# Lamentations

Lamentations is series of five poetic dirges over the fallen city of JeruSalem and its people, composed by Jeremiah soon after its destruction by the Babylonians.  
  
Like much poetic prophetic writing, the pronouns change around and make it confusing to see who’s speaking. It may be that the devastated city of JeruSalem herself is ‘speaking’ in places. We’ve guessed exactly where these parts begin and end, formatting the text accordingly. We may not have these 100% right, but we’ve tried our best.

### Lamentations

## Chapter 1

1After IsraEl was captured and JeruSalem was desolated, JeremiAh sat down and cried, wailing this lamentation over the city:  
  
 ‘O how that city, once filled with people  
 Must now sit all alone.  
 Among the nations, she [sits as] a widow…  
 She is ruled and [must pay] a tribute.  
  
 2‘She cried and wept all through the night,  
 As tears rolled down her cheeks;  
 For, no one is left to offer her comfort  
 Among all those who once loved her.  
 Yes, those who cared have now left her,  
 And her enemies, they’ve become.  
  
 3‘Humiliation has come upon Judah,  
 For [all of her people] were [taken away]  
 And she has become just a slave.  
  
 ‘Now, she finds no way to rest,  
 Because she [belongs to] the gentiles.  
 Yes, all those who chased her have caught her,  
 And [she lives] among those who oppress her.  
  
 4‘The roads to Zion now mourn,  
 For there’s no one who comes there  
 To celebrate her holiday feasts.  
  
 ‘All of her gates have been broken,  
 All of her Priests must now groan,  
 And all of her virgins are captives;  
 So, inside herself, she’s bitter.  
 5For her head is those who oppose her,  
 And to her enemies, [she now must submit].  
  
 ‘Her humiliation was brought by Jehovah,  
 Because she no longer showed Him respect.  
 So her young were led off as captives  
 Before those who have oppressed her.  
  
 6‘The daughters of Zion (her beauty) are gone,  
 [And others now serve as] their rulers.  
 As rams without pasture, they left without strength  
 In front of those who’d pursued them.  
 7So, when she thinks of these days of disgrace,  
 She is very upset.  
  
 ‘All of her beautiful things [are now gone]…  
 Those things that she’s had since most ancient times.  
 For her people fell into the hands of oppressors,  
 And no one came to their aid.  
 Then all her enemies laughed  
 When they saw these things being taken away.  
  
 8‘It was because of JeruSalem’s sins  
 That she was allowed to be battered.  
 She was humbled by the One who’d loved her  
 When He saw how indecent she’d become.  
 So now, she [just sits there and] groans,  
 And all she does is reflect.  
  
 9‘Her filth lies there at her feet,  
 Because she forgot how things would work out.  
 So, she’s now been brought low,  
 And there’s no place where she can find comfort.  
  
 ‘[She cries]:  
  
 *‘O Lord, see how I’ve been shamed;*  
 *For, to my enemies, I now must submit!’*  
  
 10‘Those who oppressed her have reached out their hands  
 To take her desirable things.  
 She watched as the gentiles entered her [Temple]…  
 Those whom [God] said should not enter  
 Among the assembly [of His people].  
  
 11‘Now, all of her people are groaning  
 Because they’re searching for bread.  
 Her desirable things, they’ve traded for food,  
 In order to save their own lives.  
  
 ‘O Jehovah,  
  
 ‘Please look down upon this,  
 For, she has been so disgraced!  
  
