

## Introduction



### WHAT IS LAMENTATIONS?

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE was an event of the most cataclysmic proportions. For the people of Judah, it meant the loss of their temple – their primary mode of worship of the LORD. But it also entailed loss of political independence, economic devastation, loss of control over their ancestral lands, an upending of social structures, and the exile of their leadership. It challenged ideas that were at the bedrock of Israelite theology such as the election of Israel and called into question the continued viability of the notion of a covenant between Israel and the LORD. All of these facets of collective trauma are reflected in the book of Lamentations.

But what is Lamentations? Who is its audience, and what is its purpose? Scholars have put forward an astonishing array of approaches to these most fundamental questions, typically by prioritizing one part of the book over others.

Classically, many expositors understood Lamentations as addressed to the survivors of the catastrophe and that its purpose was didactic: to bring the people to recognize the ways of divine justice, to confess their misdeeds, and to bring them to pray toward the LORD for their salvation.<sup>1</sup> These scholars point to the many passages in Lamentations that align theologically with Deuteronomic thought and the prophetic literature. The LORD has full control of history; sin is the root cause of destruction. All five poems in the book agree that the downfall of Jerusalem is a punishment for her sins (1:5; 2:14; 3:42; 4:6; 5:16). There are ample literary correspondences between the covenant curses threatened in Deut 28 and the reality detailed in Lamentations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gottwald, *Studies in the Book*; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text*.

<sup>2</sup> For parallels between Deuteronomy and Lamentations, see Klein, *Lamentations*, 47–49. He identifies eighteen parallel phrases between Lamentations and Deuteronomy 28 and six between Lamentations and the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32.

Lamentations makes references to the “Day of YHWH” trope (Lam 1:21; 2:1; 2:2) found in many prophetic books and employs prophetic tropes such as the goblet of punishment (Lam 4:21).<sup>3</sup> These scholars typically see Chapter 3 as the focal point of the book, with its message of hope, but also its explicit calls to identify suffering with sin, on the personal and collective levels.

Another school that has grown in numbers since the mid-twentieth century pushes back against this classic understanding and maintains that Lamentations has no lesson to teach the survivors. Indeed, the audience of Lamentations is the traumatized community itself. But rather than sermonizing to the community, the book serves the survivors as an expression of what they endured. Here the impulse toward meaning-making is upended, as the meaning of the laments is to be found in their very expression. The healing process following collective trauma requires the community not to repress their grief and shock but to face it. Lamentations allows communal pain to be reexperienced and perhaps healed.<sup>4</sup> These scholars point to the many elements of the genre of lament found in the book.<sup>5</sup> These include the formerly great attributes of the victim versus their fallen state, the pain of the lamenter at the joy of the enemy, and the request for divine vengeance. Indeed, the very name we attach to this work, “Lamentations” – which first appears in the Septuagint – suggests as much. It is true that sin is invoked as the cause of the downfall in every chapter of the book. However, for these expositors, Israel’s sinfulness is not the dominant note struck in Lamentations; her suffering is.

At the same time, it is puzzling that a work ostensibly written as a lament should include so many passages critical of the victim. Biblical laments, such as David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17–27) never include critique of the lamented individual, even when they are deserving of critique. Mesopotamian laments for the cities of Ur, likewise, express no critique of the fallen city.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this work, I have generally employed the epitaph “the LORD” in place of the tetragrammaton. I retain the transliteration “YHWH” when referring to an accepted term in the scholarship (as in the present case), and when transliterating verses within the body of the commentary.

<sup>4</sup> Hillers, *Lamentations*, 5; Kathleen O’Connor, “Lamentations,” in *Introduction to Prophetic Literature, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, NIB 6 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 1013; Klein, *Lamentations*, 22; Knut M. Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” in *Zion, City of Our God*, ed. Gordon J. Wenham and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 130.

