

# The punished and the lamenting body

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The 5 laments, when read as a single biblical book, outline several interacting bodies in a similar way that dotted lines present the silhouettes and aspects of a total picture. Each also represents action, building into a plot that can be interpreted psychoanalytically to render its depth and colour content. In addition, by focusing on the body and its sensations, this study can facilitate the visceral experience of the suffering of collective and individual bodies by the recipient.

## Introduction

This study is dedicated to my doctoral supervisor, Prof. Eben Scheffler, whom I met for the first time in 1993 at my final oral examination for the BD degree before we started our long journey about the celebration of the body in the book of Song of Songs. During these 25 years, we have become deep friends where conflict can be accommodated, just as it is in the collection of testimonies about crisis and traumatic experiences of God, testimonies that have inspired us both, also in our ageing bodies. One particular expression of this struggle Prof. Scheffler once verbalised as being imprisoned by the body, when I accidentally made him walk in the wrong direction at an airport some years ago. This almost desperate statement has stayed with me and guided me to a biblical book where the body is not only the jailor but also the prisoner, a book riddled by guilt feelings but ultimately crying to God from this imprisonment.

The body is mostly negatively portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The following examples suggest that these portrayals seem to be mainly in the Ketuvim apart from the unclean body in Leviticus: the body at the edge of existence in Job; even the body, lovesick, in Song of Songs; the body in (possible) poverty in Psalm 22 and the dreamt body in Daniel 2 where the body is described from the outside unlike the bodily experiences in the book of Lamentations, which represent the traumatised body par excellence from the inside.

It is probably because the body plays such a strong seemingly metaphorical role in these depictions of suffering that it has not always been taken seriously and why it is not even mentioned once in a more popular work such as that of Crüwell (2012:103–126), which is meant more as a spiritual guide than a commentary. Neither is it even once referred to in any of the first 6 chapters on Lamentations as first part of a work on lamentation in general in the Hebrew Bible (Lee & Mandolfo 2008). That a specific 'vehicle' is repeatedly employed to ascribe certain attributes to a 'tenor',<sup>1</sup> a distinction that Ivor Richards (1936) makes in his interactions theory of metaphors indicates an unconscious psychological reason underlying the choice of a particular metaphor, which is therefore not arbitrary according to the psychocriticism of Charles Mauron (1963). Although the latter had an individual as author in mind, one could apply his thinking to the redactor(s) of a biblical book representing the collective unconscious of the particular culture within which it is created and finalised.

The aim of this study is to reconstruct bodies from their fragments scattered through the text of Lamentations. This is done in the first part by an often statistical analysis of the mentioning of the body in the text, whereas the latter part focuses on interpretative synthesis of the found details.

## Overview of the body in laments

The Book of Lamentations is a collection of 5 originally independent songs that are brought together like body fragments or limbs to bewail the collective body, Jerusalem. For that reason, these body parts should not be assumed to have belonged to the same person, but as being

1. Other scholars call these facets figure and ground (Tsur 2000: *passim*), whereas cognitive linguists use the terms, source and target, respectively (Kövecses 2002:15ff.).

**Note:** The collection entitled 'Eben Scheffler Festschrift', sub-edited by Jurie H. le Roux (University of Pretoria) and Christo Lombaard (University of South Africa).

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somehow 'transplanted' into and forming a new body, a dismembered body 're-membered' in mourning. That the first 2 and the last 2 chapters have exactly the same number of verses, 22, and the middle one 66, a multiple of 22, might suggest that the body is also perfectly symmetrical with the longer torso flanked by equal length limbs. In addition, symmetry has also been noticed in the first 2 chapters, splitting each of them in equal-length parts (Berges 2002:80). This could tie in with the acrostic nature of the first 4 chapters: they could all point towards establishing order in the body of the text, and perhaps also in the body which is in this way contained. The literal body has almost disappeared in the last chapter even when the mind is still shaped by it (*vide infra*).

On the other hand, these 5 chapters mention quite different numbers and different kinds of body parts and therefore also portray at least 5 different bodies. When the total of 99 times (*vide infra*) where the body is mentioned is taken into account, each chapter should on average mention 14 body parts, except the third where there should proportionately be 42. Only chapter 4 complies with that. The body is therefore unequally spread over these 5 chapters.

Chapter 1, like chapter 3, roughly covers the whole body from top to toe but focuses on the head as is the case in all the chapters. In the second just as in the fourth chapter, the lower limbs are not mentioned but both mention the breast. Although the emphasis is still on the head, more attention is given to the torso (and more particularly the internal organs) and the hands than in any other chapter, specifying even the right hand twice. It also mentions body parts proportionately more than the other chapters. Chapter 3 mentions the inner body parts more than any other chapter. Chapter 5, the one without acrostic arrangement even if it is still suggested by its 22 verses as it is in Psalms 33, 38 and 103, mentions the least body parts.

