturally translated in their future sense and can be read as an expression of confidence in Yahweh’s future action (Westermann, Lamentations, 188). In keeping with the future fate of the enemy material in 1:21-22 and 4:21-22 there is valid grounds for reading the material in the precative form.
them, Yahweh, according to the work of their hands). In this context, the verb שׁוֹב in the hiphil implies "turn back/return" in the sense that the deeds will be visited back on the enemy, and will correspond to those deeds. The deeds themselves are is not specified in v. 64, but are described in vv. 59-63. The enemy has plotted against the speaker and taunted him. This is in line with the future fate of the enemy units in 1:21-22 and 4:21-22 which identify the enemy as taunting and rejoicing over Jerusalem’s downfall. As occurred in 1:21-22, the speaker calls on Yahweh to act against the enemy, an action which would reflect Yahweh’s justice. As stated by Berlin:

the argument is based on justice, not revenge. If, as the poet has argued, God is just, then he must punish those who have acted violently against Israel "for no cause." Our poet does not suggest at this point that the enemy is the vehicle for God’s punishment. Rather, he implies that the enemy is no better than Israel and deserves as much punishment. The poet’s sense of rightness in the world cannot allow the enemy to flourish.

Despite the act-consequence and correspondence pattern being seen in vv. 64-66, the evocation of the prophetic literature is not dominant here. The language of vv. 55-66 has more in common with the laments of the Psalms, and it has been noted that the stereotypical language used reflects psalmic language. That this is consistent with the understanding of Yahweh in the prophetic literature cannot, however, be denied, and has a similar emphasis to the imprecatory elements in the oracles against the nations.

4.4.2 Lamentations 5

Two uses of a sin motif occur in chapter 5, both within the extensive description of misery unit of 5:1-18. The references, however, stand in tension with one another. The first (v. 7) attributes sin to previous generations and complains about the unjust suffering of the present generation. Verse 16, in contrast, acknowledges the sin of the present generation. While attempts have been made to

225 Patrick D. Miller, Sin and Judgment, 131; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 127.
226 Berlin, Lamentations, 98.
227 Ibid., 97; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 127; Hillers, Lamentations, 132–33.
collapse these references into one theology of sin within this chapter, the tension between the two references needs to be acknowledged and seen as indicative of tension in the rhetorical environment of the text. It is widely accepted that Lam 5 closely resembles the communal lament form of the Psalter.228

4.4.2.1 Lamentations 5:7

The first sin motif occurs in v. 7, attributing sin to the previous generation of Jerusalemites. Ambiguity surrounds the intention of this verse, with opinion varying as to whether the present generation aligns itself with their sinful ancestors, thus acknowledging their own guilt, or whether the verse is a complaint at the unjust punishment of the present generation. The issue of guilt being passed from one generation to the next appears in Ezekiel (18; 33:10-20) and Jeremiah (31:27-30) and taken together suggest that this was an issue for the post-destruction community.

The unit in which this sin motif stands concerns the present situation of suffering and deprivation within the defeated city. Verses 2-18 contain a long string of images of the current plight of the community, spoken in the 1cpl voice of the survivors. Verse 7 attributes sin to previous generations, using the verb אבירי (אבירי or our fathers sinned and are no more), which echoes v. 3 with its reference to the orphaned/fatherless state of the people. This is followed by אנושו וה mMבלו a phrase whose meaning is ambiguous. Two questions arise; is the relationship between the two phrases contrastive or emphatic, and what is the meaning עינ within this context?229

Two interpretative positions have been understood, both of which hinge on whether the survivors see themselves as sinful, and whether the verse is a confession or a complaint. The first, and perhaps main, interpretation is that in 5:7 the present generation sees both the past and the present generation as sinful, and that the present generation, who locate themselves within the long succession of sinners,

228 Westermann, Lamentations, 211; Hillers, Lamentations, 161; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 140; Berlin, Lamentations, 116.
229 Berlin, Lamentations, 120.
acknowledge that they are being punished. This interpretation maintains a traditional retributive theology of just punishment for sins.\textsuperscript{230} Frequently, this reading is reinforced by considering both vv. 7 and 16 together.\textsuperscript{231} Thus Westermann argues that while v. 7 may attribute the causal sin to the fathers, taken together with v. 16, the community clearly acknowledges their own sin.\textsuperscript{232}

A second line of interpretation suggests that the present generation does not view themselves as sinners, and are thus being punished unjustly. Verse 7 thus contradicts v. 16. In this reading the principle of one generation paying for the sins of another (Exod 20:5; Jer 31:28-29) is voiced. Is this principle being accepted or rejected however? This decision rests on the translation of יְנָשָׁב, which can be translated as either “iniquities” or as “punishment.” Given that the current unit focuses on the plight of the survivors, it seems most probable that the reference is to the ongoing suffering of the community, and thus should be read as “punishment.”\textsuperscript{233} The verse, then, is not confessional, but is a continuation of the description of misery. Implicit in this reading is that there is an excess of suffering, a nuance perceived by Westermann, who states

\begin{quote}
The guilt of the forebears is properly acknowledged as a component of the lamenters’ own history. At the same time, they balk at the notion that they alone should bear the consequences of that guilt. Here we see a transformation of attitudes taking place. Those who have survived the catastrophe are no longer prepared to atone with their very existence for the sins of their forebears.\textsuperscript{234}
\end{quote}

Ezekiel 18; 33:10-20 and Jer 31:27-30 suggest that some people in the post-destruction community believed that they were being punished unjustly. Ezekiel 18:2 quotes an evidently well known proverb concerning the parents eating sour grapes and the children’s teeth being set on edge (so also Jer 31:29). The proverb points to the children suffering for their parent’s sins.\textsuperscript{235} Behind these references lies passages such as Exod 20:5; 34:7 and Num 14:18 which refer to sins being punished into

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{231}Norman K. Gottwald, \textit{Studies}, 67; Provan, \textit{Lamentations}, 128; Meek, \textit{Lamentations}, 36.
\textsuperscript{232}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}, 212.
\textsuperscript{234}Westermann, \textit{Lamentations}, 215. This statement by Westermann seems to contradict his overall reading of the chapter which collapses vv. 7 and 16 into one theological position (212).
\textsuperscript{235}Zimmerli, \textit{Ezekiel 1}, 377–78.
\end{flushright}
future generations. Ezekiel 18, 33:10-20 and Jer 31:27-30 refute this theology, arguing that each generation/individual is punished for their own sin, thus negating the possibility of unjust suffering and protecting the justice and righteousness of Yahweh. Read alongside Lam 5:7, these passages point beyond the text to the rhetorical environment of the period, reflecting one viewpoint concerning the destruction of the city. The refutation of this occurs in the prophetic texts cited. As will be seen, Lam 5:16 also presents a contradictory viewpoint as to the guilt of the community.236

In this reading, v. 7 is not a confessional reference to the causal guilt of the community for their plight. Rather, it is in line with the context of the unit and is a complaint about the extent of the community’s suffering. Taken with the references from Ezekiel and Jeremiah, Lam 5:7 is reflective of one viewpoint in the community, that they had suffered unjustly. The counter-argument, which is expressed in the three prophetic texts, finds its expression in 5:16, thus creating dialogic tension within Lam 5.

4.4.2.2 Lamentations 5:16

Lamentations 5:16 is a confession of sin which builds on the description of suffering throughout vv. 1-18. The confession stands in contrast to the protest of v. 7 in that it links the community’s sin with their current plight. Verse 16 stands in closer relationship to the prophetic viewpoint than does v. 7.

Following on from descriptions of the emotional bereavement of the
community (vv. 14-15) and a reference to the fallen state of the city (v. 16a),

v. 16b contains a cry of despair אֵלָּה אֵלָּה לֹא וָאַחֲרֵינוּ (Woe to us, for we have sinned). Within this confession lies an implicit link between the sin of the people and the current state of suffering. As has been seen elsewhere, the nature of the sin is not explained, and description of misery motifs return immediately.

As argued, this confession stands in contrast to the protest of v. 7. While it has been argued that the two can be held together as one, encompassing the overall attitude of the people (i.e. the people acknowledge both the sins of the past and present generations), it is preferable to hold the two viewpoints side by side, thus exemplifying the dialogic voices of Lamentations. This is captured by Dobbs-Allsopp, who acknowledges that polyvalent voices occur within Lamentations

Though the language of "sin" here (i.e. vv. 7 and 16) encourages us to hold the two notions together, their distinct local nuances and their detached spatial placement within the poem ultimately resist any attempt to collapse the discordant notes in these two conceptions. The poem’s outlook on sin, then, is fundamentally tensive. Sin is experienced within and beyond us, both mutually implicated but not reducible one to the other. Individual and communal responsibility before God is owned, but the felt reality of sin’s perennial "already-thereness" is strongly realized and even objected to.

In this reading of chapter 5, there is evident conflict between a sense of unjust punishment and the acceptance that sin played a causal role in the fate of the community. That this tension is unresolved clearly articulates different viewpoints, dramatically pointing to a dialogic tension within Lamentations.

4.4.3 Summary

The references to sin in Lam 3 and 5 continue to evoke associations with the prophetic literature, although do they so in a way which differs from the references in chapters 1, 2 and 4. Chapters 3 and 5 evoke other aspects of Israel’s traditions, such

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237 There is some debate as to the meaning of נַפְלָה הַגְּרוֹד רָאָשָׁנָה (the crown has fallen from our head). Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 147) argues it is a reference to the city walls, Berlin (Lamentations, 124) to the fallen honor of the city, and others still to festivity (Westermann, Lamentations, 215; Provan, Lamentations, 132).
238 Meek, Lamentations, 37; Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 67; Westermann, Lamentations, 215.
239 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 146. Italics original.
as the wisdom literature (Lam 3) and psalmic traditions (Lam 3 and 5). The associations with the prophetic traditions come through allusion to specific texts and/or concerns, such as the passing on of sins from one generation to the next as was seen in 5:7, or through the common understanding that the sin of the community is at the base of Yahweh's decision to act against the people (3:39, 42; 5:16).

In Lam 3, the sin motif is numerically dominated by references to divine responsibility and descriptions of misery. The first reference in 3:39 culminates the wisdom-like section of hopeful material which occurs in vv. 19-39. It is possible that the sins referred to in v. 39 are those listed in vv. 34-36, making this an unusually specific reference within the book. This being the case, the sins are understood as the causal basis for punishment, and in designating sins in the social domain do evoke the prophetic literature. Although a sense of hope is obtained in vv. 19-39, culminating with the recognition that the suffering is just punishment for sin, this hope is dashed in v. 42 with the bleak realization that despite community confession (v. 42a), Yahweh has failed to respond, and the suffering continues. In the larger scheme of the chapter the hope and the confession of sin are transitory and lead again into descriptions of misery and divine responsibility. While reference to the failure of repentance has some resemblance to Jer 14-15, that Lam 3:42-47 laments ongoing suffering in the aftermath of judgment highlights a fundamental difference in function between Lamentations and the prophetic literature. The final reference to sin in v. 64 expresses confidence that Yahweh will act in accordance with the sin of the enemy, thus sharing a common understanding of the relationship between sin and judgment that was present in the prophetic texts considered.

Finally, chapter 5 both evokes and stands in tension with aspects of the prophetic literature. In its entirety, Lam 5 stands closest to the psalms of lament, but in v. 7 evokes references in Ezek 18, 33:10-20 and Jer 31:27-30 concerning the sins of past generations being suffered by the present. That the three prophetic texts raise this issue suggests that it was an explanation for the fall being voiced within the community. In distinction to the prophetic texts, Lam 5 does not directly refute this
viewpoint, but rather allows the viewpoint to stand as part of the ongoing description of misery (v. 7), a viewpoint which is contrasted to the view of v. 16 which confesses the sin of the community. In this way Lam 5 both evokes, and stands in tension with aspects of the prophetic literature, a pattern evident throughout the whole book.

4.5 Conclusions: Sin and Judgment in Lamentations in Relation to the Prophetic Literature

It has been argued that the relationship in Lamentations with regard to sin and judgment is ambiguous, presenting both an orthodox view that sin was the cause of Yahweh’s punishing action against the city, and a contrasting view which questions the appropriateness and extent of the suffering. How, then, does Lamentations enter into a dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature with regard to sin and judgment?

That there is some commonality between Lamentations and the prophetic literature is evident. The analysis shows that all the texts considered share the viewpoint that Yahweh is sovereign over all the nations, has a plan for the nations, including Israel, and that history is the arena of Yahweh’s activity. This outlook is present in Lamentations without reserve. At no time does Lamentations question that Yahweh was responsible for Jerusalem’s plight. This is particularly evident in the divine responsibility units which name Yahweh as the agent of destruction. Even where human agency is mentioned (1:7, 1:10; 2:7, 22; 3:46, 52; 4:17-20), Yahweh holds ultimate responsibility.

As an extension of this divine responsibility, Lamentations allows no possibility that any other god/s may have been responsible for Jerusalem’s plight. Yahweh alone works in history. Lamentations never once explicitly mentions other gods, or raises the possibility that other gods may have been responsible for the city’s plight. Even where the possibility exists that some of the sin metaphors used refer to idolatry (e.g. Berlin’s interpretation of 1:8-9240), and thus point to the worship of

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240 Berlin, Lamentations, 50–51.
other gods, the references are at best oblique, and are only one possible reading. This theology is shared with the prophetic literature, however it is also true of the wider corpus of biblical Hebraic thought, and cannot be isolated to Lamentations and the prophetic literature alone.

Lamentations attributes the destruction to Yahweh, with divine agency far exceeding the references to human agency. This is similar to Micah, who places little emphasis on human armies in the picture of impending destruction. Prophetic books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah place more emphasis on the human agents working at the command of Yahweh. This emphasis on Yahweh’s actions points to the realization amongst the survivors that their fate came directly from Yahweh, and suggests that the enormity of the pain emerges not only from the physical reality of the destruction, but from the theological implication of what this meant in terms of the relationship between Yahweh and Yahweh’s people.

What cannot be argued, however, is that Lamentations accepts without question the prophetic viewpoint that sin was the cause of Jerusalem’s plight, and that Yahweh’s actions in punishing the city corresponded to the nature and extent of her sin. It cannot be denied that an orthodox view which links sin with Yahweh’s decision to act is expressed. It occurs most extensively in chapter 1 (vv. 5, 8-9, 14, 18, 20, 22) and is present in the other chapters (2:14; 3:39, 64; 4:13-15, 22; 5:16), and these references do evoke the prophetic literature. It is, however, a viewpoint which is held in tension with other viewpoints within the text.

This tension is expressed in several ways.

First, when considering the prophetic texts discussed, it can be argued that Lamentations stands closest to the book of Jeremiah in terms of the descriptions of Yahweh’s actions against the city/people. It was noted that within the Jeremian material there was an emphasis on the nature of the judgment and its impact, with the judgment described through graphic descriptions of military attack against the city. The graphic descriptions continue in Lamentations, however Lamentations takes these descriptions further. As was noted in chapters 2 and 3 above, there is an
emphasis on the suffering experienced by the city/people, and the references to suffering far exceed the references to sin. The sheer weight of the references to suffering, alongside the graphic detail concerning both Yahweh’s actions and the impact of those actions far exceeds that seen even within the texts from Jeremiah.

Second, the tension with the prophetic literature is directly expressed in those verses which question the extent of the suffering in relation to the sin. This occurs in 3:42, 4:6 and 5:7. These references to sin all voice complaint against Yahweh’s actions, suggesting that the divine response to sin was in excess.

A third way in which the tension is developed is through the lack of specificity in relation to the sin. This lack of specificity is very significant in Lamentations. With few exceptions (1:8-9 with its possible allusions to apostasy, 2:14 and 4:13-16 in relation to false prophets, and possibly 3:34-35) the references use only general terms for sin. While it can be argued, particularly in Lam1, that other intertextual links with the prophetic literature suggest that the sins listed there are those referred to in Lamentations, this in the end must be rejected. In conjunction with the protests of 3:42, 4:6 and 5:7, the lack of specificity suggests that uncertainty existed in the post-destruction community as to the link between sin and Yahweh’s actions. Even though it was prevalent in the prophetic literature considered - although less so in relation to other nations - what is absent in Lamentations is a sense of correspondence between sin and punishment, breaking open the relationship established in the prophetic literature. Neither is an act-consequence relationship strongly developed in Lamentations in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is appealed to concerning the enemy (1:22, 3:64; 4:22), and is present in 1:14 through the reference to Jerusalem being weighed down by the yoke of sin placed upon her, but is not otherwise understood to be operant in relation to Jerusalem. In this way Lamentations stands in tension with its prophetic antecedents.

