

Numerical Features of the Book of Lamentations

A New Approach to its Structural Design

Please read the [General Introduction](#)

I owe thanks to Klaas Eikelenboom for his constructive remarks and for having checked my text.

The Book of Lamentations is clearly in two parts: Chapters 1-4, which constitute a series of alphabetic acrostics, finalized and sealed by **132** verses (6x**22**) and a number of words that are a multiple of the divine name number **17**, **1394** (82x**17**), and Chapter 5, which is a non-acrostic alphabetizing poem with 22 verses. This chapter, like Chapter 3, stands out by the lack of the *'atnach*. The number **22**, which signifies the letters of the alphabet, determines the fivefold structure of the book (in each case delimited by a **P**), with Chapter 3 in pride of place at the centre. The book in its entirety is finalized and sealed by **154** (7x**22**) verses and **1540** (70x**22**) words.

Chapter 1: Description of the anguish of Zion caused by the fall of the city: **P 22** verses.

Chapter 2: The cause of the city's destruction: **P 22** verses.

Chapter 3: Zion's hope of relief and God's mercy: **P 22** sets of **3** acrostic verses = **66** verses.

Chapter 4: Continued description of the horrors of the siege: **P 22** verses.

Chapter 5: A prayer for remembrance and restoration: **Col. 22** alphabetizing verses.

The Hebrew text is in a relatively good condition, except for four minor and understandable scribal errors, which must be dealt with before the logotechnical analysis. See the relevant texts in BHS.

In 1,6a the words מִן־בֵּת־צִיּוֹן should be read (Qere) as מִבֵּת־צִיּוֹן, 'from the daughter of Zion'.

In 1:16b the two words עֵינַי עֵינַי, 'my eye, my eye' (usually translated 'my eyes'), is obviously a matter of dittography, and one word should be deleted. The Masoretes have a paseq-slash between the two words, which is in this case a device to mark the dittography.

In 4:3d כִּי עֵינַי, 'for the eyes', is unintelligible and should be read as one word: כִּי־עֵינַי, 'like ostriches' (following Qere, many Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions).

In 5:5a, עַל, 'on', is a haplography and should be read עַל עַל, 'a yoke on (our shoulders)'.

Outline based on the layout markers, content and numerical features

Chapter 1: Description of the anguish of Zion caused by the fall of the city:

§1: 1,1-11 Description of the misery in Jerusalem: **S** **187** (11x**17**) words.

§2: 1,12-22 The sorrows God brought upon Zion: **P** **187** (11x**17**) words.

Chapter 2: The cause of the city's destruction:

§3: 2,1-10 The misery God brought upon Zion: **S** 166 words.

§4: 2,11-19 Personal tears over the fate of Zion: **S** 165 words.

§5: 2,20-22 A plea for God's mercy; more lament: **P** 50 words.

Chapter 3: Zion's hope of relief and God's mercy: Central chapter

§6: 3,1-18 A complaint about God's punishment: **S** 96 words.

§7: 3,19-24 Trust in God's love despite afflictions: **S** 38 words.

§8: 3,25-42 There is hope for mercy if you repent: **S** Book's Centre **108**

§9: 3,43-45 God is reproached for what he did: **S** 16 words.

§10: 3,46-54 Personal lament over Zion's fate: **S** 53 words.

§11: 3,55-66 God will requite the enemies: **P** 70 words.

Chapter 4: Continued description of the horrors of the siege:

§12: 4,1-12 The situation of Zion's inhabitants: **S** 139 words.

§13: 4,13-16 The clergy sinned and God punished the people: **S** 47 words.

§14: 4,17-20 The appalling fate of the refugees: **S** 45 words.

§15: 4,21-22 The punishment of Zion is over! **P** 27 words.

Chapter 5: A prayer for remembrance and restoration:

§16: 5,1-18 A prayer for remembrance and mercy: **S** 118 words.

§17 (5,19-22) Why do you reject us? Restore and renew us! **Col.** 28 words.

Chapters 1-5	The paragraph arrangement is personal and not conclusive.	1540 (70x 22) words.
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Sixteen different views on the structural design of Lamentations

All commentaries I could lay my hands on follow the traditional chapter arrangement which is dominated by the number 22. D.A. Dorsey's arrangement of the text is a rare exception. See his book *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic, 1999, 246-252. He finds 13 units, with 'the words of hope' in **3,21-32** at the centre:

1. 1,1-11; **2.** 1,12-22; **3.** 2,1-8; **4.** 2,9-12; **5.** 2,13-22; **6.** 3,1-20; **7.** **3,21-32**; **8.** 3,33-39;
9. 3,40-66; **10.** 4,1-10; **11.** 4,11-16; **12.** 4,17-22; **13.** 5,1-22.

In my opinion, however, this division of the text is totally unacceptable, because neither the layout markers nor the poetic structure has been taken into consideration. Taking the layout marker **S** seriously applies particularly to Chapter 3, where the seams of the presumed division of the text must always coincide with the seams indicated by the layout markers. In other words, these three-line units may never be split up. Plöger (1969), Van Selms (1974), Renkema (1998), Joyce (2001), Berges (2002), and Longman III (2008), are the commentators who take the layout marker **S** in Chapter 3 seriously!