In total 99<sup>2</sup> times, one of the 29 body parts is mentioned, spread over the 154 verses of the book. Furthermore, it means that, on average, a body part is mentioned in roughly every 2 of 3 verses. This competes well with the best book for the body, Song of Songs' 8 chapters with 30 body parts (with another 6 suggested) in 65<sup>3</sup> times spread over its 117 verses, and with the book of Job (but then in 42 chapters, being 1070 verses) with one of its approximately 68 body parts occurring 546 times: 1 לְהִי [cheek] (x2), 2 יָד (hand) (x18), 3 רֹאשׁ [head] (x9), 4 אֶצְבָּע [bone] (x3), 5 רֶגֶל [foot] (x2), 6 צְוּאָר [neck] (x2), 7 עֵינַי [eye] (x10), 8 לֵב [heart, mind] (x9), 9 מְעָה [inwards] (x2), 10 קֶרֶן [horn] (x2), 11 יְמִין [right hand] (x2), 12 כִּבְדָּ [liver] (x1), 13 חֵיק [bosom] (x1), 14 פֶּה [mouth] (x4), 15 שֵׁן [tooth] (x2), 16 פְּנִים [face] (x2), 17 בֶּשֶׂר [flesh] (x1), 18 רֹאשׁ [gall] (x2), 19 עוֹר [skin] (x3+ implied in 4:7), 20 כִּלְיָהּ [kidney] (x1), 21 אָזְנוֹ [ear] (x1), 22 שֵׁפָה [lip] (x1), 23 שֵׁד [breast] (x1), 24 לְשׁוֹן [tongue] (x1), 25 הֶד [roof of mouth, palate] (x1), 26 תְּאֵר [outline, visage] (x1), 27 דָּם [blood] (x2), 28 אָף [nose, nostrils] (x2) and 29 נְפֶשׁ [life energy] (x11). This distribution reflects more or less the same

2. That is, when שֵׁפָה is included as a part of the body; when not, then 87 times.

3. That is, when אָף is included as a part of the body; when not, then 58 times.

proportions found in the Hebrew Bible in total, except that פְּנִים [face] should have occurred more, which is the body part that is elsewhere found the most (Baumann 2003:246). It means that the face is somehow hidden, probably because of shame (*vide infra*). This assumption is strengthened by the statement that תְּאֵרָם [their visage] is veiled in blackness: just an outline, a silhouette, so that לֹא נִכְרָו בְּהוֹצֵאוֹת [they are not recognised in the street]. This last-mentioned reason could explain why no שֵׁער [hair] is ever mentioned, even when one could have expected it as part of behaviour expressing mourning, or it is not mentioned precisely because it has been shaven as a sign of mourning. Yet, that almost half, 13, concern the face probably means that the facial area is not (as it is probably covered) used to express but to experience the trauma.

More than a third, 10, in this list concern internal and therefore mostly invisible organs or body parts (*vide infra*): liver, heart, inwards, bones, flesh, gall, blood, reins, palate and life force and deal with inner experience instead of an external image. The only body parts that occur in all 5 chapters רֹאשׁ [head], יָד [hand] and עֵינַי [eye], all 3 external, are the ones that are used literally more times (but not always) than the others. The eye, in the second position, is so powerful that it affects the life energy, according to 3:51. One would have expected life energy to be amongst this common denominator for all chapters, but it is not.

In addition to the רֹאשׁ [head] and the עֵינַי [eye], 8 other facial features occur in the literal sense: לְהִי [cheek] (1:2; 3:30), פֶּה [mouth] in 2:16; 3:29, 38, 46, שֵׁן [teeth] in 2:16 and 3:16 perhaps, שֵׁפָתַי ([the] lips [of]) in 3:62, לְשׁוֹן ([the] tongue [of]) in 4:4, הֶכּוֹ [his palate]<sup>5</sup> in 4:4, תְּאֵרָם [their visage] in 4:8, when this does not mean 'outline' and אֶפְיָנוּ [our nostrils] in 4:20. This is apart from the non-facial features in addition to יָד [hand]: בְּשָׂרִי [my flesh] in 3:4, וְעוֹרִי [and my skin] in 3:4; 4:8; 5:10 (implied in 4:7, 8), שֵׁד [breast] in 4:3, אֶצְבָּע [bone] in 1:13 perhaps as perhaps also in 3:4 (like teeth in 3:16) and 4:8 and דָּם [blood] in 4:13, 14.

Some of these 16 body parts are, however, used elsewhere, metaphorically, such as רֹאשׁ [head] in 2:19. That means that the remaining body parts mentioned in Lamentations, that is, more than 12, and so almost half, are only used metaphorically.<sup>6</sup> While only one out of 14 body parts, בְּרֹאשׁ [at the head] in 4:1, in the second last chapter is used metaphorically, only 2 out of 10, רֹאשֵׁנוּ [our head] in 5:16 and עֵינֵינוּ [our eyes] in 5:17, are used literally in the last chapter. In fact, in the first 3 chapters, the body is also used mostly metaphorically, making chapter 4 to stand out as different.

Although פְּנִים [face] and תְּאֵרָם [their visage] refer to the same body part, 2 different words have been used in Hebrew, making them to be somewhat different and therefore counted as 2 parts.

4. Only the generic word is given when various derivatives appear in the text.

5. The only one that could be non-visible.

6. נְפֶשׁ [life energy] is ignored in this calculation, as it is difficult to decide what its exact meaning in each case is.

In addition, several words imply the body such as *ערוּתָהּ* [her nakedness] and *תִּצְרֶנּוּ* [you shall make yourself naked] in 4:21, *מְכָאוֹב* [pain] in 1:12, 18, *כְּמוֹת* [like death], *תְּפָאֶרֶת* [beauty] in 2:1, *בִּלְע* [he swallowed], *כְּהָלֵל* [as the wounded] in 2:12, *וּתְלָאָה* [and travail], *לְעֵנָה* [wormwood] in 3:15 and 19, *שָׁקִים* [sackcloth] in 2:10, *בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם* [their garment], *תִּגְעוּ* ([you] touch) in 4:15 and *תִּשְׁכְּרוּ* [you shall be drunken]. Many verses do not mention any body parts but in 2:19 (6),<sup>7</sup> 3:4 (3) and 4:8 (3) they are clustered. In 2:19, *רֹאשׁ* [head] is used metaphorically twice, once for locality and once for temporality.

