

## **Dr. Leslie Allen, Lamentations, Session 5, Lamentation 2:1-22**

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This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Lamentations. This is session 5, Lamentations 2:1-22.

In this video we should be looking at the whole of chapter 2 and it would be good to give a quick analysis of its various parts and to see who's speaking.

For much of the chapter, our main speaker in chapter 1, or our mentor, continues to speak and takes over from Zion, who's been speaking at the end of chapter 1. But here, in verses 1 to 10, our mentor is talking about Jerusalem and Judah concerning what God had done to them in the recent tragedy of Jerusalem's and Judah's fall. And then, in verses 11 to 19, the mentor is now talking to Zion about the tragedy, and Zion is addressed. And at the end of that section, in verses 18 and 19, the mentor urges Zion to pray.

And then finally, in verses 20 to 22, Zion does pray. Looking over chapter 2 as a whole, we notice it has a literary frame, and it's the day of the Lord motif that we've already encountered at the end of chapter 1. Verse 1 speaks of the day of his anger, and then verse 22 the day of the anger of the Lord. And so there's this literary framework, and there's this appeal to the pre-exilic prophets as a basic interpretation of the tragedy of the fallen Judah and Jerusalem.

And then, as genre, verses 1 to 10 are obviously a funeral lament. It starts out with that how that shriek that scream that emotional reaction before it moves on into more rational ways of thinking. And that rational way of thinking is speaking in terms of grief as loss as a reversal between the normality of Jerusalem in the past and the series of abnormalities that Jerusalem had experienced.

But as we've seen before, it's not a conventional funeral lament; it's not purely secular, but it includes God, and in fact, it majors in God's involvement. And so, it's an adaptation of a funeral lament. But essentially, it consists of grief as the description of losses that Jerusalem had suffered as a result of God's intervention.

Then we can think in terms of grief processes, the psychological processes that are being undergone here. And first of all it's grief itself in the narrower sense of reacting to loss. And especially there is in 1 to 10 reflection on the meaning of the tragedy, on the theological factor which is strongly emphasized that Yahweh is responsible.

Thirdly, there's a response of mourning behavior mentioned at the end of verse 5 and also featured in verse 10. That last factor helps us divide verses 1 to 10 into two

sections: 1 to 5 and then 6 to 10. 1 to 5 features the disaster that Yahweh has brought about, ending at the end of verse 5 in the distress that it caused.

And then 6 picks up once again the disaster that Yahweh has brought about, and verse 10, the distress that it has caused. The trajectories that are involved is obviously grief in terms of loss and implicitly guilt as Jerusalem and Judah are the victims of God's punishment. In verse 1 the main speaker picks up that day of the Lord motif with which Zion had opened her first speech in chapter 1 and verse 12.

And so, he takes over her prophetic explanation of this tragedy. Most of the content of pre-exilic prophesying was negative, talking about God's coming judgment. And one motif it used to describe it was the day of the Lord, the time when God would intervene in a terrible reprisal for his people sinning against him.

In chapter 1, verse 12, anger was associated with God's anger on the day of his fierce anger. The mentor picks up this linking of anger with the day again at the end of verse 1, on the day of his anger. And anger, we shall find, is very much a feature.

It comes again and again, either literally or with synonyms. Synonyms. We find wrath in verse 2. We find fierce anger in verse 3. And so, it goes on.

We find fury like fire in verse 4 and fierce indignation in verse 6. And so it's very much a feature, this opening up of this aspect of anger, and we shall need to think about that. We saw that the day of the Lord was very much, does occur, definitely occurs in the pre-exilic prophets. I can't remember if we referred to its linking with anger in Zephaniah. The prophet Zephaniah associates that day of the Lord with anger.

Yes, I did speak of it, Zephaniah 1:14, the great day of the Lord is near and verse 15 says that day will be a day of wrath. And so, in this whole treatment, we're back with the pre-exilic prophets, and the claim is made here is prophecy fulfilled. And so, anger dominates that first section there.

