

FINAL INTERPRETATION

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Lamentations 1:1-14 אֵיכָה 1:11-14

ABSTRACT

The overall purpose for this exegetical study is primarily to attune to those voices heard in the biblical Lamentations I:1-14, in order to better understand the historical meaning-making process of moving through trauma and sorrow, appropriated through our present-day context. Beside a personal translation of the pericope as well as a critical textual reading, the following selected methods will be applied: 1) a literary approach through the form of *acrostics*, 2) an existential psycho-philosophical approach 3) a diffractive reading based on feminist performativity theory. The interpretation will be presented in three parts: Part I introduces the Hebrew title אֵיכָה (meaning *how*, where, what, ah!) as a keyword ‘setting the stage’ for; part II where all three methods are developed. Part III aims to capture the concluding discussion of the exegetical results. This project will be presented as a text, but also as an on-line research exposition in order to capture audio-visual expression:

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1757732/2459114>

Part I

אֵיכָה

The word אֵיכָה may be understood in numerous ways, for example as *Where? What? How?* In the Book of Lamentations it becomes abundantly obvious that אֵיכָה is the key word to both the written and spoken language of the work, and even to a wordless non-language: *How! How? Alas! Ah!? Aha?! And from these samples, questions begin to flow and then cascade: What is the sound of grief? Of despair? Where do words come from when all the rest is lost? Is it at all possible to survive the trauma of falling? How can one trust in a God, when despair and disasters are everywhere? How can one live and survive a disaster of war?* אֵיכָה becomes a timeless and spaceless keyword for any era – relevant here and now, as much as there and then. And all these seemingly impossible questions take place within this single word: אֵיכָה.

The collection of lamentations connects to more than one title. Jill Middlemas (2021) suggests that the Lamentations could be introduced as “the Book of How”, since from its very beginning there is the majestic exclamation which bursts out in “How lonely sits the city!”¹. In Jewish tradition the same collection of poetry also links to the title *Qinoth* (meaning something like ‘funeral eulogies’) though this is perhaps not giving the full correspondence since a *qinah* (singular) is closer to a ceremonial liturgical chanted speech than to a meditative song or prayer. What is important to acknowledge is that it is collection of prayers used for collective mourning “by people suffering in the aftermaths of or in communal relocation after long disasters”². From this our own contemporary context definitely has plenty to learn, not only concerning wars caused by political machinery and human failings, but also a mourning for “natural disasters”³, national and global. Middlemas continues by telling that “rituals for national and public mourning were held after serious catastrophic events and followed loss in battle, a drought, other national disasters, a forced removal, exile and relocation”⁴. To lament the fall of a city was also part of ancient cultures and this tradition is still alive with the commemoration of the destruction of both Jewish temples in 586 BCE and 70 CE as part of the liturgy during

¹Middlemas, J. 2021:1.

² Ibid.:3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

the Jewish holiday *Tisha B'Av*. Middlemas acknowledges also the Christian tradition of using the Lamentations as part of the “Holy Week services [...] in Tenebrae and Good Friday services”⁵. As a genre the Lamentations are placed alongside the prophetic literature and the *ketuvim* (writings) – connecting to the prophet Jeremiah who is thought to be the authors of this sorrow-filled collection of lament – beside being used as liturgical praxis during Jewish holidays.

I find it curious and inspiring to consider the universal resonance or even empathy which makes these lamentations so real in any historical period. Theologian Klaus Westerman refers to a study by Thomas F. McDaniel concerning whether there is a form of critical coherence between even earlier city lamentations, such as the Sumerian lament after the fall of Ur. Mc Daniel concludes that there is not really such coherence as for literary structures, but on the other hand there is a strong resemblance in experiential expressions as when “references to weeping, to lamentation, to cries of woe, and so forth”⁶. Another similarity between cultural praxis can be found in the religious aspect for how the chant was directed in relation with a God.

Before entering the actual exegetical investigation let us expand upon the words of Westermann and attend to the way questions emerge as a praxis through these laments. I began my introduction from where Westermann concludes his own introduction, with an overwhelming and existential question mark and the following words: “How is one to explain [...] structural similarity in texts so far removed from one another, both temporally and spatially? What is one to make of such relatedness?” (ibid.:22). And at this point I wish to suggest that intense emotion causes our sense of time and space to fall into one another; that what is being lifted from the greatest sorrows are the effects of experiences, sounds, fluidity, memories and continuous flows of emotions, both active and passive. But such intense flows need to be formed to have meaning, to be communicable. And from these thoughts I formulate the following research question for this task:

How does “form foster creativity”⁷ and existential meaning-making through an exegetical reading of the Biblical Lamentations / אֵיכָה 1:1-14?