 [And she says:]  
  
 12*‘All those to whom You once became close*  
 *But thereafter chose to reject You,*  
 *Will see if there’s pain like the pain that I feel.*  
 *For, I’ve been humbled by the One who addressed me…*  
 *By Jehovah, in the day of His rage.*  
  
 13*‘To my bones, He’s sent fire…*  
 *Yes, fire is what He’s sent.*  
 *Then He spread out a net for my feet*  
 *To turn me back and make me retreat.*  
 *He appointed me to be hidden from view*  
 *And to grieve throughout the rest of my days.*  
  
 14*‘He was aware of my godless deeds;*  
 *For, they were close to my hands…*  
 *And then they [crawled] up my neck.*  
 *So, all of my strength has now left me,*  
 *Since Jehovah’s put grief in my hands*  
 *And I’m unable to stand.*  
  
 15*‘All of my mighty have left me,*  
 *As has Jehovah, [my God].*  
 *For the time arrived for His visit,*  
 *And to break the best of my men.*  
 *So the Lord has trodden the winepress*  
 *Of the virgin daughter of Judah.’*  
  
 16*‘It’s over such things that I weep…*  
 *It’s why my eyes are now filled with tears.*  
 *For, those who would offer me comfort*  
 *(Those who would bring back my life)*  
 *[Have now been carried] away.*  
 *Yes, all of my sons are now gone…*  
 *And by my enemies, I’ve been conquered.’*  
  
 17‘So, although Zion has spread out her hands,  
 There’s no one who’ll come to console her.  
 For Jehovah gave a warning to Jacob  
 That they’d be surrounded by those who’d attack.  
  
 ‘JeruSalem was to serve as a woman  
 Who was set apart from the unclean…  
 Although she had to live in their midst.  
 18Yet, Jehovah has been proven righteous;  
 For, we’re the ones who embittered His mouth.  
  
 [‘For she says:]  
  
 *‘So, hear all you peoples and look at my pain,*  
 *Since all my young men and virgins are gone…*  
 *They’ve all been taken as captives!*  
  
 19*‘I was misled by those whom I loved…*  
 *My priests and my elders had failed me!*  
 *They just wanted food for themselves,*  
 *So they could save their own lives.*  
  
 20*‘Behold, O Lord, my painful condition,*  
 *For my stomach is very upset*  
 *And my heart is rolling within me!*  
  
 *‘I’ve become very bitter,*  
 *For the sword has left me without any sons…*  
 *It’s as though there’s death in my home.*  
  
 21*‘Listen indeed to my groaning,*  
 *For there’s no one to offer me comfort.*  
 *Since our enemies had heard of our badness,*  
 *They rejoiced at the things that they did.*  
 *But upon them, You’ll bring a day and a time*  
 *When they’ll become just like me!*  
  
 22*‘Yes, may their evils fall upon them…*  
 *Glean them as they’ve gleaned me for my sins!*  
 *For, [they’re the cause] of my groaning,*  
 *And they’re the ones upsetting my heart.’*

### Lamentations

## Chapter 2

1‘O how dark was the rage of Jehovah  
 When it came to the daughter of Zion.  
 For He pulled IsraEl’s glory out of the heights  
 And threw it down to the ground…  
 Yes, in the day of His rage,  
 He forgot the stool for His feet.  
  
 2‘[He] didn’t hold back, nor did He spare  
 Jacob’s beautiful things.  
 In His rage, He destroyed all the forts  
 Of the virgin daughter of Judah.  
 He cut them down to the ground,  
 And profaned our rulers and king.  
  
 3‘He broke them to pieces in anger and rage,  
 Taking all of IsraEl’s strength…  
 He turned His hand from the enemy’s face  
 And allowed them to set Jacob ablaze…  
 To consume everything that’s around him.  
  
 4‘As an enemy, He stretched tight His bow,  
 And as an opponent, he stiffened His hand  
 To destroy all the things that my eyes had desired.  
 On the Tents of the daughters of Zion,  
 He poured out the flames of His rage.  
  
 5‘So Jehovah became our enemy…  
 He sunk IsraEl and all its estates.  
 He also destroyed all its forts…  
 The strongholds of the daughters of Judah.  
  
 ‘He multiplied those who were humbling us,  
 And increased the numbers of humbled.  
  
 6‘Like a grapevine, He spread out His Tent,  
 And His holiday feasts, He corrupted.  
 He forgot all the things He’d appointed for Zion…  
 The holiday feasts and the Sabbaths.  
 He did this, because we’d provoked Him,  
 Then He threatened our king and our priests in His rage.  
  