When looking at the references to sin across the whole book, a pattern emerges. Lamentations 1 stands closer to the prophetic literature than the remaining chapters. More than half of the references to sin occur in this chapter, and the
orthodox view that the sin is the cause of Yahweh’s action is expressed, even to the extent of naming Yahweh as righteous (v. 18). That this is in line with the prophetic literature is immediately established through the personification of the city beginning in v. 1, and the naming of the destruction as a day of Yahweh by the city herself in v. 12. Even with this dominant expression, the understanding of the sin as the cause of the destruction is subtly subverted within this opening chapter. The sin of the city is not named specifically, thus shattering the sense of correspondence between sin and its consequences which is so prevalent in the prophetic literature. This lack of specificity in relation to sin stands in tension with the graphic images of pain and suffering, leaving the text’s audience unsure of the reason for such an extensive act of judgment.

The following chapters continue and intensify the tension introduced in chapter 1. Although Lam 2 opens with the destruction again referred to as a day of Yahweh, the references to sin all but disappear. In the day of Yahweh units (vv. 1-8, 20-22) there is no reference to sin, thus forming a significant deviation from the prophetic day of Yahweh texts considered. Only one reference to sin occurs in the entire chapter, and with this the focus on the sin of the city almost completely fades.

References to sin do occur in the final three chapters, but continue to be ambiguous, to the extent that opposing viewpoints to the orthodox one present in Lam 1 are expressed (3:42; 4:6; 5:7). The juxtaposition of the orthodox viewpoint with overt questioning of that viewpoint heightens and develops the tension present in the book’s opening chapter.

Finally, the very content and function of Lamentations places it in tension with the prophetic texts considered. The prophetic texts are, on the whole, judgment oracles, announcing the future, imminent action of Yahweh against the nation/s. Lamentations is written into and for the community on the other side of that judgment. Although sin is identified as one of the causes of the destruction, Lamentations grieves the destruction of the city. Lam 1 most strongly evokes the prophetic literature, particularly Jeremiah, and does portray the destruction as a
completed judgment. However, images of pain, suffering and destruction dominate the text, both numerically and in the richness and diversity of their expression, an expression which contrasts to the lack of specificity in relation to sin. The city is portrayed as a victim who has come close to, but survived death. In lamenting the city, she is portrayed with empathy and pity, and the images of her misery and pain dominate throughout. This pain, suffering, and the empathetic portrayal of the city work, against the attribution of sin to her and by her, breaking open the notion of correspondence between sin and judgment evident in the prophetic texts. The identification of sin is not the purpose of this text. Its purpose is to lament, and tension between the prophetic literature and Lamentations is evident.

In contrast to much scholarship, this reading of Lamentations does not privilege the references to the sin of the community over the more numerous references to pain and suffering. It recognizes their presence, but argues that they be given their proper weight in relation to the larger expression of the poetry. It also argues for the recognition that a struggle occurs within the text - between orthodox views of sin and judgment, and the protest against the pain and suffering endured - and in this way does not dismiss the importance of the expression of that suffering, or the struggle to understand what has happened.
Chapter 5
Lamentations as Dialogic Text

5.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters have demonstrated that Lamentations shares a number of themes and motifs with the prophetic literature. Lamentations makes extensive use of the personification of Jerusalem as female, a devise which is used elsewhere almost exclusively within the prophetic literature. In addition, it makes reference to the day of Yahweh, again a motif found elsewhere only in the prophetic literature, and also links the destruction of Jerusalem with the sins of the people and the activities of Yahweh in history. In its use of these common motifs Lamentations makes an intertextual link with these previous texts, a link which asks the audience to consider this new text, Lamentations, in light of the previous texts from the prophetic literature.

The analysis has also suggested, however, that when Lamentations makes use of these themes and motifs it does so in a way that suits the purposes of the new text, a purpose which is different from that of the prophetic texts to which it alludes. In taking up these themes and motifs, that is, in its double-voicing of the prophetic texts, Lamentations enters into a dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature. In entering into this relationship Lamentations does not necessarily adopt the prophetic viewpoint. Lamentations uses and transforms the prophetic motifs, at times asserting a prophetic viewpoint, but at other times subverting it. In addition, Lamentations draws the prophetic viewpoint into a dialogue with other viewpoints within the text. As readers/hearers of the text the audience is asked to consider Lamentations against the background of, and in dialogue with, the prophetic literature.
It was noted in the history of interpretation that Lamentations has resisted attempts to define the book by reducing it to simple monologic assertions.\(^1\) Inherent in the above assertion - that Lamentations draws the prophetic viewpoint into dialogic interaction - is that Lamentations cannot be viewed as a monologic text but is, in fact, polyphonic. That is, Lamentations contains more than one viewpoint, and those viewpoints within the text have not, and cannot, be harmonized into one. The polyphonic nature of Lamentations has been seen, to some extent, in the previous chapters. The discussion of the personification device in Lamentations suggested that different voices express different viewpoints within the text, and that there is variability in the portrayal of the catastrophe and its causes both within and across the chapters considered. When considering the references to sin in Lamentations, it was also evident that an orthodox viewpoint of the destruction as just punishment for sin was present within the book, but that that viewpoint was both questioned and subverted. This interaction of assertions and subversion was also seen in relation to the day of Yahweh references which both interpret the fall of Jerusalem as a day of Yahweh, but also implicitly question the appropriateness and extent of Yahweh's actions.

While the previous discussion has been limited to the personification of the city, references to the day of Yahweh and to sin and judgment, it remains now to draw the various insights together in order to explore in more detail how it is that Lamentations relates dialogically to the prophetic literature, and how this dialogic viewpoint itself forms part of the polyphonic tension of Lamentations. In exploring the polyphonic interaction of the text, it will be argued that Lamentations can be read as reflective of a rhetorical environment in which various and competing viewpoints were being voiced concerning the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem. As such, Lamentations is a language event which both enters into and reflects the dialogic tensions of its rhetorical environment. It is, of itself, open-ended and unfinalized; a dialogic event, not a

\(^{1}\)See chapter 1, pp. 8-30.
monologic statement.

In reviewing the analysis thus far, it is evident that large sections of Lamentations have remained undiscussed. So, for example, only small sections of chapter 3 have been covered (3:34-39, 40-41, 42-47, 64-66), and limited verses from chapter 5 (vv. 7, 16). In the discussion which follows, the full text of Lamentations will be considered. The aim of this discussion is to come to an understanding of how Lamentations develops as a polyphonic text.

In order to further explore both the dialogic interaction between Lamentations and the prophetic literature and the polyphony of the text, issues of voice, the interaction of themes, the interaction of theological traditions, and the open-endedness of Lamentations will be discussed.

5.1.1 Voice

One aspect of the polyphonic character of Lamentations is expressed through the variety of voices within the text. The presence of these voices paves the way for the expression of different viewpoints, thus developing polyphonic interaction. While it cannot be argued that any of the voices represent a developed character or personality, the very presence of the different voices provides a polyphonic scope which would have been unlikely had a single voice or persona been used throughout.

The presence of the different voices is one means through which different theological traditions and viewpoints are incorporated into Lamentations. The personified city is one of the primary voices within the book, and the inclusion of this figure forms an immediate intertextual link with the prophetic literature. As different voices emerge and re-emerge within Lamentations, they interact not only with the personified city but with the association of this figure with the prophetic literature. In the same way the personified city herself, with all her associations with the prophetic literature, interacts with the other voices within the text.
The number of different voices within Lamentations has been debated. W. Lanahan, for example, identifies the presence of five different voices (personae), including an objective reporter, the voice of Jerusalem, a defeated soldier (Lam 3), a bourgeois (Lam 4) and a choral voice. Provan identifies only three voices (the narrator, Zion, the people of Zion), while Weiss finds as many as six voices. Heim argues that the text reveals three major voices (the narrator, Jerusalem and the communal voice) and at least four minor voices (infants and babes, passersby, enemies, and xenophobic citizens of foreign nations).

Defining the number of voices within the text is of lesser importance than the recognition of their presence. After defining his concept of a persona - “a mask or characterization assumed by the poet as a medium through which he perceives and gives expression to his world” - Lanahan argues that:

The persona is not to be thought of as a fiction. It is a creative procedure in the displacement of the poet’s imagination beyond the limitations of his single viewpoint so that he may gain a manifold insight into the human experience. The poet’s manifold creative insight then becomes the ground by which the reader achieves a more powerful perception of the creative situation.

Important within Lanahan’s work is the recognition that the use of different persona within Lamentations allows for the expression of differing viewpoints.

Heim also considers the function of the different speaking voices within Lamentations. He argues that the personification of Jerusalem transforms the community into an interlocutor “who can perform different roles in the complex dialogue which dramatizes the bereavement of the survivors in Jerusalem.” In approaching Lamentations, Heim argues for the need to take each utterance within the
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²Lanahan, “Speaking Voice.”
⁴Heim, “Personification of Jerusalem,” 167.
⁷Heim, “Personification of Jerusalem.”
⁸Ibid., 144.
book on its own terms, thus "responding to the book's invitation to take part in the anguished debate of the Jerusalem community." According to Heim, Lamentations "reflects a community's desperate grasping for meaning as the world around it - and the political, social, and religious framework which gave this world meaning and purpose - has collapsed." Heim discusses Lamentations as a dialogue in which a series of utterances occur. While he does not define his understanding of "utterance" as such, his analysis considers grammatical speakers, changes in addressees and modifications of perspective and tone. Heim begins from the assumption that the utterances of Lamentations are "directed at different audiences within the textual world of the book. They convey different, and often competing messages, and they struggle for the readers' attention." He argues that Lamentations may be an intentionally polyphonic text "designed to reflect the historical situation of a community going through turmoil and crisis." Heim draws several key conclusions from his study which, while not framed consciously within a Bakhtinian analysis, do fit within this conceptual outlook. He states that the book of Lamentations:

does not simply record a fictional drama, but provides a paradigmatic dialogue which reflects the emotional reality of the inhabitants of the world it describes. The utterances of the different persona of Lamentations do not correspond to the author's own perspective. Rather, his own perspective is captured only in the individual narrator's utterances, and it is important to note how his perspective changes in the process of the dialogue. He does not dominate the other personae, for his voice is but one interactive contribution to the communal discourse. The voices of the other personae in the book are not silenced, but contribute to the understanding of the narrator and to the overall perspective of the book... It appears, then, that Lamentations is a consciously "open" text which gives multiple answers to complex questions related to Jerusalem's destruction.

This overview of Heim's study paves the way for a further consideration of the

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9 ibid., 146.
10 ibid.
11 ibid.
12 ibid.
13 ibid.
14 ibid., 169.
dialogic character of Lamentations as developed through the various voices within the text. In exploring the polyphony of Lamentations, evidence of dialogic interaction with the prophetic traditions will be considered.

5.1.2 The Interaction of Themes

A second means through which the polyphonic development of Lamentations can be considered is through the interaction of themes within and across the poems. As can be seen in the structure outlined in chapter 1, as the text unfolds, various themes emerge and re-emerge, and within these themes a variety of motifs occur, motifs which are used both within and across different thematic units. The interaction of themes and motifs gives rise to a sense of dynamic movement and interchange as new themes and motifs are juxtaposed against what has come before.

In the discussion which follows, the interplay of themes and motifs will be explored. These themes demonstrate both unity and interaction within Lamentations, an interaction which coincides, in part, with changes of voice and viewpoint. In Lam 1, for example, the narrator speaks primarily in description of misery units while Zion speaks in a divine responsibility unit. Within the speech of both voices, however, motifs belonging to the others’ concern are also used. The narrator introduces divine responsibility motifs into his speech (v. 5b), while Zion introduces descriptions of misery into hers (vv. 16, 19). The two speakers also interrupt each other’s speech introducing and reintroducing their own concerns. Interaction also occurs across chapters. Again by way of example, Lam 2 opens with a return to the speech of the narrator, however he now speaks within a divine responsibility unit, a theme which was the focus of Zion’s speech in Lam 1. The dialogic interaction also develops as new themes are introduced. This is most evident in Lam 3, which introduces wisdom-like

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15See chapter 1, pp. 63-73. See also the discussion on pp. 57-59 for a definition of theme and motif.
material different in both viewpoint and style from earlier themes. New themes and viewpoints, wherever they are introduced, must be read in the light of both the preceding and following material. As audience, the different thematic units must be read in conjunction with and weighed against other viewpoints.

In considering the interaction of themes within Lamentations, the discussion will focus on how different viewpoints are developed through the themes and motifs and, more specifically, how the viewpoints coincide or interact with the prophetic material as discussed in the previous chapters. It will become evident that some themes and motifs express the prophetic viewpoint, while others are more contrastive.

5.1.3 The Interaction of Traditions

Although it is the focus of the present study, the prophetic tradition is not the only tradition present within the dialogic interaction of Lamentations. Previous research has identified the presence of Deuteronomic elements within the book with a number of studies suggesting that there are close links between Lamentations and Deut 28.\footnote{Albrektson, Text and Theology, 215–39; Brandscheidt, Gotteszorn und Menschenlied, 202–35; Johnson, “Form and Message,” 59–60; Salters, Lamentations, 111.} Links with the wisdom tradition have also been noted,\footnote{Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 51; Westermann, Lamentations, 175–82; Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 494; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 119–22; Berlin, Lamentations, 92–94.} as have associations with Israel’s psalmic traditions.\footnote{See in particular Westermann, Lamentations and Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 465–505.}

Different traditions are incorporated in a number of different ways within Lamentations.

One means is through the use of motifs, language and concepts from the various traditions. This double-voicing was demonstrated with regard to the prophetic literature in the discussion of chapters 2-4 above. Similar double-voicing occurs, for example, in the wisdom-like units of chapter 3 (vv. 25-30, 34-39).
A second means through which other traditions can be recognized in Lamentations is through the inclusion of diverse generic elements within the book. As was outlined in the discussion of genre, Lamentations makes use of elements from a variety of forms within its poetry, thus drawing the text into association with those forms.\textsuperscript{19} These include forms common to the Psalter, such as the individual and communal lament forms, but also from more diverse genres such as the funeral dirge and the city-lament. As demonstrated by Linafelt, the inter-mixing of forms is integral to the meaning of Lamentations, and tracing their presence within and across the poems provides further insight into the polyphony of the text.\textsuperscript{20}

Although the traditions other than the prophetic tradition will not be dealt with in detail, their presence will be noted, particularly as viewpoints with which the prophetic tradition enters into a dialogic relationship. The presence of viewpoints from other traditions helps to form the dialogic character of Lamentations.

\textit{5.1.4 Lamentations as Open-Ended Text}

One of the features of dialogic truth noted by Bakhtin is its unfinalizability. The quality of unfinalizability implies that a text does not give the final word within a dialogue, but is open to future words.\textsuperscript{21} Two features of Lamentations point to this dialogic character.

First, the text, while polyphonic in itself, is also directed to another, silent voice. Lamentations addresses Yahweh, at times implicitly (1:1-6, 7-11; 2:1-8 etc), at other times explicitly (e.g. 1:9c, 11c, 20-21; 2:20-22; chapter 5), and yet Yahweh’s voice is absent throughout.\textsuperscript{22} The final verse of the book (5:22) points with great poignancy to

\textsuperscript{19}See chapter 1, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{20}Linafelt, \textit{Surviving Lamentations}, 37–38.
\textsuperscript{22}Gerstenberger (\textit{Lamentations}, 485–91, 495), in his discussion of 2:11-16 and 3:48-51, is the only commentator who suggests that the divine voice is heard within Lamentations.
the absence of a response from Yahweh, and leaves the audience questioning whether or not the end of the relationship between Jerusalem/Israel and Yahweh has really come. The text closes with doubt, but leaves open the possibility that there will be a future word from Yahweh.