Several bodies are involved, even God's as well: *הֶדְם־רִגְלָיו* [his footstool]<sup>8</sup> in 2:1 (foreshadowing God's trampling in 3:34) implying God's feet, and especially God's hand in 1:14, 2:3, 2:4, 2:8, 3:3 and 4:2 where the potter could perhaps refer to God, but in the context seems unlikely as it suggests a product of lower value. Only the singular is used for God's hand and one can assume that it must refer to God's right hand though this qualification (i.e. being the right one) would have been redundant if God had no other hand.<sup>9</sup>

In 2:3 God's body, or at least its anger, is like a burning fire, which has an implied metaphorical mouth in 4:11 as well where it 'devours' (*וְתֹאכַל; אֶכְלָה* in 2:3; *vide infra*) the foundations of Zion, just as God *בִּלְע* [swallowed up] Jacob's home. One wonders whether God's devouring is a projection, even if it is portrayed as if it happens in anger. In 3:38, God's mouth is explicitly mentioned, but then for speaking. This is incidentally the chapter where the mouth features the most, and then for each of the 3 'parties' in the suffering: the sadistic mouth and lips of the perpetrators in verses 46 and 62, respectively, that of the screaming victim and then of God speaking. Just as is often, the case in the Hebrew Bible *אָפוֹ* [his nose] expresses his anger in 4:11, metonymically condensed into the same noun. Unmentioned but implied are God's eyes in 3:50, but God's ear<sup>10</sup> (*הֲאִינְךָ* your ear; just one!)<sup>11</sup> in 3:56 and *פָּנָי* [face]<sup>12</sup> in 2:19 are explicit in the text. All these 7 body parts of God are external just as a physical image would have done<sup>13</sup> although they often reflect God's inside, God's emotions. This means that the assertion that body parts mentioned in the Hebrew Bible does not reflect the visual but only the functional characteristic, as Wolff (2002:23) claims with his notion of their synthetic nature, is not completely true. Outside of Lamentations inner organs are, however,

7.The length of this verse due to an extra stich is not because of the inclusion of a gloss, as all variant readings contain it (Frevel 2017:189).

8.Here, it is Zion as an extension of the ark of the covenant in 1 Chronicles 28:2 or the temple in Psalm 132:7 but still less than the earth in Isaiah 66:1.

9.Wagner (2010:138) claims that the left side or hand of God is mentioned twice in the Hebrew Bible but does not give the textual proofs thereof. It is, however, not listed by Baumann (2003:246) amongst the body-parts that have been attributed to God (cf. also Marksches 2016:48; Scharf 1999:30). Yet, Psalm 19:2 uses the dual form, *יָדָי* [his hands], as do Psalm 119:73 with *יָדֶיךָ* [your hands] and Isaiah 45:12 with *יָדֵי* [my hands], all referring to God.

10.According to Wagner (2010:128), the ear was a relatively late development in Israel's religious consciousness, the more so that textual became more important than visual portrayals of bodies, where ears were often absent.

11.See footnote 12.

12.This could also just be prepositionally meant as 'before'.

13.They are all amongst the 10 most often mentioned body parts of God in the Hebrew Bible (Wagner 2010:137).

sometimes attributed to God, such as *לֵב* [heart], which is not only listed by Wagner (2010) or Brown, Driver and Briggs (1907), but also by Baumann (2003:246), or as *מְעֵי* [insides, heart] as in Jeremiah 31:19. In Lamentations, apart from God's hand and feet, the focus is firmly on God's face, where the anxious victim looks for mercy.

Virtually, all of these suggest God's violence. One is tempted to interpret these references as metaphorical in the sense of anthropomorphic but there is no need to do so, if one takes the views of Sommer (2009:*passim*) into account that deities were actually regarded as embodied at the time.

In 2:19, a watch period and the street (as in 4:1, i.e. at the intersections according to Dhorme 1963:30) also seem to be a body, metaphorically. Inversely, the bodies of children become a metaphor, *פְּרִיָם* [their fruit], in 2:20.

Except for chapter 3, the 'protagonist' body is either the collective body of Jerusalem, and more specifically the temple sanctuary, as heart of the whole of Judah, or Edom (*vide infra*) tying in with the thinking of Mary Douglas (1966:*passim*) that the individual body is symbolised in the social or collective body. Radical transformations of the body can make them into 2 virtually different bodies. This is the case with the former leaders or elite who used to have the ideal skin colour of white and red in 4:7 just as the male beloved in the Song of Songs 5:10 who in Song 5:14 also has the *סַפִּיר* [sapphire] mentioned in Lamentations 4:7. Frevel (2017:286, 287) seems to see this skin as almost transparent as the rosy colour is because of the underlying veins. This excessive idealisation is a typical reaction to trauma where reality is split into 2 simple opposites like *צָהוּ* [they are whiter] in 4:7 and *הִשְׁחֶךְ* [it is blacker] in the very next verse.