H.J. KRAUS (*Klagelieder*, in: BKAT XX, 1956):

1. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

2. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

3. 1-19; 3,20-24; 3,25-33; 3,34-38; 3,39-41; 3,42-51; 3,52-66. *The S after 3,18.39.42 ignored!*

4. 1-6; 4,7-11; 4,12-16; 4,17-22.

5. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

W. RUDOLPH (*Die Klagelieder*, in: *Das Buch Ruth, Das Hohelied, Die Klagelieder*, in: KAT 1962, 187-263):

1. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

2. 1-5; 2,6-9; 2,10-12; 2,13-17; 2,18-19; 2,20-22.

3. 1-20; 3,21-33; 3,34-36; 3,37-41; 3,42-47; 3,48-51; 3,52-66. *The S after 3,42.48 ignored!*

4. 1-2; 4,3-6; 4,7-11; 4,12-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22.

5. 1; 5,2-10; 5,11-14; 5,15-16; 5,17-18; 5,19-22.

O. PLÖGER (*Die Klagelieder*, in: E. Würthwein, K. Galling, O. Plöger, *Die fünf Megilloth*, HAT 1969, 127-164):

According to the chapter- and verse arrangement. *The S consistently respected!*

A. VAN SELMS (*Jeremia deel III en Klaagliederen*, in: POT 1974, 111-157):

1. 1-3; 1,4-7; 1,8-11; 1,12-15; 1,16-20; 1,21-22. **2.** 1-3; 2,4-7; 2,8-10; 2,11-15; 2,16-19; 2,20-22.

3. 1-3; 3,4-6; 3,7-9; 3,10-12; 3,13-15; 3,16-18; 3,19-21; 3,22-24; 3,25-27; 3,28-30; 3,31-33; 3,34-36; 3,37-39; 3,40-42; 3,43-45; 3,46-48; 3,49-51; 3,52-54; 3,55-57; 3,58-60; 3,61-63; 3,64-66. *The S consistently respected!*

4. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

5. 1-22 according to the verse arrangement.

R. DAVIDSON (*Jeremiah Volume 2 and Lamentations*, in: Study Bible Series, 1985, 167-214):

1. 1-3; 1,4-7; 1,8-11 | 1,12-22. **2.** 1-10 | 2,11-17; 2,18-22.

3. 1-20; 3,21-39; 3,40-51; 3,52-66. *The S after 3,21 ignored!*

4. 1-16; 4,17-22. **5.** 1-18; 5,19-22. *Fifteen parts.*

I.W. PROVAN (*Lamentations*, in: New Century Bible Commentary. 1991): **1.** 1-22 the verse arrangement.

2. 1-12; 2,13-19; 2,20-22. **3.** 1-3; 4-6; 7-9, etc. altogether 22 stanzas. **4.** 1-22. **5.** 1-22.

O. KAISER (*Klagelieder*, in: *Das Hohelied, Klagelieder, Das Buch Ester*, in: ATD 16/2, 1992, 91-198):

1. 1-6; 1,7-11; | 1,12-16; 1,17; 1,18-19; 1,20-22.

2. 1-12; | 2,13-14; 2,15-16 2,17; 2,18-19; 2,20-22.

3. 1-3; 3,4-16; 3,17-20; 3,21-24; | 3,25-33; | 3,34-36; 3,37-39; | 3,40-41; 3,42-47; | 3,48-51; | 3,52-54; 3,55-57; 3,58-63; 3,64-66. *The S after 3,15.21.42.48.60 is ignored!*

4. 1-6; 4,7-11; 4,12-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22.

5. 1; 5,2-8; 5,9-10; 5,11-12; 5,13; 5,14-15; 5,17-18; | 5,19-22.

J. RENKEMA (*Lamentations*, in: HCOT, 1998):

1. 1-3; 1,4-6; 1,7-9; 1,10-11; | 1,12-16; 1,17-19; 1,20-22.

2. 1-3; 2,4-5; 2,6-7; 2,8-10; 2,11-13; 2,14-15; 2,16-17; 2,18-19; 2,20-22.

3. 1-6; 3,7-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-27; 3,28-33; 3,34-39; 3,40-45; 3,46-54; 3,55-60; 3,61-66. *The S always respected!*

4. 1-2; 4,3-5; 4,6; 4,7-9; 4,10-11; 4,12-13; 4,14-16; 4,17; 4,18-20; 4,21-22.

5. 1-2; 5,3-4; 5,5-6; 5,7-8; 5,9-10; 5,11-12; 5,13-14; 5,15-16; 5,17-18; 5,19-20; 5,21-22.

K.M. O'CONNOR (*The Book of Lamentations*, in: *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 2001, 1011-1072):

1,1; 1,2; 1,3; 1,4-6; 1,7-9; 1,10-11b; | 1,11c; 1,12; 1,13-16; 1,17; 1,18-22.

2,1-8; 2,9-10; | 2,11-12; 2,13; 2,14-17; 2,18-19 | 2,20-22.