Lamentations is also present within a larger body of work, the Hebrew bible, and in turn the canonical books of the Christian bible. As Tull has demonstrated, Lamentations exists in dialogic relationship with other material within the canon, specifically with Second Isaiah. This text makes conscious links with Lamentations, and within Second Isaiah the silent voice of Yahweh is finally heard.\textsuperscript{23}

Within the following discussion, the impact of divine silence will be noted where appropriate, however reference to interaction with future texts will not be addressed.

\section{5.2 Lamentations as Dialogic Text}

All these features work together within Lamentations to create its polyphonic character. The following discussion explores the dialogic and polyphonic flow of Lamentations, outlining how it is that different viewpoints, voices, themes and allusions to traditions work together to represent the profusion of thoughts, explanations and emotions that abounded in the Jerusalem community following the destruction of the city. In particular, emphasis will be placed on the dialogue which occurs with one of the explanations of the destruction, that which coincides with the prophetic traditions. It will be argued that while a prophetic viewpoint occurs within Lamentations, it has been reshaped and made to interact with other viewpoints, viewpoints which themselves have impacted on the prophetic voice within the book. Central to the discussion is the insight that Lamentations asks its audience to read and weigh the respective viewpoints against the others present, thus presenting a polyphonic rather than a monologic text.

\textsuperscript{23}Tull Willey, \textit{Remember the Former Things}.
Each chapter of the book will be discussed, briefly outlining its polyphonic portrayal. In addition, the movement of viewpoints across the chapters will also be discussed.

5.2.1 Lamentations 1

Lamentations 1 contains the speech of two personae: the narrator (vv. 1-6, 7-9b, 10-11b, 17) and personified Zion (vv. 9c, 11c, 12-16, 18-20, 21-22). Both voices speak of the destruction of the city, describing its present plight and its causes. The two voices, however, stress different aspects of the destruction, interacting with each other as the poem progresses. Strong links are made with the prophetic literature and, while there is a considerable degree of agreement with that literature, the prophetic viewpoint is also subverted.

The opening voice of Lamentations is that of the narrator, who describes the present state of the personified city (vv. 1-6) and explores something of the causes of her plight (vv. 7-11). In this initial description of the city, the narrator’s speech does present a viewpoint which coincides, on the whole, with that of the prophetic literature. Despite the strong allusion to the prophetic traditions, tension and discrepancy also occurs within the narrator’s discourse, tension which becomes increasingly evident in vv. 7-11 and particularly following Zion’s interjection in v. 9c. Dialogic interplay is thus established in the initial voice heard within the text.

The narrator’s opening speech is dominated by elements from the funeral dirge. Verse 1 opens with the cry יִזְדוּמָה, a cry which is repeated in 2:1 and 4:1 and is characteristic of the dirge. Throughout vv. 1-6 the narrator contrasts Zion’s past glory with her present state, describing her misery throughout. Elements of the dirge continue into the second speech (vv. 7-11), although the use of the contrast motif diminishes within those verses. However, this is not a “pure” representation of the dirge. There has
been no death. Although the narrator evokes the dirge, its subject - the city - is still living, a fact which is reinforced as Zion herself enters the dialogue (vv. 9c, 11c, 12-22). Nor do references to guilt and sin (vv. 5b, 8-9) belong within the dirge. Although the dirge is strongly represented in the narrator’s speech, his speech also reflects that this is a lament over the city.

Following the opening cry, v. 1 immediately evokes the prophetic literature through the personification of Jerusalem, directing the text’s audience to consider what follows in this light. Lying in the background are the texts from the pre-exilic prophetic literature which describe Jerusalem’s future downfall using female images. In this way various judgment oracles are called to mind, judgment oracles which frequently make use of the lament form or refer to lament behaviour. But it is here also that the first tension between Lamentations and the prophetic literature emerges. Within the prophetic literature, lament form is evoked, or lament behaviour described, in relation to the personified city in order to announce imminent and often inevitable judgment. Within Lamentations, however, lament form, along with elements from the funeral dirge and reference to lament behaviour (e.g. vv. 2, 4), are used to express sorrow and grief in the wake of the destruction of the city rather than to announce judgment. Although the narrator may perceive the disaster as realized judgment, as is suggested through the similarity in imagery and style with the prophetic literature, Lamentations belongs to a different rhetorical context. Where the prophets spoke of imminent judgment, Lamentations mourns realized disaster, a disaster which represents the death of the city and yet, paradoxically, in which life continues.

Although the narrator personifies the city in this opening unit, his primary concern is her role as the political and cultic center of the nation. Within vv. 1-6, the narrator intersperses reference to the personified nation (v. 3) amongst his references to the personified city. Even when referring to the city as female, many of the images suggest

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24 See also the discussions in Gottwald (Studies, 35–37) and Linfelt (Surviving Lamentations, 35–43).
her political role. She was great among the nations (v. 1), was a princess who is now a vassal (v. 1), she has lovers and friends who have abandoned her and become her enemies (v. 2), and her foes have become her masters (v. 5). The narrator also describes Zion mourning over her lost cultic function (v. 4). As will be seen, however, this view of the city differs markedly from the perspective on her suffering developed by the city herself.

The narrator's speech does, however, anticipate Zion's speech. In v. 5 he introduces a divine responsibility motif in which Yahweh is named as the one responsible for Zion's plight. In vv. 12-20, divine responsibility is the theme of Zion's speech and, by anticipating this theme, the narrator establishes an initial dialogic link between the two speakers.

Further aspects of vv. 1-6 evoke concerns familiar from the prophetic literature, suggesting that the narrator views the destruction of the city from the perspective of the prophetic tradition. Verse 2 makes reference to Zion's "lovers" (בֵּית) and, while it is not a strong allusion, the possibility that this is a reference to wrongful political allies is present.25 This possibility is reinforced by the reference to sin in v. 5 which attributes the destruction of the city to Yahweh who has acted in response to the sin of the city. Through the personification of the city, the reference to Zion's "lovers," and the naming of the destruction as punishment for sin, the text suggests that the narrator shares with the prophetic literature an understanding of the destruction of Jerusalem as an act of divine judgment.

Despite its strong evocation of the prophetic literature, vv. 1-6 create some tension with that literature. Within this unit the narrator talks only about Zion, not to her, establishing himself as an observer of the city and her plight. As an observer, however, the text suggests that the narrator has some empathy for the city. Firstly, his speech is a

description of misery, a theme more in line with the psalms of lament than the judgment oracles.26 Added to this, sympathy is portrayed through the description of Zion’s loneliness and widowhood (v. 1), her tears and lack of comforter (v. 2), and her mourning (v. 4). Even in v. 5, where reference is made to divine responsibility and sin, the surrounding lines present startling images which lead the reader to consider Zion as victim. Yahweh is said to have caused Zion to suffer (יִתְחַלֵל), and the plight of the children of the city is described in v. 5c. Even though the reference to sin suggests a causality in line with the prophetic literature, the portrayal of Zion as victim and the focus on the children establish this unit as one at odds with the judgment oracles. Through the use of imagery and descriptions which evoke empathy on behalf of the audience, the poetry sets itself in tension with the prophetic literature to which it alludes. Finally, the reference to sin is only brief, maintaining the focus on the suffering rather than the sin. Although it refers to the multitude of Zion’s sin (רָבָּב שְׁעֵר), no detail is given as to the nature of that sin. At this point there is little impact from the lack of specificity, however this builds as the unit progresses.

The narrator’s speech continues in vv. 7-11, however his focus changes. The unit centers on the causes of Zion’s plight, both in terms of the actions of the enemy against the city (vv. 7, 10), and in terms of Zion’s own actions (vv. 8-9). Descriptions of Zion’s misery continue throughout, and further reference is made to the sin of the city (vv. 8-9). While the prophetic literature continues to be evoked within these verses, the tension with that tradition develops further.

The narrator continues to talk about Zion in v. 7, describing Zion herself recalling her precious things from days of old (כְּלַם מַהוּרָו אֲשֶׁר יָדָה מִמֵּי קָרְם) alongside description of her downfall. Verses 8-9 shift to sin motifs, however these two verses are full of

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26Although identified earlier as an element of the funeral dirge, the description of misery has affinity with the complaint elements of the lament psalms. This is noted by Westermann (Lamentations, 117), although it must be noted that Westermann has a tendency to negate the importance of the dirge elements within Lamentations.
ambiguity and tension. Zion is portrayed as a despised and shamed woman, named as a sinner (מאת טמאת ירושלים v. 8a) and described in an array of sexually related images. Prophetic texts are evoked in the reference to Zion’s sin, and the images can be read in terms of Zion as harlot (Isa 1:21-26; Jer 13:20-27). However, the images also portray Zion as victim, and can be read as reference to sexual assault. Concepts of ritual impurity are also present. The ambiguity of meaning remains unresolved in these verses, however, the narrator’s reference to the lack of comforter for the city (v. 9) supports a more sympathetic reading of the text. The association of Zion as victim and the use of language to evoke sympathy again stand in tension with prophetic images of personified Zion’s imminent punishment as a form of judgment.

Again there is a lack of specificity in the reference to Zion’s sin within these verses. Although the infinitive absolute construction names the sin as grievous (האשה גזרה), the nature of the sin is not detailed. This is in marked contrast to Jeremiah 13:20-27 where the sexual humiliation of the city is portrayed as just punishment for her apostasy which is also described through sexual imagery. In a similar way Ezekiel 7:20-22 also describes the punished city through sexual imagery, and there too the apostasy of the city is named. In vv. 8-9 the sexual impropriety of the city is hinted at only, thus undermining the correspondence between sin and its consequences. Zion’s shame and degradation are elevated over the sin, further highlighting the tensive relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature.

The initial viewpoint of the narrator, which can be described as evoking a prophetic viewpoint, has, in past discussions, been a viewpoint given privileged position in interpreting Lamentations 1. This privileging has been supported through the belief that this persona provides an objective, and consequently “correct,” theological interpretation of events. As has been identified by Heim and C. Miller, however, the

27 Although not discussed here, Hosea 2 also portrays the punishment of a female figure in terms of sexual assault. There, however, the woman portrayed is representative of the land and nation.
28 O’Connor, Tears of the World, 22.
29 See C. Miller (“Reading Voices,” 394) for an overview of some of the ways the narrator’s position
narrator’s voice gives but one viewpoint of the destruction and, as has been argued here, that viewpoint is not without its tensions. Rather than being an objective observer who gives the “true” interpretation of Zion’s fate, the narrator must be understood as a literary construct, a persona or voice who interacts with other personae within the book. It is only in the recognition of the positionedness of the narrator that the dialogic nature of Lamentations can be fully explored.

Verse 9c introduces the voice of Zion for the first time, and the presence of this voice introduces a new, dialogic dimension. Zion interrupts the narrator’s speech in response to his description of her fallen, dishonored state and the absence of a comforter (vv. 7-9b). Zion addresses Yahweh, appealing to Yahweh to notice her affliction (יִתְחָרֶה) and the triumph of the enemy. The narrator’s speech has paved the way for the voice of Zion whose speech shifts reader focus from that of the narrator as an observer of the city, to that of the city as subject, the one who calls out to Yahweh in her distress. Zion’s position as victim and sufferer is now to the fore.

The narrator resumes his speech in v. 10. His speech, however, has been influenced by Zion’s interruption. The narrator continues to portray Jerusalem’s misery, again describing the action of the enemy against her (v. 10a). The language of assault continues, with the narrator describing the invasion of the temple by the nations (v. 10b) - a description which can also be read as a reference to the sexual assault of the city, thus reinforcing the sexual imagery of vv. 8-9. Within v. 10c, however, the narrator addresses Yahweh for the first time, influenced by Zion’s interjection in v. 9c. The

has been identified. For example, Dobbs-Allsopp (Weep, 33) calls the narrator “impartial,” Hillers (Lamentations, 79) and Lanahan (“Speaking Voice.”) call him “objective.”


31Although not dealing with Lamentations as such, B. Green (Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship, 49) identifies “that to assume narrator reliability, as though that voice were an unpositioned and non editing voice, seems wholly inadequate.” Drawing on the work of S. Vice, Green (p. 48) further states that “the narrator is an authorial construct, part of the artistry of the text, a voice to be reckoned with; it is not found as an impersonal and reliable reporter but as one of the voices performing in the text.”

32Dobbs-Allsopp and Linnefelt, “Rape of Zion.”

33So also Charles W. Miller, “Reading Voices,” 397-400 and Linnefelt, Surviving Lamentations, 39.
narrator's speech closes with a description of the people within the city affected by famine (v. 11a-b). Within this description the focus of the narrator's speech has shifted from a primary concern with the city as a political and cultic entity, to a focus on the everyday suffering of ordinary people in the wake of the destruction. In light of the references to Zion's sin, and her responsibility for her own plight (vv. 8-9), the images of Zion the sinner and Zion the victim are juxtaposed within the narrator's speech, creating tension in the reading of the text. This tension is evident throughout the opening two units, and emerges, at least in part, from the allusion to prophetic texts (with their emphasis on sin and judgment) within a text which laments Zion, describing her pain and suffering.

Zion interrupts the narrator a second time (v. 11c), again appealing to Yahweh, this time to notice her despised state (יהש). This appeal is followed by Zion's lengthy speech (vv. 12-16, 18-22) in which the plight of the city is described in intimate, first person speech. The dialogic character of this chapter, however, has already been established by Zion's interjection, and by the change of both addressee and focus within the narrator's speech in response to her interjection.

In contrast to the narrator, whose speech was dominated by elements of the funeral dirge, particularly in vv. 1-6, the speech of Zion is dominated by elements of the lament. The appeals for Yahweh to notice her suffering (vv. 9c, 11c, 20), and the concern with the fate of the enemy, are both familiar from the lament. In addition, the reference to divine responsibility is akin to the complaint against Yahweh. As suggested by Linafelt, in expressing lament, Zion's speech concerns life, and not death as would be conveyed through the dirge. "The lament addresses God and expects an answer."34 The paradox of Zion's being is thus captured in the relationship between the different genres evoked within the poem.

Zion's interjections (vv. 9c, 11c) introduce explicitly the possibility of Yahweh

34 Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 38.
entering into the dialogue, either through speech or action. And yet, in evoking the lament form, Yahweh’s presence has always been a possibility. Within v. 12, however, Zion addresses passersby, asking them to notice her suffering, suggesting that, at least for the present, Yahweh is unresponsive.

Verses 12-20 form a divine responsibility unit in which Zion gives a personal description of Yahweh’s actions against her. As city, Zion is embodied (vv. 13, 14, 16, 17, 20) which serves to introduce a sense of intense personal attack in Yahweh’s actions. The city as subject has shifted from an identity bound by her political and cultic function to an individual who has been overwhelmed and assaulted by a powerful enemy. The sense of personal assault potentially present through the narrator’s use of ambiguous sexual images (vv. 8-9, 10) is fleshed out and made real in the speech of Zion.

Although this is a divine responsibility unit, there is an increasing use of description of misery motifs in the latter verses (vv. 16-20). Their use, however, continues to emphasize the impact of Yahweh’s actions against the city. In voicing divine responsibility Zion echoes the narrator’s use of the motif in v. 5, although Zion’s concerns are more personal and reflective of her suffering as an individual, with her pain centering on the fact that it is Yahweh who has caused her to suffer.

Having addressed Yahweh in vv. 9c and 11c, and received no response, Zion addresses passersby in vv. 12-19, drawing the audience into the drama of her self description. Zion places emphasis on her physical and emotional suffering, describing herself as a wounded victim who is pleading for both notice and comfort. The audience’s stance in relation to that suffering is influenced by Zion’s mode of speech, and in this way she is portrayed more fully as a figure to be empathized with and pitied.

Despite the change in perspective, vv. 12-20 continue to allude to the prophetic literature. Through the personification itself, those prophetic texts which describe Zion as a woman crying out in pain or anguish are brought to mind, although Zion’s speech in Lamentations is much more sustained and detailed. In addition, Zion names her
destruction as a day of Yahweh (v. 12), again forming intertextual associations with the prophetic literature.

