

The background features a light beige wall with several fragments of aged, yellowed parchment scattered across the top and bottom edges. On the left side, there is a colorful illustration of a prophet with a long white beard, wearing a blue robe and a purple head covering, with his hands raised in prayer or lamentation. The title 'LAMENTATIONS' is written in a large, black, serif font, and the Hebrew title 'אִי כה' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font below it. The date 'SEPT. 19, 2013' is written in a blue, serif font. On the right side, there is a scroll with a wooden handle, containing the text 'BI 305 HEBREW PROPHETS' in a brown, serif font.

# *LAMENTATIONS*

# אִי כה

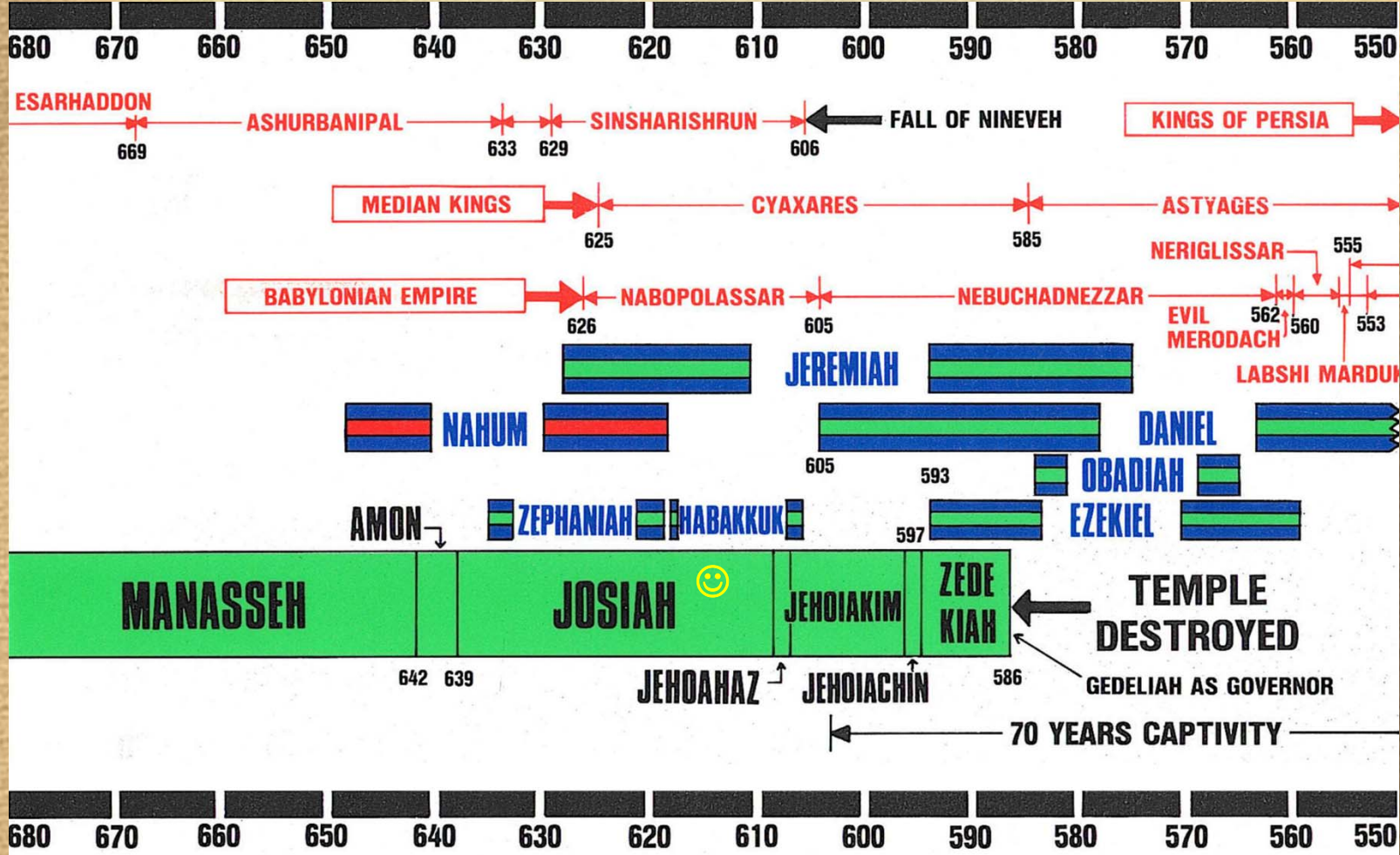
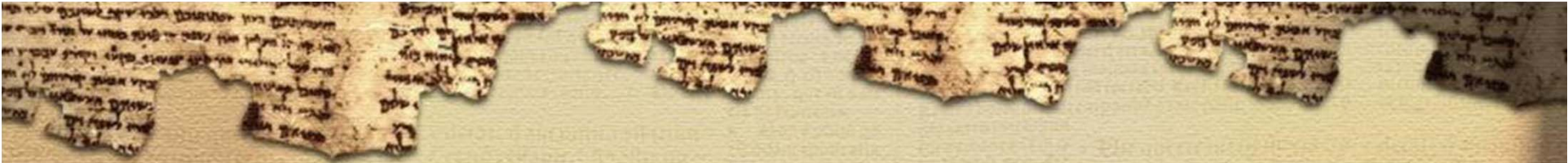
SEPT. 19, 2013