3,1; 3,2-9; 3,10-18; 3,19-20; 3,21-24; 3,25-36; 3,37-39; 3,40-42; 3,43-48; 3,49-54; 3,55-63; 3,64-66.

The S after 3,21 ignored!

4,1; 4,2; 4,3-4; 4,5-10; | 4,11; 4,12; 4,13-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22.

5,1; 5,2-3; 5,4-5; 5,6-7; 5,8-13; 5,14-18; | 5,19; 5,20; 5,21; 5,22.

E.S. GERSTENBERGER (*Psalms Part 2, and Lamentations*, in: *The Forms of the Old Testament*, XV, 2001):

Lamentations 1: *Since this is the most detailed arrangement and description of the contents, the titles of the subdivisions are mentioned in full.*

I. *1 Opening cry (how)

II. 1-10 Description of misery.

A. 1-6 Jerusalem's fate. B. 7-10a-d Jerusalem's guilt. C. 10ef Direct address of Yahweh.

III. 11-22 Personal lament.

A. 11a-d Introduction (Narration).

B. 11ef Initial plea.

C. 12-15 Complaint.

D. 16 Description of mourning.

E. 17 (Narration).

F. 18-19 Plea for sympathy.

G. 20-22 Prayer for help.

Lamentations 2:

I. *1 Opening cry (how).

II. 1-10 Description of misery.

A. 1-8 Yahweh's sanctions. B. 9-10 Consequent desolation.

III. 11-16 Divine lament

A. 11-12 Description of suffering. B. 13-16 Personal address.

IV. 17-19 Admonitions.

V. 20-22 Plea and lament.

Lamentations 3:

I. 1-18 Complaint

A. 1-3 Self-presentation, complaint. B. 4-18 Description of Yahweh's punishment.

II. 19-36 Affirmation of confidence

A. 19-21 Meditation. B. 22-36 Confession of trust.

III. 37-54 Communal confession.

A. 37-39 Theological confession. B. 40-42 Communal prayer.

1. 40-41 Call to repent. 2. Confession of guilt.

B. 43-45 Direct address. C. 46-47 Complaint about enemies *The S after 3,48 ignored!*

C. 48-51 Description of mourning. D. 52-54 Complaint about enemies.

IV. 55-66 Petition

A. 55-58 Trust of being heard. B. 59 Petition for help. C. 60-66 Denunciation of enemies.

Lamentations 4:

I. *1 Openings cry (how).

II. 1-16 Descriptive lament.

A. 1 General. B. 2-10 Peoples' suffering. C. 11-16 Yahweh's castigation.

III. 17-20 Communal lament.

IV. 21-22 Threats and promises.

Lamentations 5:

I. 1 Invocation, initial plea.

II. 2-18 Lament

A. 2-10 Collective lament. B. 11-14 Description of social groups. C. 15-18 Collective lament.

III. 19-22 Petition

A. 19 Hymnic address. B. 20 Plaintive question. C. 21-22 Petition for help.

P.M. JOYCE (*Lamentations*, in: *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 2001, 528-533):

1,1-11a; 1,11b-22; 2,1-22; 3,1-18; 3,19-39; 3,40-51; 3,52-66. *The S in Chapter 3 consistently respected.*

4,1-22; 5,1-22.

U. BERGES (*Klagelieder*, in: HThKAT, 2002):

1,1-3; 1,4-6; | 1,7-9; 1,10-11; | 1,12-13; 1,14-16; | 1,17-19; 1,20-22. 4 Sections; 8 Stanzas.

2,1-5; 2,6-10; | 2,11-16; 2,17-22. 2 Sections; 4 Stanzas.

3,1-6; 3,7-12; 3,13-21; | 3,22-27; 3,28-33; 3,34-39; | 3,40-45; 3,46-51; 3,52-60; 3,61-66. 3 Sections; 10 Stanzas.

4,1-2; 4,3-6; 4,7-11; | 4,12-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22. 2 Sections; 6 Stanzas.

5,1-4; 5,5-10; | 5,11-14; 5,15-18; 5,19-22. 2 Sections; 5 Stanzas. The **S** in Chapter 3 consistently respected.

D. BERGANT (*Lamentations*, in: Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, 2003):

1,1-6; 1,7-11b; | 1,11c-12; 1,13-18a; 1,18b-19; 1,20-22.

2,1-9a; 2,9b-12; 2,13-19; 2,20-22.

3,1-20; 3,21-24; 3,25-39; 3,40-47; 3,48-57; 3,58-66. The **S** after 3,21.49 and 60 ignored.

4,1-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22.

5,1-18; 5,19; 5,20-22.

T. LONGMAN III (*Jeremiah, Lamentations*, in: New International Biblical Commentary, 2008, 327-393):

1,1-2.3-4.5-7.8-9.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17-18.19.20.21.22.

2, 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11-12.13.14.15-16.17.18-19.20.21.22.

3,1-66 according to the alphabet: 1-3; 4-6, etc. The **S** in Chapter 3 consistently respected!

4,1-2; 4,3-4; 4,5.6.7-8.9.10.11.12.13-16.18-19. 20.21.22.