Those men are now in 4:8 blacker than coal perhaps because of being burnt as is the case in Job 30:30. There is also reference to the former beauty of the body in 2:1 (*תְּפָאֶרֶת* the beauty of) and 2:4 (*כֹּל מְהֻמְדֵי־עֵינָיִךְ* all pleasant to the eye), which was then like a celestial body: in heaven whence it was thrown down to earth. This reminds of the female beloved whose beauty is likened to the dawn or morning star, the moon and the sun, suggesting the heavenly hosts in the Song of Songs 6:10.

Likewise are the golden (perhaps celestial) bodies of the sons of Zion in 4:1–2 thrown down in the street and regarded as potter's clay. It is not their intrinsic value as the traditional translations have it, but their attributed value when the emendations of Hillers (1992:137–138) are accepted: the *ח* in *יִצְמַח* becomes a *ב* and the *שׁ* in *יִשְׁנָא* becomes a *שׁ*, resulting in 'How gold is despised! Good gold is hated'. This also reminds of the glorified male body whose head is of gold in Song of Songs 5:11a and who is rooted in a golden socket in 5:15b, perhaps a merism to suggest that his whole body is gold. One can associate this image in Lamentations 4 even further to the dream statue whose head is of gold in Daniel 2:32 but whose feet are partially of potter's clay according to the next verse (cf. also Van der Zwan 2018).

Perhaps, this is the same body as the battered body in chapter 3, which is also that of a male body. At first, it seems that he has been a witness rather than a victim, as he רָאָה [has seen] rather than felt the violence. This might be because the traumatised body 'switches off' during the emergency as a way to focus on defence and thus to survive. The first verse suggests corporal punishment and in the second, he seems to be blind, perhaps confirmed by 3:6a and taken up by 4:14, 17 again. The word, יָדוֹ [his hand], in verse 3 is almost a euphemism for violence, and therefore, by focusing on it, renders the rest of the body of the perpetrator, in this case God, invisible, although God יִשְׁקֹף וְיִרְאֶה [looks down and beholds] according to 3:50 (*vide supra*), yet seems to be deaf according to 3:56 [*vide supra*], exactly as it happens in such circumstances (Scarry 1988:24). In verses 4, 6a, 7, 9a and even 10, there is the intimation of an imprisoned – confirmed in verses 34, 53, 55 and 4:20 – and even tortured body, which, as being arrested, has come to a halt, perhaps also because of its broken bones in 3:4. The density of verse 4 with respect to bodily concentration and obsession suggests the suffering of the total body as is also the case in Job 10:11: flesh, skin and bone are not limited to any specific body part (cf. also Frevel 2017:208). When the flesh recedes, the skin can show the contours of the skeleton, which augurs death (Frevel 2017:207; Schroer & Staubli 1998:234–235).<sup>14</sup> The conditions in this prison made it feel like the grave, if 3:4b is thus understood.

That he can speak about it in the first person after his possibly voiceless cry (cf. his sighing in verse 56) in 3:8 and his broken teeth in 3:16 might mean that he could have recovered somewhat, although the wounds (cf. 2:12) and later perhaps the scars are signs by which the formerly dismembered body are remembered. That is perhaps why body language speaks so loud in these Songs: 2:10, 15,<sup>15</sup> 16, 19 and 3:29 where he progresses from body language to verbal language in 3:55 and 56. This also ties in with the bodily role the victim is forced into, over against the perpetrator who is experienced as bodiless speech (Scarry 1985:33). To speak is a relief from the lonely and invisible suffering inside the body.

Now that he can somewhat walk again, his instability, imbalance and lack of coordination make him derail from a straight and 'strong' path according to verses 9c and 11a. He has regressed to the fragmented body of the psychologically still immature infant before the mirror image stage (Lacan 1949:449ff.) if verse 11b is taken into account.

According to Leder (1990:91), the healthy ('rich') body becomes almost 'invisible' to its owner, compared to the 'poor' and painful body that completely fills the mind. On the other hand, when these negative experiences become too extreme, that is, with posttraumatic stress disorder sets in, this turns into dissociation, because the traumatic sensations and feelings are not synthesised into a symbolic form and then incorporated into a personal narrative. Excessive arousal interferes with memory and leaves fragments rather than

14. See Job 33:21–22.

15. Here, it is apotropaic according to Schroer and Staubli (1998:173).

linear speech (Van der Kolk & Fisler 1995:522; *vide infra*). Traumatic memory becomes like a *Fremdkörper* [foreign body], which intrudes as flash backs just as it hides from consciousness (Breuer & Freud 1955:32).

Neither is there a containing other according to verse 11c to emotionally hold his broken body and mind together in this trauma, as his mother would have done during that infancy. Imprisonment and torture escalate towards his imminent execution in verse 12 as in 5:12. This only serves to extend and intensify his suffering as his kidneys instead of his heart or head have been penetrated in 3:13. The pain from the poisoned arrow (threatened in 2:4) spreads through his whole body as it is מְרִירָה לְעֵנָה [filled with bitterness]. This has been adumbrated by the רֶשֶׁת [gall] in 3:5, which is still pestering him like a posttraumatic flashback in 3:19. He probably confuses his broken teeth with gravel stones in 3:16 because he has forgotten what a healthy body is like, according to 3:17. There his life is far from well-being, and one can assume within the broader context of the book, feeling far from God. The only memories he has are those of the trauma, an idea occurring 3 times in verses 19–21.