 7‘[He] thrust away His own Altar…  
 His Holy Place, He’s brushed aside.  
 So our enemies broke down our walls,  
 And shouted in the House of Jehovah  
 As we used to do on our holiday feasts.  
  
 8‘Jehovah made plans to ruin the walls  
 Of the virgin daughter of Zion.  
 First, He stretched out His ruler,  
 Then His hand sent a trampling upon us,  
 Which caused us to mourn around all our walls,  
 Because the walls were destroyed,  
 9And the gates had been cut to the ground…  
 They broke and destroyed the bars for our gates!  
  
 ‘So now, her king and her rulers  
 Have been scattered among all the nations,  
 And there’s no longer a Law,  
 Nor do our prophets see visions.  
  
 10‘They silently sit on the ground  
 (The elders of the daughter of Zion)  
 As they throw dust on their heads…  
 As they’re dressing in sackcloth…  
 As the heads of JeruSalem’s virgins  
 Are being pushed to the ground.  
  
 11‘Then the tears in my eyes started to fail,  
 Because my heart had become so disturbed.  
 My glory had just been poured on the ground  
 By the destruction of all the daughters  
 And the nursing mothers with babies,  
 There in our city squares.  
  
 12‘From the mothers, they demanded their grain and their wine  
 When they were as weak as the wounded.  
 Then, in those squares, they poured out the lives  
 [Of the babies] that nursed at their breasts.  
  
 13‘And now, what more can I say,  
 O virgin daughter of JeruSalem…  
 To what can you be compared?  
 Who can now come and save you,  
 O virgin daughter of Zion…  
 Since the cup of destruction was widened for you,  
 Who can now bring you healing?  
  
 14‘Although your prophets saw all of your folly,  
 They refused to uncover your sins  
 And save you from this captivity…  
 Even though they were concerned about your foolish ways,  
 And they knew that you had to be purged!  
  
 15‘Now, people clap hands as they’re passing,  
 And whistle as they shake their heads  
 Over JeruSalem’s daughter:  
  
 *‘Isn’t she the one who was called glory’s crown…*  
 *The most joyful place on the earth?’*  
  
 16‘But your enemies opened their mouths  
 And whistled, as they ground their teeth.  
 They said:  
  
 *‘We’ll swallow her down,*  
 *And this is the day that we planned…*  
 *We found it and [we made it happen]!’*  
  
 17‘So Jehovah did what He’d decided…  
 He finished what He said must be done…  
 The things that He said [He must do] long ago.  
 So He didn’t spare, He demolished…  
 He brought your enemies joy over you,  
 And raised the trumpets of those who attacked you!  
  
 18‘Before Jehovah, they were yelling:  
  
 *‘We’ll tear down all of Zion’s walls*  
 *And make its people stream tears day and night!*  
 *Don’t allow them the time to get sober,*  
 *Or to let their eyes become still!’*  
  
 19‘So, during the night, awaken and think…  
 At the start of each watch, pour out your hearts  
 Before the face of Jehovah!  
 Raise your arms up before Him  
 On behalf of the children who are starving,  
 Which are found on every street corner!  
  
  
 20‘Behold, O Lord…  
  
 ‘See what You’ve gleaned!  
 Should women eat the fruit of their bellies?  
 Should the babies be murdered as they’re nursing on breasts?  
 Will you kill the priests and the prophets  
 Inside the Holy Place of Jehovah?  
  
 21‘Young boys must now sleep in the streets  
 Along with the old men and virgins.  
 My young men were all taken captive,  
 And then killed by the famine and swords.  
 For, in the day of Your rage,  
 You slashed and You haven’t spared any!  
  
 22‘As a festival day (as no other day),  
 You called to those living around us.  
 Then because of Your rage, no one was saved…  
 They left no one behind…  
 My enemies were filled, and You won.’

### Lamentations

## Chapter 3

1‘Now, I’m a man who’s helpless,  
 For the rod of His rage has been laid upon me.  
 2He took me, then led me away  
 Into the darkness (not into the light).  
  