5,1.2.3-5.6.7.8-9.10.11-14.15.16.17-18.19-22.

R.B. SALTERS (*Lamentations*, in: The International Critical Commentary, 2010):

1,1-11; 1,12-22. 2, 1-8; 2,9-10; 2,11-19; 2,20-22. 3,1-25; 3,26-39; 3,40-47; 3,48-66. The **S** after 3,24.49 ignored!

4,1-16; 4,17-20; 4,21-22. 5,1-0; 5,11-14; 5,15-17; 5,18-22. 17 parts.

The numerical features of Lamentations in broad outline

Vs.	Texts	Words	Letters	יָדוּהָ	Sum words	S/P	Structural design and highlighted sections
1	Lam. 1,1	14	58		14	S	§1: 1,1-11 Description of the misery in Jerusalem
2	Lam. 1,2	18	64		32	S	
3	Lam. 1,3	16/34 (2x17)	65		48	S	1,2-3 Jerusalem weeps bitterly; Judah has gone
4	Lam. 1,4	16	68		64	S	into exile: 34 words.
5	Lam. 1,5	16	58	1	80	S	
6	Lam. 1,6	16*	57		96	S	MT 17.
7	Lam. 1,7	23	86		119	S	
8	Lam. 1,8	18	68		137	S	
9	Lam. 1,9	17	65	2	154	S	1,9 The city has sinned and is despised: 17 words.
10	Lam. 1,10	17	56		171	S	1,10 Jerusalem has been robbed: 17 words.
11	Lam. 1,11	16	69	3	187	S	
11	Lam. 1,1-11	187 (11x17)	714		187 (11x17)		Sealed by 187 (11x17) words like 1,12-22.
12	Lam. 1,12	20	72	4	207	S	§2: 1,12-22 The sorrows God brought upon Zion
13	Lam. 1,13	15	61		222	S	
14	Lam. 1,14	16	60		238	S	
15	Lam. 1,15	16	60		254	S	
16	Lam. 1,16	19*	66		273	S	MT 20.
17	Lam. 1,17	15	60	5	288	S	
18	Lam. 1,18	16	59	6	304	S	
19	Lam. 1,19	15	56		319	S	
20	Lam. 1,20	18	59	7	337	S	
21	Lam. 1,21	20	66		357	S	
22	Lam. 1,22	17	55		374/187	P	1,22 May God give the foes their due: 17 words.
11	Lam. 1,12-22	187 (11x17)	698		187 (11x17)		Sealed by 187 (11x17) words like 1,1-11.
22	Lam. 1,1-22	374 (22x17)	1412		374 (22x17)		Sealed by altogether 374 (22x17) words.
23	Lam. 2,1	18	68		392	S	§3: 2,1-10 The misery God brought upon Zion
24	Lam. 2,2	18	66		410	S	
25	Lam. 2,3	17	65		427	S	2,3 YHWH has withdrawn from Judah: 17 words.
26	Lam. 2,4	16	58		443	S	
27	Lam. 2,5	15	64		458	S	
28	Lam. 2,6	15	58	8	473	S	
29	Lam. 2,7	16	67	9	489	S	

30	Lam. 2,8	17	62	10	506	S	
31	Lam. 2,9	17 51	70	11	523	S	2,8-10 Zion in ruins; all mourn: 3x17 words.
32	Lam. 2,10	17	68		540/166	S	
33	Lam. 2,11	17	67		557	S	§4: 2,11-19 Personal tears over the fate of Zion
34	Lam. 2,12	14 52 (2x26)	59		571	S	2,11-13 How can Zion be comforted?: 52 words.
35	Lam. 2,13	21	70		592	S	
36	Lam. 2,14	16	62		608	S	
37	Lam. 2,15	20 52 (2x26)	77		628	S	2,14-16 Prophets have failed; foes rejoice: 52 w.
38	Lam. 2,16	16	65		644	S	
39	Lam. 2,17	19	67	12	663	S	
40	Lam. 2,18	20	68		683	S	
41	Lam. 2,19	22	86		705/165	S	
42	Lam. 2,20	18	71	13	723	S	§5: 2,20-22 A plea for God's mercy; more lament
43	Lam. 2,21	15	61		738	S	
44	Lam. 2,22	17	68	14	755/50	P	2,22 Terror all around; none escaped: 17 words.
22	Lam. 2,1-22	381	1467		381		381 words. Note that 3,1-66 has also 381 words!
45	Lam. 3,1	6	22		761		§6: 3,1-18 A complaint about God's punishment
46	Lam. 3,2	6	20		767		
47	Lam. 3,3	7	20		774	S	
48	Lam. 3,4	5	21		779		
49	Lam. 3,5	5	18		784		
50	Lam. 3,6	4	22		788	S	
51	Lam. 3,7	6	23		794		
52	Lam. 3,8	6 17	21		800		3,7-9 God has walled me in: 17 words.
53	Lam. 3,9	5	21		805	S	
54	Lam. 3,10	6	21		811		
55	Lam. 3,11	5	22		816		
56	Lam. 3,12	5	22		821	S	
57	Lam. 3,13	4	19		825		
58	Lam. 3,14	7	26		832		
59	Lam. 3,15	4	23		836	S	
60	Lam. 3,16	5	23		841		
61	Lam. 3,17	5	23		846		
62	Lam. 3,18	5	23	15	851/96	S	
63	Lam. 3,19	5	21		856		§7: 3,19-24 Trust in God's love despite afflictions
64	Lam. 3,20	5 17	21		861		3,19-21 I remember my affliction and bitterness,
65	Lam. 3,21	7	21		868	S	therefore, I have hope: 17 words.
66	Lam. 3,22	9	28	16	877		
67	Lam. 3,23	4	20		881		
68	Lam. 3,24	8	27	17	889/38	S	1,1-3,24 is sealed by 68 verses and 17x YHWH.
68	1,1-3,24	889		17x	889		
69	Lam. 3,25	5	21	18	894		§8: 3,25-42 There is hope for mercy if you repent
70	Lam. 3,26	5	23	19	889		3,25-42 central core of the book: 108 words.
71	Lam. 3,27	6	21		905	S	in terms of verses: 68 + 18 + 68 = 154.
72	Lam. 3,28	6	19		911		See Observations 3 and 4 below.
73	Lam. 3,29	6 17	21		917		3,28-30 There may be hope: 17 words.
74	Lam. 3,30	5	20		922	S	
75	Lam. 3,31	5	17		927		
76	Lam. 3,32	6	19		933		
77	Lam. 3,33	7	21		940	S	
78	Lam. 3,34	6	22		946		
79	Lam. 3,35	6	23		952		
80	Lam. 3,36	6	21		958	S	
81	Lam. 3,37	7	20		965		
82	Lam. 3,38	6	23		971		
83	Lam. 3,39	7	22		978	S	
84	Lam. 3,40	6	29	20	984		
85	Lam. 3,41	7	23		991		
86	Lam. 3,42	6	24		997/108	S	

