

Lament Psalms

Asking God the Hard Questions

Psalm 13: "How long, Yahweh?"
(Structure of Lament Psalms)
Session 2 -- 19 September 2021



1st Baptist Church – Regina, SK L4L Fall 2021
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"By the Rivers of Babylon We Sat and Wept" (1938) by Moshe Rynecki
https://rynecki.org/wp-content/themes/rynecki/images/np1938nr32-e1418056288987.jpg

1	26	51	76	101	126
2	27	52	77	102	127
3	28	53	78	103	128
4	29	54	79	104	129
5	30	55	80	105	130
6	31	56	81	106	131
7	32	57	82	107	132
8	33	58	83	108	133
9	34	59	84	109	134
10	35	60	85	110	135
11	36	61	86	111	136
12	37	62	87	112	137
13	38	63	88	113	138
14	39	64	89	114	139
15	40	65	90	115	140
16	41	66	91	116	141
17	42	67	92	117	142
18	43	68	93	118	143
19	44	69	94	119	144
20	45	70	95	120	145
21	46	71	96	121	146
22	47	72	97	122	147
23	48	73	98	123	148
24	49	74	99	124	149
25	50	75	100	125	150

▶ about 60 psalms are "lament psalms"

= 40 % of all of the psalms

Psalms of Lament → Voice the feelings that God has abandoned or is not hearing the psalmist, who cries out to God over the situation; but with a sense of confidence at the end of the psalm that God will make things better

(a) Individual Psalms	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 17, 22, 26, 28, 31, 35, 36, 39, 41, 42, 43, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 64, 69, 70, 77, 86, 88, 94, 102, 109, 120, 140, 141, 142	(b) Community Psalms	12, 44, 60, 74, 75, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 89, 90, 106, 108, 123, 137
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Subcategory: Penitential (Penance, Forgiveness)
Psalms 25, 38, 51, 130, 143

Tragedy Strikes

"Life is the Pits!
Why, O Lord?"

Spiritual Questioning

DISORIENTED

Lament Psalms

▶ Lament Psalms are Prayers addressed to God

Psalm 13 (KGF translation)
[Heb v. 1] For (to / of) the Leader. A Psalm of (to / for) David.

Vocative

[Heb 2] 1a How long, **Yahweh**, will you forget me – forever?
b How long will you hide your face from me?

[Heb 3] 2a How long must I bear pain [or, "take counsel"] within myself,
b (and) have sorrow in my heart every day?
c How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

2nd Person Singular

[Heb 4] 3a Look! Answer me, **Yahweh**, my God!
b Give light to my eyes,
c or I will sleep (in) death.
[Heb 5] 4a or my enemy will say, "I have overcome him",
b (or) my foes will rejoice
c because/when I am shaken.

2^{ms} Imperative

[Heb 6a] 5a And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.
b My heart will rejoice in your deliverance.
[Heb 6b] 6a I will sing to / for Yahweh,
b when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Lament Psalms

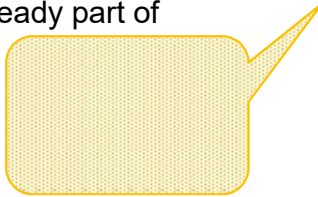
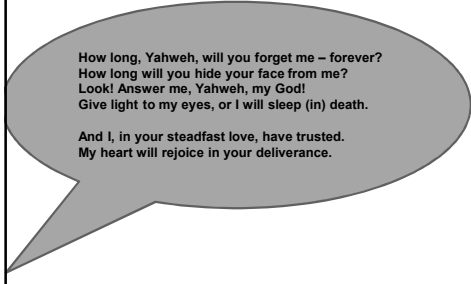
- ▶ Lament Psalms are Prayers directed to God thus,
 - they are not merely the psalmist’s journaling their thoughts, or composing a song, with no specific audience in mind
 - they are not merely the psalmist’s mulling over the situation in their mind, such that the psalmist becomes the audience
 - they are not the psalmist complaining to other people about the situation

Lament Psalms

- ▶ Lament Psalms are Prayers directed to God which means the primary purpose is:
 - not merely for the psalmist to cathartically voice & vent their feelings
 - not merely to bring clarity to the psalmist about the situation
(--in those cases, there would be no need for an audience)
- rather the primary purpose is:
- to solicit help from God regarding the situation

▶ Addressed to God

- ▶ Presumes a Dialogue-Type Relationship with God
 - Lament Prayer arises out of & is based on the covenant relationship with Yahweh that the Psalmist is already part of



- Expectation is that God will Respond to the Prayer

Lamentation = poem

that is not addressed to anyone in particular (it is a soliloquy) on the occasion of a death
▶ is a “mourning song” / “funeral dirge”

- lamentation is “death” & past-oriented
- lamentation compares the present loss due to the death with the past glory

Genre / Literary Type:

- differentiate between “lamentation” & “lament”

Lament = prayer to God

on the occasion of a disorienting / distressing situation that seeks God’s intervention & deliverance