Then comes the turning point and the healing can start. In this positive section from verses 22–41, only a few references are made to the body, and mostly negatively, with the exception of verses 38 and 41, where the hand is exhorted to metaphorically lift up the (until now too heavy) heart. This shows that the body only comes to the fore when it suffers. It is hardly capable of expressing positive emotions here, even when they occur.

While chapters 2 and 3 are about the body losing substance in being poured out, and in chapter 4, hunger (although already foreshadowed in 1:11) and thirst in the dungeon dominate the body, chapter 5 deals in verses 4, 5, 6, 9 and 13 with the exhausted body, already adumbrated by מְלָצָה [and travail] in 3:5b: in verse 6, the hand is a metonym for labour (or begging) but in 8 for exploitation. Bodies are driven to their extreme: beyond labour is rape in verse 11 and death in verse 12. All body parts mentioned are with negative connotations in the context.

In lamentations about destruction and death, one would also expect to come across at least hints about corpses (*vide infra*) but the supposedly deceased one, Jerusalem or Judah, speaks out from time to time (1:9c, 11c–16, 18–22; 2:20–22). This expectation is met in 3:6 where it even involves an image of an already decomposed body, having been dead for a long time. In 3:16, wallowing בְּאֵפֶר [in ashes] further reinforces this mindset.

## Interpreting the body in lamentations

The body is not only in physical pain and suffering but also expresses emotional distress. That is why psychosomatic experiences are described in several verses and then in the first

person. In 3:4, the body has been under attack and perhaps even tortured over some period of time. As ראש in 3:5, 19 where it means 'gall' is a homonym, the poison might be associated with the 'head', the meaning of the different stem, which some translation such as the LXX accepted. Koenen (2015:189) refers to Van Selms who regarded ותלצה in 3:5 as building material, as ראש is also used in Psalm 118:22, although this meaning can, however, not be applied to 3:19. This reminds of both Freud (1998:154, 2008a:89, 2008b:351) and Jung (1984:116) who recognised that buildings, especially houses, often function as symbols for the body or its parts, especially in dreams. Others, such as Wutz (1930:186), read it as שאר [poverty]. If it means 'gall', internalisation of external relational objects would undermine the inside of the body and mind of the suffering one, confirmed by 3:15, for instance, where the empty stomach (so to speak) is filled with bitterness, concretised by wormwood, instead. Whether the bones in 3:4 and the teeth in 3:16 are literally broken is open for debate. The heart is faint in both 1:22 and 5:17, as if to frame the book, but hard at the heart of the book in 3:65.

Fire and water function as destructive forces as they do in Song of Songs 8:6–7. In chapter 2 (e.g. verses 3 and 4), just as in 1:13, 20, burning plays an important figurative role again as it does in 4:11, but also pouring out,<sup>16</sup> as if a solid has been melted by fire: the liver (in 2:11 with the verb נשפך), life energy (in 2:12 with the verb נשפך),<sup>17</sup> blood<sup>18</sup> [in 4:13 with the nominal verb השפכים (the shedders of)] and the heart (in 2:19 with the verb שפך) are all poured out as if they are liquids, just as the eye<sup>19</sup> in 3:49. Eventually, the victim is completely flooded in 3:54. In the case of the liver, life energy and the eye, the passive verb is used, even when, in the case of blood, the victim is the object of an active verb. That means in 4 of the 5 cases, the body is out of the subject's control. Therefore, only the heart, which is used metaphorically here, can be actively surrendered as well (*vide infra*). The call to do so implies control and is therefore positively connoted, as it ironically saves the body as a person (Bester 2007:168).

In 4:1, the golden stones (*vide infra*) seem to be melted as they are also poured out (תשפך) onto the street. In the case of anger (perhaps, a kind of liquid fire) in 4:11, the emotion has already metonymically replaced the organ of (burning) anger, God's nose as in Exodus 15:7–8, from which it would be a bodily excretion (שפך [poured out]).<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, that is also why the human nostrils, or at least its breath, seem(s) to have some divine link or connotation

16. Bester (2007:174) points out that the verb, ערה, as it occurs in 1:8 and 4:21 can also mean 'pour out', apart from 'bare, expose' and so would extend the idea of pouring out even to this verb, as an additional meaning, which would, at least unconsciously, be associated with it.

17. See also 1 Samuel 1:15; Job 30:16; Psalm 42:5; with a different verb (עור, denude, expose) in Psalm 141:8 and Isaiah 53:12. According to Kipfer and Schroer (2015:2), pouring out the נפש refers to dying.

18. In almost half of the cases where a body part or the body in total is 'poured out' using the verb, שפך, it concerns blood in the Hebrew Bible (Bester 2007:166).

19. Only one, just as in 3:51! The same verb, נגרה [is poured out], is used in 2 Samuel 14:14 (*vide infra*) and therefore probably refers to literal substance.

20. See Schellenberg (2016:109n46), referring to Job 4:9 and 32:2, 3, 5.

in 4:20, as that which has been exhaled or exuded by God,<sup>21</sup> מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה [breath], is received by the human nose as מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה [the anointed of Yahweh]. Dhorme (1963:81) believes that it is the acceleration of breathing during anger that connects it with the nose as Job 4:9 suggests. Slow, calm breathing in Proverbs 14:29, אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם [he who is slow to anger] or Proverbs 25:15, בְּאַרְךְ אַפַּיִם [by long forbearing] is therefore the opposite of בְּצֶרְ-אַפַּיִם [brevity of breathing] expressing anger in Proverbs 14:17. A 'long' nose can therefore contain its anger.