<sup>5</sup> Berlin, *Lamentations*; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*; Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation*, trans. Charles Muenchow (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Michael S. Moore, “Human Suffering in Lamentations,” *RB* 90 (1983): 534–55.

<sup>6</sup> See “A Closer Look: Mesopotamian Laments,” pp. 64–66.

A variation of this approach holds that the book is indeed one of lament, but that its primary audience is not the reeling Judeans of the sixth century BCE. Rather, the book is written for posterity. By this reading, Lamentations is a memorialization of the grief and trauma of the destruction of Jerusalem, preserving the memory of that event for future generations.<sup>7</sup> For Iain Provan, “We are further being invited to learn from their experience to participate in their attempt to relate their experience to the reality of God. The book reminds us in a forceful way of the challenge of suffering to faith, and invites us to feel and to ponder its significance.”<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that the reception history of the book bears this out, as Lamentations has assumed a prominent place in the liturgy for Jews on the anniversary of the destruction of the temple on the Ninth of Ab. But the reception of the book by later readers must be kept distinct from the question of the original purpose of its composition. Lamentations assumes its readers possess a great familiarity with the background events that led to the destruction. No individuals, not even the Babylonians themselves, are mentioned by name throughout. Only the most oblique references are made to former treaty partners. A work written for posterity – for those who live at a time and place far removed from sixth century Judah – would be better served by providing at least the bare-bones context, for such an ostensibly distanced reading and listening audience.

For others, by contrast, the audience of Lamentations is none other than the LORD himself. By this view, the lamenting that takes place in this work is not merely cathartic – expression for expression’s sake. Rather, Lamentations was composed and recited in order to confront the LORD with the affliction that he has caused, with the intent of softening his heart and provoking a salvific response from him.<sup>9</sup> These expositors point to the prayers found within Lamentations (Lam 1:9, 11, 21–22; 2:20–22; 3:56–66) and especially its climax in Chapter 5, where either the narrator or perhaps the community offers an impassioned prayer to the LORD to consider the community’s deprivation and to restore the covenantal relationship between the LORD and Israel.<sup>10</sup> Yet, here, too, the characterization of the book as a whole seems to rest on a selective emphasis of evidence. While

<sup>7</sup> Berlin, *Lamentations*, 15–17; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 103.

<sup>8</sup> Provan, *Lamentations*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Berlin, *Lamentations*, 9; Salters, *Lamentations*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Elie Assis sees prayer as the central theme of the book, and that the author seeks to draw the Jerusalem community from a state of despair to a state of prayer. See Assis, *Lamentations*.

appeal to the LORD is an important part of Lamentations, the text before us seems to engage other concerns as well, unlike, say, Psalms 74 and 79, which are devoted entirely to appealing to the LORD for salvation in the wake of the temple's destruction.

Others, still, take the notion of the LORD as the audience of Lamentations even further and maintain that the purpose of the book is not to appeal for salvation. Rather, the book stages a resistance to divine acts executed in the name of divine justice.<sup>11</sup> Its champion is Bat-Zion who is hurt and hurting but able to rise in the midst of suffering to confront her God.<sup>12</sup> For these scholars, Lamentations implicitly asks whether in fact Zion's suffering exceeds what is warranted. For these readers, the focus of the book is directed toward the question of who should be blamed for Israel's pain, rather than how the relationship shall be restored between the LORD and Israel. To be sure, these expositors recognize that Lamentations never abandons sin. They insist, however, that the thrust of the progression of the poems displaces it and reduces its importance relative to Bat-Zion's anger and accusation against God. These approaches point to the fact that the book ends on a note of doubt as to whether the LORD can or will hear Israel's pain and prayers, and not on a note of hope or expectation that he will. These readers challenge the claim that the center of Lamentations is in Chapter 3, with the *geber's* call for repentance.<sup>13</sup> Todd Linafelt has gone so far as to critique these long-held positions from a hermeneutic of suspicion. If expositors have championed Chapter 3 as the center of Lamentations, it is because of an inherent male bias toward the male figure of Chapter 3 and a distinctly Christian bias toward the suffering man of that chapter, based on a perceived similarity to the figure of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Scholars like Linafelt argue