Let's think about God's anger. We don't think of it very much. Divine anger, if we think about it at all, we contrast it with God's love and we are right in doing that because scripture itself does it.

We think of John chapter 3, and there are three, and there are two important verses there for our consideration. John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life. But John 3.36 gives us a shadow side to that promise.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life but must endure God's wrath. And there we are, love over against wrath. We

never seem to hear sermons on God's anger these days, but we do hear plenty on God's love. The Bible is more balanced than that.

There's this pair of terms, polarized terms, love or anger. Yes they're polarized, they're parallel in a sense but they're radically different, not only as negative and positive but in other respects. Love is a regular attribute of God, anger is not.

Anger is a reaction to a human provocation. If there were no human provocation, God would never get angry. Divine anger is God's moral reaction to human wrongdoing in the name of justice.

It's not an initiating factor, and it's a reactive factor. In our first video, we made reference to the description of the fall of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 25, and we saw that it was largely a historical account, but yes, it's 24 and 25. At the end of verse 24, there's a theological element brought in just in passing, but it's so important; it's something that the editors have made plain earlier on in this epic history.

2 Kings 24 20, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the Lord that he expelled them from his presence, and so the fall of Jerusalem is an example of God's anger. And our mentor here would agree that this is so. There's another keyword in Lamentations 2, that first part, and it's destroy, destroy.

This, too, is a negative term that very much goes along with anger, but here is the outworking of anger. In verse 2, the Lord has destroyed, and in verse 5, he's destroyed. We find that twice and then later on in verse 8, destroying.

And so here's the outworking of that anger in destruction, in fact. A striking feature of verses 1 to 7 is that God is a subject. God is featured in a negative way.

In most of those sentences they have God is subject as a verb of destruction and part of Jerusalem or Judah is the object of that destruction. And that's not an accident, that does link up with something we find in the pre-exilic prophets. Here, I refer to a way of speaking that the prophets have, which is what we call an oracle of disaster or an oracle of judgment.

That has two component parts or even three, and it starts out by giving a reason. Why should God punish his people or the capital? There's a reason given, and there's then an announcement, and the second half of the two sections, speaks of divine intervention in a negative way. God is doing something, and I will do something. Do something bad, and then it speaks of human consequences.

Again and again, we find this formula of an oracle of disaster being used again and again. And I'll just read one example, Amos chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Judah and for four, I will not revoke the punishment

because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his statutes but have been led astray by the same lies after which their ancestors walked. That's the reason.

But now we come to the announcement. First, there is the divine intervention, and then there are the human consequences. So, I will send a fire on Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

And that element in that prophetic pattern, I will send a fire on Judah, this is what is being picked up in Lamentations chapter 2 in these early verses with the only change that it's a report of God's intervention, and so instead of I it is he the Lord himself is responsible in the third person. And so, Lamentations is here again, taking a leaf out of the prophetic books, and it's associating this style of speaking is associated with prophetic oracles of disaster. And so this is a further endorsement of the prophetic revelation.

Those oracles of disaster with that negative intervention, personal intervention of God. It's happened. Here it is.

And it's come sadly true. Very often, one needs to look at the background behind Lamentations in order to interpret it right. So much in Lamentations has a cultural context one needs to appreciate.

So, we can now understand the tone of what the mentor is saying. He is commending to the congregation his interpretation of the lost war against Babylon in a theological way in terms of God's own intervention into this national situation. And so we have in verse one a reference to Jerusalem speaking about Zion.

But most of that first part is talking about Judah in verses one to five apart from verse one. But then in six to ten he wants to speak about Jerusalem and so there's a differentiation. But he does start with Zion.

How the Lord, in his anger, has humiliated daughter Zion. Some uncertainty about that translation but we won't go into that of that verb. Daughter Zion.

Once again, Zion is personified as a woman. He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel. He has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

The splendor of Israel and the footstool I interpret here as metaphors for Zion in view of the mention just before of daughter Zion. The splendor of Jerusalem is that it was Israel's glorious center and focal point of importance in Judah and it was his footstool. Primarily the ark was regarded as God's footstool.

