

Lamentations 4

1. Which people or groups of people are mentioned in this text? Make a list. What is the order in which they are mentioned? What is the order in which groups of people suffer or die? How does it compare to the people mentioned in Lamentations 1-3? Pay particular attention to Lamentations 2.
2. Divide the text into sections. What are the themes of each section? Who is speaking? Who is addressed? How might the sections interact with each other? How do themes develop?
3. What is God's role in this text? How is God thought of? How does God's role here compare to God's role in the other chapters we have read?
4. How is motherhood conceived of in this text? What is the role of a mother? What is the role of a child?
5. How is sin conceived of in this text? Who is at fault? What is the relationship between sin and suffering? Sin and impurity? Are there multiple interpretations of sin in this text?
6. List all the words for eating or starving in this text. What story do they tell? Pay attention to color.

איכה פרק ד

Lamentations 4

1. Alas/How ¹ can the gold be dulled, how can the good pure-gold change? The sacred stones ² poured out ³ on the corner of every street ⁴ ?	א איכה יועם זהב ישנא הכתם הטוב תשפתכנה אבני-קדש בראש כל-חוצות:
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1. Compare this first line to the first lines of the other chapters we have read. What does the approach of this chapter seem to be? Is there a metaphor or metaphors used? What might the gold be referring to? How might the gold have been dulled? What does the tone seem to be?

2. The precious children of Zion ⁵ , (worth more than their) weight in fine-gold, How ⁶ can they be thought ⁷ of as shards of clay jars, the work of a potter's hands ⁸ ?	ב בני ציון היקרים המסלאים בפז איכה נחשבו לנבל-תירש מעשה ידי יוצר:
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1. How does this second verse work with the first verse? What parallels might you draw? Why might איכה repeat?

3. Even/also ⁹ the jackals/dragons drew out (their) breast, they give suck ¹⁰ to their young. The daughter ¹¹ of my people ¹² was cruel, like ostriches in the wilderness.	ג גם-תנים תלצו לשד היניקו גוריהן בת-עמי לאכזר כיענים במדבר:
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1. Why might these jackals and ostriches be brought into the picture? Think of a few possible reasons. What are your associations with these animals? What are your biblical

¹ Word איכה Lam 1:1; 2:1; 4:1,2

² Word אבן Lam 3:53

³ Root שפך Lam 2:4, 11, 12, 19; 4:11,13

⁴ Root חוצ Lam 2:19, 21; 4:5, 8, 14

⁵ Word ציון Lam 1:4, 6, 17; 2:1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18; 4:2, 11, 22

⁶ Word איכה Lam 1:1; 2:1; 4:1, 2

⁷ Root חשב Lam 3:60, 61

⁸ Root יד Lam 1:14, 17; 2:8; 3:64; 4:2, 6, 10

⁹ Word גם Lam 2:9

¹⁰ Root ינק Lam 2:11, 4:4, 4

¹¹ Word בת Lam 1:6, 15; 2:2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18; 3:48, 51; 4:3, 6, 10, 21, 22

¹² Word עמי Lam 1:7, 11; 2:11; 3:14, 48; 4:3, 6, 10

associations with these animals? Look at [Micah 1:8](#), [Jeremiah 51:34](#), [Job 30:29](#), and [Isaiah 43:20](#) for mentions of these animals.

4. The tongue of the suckling (infant) ¹³ stuck to his mouth with thirst. Little ones ¹⁴ asked for bread, ¹⁵ there is no one ¹⁶ to spread it out ¹⁷ for them.	ד דָּבַק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק אֶל־חִכּוֹ בְּצָמָא עוֹלָלִים שָׁאֲלוּ לֶחֶם פֶּרֶשׁ אֵין לָהֶם:
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1. What is the relationship between this verse and the previous one?
2. Look back at the descriptions of starvation during the siege in Lamentations 2:11-12, 18-20. How is starvation presented there? How is it presented here? In Lamentations 1 you saw the repeated line, אין מנחם, there is no one to comfort. What has happened to that idea here?

5. Those who ate delicacies are desolated ¹⁸ in the streets, ¹⁹ Those who were reared in worm's (purple) embrace ash heaps.	ה הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַדָּיִם נִשְׁמּוּ בַּחוּצוֹת הָאֻמָּנִים עָלֵי תוֹלַע חִבְקוֹ אֲשַׁפְתוֹת:
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1. To whom might this verse refer? Would you group this verse with the previous verses or the following verses?