<sup>11</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*; Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*; O'Connor, *Tears of the World*; Middlemas, *Lamentations*; Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God*; Hillers, *Lamentations*; Edward L. Greenstein, "The Wrath at God in the Book of Lamentations," in *The Problem of Evil and Its Symbols in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> The epitaph for the remnant community, *Bat-Şiyyon*, is typically rendered either as "Daughter Zion" or "Daughter of Zion." However, these bear very different meanings and it is likely that the author intended both. See "A Closer Look: Bat-Şiyyon – 'Daughter Zion' or 'Daughter of Zion,'" pp. 34–36, where I explain the nuances of each and my choice to neutrally transliterate the term 'Bat-Zion.'

<sup>13</sup> The male poet who narrates Chapter 3 in the first person self-identifies in 3:1 as *ha-geber*, literally "the man", with specific connotations of one who walks in the ways of the LORD. Characterizations of the *geber* abound in the scholarly literature. See discussion on pp. 91–94.

<sup>14</sup> Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 5.

that we ought to shift our focus to the figure of Bat-Zion and her pain in Chapters 1 and 2, giving pride of place in Lamentations to confrontation over capitulation.<sup>15</sup>

This line of reading, however, has been critiqued.<sup>16</sup> Not only is sin identified as the cause of the destruction in all five of the poems, but also by all of its characters, including Bat-Zion herself (1:18). And, in fact, the passages that overtly decry and assail God's actions amount to but several verses in the whole work (1:12–15; 2:20–22; 3:43) and the trope seems entirely missing from Chapters 4 and 5. That said, these scholars have drawn proper attention to an important element of Lamentation's tapestry that has gone underappreciated in other readings of the book.

Thus, paradoxically, Lamentations critiques Israel as sinful and deserving of harsh punishment but also critiques God as cruel. It is no wonder that Johan Renkema concludes that the theology of Lamentations is "a theology ending in a question mark."<sup>17</sup> The book is a *mélange* of seemingly incompatible genres; part prayer, part hortatory sermonizing, part lament, and part polemic against the LORD. On the employ of genres in biblical literature, Carol Newsom writes, "Texts may participate in more than one genre ... The point is not simply to identify a genre in which a text participates, but to analyze that participation in terms of the rhetorical strategies of the text."<sup>18</sup> Nowhere is this challenge greater than in Lamentations.

Faced with this disparity of genres and viewpoints, scholars increasingly have become suspicious of the attempt to monologize the text, identifying within it a primary theme of theodic or of anti-theodic interpretation. With greater frequency, expositors in the early decades of the twenty-first century have sought in Lamentations, "intersecting perspectival discourses in which no single speaker, no particular viewpoint silences the others."<sup>19</sup> By this view, Lamentations is predicated upon shifting voices whose testimonies volley in disquieting tension and conflict.<sup>20</sup> By these readings, to

<sup>15</sup> See Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*; Seidman, "Burning the Book"; Guest, "Hiding Behind."

<sup>16</sup> See House, *Lamentations*, 322–23; Thomas, *Poetry and Theology*, 34–39; Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NIBCOT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 339.

<sup>17</sup> Renkema, *Lamentations*, 579.

<sup>18</sup> Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>19</sup> O'Connor, "Lamentations," 1022.

<sup>20</sup> See in this vein, Bier, "Perhaps There Is Hope"; Provan, *Lamentations*; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*; Thomas, *Poetry and Theology*; Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?*; O'Connor, *Tears of the World*, 14; Alan Cooper, "The Message of Lamentations," *JANES* 28 (2001): 1–18.

assume that there is one major theological thrust in the book is to superimpose *a priori* assumptions.

