

Psalm 79

LAMENT

TODAY:

- Lament
- Historical background to Zion theology and Ps 79
- Ps 79
- Form: Lament
- Imprecatory psalms
- 9th of Av
- Take away points

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N42VIAxglCE&feature=related>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N42VIAxglCE> 4:37

Complaint Choir



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATXV3DzKv68> 3:00 of 8:29

Lament

- To mourn aloud : wail
- To express sorrow, mourning, or regret for often demonstratively : mourn
- “An appeal to God’s compassion to intervene and change a desperate situation.” — R. Murphy

- Source <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lament> accessed 2/22/09
Murphy, Roland E., O. Carm. *Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Abingdon, 1983.

9/11



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oOW-1OwtCA>
- (4:14)



Personal Reflection

- **Reflect silently upon a difficult time; perhaps when you were suffering or depressed.**
 - **If you went to church at this time, did you feel that your suffering or grief was cared for?**
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Beth LaNeel Tanner

- "...in short, to be a Christian in the twentieth-century America means to be happy,"¹
 - the first loss of the church is the "loss of genuine covenant interaction" where the worshipper "is voiceless or has a voice that is permitted to speak only in praise and doxology."²
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- ¹ Beth LaNeel Tanner, "How Long, O Lord! Will your People Suffer in Silence Forever?" in *Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue, and Authority*, ed. Stephen Breck Reid (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 144.
 - ² Walter Bruggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *JSOT* 36 (1986), 7-71; as quoted in Tanner, 144.



Historical Background

- Psalm 79 deals with the of military destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.
 - Afterwards, many were taken captive into exile in Babylon.
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Solomon's Temple

Splendor! 1 Kings 6; 7:13-51



1Ki 7:48 So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the LORD: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, 49 the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; 50 the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and fire pans, of pure gold; and the sockets of gold, for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the Most Holy Place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple.

Presence of God

- **1 Kings 8:10-11**
- **¹⁰ And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.**

Zion Theology

- 721 BC, Samaria (Northern Kingdom) conquered by Assyria
- 701 BC, Assyria (Sennacherib) conquers Judah, but Jerusalem and Hezekiah survive
- 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem and exiles many, Temple survives
- Prior to 586/87 BC, Zion will stand forever
 - Davidic dynasty promised for eternity 2 Sam 7:8-17 , Ps 89:19-37

Sin, even IN the temple

- **2 Kings 21:2-15** (esp. 2-7)
- Manasseh ...did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ..
- ⁶ He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. ⁷ **The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever;**

Warnings of judgment for sin

Micah 3:8-9, 12 (also Jeremiah 26:18)

⁹ Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob / and chiefs of the house of Israel,

who abhor justice / and pervert all equity,

¹⁰ **who build Zion with blood / and Jerusalem with wrong!**

¹¹ **Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, / its priests teach for a price, / its prophets give oracles for money;**

yet they lean upon the LORD and say, / "Surely the LORD is with us! / No harm shall come upon us."

¹² **Therefore because of you / Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, / and the mountain of the house a wooded height.**

Destruction of Jerusalem 586/87 BC

2 Kings 25:8-17

(also Jeremiah 52:13; Isaiah 52:1; Lamentations 1:10, Ezekiel 25:3)

⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month-- which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon--Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ **He burned the house of the LORD,** the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.

Destruction of Jerusalem 586/87 BC

2 Kings 25:8-17

(also Jeremiah 52:13; Isaiah 52:1; Lamentations 1:10, Ezekiel 25:3)

¹⁰ All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard **carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city** and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon--all the rest of the population. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.



Crisis of Faith

After the conquering of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple, “How should they understand what had happened to them?”

Crisis of Faith

- Had God sent them into exile, or had the gods of Babylon been victorious?
- Were they still the chosen people, or had God abandoned them?
- What had gone wrong?
- Was God able to deliver them?
- Was God willing to deliver them?
- Would God remember the promises he made to Abraham and David?¹

¹ Mark A Thronveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, John Knox Press, 1992.

Read Psalm 79

- Read Psalm 79
- In verses 7-12, underline
 - The imperatives (commands) and
 - The hortatory speech (Let the...)
- Circle all the “for”s and other reasons (Why should God act?)

Lament: Typical Aspects

- **Work in pairs and identify:**
 - **Address to God**
 - **Motivation**
 - **Complaint, describing situation of distress**
 - **Expression of confidence in God**
 - **Petition**
 - **Vow to give thanks and praise (!)**

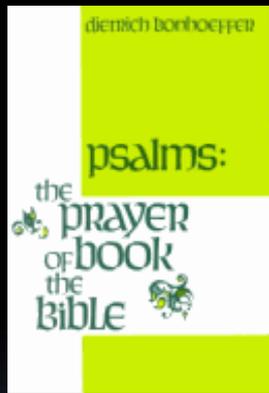
Imprecatory Psalms

imprecating

- to invoke evil on : curse
- to utter curses

- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imprecating> Accessed 2/22/09

Bonhoeffer on Imprecatory Psalms



The enemies referred to here are enemies of the cause of God, who lay hands on us for the sake of God. It is therefore nowhere a matter of personal conflict. Nowhere does the one who prays these psalms want to take revenge into his own hands. He calls for the wrath of God alone (cf. Romans 12:19). Therefore he must dismiss from his own mind all thought of personal revenge; he must be free from his own thirst for revenge. Otherwise, the vengeance would not be seriously commanded from God. This means that only the one who is himself innocent in relation to his enemy can leave the vengeance to God.

9th of Av



- ...Should I weep in the fifth month [Av], separating myself, as I have done these so many years? - Zechariah 7:3
- In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month ...came Nebuzaradan ... and he burnt the house of the LORD...
II Kings 25:8-9 & Jeremiah 52:12-13

9th of Av



- **Jewish Year 5774:**
- **Starts at sunset**
- **Tue, 1 Aug 2017**
- **Sun, 22 Jul 2018**

- <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayd.htm>



Small Group Discussion

- Is it comforting knowing that you can be gut-wrenchingly honest with God and trust God with your unloveliness? Why?
 - How do you wrestle with a loving God in your understanding of suffering?
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Key Points for us in Psalm 79

- **Understanding the context provides a more meaningful interpretation.**
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Key Points for us in Psalm 79

- Ps 79 is an “heartfelt effort to integrate God into their understanding of the events that have wrecked their lives.”
- Ps 79 is “a desperate and honest plea for God to show himself to be the God that the people had always known, the God of their salvation.”

- Source: Tate, Marvin E. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 20, Psalms 51-100*. (Thomas Nelson, 1991) 302-303.

Key Points for us in Psalm 79

- Psalm 79 shows us that we can trust God with our weakness and unloveliness.
- Imprecatory psalms seek God's action. The psalmist does not wreak his/her own vengeance.

- Source: Tate, Marvin E. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 20, Psalms 51-100*. (Thomas Nelson, 1991) 302-303.

Key Points for us in Psalm 79

- **“Without divine help, there can be no praise.”**
- **The people of God cope with disaster by hanging onto hope! The last word is “praise.”**

- Source: Tate, Marvin E. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 20, Psalms 51-100.* (Thomas Nelson, 1991) 302-303.



A suggestion

- **Write a lament**
 - **Remember to follow the ancient psalmist's example and end with praise**
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