In evoking the prophetic literature Zion also subverts that literature. As discussed above, the prophetic day of Yahweh texts provide detail concerning the sins which resulted in the announcement of the day, specific references absent within Zion’s speech. Although she refers to her sin three times (vv. 14, 18, 20), identifying those sins as the reason for Yahweh’s action and thus echoing the narrator’s orthodox view in relation to the destruction, the nature of those sins is not specified, nor are they dwelt upon. Each time she names her sin Zion’s speech returns immediately to a description of the suffering Yahweh’s action caused her, with the references surrounded by images of Jerusalem’s portrayal of herself as an unconforted victim. Zion’s first person speech further destabilizes the association with the prophetic literature. Where the impact of the day of Yahweh is described in the prophetic literature it is generally in terms of the terror and/or anguish it evokes on those who experience the day, always in second person address or third person description. Zion describes the impact on herself as an individual, a presentation of personal affliction unique in Lamentations’ use of the day of Yahweh motif.

Zion’s speech also stands in contrast to that of the narrator. While the narrator’s speech was filled with references to the political downfall of the nation, the city’s cultic function, and her loss of purity, Zion’s emphasis is more on the personal impact of the destruction and the fate of groups within the city. This difference is emphasized in the interruption by the narrator in v. 17. The narrator reinforces some of Zion’s speech - her lack of comforter and her reaching out for consolation - but he also continues to voice his own concerns. Using divine responsibility motifs, the narrator describes the turning of Judah’s political allies against her and again makes mention of Zion’s lack of purity - concerns not mentioned at all by Zion. As a dialogic interaction, the concerns of the narrator and of Zion differ in chapter 1, the narrator focusing on Zion’s political and
cultic roles, Zion on her personal fate. These differing concerns are, arguably, facets which represent aspects of the community’s concern following Jerusalem’s destruction. The people suffered personal pain and anguish, and the political and cultic life of the city was destroyed.

Just as the narrator’s speech was influenced by Zion’s interjection in vv. 9c, so too is Zion’s speech affected by the narrator’s interjection. In language reminiscent of the prophetic focus on the just action of Yahweh, Zion declares that Yahweh was in the right (לא עתה) as she had rebelled (مفחרה) against Yahweh’s word (v. 18). Zion then describes the captivity of her young women and young men (v. 18c), the deception of her “lovers” (אמרה v. 19, also v. 2) and the fate of the political and cultic leaders (v. 19). Previously it had been the narrator who was concerned with political and cultic matters. Although Zion echoes the narrator’s concerns, she does so for her own purposes. Zion’s speech places more emphasis on the incomparability of her suffering (v. 18b) and the anguish and turmoil with which she suffers (v. 20). As noted by C. Miller, while the narrator’s use of these images comes from the perspective that the destruction is the consequence of Jerusalem’s sinful action, Zion uses the same images to emphasize her suffering.35

The unit closes with Zion again making an appeal for her suffering to be noticed, turning back to Yahweh (v. 20a). Having called out to Yahweh in vv. 9c and 11c, and having had no response, Zion turns to passersby in v. 12, and in v. 18 also calls out for the peoples (עם) to hear her cry and notice her suffering. Again, no response is forthcoming, and Zion re-turns to Yahweh. Zion’s initial speech ends where it opened, with Zion enduring unnoticed, comfortless suffering.

Zion’s voice continues into the future fate of the enemy unit in vv. 21-22, again both evoking and subverting the prophetic literature. Reference to the day of Yahweh and to the sin of both Zion and her enemies, references which evoke the prophetic

35Charles W. Miller, “Reading Voices,” 400.
literature, are surrounded by Zion’s description of her own misery and the absence of a comforter for her (v. 21a, 22c). Verse 21 opens with reference to Zion groaning but receiving no comfort, suffering compounded by her enemy’s pleasure at her downfall (v. 21b). Zion again identifies her destruction as a day of Yahweh, a day instituted by Yahweh because of her transgressions (v. 21b). Through the precative form, Zion implicitly wishes that such a day be brought against her enemies (v. 21c-22a). In the wish that Yahweh treat the enemy as she herself has been treated, an element of reproach and question as to Yahweh’s evenhandedness is introduced, a question which reinforces the impression gained from the lack of specificity in relation to the nature of Zion’s sin within this unit and throughout the chapter. Zion appeals to Yahweh on the basis of an act-consequence understanding, suggesting that Yahweh should act in order to bring to the enemy the consequence of their behaviour. Following the pattern of the chapter, Jerusalem does not dwell on her own sin, but closes the unit with further reference to her groans and the physical impact of her suffering (הלברמ my heart is faint). This final unit moves between the support of and the subversion of the prophetic traditions which it evokes. It stands in line with the prophetic traditions through the recourse to an act-consequence framework, and through naming the day as a day of Yahweh. In turn however, it also subverts that literature in its implicit questioning of Yahweh’s evenhandedness and the emphasis on the suffering.

Lamentations 1, then, can be read as a polyphonic text in which unmerged viewpoints stand in tension, viewpoints which strongly evoke the prophetic literature but also stand in tension with it. Two speakers are given voice: the narrator and personified Zion. These two speakers have different concerns. The narrator, while describing the plight of personified Zion, and doing so with some degree of empathy, is primarily concerned with her political and cultic function alongside concerns with the purity of the city. The narrator’s speech makes conscious allusion to prophetic texts through the personification of the city, and in the references to sin as being the cause of Zion’s
destruction. Zion interrupts the narrator’s speech to appeal to Yahweh to notice her suffering, an interruption which results in a shift of addressee and focus on behalf of the narrator. When Zion speaks, she is much more concerned with the personal reality of her own suffering and the suffering of the community within the city. Zion likewise alludes to the prophetic traditions through her reference to the day of Yahweh, through her self personification and through her naming sin as the cause of Yahweh’s action against her. Zion’s speech is also interrupted by the narrator, who reintroduces topics of cult, political entity and purity. Following the narrator’s interjection, Zion makes reference to cult and political leaders but does so to emphasize her suffering. Even when she voices the orthodox view of the narrator that her sin was the cause of her suffering, the reference is eclipsed by her immediate concern with her own suffering. Zion and the narrator discuss the same event, but do so from different perspectives, thus expressing different viewpoints. The two voices do, however, interact with each other, and in this way give voice to a dialogic interaction of viewpoints.

As argued, Lam 1 does draw itself into dialogic relationship with the prophetic literature. Of all the chapters in Lamentations, this chapter stands closest to the outlook of the prophetic tradition. Through the personification, the reference to the day of Yahweh and the presentation of the orthodox view that Jerusalem’s fate was caused by her sinful action, the audience is directed to consider Zion’s plight against the background of the prophetic literature. The text, however, stands in dialogic tension with that literature. It makes use of prophetic motifs but does so for its own purposes. The prophetic texts announce the future action of Yahweh or, at times, even describe past action, but nearly always do so for the purpose of announcing judgment. Lamentations addresses different needs within the community - the need to name and express pain and suffering. While the allusion to the prophetic literature implies that the pain and suffering is the result of Yahweh’s judgment, this is of lesser concern than the expression of that pain. The need is served by several features of the text. Although the
narrator’s speech stands closer to the prophetic view than does Zion’s, both speakers present the city’s plight with empathy. This empathy is seen through the narrator’s description of Zion’s mourning, and in the reference to the plight of the children and the famine in the city. The narrator emphasizes the absence of a comforter for the city, as does Zion herself. In addition, even in those verses which present Zion as impure (vv. 8-9, 17), ambiguity also points to Zion as victim, albeit not an innocent one. Although the prophetic literature uses images of the city as a suffering female figure, Lamentations pushes those images further, sustains them for longer, and makes them richer and more diverse, thus creating a figure who is a victim and to be pitied. Zion herself focuses on the personal and devastating suffering caused to her, further destabilizing the prophetic motifs. Finally, although Lamentations 1 names the sin of the city as the cause of her destruction, the sin is not specified, thus breaking open the sense of correspondence between sin and judgment usually present within the prophetic texts. The sin itself never becomes the center of attention, with both the narrator and Zion maintaining the expression of pain and suffering as the central concern of the chapter.

5.2.2 Lamentations 2

Lamentations 2 continues the dialogic interplay begun in chapter 1, with the voices of both the narrator and Zion again being heard. While Lam 2 shares common thematic units with Lam 1, both containing divine responsibility (1:12-20; 2:1-8) and description of misery (1:1-6, 7-11; 2:11-19, 20-22) units, the focus and the development of those thematic units varies from that seen in Lam 1. It is the narrator who now voices the divine responsibility theme, moving then to voice a description of misery (vv. 11-19) in which he addresses Zion for the first time and expresses his own grief over the fate of the city. Zion continues to call to Yahweh to notice her suffering, but her description of misery becomes more strident as she attempts to goad Yahweh into action (vv. 20-22).
While the prophetic literature continues to be evoked, there is a significantly diminished emphasis on sin as the cause of Zion’s fate.

In contrast to Lam 1, the intermixing of generic elements is less pronounced in Lam 2. As in 1:1, the poem opens with the אַלָץ cry (2:1), thus evoking the funeral dirge. Lament elements, however, predominate throughout. While Linafelt has identified the presence of the contrast motif in vv. 1-8 (vv. 1, 5), these are more implicit than explicit. In describing Yahweh throwing down the splendor of Israel from heaven (v. 1), or the laying in ruins of strongholds (v. 5), the former glory is implied not stated. In Lam 1, where the dirge is more strongly evoked, the contrast motif is also explicitly developed (vv. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6).

The narrator’s speech of vv. 1-8 opens the chapter. In response to Zion’s speech about divine responsibility in 1:12-20, the narrator now voices the divine responsibility theme but, in doing so, expresses his own concern. In contrast to Zion’s description of Yahweh’s personal attack against her, the narrator continues to be concerned with the political and cultic role of the city. Reference to the abandonment and/or destruction of the cult by Yahweh opens the unit (v. 1) and recurs in vv. 6-7. Multiple references are made to the physical destruction of Jerusalem, the nation and its leaders (vv. 2-5, 8). Although the narrator continues to use נֶב designation to name the city, thus maintaining her personification, there is minimal development of the figure within this unit, emphasizing her role as the capital and political center of the nation.

The prophetic literature continues to be both evoked and subverted. The destruction of Jerusalem is again named as a day of Yahweh (v. 1). The focus of vv. 1-8 is on Yahweh as warrior acting against the city and nation, suggestive of the holy war.

36 Westermann, Lamentations, 148; Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 42 Linafelt and Westermann both argue that vv. 1-10 (Westermann continues to v. 13) are a description of misery corresponding to an accusation against Yahweh. (although it is argued here that vv. 1-8 represent a divine responsibility unit, which maintains the complaint against Yahweh focus). Other features common to the lament include: the complaint against the enemy (vv. 15-16); the direct address to Yahweh (v. 20); the descriptions of misery throughout vv. 11-22.
imagery. A barrage of verbs is used to describe Yahweh’s actions, with the agency of the Babylonians all but absent within the unit, mentioned only in vv. 3 and 7 and even then Yahweh is described as having allowed the city/temple to fall into their hands. Divine responsibility and Yahweh as warrior are emphasized throughout. The anger and wrath of Yahweh are also stressed, with vv. 1-6 dominated by reference to the heat and intensity of Yahweh’s anger, references similar to the day of Yahweh references in Zeph 1:2-2:3.

Several facets of this description of divine action subvert the prophetic motif however. As discussed in chapter 3 above, there is an absence of reference to the reason for the day, with sin not mentioned in the chapter until v. 14, and even there it is only brief. This in itself breaks the pattern of the prophetic day of Yahweh texts. The tension with the prophetic predecessors is intensified through the concentrated focus on the actions of Yahweh. Each phrase begins with the action attributed to Yahweh and in this way the destructive force of Yahweh stays to the fore throughout the description. Within the unit only brief mention is made of lament behaviour (vv. 5, 8), once of the walls and ramparts. This intense focus on Yahweh’s actions initially suggests a sense of dispassion on behalf of the narrator, particularly when read in association with the minimization of the personification within the unit. The sense of emotional distance is broken open, however, in the sheer intensity of the description and the unrelenting focus on Yahweh’s destructive action in the absence of any causal explanation. As Zion is overwhelmed by Yahweh’s forceful destruction, so too is the audience. The intensity of the description is not even relieved by a description of the outcome of the day as evoking a positive turning of the people to Yahweh (Zeph 3; Ezek 7; 30:1-1937), as this prophetic element is also absent from Lam 2. As with Zion’s speech in1:12-20, the audience is left with a strong sense of Zion as Yahweh’s overpowered victim, a sense which totally subverts the prophetic notion of the day of

37See chapter 3, p. 185.
Yahweh as a day of Yahweh’s just response to the sins of the people.

The sense that the narrator’s speech expresses outrage at the treatment of Zion is confirmed in the following two units (vv. 9-10, 11-19).

Verses 9-10 form a transitional unit in which a shift in theme from divine responsibility to description of misery occurs. Verse 9 opens with ongoing description of the destruction of the city, but in v. 9b shifts to description of groups within the city. Initially the political and cultic leaders are the focus (v. 9b-c), described as abandoned by Yahweh, followed in v. 10 by references to the mourning of both the elders and the young girls, thus encompassing the whole spectrum of society.

In vv.11-19, a description of misery unit, the narrator is transformed from an observer of the city’s plight to a participant in her suffering. In v. 11, the narrator, for the first time, assumes the same attitude to the destruction as does Zion, describing his own weeping and turmoil over the devastation. Verses 11-12 make reference to the distress of children and infants. Previous mention of children has been made by both the narrator (1:5) and Zion (1:16), with this reference standing closer to the speech of Zion than to previous speech by the narrator. In 1:5 the narrator’s reference to the children concerned their exile, a reference in line with his reporting of the downfall of city and nation. In 2:11-12 the narrator describes the cries of the children due to the famine and their subsequent starvation, which stands in line with Zion’s reference in 1:16. This further reinforces the shift to Zion’s perspective by the narrator.

In vv. 13-19 the narrator addresses Zion for the first time, further acknowledging her concerns and perspective. Verse 13 is pivotal, with the narrator acknowledging the incomparability of Zion’s suffering, seeking, but failing, to offer her comfort. Verses 14-17 reinforce the impossibility of comfort for Zion. The prophets are excluded from the

38 Although the narrator’s speech here stands close to the speech of Zion, there is no indication of a change of speaker within these verses, particularly as the city is referred to using the designation. Only Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 487) questions the voice here, arguing that vv. 11-16 represent a divine lament.
role of comforter due to their failure to expose Zion's iniquity and because of the falseness of their visions. This reference echoes concerns with false prophecy in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Verse 15 describes the mockery of the passersby, v. 16 the gloating of the enemy, while v. 17 announces that it was Yahweh who caused Zion's downfall. Despite effectively disqualifying Yahweh as a comforter for the city given the divine responsibility for the destruction, in vv. 18-19 the narrator calls on Zion to cry again to Yahweh. Despite Yahweh's responsibility and ongoing silence, it is only in a response from Yahweh that comfort is possible for the distraught city. The paradox of Zion's situation is thus captured.

Chapter 2 closes with a brief speech by Zion who returns to appeal to Yahweh to notice her plight (vv. 20-22). This appeal can be seen as a dialogic response to the speech of the narrator in vv. 12-19, who excludes groups of potential comforters/healers for Zion - the prophets, passersby, and even Yahweh - and yet, having dismissed Yahweh, also extols Zion to turn again to Yahweh. Throughout Lam 1 and 2, Zion alternates between turning to Yahweh (1:9c, 11c, 20; 2:20) and away from Yahweh (1:12-19) in her attempt to have her suffering noticed. In 2:20 she repeats the imperative ראה, and reminds Yahweh of their past relationship (Look, Yahweh, and consider! To whom have you done this?). In an effort to goad Yahweh into responding, Zion describes the extreme suffering within the city, making special mention of the cannibalism of the mothers (v. 20), a reference which echoes but also intensifies the previous mention of the plight of the children (1:5, 16; 2:11-12). Zion then draws together the concerns of the entire chapter, accusing Yahweh of not only forgetting but also of mistreating various groups within the city. She includes reference to the religious leadership (v. 20), thus picking up the narrator's focus. Reinforcing her speech in 1:12-20, 21-22 and the narrator's speech in 2:1-8, Zion again names her destruction a day of Yahweh, and in her use of sacrificial imagery (vv. 21-22) alludes to the day of Yahweh material in Zephaniah 1:7-9. Although this final speech is directed at Yahweh, Yahweh
remains silent.

