

2023 Exegesis Exam on Lamentations: Recommended Commentaries

Before the exam date, be sure to do at least four things:

1. Secure commentaries ahead of time. Take a look at them. If you find one unhelpful, obtain a good substitute. If you have questions about one, email Dr. Matt *before the exam begins*.
 - a. People grading exams don't look favorably on old commentaries, especially when a student only uses commentaries more than 20 years old. At least three of the ones you cite should have been published since 2000.
2. Familiarize yourself with the book of Lamentations. Read it a few times. Takes notes on themes and ideas.
3. Read introductions to Proverbs in study Bibles, such as:
 - a. *The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible* (edited by Coogan et al.)
 - b. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (edited by Harold W. Attridge et al.)
 - c. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (edited by Walter Harrelson et al.)
 - d. *The CEB Study Bible* (edited by Joel B. Green et al.)
 - e. NOTE: Whenever you use an idea from a study Bible, it needs to be cited. Having said that, it's best to avoid citing study Bibles too much on the exam. So, use them to get your bearings on the book, but don't rely on them too much in the exam itself.
4. Read introductions in your commentaries.
5. Remember that the first four chapters of Lamentations are alphabetic acrostics. That means that each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet (or in the case of chapter 3, there are three verses before a letter changes to the next). When you look at translations, it's common to see the translator write the Hebrew letter (or its name) before the verse being translated (e.g., CEB translation).

Nearly every PCUSA exegesis exam has questions dealing with:

- a. establishing the text,
- b. literary context,
- c. historical context,
- d. canonical context, and
- e. theology and application.

The following chart explains which commentaries are helpful in dealing with which questions. Most commentaries deal with [b] literary and [d] canonical context, but students need to be careful in selecting resources to help with [a] establishing the text and [e] applying the text to today. With Lamentations, most commentators agree on the historical context and deal with it.

If you use a library copy online, ***BE SURE YOU CLOSE THE COMMENTARY WHEN YOU ARE DONE***. That will allow another student to go in and use it after you. Also, it will work best if you save relevant pages

of the commentary, close it, and then read what you've saved to your computer. This practice will allow your fellow students to use these resources as well.

You may be asked technical questions involving the textual apparatus. So, be sure you have a copy of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*—the Hebrew Bible with the textual apparatus. Be sure you have the English key to the Latin words, abbreviations, and symbols (see pages LIX to LXIX). Don't forget that the last page of that key lists symbols, including ones that you might otherwise miss. If you've forgotten textual criticism, review that material from Hebrew class.

Many of these resources are available as eBooks to current students (see links on the right column of the chart below). If an eBook is *not* available, you could try emailing our library at reference@dbq.edu to see if it is possible for them to scan the section of the commentary. If you do so, be sure to give ample time for them to reply to your request. This method of obtaining resources can be helpful if you want to check an additional source, but it shouldn't be relied upon as a primary way of getting commentaries.

Commentary Features

Author	Series	Date: may differ with eBooks	Establishing the Text			Literary Context	Historical Context	Canonical Context	Theology or App.?	eBook?
			New Trans.	Textual Criticism	He- brew					
Bailey	BCBC	2015			Some	Y	Y	Y	Y	Click here for eBook
Berlin	OTL	2004	Y	Some	Y	Y	Y	Y	See pp. 17-22	Click here for eBook
Bracke	West- minster	2000				Y	Y	Y	See pp. 187-89	Not available
Dobbs- Allsopp	Inter- preta- tion	2012				Y	Y	Y	See pp. 23-48	Not available
Garrett & House	Word (WBC)	2004	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	See pp. 316-28 & "Expla- nation" Sections	Not available
Goldin- gay	For Every- one	2016							Y	Click here for eBook
Golding ay	NICOT	2022	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	See pp. 25-32, "A Reader's Response" Sections	Click here for eBook
Hens- Piazza	Wisdom	2017				Y	Some		Y	Click here for eBook
Hillers	Anchor	1972	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Not available

Author	Series	Date: may differ with eBooks	Establishing the Text			Literary Context	Historical Context	Canonical Context	Theology or App.?	eBook?
			New Trans.	Textual Criticism	He- brew					
O'Connor	NIB	1998			Some	Y	Y	Y	Y	Click here for eBook
Parry	Two Horizons	2010	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	pp. 159-236	Not available
Salters	ICC	2010	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	pp. 26-29	Click here for eBook

Annotated Bibliography (in Alphabetical Order)

Two important things to note:

- If a source interacts with Hebrew using transliteration, you may want to use the following resource to discern the exact Hebrew letters being described: <http://opensiddur.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/SBL-Handbook-of-Style-Transliterating-and-Transcribing-Ancient-Texts.pdf>
 - It provides two systems of Hebrew transliteration. The first is the academic one, which has the diacritics above and below letters (especially vowels, e.g., *â*). The second is the general one. It doesn't have diacritics, so a single letter can refer to more than one Hebrew character (e.g., *a* = *patakh* or *qamets*).
- If you use an electronic copy of a book, be sure to cite that you are doing so. For example, you can insert "eBook ed." just before the place of publication.