- lament is “life” & future-oriented
- lament speaks of the present distress, but looks forward to future deliverance & restoration with a sense of assurance that God will hear & intervene

► Lament Psalms use Generalized, Stereotypical Language to describe the Disorientation

Psalm 13 (KGF translation)

[Heb v. 1] *For (to / of) the Leader. A Psalm of (to / for) David.*

- [Heb 2] 1a How long, Yahweh, will you forget me – forever?
- b How long will you hide your face from me?
- [Heb 3] 2a How long must I bear pain [or, “take counsel”] within myself,
- b (and) have sorrow in my heart every day?
- c How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
- [Heb 4] 3a Look! Answer me, Yahweh, my God!
- b Give light to my eyes,
- c or I will sleep (in) death.
- [Heb 5] 4a or my enemy will say,
- “I have overcome him”,
- b (or) my foes will rejoice
- c because/when I am shaken.
- [Heb 6a] 5a And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.
- b My heart will rejoice in your deliverance.
- [Heb 6b] 6a I will sing to / for Yahweh,
- b when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.

► Lament Psalms use Generalized, Stereotypical Language to describe the Disorientation

- The Specific Circumstances of “Disorientation” are extremely difficult to determine --both, with respect to, the nature of the distress & the “enemies” who are involved
- It is the generalized, stereotypical language that allows the psalms to be appropriated by subsequent pray-ers, who are in a variety of differing circumstances --the language evokes re-appropriation of the psalm by others

Lament Psalms

► Recurring Components

1) Complaint:

Emotional Description of the Distress

2) Petition:

Requests for God to Help
+ Reasons Why (Motivation)

3) Confidence / Trust:

Declarations that the Psalmist fully Trusts in God

► Secondary Component:

Commitment to PRAISE

Psalm 13 (KGF translation)

COMPLAINT

1 How long, Yahweh, will you forget me – forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I bear pain [or, “take counsel”] within myself,

(and) have sorrow in my heart every day?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

“You-”

“I-”

“They-”

Petition

3 Look! Answer me, Yahweh, my God!

Give light to my eyes,

or I will sleep (in) death.

4 or my enemy will say,

“I have overcome him”,

(or) my foes will rejoice

because/when I am shaken.

Motivation

TRUST

5 And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.

Commitment to Praise

My heart will rejoice in your deliverance.

6 I will sing to / for Yahweh,

when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Lament Complaint	“Grumbling & Murmuring” Complaining
▶ Voiced in the context of Confidence & Trust in God	▶ Reflects a Lack of Trust in God’s providing and delivering
▶ Reaffirms God’s Sovereignty over the situation	▶ Desire to Replace God’s Leadership
▶ Focus is on moving forward to Deliverance so as to get out of the Disorienting Circumstances	▶ Focus is on Going Back to the Previous Condition of how things were before, rather than moving forward
▶ God is the one being spoken to	▶ God is talked “about”, but not necessarily to
▶ Is Appropriate in the Dialogue Relationship with God	▶ Displays an Inappropriate Attitude of Rebellion against God

Lament Psalms

1) Complaint

(a) God -- “You-Complaints”

- ▶ God’s Lack of Attention to the Suffering
- ▶ God is the Source of the Circumstances of Distress

(b) Psalmist / Lamerter – “I-Complaints”

- ▶ External, Physical Suffering
- ▶ Internal, Psychological & Emotional Suffering

(c) Enemies -- “They-Complaints”

- ▶ Enemies’ Threatening & Attacking Actions
- ▶ Enemies’ Hostile Words

Lament Psalms

1) Complaint

(a) God -- “You-Complaints”

(b) Psalmist / Lamerter – “I-Complaints”

(c) Enemies -- “They-Complaints”

- ▶ Purpose is *not* merely to “Describe” the situation, Rather the Complaint Functions as a Motivation for God to Act
“God, see how bad things are – please act!”

Lament Psalms

▶ Recurring Components

1) Complaint:
Emotional Description of the Distress

2) Petition:
Requests for God to Help
+ Reasons Why (Motivation)

- a) Calls for God’s Attention
- b) Requests for Protection & Deliverance

3) Confidence / Trust

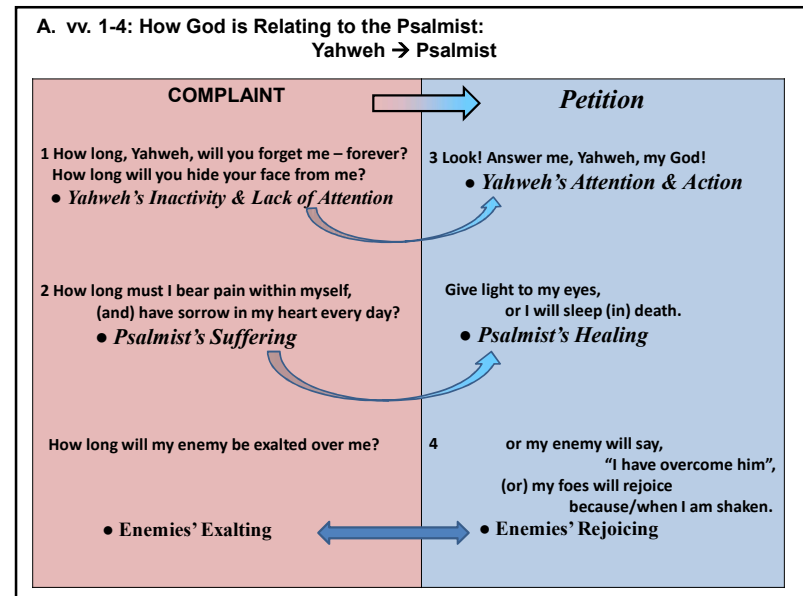
Function:

- a) Highlight the Psalmists' Relationship with God
- b) Theological Foundation for the Petitions
→ Motivation for God to Act
- c) Help the Psalmists maintain Proper Perspective of the Situation
 - Trust counterbalances the Distress (Complaint)
 - Declaring it, Spiritually & Psychologically Reinforces the Psalmists' Trust & Assurance

Commitment to PRAISE

- Praise is most often anticipated as occurring in the Future (rather than being a Present Expression)
- Psalmists Commit themselves to Praising in the Future **when** God Delivers from the Disorientation & the Psalmists move into Reorientation

<p>A. vv. 1-4: How God is Relating to the Psalmist: Yahweh → Psalmist</p> <p>1 How long, Yahweh, will you forget me – forever? How long will you hide your face from me?</p> <p>2 How long must I bear pain within myself, (and) have sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?</p> <p>3 Look! Answer me, Yahweh, my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep (in) death.</p> <p>4 or my enemy will say, “I have overcome him”, (or) my foes will rejoice because/when I am shaken.</p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Psalm 13 <small>(PSS)</small></h2>
<p>► Drastic Shift in Emotional Mood</p>	<p>B. vv. 5-6 How Psalmist is Relating to God: Psalmist → Yahweh</p> <p>5a And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.</p> <p>5b My heart will rejoice in your deliverance.</p> <p>6 I will sing to / for Yahweh, when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.</p>



A. vv. 1-4: Present Reality of Distress → Potential Future	
COMPLAINT 1 How long, Yahweh, will you forget me – forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I bear pain within myself, (and) have sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?	Petition 3 Look! Answer me, Yahweh, my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep (in) death. 4 or my enemy will say, “I have overcome him”, (or) my foes will rejoice because/when I am shaken.
B. vv. 5-6: Present Reality of Trust → Expected Future	
Declaration of TRUST 5a And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.	Commitment to Praise 5b My heart will rejoice in your deliverance. 6 I will sing to / for Yahweh, when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.

	Yahweh	Psalmist	Enemies
Present Reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inactivity & Lack of Attention 1 How long, Yahweh, will you forget me – forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffering 2a-b How long must I bear pain within myself, (and) have sorrow in my heart every day? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exalting Over 2c How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
Potential Future		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death 3b Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep (in) death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejoice 4 or my enemy will say, “I have overcome him”, (or) my foes will rejoice because/when I am shaken.
Expected Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 5b your deliverance 6b when /because he has dealt bountifully with me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejoice 5b My heart will rejoice – 6 I will sing to / for Yahweh. 	

- ▶ Movement from Yahweh’s Lack of Attention & Inactivity (Non-Action) to → Deliverance (Action)
 - is predicated on & motivated by Yahweh’s character of “steadfast love” (v. 5a)
 - Deliverance is solely Yahweh’s action (Deliverance will not occur *if* Yahweh does not act)
- ▶ Human Motivation that moves Yahweh from Non-Action → Action
 - is (a) the Psalmist’s Crying out to Yahweh in Lament Prayer
 - (b) the Psalmist’s Trust in the Covenant Character of Yahweh
- ◆ Yahweh’s Non-Action is addressed through Lament
- ◆ Yahweh’s Action (deliverance) is Responded to through Praise

Psalm 13 (KGF translation)
[Heb v. 1] For (to / of) the Leader. A Psalm of (to / for) David.

<small>[Heb 2]</small> 1a	How long, Yahweh , will you forget me – forever?	
	b How long will you hide your face from me?	
<small>[Heb 3]</small> 2a	How long must I bear pain [or, “take counsel”] within myself,	
	b (and) have sorrow in my heart every day?	
	c How long will my enemy be exalted over me?	
<small>[Heb 4]</small> 3a	Look! Answer me, Yahweh, my God!	
	b Give light to my eyes,	Addressed to Yahweh
	c or I will sleep (in) death.	In 2nd person
<small>[Heb 5]</small> 4a	or my enemy will say,	
	b “I have overcome him”,	
	c (or) my foes will rejoice	
	b because/when I am shaken.	
<small>[Heb 6a]</small> 5a	And I, in your steadfast love, I have trusted.	
	b My heart will rejoice in your deliverance.	
<small>[Heb 6b]</small> 6a	I will sing to / for Yahweh ,	Yahweh spoken of in 3rd person
	b when/because he has dealt bountifully with me.	