

Listening Guide

This Listening Guide is designed to help you ask questions and take notes on what you’re learning. The process will accomplish two things: first, it will help process the information in the lecture by keeping your mind engaged with the material. Second, it will allow you to collect your notes in one place for a summary of the lesson’s content. If you choose to do additional study or want to teach the material to others, you will have a thorough set of notes to guide you.

You may print these Listening Guide pages separately and complete the information as you read, listen to, or watch the lessons. Or as an alternative, you can fill in the fields in this digital version and save to your computer once you are finished.

I. Introduction

[1] During what time in Israel’s history do the books of Esther and Lamentations come?

[2] What characterizes the people Esther is part of?

[3] To what is Lamentations a reaction?

[4] What is Esther a reaction to?

[5] When did the event Lamentations is about occur? When did the events in Esther occur?

II. Lamentations

[6] What does Lamentations contain?

[7] What is Lamentation's genre?

[8] What are some of the things that make Jerusalem significant?

[9] In what year was Jerusalem reduced to ruins?

A. Structure of the Book

[10] What is each chapter of Lamentations?

[11] What else, besides being poetic, is a special feature of Lamentations?

[12] What is an acrostic poem?

B. Hebrew Pattern

[13] How many letters are in the Hebrew alphabet?

[14] How many parts are there to each of Lamentation's chapters?

Note: A "couplet" is a two-line poetic statement. Each idea is divided into two related thoughts. See Lamentations 1:1, for instance. In line 1, the idea, "How deserted lies the city," is completed in the second line, "Once so full of people."

[15] How many couplets are in each verse of chapters 1 and 2?

[16] With what Hebrew letter would each of the couplets in chapters 1 and 2 begin?

[17] In chapter 3 (as in chapters 1 and 2), the poet presents three couplets in a row that begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. But while each verse in chapters 1 and 2 contain three couplets, in chapter 3 each verse contains only one couplet. Each chapter has 66 couplets; but chapters 1 and 2 have only 22 verses and chapter 3 has 66 verses. How would you summarize the difference between chapters 1 and 2 and chapter 3?

[18] How is chapter 4 different from chapters 1, 2, and 3?

[19] How is chapter 5 structured differently from chapters 1–4?

C. Structure Parallels Emphasis

[20] What emphasis in Lamentations is paralleled in its structure?

[21] What does Lamentation's structure tell us about how the poet responded to Jerusalem's destruction?

[22] How is what is described in Lamentations 5 similar to a description of Jerusalem's citizens after Jerusalem was destroyed?

D. Six Elements of Hebrew Lament Poetry

[23] In what way is a Hebrew lament a special type of poem?

[24] What are the six elements of a Hebrew lament poem?

[25] Which of the six elements is most prominent in Lamentations?

E. Rapid Change in Topics

[26] How would an ancient Jewish reader respond to a poet's rapid and unexpected change in topics?

F. Examples of Rapid Transition

[27] How is the lament language used in the New Testament?

[28] In what way do you resonate with the poet's ability to move from the complaint to the expression of trust? Can your emotions or thoughts move from "bitterness and gall" to "God's compassions are new every morning" and "great is Your faithfulness" as easily and quickly as Jeremiah did in this lament?

G. Yet All Is Not Lost

[29] What does Lamentations teach us about how to pray when "all is bitterness and gall"?

[30] Who, among Jerusalem's citizens (and in our own time), would be most apt to conclude that God had abandoned them?

[31] Did the book of Lamentations focus backward or forward as it poured out its sorrows to God?

[32] What difference does it make that Lamentations is the prayer of a godly prophet?

III. Esther: Queen of Persia

A. Setting

[33] What two responses did the Jews make to Cyrus's decree that they were allowed to return to Jerusalem?

[34] What were some reasons a number of Jews remained in Mesopotamia?

[35] How many years passed between the Babylonian captivity and the events recorded in Esther?

[36] Where had the Jews in Esther's story grown up?

[37] What had Jeremiah the prophet encouraged the captives to do in Babylon?

[38] Were the Jews all living in one part of the Persian Empire or were they scattered over various parts of it?

[39] Who are the two key figures in Esther's story?

B. A Too-Shy Queen?

[40] Which Persian king was ruling in Esther's time?

[41] Why did Queen Vashti refuse the king's command to "appear" at his banquet?

[42] What was Xerxes searching for after he deposed Queen Vashti?

[43] What happened to Esther in chapter 2 of her story?

C. Threats

[44] Who was Mordecai?

[45] What plot did Mordecai discover?

[46] Who was Haman?

[47] What was the issue between Mordecai and Haman?

[48] How did Haman decide to address the issue he had with Mordecai?

[49] What two plots arise in the Esther story?

[50] What was happening in the Mordecai/Haman plot?

[51] What was happening in the Mordecai/Xerxes plot?

[52] What finally happened in the Mordecai/Xerxes plot?

D. Rewards

[53] How did Haman confuse Artaxerxes's attempt to honor Mordecai?

[54] How did the Mordecai/Haman plot end?

[55] What was the irony the narrator included in the Mordecai/Haman plot?

[56] What edict had Haman managed to have Xerxes deliver?

[57] What fact about Persian law made Haman's edict problematic even though Haman had been discredited and hanged?

E. Edicts

[58] What dilemma did Haman's edict create for Mordecai and the Jews?

[59] How did Mordecai respond to this dilemma? What was his solution?

[60] What Jewish feast grew out of this successful effort to protect the Jews from extinction?

[61] What reason did Dr. Stuart give for the fact that God is not mentioned in Esther?

[62] Even though God’s name doesn’t appear in Esther, in what ways did Dr. Stuart suggest God was still involved?

Reflection

Record one new fact or insight you discovered in this lesson.

Application

Jeremiah’s six-part lament is a model to follow when we are in despair. We can “address” God and express our complaint as we pour out our fears and anger to Him. But our next response (our expression of trust) is conditioned by the depth of our faith. Real trust is not cultivated in the moment of despair. Our trust in God depends on the depth of our relationship with Him. Our plea for deliverance will be disingenuous without that trust, and our testimonial of God’s goodness may never be spoken of by us. Review this six-part lament (point II. D in the lesson) and try using it to build depth into your relationship with God.