Lamentations

Introduction

Opening question: What do we have to lament?

Hebrew Poetry

Hebrew poetry generally is made up of two matching verses that balance each other in thought and length. They generally have three stress accents each. (a-b-c, a'-b'-c' pattern). Example: Psalm 19.
In a lament, the second line of the verse is usually shorter (a-b-c, a'-b' pattern). It gives the sense that the second line is cut off before completion – a tragic "cutting off". (This is easier to see in Hebrew than the English translations.) Example: Lamentations 3:4.

Lamentations is made up of 5 poems. The mournful beat of the lament occurs both on the verse level and in the larger structure. Three longer and two shorter poems. They are also acrostic (with the exception of chapter 5, it does relate to the alphabet because of its length).

Three longer poems
- Lamentations 1: acrostic poem, 22 verses, 66 lines, one verse per letter of alphabet
- Lamentations 2: acrostic poem, 22 verses, 66 lines, one verse per letter of alphabet
- Lamentations 3: acrostic poem, 66 verses, one line each, 3 verses per letter of alphabet

Two shorter poems
- Lamentations 4: acrostic poem, 22 verses, two lines each, 44 lines, one verse per letter
- Lamentations 5: not acrostic, 22 verses, one line each, 22 lines, relates to alphabet because of length

Various voices offer testimony in Lamentations: Daughter Zion, Narrator, Strongman, etc… God's voice is missing. In chapter 3, God's love is briefly remembered, but he doesn't speak.

More Literary Structure

There is also an overall chiastic structure to Lamentations. The center climax of Lamentations is God's great love.

Concluding Thoughts:

- *Lamentations is a literary masterpiece.*
- *Lamentations can bring to the surface pain in our own lives and community that we often prefer to deny.*
- *Lamentations can be a book of comfort. We are not alone.*
- *Lamentations points us to the unending love, mercy and faithfulness of God.*
- *Lamentations reminds us to put our hope in God, even in the worst circumstances.*

The Book of Lamentations – Bob Krepps