The tension filled relationship with the prophetic literature continues within this chapter. Links with the prophetic traditions are continued through the ongoing personification of the city. The less developed personification of vv. 1-8 echoes similar descriptions of the city which use נַחֲלָה titles from the prophetic literature, while the more developed descriptions in vv. 10-22 resound with other prophetic descriptions of the suffering city. Reference to false prophets in 2:14 echoes the false prophecy texts of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, suggesting that within the rhetorical community of the text the deception of the false prophets was identified as a possible cause of city’s suffering. The naming of the day as a day of Yahweh, and the close association with imagery from Zeph 1:2-2:3, place this interpretation of the day within a prophetic understanding.

But other elements subvert these associations. The absence of any reference to sin within either of the day of Yahweh units (vv. 1-8, 22-21) is a marked contrast to those prophetic day of Yahweh texts in which Jerusalem/Israel is the target. The accumulation of verbs describing the extremity of Yahweh’s actions against the city barrage and overwhelm the reader, creating a sense of the victimization of the city. In the shift in the narrator’s position from distant observer of the city to fellow sufferer, and through the ongoing description of the intense suffering of the city, culminating as it does with the description of mothers eating their own children, the prophetic sense of just punishment which corresponds to the sin is lost. Unlike the prophetic texts where Zion is cast in the role of the deserving recipient of Yahweh’s anger, Jerusalem is transformed into a battered and overwhelmed victim of divine wrath.

The polyphony commenced in Lam 1 continues in Lam 2. The narrator and Zion express their own concerns, and reflect on the destruction from their individual perspectives. Although presenting their own viewpoint, the speech of both personae is influenced by the speech of the other. Within chapter 2, the narrator’s speech shows the greater impact of the speech of the other. The narrator opens the unit with divine
responsibility, a concern primarily Zion's in chapter 1. His focus moves away from the presentation of Yahweh as the righteous one who acts in response to sin, to a portrayal of Yahweh as an overwhelming destructive force, destroying the victim - Zion. The narrator moves from his position of observer of the suffering city, to fellow sufferer, expressing his own grief alongside that of Zion. Zion's perspective of herself as victim does not change but the narrator increasingly recognizes the city in this role, thus subverting the prophetic traditions evoked within the chapter and drawing the audience deeper into the experience of pathos for the city.

5.2.3 Lamentations 3

Chapter 3 of Lamentations is a diverse and complex chapter. It introduces new voices, themes and traditions into the book and in doing so introduces disparate viewpoints into the dialogic interaction. The intertextual links with the prophetic literature become less overt: the personification of the city as female all but disappears, with only one ambiguous use of נְתֵנִי צְדֵי occurring in v. 48; the day of Yahweh motif is absent; and only three references to sin occur. The chapter does, however, form links with other traditions such as the Psalms and wisdom literature.

One of the complexities of this chapter is its mixture of genre and voice. The chapter opens in the first person voice of a male figure (חֲרֵב) who, in a divine responsibility unit which is reminiscent of the psalms of lament, describes his personal (mis)treatment at the hand of Yahweh (vv. 1-18). Verses 19-39 continue in the first person voice, but introduce new and seemingly disparate themes. Two expressions of confidence in Yahweh, also familiar from the lament form, (vv. 19-24, 31-33) are interspersed with wisdom-like material (vv. 25-30, 34-39), expressing more hope than seen elsewhere within Lamentations. In both form and content, these verses stand in acute tension with the remainder of the book. Verses 40-41, 42-47 present a shift in both
voice and theme. Incorporating elements of the communal lament form, vv. 40-41 contain a call to worship in the first person plural voice, followed by a divine responsibility unit in the voice of the community (vv. 42-47). Finally, vv. 48-64 return to first person singular speech, drawing again on the individual lament form. The relationship of this voice to the earlier first person voice within the chapter is, however, ambiguous.

This mixture of voices and genre has proved problematic for scholarship, with various lines of argument having developed in an attempt to account for the diversity of material within the chapter. The discussion centers broadly around issues of unity and the identity of the voices within the text.

First, with regard to the issue of unity, one means of accounting for the differences in generic forms within the chapter, particularly if the movement between the individual and communal voice is understood as movement between the individual and communal lament forms, is to see the chapter as composite. This line of argument is developed by Westermann, who argues that a compiler has brought together originally independent psalm material (vv. 1-25 with vv. 64-66 as a fragmentary conclusion; vv. 42-52 and 53-58) and woven them together with two separate expansions (the didactic expansion of vv. 26-41, and vv. 59-63). The acrostic form holds the poem together, the units woven so carefully that "the independent literary seams can hardly be recognized."

Several features of the text, however, speak for its unity, particularly the intensified acrostic form in which each line in groups of three uses its respective alphabetic letter. Although several changes of voice and point of view occur within the poem, these changes do not coincide with the alphabetic stanzas, further suggesting

39 Although vv. 40-41 are in lcp voice, the flow of the text would suggest that these verses are spoken by the man who turns to the audience, calling them to confession.
40 A full history of the interpretation of chapter 3 will not be provided here as the details go beyond what is necessary for current purposes.
41 Westermann, Lamentations, 168-69.
42 Westermann, Lamentations, 191. Gerstenberger (Lamentations, 496) also raises the possibility that independent units of material may have been brought together in Lam 3.
compositional unity. In light of these features, there is merit in considering the poem as a structural unit, recognizing the generic shifts across the chapter as an inherent component of the text. As such, Lam 3 continues the polyphonic interplay identified in Lam 1 and 2.

A second area of debate concerns the number and identity of the voices within the chapter.

In what can arguably be seen as an attempt to produce a monologic reading of the chapter, attempts have been made to read the text as the product of one voice, either that of an individual male figure or that of the community.

A number of commentators argue that the first person speech of vv. 1-39, 48-66 should be read as continuous with the communal voice of vv. 40-47. As such, the man, introduced in v. 1, is understood as the representative voice of the community. This position is captured by Eissfeldt, who states:

In spite of the fact that the poem is in large measure in the form of the individual song of lamentation, there ought never have been any doubt that it was composed from the first with reference to the disaster to Jerusalem. Even the fact that it begins I am the man, whereas elsewhere Jerusalem is normally referred to in the feminine as the city, does not provide an argument against this. For on the one hand the change over to "We" (vv. 40-47) can only be understood if the poet had from the outset a plural entity in mind, Jerusalem or Judah, and on the other hand, the placing of the third poem with the others which clearly apply to the disaster to Jerusalem.

There are, however, difficulties with this line of argument. The continuity of voice between the feminine voice of Lam 1 and 2 and the masculine voice of Lam 3 is difficult to maintain given the strong and intentional gendering of both figures. In addition, this male figure clearly stands separate from the community, as is evident in v. 14 where the

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43 Berlin, Lamentations, 85; O’Connor, Tears of the World, 46.
46 Eissfeldt, Introduction, 503. Italics original.
man talks of having become the laughing stock of all "my people" (חּֽוֹרֵף).

A second argument, which also attempts to reduce the polyphony of chapter 3, is that the voice is that of the male figure throughout. Within this understanding the first person plural speech in vv. 40-47 is understood to be spoken by the man, with his speech expanding to become inclusive of the wider community. As such, the change to plural voice is a rhetorical device aimed at drawing the audience into the speech.47

While both these arguments have the merit of treating Lam 3 as a unified text, they do reduce its polyphony, a move which is unmerited given the interplay of voices within Lam 1 and 2. More true to the text is the recognition that a new voice, whose presence is anticipated by the shift to the plural voice in the speech of the man in vv. 40-41, is introduced into the text in vv. 42-47. As suggested by O’Connor, who argues that the initial male voice is that of a "strongman," the community voice is a separate one, "joining the strongman in confession and lament (3:40-47), as if the people had been listening, and, at his invitation, step into the poetry."48 This reading is in keeping with the dialogic pattern evident in Lam 1 and 2. The community voice is present, giving expression to the suffering from a different perspective. This voice stands in contrast to the male voice as is evident by the change of content within these verses. The male has reached a point where he advocates patient waiting on Yahweh in times of suffering, and counsels against lamenting. The community then gives rise to further lament, thus contradicting the position gained by the man. In recognizing this dialogic interaction, the tension in content takes meaning.

Various suggestions have been put forward as to the actual identity of the man:
Jeremiah - not as author but as intended speaker;49 King Jehoiachim;50 King Zedekiah;51

47See, for example, Provan, Lamentations, 100–01; Berlin, Lamentations, 95; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 105–09. Dobbs-Allsopp’s insistence on a single voice throughout chapter 3 is a surprising anomaly in a commentary which otherwise values the multivoiced nature of Lamentations. His decisions concerning voice are influenced by his identification of the man introduced in 3:1 as an "Everyman," a paradigmatic sufferer of the post-destruction community.
48O’Connor, Tears of the World, 44–45.
49Rudolph, Die Klagelieder, 227–45; Meek, Lamentations, 23; Norman K. Gottwald, Studies, 74; Berlin, Lamentations, 32.
a veteran soldier of the siege;\textsuperscript{52} the voice of the narrator who identifies closely with the city;\textsuperscript{53} or a non-specified “pious” figure.\textsuperscript{54} Hillers, followed by Dobbs-Allsopp, suggests that the speaker represents an “Everyman,” who is not a specific historical figure, but represents anyone who has suffered greatly.\textsuperscript{55} O’Connor identifies the man as a “strongman,” a male who is unable to fulfill his role as a defender of women, children, and other non-combatants, as he himself is a captive.\textsuperscript{56} Finally, Berlin argues that the voice in chapter 3 is the personified voice of the exile. This voice stands in contrast to that of Zion, echoing the experience of the destruction from a different perspective than those who remain in the city.\textsuperscript{57}

The actual identity of the voice is less important than the perspective on the suffering it brings. It will be argued below that this voice presents a new and different perspective. Through the expression of confidence and wisdom-like units in vv. 19-39 this voice is able to reach a position of hope. The community responds to this hope, voicing a renewed lament which focuses again on the divine responsibility for the suffering (vv. 42-47). In turn, a singular voice introduces further description of misery (vv. 48-54), followed by a unit concerning the future fate of the enemy (vv. 55-66). Whether or not this speaker is the same as the initial speaker of vv. 1-18 remains to be explored.

Chapter 3 opens with an extended divine responsibility unit (vv. 1-18) in which the voice of a male figure is heard. The language within this unit is reminiscent of the psalms of lament.\textsuperscript{58}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{50}] Porteous, cited Salters, \textit{Lamentations}, 105.
  \item[\textsuperscript{51}] Saebo, “Who is ‘the Man?’,” 301–04.
  \item[\textsuperscript{52}] Lanahan, “Speaking Voice,” 45–56.
  \item[\textsuperscript{53}] Provan, \textit{Lamentations}, 81.
  \item[\textsuperscript{54}] Brandscheidt, \textit{Gotteszorn und Menschenlied}, 350. So also Kraus (cited Saebo, “Who is ‘the Man?’,” 229).
  \item[\textsuperscript{55}] Hillers, \textit{Lamentations}, 122; Dobbs-Allsopp, \textit{Lamentations}, 106–09.
  \item[\textsuperscript{56}] O’Connor, \textit{Tears of the World}, 44.
  \item[\textsuperscript{57}] Berlin, \textit{Lamentations}, 84–85.
The emphasis of this unit differs from the divine responsibility units examined so far (1:12-20; 2:1-8) which concerned the personified city. 2:1-8 contains a third person description of Yahweh’s actions against the city, focussing on its role as political and cultic center. 3:1-18 concerns Yahweh’s action against an individual figure, and, like 1:12-20, is in first person voice. Unlike 1:12-20 however, there is no indication that the voice in 3:1-18 in any way represents the city. There is no movement between reference to the city and reference to groups of people within the city, nor are there any references to aspects of the physical city such as walls and ramparts. Rather, this voice at all times describes the suffering of an individual rather than a metaphorical representation of the city.

That this is a male voice is emphasized in the opening verse in which the speaker introduces himself (אֲנִי הַמָּרְדָּכָע יִדְעָה עֵנֶנִי) I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath). This direct introduction intentionally sets this voice apart from the previous speakers of Lam 1 and 2. The use of נְכֵר also genders this voice. He is male, and is recalling his suffering as an intentionally gendered figure. His maleness sets him apart from Zion, who is also intentionally gendered as female. As a male figure, the images used to describe Yahweh’s affliction are associated with more masculine imagery than those of Zion, “invoking the physical violence against the male body associated with war and exile.” Reference is made to Yahweh imprisoning the man (vv. 4-9) and Yahweh as a hunter (vv. 10-13), of the man being shot with arrows (vv. 12-13), walled in/imprisoned (vv. 7, 9). The man describes the relentlessness of Yahweh’s pursuit (vv. 2-3) and the affliction of both body (vv. 4-6) and spirit (vv. 5, 11, 14-18). Like Zion, this is a very embodied figure (vv. 4, 13, 16) who has suffered great individual affliction against all aspects of his person. The end result is the loss of all

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am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his fury. He led me on and made me walk in darkness instead of light... In dark places he makes me dwell, like the ones dead long ago... He has walled up my ways with hewn stones. He has twisted my paths.” So also Berlin, Lamentations, 86.
59 Berlin, Lamentations, 84–85.
hope and happiness (vv. 17-18). These final verses introduce description of misery motifs, motifs continuous with, and representative of, the outcome of Yahweh’s treatment of the man.

Yahweh is not explicitly identified as the actor until v. 18 (וַאֲמַר אֵצֶר נָרְצוּתַהּ). In vv. 1-17, the one who performs the actions is simply identified as the male agent of the verbs. As suggested by Dobbs-Allsopp, this has the effect of “decentering God from this portion of the poem and focusing instead on the ‘I’ of the speaker and his hurt.”61 Given the presence of this poem amongst the remainder of the book, however, the reader is left in no doubt that it is Yahweh who acts.

In contrast to Zion’s divine responsibility speech of 1:12-20, the man in 3:1-18 makes no reference to sin as the cause of Yahweh’s actions against him, nor does he overtly call on Yahweh or others to notice his suffering. Zion sought comfort and recognition of her suffering (vv. 12, 16, 18, 20), a need also reflected in the speech of the narrator about Zion (1:1-6, 7-11, 17; 2:11-19). In the absence of reference to sin, 3:1-18 stands closer to the narrator’s divine responsibility speech of 2:1-8, although in the highly personal account of the suffering 3:1-18 and 2:1-8 are sharply contrasted. Although the man’s speech is not overtly directed towards another, in the larger context of the chapter the speech creates the scene into which the theodicy of vv. 19-39 is articulated.

The speech of the man, then, differs from that of Zion and the narrator. In introducing this new persona, the text is able to present a yet different viewpoint on suffering. This viewpoint is distinctly masculine, and while not overtly linked to the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, is clearly concerned with great affliction and strife.62 The man recalls his suffering, with the final verses recounting the

60 The nuances of this verse are more varied than suggested by the NRSV. As outlined by Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 116), the יַד can convey both source and the cause, with the translation “So I say, my lasting hope has perished because of the Lord” more fully representing what has been detailed in the preceding verses.
61 Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 110.
62 Given the images of pursuit and imprisonment, a setting in the period following the destruction is
man’s loss of peace, happiness and hope (vv. 17-18). In the verses which follow, however, the man moves beyond the recollection of suffering in an attempt to explain or resolve the suffering. In doing so, he introduces wisdom-like themes, woven together with references to the causality of sin. The divine responsibility lament of vv. 1-18 becomes the background of, and the reason for, this theodicy.