6. The iniquity ²⁰ of the daughter of my people has become bigger than the sin ²¹ of Sodom, which was turned over ²² like a moment, and it was not hands ²³ (that caused) it suffering. ²⁴	ו וַיִּגְדַּל עֲוֹן בֵּת־עַמִּי מִחַטָּאת סֹדֶם הִהְפֹּכָה כְּמוֹ־רֹגַע וְלֹא־תָלוּ בָּהּ יָדַיִם:
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¹³ Root ינק Lam 2:11; 4:3, 4

¹⁴ Root עלל Lam 1:15; 2:19; 4:4

¹⁵ Word לחם Lam 1:11; 5:6, 9

¹⁶ Phrase אין... Lam 1:2, 7, 9, 17, 21; 2:9; 3:49; 4:4

¹⁷ Root פרס. Lam 1:10, 13, 17; 4:4

¹⁸ Root שמם. Lam 1:4, 13, 16; 3:11; 4:5; 5:18

¹⁹ Root חוצ Lam 2:19, 21; 4:1, 5, 8, 14

²⁰ Root עון. Lam 2:14; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:7

²¹ Root חטא Lam 1:8; 2:14; 3:39; 4:6, 11, 13

²² Root הפך Lam 1:20; 3:3; 5:2, 15

²³ Root יד Lam 1:14, 17; 2:8; 3:64; 4:2, 6, 10

²⁴ Root חול Lam 3:26

1. How is sin conceived of in this verse? Is there blame placed? How does this understanding of sin and punishment compare to other understandings in Lamentations?

7. Her Nazirites/princes were purer than snow, more dazzling than milk. They were ruddier in bone ²⁵ than rubies, their being cut like sapphire.	ז וְכֹה נְזִירֶיהָ מִשְׁלֵג צָהוּ מִחֶלֶב אֲדָמוּ עֵצָם מִפְּנִינִים סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם:
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1. This is a classic description of beauty. See Song of Songs 5 for comparison. Why might such a description be brought here?

8. Their appearance became darker ²⁶ than charcoal-black, they were not recognized on the streets. ²⁷ Their skin shriveled on their bones, ²⁸ dried like it was wood.	ה חֲשֵׁךְ מִשְׁחֹרֶת תַּאֲרָם לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת צָפָד עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם יִבֵּשׁ הָיָה כַּעֵץ:
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1. Sit with this image.

9. Better ²⁹ for those pierced ³⁰ by sword ³¹ than those pierced ³² by hunger, ³³ Those who pine away, stricken with (lack of) produce of the field.	ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלָלִי-חֶרֶב מִחֲלָלֵי רָעָב נִשְׁהָם יָזְבוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְנוּבָת שָׂדֵי:
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1. What is the attitude here towards being still alive? Compare it to the attitude in Lamentations 3:22-24. Compare this verse, starting with "טוב" to the Lamentations 3:25-27, also beginning with טוב.

²⁵ Root עצם Lam 1:13; 3:4; 4:7, 8

²⁶ Root חשך Lam 3:2, 6; 4:8; 5:17

²⁷ Root חוצ Lam 1:2; 2:19, 21; 4:1, 5, 8, 14

²⁸ Root עצם Lam 1:13; 3:4; 4:7, 8

²⁹ Word טוב Lam 3:25, 26, 27

³⁰ Root חלל Lam 2:2, 12; 4:9

³¹ Word חרב Lam 1:20; 2:21; 4:9; 5:9

³² Root חלל Lam 2:2, 12; 4:9

³³ Word רעב Lam 2:19, 4:9; 5:10

10. The hands ³⁴ of merciful ³⁵ women cooked their children, They have become for eating in the destruction ³⁶ of the daughter ³⁷ of my people. ³⁸	י יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת בָּשְׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לֵמוֹ בַּשָּׂבָר בַּת־עַמִּי:
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1. How do you understand ‘merciful’ here? Think of a few possible explanations.
2. The word רחם also can mean womb. משבר can also mean birthing stool. What does that contribute to your understanding of this verse?

11. YHWH has finished ³⁹ his rage, ⁴⁰ he has poured out ⁴¹ the wrath ⁴² of his nose, ⁴³ And he has kindled a fire ⁴⁴ in Zion that ate ⁴⁵ her foundations.	יֵא בָלָה יְהוָה אֶת־חֲמָתוֹ שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אָפוֹ וַיִּצֶת־אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסֻדֶּיהָ:
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1. God is mentioned here for the first time. God hasn’t appeared yet, either by name or by reference. Why might he appear here? What is it God is doing? How might this verse interact with the first verse?