87	Lam. 3,43	6	24		1003		§9: 3,43-45 God is reproached for what he did
88	Lam. 3,44	5	20		1008		3,43-5,22 is sealed by 68 (4x17) verses.
89	Lam. 3,45	5	23		1013/16	S	
90	Lam. 3,46	5	20		1018		§10: 3,46-54 Personal lament over Zion's fate
91	Lam. 3,47	6	22		1024		
92	Lam. 3,48	8	24		1032	S	
93	Lam. 3,49	6+	24		1038		
94	Lam. 3,50	5+	20	21	1043		3,49-51 Tears, tears over the city: 17 words.
95	Lam. 3,51	6/17	25		1049	S	
96	Lam. 3,52	5	20		1054		
97	Lam. 3,53	6 17	20		1060		3,52-54 There seems to be no hope: 17 words.
98	Lam. 3,54	6	23		1066/53	S	
99	Lam. 3,55	5	22	22	1071		§11: 3,55-66 God will requite the enemies
100	Lam. 3,56	7	30		1078		
101	Lam. 3,57	6	23		1084	S	
102	Lam. 3,58	6	22		1090		
103	Lam. 3,59	5	23	23	1095		
104	Lam. 3,60	6	22		1101	S	
105	Lam. 3,61	6	24	24	1107		
106	Lam. 3,62	6 52 (2x26)	23		1113		3,58-66 God has taken up my cause and will
107	Lam. 3,63	5	25		1118	S	requite my enemies: 52 words.
108	Lam. 3,64	6	25	25	1124		
109	Lam. 3,65	6	20		1130		
110	Lam. 3,66	6	25	26	1136/70	P	Until this point, 26x YHWH.
66	Lam. 3,1-66	381	1466	6x	381		381 words. Note that 2,1-22 has also 381 words!
111	Lam. 4,1	12	48		1148	S	§12: 4,1-12 The situation of Zion's inhabitants
112	Lam. 4,2	12	51		1160	S	
113	Lam. 4,3	11*	45		1171	S	*MT 12.
114	Lam. 4,4	12	42		1183	S	
115	Lam. 4,5	9	46		1192	S	
116	Lam. 4,6	13	45		1205	S	
117	Lam. 4,7	10 104 (4x26)	43		1215	S	4,4-12 Special emphasis on various victims of the
118	Lam. 4,8	13	46		1228	S	siege of Jerusalem: 104 words.
119	Lam. 4,9	11	46		1239	S	
120	Lam. 4,10	11	44		1250	S	
121	Lam. 4,11	12	46	27	1262	S	
122	Lam. 4,12	13	48		1275/139	S	
123	Lam. 4,13	8	40		1283	S	§13: 4,13-16 The clergy sinned and God punished
124	Lam. 4,14	9 34 (2x17)	41		1292	S	
125	Lam. 4,15	17	59		1309	S	4,13-15 Because of the sins of the prophets and
	Lam. 4,16	13	49	28	1322/47	S	priests they became unwelcome refugees: 34 w.
127	Lam. 4,17	12	52		1334	S	§14: 4,17-20 The appalling fate of the refugees
128	Lam. 4,18	11	47		1345	S	
129	Lam. 4,19	11	46		1356	S	
130	Lam. 4,20	11	49	29	1367/45	S	
131	Lam. 4,21	13	52		1380	S	§15: 4,21-22 The punishment of Zion is over!
132	Lam. 4,22	14	50		1394/27	P	4,13-22 (§13-15) altogether 119 (7x17) words
22	Lam. 4,1-22	258	1035		258		
132	Lam. 1-4	1394 (82x17)	5352	29x	1394 (82x17)		Lamentations 1-4 is sealed by 1394 (82x17) words.
133	Lam. 5,1	9	31	30	1403		§16: 5,1-18 A prayer for remembrance and mercy
134	Lam. 5,2	5	27		1408		5,1-5 First part of a prayer for mercy: 34 words.
135	Lam. 5,3	6 34 (2x17)	29		1414		
136	Lam. 5,4	6	29		1420		
137	Lam. 5,5	8*	30*		1428		*MT 7.
138	Lam. 5,6	6	22		1434		
139	Lam. 5,7	6	31		1440		
140	Lam. 5,8	6	22		1446		
141	Lam. 5,9	6	27		1452		
142	Lam. 5,10	6	28		1458		