The image of God's presence, God's religious presence. But now this is applied to the city. The God himself has been present in that city.

But he does not remember his footstool. It doesn't mean that that is not speaking of elapsed memory here. But it's speaking of ignoring, putting out of his mind that whole situation of that special role of Jerusalem and acting in a quite different way.

In verse 2, the Lord has destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob. This sounds terrible, but we have to recall, in fact, that it's an echo of pre-exilic prophetic speaking. This without pity, no pity.

It occurs a number of times in the pre-exilic prophets. For instance, in Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 14, we have the word ruthlessly in the NRSV but strictly it's without pity or without mercy. And this is an expression in chapter 2, it occurs a number of times.

It's going to occur again in verse 17. So, it's another of these keywords. In verse 17, he is demolished without pity.

Unfortunately, the NRSV now varies its translation, but it's the same expression as without mercy early on. And then in verse 21, without mercy. The NIV throughout translates without pity for these three expressions.

And so, this too is taken from prophetic prophecy. So, from a variety of angles, it's being said prophecy has been fulfilled before your eyes. It's talking now about Judah, the dwellings of Jacob have been destroyed.

The strongholds of daughter Judah are the defensive fortresses on the frontiers of Judah. And then he's brought down to the ground in dishonor of the kingdom and its rulers. That royal nation ruled by a king for so many centuries has now perished.

In verse 3, he's cut down in fierce anger, all the might of Israel. Literally it's the horn and the NIV keeps that literal translation but what it would mean to a reader, I'm not sure. But the horn is a metaphor.

It's taken from the wild ox, which would engage in fighting its foe, another wild ox. And when it had brought the enemy down, it would lift up its horn and bellow. And that lifting up of the horn is its power as triumphant.

Later on in the chapter, we're going to find this notion picked up when we eventually come to it. Yes, in verse 17, he has exalted the might of your foes. Literally, he's raised, lifted up the horn of your foes like wild oxen.

Ah, we've won, we've won. And God has been responsible for that metaphorical lifting up of the horn. And then we find God more intimately, more personally

involved, one might say, in verse 4, he's bent his bow like an arrow with his right hand set like a foe.

He is killed. He's an archer here. He is killed all in whom we took pride in the tent of daughter Zion, all our leaders, religious and political, and they're all dead. He's poured out his fury like fire.

The Lord has become like an enemy. He's destroyed Israel, destroyed all its palaces. We've gone back, we had that tent of daughter Zion, it's the city.

We went back to talking about Zion, but now the main theme of Judah comes back in 5. Destroyed Israel, destroyed all its palaces. We think of palaces as a royal word, Buckingham Palace, but better-rendered mansions, which rich people built for themselves, big structures, well-defended structures, which Judah was full of—and laid in ruins its strongholds, multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation.

That reference to mourning behavior ends this first little section of 1 to 5, this response of mourning. Then we start again, but here we're concentrating only on Zion from 6 to 9. He's broken down his booth like a garden. The booth and then the tabernacle in the next half-line are both archaic references to the temple.

And here, he's broken down his booth like a garden, it doesn't make very much sense. It's really a sort of shorthand expression, like a garden booth, like a booth in a garden, like a flimsy structure you might find in a garden. He's broken it down; that solid structure of the temple destroyed his temple.

The Lord is abolished in Zion, festivals, and the Sabbath. And so here is a loss indeed of that religious worship which had been held for so long, so many centuries. And in his fierce indignation is spurned, king and priest.

We still have religious services in mind and the king sometimes took part, had a part to play in religious services. And so, this is why he's mentioned along with the priest. And we carry on with this religious way of thinking in verse 7. The Lord has scorned his altar and disowned his sanctuary.

He is delivered into the hands of the enemy, the walls of her palaces. These great mansions were not only scattered through Judah but also a feature of Jerusalem. A clamor was raised in the house of the Lord as on a day of festival.

