

Dr. Leslie Allen, Lamentations, Session 7, Lamentations 3:17-23 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Allen, Lamentations, Session 7, Lamentations 3:17-23, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Leslie Allen's Session 7 lecture on Lamentations 3:17-23 examines a shift from **despair to hope within the text**. The passage begins with a mentor reflecting on past negative convictions stemming from personal losses and emotional distress, mirroring the congregation's suffering after Jerusalem's fall. **Allen highlights how the mentor then transitions to positive convictions, emphasizing God's steadfast love, compassion, and faithfulness as detailed in Exodus 34:6**. He analyzes the mentor's realization of being a survivor as a gift and basis for hope, despite unchanged circumstances. **Allen critiques the hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness" for misinterpreting the text by removing it from its original context of lament and crisis**. The lecture concludes by noting the turning point in the passage, from negativity to a vision of a more positive future rooted in God's character, paralleling the experience in Psalm 73.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Lamentations, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Lamentations).



**Allen_Lam_Session0
7.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 7, Lamentations 3:17-23

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Leslie Allen's session on Lamentations 3:17-23.

Briefing Document: Lamentations 3:17-23 (Dr. Leslie Allen, Session 7)

Main Themes:

- **Shift from Despair to Hope:** The passage marks a crucial shift from the preceding lament, moving from negative convictions and despair to a budding sense of hope grounded in the character of God. The mentor in Lamentations is reflecting on his own past lament and how he moved beyond the negativity of the moment to find hope.
- **Re-evaluation of Lament:** The mentor wants to re-evaluate what he had said in his lament. According to Allen, a positive frame of mind is needed. "After his prayer lament, he wants to re-evaluate what he'd said... But in fact, he needed to come to a positive frame of mind, and that was what happened in his experience. And he's going on to explain this."
- **The Nature of Loss and Expectation:** The initial verses (17-20) focus on the experience of loss – loss of peace, happiness/prosperity, glory/life expectancy, and crucially, loss of expectations. This loss of expectation is a key element of grief: "This business of expectation we've seen before is very important in any experience of grief because loss always entails a loss of expectation and the loss of prospects."
- **Theological Grounding of Hope:** The shift towards hope (verses 21-24) is rooted in theological convictions, specifically the steadfast love (Hesed), mercies/compassion, and faithfulness of God. Allen emphasizes the importance of God's permanent attributes vs the temporary experience of God's wrath.
- **Intertextuality and Exodus 34:6:** The language of Lamentations 3:22-23 directly echoes Exodus 34:6, where God reveals his character to Moses after the golden calf incident. This connection highlights the possibility of restoration and a future even after profound sin and judgment.
- **The Significance of Survival:** The mentor recognizes his survival as a gift from God, "God has spared me. God hasn't killed me in his wrath. Here I am, alive."

Allen argues that seeing one's survival as a gift from God can form the basis for hope and a belief in a future purpose.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Structure of Lamentations 3:17-24:** The passage is divided into two sections: verses 17-20 expressing negative convictions, and verses 21-24 expressing positive convictions and hope.
- **Losses Experienced (Verses 17-20):**
 - Lack of peace ("My soul was bereft of peace.")
 - Lack of happiness/prosperity/good fortune ("I forgot what happiness was.")
 - Loss of glory/splendor/life expectancy ("Gone is my glory.")
 - Loss of expectations from the Lord ("gone is all I had hoped for from the Lord")
 - Affliction and wandering (restlessness): "The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall."
- **Shift to Hope (Verse 21):** "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope." Allen notes this shift does not come with a change in circumstances, but in attitude. "There's no indication, as I say, there's any change in his outward circumstances... But he can move on in his personal attitude, and he can overcome in his mind and heart."
- **Theological Foundations of Hope (Verses 22-23):**
 - "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end" (NRSV). Allen explores the textual variations and meanings of "steadfast love" (Hesed) as acts of steadfast love, God's covenant love and commitment, or great love.
 - "They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Allen emphasizes the mentor's experience of these verses in his own life, viewing his survival as God's gift. He also notes the switch of pronouns from "his mercies" to "your faithfulness," marking a turning to God in prayer.
- **Critique of the Hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness":** Allen criticizes the hymn for taking the verse out of the context of lament and disorientation, and placing it within a season of orientation and blessing, thereby missing the original's profound message.

- **Turning Point:** Allen notes that verse 22-23 represent a turning point. He states "There's this change of attitude, this realization that he is a survival survivor, and in fact, he's come to a turning point... a more positive future can be envisioned. And so there is a resolve in the direction of change."