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Westermann, C. 1994: 20.

⁷ James, E. T. 2021:95.

Part II

Exegetical investigations

1. Text critical exegesis⁸

¹ אֵיכָה

יָשְׁבָה בְּדָד הָעִיר רַבָּתִי עִם
הָיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה רַבָּתִי בַּגּוֹיִם
שָׂרָתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת הָיְתָה לָמָם

¹ Alef. How...

she sat alone, the city so full of people?
has she become like a widow, greatest among nations?
has a princess among cities become a vassal?

²⁹ כָּכֹו תִבְכֶּה בְּלֵילָה וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לִחֶיהָ
אֵי-יִלָּה מִנַּחֲמָהּ מִכָּל-אַחֲבָיָהּ
כָּל-רֵעֶיהָ בָּגְדוּ בָּהּ הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים

² Beit

Bitterly she weeps in the night, and her tear is on her cheek.
she has nobody comforting out of all her lovers
all her friends have betrayed her
they have become toward her enemies

³ גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה מֵעֲנִי וּמִרַב עֲבָדָהּ
הִיא יֹשְׁבָה בַּגּוֹיִם לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ
כָּל-רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשְׁיִגוּהָ בֵּין הַמִּצָּרִים:

³ Gimel

gone into exile she has, Judah, out of affliction and out of hard servitude
she dwells among the nations; she does not find a place to rest
all her persuers they have overtaken her, in the midst of her distress

⁴ דָּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת מִבְּלִי בְּאֵי מוֹעֵד
שׁוֹמְמִין כִּהְיָה נְאֻחִים¹⁰ כָּל-שְׁעָרֶיהָ
וְהָיָא מִרְלָה:¹¹ בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נֹגוֹת

⁴ Daled

Drowned in sorrow are Sion's roads, for no one comes to assemble for feast
all her gates are desolate, her priests they are groaning, her daughters are grieving
and she herself is her own bitterness

⁸ In the process of my textual analysis, the following translators' readings are diffractively read through my own interpretation: Ian Provan 1991, Delbert R. Hiller 1992, Claus Westerman 1994, Robert Alter 2018, Bible 2000, and Yael Ziegler 2021.

⁹ 1:2 a pc Mss Vrs du, 1 מ = a few (several or a number of, between 3-10) medieval manuscripts, all or most of the versions, dual, read in Textus Masoreticus. Meaning: the word לִחֶיהָ is in a small number of Mss translated to 'her cheeks' in dual, and therefore read as dual in MT. Bible 2000 tells 'kinden' (singular + definite article), while Robert Alter writes 'her cheek' (singular + sf 3fs).

¹⁰ 4 ^a prp שְׁעָרֶיהָ = Here is proposed another set of vowels, omitting the first swa and instead adding a *cholam*; ayin omits the qamats and instead receives a swa + *patach*.

¹¹ 4 ^b ὁ ἀγόμενοι cf α'σ', 1 נְהוּגוֹת = In septuaginta the word 'maidens' can be compared as α'σ'; further according to ketiv (what is written in BHS) is נְהוּגוֹת, which is read according to Qere as נְהוּגוֹת.

⁵ הָיוּ צָרִיָּה לְרֹאשׁ אֲבִיָּה שְׁלוֹ
כִּי־הָיְתָה הוֹגָה עַל רַב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ
עוֹלָלֶיהָ הָלְכוּ שָׁבִי לַפְּנֵי־צָר:

⁵ Heth

her foes, they are to be a head, her enemies they are tranquil
since Yahweh has made her suffer over manyfold of her transgressions
her children have gone away, captives before her foes

⁶ מִן בְּתֻצִיּוֹן כָּל־הַדָּרָה ¹² ¹³ וַיֵּצֵא
הָיוּ שָׂרֵיהָ כְּאֵלִים לֹא־מִצְאוּ מְרֻעָה
וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא־כֹחַ לַפְּנֵי רוֹדְףָ:

⁶ Vav

he has taken from Sion's daughter all her majesty
they, her princes, have become like stags that find no pasture
and they go without strength in front of pursuer