 3‘So, throughout the rest of my days,  
 Against me, He’s turned His hand.  
 4My flesh and my skin, He’s made old,  
 And He’s broken my bones.  
  
 5‘Against me, He’s now built [a wall],  
 And my head He’s encircled with trouble.  
 6Inside a dark place, He has put me,  
 As though I’d been dead throughout the ages.  
  
 7‘Against me, He’s constructed a wall  
 Through which I can’t escape,  
 And with a brass chain, He’s weighed me down.  
  
 8‘Although I cry out and yell,  
 He’s shut out my prayers…  
 9He’s blocked all my roads and my ways!  
  
 10‘He’s become a bear that’s lying in wait,  
 And a lion that’s lurking, unseen.  
 11When I rebelled, He then chased me down  
 And caused me to no longer be…  
 He established me to be wiped away.  
  
 12‘He’s stretched tight His bow,  
 And set me on a stone as His target.  
 13Into my kidneys, He’s shot poison arrows  
 14And He’s made me a source of His laughter…  
 A psalm throughout the whole day.  
  
 15‘With bitterness, He’s now filled me,  
 And bile, I’ve been given to drink.  
 16With a small rock, He knocked out my teeth,  
 And then He gave me ashes to eat.  
  
 17‘He’s pushed peace from my life,  
 And made me forget all the good things I had.  
 18So I said that my victory had perished  
 Along with my hope in Jehovah.  
  
 19‘But, this is what I remembered:  
  
 ‘Despite the state that I came to be in  
 (My persecution, bitterness, and bile),  
 20I haven’t been forgotten…  
 Yes, my life will continue!  
 21This is [the thought] that I’ve kept in my heart,  
 And the reason why I keep on waiting.  
  
 22‘For the mercies of [God] never end,  
 And His compassions will never fail.  
 23Each morning, they’re renewed,  
 And on Him, we can always rely.  
  
 24*‘The portion that’s mine is Jehovah,’* said my soul.  
 And because of this, I’ll keep waiting.  
 25For Jehovah is good to all those who wait  
 And wholeheartedly keep searching for Him.  
  
 26‘So it’s good [for us all] to be quiet  
 And await Jehovah’s salvation.  
 27And it’s also good for each man to bear  
 His own yoke from the time he’s young.  
  
 28‘Yes, we should sit all alone  
 And quietly carry our loads,  
 29Then put our mouths to the dust,  
 And believe that there’s still hope.  
  
 30‘We should turn the other cheek when they slap us,  
 And we should accept all their scorn.  
 31For, [in our hearts], we’ll know that Jehovah  
 Won’t push us away throughout the ages.  
 32Since, in His abundance of mercy,  
 He shows pity for those who humble themselves.  
  
 33‘Harsh replies don’t come from His heart,  
 As He teaches sons of men to be humble.  
 34And now He’s humbled the feet  
 Of those who’ve been carried away from this land.  
  
 35‘From before His face in the heights,  
 He’s removed the decisions of men.  
 36But Jehovah never said that He’d bring  
 Condemnation upon all mankind.  
 37And who could ever say such a thing…  
 Yes, who could cause it to happen  
 Without Jehovah saying it’s so?  
  
 38‘From His mouth in the heights can come good or bad.  
 39So, why do the living choose to grumble  
 At others concerning their sins?  
 40For before Him, our ways are stretched and examined  
 To see how we can be turned to the Lord.  
 41So, we should lift our hearts with our hands  
 Towards the Most High in heaven.  
  
 42‘It’s because we’ve been irreverent sinners  
 Who don’t deserve any forgiveness,  
 43That we’ve been wrapped in His rage…  
 Yes it’s because we chose to reject Him  
 That He decided to send us away…  
 Why He chose to destroy, not to spare us.  
  
 44‘So He wrapped Himself in a cloud  
 And closed His eyes to our prayers…  
 45Then He pushed us away.  
  
 46‘So against us, our enemies [shouted],  
 47Which stunned us and made us feel fear…  
 And then, our destruction arrived.  
  