These views, seeing Lamentations as a book of debate about the meaning of the fall of Jerusalem, are a great advance in our understanding of the book. The approach is appealing not only because it solves the exegetical conundrum of juxtaposed conflicting viewpoints but also because it accords with what we know about the variety of viewpoints held in Jerusalem before and after the fall of the city from the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. From a rhetorical perspective, these two books stand distinct in prophetic literature in that they ubiquitously cite other voices – either statements attributed to individuals who are identified by name, title, or social circle or popular sayings attributed simply to the people. Dalit Rom Shiloni has identified forty-eight such quotations in Ezekiel 1–39 and 136 in Jeremiah. These voices typically represent a deliberate and articulated opposition to the positions expressed by the prophetic protagonists of those books.<sup>21</sup>

The fall of Jerusalem, as reported in the book of Jeremiah, did nothing to quell debate about the theological meaning of what had happened. Despite the fact that Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the temple's fall and the city's conquest had now come to fruition, the people express no acceptance of his interpretation of events. The assassination of the Babylonian-installed governor of Judah, Gedaliah, by loyalists to the Davidic throne (41:1–3) demonstrates that the belief in the immutable election of the Davidic line was still strong in some quarters. Others continued to relate to the temple mount as a site of pilgrimage and cultic worship (41:4–5). Large contingents of survivors continue to question whether Jeremiah communicates and represents the LORD's will (43:2). Against Jeremiah's counsel, his opponents argue for syncretistic worship of multiple deities in Egypt, implicitly critiquing the power of the LORD, and a lack of belief in his promise to sustain a remnant in Jerusalem (44:15–20).

The notion that collective catastrophe engenders a shattering of theological paradigms and results in competing theological stances in its wake is well born out in contemporary times as well. In his study, *Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors*, Reeve Robert Brenner interviewed more than 700 survivors and asked more than a hundred questions concerning their religious beliefs and practices prior, during, and after the war.<sup>22</sup> Even among those who were religious before the war and remained so afterward, his

<sup>21</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Voices from the Ruins*, 80–81.

<sup>22</sup> Reeve Robert Brenner, *Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

study reveals a surprising diversity of religious stances. What Brenner uncovers in Israel's most recent national calamity, Lamentations uncovers within its first.

Yet, while there is great merit in identifying multiple viewpoints within Lamentations, the approach can be critiqued from two standpoints.

Scholars who adopt this position maintain that all viewpoints in Lamentations need to be regarded as equally valid in the eyes of its author or authors. As Miriam Bier has written, "the critical mistake to avoid is prematurely equating the Poet's point of view – the point of view of the text – with any one constructed point of view within the work." Yet, as some scholars have noted, these approaches – all products of late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century writers – align well with postmodern notions of truth.<sup>23</sup> This however, raises the specter that there is anachronism in reading such contemporary notions back into the minds and intentions of Israelite authors living in the sixth century BCE. Of all the views presented in Lamentations, are none the author's own? If each of the protagonists in the book – the narrator, Bat-Zion, the *geber*, the community – expresses deep and heartfelt convictions, why is the author, by ostensibly presenting all these views on equal footing, a theological fence-straddler? The book of Job, which also presents multiple viewpoints about issues of theodicy, ultimately endorses the position of Job over that of his companions. The book of Ecclesiastes offers multiple versions of the good life, but concludes by endorsing a life of piety.<sup>24</sup>

#### IS THERE A STRUCTURE IN THIS TEXT?

However, these more recent approaches highlighting the multiplicity of viewpoints within Lamentations carry a more serious drawback. They leave the book – both as a whole and with regard to each of its chapters – entirely bereft of a structure.<sup>25</sup> As Frederick Dobbs-Allsopp has written, "the poems never really go anywhere either individually or as a collection ... the poetry

<sup>23</sup> Boase, *The Fulfilment of Doom?*, 17; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> I take the epilogue of Ecclesiastes to be integral to the book and not a later addition. See Stuart Weeks, "Fear God and Keep His Commandments": Could Qohelet Have Said This?," in *Wisdom and Torah*, JSJSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 101–18.