There's bitter irony there because the temple would be a noisy place at temple time when the services were going on. The temple choirs would be singing, and the congregation would be shouting out responses of hallelujahs, but now it's transformed. But there's still a noise, but now it's a terrible noise, the raucous shouts of enemy troops.

And so, there's an ironic contrast and comparison here at the end. And then in verse 8, the Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of daughter Zion. And this is something that verse 17 is going to develop further.

When we come to verse 17, we can look back at verse 8 and see that this determination is God's plan, God's planning, God's deliberate work that he'd already announced to his people. We will wait and see that interpretation in verse 17. He stretched out the line.

He did not withhold his hand from destroying. Stretching out the line is a metaphor here for marking out condemned property that had to be demolished. And a number of times in the Old Testament, it's used.

And God has set out that marker, that yellow tape that we might say, and then beyond this point, the destruction will happen. And in verse 8, we've got a repetition of that, one of those keywords of verses 1 to 5. He calls rampart and wall to lament, and they languish together. Rampart, the outer wall, and then the more solid inner wall.

And they'd all fallen. The walls had been demolished. And so the Babylonians could surge in at the end of that siege of 18 months.

And talking about that disaster, her gates have sunk into the ground. He has ruined and broken her bars. There were bars normally across the pair of gates, but now that bar had been destroyed.

And so, the gate could be forced open. Her king and princes are among the nations. Another great loss was that they were exiled along with other Judeans.

Guidance is no more. Here in the latter part of verse 9, we're talking about leadership being lost. King and the princes, the royal officials, they're no longer in Jerusalem.

Guidance is no more. It's literally Torah, but in the sense of instruction, instruction that the priests would tend to give. And so, there's no priestly instruction because the priests are not around anymore.

And then lastly, the prophets obtained no vision from the Lord. There's no fresh prophetic revelation. And so, there's a loss of leadership, three types of leadership are there no more.

And then, in verse 10, we come back to the mourning behavior of distress in reaction to such a disaster. The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence. They've thrown dust on their heads.

They put on a sackcloth, very much like Job's comforters at the end of Job chapter two, which we read out in our first video. These are mourning activities. Involved are elders and then also young girls of Jerusalem age and gender are united in a common grief.

The young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. And this association with the ground is very much a part of grieving in the ancient world. In verse 11, we have the response of the mentor himself.

In verse 10, he's spoken of other people's responses in Jerusalem, and now he gives his own response. And it's in tears, in terms of tears. My eyes are spent with weeping.

My stomach churns. There's this psychosomatic reaction. My bile is poured out on the ground.

I vomit. I'm so upset because of the destruction of my people. And here's the empathy of this mentor.

He's a fellow citizen with those who had been destroyed literally and those who were left. Then, he gives an example of what hurt him, especially infants and babies fainting in the streets of the city. And he thinks back to that siege situation.

And grown-ups could live longer. Their bodies were more developed, but youngsters, infants, and babes didn't have the stamina to cope with the starvation and the privation that was necessary. And so, he thinks back to that as a horrible thing, the suffering of these infants and babes and no food to give them.

And this is spoken of further in verse 12. They cried to their mothers. All these should really be past tense because the situation of lamentations is after the siege, after the capture of Jerusalem, but it's looking back to that siege situation.

They cried to their mothers, where is bread and wine? As they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city as their life is poured out on their mother's bosom. Where is bread and wine? We might say where is bread and water, but the water supply run out. And all you could look for is what was in the storage cupboard.

Well, what was left? Well, hopefully there might be some wine there for them to drink. There might be some; it's literally grain, grain, and bread rots after a little



while, but grain, where are grain and wine? That's the literal sense. And its storage items might still be left in this starving environment.

And they faint like the wounded. The wounded are casualties in war, soldiers out fighting, but this is collateral damage that these children suffer in this perceived city. And all their mothers can do is to hold them tight in their arms as they die.

And so, in verse 13 through 17, the mentor turns to speak to Zion. Now he's spoken about Zion, about Judah, but now he speaks to Zion. He turns to the woman beside him and speaks to her in that liturgy.