One implication of such an outpouring is that the body is a container, a vessel as Kipfer and Schroer (2015) have called it. Three of these 6 instances where something is poured occur in the second chapter about the female body who represents a collective body. This reminds one that the majority of anthropomorphic, iconographic findings that have archaeologically been excavated are in the shape of a woman (2015:1), many of them vessels, not only to drink from but also for pouring out liquid. These containers point to the body's similar form and function but their contexts add more dimensions of meaning to what seems to be only an imitation of the human body.

Another implication of this outpouring is 'drying up', something perhaps hinted at by אבילות in 1:4, which is usually translated as 'mourning' rather than 'drying out', an alternative meaning of a different stem, which would have suited the context better than personalising, as the roads spoken of are no longer used (cf. Schellenberg 2016:109n.48). The same word is also used in 2:8 about a wall, and therefore in the same Song as where half of these outpouring instances occur.<sup>22</sup> Exploiting thirst is also implied in 5:4. If Kipfer and Schroer's (2015:7) claim that a dry vessel (which would happen when all has been poured out) is more fragile is accepted, then this adds to the idea of the body's proximity to death in Lamentations. The idea of drying out would, however, not apply to God who is the subject in 2:4 and 4:11.<sup>23</sup>

The theme of pouring out in chapters 2 and 3 and the first 2 verses of chapter 4 turns in the rest of chapter 4 to that of drying out, as is found in verses 4 and 8, in the latter of which it becomes explicit in the verb, יבש [is withered].

This is the only time in the Hebrew Bible where the liver is mentioned for a human being, the other 13 times all referring to animals (Wolff 2010:110).<sup>24</sup> That it is mentioned at all could be because the Lamentations could have been composed under Babylonian influence where it was considered beside

21. See וּבְרִיחַ [and by the breath] in Exodus 15:8. Here, the divine breath causes death, just as it produces life in Lamentations 4:20, reminding of נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים [the breath of life] in Genesis 2:7.

22. Only in 5:15 would 'mourning' be the only possible translation.

23. See also Job 12:21; Psalm 107:40; Jeremiah 10:25; Isaiah 42:25; Ezekiel 7:8; 20:13, for example.

24. Wolff (2010:110) considers the possibility that in Psalms 16:9, 30:13, 57:9 and 108:2, different vowels could be used to change the meaning from 'glory' to 'liver'.

the heart<sup>25</sup> to be the most important organ because of the practice of hepatoscopy in Mesopotamia (Schroer & Staubli 1998:76). It is associated with ראש [gall] in 3:5, 19,<sup>26</sup> and therefore further with bitterness in 1:4 (מר), 3:15 (במרורים) but also with heaviness, which relates to the meaning of the verb, כבד. Perhaps, the liver bladder (cf. Job 16:13; 20:25; Pr 7:23) has been penetrated by an arrow as the kidneys have been in 3:13 similarly to Job 16:13 (where the gall bladder is juxtaposed to kidneys as well) and 20:25.

According to Dhorme (1963:109), awareness of the inner organs represented the first psychological interests of the Semites. Emotions in Lamentations, especially sadness and anger, flow like secretions from specific body parts, which are then said to be 'poured out'. This is what Lakoff and Kövecses (1983) found in cognitive linguistics to be one of the most typical metaphors about emotions universally. Yet, Wagner (2006:98) claims that this is only seldom the situation, such as שמה [wrath] in Esther 5:9 and גון [sorrow] and ושממה [astonishment and appalment] in Ezekiel 23:33.<sup>27,28</sup> With humans, the product of a potter according to Isaiah 29:16; 43:1; 44:2,24; 45:9–12; 49:5; 64:7b; Jeremiah 18:11,16 and right in Lamentations, 4:2, for example,<sup>29</sup> this makes even more sense.

In the case of the eye not only an emotion in the sense of sorrow, but also its concomitant substance, tears,<sup>30</sup> are meant, as 1:16 and 3:48 make explicit. Incidentally, Dhorme (1963:78) believes that the other meaning of the word, עין [fountain], is to be explained in this way, as Jeremiah 8:23 has it. According to 2 Samuel 14:14, people become like spilt water absorbed by the earth (*vide supra*; ורמים הנגרים ארצה) when they die. This might refer to the fluids which flow from the body after dying. Both the inside and the outside of the body are on fire: the bones in 1:13, the inwards in 1:20<sup>31</sup> and in 2:11 (where burning juxtaposes being poured out) and perhaps the stomach separate from the inwards in 5:10 where it also makes the skin to be hot, a condition that reminds of the raised temperature of decomposing matter. It is, however, exceptional that the inwards are burning, although they do something similar in Job 30:27. Normally, they 'move' or 'resound' (המה) with loving desire in Song of Songs 5:4 or

25. See Psalm 16:9 and 108:2 if the vowels of בנודי (from בנוד) are changed; *vide supra* footnote 4.

26. In Psalm 16:9, the liver praises God and so also has positive connotations elsewhere. In fact, that it is so closely related to the word, נבדו [glory], could mean that there might be a relation between the two concepts, and in this way elevate the connotation attached to the liver. This could also simply happen through at least unconscious association even if there is no etymological link between the two words.

27. Note the word, כוס [cup], in Jeremiah 51:7 and Ezekiel 23:33. In addition: Ecclesiastes 12:6 where the words, גלגל [bowl] and נד [pitcher], occur.