143	Lam. 5,11	6	25		1464		
144	Lam. 5,12	7	27		1471		
145	Lam. 5,13	6	27		1477		
146	Lam. 5,14	5 17	26		1482		5,13-15 Young and old suffer; no joy: 17 words.
147	Lam. 5,15	6	24		1488		
148	Lam. 5,16	8	28		1496		
149	Lam. 5,17	9	29		1505		
150	Lam. 5,18	7	24		1512/118	P	
151	Lam. 5,19	7	26	31	1519		§17 Why do you reject us? Restore and renew us!
152	Lam. 5,20	6	27		1525		
153	Lam. 5,21	7	31	32	1532		
154	Lam. 5,22	8	27		1540/28	Col.	
22	Lam. 5,1-22	146	597	3x	146		
154	Lam. 1-5	1540 (70x22)	5949	32x	1540 (70x22)		Sealed by 154 (7x22) verses; 1540 (70x22) words.

Observation 1 In 1,1 Codex L has a slash after לָמַחַד־יָמִים . This means that it was regarded as the heading. The total number of words is most significant: **1540=70x22**, exactly **10x** the **154** Masoretic verses.

Chapter 1 is made up of **22** verses with **374 (17x22)** words, which divide into two equal parts: vs. 1-11 with **11** verses and **187 (11x17)** words, and vs. 12-22 with **11** verses and **187 (11x17)** words.

2,8-10 stands out with **51 (3x17)** words, 2,11-13 with **52 (2x26)**, 2,14-16 with **52 (2x26)**, and 2,22 with **17**.

3,25-42, the central core of the book, stands out by being flanked by **68 (4x17)** verses: **68+18+68**.

4,4-12 stands out with **104 (4x26)** words, and 4,13-22 with **119 (7x17)** words.

Chapters 1-4 are finalized and sealed by **1394 (82x17)** words.

5,1-5 stands out with **34 (2x17)** words, and 5,13-15 with **17**.

Of the **1540** words **1445 (5x17x17)** are highlighted by the divine name number **17 (94%)**.

Observation 2: Factual evidence of an earlier version of the book

There is another remarkable numerical aspect that meets the eye immediately if we survey the **poetic verselines**, namely the irregularity in Chapters 1 and 2. While all their Masoretic verses have **three poetic verselines**, 1,7 and 2,19 have a **4th** verseline (1,7d and 2,19d) consisting of **5** words.

This is the Masoretic Text as it has come to us: with **266** verselines and **1540** words:

Chapters	Masoretic Verses	Poetic Verselines	Words
1	22	66+1=67	369+5=374
2	22	66+1=67	376+5=381
3	66	66	381
4	22	44+	259
5	22	22=66	145
Total	154	266	1540

The **67** verselines in Chapters 1 and 2 clearly stand out as 'irregular' in the otherwise regular pattern in terms of the Masoretic verses in Chapters 3-5, with **66 (3x22)** in Chapter 3 and **66** in Chapters 4-5. This irregularity can be explained as suggesting two compositional stages in the coming into being of the the book. At an earlier stage, the book seems to have had a regular pattern regarding the verselines, as in the case of the Masoretic verses, with **66 verselines** in Chapter 1 and 2.

This was the earlier form of the text: with **264** verselines and **1530** words:

Chapters	Masoretic Verses	Poetic Verselines	Words
1	22	66	369
2	22	66	376
3	66	66	381
4	22	44	259
5	22	22	145
Total	154	264 (12x22)	1530 (90x17)

But there is more to say about the **264** verselines in the earlier form of the text. If we differentiate between **acrostic** and **non-acrostic** verselines, we get the following intriguing picture:

Chapter 1 has **22** sets of **1 acrostic**, and **44 non-acrostic verselines**: **22+44=66**.

Chapter 2 has **22** sets of **1 acrostic**, and **44 non-acrostic verselines**: **22+44=66**.

Chapter 3 has **22** sets of **3 acrostic verselines**: **66** **66 + 0=66**.