What can I say to you? What compare 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? And he's overwhelmed. He says how overwhelmed he is by this whole tragedy. He talks rather like Zion herself back in 1:12 where she spoke of the uniqueness of her sorrow.

Is there any sorrow like my sorrow which is brought upon me? And he picks up this note of uniqueness that he can't describe it. He can't adequately compare it with anything within his knowledge. It's so bad and so extreme.

And he says, for vast as the sea is your ruin, who can heal you? And he speaks of the overwhelming nature of the disaster. It's like the ocean. It's like the Mediterranean Sea.

It's too big to get his mind around. But there's an extra factor in Hebrew thinking because sea is often used metaphorically. And it spoke of chaos.

It's a symbol of chaos. And that gets picked up in Revelation, the beginning of Revelation chapter one. The sea was no more and it's the end of chaos in human affairs.

And so, the sea has more to it than we think. It's a chaotic, utterly chaotic situation which is beyond healing, beyond helping and getting through.

And then there's a matter of guilt. But now it's a specialized guilt. Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions.

They have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen oracles for you that are false and misleading. A number of the pre-exilic prophets refer to another type of prophet that Jerusalem liked. Oh yeah, your prophets, the prophets you like to listen to.

You don't like to listen to us speaking about destruction, but the other types of prophets spoke of peace and reassurance. Don't worry. And we sometimes call them shalom prophets.

Everything's going to be all right. God's on our side. Don't you believe it? Just trust in God.

Everything will be well. And there was never talk of repentance. No need for those prophets to talk of repentance.

It didn't matter if sinning didn't come into their prophetic horizon. And so, they brought the wrong message. And they were the ones that Zion listened to.

They were the ones. And Jeremiah especially has a long section of oracles against these prophets. And so, they're the ones who underlie the guilt, increase the cause and increase of the guilt to a large extent that they were not helped by this so-called prophetic revelation, which was not really of God.

It didn't expose your iniquity as the true prophets did. And so, this was one reason for the ruin. This speaks of the guilt to trajectory, which comes after the grief to trajectory.

But then there was a second cause, a secondary suffering of humiliation. And it comes in verse 15. All who pass along the way clap their hands at you.

They hiss and wag their heads at the door to Jerusalem. And we come back now to what Zion had spoken, this way of speaking of passes by a ruined city back in 112. And the mentor picks it up.

And here he speaks of their ridicule and this hissing and shaking their heads and clapping their hands. Gestures mean different things in different cultures. And obviously in this context, it refers to mockery and ridicule, laughing at Jerusalem.

And so here is that secondary factor. Disaster has become a stigma for people to laugh at. And that rubs salt into Zion's wounds and makes it harder to bear.

And then in verse 15 at the end, is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth? This is an expectation that had not been fulfilled. This is Zion theology. And part of this is a quotation from a song of Zion, the joy of all the earth in Psalm 48.

And in verse two, it speaks of Mount Zion as the joy of all the earth. And that's may well have been a text that the Shalom prophets referred to. And this perfection of

beauty, it comes in an adjacent Psalm, not a song of Zion, but it's a song of Zion motif.

Psalm 50 in verse two, Zion is called the perfection of beauty, perfection of beauty. Yes, this is God's city. This is a city that God delights in.

But this whole Zion theology, that expectation, which I'm pretty sure the false prophets had embraced, it had proved to be wrong. And this is an expectation that did not materialize. And so often grief involves the giving way of expectations that one depended upon and one had to learn to live without them.

And this note of ridicule is carried on in verse 16. Excuse me, I've got to get my, no, I'm all right. I've got the clock there.

In verse 16, there's a continuation of this ridicule and humiliation. All your enemies open their mouths against you. They hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry, we have devoured her.

Ah, this is the day we long for. At last, we've seen it. And these are the destroying enemies now.

And these are the conquerors. They join in this humiliation and ridicule, this secondary type of suffering, as conquerors. And they think it's all they're doing.

