

Lamentations Liturgy

Jonathan Andreas

Submitted on 23 June 2014 for BWS 7.201 Old Testament as Scripture
Edinburg Theological Seminary

CHAPTER ONE

For two readers. Scripture quotes (NRSV) along the left margin are to be read by a man or woman of respect within the community. The indented readings are to be read by someone who is on the fringes (e.g. with tattoos, a criminal record, or someone difficult to love). Not all verses have been included.

^{1a}How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!

How lonely sit 2.23 million adult men and women in US prisons.

^{1c}She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal.

Ministers, fire chiefs, schoolteachers lie next to gang members.

^{2a,c}She weeps bitterly in the night with tears on her cheeks; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.

All weeping bitter tears into their makeshift pillows; wives, husbands, friends bore false witness against them.

^{3a,b}Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place....

Sent far from home and strip-searched over and over again; living among rude, foul-mouthed guards and other prisoners; there is no peace and quiet.

⁵Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper, because the LORD has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

Those inmates who once fought corruption are now under its thumb, because they are indeed guilty of their own weaknesses; those who used to look up to them have forgotten any good they did.

^{7a,b,d}Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of old....the foe looked on mocking over her downfall.

But the prisoners themselves haven't forgotten their successes, the people whose lives they helped. Yet, oh, what fun the media had, demonizing the most successful: "How far they have fallen!"

⁸Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away.

Most of them are in fact guilty of their crimes, but now that their every dirty secret has been exposed for all to see, they fall into despair—some turning to suicide.

^{9a,b}Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her.

The sex offenders caught in their self-doubt; no one wants to help them!

^{11c}Look, O LORD, and see how worthless I have become. ^{12a}Is it nothing to you, all who pass by?

No one wants to help me. I am worthless. You who are listening right now—yes, you—will you do nothing but listen? Won't you *do* anything?

¹³From on high he sent fire; it went deep into my bones; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me stunned, faint all day long.

God is certainly doing something: burning me from the inside out. God set a trap for me; I don't know how much more I can take.

¹⁴My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; they weigh on my neck, sapping my strength; the LORD handed me over to those whom I cannot withstand.

God dumped my crimes on my head and handed me over to corrupt guards and inmate-thugs.

^{16a,b}For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my courage....

I wish I could cry more; this places leaves me dispirited, bereft of emotion. Besides, who would hug me? No one loves a loser.

¹⁸The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and behold my suffering; my young women and young men have gone into captivity.

It's true, I'm guilty and deserve correction; but, come on, enough is enough; am I not allowed to dream, to hope?

^{20a,b}See, O LORD, how distressed I am; my stomach churns, my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious.

Come on, God, can't you see how sorry I am, how torn up I am about what I did?

^{21b}All my enemies heard of my trouble; they are are glad that you have done it. ²²Let all their evil doing come before you; and deal with them as you have dealt with me...for my groans are many and my heart is faint.

A lot of people are glad I'm suffering. If they only knew how inhumane all of this is! Two wrongs don't make a right. I don't know what else to say. I feel like giving up.

Antiphon for Low Voices

Lamentations Liturgy: Chapter Two

Jonathan Andreas

♩ = 92

Baritone 1

1. The - Lord has thrown down his peo - ple. 2. The Lord de - stroyed with-out

Baritone 2

1. The Lord has thrown down his peo - ple. 2. The

B 1

mer - cy. 3. The Lord with - drew his pro - tec - tion. 4. The

B 2

Lord de - stroyed with - out mer - cy. 3. The Lord with - drew his pro -

B 1

Lord poured fu - ry like fi - re. 5. The Lord has be - come like an

B 2

tec - tion. 4. The Lord poured fu - ry like fi - re. 5. The

B 1

e - ne - my. 6. The Lord has a - bol - ished his tem - ple. 7. The

B 2

Lord has be - come like an e - ne - my. 6. The Lord has a - bol - ished his

© 2014 Jonathan Andreas. All Rights Reserved.

Antiphon for Low Voices

28

B 1
 cur - ses. 16. Your e - ne - mies re - joice in your mi - ser - y. 17. The

B 2
 pas - sers - by taunt you with their cur - ses. 16. Your e - ne - mies re - joice in your

31

B 1
 Lord has done what he pur - posed. 18. Cry a - loud to the

B 2
 mi - ser - y. 17. The Lord has done what he pur - posed.

34

B 1
 Lord! 19. Pour out your heart in his pre - sence. 20. Look, O Lord, and con -

B 2
 18. Cry a - loud to the Lord! 19. Pour out your heart in his pre - sence.

38

B 1
 sid - er! 21. All that you have killed with - out mer - cy. 22. My

B 2
 20. Look, O Lord, and con - sid - er! 21. All that you have killed with - out

41

B 1
 e - ne - my de - stroyed all my chil - dren.

B 2
 mer - cy. 22. My e - ne - my de - stroyed all my chil - dren.

CHAPTER THREE

¹I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; ²he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; against me alone he turns his hand, again and again, all day long.

I am a target of an anger so great that I have been thrown into a dark cell and mistreated all day long.

⁴He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my bones....

In overcrowded places, disease spreads rapidly, and my body fails me. Bullies give me a choice: hand over my food or get a broken nose.

⁷He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has put heavy chains on me; ⁸though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer....

An electric fence surrounds me; I am shackled hand and foot. When I cry out for help, my prayers bounce off the concrete ceiling.

⁹[H]e has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked. ¹⁰He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; ¹¹ahe led me off my way and tore me to pieces.