Verses 19-39 evoke Israel’s wisdom traditions far more strongly than they do the prophetic traditions, particularly given the reflection on the nature of Yahweh (vv. 22-24, 34-39) and the correct stance to be taken before Yahweh in the face of suffering (vv. 25-30). Psalm traditions are also evoked in the expressions of confidence (vv. 19-24, 31-33). Some affinity with a prophetic outlook can, however, be identified in vv. 34-39. The inclusion of the expressions of confidence and the wisdom-like material introduces an element of hope which is otherwise absent in Lamentations, and is, in many ways, a counter view to the remainder of the book. It is this opposing theology of hope which has frequently been privileged in discussions of the intent and theology of Lamentations, however it must be recognized that this hope is but one viewpoint among the many expressed within the book.

In vv. 19-24 a transition occurs in the man’s speech as he moves from a divine responsibility theme to an expression of confidence in Yahweh. In its movement from ongoing expression of suffering (vv. 19-20) to the possibility of hope (v. 21-24), the way is paved for the wisdom-like material which follows. The transitional nature of this unit also insures that the continuity of voice between vv. 1-18 and 25-39 is recognized.

In its transitional function, vv. 19-24 look backwards to what has come before, and forwards to the hope in the following verses. In vv. 19-20 the man recalls (ותקן) what has come before; his suffering. Verse 20 echoes v. 17, both of which make mention of the man’s soul (נפש): in v. 17 the soul is bereft of peace, and in v. 20 it is bowed down

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not implausible (Contra Westermann [Lamentations, 193]).
63There is some debate as to the translation of this verse. While the verb רכש is frequently translated as 3fs passive, in MT it is either 2ps masculine or 3fs qal. Provan (Lamentations, 89) and Albrektson (Text and Theology, 138) both read as the 2ps masculine translating “you have rejected my soul from
Verse 21 marks a turning point, and hope is mentioned for the first time. While NRSV opens v. 21 with a contrastive "but," this is absent in MT, leaving the verse a bald statement "this I call to mind and therefore I have hope." The source of the man's hope lies in the recollection of Yahweh's attributes of steadfast love (תבש), mercy (רחם) and faithfulness (אמונה), attributes which are constant. The expression of confidence belongs to the psalm traditions and is thus continuous with the opening unit. In the introduction of elements of hope, however, these verses also anticipate the wisdom-like material which follows.\(^{64}\) Verse 24, with its reference to Yahweh as המקנה (portion), draws on the tradition of Num 18:20, where the people are said to have received allotments in the land, but not the priests for whom Yahweh was their portion. In referring to Yahweh as המקנה, the speaker is affirming his dependence upon Yahweh, even in the face of all other supports of life having failed.\(^{65}\) Reference is again made to the soul (נפש νν, 17, 20), highlighting the transition in the man's position.

The verses which follow (νν. 25-39) introduce a new viewpoint into the dialogue, providing a theodic outworking in which the man uses wisdom-like language and concepts to both account for (his) suffering and to expound the proper attitude towards suffering. It is these verses which stand in greatest contrast to the remainder of both chapter and book. Although contrastive in its attitude, the man's recollection of his suffering provides the basis for the theodicy which follows.

Verses 25-30 continue to define attributes of Yahweh, who is good to those who wait for him and to the soul (again נשפ) that seeks him.\(^{66}\) The following five verses all

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\(^{64}\) Berlin (Lamentations, 93) and Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 118) suggest that these verses form links with the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7).

\(^{65}\) Hillers, Lamentations, 128–29; Provan, Lamentations, 94; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 118; Berlin, Lamentations, 93–94.

\(^{66}\) In MT v. 26 reads literally "good, and waiting and silently for the salvation of Yahweh." While some debate exists as to the precise way to translate this line (see Albrektson, Text and Theology, 147–48; Provan, Lamentations, 95; Hillers, Lamentations, 110, 115), the line advocates the
counsel patient waiting on Yahweh and the adoption of an attitude of humility. This new stance adopted by the man is in contrast to his initial vehement and lengthy complaint against Yahweh. As the text reads, the man has moved from a contemplation and recollection of his own suffering, to a reasoned reflection on that suffering, a reflection that resonates with Israel’s wisdom traditions. As such, the man constructs a theodicy as a means of moving beyond the experience of suffering, attempting to distill a sense of hope. The wisdom-like qualities of this speech are reflected in the didactic tone, instructing those who listen on the proper way to behave in the face of suffering. The man’s more inclusive and expansive references to “those” who wait (לךצ) for him alongside other third person references which contrast with the intimate first person speech of vv. 1-18, contribute to the wisdom-like tone.

As an expression of the dialogic character of Lamentations, it is significant that the man’s thought develops and changes within the chapter. The text presents a dynamic and multifaceted collage of viewpoints on the suffering, with the hope of the man being one of those expressions. The man’s movement between despair and hope reflects one aspect of the rhetoric surrounding the destruction of the city, with the fleeting nature of the hope also true to the nature of grief and despair.

Verses 31-33 return to the expression of confidence in Yahweh. Within this unit the ongoing nature of the suffering is acknowledged, with reference made to Yahweh not rejecting forever (כי לא י_ARROW אלולמת אופני) v. 31) alongside reference to Yahweh causing grief (כי לא מאל מענה) v. 32). The references are counterbalanced by confidence in Yahweh’s compassion (רחם) and steadfast love (חסד), and the belief that Yahweh does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone (כי לא ע玖ヴァיパーナה ביני איש) v. 33). This viewpoint forms a sharp contrast to the divine responsibility units of both the man himself (vv. 1-

endurance of suffering in silence.

67Dobbs-Allsopp (Lamentations, 120), for example, argues that the call to wait patiently on Yahweh shares the basic outlook of the friends in Job (followed by Berlin Lamentations, 92–93).

68Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 122.

18), of Zion (1:12-20) and the narrator (2:1-8), particularly the intentionality implied by the narrator in 2:8.

Verses 34-39 form the final unit within this section. Again, wisdom-like language is apparent in the description of Yahweh’s omniscience and omnipotence (vv. 36-38). The unit culminates in v. 39, with its declaration of the futility of complaint in the face of the punishment of sins (נוש). If, as was argued in chapter 4, the description of oppression in vv. 34-35 are the sins indicted in v. 39, links with the prophetic traditions are formed within this unit.\textsuperscript{70} The suffering described becomes the just punishment for sin, a theological understanding within the prophetic literature, although not exclusive to that literature, it being present in other strands such as Dtr and wisdom traditions.

While there is distinct hope within the man’s speech, and the possibility of leaving behind grief and suffering, the dialogue of Lamentations does not conclude at this point. The hope is only temporary as vv. 42-66 return to lament and focus once more on the suffering endured. In the larger scheme of the chapter and the book, the hope-filled theodicy developed by the man is fleeting; it is only one polyphonic viewpoint in the larger dialogue.

Despite the movement of the poem back into lament, the position attained by the man is given privileged position in much of the scholarship on Lamentations.\textsuperscript{71} However, in recognizing the multiple expressions within Lamentations, and in allowing those expressions to remain unmerged, the hope of the man does not eclipse other, less hopeful voices. Instead, it is understood as but one viewpoint concerning the destruction of the city and the suffering of the community, and while it does suggest a path by which the hopelessness of suffering can be alleviated, it is neither the center, nor the purpose of the whole book. Hope is but one voice struggling to be heard in the rhetorical confusion of Lamentations.

\textsuperscript{70}See the discussion in chapter 4, pp. 275-277.
\textsuperscript{71}See the discussion in chapter 1, pp. 17-19.
The position attained by the man with regard to suffering and sin is carried forward into the transitional unit of vv. 40-41. Although a shift to plural voice occurs in v. 40, the text suggests it is the man who continues to speak in these verses. Arising from his own recognition of a relationship between sin and suffering, the man calls upon the community to examine their ways and confess their sins. Although the community has not been overtly present within the poem, their voice is heard in vv. 42-47. In the shift to plural voice, the man draws the community into his speech, assuming that they too will share the confidence of his new found insight. The man’s call to confession draws into itself associations with wisdom and prophetic traditions. The call for the community to search (שָׁמֵש) and examine (וֹאֵר) their ways has overtones of the wisdom traditions, while the use of the verb שבֵר is used frequently in Jeremiah in relation to the people returning to Yahweh.

In v. 42 the transition to the communal voice is completed by the shift to communal lament form (vv. 42-47). The unit opens with a confession which uses the general words והราม and describes the sins of the community. The lack of specificity in this confession stands in contrast to vv. 34-35. While the confession is anticipated by the call in vv. 41-42, what is not anticipated is the rapid shift to a divine responsibility theme in v. 42b, which accuses Yahweh of abandoning the people and of not responding appropriately to their confession. As argued in chapter 4, this unit echoes the content of Jer 14-15, accusing Yahweh of abandoning the people. The texts in Jeremiah and Lamentations explain the suffering of the community through the decision of Yahweh to abandon the people, however Lamentations contrasts the Jeremian material in that the abandonment is portrayed as continuing after the incursion of the judgment. The accusation stands in sharp contrast to the hope gained by the man.

In reintroducing divine responsibility (vv. 42-47) the text returns to the theme of

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72 Prov 2:4; 20:27; Job 5:27; 28:3, 27 (Berlin, Lamentations, 95).
73 For example, Jer 3:12, 14, 22; 4:1; 15:19; 18:11; 25:5; 31:21; 35:15.
74 See the discussion in chapter 4, pp. 277-279.
vv. 1-18, with the descriptions of divine violence also echoing the speeches of Zion (1:12-20) and the narrator (2:1-8). The communal voice of vv. 43-47 further develops the sense of divine abandonment introduced in v. 42b. Verses 43-44 describe Yahweh wrapped in anger, pursuing (יהיה) and killing (ירב) the people.\(^7\) Taken in contrast to the hope of the man expressed in vv. 19-39, this expression of divine abandonment presents a jarring note. The confidence in Yahweh’s steadfast love and eternal goodness is held in tension with the community’s view of Yahweh’s presence being withheld. Verse 45 moves from the description of divine abandonment to a description of Yahweh acting against the people, introducing further tension into the text. The unit closes (vv. 46-47) with description of misery motifs in which the people describe both the actions of the enemy against them and the panic, devastation and destruction which defines their existence. The presence of these description of misery motifs in a divine responsibility unit reinforces that it is Yahweh who is responsible for the suffering.

Voice and theme change again in v. 48. Although some commentators maintain a continuity of both voice and speaker between vv. 42-47 and vv. 48-66,\(^7\) the shift to a singular voice would suggest that a different persona is now speaking. Who the persona, is however, is debatable. While the return to 1ps speech would suggest a return to the speech of the man of vv. 1-41, differences in viewpoint, particularly in vv. 48-51, suggest that a different persona enters the dialogue. In vv. 48-51 the language is more inclusive of the wider community than the speech of vv. 1-18. Reference is made to בְּרֵא in v. 48, and to groups within the community in v. 51. Only vv. 52-63 are close to the speech of vv. 1-18, both being centered on the fate of an individual sufferer.

The description of misery in vv. 48-51 is dominated by motifs of lamentation and

\(^{7}\) Berlin (Lamentations, 96) suggests possible links with the exodus and Sinai traditions through the reference to cloud in v. 44.

\(^{7}\) Albrektson (Text and Theology, 166), for example, notes the change of voice, but suggests that the abrupt change supports that the “I” of the poem is communal. Westermann (Westermann, Lamentations, 183) argues that vv. 42-51 are part of a fragmentary communal lament, and that the change to 1ps does not indicate a change of speaker or a shift to an individual lament. The “I” “brings out the fact that the misery is experienced at a personal level.”
mourning. The imagery of eyes weeping controls the description. Verse 48 bears strong resemblance to 2:11, which similarly speaks of weeping eyes andrying, thus suggesting that it is the narrator’s voice which appears here for the first time in the chapter. That the narrator mourns overבֶּן עָמוּד, which may be a reference to the city, and declares his intention to mourn until Yahweh takes note (v. 50 until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees), reinforces the sense that it is the narrator speaking in v. 48. In response to the portrayal of suffering by the community, the narrator again laments and mourns (so also 2:11-19), seeking notice from Yahweh. The narrator’s viewpoint, which stands alongside and is empathetic towards the city, is thus present, introducing a different dialogic perspective into chapter 3.

Verses 52-66 mark yet another change in perspective, returning again to the language of individual suffering similar to that of vv. 1-18.

Verses 52-54 are a description of misery, containing a complaint against the enemy which continues the motif introduced by the communal voice in v. 46. That the speaker describes his treatment in terms of hunting imagery forms a link back to vv. 1-18 (vv. 10-13), although here it is clearly the human enemy not Yahweh who is acting against the speaker. The focus on individual suffering would suggests a return to the speech of the man of vv. 1-39. Again, there is affinity between these verses and the lament psalms.

The final unit of the chapter (vv. 55-66) is defined as a future fate of the enemy unit. There has been much debate around these verses, in particular their relationship to the distress portrayed in vv. 51-54. Debate exists as to whether the verses relate two situations of distress - a past resolved distress alongside a present ongoing one - or if

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77Verse 51 is textually difficult. A literal reading is either “my eye deals severely with my soul because of all the daughters of my city” (Provan, Lamentations, 103) or “my eye has done to my soul from (more than) all the daughters of my city” (Hillers, Lamentations, 118). It is either that the eyes are worn out from crying, or that they are assaulted by the sights they see (Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 126). Whichever translation is used, the extent and depth of the emotional distress is intended.
only one situation is present.\textsuperscript{78} This tension arises as the verbs of vv. 55-66 are perfect verbs, which most often portray completed action, however by the end of the unit the man is clearly petitioning Yahweh to act. Where, then, does the transition from past distress to present take place? In order to resolve this issue, a number of commentators argue that the precative perfect is used within these verses, which in turn allows this unit to be recognized as an extended petition for Yahweh’s intervention against the enemy.\textsuperscript{79} The man is thus pleading for Yahweh to heed his current plight, and to take action against the enemy.

The imagery and motifs within this unit continue to utilize lament language, including the invective against the enemy. Although it is still the man speaking within these verses, his appeal concerning the future fate of the enemy has links with the appeal of Zion in 1:21-22 (and again in 4:21-22). As in 1:21-22 and 4:21-22, reference is made to the taunts of the enemy (vv. 61-63), and Yahweh is called on to act against the enemy in accordance with their deeds (vv. 64-66). Although the content of this speech uses stereotypical language, as a dialogic text the man’s speech echoes Zion’s, reflecting similarity in their response to their plight. As was argued in chapter 4 above, the prophetic literature is also evoked here to some extent, although the ties with the language of the Psalms are stronger. The verses presuppose an act-consequence understanding in which it is expected that Yahweh will respond to the deeds of the enemy in a way which both corresponds to those deeds, but also which returns (בְּרַשֲׁת) those deeds back on the doers. This understanding of Yahweh’s actions is present in the prophetic literature, as it also is in the Psalms.\textsuperscript{80} In calling on Yahweh to act, the implication is that should Yahweh do so, some modicum of relief or comfort would be given the speaker.

\textsuperscript{78}For an overview of the issues, see Provan (“Past, Present and Future,” 164–74).
\textsuperscript{80}See, for example, Pss 6:10 (E); 79:12; 83.
Lamentations 3 introduces new and diverse viewpoints into the polyphony of the book. The chapter is dominated by the speech of a single man (גְּדוֹל) who reports his suffering in intimate, personal terms. In contrast to Zion's first person speeches (1:12-20, 21-22; 2:20-22), the man's speech is not inclusive of a wider community (vv. 1-39).\textsuperscript{81} He makes no reference to the fate of groups within the city, or of aspects of the physical city, concentrating at all times on his individual, embodied suffering at the hands of Yahweh. This man, in contrast to both Zion and the narrator of chapters 1 and 2, moves beyond the description of suffering and divine responsibility, to introduce elements of theodicy into the poetry (vv. 19-39). In didactic speech which uses elements from the psalms and wisdom-like language, the man names the attributes of Yahweh as reason for hope, and counsels the need for the patient endurance of suffering, even to the extent of disavowing the validity of lament in the face of punishment for sin (v. 39). While Lam 1 named the sin of the city/people as the cause of Yahweh's action (vv. 5, 8-9, 14, 18, 20, 21-22), and validated that action as righteous (1:18), there was no sustained reflection on the positive attributes of Yahweh, nor was there any attempt to advocate the patient acceptance of suffering. In Lam 2, the identification of sin as the cause of Yahweh's actions virtually disappears. Lamentations 3 introduces themes which would seem incompatible with those of chapters 1 and 2, using traditional psalmic and wisdom-like language in an attempt to explain the suffering and to counsel alternate behaviour in the face of suffering. The outcome of this section is that the man accepts his suffering as divine punishment, and counsels a silent and patient waiting on Yahweh who, by Yahweh's very nature, will not allow the suffering to continue forever.