And their reference to the day, this is the day we long for. Ah, well, the mentor and Zion have been speaking of the day of the Lord. We thought it was God.

Oh, it's us, the conquerors say. It's our day, our great day that we plan for. And we're responsible.

And so, there's this self-congratulation. Mission accomplished. This is the day we long for.

At last, we've seen it. It was a long time coming, but we've made it, troops, we've made it. And so, this is their reaction.

But then verse 17 puts the record straight. The Lord has done what he purposed. He carried out his threat as he had ordained long ago.

And what this is saying is the truth as the mentor saw it. That the real day was the day of the Lord. And this purpose, this threat, refers back to the prophets and the day the Lord mentioned there.

And it's as he ordained long ago, ever since the middle of the 8th century, there had been prophetic witnesses to the coming destruction of both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. And now it had happened. And so, this is a reference to the past prophetic revelation here.

He's demolished without pity, without mercy. Once again, that key phrase taken over from the prophets being expressed here. He's made the enemy rejoice over you.

God's behind it. The enemy is rejoicing over you, but behind him stands Yahweh as the cause of the disaster. And he's exalted the might of your foes.

He's raised the horn of your foes. And he's the one that has allowed them to triumph in this way. So, God was ultimately responsible, not the human enemies.

And this is what verses 1 to 8 meant when God was the subject of all those verbs of destruction. And verse 17 explains that God's determining back in verse 8. And so, verse 17, which has so many echoes of the earlier part of this chapter, it's a clarification of the earlier part of the poem. Verses 18 to 22 are all related to prayer.

And in verses 8 and 19, it's still the mentor speaking and still speaking to Zion. But now he encourages Zion to pray a prayer of lament. And then in 20 to 22, we shall come to Zion's own prayer.

But first, from verse 18, cry aloud to the Lord, O wall of daughter Zion. There's a personification of the wall of Zion here. And that broken down wall is called to mourn.

And this is picking up verse 8, where there's a personification of the rampart and wall. He calls rampart and wall to lament. They languish together.

But they're not only to lament in terms of lamenting their grief. They're also now to engage in a prayer lament. And so, it picks up verse 8 and says, we've got to go further than a funeral lament. And we've got to move to a wall, and you've got to move to a prayer lament.

But as it goes on, it pretty obviously refers to daughter Zion herself. Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night. Give yourself no respite, no your eyes, yourself no rest, your eyes no respite.

And so, prayer will go to the root of the problem. And this is verse 19, this crying aloud to the Lord is so necessary. The prayer will go to the root of the problem.

It will relate to the one who caused the grief. And so he's the one who's able to deal with the problem, God himself. God is the one to take the pain to.

And that grief is to be expressed not only in spoken words but also emotionally in this uncontrolled crying on and on and on as an expression of grief. But then we move to the prayer aspect in 19. Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watches.

The night hours were divided into various watches. This is the first watch of the night when other people are thinking of going to bed and falling asleep. Well, carry on, carry on crying out.

Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord in your praying. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children. Then, looking back at who fainted from hunger at the head of every street, looking back to that situation of starvation during the siege and picking up the mentor's own distress and saying, not only a matter of grief but take that grief to God.

And that lifting up of the hands, it had been the hands, it was a gesture reinforcing the words of the prayer. Back in chapter 1 and verse 12, there was this appeal to passers-by, in verse 17 of chapter 1, the mentor described Zion stretching out her hands, but that horizontal appeal now had to be supplemented with a vertical appeal and lifting the hands to God. And he thinks back to these children who died of starvation during the siege, less able to withstand privation than the adults around them.

And then in 20 through 22, Zion does pray and she functions as the role model for the congregation. This is the sort of way that the congregation must go. They, too, must come to the point of grieving, yes, but also bringing their grief to God.

And in 20 to 22, we have five examples of traumatic suffering. And we can give this overview, first of all, that in verse 20, should women eat their offspring, the children they are born? This is going to be picked up in chapter 4 and verse 10 and developed more. But what had happened is that children had died, as we've already seen in this chapter, and the rest of the family with no food, they would use those dead bodies for food themselves in order to survive, which is horrible to think of, but it was the only way that the others could survive.