⁷¹⁴ זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם יָמֵי עֲנִיָּה וּמְרוּדֶיהָ
¹⁵ כָּל מַחֲמָדֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם
בְּנָפֶל עָמָה בִּיד־צָר וְאִין עוֹזֵר לָהּ
רְאוּיָה צָרִים שָׁחֲקוּ עַל מַשְׁבֹּתָהּ:

⁷ Zeth

She remembers, Jerusalem, in days of her affliction and her restlessnesses
all her precious delights that were from days of old;
as when her people fell into a foe's hand, and there was no one helping her
the princes, saw her, they teased her for her downfall

⁸ עַל־כֵּן לִנְיָדָה הָיְתָה ¹⁷ חֲטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם ¹⁶ חֲטָאָה
כָּל־מַכְבְּדֶיהָ הִזִּילוּהָ כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוֹתָהּ
גַּם־הִיא נֶאֱנָחָה וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲוָר:

⁸ Heth

Sin she sinned, Jerusalem, therefore to filth she became
All who honored her, despise her for they saw her nakedness
She herself groans and she turns backward

¹² 6 ^a * Θ καί ἐς ἡρᾶς = וַיֵּצֵא. Meaning: in Septuagint the form of the word וַיֵּצֵא is a probable conjecture, thus vowels has been changed from וַיֵּצֵא to וַיֵּצֵא

¹³ 6 ^{b-b} pc Mss ut Q מִבֶּת. Meaning: that in a few (several or a number of, between 3-10) medieval manuscripts the following is read according to Qere as מִבֶּת, in other words the written (ketiv) מִן בֶּת is read (qere) as מִבֶּת.

¹⁴ 7 ^a prp מְרוּדֶיהָ = here is proposed the following מְרוּדֶיהָ instead of וּמְרוּדֶיהָ, meaning that the the proposed alternative omits the vav cons. and the phrase can be read as “her afflicted restlessnesses” rather than “her affliction and her restlessnesses”

¹⁵ 7 ^{b-b} prb add = meaning that the full sentence “כָּל מַחֲמָדֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם” has probably been added.

¹⁶ 8 ^a prp חֲטָאָה = here is proposed the following changing in vowels חֲטָאָה, meaning that חֲטָאָה could be interpreted as חֲטָאָה

¹⁷ 8 ^{b-b} firt dl m cs = perhaps to be deleted on account of the metre on account of = meaning that עַל־כֵּן translated as *therefore* can be omitted on account of the metre.

⁹ טמאָתה בשוליה לא זכרה אחריתה
פלאים אין מנחם לה¹⁸ ותָרַד
כי הגדיל אויב: ¹⁹ ראה יהנה את-עניי

⁹ Teth

Her uncleanness is in her skirts, she has not sense of her doom
And thus, she spirals downward wondrously,
There is no comforting for her,
See, Lord, to my affliction for he – an enemy - has greatly triumphed.

¹⁰ ידו פָּרַשׁ צָר על כל־מחמדיה
פי־רָאָתָה גוֹיִם בָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁה
אֲשֶׁר צוּיָתָה לֹא־יָבֹאוּ בִקְהֵל לָךְ:

¹⁰ Yod

His hand is stretched out, closing in on all her precious delights
As she saw nations coming inside her sanctuary,
“who you forbid to enter in your assembly”

¹¹ כָּל־עַמָּה נֶאֱנָחִים מִבְּקָשִׁים לָחֶם
בָּאֵל לְהָשִׁיב נַפְשׁ²⁰ נִתְּנוּ מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם
רָאָה יְהוָה וַהֲבִיטָהּ כִּי הִיטִי זֹלָלָה:

¹¹ Caph

All her people they are groaning, as they are reaching for bread
They are trading their treasures, for food to regain strength
See, Lord, and be aware for I am being despised.