<sup>25</sup> Several studies have attempted to identify various structuring mechanisms to the whole of Lamentations such as chiasmus, and concatenation, although by and large these have not fared well when subject to rigorous examination. See Bo Johnson, "Form and Message in Lamentations," *ZAW* 97:1 (1985): 58–73; Carl Wilhelm Eduard Nägelsbach, "Die Klagelieder" in *Der Prophet Jeremia, Die Klagelieder*, Theologisch-homiletisches

seems to be transitional or processual in nature, always moving but never getting anywhere.”<sup>26</sup> For Jill Middlemas, throughout Lamentations, “the jumble of images bubble up to the surface in random order.”<sup>27</sup> Concerning Chapter 1, Robert Salters has gone so far as to write, “the verses are not in any particular order. Indeed, one could place vv. 12–19 in almost any order without serious loss of effect.”<sup>28</sup> Heath Thomas rightly observes, “no research at present observes how the *whole* of Lamentations presents its theology in concert synthetically.”<sup>29</sup>

Remarkably, not a single expositor of this school of multiple voices maintains that there must indeed be a structure but that it eludes us. Rather, finding neither consistent theology nor clear structure in the poem, scholars have made a virtue of necessity, offering poetic rationales for this seeming randomness. Many scholars celebrate the multivocality and polyvalence of the text. For Charles Miller, there is no order, nor conclusion, for the conflict “remains unresolved and unresolvable.”<sup>30</sup> Robert Salters seeks literary virtue in the fractured nature of the poem. For Salters, the disjointed nature of the speeches contributes to a dramatic effect of disoriented speakers, reeling in the aftermath of the destruction.<sup>31</sup>

These approaches level an enormous exegetical weight on this explanation of intentional randomness. Consider the exegetical implications of this through the following illustrative examples. The most optimistic note in the entire book is at the close of Chapter 4, where the narrator prophesizes that Bat-Zion will experience no more exile and that Edom will be requited for her misdeeds. But why does this appear at the point that it does? Why is this not, for example, the closing note of the entire book? What is it about the rhetorical aims of Chapter 4 – and only Chapter 4 – that mandates that this note appears where it does? Can it be that there is really no reason for this, other than the random placement of ideas and images? Or, consider the shift

Bibelwerk 15 (Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1868); William Shea, “The Qinah Structure of the Book of Lamentations,” *Bib* 60 (1979), 103–7; Johan Renkema, *The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I–IV)*, JSOTSup 74 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 294–396; Elie Assis, “The Unity of the Book of Lamentations,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 306–29. See review of the issue in Thomas, *Poetry and Theology*, 25–34.

<sup>26</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 27; see similarly, Boase, *The Fulfillment of Doom?*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Middlemas, *Lamentations*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Robert B. Salters, “Structure and Implication in Lamentations 1?,” *SJOT* 14 (2000): 299.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, *Poetry and Theology*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Charles William Miller, “Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1,” *BibInt* 9 (2001): 407.

<sup>31</sup> Salters, “Structure and Implication,” 300; cf. Klein, *Lamentations*, 6.



of voices in Chapter 1. Across the first nine verses of the chapter, only the narrator speaks. From there on, the voice of Bat-Zion predominates, with occasional interruptions by the narrator. Why is the discourse structured in this way? Why do we not hear Bat-Zion across the first nine verses? What is achieved by the narrator's interruptions in vv. 15 and 17? Or, consider this: In Chapter 2, we find that in vv. 12–19, the narrator directly addresses Bat-Zion in second person. This happens nowhere else, with the exception of 4:21. But why is direct address included here in the middle of Chapter 2 and virtually nowhere else? This approach is all the more surprising given that the author(s) of Lamentations has gone to such lengths to carefully craft acrostic compositions in Chapters 1–4.<sup>32</sup> It seems unlikely that the author would expend great attention to the form of his work, while lacking any plan for the order of the poem's content. To ascribe all of this – and much more – to a poetic of randomness found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible requires an enormous interpretive leap of faith. It is the purpose of the present commentary to focus on precisely these issues. This commentary places a premium on understanding how themes are developed in a systematic fashion within each chapter. It puts pride of place on understanding the rhetorical aims and design of each chapter and how the chapters cohere into a whole.<sup>33</sup>

