

A Funeral Song

This is a sorrowful lament about the death of a nation, the nation of Israel. This section of the scripture is part of the Meggiloth. It is read on the 9th of Av - this is the commemoration of the destruction of Solomon's temple. The five chapters of Lamentations are five different dirges of a funeral song.

The people cry to the Lord, but none of those cries are answered. The people of Israel are being punished at the hands of enemy nations. Judgment came because of the sins of the prophets and the iniquities of the priests. There was no fear of the Lord among the leaders or the people. Jeremiah had the hard job of telling the people of God's judgment and it broke his heart.

Say it! Play it! Pray it!

Objectives:	Play out the Role of Jeremiah mourning the downfall of Jerusalem. Gain insight into our own faith. Have fun with your family.
Number of Players:	4 or more (narrator, Jeremiah, the sad people of Israel, the Babylonian captors)
Length:	30 - 45 minutes
Set up:	You can get as elaborate as you like. As the story is played out, the separate characters should act out what is being said and dramatize how these events make them feel.

Narrator: Jerusalem, God's city has fallen to the Babylonians. Jeremiah mourns, not for his own personal loss however, but for the sinfulness of the Israelites. The People of Israel have chosen to reject God. Yet even in this time of suffering there is hope. The Lord will not discipline His people forever; He will eventually restore those who wait on Him.

Jeremiah (sad/mournful) (as Jeremiah mourns and pours out his heart, the Babylonians and the Israelites should act out what he is saying): How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave!

She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.

The roads to Zion mourn because no one comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

The adversary has spread his hand over all her pleasant things; for she has seen nations enter her sanctuary, those whom You commanded not to enter Your assembly.

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me, which the Lord has inflicted in the day of His fierce anger.

For these things I weep; My eye, my eye overflows with water; Because the comforter, who should restore, my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion



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spreads out her hand, but no one comforts her; The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that those around him become his adversaries; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.

The People of Jerusalem: The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment. Hear now, all peoples, and behold my sorrow; My virgins and my young men have gone into captivity.

Narrator: The people were sorry that they were being punished, but they were not yet repentant of their sins.

Jeremiah: How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord was like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel, He has swallowed up all her palaces; He has destroyed her strongholds, and has increased mourning and lamentation in the daughter of Judah.

The Lord has spurned His alter, He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has given up the walls of her palaces into the hands of the enemy. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord as on the day of a set feast. My eyes fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my bile is poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city.

How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; who can heal you? All who pass by clap their hands at you, they hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem.

Babylonian Captors: (mocking) Is this the city that is called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?.

Jeremiah: I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the Lord's wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely He has turned His hand against me time and time again throughout the day. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked.

Jeremiah (cries out to God): Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me.

Narrator: Even during this very dark and depressing time, Jeremiah lifts his face to God and finds hope in God; a reason to rejoice.

Jeremiah: (with hope) This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassion's fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore I hope in Him! The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

Narrator: However, relief is not for a few years; Jeremiah surveys the scene in Jerusalem and gives a description of the carnage. And he mourns, and weeps more.



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Jeremiah: How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street.

The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, and it has devoured its foundations. The kings of the earth, and all inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem; because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in her midst the blood of the just. They wandered blind in the streets; They have defiled themselves with blood, so that no one would touch their garments.

Narrator: Edom took an active role in promoting Jerusalem's fall to Babylon and then rejoiced when Jerusalem fell.

Jeremiah: Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, You who dwell in the land of Uz! The cup shall pass over to you and you shall become drunk and make yourself naked. The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no longer send you into captivity. He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins!

Jeremiah: (crying out to God) Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time? Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days of old, unless You utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!

Narrator: The Lord has said, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you crossed over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. I will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where I will drive you. There you will serve other gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat or smell. But from there You will seek Me the Lord your God, and will find Me if you seek Me with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to Me, the Lord your God and obey My voice (for I am a merciful God), I will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which I swore to them."

And so, Lamentations ends with hope. In spite of their suffering because of their own sin, Judah was not abandoned. Even through the tears, Jeremiah knew God was faithful and merciful.

Discussion: Have each person share how it felt to them to play the role they did and what insights they gained about the people they played, God's character and their own life. Questions to consider: Have you ever felt lonely and abandoned? How did Jeremiah renew his hope? Why did God allow the people to be taken into captivity? When you sin, what should your response be? What is the purpose of discipline? Share a time that you were disciplined and what you learned from it. When a situation seems hopeless, what can you do to renew your hope.

Read this scripture out loud, together: *This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, therefore, I hope in Him! The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*



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Prayer: Close in prayer thanking God for His provision, for His mercies that are new each morning, and for all that you have learned and the fun you had with your family.