 48‘So, tears have poured from my eyes  
 For the destruction of the daughters of my people.  
 49But I’ll [drink the tears] from my eyes,  
 And I’ll not hold back or be quiet  
 50Until the time that I can look through  
 And see Jehovah in the heavens.  
  
 51‘Now my eyes look back on my life in great rage  
 For [what’s happened to] the daughters of my city.  
  
 52‘By our enemies, we were hunted like sparrows,  
 53And now they’ve ended my life…  
 They’ve tossed me into a grave  
 And covered it up with a stone.  
 54Then, as water dripped down on my head, I said:  
  
 ‘I’ve just been thrown away.’  
  
 55‘So I called on Your Name, O Jehovah,  
 From out of the lowest of pits.  
 56I said:  
  
 ‘Don’t cover Your ears…  
 Hear my voice and the things that I beg.’  
  
 57‘Then You came to my aid on the day that I called,  
 And You told me that I shouldn’t be afraid!  
  
 58‘O Lord,  
  
 ‘You have pleaded my case,  
 And then You ransomed my soul.  
 59For You’ve seen the things that they’ve done, O Jehovah;  
 So pass judgement on them on my behalf.  
  
 60‘You’ve beheld their vengeance upon me,  
 And the plans that they’ve laid out against me.  
 61You listened to their scornful words  
 And saw the [things that they did]…  
 62You heard from the lips of those who attacked me  
 And You knew what they thought all day long.  
 63For, when they sat down and when they arose,  
 You saw what they did through their own eyes!  
  
 64‘O Jehovah,  
  
 ‘Will You pay them back for what they deserve,  
 According to the works of their hands?  
 65Curse them for all the trouble they’ve caused,  
 66Then pursue them in rage and remove them  
 From all places under the sky, O Lord.

### Lamentations

## Chapter 4

1‘O how the gold’s lost its luster  
 And how the silver’s been tarnished;  
 For the [Temple’s] holy stones have been tossed in the streets.  
  
 2‘For because the sons of Zion esteemed  
 And gained their courage from things made of gold,  
 They came to be looked on as earthenware pots…  
 And as works in the hands of a potter.  
  
 3‘Then, nursing cubs were stripped from the breasts  
 By those who’d become like the Dragon,  
 And the daughters of my people were abandoned  
 Like sparrows that are lost in the desert.  
  
 4‘Now the tongues of the nursing, stick to the breasts,  
 In hope that their thirst can be quenched.  
 And as the infants are crying for bread,  
 It’s being snatched from their mouths.  
  
 5‘So from those who once ate the best,  
 All been taken away…  
 And those who were raised wearing purple  
 Are found in the streets embracing manure.  
  
 6‘For the lawless ways of my people’s daughters  
 Proved to be greater than Sodom…  
 That place which none tried to save  
 When it was being wiped away.  
  
 7‘Her Nazarites were once like the snow…  
 Radiant and whiter than milk…  
 Yes, even better than sapphires!  
 8But now, their appearance is darker than soot,  
 And they’re unrecognized in the streets.  
 For their skin is now stuck to their bones,  
 And they’ve dried up like lumber.  
  
 9‘It was better for those who were killed by the sword  
 Than for those who’ve been pierced by starvation…  
 Those in want of the produce of fields.  
  
 10‘And the hands of women [who were known for their] pity,  
 Then boiled their own children as food…  
 So amid the destruction of the daughters of my people,  
 11Jehovah completed His rage.  
  
 ‘Then, as He poured out the wrath of His rage,  
 He lit a fire throughout Zion,  
 Which burned her to her foundations.  
  
 12‘To the kings of the earth who lived in that time,  
 It was hard to believe…  
 That an enemy could enter JeruSalem’s gates  
 And then bring so much devastation.  
  
 13‘But it happened because of the sins of her prophets…  
 The failures of all her priests…  
 And the shedding of innocent blood in her midst.  
  