28. Psalm 2:9; 31:13 use the word, כלי [like a vessel], but the meaning could be wider than just a vessel. See in this regard also Jeremiah 19:11 [preceded in the previous verse by the word, הבקבוק (the bottle)], 22:28; 48:12, 38; 51:34; Isaiah 22:24 [note also האגבות (cups; cf. Song of Songs 7:3) and הנבלים (flagons)]; 41:25 (though here the body is not directly implied); Hosea 8:8 and 1 Samuel 21:6, although in the latter case probably referring to the penis. Isaiah 30:14 uses the words, נבל יוצרים [potter's vessel] and מנבא [out of the cistern]. In some of these instances, a collective body is referred to. The emphasis is always on creatureliness and fragility.

29. See also Jeremiah 18:2–7.

30. These cause the eyes to כלו in 2:11 and תכלינה [in both instances: fail] in 4:17 (Bester 2007:170).

31. Bester (2007:170) associates this with the burning houses of the destroyed city, and thus understands the body as metaphor for the city or the corporate body.

with compassion in Isaiah 16:11 (here even musically) or in Jeremiah 31:19. The difference in emotions experienced is probably that in both Lamentations and Job, the suffering is individual, whereas in the Song, Isaiah and Jeremiah, the experience is that of 'resonating' in some way with another person. For Cottrill (2008:103), the essence of an individual lament in the Hebrew Bible is bodily suffering.

That these experiences are expressed in a culturally conditioned way is suggested by Psalm 22:15 and 2 Samuel 14:14 where the suffering person's whole being is like water being poured out (נשפכה; cf. also Van der Zwan 2017:76) and by Psalm 62:9 where a call is made to pour out their heart (שפכו), but then in crying surrender (*vide supra*).

The same body part can have different connotations in the different chapters: צוארי [my neck] in 1:14 bears the individual brunt of guilt, but צארנו [our necks] in 5:5 refers to a group bearing a physical burden, dehumanised to become like a draught animal (Kaiser 1992:193),<sup>32</sup> though also because of guilt. In 1:2, לחי [her cheeks] are the first body part to be mentioned and serve as the receptacle for either sorrow<sup>33</sup> or as לחי [his cheek] for someone else's aggression in 3:30. In 1:13, the רגלים [feet] are the victim, but in 3:34, the perpetrator. The same applies to שני [my teeth] in 3:16 and שן [teeth] in 2:16, as well as קרן [the horn] in 2:3 and 2:17, respectively. This can even happen in direct juxtaposition: in 2:3, ימינו [his right hand] would have been protective (Kaiser 1992:140), but in the next verse, it is aggressive. Just as ידי [the hands] in 4:10 is a metonym for the perpetrator, so דם in 4:13, 14 is one for the victim. This pattern of vacillating between opposites seems to be characteristic of Lamentations.

It is not arbitrary that the body is used as a possible metaphor in this context. Boase (2014) has recognised the high level of using the body as an apparent metaphor alongside physical suffering as somatisation. What is usually regarded as the metaphorical use of body parts is perhaps rather the emotional connection with the body and in this way not metaphorical. By interpreting such body references as metaphors may also be defending against the intensity of such language, as it actually prevents a voyeuristic and indifferent response by the recipient (Gillmayr-Bucher 2004:310–312, 314, 325). The correlative link between dissociation because of trauma (*vide supra*) and comorbid somatisation has been established as frequent and serious (Saxe et al. 1994:1329).

Three of the 5 so-called *megilloth* [scrolls] in the Hebrew Bible are 'feminine', and 2 are sceptical, if all 5 are not protest literature. It could well be that this is because the female body is the one that had suffered the most. As such they could be considered as somehow philosophical works critiquing a male collective body. The destroyed city of Jerusalem in the first chapter is personified as a woman (Hunter 1996:139), perhaps the raped female body (1:10)

32. See Deuteronomy 28:48, Isaiah 10:27, 14:25, 47:6, Jeremiah 27:2, 8, 11, 12, 28:10–11.

33. That is, the tears from the eyes, the body part last mentioned (in 5:17).

mourned, and spoken of in the third person until verse 10 and so objectified. The final lamentation, on the other hand, is about the land, perhaps also as a (female) body. Yet, the only body part referring to a woman explicitly is חֵיק [bosom] in 2:12. She, having lost both her children and her husband, is worse off than Job who still retains his wife.

Both, however, suffer in their bodies: the second and fourth lamentations are about starvation,<sup>34</sup> an intense bodily experience, followed by extreme cruelty, the extent of which reaches even as far as cannibalism, reminding of 2 King 6:28–29: mothers eating their own children in 2:20 and 4:10, not only to satisfy their hunger but also perhaps to mercifully save their offspring from further suffering, unbearable to witness it any longer, all so typical in war (cf. Wilson 2012:105). Their children return לֶכְרוֹת [as food] to the bodies whence they once came, suggested by רַחֲמֵינִיֹּת [full of compassion], playing on the word, רֶחֶם [womb]: a vicious circle where aggression and violence suffered is internalised not only emotionally but also acted out in psychotic literalisation.