#### THE VOICES OF LAMENTATIONS

The departure point for understanding the systematic fashion in which Lamentations conveys its theology is through appreciating its employ of a distinct poetic device. Discussions of the poetics of Lamentations routinely address the structural features of acrostic, repetition, and meter – poetic devices found widely throughout the Hebrew Bible. But what makes the poetics of Lamentations distinct is the ubiquitous presence of shifting voices found throughout its first four chapters. Understanding the inter-relationship of these voices is the key to understanding the design and aims of the book as a whole.

<sup>32</sup> The author's penchant for order and structure is further borne out by the elaborate and tight chiasmic structures witnessed in Lamentations 1 and 2. See my study, Joshua Berman, "Criteria for Establishing Chiasmic Structure: Lamentations 1 and 2 as Test Cases," *Maarav* 21 (2014): 51–69.

<sup>33</sup> Philological and grammatical issues will, of course, be dealt with, but not at length if previous commentaries have already addressed them adequately. For commentaries that address these issues thoroughly, see particularly Renkema, *Lamentations*; Westermann, *Lamentations*; Salters, *Lamentations*; Klein, *Lamentations*.

William Lanahan's 1974 study ushered in the recognition by scholars that Lamentations works around a series of characters that are in dialogue, and this is an aspect of the book that has been recognized by all who have written on Lamentations ever since.<sup>34</sup> Scholars differ on how many voices Lamentations employs, though all agree that the voices heard most often are those of the narrator, who employs a third-person discourse concerning Jerusalem, and of Bat-Zion, who speaks of Jerusalem in first-person discourse.<sup>35</sup> There is broad consensus that the author has constructed these characters to express different moods and viewpoints.

It is remarkable, therefore, that one finds in this scholarship no developed profile of either of these characters. There is good reason for this; both the narrator and Bat-Zion, respectively, enunciate widely varying points of view. The narrator can be stern on the one hand, as seen in 1:5, "Her foes have become the masters; her enemies prosper because the LORD has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions."<sup>36</sup> And on the other hand, the narrator can be deeply empathetic, as found in 2:11–13, "My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city ... What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; who can heal you?" Contemporary assessments of the stance of the narrator in Lamentations label him as distanced emotionally from the events themselves.<sup>37</sup> For Frederick Dobbs-Allsopp, he is "impartial."<sup>38</sup> For Delbert Hillers, he is

<sup>34</sup> William F. Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations," *JBL* 93 (1974): 41–49; See also Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Poet as 'Female Impersonator': The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering," *JR* 67 (1987): 164–82. The most highly developed analysis of the speakers is Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem," 129–69.

<sup>35</sup> Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 132, 167, 209, 241–42, 271, identifies six in total: Zion, narrator, the people, Jeremiah, and two choirs. Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 41–49, sees five: a reporter, Zion, a defeated soldier, a bourgeois (ch. 4), and the community as a whole (ch. 5). For Provan (7), there are three: narrator, Zion, and the people of Zion.

<sup>36</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations follow the NSRVue.

<sup>37</sup> There are no linguistic markers in Lamentations 1 that mandate an understanding of the narrator as male. However, it stretches credulity to assume that the author intended to create an androgynous figure, and expositors have generally assumed this to be a male voice. Feminist readings of Lamentations have profitably interpreted the narrator as male, establishing an apposition between the male narrator and Daughter Zion. See Seidman, "Burning the Book," 278–88; Guest, "Hiding Behind," 413–48; Linafelt, "Zion's Cause," 267–90; O'Connor, *Tears of the World*, 110.

<sup>38</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter*, 33.