12. The kings of the earth, ⁴⁶ all the inhabitants ⁴⁷ of the world did not ⁴⁸ believe That adversary ⁴⁹ and enemy ⁵⁰ could come to the gates ⁵¹ of Jerusalem. ⁵²	יֵב לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ מְלָכֵי־אֶרֶץ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תִבְלָה כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:
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³⁴ Root יד Lam 1:14, 17; 2:8; 3:64; 4:2, 6, 10

³⁵ Root רחם Lam 3:22, 32; 4:10

³⁶ Root שבר Lam 2:11, 13; 3:11, 47, 48; 4:10

³⁷ Root בת Lam 1:6, 15; 2:2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18; 3:48, 51; 4:3, 6, 10, 21, 22

³⁸ Root עם Lam 1:7, 11; 2:11; 3:14, 48; 4:3, 6, 10

³⁹ Root כלה Lam 2:11, 22; 3:22; 4:11, 17

⁴⁰ Root חמה Lam 2:4

⁴¹ Root שפך Lam 2:11, 12, 19; 4:1, 11, 13

⁴² Root חרן Lam 1:12; 2:3; 4:11

⁴³ Root אפ Lam 1:12; 2:1, 3, 6, 21, 22; 3:43, 66; 4:11, 20

⁴⁴ Word אש Lam 1:13; 2:3, 4; 4:11

⁴⁵ Root אכל Lam 2:20

⁴⁶ Root ארצ Lam 2:1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 15, 21; 3:34; 4:12, 21

⁴⁷ Root ישב Lam 1:1, 3; 2:10; 3:6, 28; 4:12, 21; 5:19

⁴⁸ Word מלך Lam 2:2, 6, 9

⁴⁹ Root צר Lam 1:5, 7, 10, 17; 2:4, 17; 4:12

⁵⁰ Word אויב Lam 1:2, 5, 9, 16, 21; 2:3, 4, 5, 7, 16, 16, 22; 3:46, 52

⁵¹ Root שער Lam 1:4, 2:9; 4:12

⁵² Word ירושלים Lam 1:7, 8, 17; 2:10, 13, 15; 4:12

1. Why might this group of people have believed in the inviolability of Jerusalem? What does it say about them?

13. For the sins ⁵³ of her prophets, ⁵⁴ the iniquities ⁵⁵ of her priests, ⁵⁶ Who poured out ⁵⁷ in her midst the blood of the righteous. ⁵⁸	יג מִחַטָּאוֹת נְבִיאֶיהָ עֹנֶת כְּהֻנָּתָהּ הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ דָּם צְדִיקִים:
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1. Who is at fault here? For what are they blamed? Who might the “her” be?

14. They tossed/wandered, ⁵⁹ blind, in the streets, defiled with blood, Such that no one was able to touch ⁶⁰ their clothing.	יֵד נָעוּ עִוְרִים בְּחִוְצוֹת נִגְאָלוּ בַדָּם בְּלֹא יוֹכְלוּ יָגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם:
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1. Why might they be blind? Who might they be? Remember King Zedekiah, king during the siege, who was captured when he tried to escape. The Babylonians killed his children before his eyes and then blinded him.

15. “Turn aside, ⁶¹ impure,” ⁶² they called to them, “turn aside, turn aside. Do not touch!” When they fled and wandered, ⁶³ They said among the nations “they will not continue to live here.”	טו סִוְרוּ טִמְאָה קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ אֶל־תִּגָּעוּ כִּי נָצוּ גַם־גָּעוּ אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם לֹא יוֹסִפוּ לָגִוֶּר:
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1. How does the understanding of impurity here compare with the understanding of impurity in Lamentations 1? What are the results? What role does gender play?

⁵³ Root חטא Lam 1:6; 2:14; 3:39; 4:6, 11, 13

⁵⁴ Root נבא Lam 2:9, 14; 4:13

⁵⁵ Root עון Lam 2:14; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:7

⁵⁶ Word כהן Lam 1:4, 19; 2:6, 20;

⁵⁷ Root שפך Lam 2:11, 12, 19; 4:1, 11, 13

⁵⁸ Root צדק Lam 1:18; 4:13

⁵⁹ Root נוע Lam 2:15; 4:14, 15

⁶⁰ Root נגע Lam 2:2; 4:14, 15

⁶¹ Root סור Lam 3:11; 4:15, 16

⁶² Root טמא Lam 1:9

⁶³ Root נוע Lam 2:15; 4:14, 15

16. The face⁶⁴ of YHWH has made them into pieces,⁶⁵ he will not continue to behold⁶⁶ them. The faces⁶⁷ of the priests⁶⁸ they have not raised up and the elders⁶⁹ they did not favor.	זו פְּנֵי יְהוָה חָלְקָם לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִבְיטָם פְּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ וְזִקְנִים לֹא חָנְנוּ:
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1. Look back at Lamentations 3:24. What is "חלקי ה" there? What is it here? What is the role of priests here? Who might the "they" be?