Chapter 4 has **22** sets of **1 acrostic**, and **22 non-acrostic verselines**: **22+22=44**.

Chapter 5 has **22** sets of **1 non-acrostic verseline**: **22** **0+22=22**.

Altogether **132 acrostic verselines** and **132 non-acrostic verselines**, as in the table below:

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
1a Aleph 1b non-acrostic 1c non-acrostic	1a Aleph 1b non-acrostic 1c non-acrostic	1 Aleph 2 Aleph 3 Aleph	1a Aleph 1b non-acrostic	1 non-acrostic
2a Beth 2b non-acrostic 2c non-acrostic	2a Beth 2b non-acrostic 2c non-acrostic	4 Beth 5 Beth 6 Beth	2a Beth 2b non-acrostic	2 non-acrostic
3a Gimel 3b non-acrostic 3c non-acrostic	3a Gimel 3b non-acrostic 3c non-acrostic	7 Gimel 8 Gimel 9 Gimel	3a Gimel 3b non-acrostic	3 non-acrostic
4a Daleth 4b non-acrostic 4c non-acrostic	4a Daleth 4b non-acrostic 4c non-acrostic	10 Daleth 11 Daleth 12 Daleth	4a Daleth 4b non-acrostic	4 non-acrostic
5a Heh 5b non-acrostic 5c non-acrostic	5a Heh 5b non-acrostic 5c non-acrostic	13 Heh 14 Heh 15 Heh	5a Heh 5b non-acrostic	5 non-acrostic
6a Waw 6b non-acrostic 6c non-acrostic	6a Waw 6b non-acrostic 6c non-acrostic	16 Waw 17 Waw 18 Waw	6a Waw 6b non-acrostic	6 non-acrostic
7a Zayin 7b non-acrostic 7c non-acrostic	7a Zayin 7b non-acrostic 7c non-acrostic	19 Zayin 20 Zayin 21 Zayin	7a Zayin 7b non-acrostic	7 non-acrostic
8a Cheth 8b non-acrostic 8c non-acrostic	8a Cheth 8b non-acrostic 8c non-acrostic	22 Cheth 23 Cheth 24 Cheth	8a Cheth 8b non-acrostic	8 non-acrostic
9a Teth 9b non-acrostic 9c non-acrostic	9a Teth 9b non-acrostic 9c non-acrostic	25 Teth 26 Teth 27 Teth	9a Teth 9b non-acrostic	9 non-acrostic
10a Yodh 10b non-acrostic 10c non-acrostic	10a Yodh 10b non-acrostic 10c non-acrostic	28 Yodh 29 Yodh 30 Yodh	10a Yodh 10b non-acrostic	10 non-acrostic
11a Kaph 11b non-acrostic 11c non-acrostic	11a Kaph 11b non-acrostic 11c non-acrostic	31 Kaph 32 Kaph 33 Kaph	11a Kaph 11b non-acrostic	11 non-acrostic
12a Lamedh 12b non-acrostic 12c non-acrostic	12a Lamedh 12b non-acrostic 12c non-acrostic	34 Lamedh 35 Lamedh 36 Lamedh	12a Lamedh 12b non-acrostic	12 non-acrostic
13a Mem 13b non-acrostic 13c non-acrostic	13a Mem 13b non-acrostic 13c non-acrostic	37 Mem 38 Mem 39 Mem	13a Mem 13b non-acrostic	13 non-acrostic
14a Nun 14b non-acrostic 14c non-acrostic	14a Nun 14b non-acrostic 14c non-acrostic	40 Nun 41 Nun 42 Nun	14a Nun 14b non-acrostic	14 non-acrostic
15a Samekh 15b non-acrostic 15c non-acrostic	15a Samekh 15b non-acrostic 15c non-acrostic	43 Samekh 44 Samekh 45 Samekh	15a Samekh 15b non-acrostic	15 non-acrostic
16a Ayin 16b non-acrostic 16c non-acrostic	16a Peh 16b non-acrostic 16c non-acrostic	46 Peh 47 Peh 48 Peh Reverse order	16a Ayin 16b non-acrostic Normal order	16 non-acrostic
17a Peh 17b non-acrostic 17c non-acrostic	17a Ayin 17b non-acrostic 17c non-acrostic	49 Ayin 50 Ayin 51 Ayin Reverse order	17a Peh 17b non-acrostic Normal order	17 non-acrostic

18a Tsadeh 18b non-acrostic 18c non-acrostic	18a Tsadeh 18b non-acrostic 18c non-acrostic	52 Tsadeh 53 Tsadeh 54 Tsadeh	18a Tsadeh 18b non-acrostic	18 non-acrostic
19a Qoph 19b non-acrostic 19c non-acrostic	19a Qoph 19b non-acrostic 19c non-acrostic	55 Qoph 56 Qoph 57 Qoph	19a Qoph 19b non-acrostic	19 non-acrostic
20a Resh 20b non-acrostic 20c non-acrostic	20a Resh 20b non-acrostic 20c non-acrostic	58 Resh 59 Resh 60 Resh	20a Resh 20b non-acrostic	20 non-acrostic
21a Sin/Shin 21b non-acrostic 21c non-acrostic	21a Sin/Shin 21b non-acrostic 21c non-acrostic	61 Sin/Shin 62 Sin/Shin 63 Sin/Shin	21a Sin/Shin 21b non-acrostic	21 non-acrostic
22a Taw 22b non-acrostic 22c non-acrostic	22a Taw 22b non-acrostic 22c non-acrostic	64 Taw 65 Taw 66 Taw	22a Taw 22b non-acrostic	22 non-acrostic