¹² אֲלֵיכֶם כָּל־עֲבָרֵי דָרֶךְ הִבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ²¹ לֹא
אִם־יֵשׁ מִכָּאוֹב כְּמִכָּאֲבִי אֲשֶׁר עֹלְלָל לִי
אֲשֶׁר הִוָּגָה יְהוָה בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:

¹² Lamed

Is it really nothing to you, all you who serve while being a road, You, look and you, see?
If there is sorrow as my sorrow, which was put on me,
which he inflicted, Lord; on the day, fierce, was his anger

¹⁸ 9 ^a prp וַתִּרְדַּד cf σ' καὶ κατήχθην, *V deposita est* = here is proposed the following word וַתִּרְדַּד instead of what is written in BHS as וַתָּרַד, simply meaning that the line connects with the mood of the previous line, but not with any strong difference in contextual meaning; further in Vulgata one can read *deposita est* meaning *what is placed*, connecting to the distance she has developed towards her doom - as both history and future. It is in this moment as if time and space have created a paradoxical dreamlike state of mind in her, while she falls out of her self.

¹⁹ 9 ^b l עֲנִיָּה cf Bo Ambr. = is according to Qere read as עֲנִיָּה compared with Bohairica Ambrosius, rather than the ketiv (written form) אֶת־עֲנִיָּי. This causes a changing identification of the speaking subject in the lamentation, meaning a change from the observing third part seeing the other (3fs), to the female subject lamenting herself as 1cs (= *her* afflictions are thus accounted as *my* afflictions).

²⁰ 11 ^a Q^{Mss} mlt Mss מהמדיהם = Read (Qere) in more manuscripts incl. BH Kittel and in BH Snaith, London1958 as מהמדיהם, meaning that Vav is omitted from what is written מחמודיהם (ketiv) in the read (qere).

²¹ 12 ^a *^{Mss} σ'ού, ^{rel} οί = in Septuaginta Codex Versiones graecae the form of the word consists of σ'ού, while in Septuaginta remaining the form of the word consists of οί.

13 ²² מִמָּרוֹם שְׁלַח-אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמוֹתַי וַיִּרְדָּנָה
פָּרַשׁ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי הִשִּׁיבֵנִי אֲחֹרֶר
נִתְּנִי שְׁמָמָה כָּל-הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:

13 Mem

From high he sent fire into my bones and he brought it down
He spread a net to my feet, he turned me backward
He left me stunned; all the day fainted.

14 ²³ פָּשַׁעִי בְּיָדוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגֹּוּ נִשְׁקָד עַל
עַל-צְנֹאֲרֵי הַכִּשְׁיִל פָּחִי ²⁴ עָלוּ
בְּיָדִי לֹא-אוּכַל קוּם: ²⁵ נִתְּנִי אֲדָנִי

14 Nun

He bound into a yoke my transgressions; by his hand they were entangled
They were set upon my neck; he made my strength fail
He gave me, the Lord, into the hands of those I cannot stand against.

²² 13 ^a **Ⲭ** κατήγαγεν αὐτό = הִרְיָדָה vel וַיִּרְדָּנָה . Meaning: Septuaginta suggests that the origin may be from two different roots: וַיִּרְדָּנָה or הִרְיָדָה, translated into: ירד (descended, as according to the analytical key: Qal perf 3fs) or רדה (1. rule, govern; 2. scrape out; as according to the analytical key: Cons. Qal impf. 3ms -3fs).

²³ 14 ^{a-a} dub; mlt Mss **Ⲭ** ἐπεσκήθη ἐπὶ = נִשְׁקָד עַל = these two words are doubtful; in many Medieval manuscripts no vowels are indicated, and Septuaginta suggests a *patach* (עַל) rather than a *cholam* (עֹל).

²⁴ 14 ^b **Ⲭ** ^L τον ζυγόν αὐτοῦ, σ' ο' ζυγός αὐτοῦ = עָלוּ. Septuaginta the greek text according to Luciani suggests: his yoke, to his yoke = in Hebrew עָלוּ, which differs from the vowels in BHS עָלוּ (as suggested in Analytical key: עלה Qal. Pf 3cp).

²⁵ 14 ^c l c mlt Mss יהוה = is read in multiple Medieval manuscripts *with* (cum) יהוה.