17. Still our eyes⁷⁰ are finished,⁷¹ for our help is emptiness. While watching and watching for a nation⁷² that does not save.	יֵי עוֹלָמֵנוּ תִכְלֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ אֶל־עֲזָרָתָנוּ הֶבֶל בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צָפִינוּ אֶל־גּוֹי לֹא יוֹשָׁע:
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1. Who might the speaker be now?

18. They surely hunted⁷³ us, (preventing us) from walking in our squares.⁷⁴ Our end drew near,⁷⁵ our days⁷⁶ were filled, for came our end.	יֵה צָדּוּ צָעָדֵינוּ מִלֶּכֶת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ קָרַב קִצְעֵנוּ מִלְּאוֹ יָמֵינוּ כִּי־בָא קִצְעֵנוּ:
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1. How has the public square or street been used in this chapter?

⁶⁴ Word פני Lam 1:5, 6, 22; 2:3, 19; 3:35; 4:7, 16; 5:9, 10, 12

⁶⁵ Root חלק Lam 3:24; 4:16

⁶⁶ Root נבט Lam 1:11, 12; 2:2; 3:63; 4:16; 5:1

⁶⁷ Root פני Lam 1:5, 6, 22; 2:3, 19; 3:35; 4:7, 16; 5:9, 10, 12

⁶⁸ Word כהן Lam 1:4, 19; 2:6, 20; 4:13, 16

⁶⁹ Root זקן Lam 1:19; 2:10, 21; 4:16; 5:12, 13

⁷⁰ Root עין Lam 1:16; 2:11, 18; 3:48, 49, 51; 4:17, 5:17

⁷¹ Root כלה Lam 2:11, 22; 3:13, 22; 4:11, 17

⁷² Root גוי Lam 1:1, 3, 10; 2:10; 4:15, 17, 20

⁷³ Root צוד Lam 3:52, 4:18

⁷⁴ Root רחב Lam 2:11, 12; 4:18

⁷⁵ Root קרב Lam 1:15, 20; 3:45, 57; 4:13, 18

⁷⁶ Root יום Lam 4:18; 5:21

19. Swifter were our pursuers than eagles of the heavens. On the mountains they hotly-pursued us, in the wilderness they lay in wait ⁷⁷ for us.	יט קלים היו רדִּפֵּינוּ מִנְּשָׂרֵי שָׁמַיִם עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ:
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1. Look back at Deuteronomy 28:49. Why might similar language be used?

20. The wind of our noses, the anointed of YHWH, was caught in their traps (pits,) About whom we had said, 'In his shadow we will live among the nations.' ⁷⁸	כ רוח אֲפִינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה נִלְכַּד בְּשִׁחִיתוֹתָם אֲנֹשׁר אֲמָרְנוּ בְּצֵלוֹ גִּתִּיעָה בְּגוֹיִם:
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1. To whom might this refer? Does this change your understanding of the voices in Lamentations 3?

21. Rejoice ⁷⁹ and be glad, daughter of Edom, sitting/dwelling ⁸⁰ in the land ⁸¹ of Uz. Also to you will pass the cup. You will get drunk and make yourself naked.	כא שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־אֲדוֹם יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוּז גַּם־עָלֶיךָ תַעֲבֹר־כּוֹס תִּשְׁכָּרִי וְתִתְעָרִי:
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1. Look back at Lamentations 1:21. How do these two texts interact?

22. Your iniquity is brought to an end, daughter ⁸² of Zion ⁸³ , he will not continue to uncover/exile ⁸⁴ you. He has taken note of your iniquities daughter ⁸⁵ of Edom, he has uncovered ⁸⁶ your sins.	כב תִּם־עוֹנֶיךָ בַת־צִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ פָּקַד עוֹנֶיךָ בַת־אֲדוֹם גָּלָה עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ:
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1. The chapter seems to end on a happy note. How have we gotten here? Has there been a process of tshuva?

⁷⁷ Root ארב Lam 3:10.

⁷⁸ Root גוי Lam 1:1, 3, 10; 2:10; 4:15, 17, 20

⁷⁹ Root שוש Lam 1:21; 4:21

⁸⁰ Root ישב Lam 1:1, 3; 2:10; 3:6, 28, 63

⁸¹ Root ארצ Lam 2:1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 15, 21; 3:34; 4:21

⁸² Word בת Lam 1:6, 15; 2:2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18; 3:48, 51; 4:3, 6, 10, 21, 22

⁸³ Word ציון Lam 1:4, 6, 17; 2:1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18; 4:2, 11, 22

⁸⁴ Root גלה Lam 1:3; 2:14; 4:22

⁸⁵ Word בת Lam 1:6, 15; 2:2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18; 3:48, 51; 4:3, 6, 10, 21, 22

⁸⁶ Root גלה Lam 1:3; 2:14; 4:22