BI 305  
HEBREW  
PROPHETS

## Theme

***THE KEY PASSAGE IN LAMENTATIONS IS 3:19–24, WHERE THE SPEAKER AFFIRMS THAT BELIEF IN GOD’S MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS IS THE KEY TO A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. THIS FACT IS TRUE EVEN FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE MERITED AND RECEIVED GOD’S JUDGMENT (1:18). HOPE, NOT DESPAIR, IS THE FINAL WORD IN LAMENTATIONS.***





# LAMENTATIONS

PROBABLE DATE FOR BOOK  
AFTER ~586 B.C.



## Audience: Exiles

### Historical Setting:

*Lamentations describes the results of Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem in 587 b.c. in vivid (though stylized) detail. The book has the flavor of personal experience and eyewitness testimony, particularly in the descriptions of death and starvation in 4:1–22. Though it is possible that a long time passed between the destruction and the book's composition, there is no compelling reason to accept this conclusion. Since temple worship had begun again by 520–516 b.c. (during the time of Haggai and Zechariah), it is likely that the mourning for the city and temple had reached its height before then. The date of the writing of Lamentations probably falls between 587 and 516 b.c., with a time earlier in the era being more likely.*

### Purpose

*Lamentations was most likely written to be prayed or sung in worship services devoted to asking God's forgiveness and seeking restoration to a covenant relationship with God. Such observances began as early as the months after the temple's destruction in 587 b.c. (Jer. 41:4–5). They continued when the temple was rebuilt during Zechariah's time (c. 520 b.c.; see Zech. 7:3–5; 8:19). As time passed, Lamentations was read and sung as part of annual observances related to remembering the temple's destruction.*

# *THE OPENING WORD, "HOW"*

- The opening word often used in Biblical texts for laments and funerals

Much like today's





## ***STRUCTURE – CHAPTERS 1-4 ARE ACROSTICS***

- Chapters 1,2 and 4 are simple multiline acrostics
  - Chapter 1 and 2 have 22 stanzas where each stanza is made up of 3 lines, and is identified as a verse. Each succeeding stanza starts with the next letter in the (Hebrew) alphabet.
  - Chapter 4 is just like chapters 1 and 2 except that it has 2 line stanzas.



# ACROSTIC FORM – CHAPTER I

- Aleph { **א**יכהו ישבה בדד העיר רבתי עם היתה כאלמנה 1  
רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות היתה למס:
- Bet { **ב**כו תבכה בלילה ודמעתה על לחיה אין-לה 2  
מנחם מכל-אהביה כל-רעה בגדו בה היו לה  
לאיבים:
- Gimel { **ג**לתה יהודה מעלי ומרב עבדה היא ישבה בגוים 3  
לא מצאה מנוח כל-רדפיה השיגוה בין המצרים:
- Dalet { **ד**רכי ציון אבלות מבלי באי מועד כל-שעריה 4  
שוממין כהניה נאנחים בתולתיה נוגות והיא  
מר-לה:
- Heh { **ה**יו צריה לראש איביה שלו כי-הנה הוגה על 5  
רב-פשיעה עולליה הלכו שבי לפני-צר:





## *STRUCTURE – CHAPTERS 1-4 ARE ACROSTICS*

- Chapter 3 has the acrostic letter repeated for each of the lines in the verse.
  - Chapter 3 has 22 - 3 line verses (66 total) with each line in the verse repeating the opening letter and each following 3 line stanza starting with the next letter in the alphabet.