Lamenting as Exegesis through Acrostics: a Literary-Narrative Investigation

Elie Assis points out that “In the Book of Lamentations, as in every other work, it is impossible to separate form and content. The form in which the content resides constitutes an essential part of the shaping of meaning”²⁶. There is an important aspect in this statement which opens up the narrative and literary method of applying *acrostics* as a map to the selected pericope. Acrostics thus function as a door to - and an art of - sensing the mood behind words and logos. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp²⁷ picks at the same thread when telling that firstly, the *acrostic* serves “as a container” for the poetry; secondly, it offers safety and stability through its patterned structures in an otherwise chaotic and eclectic performance of trauma and human inner despair; thirdly, through the acrostics a sense of “trajectory” and “dynamism” is obtained; and fourthly, using the alphabet causes a meaning-making process to appear with a certain *completeness* and *fullness* as a communal and cultural tool for sharing emotional fragility in a situation that could otherwise emerge as a too sensitive to tackle. So, when literally *moving into* any of the verses, the Hebrew letters give comfort as much as they become the driving force for the poet as well as the sensuous receiver, thus *making the pain* part of the self, no matter where one is in time or space.

Perhaps this is also one of the more interesting aspects of this form, since even if the actual acrostic patterns were assembled and inserted after the primary writing and composition, as suggested by Claus Westermann²⁸, an acrostic pattern can be observed as both an objectified fragment to direct a certain reading, but also as an actively dynamic movement *through* a specific mood and situation. In other words, an acrostic pattern can be both a definite article as much as a fluid and undefined sense of *acting through* a learning process. The very first letter א is a fine example of which Dobbs-Allsopp acknowledges that “[A]mong the cruelest phenomenal qualities of suffering is its purely aversive capacity to strip away a person’s mental abilities and to destroy language [...] The movement from the sequence’s primordial scream of ‘Eichaaah!’ to the articulate speech of the rest of the poetry [...] symbolizes these poem’s reclamation of language from wordless garble of anguished speech”²⁹. Through this kind of *moving* from primal sound-pattern to intelligible meaning-making words, a process of growing and healing can be made possible. This progression can be compared God’s creation of the

²⁶ Assis, E. 2007:718.

²⁷ Dobbs-Allsopp, F.W. 2002: 17-18

²⁸ Westermann 1994.

²⁹ Dobbs-Allsopp, F.W. 2002: 33

universe, when all was chaos and God created meaning through the act of naming of actors becoming part of the creation. The Book of Lamentation thus becomes a new form of creation out of disorder and meaninglessness, pointing towards the importance of trust and hope in what has not yet been made sense of, and a turning towards God as a way of learning, living and becoming.

An Existential Psychological approach

Chapter 1:1-9 assembles a third person's horrified impressions of grief, loneliness and the total "tragic collapse"³⁰ of a female character who personifies the sacred city of Jerusalem as well as its people. The female character appears as many different voices, through the many poetic ways of imagining this wounded, weeping being. All the translations I have moved through give their own interpretation of how the female victim cries: bitterly³¹, aloud³², she weeps on³³, she surely cries³⁴, she cries endlessly³⁵. There will be many more variations, because the Hebrew words (in BHS) offer the interpreter an openness: בָּכּוֹ תִּבְכֶּה. My own choice follows the acrostic pattern of the letter *Beit*, and I translate the words into *Bitterly she weeps*. But it is not an easy choice. And here is where we must sit down to have a dialogue, all the interpreters together. Because the very act of listening to the Other is fundamentally what existential psychology is based upon: a method concerned with attuning into what is heard and read *through* the Other; moving through words and thinking in relation to their Otherness. It is about desiring to learn from what has been placed on the table (the effects), more than to try to prove the Other being wrong, as in an opposing discussion.

What is strived for in an existential exegesis can also be found in a rabbinic study house, as well as when a group of musicians sit down to play or sing. It's about listening as a way of reading the Other, a deep listening to the sacred sound of the Other. Dobbs-Allsopp set words - with the help of Levinas and Brueggemann - to these thoughts as follow: "Therapeutically, the poets' act of linguistic creation [...] project aliveness and sentience outward, while at the same time forcing pain itself into an objectified state and thereby alleviating and [...] even

³⁰ Middlemas 2021: 3

³¹ NRSV. 2021. The Bible.

³² Hillers. D. 1992.

³³ Alter, R. 2018.

³⁴ Ziegler, Y. 2021.

³⁵ Westerman 1994.

eliminating pain's aversiveness. [...] Ethically, pain brought to speech is an act of protest, an assertion of pain's uselessness and malignancy that is unforgivable wherever and whenever encountered, and that always calls of active consolation" ³⁶. Such consolation does not only need an opposing set of structures but also needs what Brueggeman calls "limitless generosity and extravagant abundance"³⁷; and also what the theologian and existential philosopher Martin Buber refers to when he writes that "The human being of whom I say *You* I do not experience. But I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I experience him again. Experience is remoteness from you." Words are opening up for relationality to emerge, for closeness to blur the line between me and you. So when I enter an authentic relationship with the grief in the Book of Lamentations, I become grief-stricken myself, I even become grief, and thus I speak and cry as if I am every word and every sound uttered. I and Thou, moving through learning how to stay with any trouble.

