



# LAMENTATIONS

## LAMENT POEMS IN THE BIBLE: (SEE PSALMS 10, 63, 69, 74, 79)

- A FORM OF PROTEST
- A WAY TO PROCESS EMOTION
- A PLACE TO VOICE CONFUSION



LAMENT POEMS RESTORE A SACRED DIGNITY TO HUMAN SUFFERING

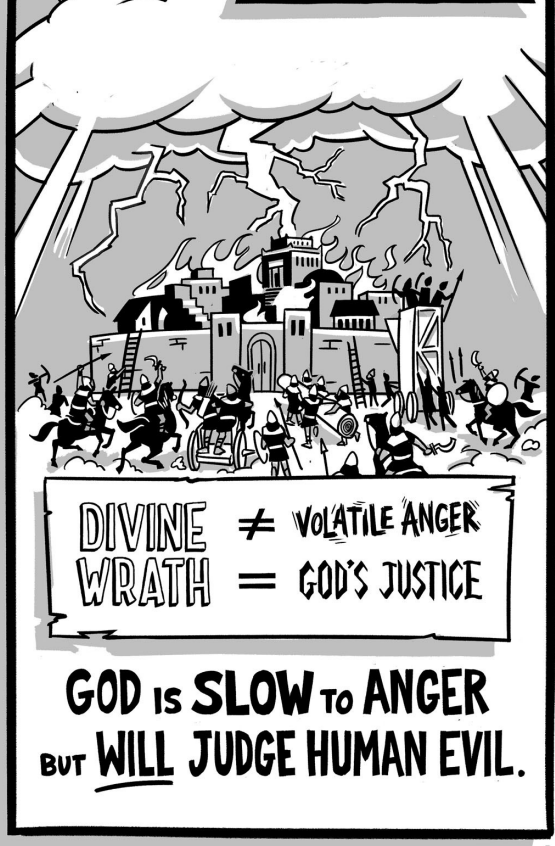
DESIGN OF THE FIVE POEMS:  
ACROSTIC = "ALPHABET POEM"  
1. ל (=A) 4. ת (=D)...  
2. ב (=B) 21. ש (=S)  
3. ג (=G) 22. ד (=T)