God got me in this mess. He's like a mugger waiting to do me wrong.

¹⁴I have become the laughingstock of all my people, the object of their taunt-songs all day long. ¹⁵He has filled me with bitterness, he has sated me with wormwood.

The media villainize me and their lies make me sick.

¹⁷[M]y soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; ¹⁸so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the LORD."

What is peace? What is happiness? I no longer remember. All of God's kingdom-building activities I was involved in are gone.

²¹But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

[The next section is to be read in unison.]

³¹For the Lord will not reject forever. ³²Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ³³for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

³⁴When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, ³⁵when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, ³⁶when one's case is subverted—does the Lord not see it?

⁴⁰Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD. ⁴¹Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven. ⁴²We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven.

⁴³You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; ⁴⁴you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. ⁴⁵You have made us filth and rubbish among the peoples.

[Return to two readers.]

⁵⁵I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; ⁵⁶you heard my plea, “Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!” ⁵⁷You came near when I called on you; you said, “Do not fear!”

I’ve called to you, God, from a sweltering Louisiana prison with no air conditioning, from a Texas death row cell, from solitary confinement in California: “Give me relief!”

⁵⁸You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life. ⁵⁹You have seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge my cause.

Law school students and organizations like The Innocence Project are finding and helping a few of us who shouldn’t be here.

⁶²The whispers and murmurs of my assailants are against me all day long. ⁶⁴Pay them back for their deeds, O LORD, according to the work of their hands! ⁶⁵Give them anguish of heart; your curse be on them! ⁶⁶Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the LORD’s heavens.

Destroy the TV shows, the movies, the news shows that falsely divide the world into good and evil, the courageous cops vs. the “criminal element,” and needlessly spread fear. Show that good and evil are not us vs. them, but lie within each of our own hearts.

Paper Dolls

Lamentations 4

Jonathan Andreas

Freely wailing intro

♩ = 105
Middle-eastern percussion
CHORUS 2

Voice

The gold has lost its shine.

4 Dm B♭ A
Chil - dren, like pre - cious stones, lie scat - tered on the street.

8 Dm B♭ A
Chil - dren, a - ban - doned beg - ging get no - thing to eat.

12 E Dm E
Chil - dren, more val - u - able than their weight in gold, tossed a - side

17 A m Percussion solo (vamp as needed) to VERSES **Fine**
like pap - er dolls. [Spoken (low voice)]
Even animals treat their young better than this. 1. The
3. We

21 **VERSE 1** A Dm B♭ A
weal - thy in their fi - ner - y, the own - ers of the wi - ner - y now sleep - in the gut - ter;

27 B♭ A Dm 3 Em 3 F 3 Em
"Will work for food," they mut - ter. A peo - ple so hand - some, so heal - thy, so thin;

31 A m B♭ D E♭
now look at them: dir - ty fa - ces, shriv - eled skin. I'd rath - er be shot dead in a

© 2014 Jonathan Andreas. All Rights Reserved.

Paper Dolls

35 D Eb D Am Bb/D Gm A7

mo-ment than waste a-way from star - va tion, temp-ted to eat the next gen-er-a-tion.

40 Percussion solo (vamp as needed) to CHORUS **D. S.** VERSE 2 A Gm

[Spoken low voice]
This is God's doing, destroying his people. 2. Oth-ers look on with gall;

44 Bb A Dm 3 Em 3 F 3 Em

48 Am Bb D Eb

they were drip-ping with dis - hon-est-y and cor-rup - tion. Peo-ple lost their trust in their

52 D Eb D Percussion solo (vamp as needed) **D. S.**

[Spoken (low voice)] to CHORUS
prea-chers and walk'd a - way from them. God scattered them!
No more phony leaders!

56 VERSE 3 A Gm A Bb Dm 3 Em 3

look'd for help that nev - er came; it was our end, our dy - ing shame. We fled and hid and were

61 F 3 Gm 3 A 3 Dm

found; Our lead - er cap-tur'd and bound. You Oth-ers! Be glad you're not in our shoes. You

67 A Percussion solo (vamp as needed) **D.S. al Fine**

[Spoken (low voice)] to CHORUS
Oth-ers! You'll soon sing the blues. Has God finished with us?

CHAPTER FIVE

¹Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look and see our disgrace! ²Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to aliens. ³We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

O God, please don't forget us prisoners! Upon our arrest, we couldn't make our payments and have lost our cars, homes, and downpayments. Our families have been torn apart.

⁴We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought. ⁸Slaves rule over us; there is no one to deliver us from their hand. ⁹We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.

Though most of us are poverty-stricken, the system makes our families pay exorbitant phone bills and drive long distances to stay in touch. Poorly educated guards make more money than college professors; they and their inmate-thug-favorites tell us what to do. The rules change so frequently and capriciously that yesterday's good work might get you into trouble today.

¹¹Women are raped in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah. ¹²Princes are hung up by their [enemy's] hands; no respect is shown to the elders.

Guards seduce and rape prisoners; a former person of respect—a professor, a doctor, an elderly person—is treated like dirt.

¹⁵The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned into mourning. ¹⁷Because of this our hearts are sick, because of these things our eyes have grown dim....

How can we laugh in a place so morally backwards? It's hard to find anything good in the world anymore. It all seems so hopeless.

¹⁹But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. ²⁰Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days? ²¹Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old— ²²unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure.

Do you reign forever, God? Really? If so, where are you? Come back, God! Remember how close we used to be? Or have you totally given up on us?