The perfect parity between the **acrostic (132)** and **non-acrostic** verselines (132) in the earlier form of the book provides us with a plausible explanation for the lack of acrostics in Chapter 5, which is certainly not due to carelessness on the part of the author, as has been suggested, but a matter of deliberate design to achieve a perfect balance between **acrostic** and **non-acrostic** verselines.

Having detected and described the earlier form of Lamentations, let us now return to its final form, in which the redactor has added two verselines with 10 words to achieve **266** verselines with **1540** (70x22) words in a 10-1 correspondence with the **154** (7x22) verses.

It is possible that the structural design of Lamentations was influenced by the comparable structure of Psalm 119 with its **176** verselines, divided into **22** sets of 8. See my [logotechnical analysis of Psalm 119](#). Or is it the other way round?

Observation 3: The central cores of the book

Chapter 3 is the longest chapter, seeing its 66 Masoretic verses. It is flanked by 44 verses on either side: 154=44+66+44. It also stands out, because it has **22** sets of 3 alphabetic acrostic verselines. This device draws particularly attention to this chapter as the central chapter of the book.

In its turn, the central Chapter 3 has a meticulously designed central core of its own, **3,25-42**, in terms of Masoretic verses, right in the middle of the book: **154=68(4x17)+18+68(4x17)**.

Moreover, in terms of content, **3,25-42** constitutes the crucial turning point in the poem: the leading theme, already intimated in verses 19-24, is no longer lamentation, but hope, self-examination, and conversion based upon God's mercy. This central core can be delimited precisely. It starts most significantly with a conspicuous threefold use of the initial key-word טוב, 'good,' in verses 25, 26 and 27, and ends with a striking shift from third to second person, addressing God directly in verse 42.

Observation 4 The Masoretes located the mathematical centre of the book on verse level between verses 33 and 34 - in Codex Leningrad at the indentation at the beginning of **3,34**. Moreover, in terms of the 154 Masoretic verses, **3,25-42** constitutes the mathematical centre of the book, which appears to have a typical *sevenfold* structure in a menorah pattern:

1.	1:1-22	22 verses	} 68 (4x17) verses.
2.	2:1-22	22 verses	
3.	3:1-24	24 verses	
4.	3:25-42	18 verses — mathematical centre	
5.	3:43-66	24 verses	} 68 (4x17) verses.
6.	4:1-22	22 verses	
7.	5:1-22	22 verses	

The 18-verse central core is flanked by three branches consisting of **68 (4x17)** verses on each side. This demonstrates the deliberate use of the holy number **17** regarding the Masoretic verses.

An examination of the central core itself on word level reveals that the number **17** likewise structures the central core. The 6-word **verse 34** at the mathematical centre of the core is flanked by **51** (3×17) words on either side, and surrounded by **17** verses ($9 + 8$):

3:25-33	51 words (3×17)	9 verses	} 17 verses.
3:34	6 words	1 verse	
3:35-42	51 words (3×17)	8 verses	

This structure can hardly be a matter of chance and must be reckoned with in interpreting the message of the book. It means that **3:25-42**, and **3:34** should receive special attention.

Observation 5 There is another interesting feature in this book I would like to call attention to: the hidden *acrostic* in 5:1-4. A hidden acrostic is a technique used to form a name, word or phrase with the first letters of successive lines or verses of a text to encode a message in it. Alphabetic poems are apparent *alphabetic acrostics*.

In Chapter 5 the author/redactor abandoned the principle of the *alphabetic* acrostic but retained the regular number of **22** verses.

For a study on chapter 5 see Siegfried Bergler, "Threni V—nur ein alphabetisierendes Lied? Versuch einer Deutung," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977), 304-320.

Instead of the alphabetic acrostic the author/redactor employed another type of acrostic, using not all but only a selective group of initial letters to form a hidden acrostic in 5:1-4 where the initial letters of the four verses, א ג י ז, spell the word זנים, "adulterers." This hidden acrostic refers to the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in their relationship with God.

Significantly enough, the number of words in 5:1-4 is **26** (9 in vs. 1 and **17** in vs. 2-4).

For the acrostic, see W. Soll's entry "Acrostic" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, I, 58-59; additional literature.

Observation 6 The name YHWH occurs **32** times: **26x** in Chapters 1-3, and **6x** in Chapters 4-5.

Adonay occurs no less than **14** times: 1,14c.15a.15c, 2,1a.2a.5a, 7a.18a.19b.21c, 3,31b.36b.37b.58a.

Elyon occurs **2x**, precisely within the central core of Chapter 3 (3:35b.38a).

The designation El appears **1x** (3:41b).

So there are altogether **49** (7×7) references to God.