Implications:

- This passage provides a model for processing grief and moving towards hope in the midst of suffering.
- It highlights the importance of theological reflection and remembering God's character as a foundation for hope.
- It emphasizes the significance of recognizing and celebrating God's gift of life, even in difficult circumstances.
- It challenges the church to acknowledge and address the reality of suffering in worship, rather than solely focusing on celebration.

4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 7, Lamentations 3:17-23

Lamentations 3:17-23: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the four losses the mentor identifies in verses 17-18?
2. What is the significance of the mentor using the same words for his affliction and wandering as were used for Jerusalem in Lamentations 1:7?
3. What key phrase introduces the mentor's shift towards hope in verse 21?
4. According to Dr. Allen, what element was often included in prayer laments but was intentionally separated by the mentor in Lamentations 3?
5. What textual issue exists in the first line of verse 22 regarding the subject of the verse?
6. What does the plural form of "steadfast love" in Hebrew indicate, according to Dr. Allen?
7. What does the mentor say is "new every morning," providing a basis for hope?
8. To what Old Testament passage does Dr. Allen say verse 22 harks back, and why is that passage significant in this context?
9. What is the significance of the mentor switching pronouns from the third person ("His mercies") to the second person ("thy faithfulness")?
10. What are the three life settings that Walter Brueggemann uses to distinguish psalms, according to Dr. Allen?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The four losses are: lack of peace, loss of happiness or good fortune, loss of glory or life expectancy, and loss of expectations from the Lord. These losses represent a comprehensive sense of despair and hopelessness.
2. The mentor's use of the same words suggests a parallel experience between himself and the people of Jerusalem, emphasizing his shared suffering and

making his testimony relatable to the congregation. It indicates that he understands their pain on a personal level.

3. The key phrase is, "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope." This phrase marks a critical transition from despair to a renewed sense of optimism and signals a shift in the mentor's perspective.
4. The element is the affirmation of faith. The mentor deliberately separates this positive affirmation from the lament to highlight the contrast between negative reactions and the potential for positive attitudes.
5. The textual issue involves a potential switch from singular ("the Lord's great love") to plural ("we are not consumed"). The original Hebrew text implies a "we" which contradicts the mentor's individual experience being described.
6. The plural form of "steadfast love" (and "mercies") indicates acts of steadfast love (and compassion). This implies a continuous series of divine interventions and expressions of God's covenant commitment.
7. God's steadfast love and compassions are "new every morning." This suggests a fresh start and renewed opportunities for experiencing God's grace and mercy, giving reason for hope even in the midst of crisis.
8. Verse 22 harks back to Exodus 34:6. This is the passage where God reveals Himself to Moses as merciful, gracious, and abounding in steadfast love, and it occurs after Israel's sin with the golden calf, symbolizing God's willingness to forgive and restore.
9. The switch in pronouns signifies a turning to God in prayer. Up until this point, the mentor had been reporting God in the third person, but now there is direct prayer to God, "Thy faithfulness," showing intimacy and acknowledgement of God's power.
10. The three life settings are orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. These represent states where life is good, where crisis has invaded, and where one has come through the crisis back to God, respectively.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the structure of Lamentations 3:17-23, focusing on the contrast between the negative convictions in verses 17-20 and the positive convictions in verses 21-24. How does this structure contribute to the overall message of the passage?
2. Discuss the significance of the mentor's personal experience in Lamentations 3:17-23 as a model for the congregation. How does his testimony of moving from despair to hope offer guidance and encouragement to those suffering from the fall of Jerusalem?
3. Explore the theological themes present in Lamentations 3:22-23, particularly the concepts of steadfast love, compassion, and faithfulness. How do these attributes of God provide a foundation for hope in the midst of crisis?
4. Evaluate Dr. Allen's critique of the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" in light of Walter Brueggemann's three life settings. Do you agree with Dr. Allen's assessment that the hymn misuses the text, and why or why not?
5. Compare and contrast the mentor's turning point in Lamentations 3:22-23 with the psalmist's turning point in Psalm 73. What similarities and differences exist between these experiences, and what insights do they offer into coping with suffering and maintaining faith?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Lament:** A passionate expression of grief or sorrow, often in the form of a complaint or prayer.
- **Mentor:** In the context of Lamentations, the individual whose personal testimony serves as a model and source of encouragement for the congregation.
- **Testimony:** A first-person account of an experience, particularly one that bears witness to a truth or lesson.
- **Steadfast Love (Hebrew: *Hesed*):** God's covenantal love, loyalty, and commitment to His people; often translated as mercy, kindness, or grace.
- **Compassion:** A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.
- **Faithfulness:** The quality of being reliable, trustworthy, and unwavering in loyalty; in the context of God, it refers to His consistent and dependable character.
- **Orientation:** A state of stability and well-being where life is generally good and one experiences God's blessings. (Brueggemann)
- **Disorientation:** A state of crisis, suffering, and loss of direction, where one feels overwhelmed by challenges and questions God's goodness. (Brueggemann)
- **Reorientation:** A state of renewed hope and gratitude after experiencing disorientation, where one comes to a deeper understanding of God's faithfulness and experiences restoration. (Brueggemann)
- **Intertextuality:** The relationship between texts, especially literary ones.
- **Wrath:** Strong vengeful anger or indignation.