While much scholarship has advocated that 3:19-39 forms the theological high point and crux of Lamentations, the text itself does not allow this reading. In a dialogic interaction, the position of hope gained by the man is immediately countered by the

\textsuperscript{81}With the exception of vv. 40-41 where the man draws the community into the dialogue through the use of the Icl pl form.
communal voice of the people, who again voice a divine responsibility theme accusing Yahweh of failing to respond appropriately to the people (vv. 42-47). The voice of the narrator re-emerges in vv. 48-51, reminding the text’s audience of the ongoing suffering of the community. In response, the voice of the הֹלֵך himself expresses further description of misery. In the larger structure of the chapter, the hopeful viewpoint is but one expression within the whole and represents a hope which is both temporary and fleeting. The hope is neither accepted by the community nor maintained by the man, thus validating the ongoing suffering of individual and community alike.

5.2.4 Lamentations 4

Lamentations 4 continues the dialogic interaction of chapters 1 to 3, although in somewhat diminished form. Only two lines are assigned to each of the alphabetic stanzas, with only the first of those lines starting with the respective letter of the alphabet. Although Zion herself does not speak, her presence continues to be felt through the personification of the city, however this is not as extensive as in chapters 1 and 2. Two voices are heard: that of the narrator, who returns to a description of Zion’s misery (vv. 1-10) but also focuses on divine responsibility (vv. 11-12), the sin of the priests and prophets (vv. 13-16), and the future fate of the enemy (vv. 21-22); and the communal voice of the people (vv. 17-20). The dialogic interaction with the prophetic literature continues, marked through the personification of the city and the references to sin, although the relationship continues to be tension filled. Taken as a whole, the themes and motifs of this chapter stand closer to Lam 1 and 2 than Lam 3, although a fleeting element of hope is present in v. 22 thus forming a link with chapter 3.

In 4:1-10, a description of misery unit, the voice of the narrator returns. That this is the narrator’s voice is suggested by the re-emergence of the personification of Zion through the use of הָו designations (vv. 3, 6, 10), feminine singular suffixes (v. 7) and
other feminine imagery. The narrator describes not only the plight of the city, but also groups within the city, which is in keeping with the speeches of chapters 1 and 2. The chapter opens with the familiar נֶפֶשׁ cry which was used to introduce 1:1 and 2:1, both in the narrator’s voice. The opening cry reintroduces elements from the funeral dirge into the poetry, and within vv. 1-10 the contrast motif also occurs (vv. 1, 2, 5, 7-8), again an element of the dirge.

Read against the preceding chapters, the first unit of Lam 4 marks a return to the concerns of the opening two chapters. Through the return of the narrator’s voice, and in combination with the description of misery, the movement towards hope gained by the man in 3:19-39 is further relegated to the sidelines. It is as if the poetry is circling back on itself, surrounding the hope with repeated images of suffering which ensure that the ongoing enormity of the suffering is not eclipsed by the lone voice of hope. That the hope of chapter 3 is present is not to be denied, but it is only one viewpoint, and a viewpoint not shared by the majority within the book. If the text as a whole is understood to be reflective of its rhetorical environment, it can be argued that the sense of hope is one that is either not widely held or is not a sustained mood of the community. The reality of pain and suffering prevails.

Verses 1-10 continue the dialogic interaction with the prophetic literature. The initial link is made through the ongoing personification and is reinforced by both the similarity of themes and imagery with chapters 1 and 2. As seen in both the prophetic literature and in Lam 1 and 2, there is movement between reference to the city and to the people, even to the extent that it is difficult in 4:1-10 to determine if the text refers to real mothers or to the metaphorical mother Zion. Although the prophetic literature is evoked there is also tension with, and subversion of, that literature. The narrator continues to portray the stricken city with empathy, focusing on her plight and not her

82 It was argued in chapter 2 (pp. 141-143) that the references to נֶפֶשׁ could be read as referring to the personified city in the context of 4:1-10.
sin. Repeated focus on the plight of the children drives this stance home. In addition, the one potential reference to sin within the unit (v. 6) is more a complaint about an excess of punishment than it is a reference to the sinful behaviour of the city, and, as such, overtly questions the prophetic link between sin and judgment.83

The unit opens and closes with descriptions of the fate of the children of the city, and, in keeping with chapters 1 and 2, this imagery depicts both the extent of the devastation and evokes sympathy. The changed status of the children is described in vv. 1 and 2, where they are likened to tarnished gold and broken, discarded pots. Verses 3-4 describe the starvation and thirst of the children, whose mother(s) is described as cruel in her failure to care for them. The unit closes with reference to “compassionate women” (מלשים יהודיות) boiling their children for food, a shocking image which echoes 2:20. The full horror of the famine is driven home in this verse and, while the image may offend and startle, does serve to portray the extent of utter degradation and suffering experienced by/within Zion.

The link with the prophetic literature is subverted in vv. 5-9. The description of misery focuses on the changed state of the elite of the city (vv. 5, 7-8) and on the severity of the suffering inflicted. Verse 5 continues the famine motif of vv. 3-4, but shifts focus to the wealthy of the city (those who feasted on delicacies and wore purple). The wealthy are as afflicted as other segments of society. Verses 7-8 describe the plight of the princes, again suggesting that the whole population has been brought down. These references to the elite alongside the children not only show the extent of the suffering, but have the effect of driving home the extreme degradation of the city and thus continue to evoke audience sympathy, and suggest an excess of suffering.

Verse 6 intensifies the tension with the prophetic literature. While חטא and עון can be read as references to sin in the context of the unit, and in particular in relation to v. 9 which asserts that those who died by the sword fared better than those who died of

83 See the discussion in chapter 4, pp. 265-266.
starvation, they are better read as references to the extremity and severity of the punishment inflicted on Zion. As such, v. 6 forms a complaint about excess of punishment, placing this verse in a tensive relationship with the prophetic literature. Guilt may well be implied within the verse through the use of עִם [Ezra] and בֶּן, however in 4:6 the link between sin and punishment is explicitly questioned, as is the severity and the extent of Yahweh’s treatment of the city. Lamentations both evokes and subverts attempts to explain the suffering from a prophetic understanding of the link between sin and judgment.

Verses 11-12 continue the voice of the narrator, although the theme changes to that of divine responsibility, again evoking the lament form. While this is not day of Yahweh material, reference to Yahweh’s wrath (זעם) and hot anger (ירוחם) recall the day of Yahweh motif of 1:12-20 and 2:1-8. Again, the prophetic traditions are evoked, returning to the attempt to explain the destruction through this tradition. Verse 12 contains an indirect quote which evokes Zion theology as to the inviolability of Jerusalem, imagery reminiscent of, although not limited to, Isaiah 1:39.84 The Zion theology is negated by citing it in association with descriptions of the destruction of the city.

The extended sin unit of vv. 13-16 continues the concerns expressed throughout Lamentations by the narrator. Reference is made to Zion’s prophets and priests who hold special responsibility for the city’s fate. The narrator has previously made mention of the failure of the prophets (2:14). Verses 14-15 draw in issues of purity which can be seen as compatible with the narrator’s concerns with the political and religious role of the city, particularly in 1:1-6, 7-11. These verses reassert links with the prophetic literature, identifying the priests and prophets as having responsibility for the downfall of the city which echoes similar references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.85

84Present also in the Zion Psalms (e.g. Pss 46; 48).
The description of misery in the 1cpl voice of vv. 17-20 provides one of the most concrete descriptions of the fall of the city found in Lamentations.\textsuperscript{86} In this description the isolation of Jerusalem, who looked vainly for help (v. 17), and the relentlessness of the enemy (vv. 18-19) are described. The unit closes with reference to the capture of the king (v. 20) which marked the end of the monarchy, the nation, and in turn, the end of an era. Although the voice here is distinct from that of the narrator, the political downfall of the nation is the focus, thus echoing concerns of the narrator.

The chapter closes with reference to the future fate of the enemy, reflecting the closing verses of chapters 1 and 3. The identity of the voice in 4:21-22 is difficult to determine but is most likely the narrator. Edom and Zion are addressed using feminine singular forms, and using ב נ designations, thus denoting a personification of both. In an ironic contrast, the fate of Edom and Zion are contrasted and, in doing so, an element of hope is offered Zion (v. 22).

Verse 21 establishes an initial contrast between the present and future fate of Edom with an ironic note - the poet calls to Edom to rejoice ( 쉽) and be glad (שמחה), the implication being that the rejoicing is over the fall of Jerusalem. The verse concludes, however, with the promise of future judgment and humiliation for Edom using metaphorical language ( 메 עליך חסר כות השכרי וה払いים but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare). The image utilizes prophetic language for Yahweh’s wrath\textsuperscript{87} with the metaphor being extended to portray the future humiliation of Edom as a result of this wrath (i.e. drunkenness and nakedness). The same root ( עור\textsuperscript{88}) to describe nakedness is used of Jerusalem in 1:8, thus mirroring

\textsuperscript{86}It has been argued by Westermann (Lamentations, 205) and Hillers (Lamentations, 151) that the events portrayed here bear close resemblance to the account of the fall in 2 Kgs 25:4-7. Although the historicity behind the account can only be conjectured, the unit does suggest the conditions at the end of the siege and of Hezekiah’s capture.

\textsuperscript{87}So Hillers (Lamentations, 152 ) cites the following references as using this imagery: Jer 13:13; 25:15-29; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7, 39; Obad 16; Pss 60:5; 75:9; Hab 2:15-16; Zech 12:12; Job 21:20.

\textsuperscript{88}This verb can mean either “pour out” or “lay bare.” It is rare in the kethpael, but in this context the meaning “lay bare” fits best (Albrektson, Text and Theology, 195).
Edom’s fate with Zion’s.  

As seen in the future fate of the enemy unit in 1:21-22, the sin/punishment of Zion is paralleled with that of the enemy, which here is Edom. Edom is told that her iniquity (רעה) and sin (עון) will be visited (גרת) upon her, again suggesting that some comfort will come to Zion in the downfall of her enemy. An act consequence framework is established within these verses. The act-consequence framework (here and in 1:21-22), which suggests a correspondence between the sin and Yahweh’s actions, presents the view that the punishment was in line with the sin. This view, however, also stands in tension with the more dominant pattern of the sin references lacking specificity, references which break open the sense of correspondence. The lack of specificity even occurs as the act-consequence framework is named (1:22; 4:22), highlighting the tension in Lamentations with regard to the relationship between sin and judgment.

4:21-22 also expresses hope for Jerusalem. In direct address, Zion is told that the punishment of her iniquity is complete. While this phrase is most often read in the perfect, the possibility is open that this is a precative wish. Zion is also told that Yahweh will either keep her in exile no longer or never exile her again. The element of hope stands in tension with the obvious ongoing suffering portrayed in both the preceding and following texts. Even if the end of suffering and exile are declared to Zion in the past tense, the return to lament in chapter 5 marks the hope as fleeting and transitory. Like the position of hope gained by the man in chapter 3, the hope here is only one possibility and, in the movement back to lament, the validity and reality of the ongoing suffering is reinforced.

Lamentations 4, then, continues the dialogic interplay of the book. Different voices and viewpoints are heard, presenting aspects of the suffering from different perspectives. Earlier chapters of the book are evoked, particularly through the perspective of the

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90 Ibid., 138; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 152.
narrator. Again, the narrator uses motifs and imagery which evoke and subvert the prophetic literature. While the prophetic outlook is supported in vv. 13-16, and 21-22, it is also questioned and subverted in v. 6, and no attempt is made to merge the opposing viewpoints within the chapter. An element of hope is introduced into the chapter, recalling the hope of Lam 3, although the hope is more tentative. The precative hope that the suffering is ended is voiced, which stands in contrast to the confidence expressed in Yahweh in 3:19-39. What hope is expressed continues to be fleeting and temporary as the movement back into description of misery in chapter 5 reinforces.

5.2.5 Lamentations 5

The voice of the community is reintroduced into the dialogue in Lam 5.\textsuperscript{91} The community speaks throughout with no changes of voice present. This is the only chapter of Lamentations in which only one voice is heard. Alongside the consistency of voice comes a consistency of genre, with Lam 5 being widely recognized as resembling the communal lament form.\textsuperscript{92} The chapter also contrasts with the rest of the book in length and literary style. The acrostic disappears although the chapter maintains a twenty-two verse length. The verses are shorter again than chapter 4, suggesting a sense of both diminishment and closure. Despite this closure, Lamentations is true to its polyphonic character with 5:22 leaving the dialogue open, concluding as it does with question and/or doubt. While form suggests closure, content belies this, marking Lamentations as an unfinalized text. In its prayerful lament the community turns to Yahweh, concluding with an appeal and yet, in contrast to expectation, Yahweh remains silent and, as such, the final voice heard is that of the community still in the midst of their pain and suffering.

\textsuperscript{91}First person plural voice also occurs in 3:42-47 and 4:17-20.
\textsuperscript{92}Form-critically, chapter 5 contains the key elements of the communal lament: an address to Yahweh (v. 1); a description of misery/complaint (vv. 2-18); praise of Yahweh (v. 19); complaint (v. 20); an appeal to Yahweh for help (vv. 21-22) (Westermann, Lamentations, 212–13; Gerstenberger, Lamentations, 501; Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 142.
Chapter 5 can be divided into three thematic units. Verses 1-18 contain an extended description of misery, opening with an address to Yahweh. Verse 19 contains a brief praise of Yahweh while vv. 20-22 concern the future restoration of Jerusalem. The chapter is dominated by the description of misery in which the familiar motifs of destruction, conquest and famine occur. While praise of Yahweh is present (v. 19), any sense of hope which may be anticipated through this element is questioned by the final words (v. 22) which close the book with the community in doubt as to whether the silence of Yahweh will ever be broken.

As with Lam 3, the links with the prophetic literature are less overt within this chapter. There is no personification of the city, and reference to the day of Yahweh is likewise absent. Two references to sin occur (vv. 7 and 16), forming links with the prophetic literature. Verse 7, however, explicitly questions the link between sin and punishment thus subverting the prophetic traditions. Verse 16 stands in tension with v. 7, presenting as it does the more conventional viewpoint that the destruction was the result of the sin on the community.

The opening address, which calls on Yahweh to remember (דָּרָךְ) and to look and see (וְיָרָא), recalls the appeals of Zion in 1:9c, 11c, 20; 2:20 and the man in 3:63. The repetition of the appeal reinforces a central concern of the poetry - the need to gain Yahweh’s attention in the hope that Yahweh will act towards the community to alleviate the suffering. Tension between Yahweh’s absence and presence interweave within the poems. The oppressive, destructive presence of Yahweh is felt in the divine responsibility units, but the absence is also strongly felt through reference to divine abandonment and through the frequent appeals for Yahweh to take note of the suffering. The appeals are never answered and Yahweh’s absence is ever present within the book.

Verses 2-18 contain description of misery motifs throughout. The imagery is that of death, abandonment, enslavement, famine and degradation. The concern is with the fate of the people, with only vv. 16-18 making reference to the loss of the monarchy and
the desolation of the physical city. As such, the speech of the community is closer to that of Zion (1:12-20; 2:20-22) than that of the narrator (1:1-6, 7-11; 2:1-8), although the narrator does focus on the people in 4:1-10. In contrast to the description of misery units in chapters 1, 2 and 4, however, no divine responsibility motifs occur in 5:1-18, reinforcing the centrality of the suffering but also supporting the overall sense of diminishment. The suffering described includes emotional depletion and the absence of all the joys of life. There is neither music (v. 14) nor dancing (v. 15), and joy has ceased (v. 15). In their place comes mourning, sickness of heart and dimness of eyes (vv. 15-17).