A diffractive exegetic reading.

And "staying with the trouble" - the often quoted statement by feminist scholar Donna Haraway ³⁸ - is a call for patience, which is a very useful technique of knowledge when entering the lamentations as a reader who is confronted with total isolation, emptiness and an existential sense of lostness and wonder. I personally think that both of the methods explained above can be understood and referred to as diffractive reading methods. Feminist scholars Birgit Mara Kaiser and Kathrin Thiele are among the first to contextualize this so called feminist new materialist theorizing as *diffractive reading method*. They introduce the method as a way of moving "out images of difference/s from oppositional to differential, from static to productive, and our ideas of scientific knowledge from reflective, disinterested judgement to mattering, embedded involvement. It is an inverted category of semantics, that builds on and contests metaphors we habitually use to describe practices of knowing and living. Diffraction, thus, is a significant 'subject shifter' [...] a relational ontology [...] as both method of engagement and radically immanent world(ing) where relationality/differentiation are primary dynamics of all material-discursive entanglements"³⁹. Without moving too deep into the theories behind these words I want to claim that allowing myself as a reading subject to sit down next to the crying female character in the Lamentations, I have entangled myself with her; I and Thou have

³⁶ Dobbs: 2002:35.

³⁷ Brueggemann:171

³⁸ Haraway. D. 2016.

³⁹ Kaiser, B. M. & Thiele, K. 2012: 1.

emerged, according to Buber; and the Other's pains have through my reading been encountered and entangled with Brueggemann's "limitless generosity and extravagant abundance"⁴⁰; or as Elaine James suggests when "[T]he poems lead us into a sense of the interior world of the speakers, who are consumed with emotions of love. The poems are their speech"⁴¹, becoming the speech also of grief and hopelessness, when spoken. And speaking, reading, understanding, entangling are verbs situated at the very core of diffractive methods. As feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva writes, "[T]he verb of which the tense can be modulated: recalling a past, opening a future, remaining in the present or trying to arrive in it, to dwell in it, and which serves to build bridges between different moments". Such a verb is both in the meaningless *Eicha*, and in the act, and the meaning-ful verb *lamenting*. Detailed exploration of the lamentations in Hebrew offers the reader *possibilities* for meaning-making, as much as it contains *effects* ready for being rebuilt and reconfigured, creating more-than-ever-imagined possible understandings.

Part III

A concluding discussion

To return to my research question: "How does 'form foster creativity'⁴² and existential meaning-making through an exegetical reading of the Biblical Lamentations / תְּהִינֵנּוּ 1:1-14. It is valuable to think through a sentence in Assis's paper where he writes that "deep emotional expression usually bursts out unrestrained. Those who grieve tend not to cry in rhythm. Mourners cannot be bothered with the style of their grievings"⁴³. This is what is expressed in various forms throughout the lamentations. And forming – as one of the verbs described by Kristeva – is happening also today, here, in this world. Communal mourning is needed more than ever in Jerusalem right now, when people are moving through their lives as part of a war zone. What the lamentations may offer all of us in today's context is a spacetime for learning, moving and acting in all ways, as poets of our own experiences. The spacetime for translating the untranslatable may be conceived perhaps as a labyrinth, created for walking in between formalities, controlled theological structures, and exegetical traditions. This will never offer us any shortcuts, because "[L]ike a labyrinth, a poem has no shortcuts. It asks its audience to

⁴⁰ Bruggemann 2009:171.

⁴¹ James 2021:18

⁴² Ibid.:95.

⁴³ Assis 2007: 717

invest time, energy and care, and above all attention”⁴⁴. And it is in this mood I have entered my pericope, allowing a forming praxis to turn into a creative and existential reading, in search for meaning in the worst of any situations. In times of violence, hate and horror, The Book of Lamentations becomes a way of searching and finding meaning while unfolding Hebrew words as emotions, tears, spiraling downwards into horror and upwards into wonder, and finally resting in trust and hope, ready for that which will become the next step.

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⁴⁴ James 2021:15.