ORDERED & LINEAR STRUCTURE VS. DISORDERED & PAINFUL CONFUSED GRIEF

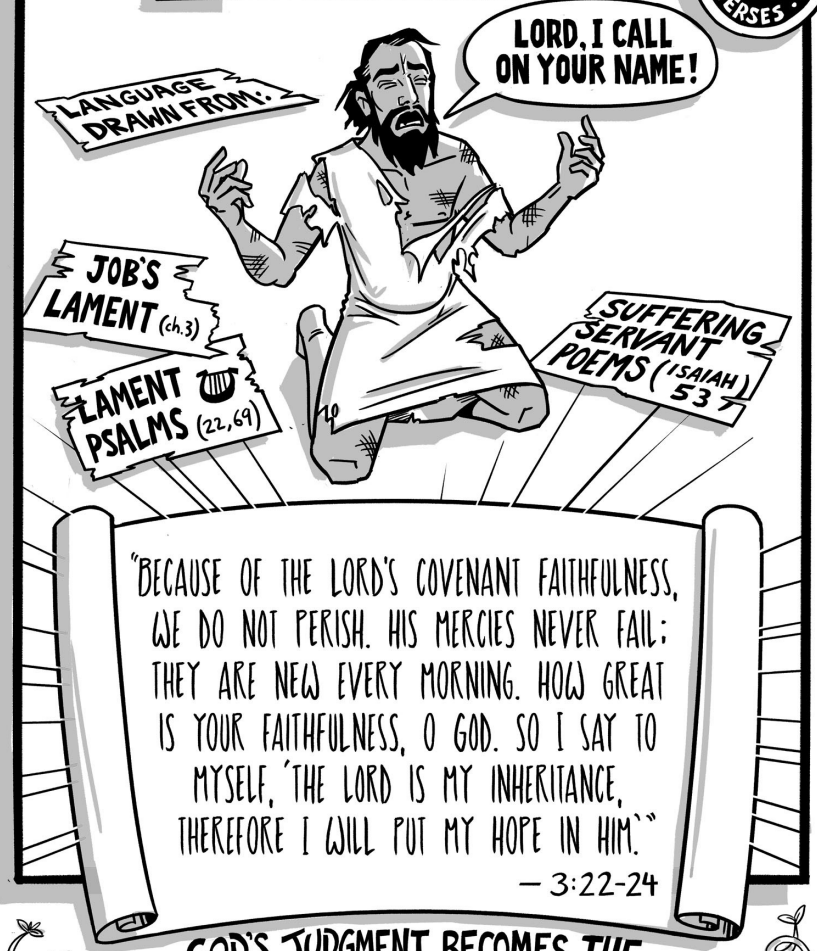
### 1 LADY ZION'S GRIEF & SHAME



### 2 THE FALL OF JERUSALEM & GOD'S WRATH



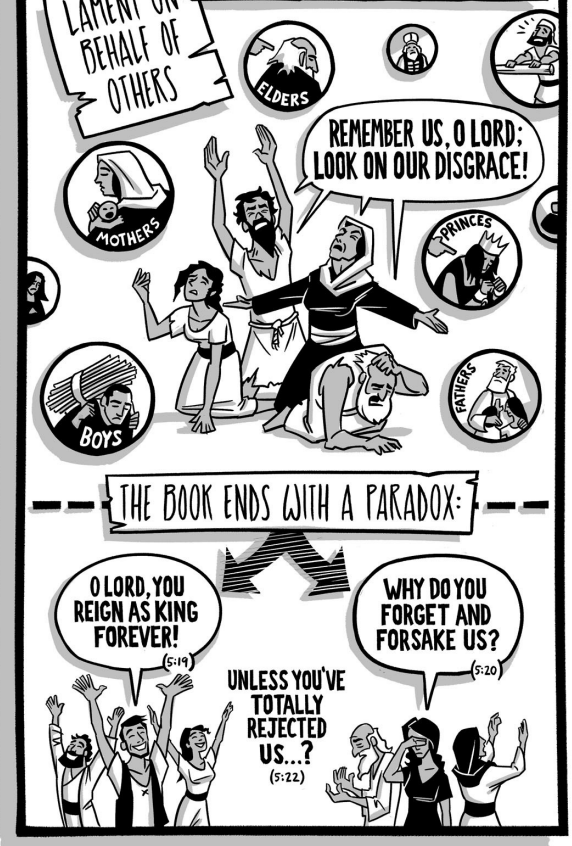
### 3 THE SUFFERING ONE



### 4 THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM



### 5 COMMUNAL PRAYER FOR GOD'S MERCY



GOD'S JUDGMENT BECOMES THE SEEDBED OF HOPE

# How is Lament a form of “being with”?

## Psalms of lament

**Ask** the group: What's the difference between whining and lament? Can you think of any recent world events (catastrophes) that needed to be lamented, not just by individuals, but by an entire community? Have you ever taken part in a communal service of mourning? What was it like for you?

Ask participants to choose a partner and identify elements of biblical lament (below) in one of the lament psalms (6, 22, 28, 42, 43, 69, 77):

- Invocation of God (calling on God to be present)
- Complaint
- Recollection of God's saving power/acts
- Request /demand for help
- Thanksgiving for God's (as yet unknown) response

Ask each person to write a brief personal lament using the above structure. Read aloud these laments in your closing worship.

## Broken beyond repair

Share this story:

A seven-year-old boy had been playing at a next-door neighbor's and came home later than the agreed time. With his head hanging low, he trudged into the kitchen where his mother was busy preparing dinner. "Tom," she said, "Where have you been? I was expecting you half an hour ago." "Sorry I'm late, Mom. We were playing outside and Chris broke his new Tonka Truck." "Oh," his mother offered in an understanding tone of voice, "so you stayed to help Chris fix his truck?" "No," Tom replied. "I stayed to help him feel sad."

In a society obsessed with "fixing the problem," sometimes the most faithful response is simply to stand in solidarity with those who suffer. Ask the group to make a list of things that can't be fixed when broken. Ask participants to recall a time when something they cherished was broken beyond repair. **Ask:** How did this make you feel? How is the death of a loved one similar? Do you remember the first time someone you knew died? How did you feel? What did your body do? What did you do to cope?

## Getting angry with God

Ask the group if they feel it's really okay to come before God "just as we are," with our full range of feelings. Does this include raging at God? After several responses, suggest the group consider the testimony of Ms. Johnson, a courageous veteran of the Civil Rights struggle:

I could not have lived to be a 74-year-old black woman in this country without getting fed up with God on a regular basis. But you know what? It's okay for me to be angry with God, because God and I have a long-term relationship, and God can handle my anger. And in my Bible, I read the Psalms, and they give me a language for my anger.

**Ask:** Do we have an intimate enough relationship with God to say this? Or are we afraid to let God know how we truly feel about injustice, oppression, and suffering?