5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 7, Lamentations 3:17-23, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Lamentations 3:17-23 FAQ

1. What is the primary shift in focus between Lamentations 3:1-16 and 3:17-23?

While Lamentations 3:1-16 presents a testimony, a "guilt-related individual prayer lament", verses 17-23 offer personal reflections on that lament, focusing on lessons of hope the mentor learned from it. The mentor re-evaluates his lament and, although still aware of the crisis, shifts towards a more positive frame of mind. The mentor seeks to re-evaluate the lament and find a more positive frame of mind.

2. What are the "losses" the mentor reflects on in verses 17-20, and what do they signify?

The mentor describes four key losses:

- **Lack of peace (Shalom):** The wholeness and satisfying nature of life is gone.
- **Loss of good fortune:** He has lost something good.
- **Loss of glory (Life expectancy):** He sees no future prospects and anticipates death.
- **Loss of expectations from the Lord:** His relationship with God feels broken, and positive spiritual expectations are gone. These losses highlight the comprehensive nature of grief and despair, encompassing not only physical well-being but also emotional, spiritual, and existential dimensions.

3. What is the significance of the mentor using the same words "affliction and wandering" in verse 19 that were previously used to describe Jerusalem in chapter 1, verse 7?

By using these same words, the mentor is drawing a parallel between his own personal experience and the collective experience of Jerusalem (representing the remaining congregation). This suggests a shared psychological state of restlessness and inability to settle mentally due to grief and affliction, creating a sense of solidarity between the mentor and the congregation.

4. What marks the turning point in the mentor's perspective, as introduced in verse 21 ("But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.")? What triggers this shift?

The turning point is the deliberate act of calling something to mind, leading to hope. This suggests a conscious effort to shift focus away from despair towards something that can inspire hope. It's not a change in circumstances, but a change in attitude. The mentor overcomes negativity and begins to think outside the box of his present suffering. He's looking for healing and preparing his readers for that.

5. What are the key attributes of God that the mentor focuses on in verses 22-23 as the foundation for his hope? How does this relate to Exodus 34:6?

The mentor emphasizes God's steadfast love (acts of steadfast love), compassion (acts of compassion), and faithfulness. These attributes are directly linked to Exodus 34:6, where God reveals Himself to Moses as merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. This connection to Exodus 34:6 is crucial because it implies that even after a significant sin like the golden calf incident, there was a future for Israel. Thus, despite the current crisis, the mentor suggests there may still be hope for the congregation.

6. What is the significance of the mentor's survival, and how does he connect it to the idea of God's "steadfast love"?

The mentor views his survival as an act of God's grace. Despite feeling like he was near death, he is still alive. He connects this to the idea of God's "keeping grace" or preserving grace, an aspect of steadfast love that maintains life. This gives him a basis for hope, both for himself and, by extension, for the congregation who are also "survivors" of the recent devastation.

7. Why does the speaker dislike the hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness" in the context of Lamentations 3:22-23?

The speaker criticizes the hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness" for misusing the text of Lamentations by removing it from its original context of lament, crisis, and disorientation. The hymn celebrates God's faithfulness in a general sense of blessing and orientation (when life is generally good), while the Lamentations passage arises from a place of deep suffering and struggle to find hope amidst despair. By ignoring the original context, the hymn glosses over the reality of suffering and potentially invalidates the experiences of those who are currently in a season of disorientation.

8. What is the "turning point" that the mentor experiences, and how does it relate to the idea of closure in grief or lament?

The turning point is a resolve in the direction of change. It's not full closure, which the speaker notes is not achieved in Lamentations. The pain is still felt, but a more positive future can be envisioned. The mentor realizes that God is keeping him alive and that God must have a purpose for him.