On another level, melancholia as avoidance of mourning gives way to a regression to the earliest pre-genital phase, the oral sadistic, which is expressed in the cannibalistic impulse, according to Karl Abraham (Jones 1927:278, 448). In this way, the mother tries to hold onto her dead child, with whom she identifies, by incorporating her love object. While the infant wants to drink in the body of the mother in 4:4, a craving still lingering on in the word, מִחֶלֶב [than milk], in 4:7, the mother who cannot respond to that desire reverses the process, defending against her possible guilt feelings. In 4:5, the previously spoilt children now search something to eat from the אֶשְׁפָּתוֹת [dungheaps, refuse heaps]. If this goes to the extreme extent of eating even excrement, according to Abraham (Jones 1927:444), then the cannibalism of the mothers extends to their children who regress to combine oral with anal sadism: in an early stage of ‘partial love with incorporation’, a child has ambivalent feelings towards representations of the mother’s body, which is both rejected and also desired, and then represented by faeces towards which an unconscious narcissistic longing remains.

The human bodies in the text are also shamed bodies. This is indicated by רָאוּ עֲרוֹתֶיהָ [they have seen her nakedness] in 1:8 and תִּשְׁכְּרוּ וְתִתְעַרְוּ [you shall become drunk and make yourself naked] in 4:21 (cf. Guest 1999), which, as public presentation of the private, both verses clearly suggesting contempt, is worse scorn than the public presentation of the body through פְּנֵי זְקֵנִים [the faces of the elders] not being honoured in 5:12. Just as the hand in 5:6 is a body, part that both gives and takes, so the face is a two-way door for the body. That they both link the body to the outside world perhaps explains their prominence.

The naked female body is therefore not to be celebrated for its aesthetic nature as it is in the Song of Songs. Instead, it

implies sin, uncleanness and guilt. Two different bodies are, however, referred to in 1:8 and 4:21 but both are female: in the first, it is Jerusalem, probably standing metonymically for Judah in total, and in the second, it is בַּת-אֶדְוֹם [Edom’s daughter]. This shameful female nakedness stands in contrast to men who wear clothes in 4:14 even when that leaves them טָמֵט [unclean]<sup>35</sup> as well in 4:15: the shamefulfulness of the bodies is not vested in the bodies as such, but in their behaviour. In the case of female bodies, it is their sexual and in the case of male bodies it is their violent behaviour that renders them unclean and sinful. Nakedness is also suggested in 3:4 where the waning flesh and skin, having served as some kind of ‘clothing’ (cf. Frevel 2017:204) that God בָּלָה [has worn out], is linked to starvation (*vide supra*) and possible illness as a consequence.

Except for כִּבְדֵי [my liver] in 2:11, חֵיק [bosom] in 2:12 and תֵּאֲרָם [their visage, outline] in 4:8, there are no exceptional body parts or special names for body parts as would have been expected in poetry as it is in the book of Job where about 68 occur of which many are uncommon (Schellenberg 2016:122–126)

Different from Psalm 22 and the Song of Songs where body references are repeatedly found in the same context as references to animals, the book of Lamentations does not do so, except in 3:52 (כַּצִּפּוֹר like a bird), 4:3 ([תַּיִמִּים] jackals; [פִּינְעִינִים] like the ostriches),<sup>36</sup> 19 (מִנְּשָׂרִי than the eagles of) and 5:18 (שׁוֹפְלִים foxes). In the state of bodily weakness, power has been projected onto the horn of an animal and then internalised in 2:3, as if humans or a human group also have horns, just as it is in Zechariah 2:1, 2, 4 and Jeremiah 48:25, for instance.

One would expect the body facing death to be experiencing more intensely and therefore to be trapped in suffering silence (Scarry 1985:33). The context is indeed that of death, as Judaism calls it, apart from אֵיכָה (‘*Ēykhōh*, how!), also קִינּוֹת (funeral dirges, which it is only partially), a word that does, however, not occur in the text (Crüwell 2012:109). This is reflected in the 3:2 metre<sup>37</sup>, which is so typical of this poetic form (Shea 1979:*passim*). It is recited at the festival of Tisha Ab on the ninth of the month of Ab to commemorate amongst other catastrophes, the destruction of both temples (and therefore a collective death because of the attack on the heart of God’s earthly presence) and after the death of a relative. Even their origin starts just after the fall off Jerusalem and means that they are born from death, crisis and trauma, yet grew into its present body over the next 150 years (Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2017:165).

## Conclusion

Some of the bodies in the Book of Lamentations are burnt, broken, hungry, thirsty, imprisoned, exploited, exhausted

35. See חֵיקֶיךָ [as unclean] in 1:17.

36. See Job 39:16.

37. This is critiqued by Berges (2002:79) who refers to Budde (1882:19), the originator of this idea himself who admitted that the essence of this specific metre was actually that a longer line of verse was followed by a shorter one.

34. See 2:19 and 4:9 where בָּעֵר [hunger] is explicitly mentioned; in 4:3–5 where it is implied; cf. also 5:4 for thirst being exploited, and 5:6, 9, 10 for hard labour just to earn food. All of this adds another sense of emptiness.

and shamed. As punished bodies, they lament their own condition, which is not only because of an unhealthy but also because of an immoral life style.

On the other hand, there are abusive bodies dominating through their hands (15 out of 20 instances), while witnessed by the victim's eyes (weak or weeping in 9 out of 10 instances), the 2 body parts most mentioned in Lamentations when 𐤁𐤏𐤁 is ignored because of its plurality of meanings.

Being part of a religious canon, this book shows that the utter and extreme suffering of the body is not hidden behind promises of paradisiacal dreams of salvation but honestly faced in its gruesome depiction.

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