 14‘Then, in her streets, her watchmen were stunned;  
 For, they became [spattered] with blood…  
 It was something that they couldn’t avoid,  
 Since the clothes that they wore had to touch it.  
  
 15‘So, people started shouting:  
  
 *‘Get away… Get away,*  
 *Because you’re all now unclean!*  
 *Get away… Get away… Don’t touch them!’*  
  
 ‘Then, after we fled and wandered about,  
 The gentiles said:  
  
 *‘You can’t stay among us!’*  
  
 ‘Yes the gentiles shouted at us:  
  
 *‘There’s no way that we want you to come here!’*  
  
 16‘Even though our portion was the person of [God],  
 He no longer kept watch over us,  
 For the people had shown no respect  
 To their elders or Priests.  
  
 17‘So our eyes had started to fail  
 As we were searching for aid…  
 They just watched us and offered no help…  
 A nation with no one to save them.  
  
 18‘Now, stay away from our city squares,  
 For they’re hunting our young…  
 Our time has approached and our days are fulfilled,  
 So our end is now close at hand!  
  
 19‘For, those who chase us are even more agile  
 Than eagles [that attack from] the mountains…  
 They’re sitting there and waiting for us  
 From their perches high over the desert.  
  
 20‘Jehovah’s anointed (our life’s breath and lord)  
 Has also been seized and carried away  
 Because we became so corrupt…  
 Yes, this one about whom we’d once said:  
  
 *‘Among the nations, we’ll dwell in his shadow.’*  
  
 21‘So rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom…  
 The one who’s residing in Uz!  
 Yet you’ll also go into the cup of the Lord,  
 Where, after you’re drunk, you’ll be poured.’  
  
 22‘O great daughter of Zion;  
 Your lawless acts have now reached their end,  
 And [God] won’t be in the places you’re sent.  
  
 ‘And you, O daughter of Edom;  
 He’ll also examine your lawless ways,  
 And reveal your unrighteous deeds.

### Lamentations

## Chapter 5

1‘O Jehovah,  
  
 ‘Remember what’s happened to us…  
 Look down and see how we’ve been scorned!  
 2Our inheritance has been [given] to strangers,  
 And our houses have been offered to gentiles.  
  
 3‘Since we don’t have fathers, we’re orphans,  
 And all of our mothers are widows.  
 4So now we must pay for our water,  
 And we must barter for wood.  
  
 5‘Because we were closely pursued,  
 We tired and couldn’t find rest.  
 6Then to Egypt, we held out our hands,  
 And also to Assyria’s bounty.  
  
 7‘Since our fathers had sinned, they’re now gone…  
 They’ve paid the cost of breaking Your Law.  
 8And as a result, we’re now slaves,  
 Who have no one to redeem us.  
  
 9‘We carry bread at the risk of our lives  
 Before the swords in the desert,  
 10And our skins are dark, as though oven baked,  
 For they’ve shriveled from famine.  
  
 11‘They’ve [raped] the women of Zion,  
 And the virgins in the cities of Judah.  
 12Rulers were hung by their hands,  
 And no longer could elders be recognized.  
  
 13‘So the best of men are now weeping,  
 And from hauling wood, the young men are weak.  
 14Our elders no longer sit at our gates,  
 And our [singers] no longer sing psalms.  
 15So what once brought joy and dance to our hearts,  
 Has now been turned into dirges.  
  
 16‘It’s because of our sins  
 That the crowns of our heads reflect woe…  
 17The grief in our hearts is more grievous,  
 And our eyes have become even darker.  
  
 18‘Mount Zion has now been destroyed,  
 And it looks like foxes ran through it.  
 19But You, O Jehovah, exist throughout the ages…  
 Throughout generations of generations, Your throne has remained.  
  
 20‘So, why did You forget to let us succeed…  
 Will we be forsaken throughout the rest of our days?  
  
 21‘Please turn back to us, O Jehovah,  
 Then, when we return, we’ll renew our days  
 As they’d been long ago!  
 22But we were pushed away and rejected  
 Because we provoked You to rage.’