But this is one example of traumatic suffering. And then at the end of verse 20, should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord, as it happened in the overwhelming of Jerusalem by the Babylonians? In this double sacrilege, religious leaders were killed and killed in the sanctuary. And then at the beginning of 21, general massacre of old and young, young and old were lying on the ground in the streets.

And then the fourth example is the killing of young men and young women, so they couldn't live out the rest of their natural lives. My young women, my young men have fallen by the sword. And then lastly, at the end of verse 22, thinking of the children, no one escaped or survived when the Babylonian troops surged into Jerusalem.

Those whom I bore and reared, my enemy is destroyed. And those children who didn't die of famine were killed; many of those were killed by enemy soldiers after the city had fallen. And so, this is the last tragic example.

And so, bringing this whole different aspect of the problem of the destruction of Jerusalem, unfolding the traumatic content of it all. And so, it starts out in verse 20. Look, O Lord, and consider, to whom have you done this? And the thinking is, how could this have happened to Jerusalem, the city of God, in a special relation to God? This reversal is too much to take, and Jerusalem, of all cities, should have suffered in this way.

We find in this prayer that there are two different ways of thinking. There's a tension that Zion is expressing here, and it's a tension that the congregation must feel in turn and work their way through. It's a clash between two contrasting perceptions of her tragedy.

One is the perception of her mind, and the other is the perception of her gut feelings. And first of all, she has a sort of cognitive perception. Yes, she's able to think rationally.

Yes, she acknowledges that Yahweh is responsible for the destruction. It's in accord with pre-exilic prophecy in a variety of ways. And it agrees with that divine negative intervention that we read of in prophetic oracles.

And so, in 21, that last section, you killed them, slaughtering. You killed them, that divine negative intervention, as in the oracles of disaster. And then two, it sides again with pre-exilic prophecy, linking up with the day of the Lord.

Because again, in verse 21, on the day of your anger, you killed them. And then in 22, the day of the anger of the Lord. So yes, again, there's this tie-in with pre-exilic prophecy.

And then, going back to verse 21, without mercy, this is a pre-exilic note that is being echoed. And then also in 20b, there's something that we need to notice. And that is a reference to Deuteronomy.

Looking back to Deuteronomy, in fact, this reference to women eating their offspring, literally the fruit of their womb. And this too is picked up from

Deuteronomy 28. And so that being so, there's a Torah confirmation of what had happened.

And so, mentally, one can perceive what has happened and say amen to it. But also, there's an emotional perception. And this too creates a struggle, the struggle between mind and heart.

Zion must concurrently express her reaction to the overwhelming horror of a crisis that defies expectation. And those old expectations, they hadn't come true, but they were terribly overridden with horrible new happenings. And Zion is here repeating what she's learned from the mentor.

And she's praying a summary of his own two reactions earlier in this poem. There'd been a rational perception, a cognitive perception in 1-8 and 17, a divine negative intervention. The Lord has done this corresponding to, and I will do this in the prophetic oracles.

And then the day of his anger in verse one, yes, the day of the Lord, the day of the anger of the Lord is Zephaniah and Amos, as Zephaniah said. And then, without mercy or without pity, just as the prophets had said, yes. Zion had gone further by adding another Torah reference to Deuteronomy 28 in verse 20, further to the ones added by the mentor and Zion herself in chapter one.

But then the mentor also had an emotional perception that he couldn't cope with. And that was in verse 11. And taken further in verse 13, vast as the sea is your ruin.

And so, the mentor himself was aware of this tension, this challenge, this struggle between rationalizing what had happened on the one hand and trying to deal with it emotionally on the other. And what can Zion do? What Zion is told to do is to bring this struggle to God in prayer and see what will happen. Next time, we are going to be studying the first part of chapter three.

And I want you to read over carefully verses one through 16 of chapter three of Lamentations.

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Lamentations. This is session 5, Lamentations 2:1-22.