Bailey, Wilma A, and Christina Bucher. *Lamentations*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2015.

This excellent commentary is written by Wilma Bailey, an African American woman with connections to Mennonite communities. She brings Lamentations into dialogue with events of community tragedy she has studied in the modern world. After the commentary, readers can find a collection of essays on Lamentations covering topics like Acrostic, Evil Spirits, and Hebrew Poetry.

Berlin, Adele. *Lamentations: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

This author is highly respected, especially for work on poetics. This commentary does great work with Hebrew; see both the commentary and the footnotes that immediately follow the translation. When accessing this resource, you might not see chapter 2 in the table of contents on the webpage. However, it's there. You'll just need to scroll down from chapter 1 or up from chapter 3. Lastly, the second paragraph on page 7 is an excellent summary of the book by chapter.

Bracke, John M. *Jeremiah 30-52 and Lamentations*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

This commentary is clear and concise. It doesn't extensively engage technical material. It may be useful to consult initially before turning to more challenging commentaries.

Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W. *Lamentations*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Westminster John Knox, 2012.

This volume is more technical and less accessible than other commentaries in the Interpretation series.

Garrett, Duane A., and Paul R. House. *Song of Songs/Lamentations*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004.

This work has some of the best resources when it comes to establishing the text (translation, textual criticism, Hebrew). It is a technical commentary, which makes it a little difficult to navigate. Each section usually has these subsections: [1] a bibliography (which you can usually disregard), [2] a translation with footnotes (pay special attention to these footnotes because they often deal with textual criticism; abbreviations are explained early in the commentary), [3] form/structure/setting, [4] comment (which often deals with Hebrew words), and [5] explanation (which looks at the bigger picture and touches on theology).

Goldingay, John. *Lamentations and Ezekiel for Everyone*. Old Testament for Everyone. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016.

This short volume focuses on relating the text to today. It's useful when working on the Application section of the exam.

Goldingay, John. *The Book of Lamentations*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2022.

An excellent all-around commentary. The author is especially good at Hebrew and textual criticism. The layout of this commentary could be improved: the translation of each verse appears before each verse's commentary (but isn't well marked). Look at footnotes attached to the translation to see helpful discussions about textual criticism. The end of each chapter has "A Reader's Response," which provides a theological summary that is more focused on the ancient setting. See the other Goldingay volume for how he connects the text with the world today.

Hens-Piazza, Gina. *Lamentations*. Wisdom Commentary. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2017.

This commentary makes many connections with the world today. It often talks about abuse. Its feminist approach can be fruitfully compared and contrasted with Berlin's commentary (see esp. 7-10 of Berlin).

Hillers, Delbert R. *Lamentations*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972.

This commentary series is now dated. However, for several decades, it was seen as one of the most authoritative scholarly sources. Note that for each section of text, there's first an original translation, then "Notes" (where one can find textual critical commentary), and then "Comment" (which takes more of a bird's eye view than the Notes).

O'Connor, Kathleen M. "The Book of Lamentations." Pages 6:1013–1072 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.

Although the commentary is now somewhat dated, O'Connor is an excellent interpreter who provides useful insights, especially in the subsections called "Reflections" at the end of each chapter (which often deal with theology/application). Do not rely on the transliteration in this eBook because it did not transfer well into the electronic format. To access this commentary electronically, use [the link above](#). Then click "View eBook." Next, log in with your UD credentials. Then you may need to click "+Biblical Commentaries." Next, you may need to click on "The New Interpreter's Bible." Then, click on "6: Introduction to Prophetic Literature; Isaiah..." on the right. Next, click on "The Book of Lamentations" and choose a section.

Parry, Robin A. *Lamentations*. Two Horizons. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

This is an excellent volume. The commentary is useful for most areas, but for theology/application, readers need to turn to pages 159-236, which covers topics like anti-Semitism, divine anger, theodicy, and ethics.

Salters, Robert B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Lamentations*. The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. London: T & T Clark, 2010.

This commentary is extremely technical. It will probably be most helpful in establishing the text, especially textual criticism and working with Hebrew. The format is as follows: each chapter begins with an introduction. Then there is a new translation. Next is a verse-by-verse commentary. At the beginning of the commentary on each verse, you can find insights from textual criticism (see *Text and Versions*).