The description of misery most strongly evokes Israel’s psalm traditions, however the prophetic literature is also evoked. The causality of sin is named in v. 16 through a cry of communal lament combined with a confession of sin (ארכי נא לזלצ אלוהים). In v. 7, however, a reference to sin forms part of the description of misery, with the present generation naming the sins of the ancestors as the cause of their current plight. The text recalls similar references in Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Ezek 18; 33:10-20; Jer 31:27-30), although there the prophets refute the claim arguing instead that the present generation are punished for their own sin. Taken together, the texts from Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Lamentations suggest that one of the viewpoints within the rhetorical environment of the post-destruction period is that the present generation has suffered both to excess and undeservedly. In Lamentations, the claim of unjust suffering is not refuted and stands in tension with v. 16. Again, the polyphony of the text is highlighted.

Verse 19, with its description of Yahweh’s enduring reign, anticipates hope, particularly given this poem’s relationship to the communal lament form. Through this element of praise, the possibility that Yahweh will respond to the people is implied. Verse 19 is, however, “a singularly isolated word of praise,”93 and the anticipated hope is not realized. Verse 20, in its use of the “why” question common to the lament form,

voices a sense of divine abandonment asking of Yahweh “Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days?” The rapid movement away from praise to ongoing lament undermines the praise, effectively distancing Yahweh from the people. As stated by Westermann, “the perpetual entronement of God in the heavens locates God so far away that God’s view from above apparently does not reach all the way down to the level of the human misery that has just been described.”

94 As in Lam 3 and 4, the possibility of hope is only fleeting and transitory, enclosed and encompassed by suffering.

The juxtaposing of hope and its negation is repeated in the final two verses of the book. In v. 21 the community prays to Yahweh to restore them and to renew their days as of old (חֲשִׁיבֵנוּ ה’ חֲשִׁיבֵנוּ דְּבָרֵינוּ וְנִשְׁחֵנוּ וְנִשְׁחֵנוּ טָמֵנִי וּצְרֵדָנוּ). The hopeful possibility of the appeal is negated by the final doubt filled and despairing question (v. 22). While the text’s syntax is difficult, it cannot be doubted that this final verse is less than hopeful.96 The silence of Yahweh throughout Lamentations becomes the central focus of its conclusion and the sense of divine abandonment is reinforced. The poetry moves towards Yahweh but does so in doubt of a response, unsure as to whether the destruction, pain and suffering represent a permanent severance of the relationship with Yahweh. The dialogue is open and unfinalized and both the community and the text’s audience are left with the heart rending reality of the ongoing silence of Yahweh. The “closure” of the text is directed to the response of another and, as such, the doubt-filled possibility of future dialogic interaction remains open.

94Westermann, Lamentations, 216.
95Westermann, Lamentations, 216.
96For discussion of 5:22 see Robert R. Gordis, “The Conclusion to the Book of Lamentations (Critical Notes),” JBL 93 (1974): 289–93; Tod Linafelt, “The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations,” JBL 120 (2001): 340–43. Linafelt’s translation of the verse as a protasis without an apodosis - that is “an ‘if’ with the ‘then’ left unstated” (p. 342) - captures the forward movement of the verse. He translates “For if truly you have rejected us, raging bitterly against us...”
Chapter 6
Conclusions

The current study began with the observation that the book of Lamentations has frequently been associated with the theological tradition of the eighth to sixth century prophetic literature. The recognition of a link between Lamentations and the prophetic literature was brought to the fore in the work of Gottwald whose insights have found support in subsequent publications.\(^1\) It was noted, however, that there are a number of limitations in the recognition of this link, including a too readily held assumption that because Lamentations shares themes and motifs with the prophetic literature it also propounds the same theology. Compounding this belief has been, in many cases, the tendency to attempt to reduce both Lamentations and the prophetic literature to simple monologic theological statements. This tendency has done injustice to the variability between the various prophetic books of the period and, more importantly, has produced a flattened reading of the book of Lamentations, a book which has consistently resisted attempts to define it in terms of a single theological statement.

Rather than assuming that because Lamentations shares themes and motifs with the prophetic literature it also shares its theological outlook, the aim of the present study has been to explore the nature of the relationship between Lamentations and the eighth to sixth century prophetic literature. In order to explore this relationship, Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and double-voicing have been used.

A number of motifs common to both Lamentations and the prophetic literature were explored: the personification of Jerusalem as female; reference to the day of Yahweh; and reference to sin in relation to Yahweh’s actions against the city and its people. The use of these motifs within the prophetic literature was examined, followed

\(^1\)Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies*. See chapter 1 (pp. 8-30) for a full discussion.
by a comparison of their use within Lamentations. In exploring these common motifs, the aim was to determine how it is that Lamentations takes up and transforms these prophetic motifs to suit the purposes of this new text. In this way the nature of the dialogic relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature was explored.

Central to the current study is the recognition that the text of Lamentations cannot be reduced to simple assertions about the book’s theology, and that the book itself expresses a variety of viewpoints concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Of these expressions, the one which coincides with the prophetic traditions is only one viewpoint. This viewpoint exists alongside others within Lamentations, all of which create a polyphony of unmerged viewpoints within the text. The study has also explored how the viewpoints that double-voice the prophetic literature form part of the polyphonic expression of the book.

When considering Lamentations’ use of the prophetic motifs of the personification of Jerusalem as female, the day of Yahweh, and references to sin, it can clearly be argued that Lamentations does make dialogic links with the prophetic literature. In doing so Lamentations directs its audience to consider this text against the background of the prophetic literature. What cannot be argued however is that Lamentations adopts without question the prophetic viewpoint. At times it does assert a prophetic outlook, and in doing so aligns itself with various expressions from the prophetic literature. At other times however, Lamentations subverts the prophetic literature, drawing itself into a tension filled dialogue with that viewpoint. The movement between assertion and subversion forms part of the dialogic character of Lamentations.

Lamentations evokes and asserts the prophetic literature in a number of ways. In its opening verses the book forms immediate links with the prophetic literature through the personification of the city as female. The link with the prophetic literature is reinforced throughout the text. It is strengthened through the ongoing personification of
the city, which is dominant in Lam 1, 2 and 4. In various places the text names the
destruction of the city as a day of Yahweh (1:12, 21-22; 2:1, 21-22), a motif which
belongs almost exclusively to the prophetic literature, with the references in
Lamentations being the only uses of this motif outside the prophetic literature. In
addition, Lamentations names Jerusalem’s and/or the people’s sin as the cause of
Yahweh’s destructive action towards the city and community alike, again aligning itself
with the understanding of the prophetic traditions.

In forming intertextual links with the prophetic literature Lamentations does, to
some extent, accept aspects of that tradition. In personifying the city and naming the
destruction as a day of Yahweh, Lamentations does suggest that the events surrounding
the fall of Jerusalem be understood as Yahweh’s act of judgment. This interpretation of
the events is reinforced, particularly in Lam 1, through the references to sin being the
cause of Yahweh’s actions against the city (1:5, 8-9, 14, 18, 20, 21-22; 2:14; 3:39, 41;
4:13-16; 5:16). The destruction of Jerusalem as a just response of Yahweh to the sins of
the city/people is one viewpoint presented within Lamentations, a viewpoint which can
be aligned with a prophetic outlook.

Lamentations does not, however, accept this viewpoint without question, or
leave the explanation of the destruction as just punishment unchallenged. The dialogic
interaction with the prophetic literature is less straightforward than the simple assertion
of a shared theological outlook. Although Lamentations accepts in some places the
outlook of the prophetic literature, it also subverts that literature in a number of different
ways.

First, subversion emerges at the level of form. It was noted in the analysis of the
prophetic texts that in almost all cases the relevant texts are those which contain
judgment oracles and/or indictment of the city/people. Oftentimes those judgment
oracles use the lament form or make reference to lament behaviour, whether this be of
the city, the people, the prophet, or Yahweh. The use of lament form and language
drives home the often inevitable and imminent judgment to come against the city/people. In contrast, the intent of Lamentations is not the announcement of judgment but the expression of grief and anguish in the wake of the disaster. While the destruction may be interpreted as realized judgment, this realization is secondary to the expression of pain and suffering. The use of the prophetic motifs helps to articulate the sense of realized judgment, however this articulation remains secondary to the primary purpose at all times. The secondary nature of this articulation is most apparent in the constant movement back to the description of misery following the naming of the sin as the cause of the destruction, a movement which never allows the sin to take precedence over the suffering expressed.

A second way in which the prophetic literature is subverted is through the extended, empathetic portrayal of the city in multiple ways as a destroyed and grieving female figure, and through the images of the decimated people. While the city may have been judged, she is to be viewed with great pity in her extreme degradation and suffering, thus undermining the dominant portrayal of her within the prophetic literature. The images used of the city portray her in vulnerable and pitiable roles. She is also described as a victim who has fallen prey to a force far stronger and more powerful than herself. These images are most strongly developed in Lam 1 and 2. In Lam 1 the city is portrayed as a widow, a grieving and inconsolable mother, and is the victim of an onslaught of divine wrath. She is also portrayed as uncomforted, and the absence of suitable comforters for her is highlighted (1:12-20; also 2:11-19). Repeated images of the suffering of all groups within society, and in particular of the children, drive home this sense of empathy. This portrayal of the city stands in contrast to that of the prophetic literature where the emphasis in the portrayal of the city is as the one who deserves to come under Yahweh’s wrath. Even within Jeremiah, which stands closest to Lamentations in its graphic descriptions of the nature and impact of the impending judgment, the city is not portrayed with the pathos and empathy present within
Lamentations. The sense of empathy is heightened within Lamentations through the extended, multifaceted portrayal of the city. In the prophetic literature the personification was largely confined to single units, and only one or two aspects of the city’s being were personified, making the motif less complex and less developed within the prophetic literature. Within Lamentations, however, the portrayal of the city is extended within and across chapters, allowing the figure to be more fully and more richly developed. As a result, the audience is able to engage more fully in the city’s pathos.

A third way in which the prophetic literature is subverted is through the lack of specificity with regard to the nature of the sin committed by the city/people. With few exceptions (2:14 and 4:13-16 in relation to false prophets and possibly 3:34-39) the nature of the sin is not specified within Lamentations. This stands in direct contrast to the references to sin within the prophetic literature. In all cases the nature of the sin of the community/city was named within the prophetic literature, either within the given units discussed or within the immediate literary context. Within the prophetic literature the nature of the sin is made clear and, in most cases, is shown to correspond to the punishment announced. This sense of correspondence is shattered within Lamentations as the nature of the sin which corresponds to such great suffering is not named, an absence which jars against the extended descriptions of misery and suffering. While the evocation of the prophetic literature may suggest the nature of the sin, this is at best only alluded to, never stated. In this way the text’s audience is left wondering what the nature of the sin is.

References to sin are most dominant in Lam 1, diminishing significantly in the following chapters, suggesting some ambivalence about the relationship between sin and Yahweh’s actions. In addition, reference to sin is noticeably absent within some units, primarily in the divine responsibility units of 2:1-8 and 3:1-18. Lamentations 2:1-8 names the destruction of the city as a day of Yahweh. Within the prophetic literature

\[\text{References to sin occur in Lam 1:5, 8-9, 14, 18, 20, 21-22; 2:14; 3:39, 42, 64; 4:6, 13-16; 21-22; 5:7, 16.}\]
where a day of Yahweh is directed against Judah, the nature of the sin is always specified. Lamentations 2:1-8, however, is completely lacking in any reference to sin, subverting the expectations arising from the prophetic texts and helping to underline the absolute ferocity and power of Yahweh’s attack on the city. The divine responsibility unit in 3:1-18 similarly lacks reference to sin, again highlighting the suffering of the man at the hand of Yahweh.

In line with a number of prophetic texts (Isa 1:4-9; 6:1-8; 10:17-21; 13:12-17; 30:20-27), the notion of act-consequence is developed in the future fate of the enemy units within Lamentations (1:21-22; 3:55-66; 4:21-22), which would suggest that the nature of the “punishment” was perceived to correspond with the sin. This is not, however, a sustained viewpoint within the book, and this viewpoint is subverted by the lack of specificity as to the nature of the sin, both within these units and elsewhere in the text.

In addition, several passages overtly question the appropriateness of the punishment meted out to the city/people (3:42; 4:6; 5:7), with implicit criticism also present in 1:21-22. The three verses which question the divine action accuse Yahweh of acting unfairly against the city/people, portraying a sense abandonment, anger and outrage on behalf of the speakers. These texts suggest that within the rhetorical environment of the text, questions were being raised as to what the people had done to deserve such harsh treatment. The viewpoint which questions Yahweh’s actions stands alongside the more orthodox view of the just punishment of sin, giving voice to an inherent, unmerged tension within Lamentations.

This final point leads into the final conclusions of this study. In past research on the theology of Lamentations, many attempts have been made to define the book’s theology through its dominant theological statement or purpose. The text itself has defied these attempts, refusing to be captured in simple monologic statements. In applying Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism and polyphony to Lamentations, it has been
shown that Lamentations can be understood as a polyphonic text in which unmerged viewpoints coexist and interact with each other. The book of Lamentations draws on a variety of traditions, allows different voices and viewpoints to be heard, and develops and intersperses a variety of themes. One of the viewpoints expressed is that which coincides with the prophetic literature, a viewpoint which understands the destruction of Jerusalem as Yahweh’s just action against the sinful city. The prophetic viewpoint is, however, transformed as it is double-voiced within Lamentations, and it in turn competes with other viewpoints which both question and subvert that opinion. Voices are heard which suggest that the people were punished for the sins of previous generations (5:7), or that the punishment was too harsh (4:6). The repeated emphasis on the extent and enormity of the suffering implicitly questions the prophetic viewpoint. Other voices are also heard, voices which express hope and appeal to wisdom-like traditions in order to counsel the patient endurance of suffering. All viewpoints work together to form the polyphonic texture of Lamentations.

The polyphonic character of Lamentations is also to be found in its open-ended dialogue. The book does not attempt to answer all the questions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, nor does it say the final word. It enters into a dialogic interaction, responding to words already spoken about the destruction, giving voice to some explanations, and exploring and expressing the pain and suffering from a myriad of perspectives. But Lamentations also anticipates future words, both human and divine. Throughout the book, speech is directed at the divine through appeals, through the lament form, through questions, and through the very expression of the pain. Yahweh, however, remains silent, and the book closes with a poignant question leaving the audience in doubt as to whether the divine voice will ever respond. As a polyphonic, dialogic text, Lamentations stays true to itself: it expresses pain; it anticipates future words; it remains open and unfinalized. In the end, it finishes as it starts in pain-filled anticipation of the divine voice and divine comfort.
The current study has focussed on one aspect of the polyphonic interaction of Lamentations - the dialogic interaction it establishes with the prophetic literature of the eight to sixth century B.C.E. Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism, double-voicing, and polyphony have proved fruitful for exploring the nature of the relationship between Lamentations and the prophetic literature. However this is only one aspect of the dialogic complexity of this text. Other aspects of the text remain to be explored: the interaction with the Dtr traditions, the wisdom-traditions, and the Zion and Davidic traditions. Possibilities also exists for using this method in relation to the interaction with the Psalms.

Beyond its dialogic interaction with past and contemporaneous traditions within the Hebrew bible, future texts also enter into a dialogic interaction with Lamentations. Tull has already discussed the dialogic interaction between Lamentations and Second Isaiah. ³ There is, in addition, much potential in seeking other responses to Lamentations in the literature of the late exilic and post-exilic periods. A myriad of possibilities exist for exploring how Lamentations interacts with past and future viewpoints, helping to develop and define the complex dialogic interweaving of the Hebrew bible.

³Tull Willey, Remember the Former Things.
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366


