



When Was the Book of Lamentations Written?

The common conception is that the book of Lamentations, which mourns the destruction of the first Holy Temple and the ensuing exile of the Jewish nation, was written in reaction to those tragic events. Many paintings depict the prophet Jeremiah, the author of Lamentations, penning the work while in the background Jerusalem and the Temple are going up in smoke.

In actuality, the widely accepted Jewish view is that Lamentations (or at least the bulk of it) was penned years before the actual calamitous events it depicts.

The first Temple was destroyed in the year 423 BCE. Seventeen years earlier, G-d instructed Jeremiah, "Take for yourself a scroll and write upon it all the words that I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah ... Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I plan to do to them, in order that they should repent, each man of his evil way, and I will forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Jeremiah, who was imprisoned at the time (apparently because King Jehoiakim was tired of listening to Jeremiah's prophecies foretelling the fall of Jerusalem), dictated to his devoted student Baruch ben Neriah three chapters, each chapter consisting of 22 verses, each verse beginning with a different letter, following the order of the Hebrew alphabet. These chapters vividly and heart-wrenchingly describe the tragedies and calamities that would befall Judah. The chapters speak in past tense, lamenting these events as if they had already occurred.



Baruch wrote these chapters on a scroll and, at the prophet's instruction, read them to the people gathered in the Temple. Ultimately, the document was read before King Jehoiakim, who upon hearing only the first few verses callously tossed the scroll into the fireplace.

G-d then instructed Jeremiah to rewrite the prophecies. Jeremiah again dictated the prophecies to his student, this time adding an additional chapter—one that contained 66 verses, the first three starting with the letter aleph, the next three with a bet, and so on.

The first three chapters that Jeremiah wrote constitute chapters 1, 2 and 4 of the book of Lamentations. The 66-verse chapter he added is chapter 3. Chapter 5—the only chapter that isn't an alphabetical acrostic, though it too contains 22 verses—was added by Jeremiah at a later time.

(Chapter 4 was originally composed as a eulogy for King Josiah (Yoshiyahu), Jehoiakim's father. Unlike Jehoiakim, Josiah was a truly saintly individual, as the Torah testifies (II Kings 23:25): "Before him there was no king like him who returned to G-d with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to the entire Torah of Moses, and after him no one [of his stature] arose.")

And indeed, seventeen years later, on the ninth of Av in the year 3338 from creation, the Temple was destroyed and the Jews led into captivity—precisely as Jeremiah had prophesied.

Ever since, the book of Lamentations is read every year on the eve of the ninth of Av.

May G-d soon comfort us and usher in the time when we will be doubly consoled with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

No Respect For Tradition

"All of you approached me..." (1:22) Moshe rebukes Bnei Yisroel for the sin of the spies which resulted in the death of an entire generation and Bnei Yisroel's condemnation to wander in the desert for an additional thirty-eight years. Moshe introduces the recounting of the episode with what appears to be merely an historical depiction of the way in which the events unfolded: "All of you surrounded me saying 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the Land.'" Rashi however, teaches that this introductory statement identifies a flaw in Bnei Yisroel's behavior. Bnei Yisroel approach Moshe "be'irbuvia" – "in a disorderly and disrespectful manner", the young pushing ahead of their elders and the elders pushing ahead of the leaders. Why is this information introduced in Parshas Devarim which is only a recounting of the episode and not in Parshas Shelach which contains the primary account of the occurrence? Why is it necessary to divulge this indiscretion which appears to be only tangential to the actual sin of the spies?

The strong commitment to tradition adhered to by the Jewish people reflects not only their desire to ensure Jewish continuity but also their respect and reverence for earlier generations and their values. A breakdown in observance of these traditions makes a statement that the earlier generations and the values held dear to them are no longer worthy of respect.

For four hundred years, beginning with the Patriarchs and continuing on from parent to child, a tradition of returning to the Land of milk and honey as promised by Hashem was handed down. The very notion that spies were needed to determine the Land's viability as a place of residence for Bnei Yisroel reflects a lack in their respect for the traditions of their elders.

Devarim is the Sefer which records the last few weeks of Moshe's life. Moshe uses this time period to relate all the transgressions committed by Bnei Yisroel in the past and to exhort them not to succumb again. The manner in which they approach Moshe is not integral to the story line of the sin of the spies and therefore not recorded in Parshas Shelach. It is, however, essential to understanding the dynamics of the sin and how to avoid repetition of this occurrence. By identifying the flaw in their manner of approaching him, Moshe is explaining to Bnei Yisroel that this flaw is symptomatic of the greater problem, the lack of commitment to the traditions of their elders. Had they possessed the required reverence for their elders they would not have questioned the viability of Eretz Yisroel.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Dr. Shimon and Mrs. Chaya Deutsch
are sponsoring Kiddush after davening this Shabbat
in memory of the **yahrzeit** of
Shimon's mother,
Rivkah bas Meir,
whose yahrzeit is the 6th of Av.



Yahrzeits This Week:

Binyomin Gutman	6 Av - Friday night / Shabbat	for mother	Ahuva bas Mordechai HaLevi
Steven Deutsch	6 Av - Friday night / Shabbat	for mother	Rivkah bas Meir
Joseph Zakar	10 Av - Tuesday night / Wednesday	for mother	Chaya Rivka bas Yaakov

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 8/9 — 5 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/10 — 6 Av

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:41 a.m.
Minchah — 7:40 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 8:08 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:51 p.m.

Sunday, 8/11 — 7 Av

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Maariv — 7:45 p.m.

Monday, 8/12 — 8 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah — 5:00 p.m.
Fast Begins — 8:05 p.m.
Ma'ariv and Eichah — 8:45 p.m.

Tuesday — Tisha b'Av, 8/13 — 9 Av

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Kinos — Until 12:00 noon
Chatzos — 1:11 p.m.
Early Mincha — 2:00 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.
Fast Ends — 8:33 p.m.

Wednesday, 8/14 — 10 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Thursday, 8/15 — 11 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Friday, 8/16 — 12 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 7:41 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.