# ACROSTIC FORM – CHAPTER 3

Aleph	{	אָנִי הַגִּבֹּר רָאָה עֵינֵי בְּשֵׁבֶט עֶבְרָתוֹ:	1
		אוֹתֵי נְהַג וַיִּלֶּךְ חֲשָׁף וְלֹא-אֹר:	2
		אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי יִשָּׁב יִהְפֹּךְ יָדוֹ כָּל-הַיּוֹם:	3
Bet	{	בָּלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי שָׁבַר עֲצָמוֹתַי:	4
		בָּנָה עָלַי וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וַתִּלְאַה:	5
		בְּמַחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי כִּמְתֵי עוֹלָם:	6
Gimel	{	גָּדַר בְּעַדִּי וְלֹא אֵצֶא הַכְּבִיד נְחֹשְׁתִּי:	7
		גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֲשִׁיעַ שְׁתֵּם תִּפְלֹתִי:	8
		גָּדַר דַּרְכֵי בְּגִזִּית נְתִיבֹתַי עֲוֹה:	9



# *UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC MOVEMENT*

- Chapters 1-2 are the least Acrostic

These relate the horrible defeat at the hands of Babylon. People, property, community and hope have been lost.

- Chapter 3 is the most Acrostic

An individual counsels Jerusalem of the justice of what He has endured, and the way to come to trust in God's faithfulness.

- Chapter 4 returns to the form of chapters 1-2 but has a tighter spacing

Jerusalem continues to question the justice – but admits her sin and takes comfort that the pain will end. The two line acrostic form conveys protest, but not as much as the 3 line in chapters 1-2

- Chapter 5 is a community lament paralleling the individuals thoughts in Chapter 3

Jerusalem now cries out to God casting all her future on him. Chapter 5 is for community what chapter 3 is to the individual – the whole community has come to accept what the individual in chapter 3 advised.





# *OUTLINE OF LAMENTATIONS*

## LEVEL



I. How Lonely Sits the City (1:1-22)



II. God Has Set Zion under a Cloud  
(2:1-22)



III. I Am The Man Who Has Seen Affliction  
(3:1-66)



IV. How the Gold Has Grown Dim (4:1-22)



V. Restore Us to Yourself, O Lord (5:1-22)





*I. HOW LONELY SITS THE CITY (1:1-22)*

LEVEL

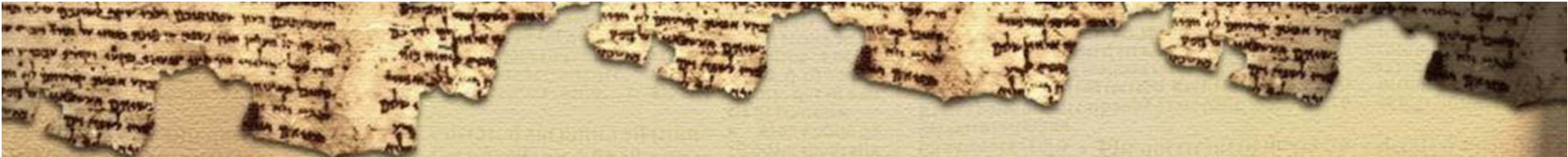
2

A

A. Jerusalem's Devastation (1:1-11)

B. Jerusalem's call for help (1:12-22)





## *II. GOD HAS SET ZION UNDER A CLOUD (2:1-22)*

LEVEL

**2**

**B**

- A. The Effects of God's punishment (2:1-10)
- B. The need to cry out to God (2:11-19)
- C. Jerusalem asks God to see and act (2:20-22)



*III. I AM THE MAN WHO HAS SEEN AFFLICTION (3:1-66)*

LEVEL

2

C

- A. Enduring suffering, experiencing faithfulness (3:1-24)
- B. Responding to God's goodness and sovereignty (3:25-39)
- C. Praying for renewal (3:40-47)
- D. Maintaining confidence in God (3:48-66)



*IV. HOW THE GOLD HAS GROWN DIM (4:1-22)*

LEVEL

2

D

- A. The suffering of Jerusalem's children (4:1-10)
- B. God's punishing of Jerusalem's religious leaders (4:11-16)
- C. The power of Jerusalem's Enemies (4:17-20)
- D. The end of Jerusalem's suffering (4:21-22)



*V. RESTORE US TO YOURSELF, O LORD (5:1-22)*

LEVEL

2

E

- A. Opening Petition (5:1)
- B. The woes Jerusalem has faced (5:2-18)
- C. A concluding prayer for restoration (5:19-22)

