Chet 3

2021

Excerpted and amplified from Appendix 2 of *An Unfinished Liturgy*.

Among the more amazing and frightening, curious facts of archaeology is the complete absence of Lamentations 3:22-24, commonly known as Chet, from manuscript B, which we have dubbed Chet 3.

I only know of one paper on the subject:

<https://rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Lanser_Matthew_Thesis_20180413.pdf>.

This paper poses the problem in an impressive discussion; served up with rigorous research; thoughtfully considered: everyone should read this paper at least once. But, in the end, we are left dangling, hungering, thirsting for further resolution. Rahlfs is silent on the matter. We look forward to examining whatever Göttingen might have to say on the subject.[[1]](#footnote-1) As it now stands, we are pretty much left in the dark.

My null working hypothesis, my basis for further research, stands on these presuppositions:

Lamentations is the most significant book speaking to the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. This is a very important theological issue: arguably, the most important theological issue of all.

Chapter 3 of Lamentations is the hinge chapter.

Chet 3, verses 22-24 is the pivot axis.

The absence of these verses from any major manuscript constitutes an archaeological and biblical disaster.

This disaster must be disproved.

In other words, you must prove:

* That Lamentations is not a significant discussion of Old and New Covenant transition, or anything else concerning the Babylonian Captivity; and/or that biblical covenants are not important theological issues.
* That Lamentations 3 is not the hinge chapter of the book.
* That Chet 3 is not the pivotal axis of the book: in brief, that Chet 3 is not ***THE*** summary statement of the whole argument of the book.
* That the absence of these verses, is in fact a trivial matter, of no concern to real scholars.
* That there is nothing significant left to prove or disprove.

We are not yet arguing for the probability or sensibility of outcomes: these must be found. We only seek to display the horror and scope of our alarm. Some of the possible outcomes of this disaster might be:

* Chet 3 does not exist in the Hebrew prototype: it’s a rabbinic interpolation.
* The acrostic structure of Lamentations 3, as found in the Masoretic Text, is a modern rabbinic invention.
* The insertion of acrostic markings into B at chapter 3 is a false correction.
* What are found substituting for Chet 3 are attempts at reverse translation from the Masoretic Text into Greek.

We cannot accept any proposed explanation that the absence of Chet 3 is due to parablepsis. If a scribe looks away and loses track of a word or two, that is parablepsis. One simply does not lose a key thematic verse of Scripture: let alone, three of them. The scribe, here, is incompetent and sloppy: his error would certainly be caught by the official rigorous inspection of manuscripts. The loss of these key pivotal verses, in a central hinge chapter, for the most significant summary of the theological impact of the Babylonian Captivity… that is not parablepsis: this is a deliberate wicked act of sabotage and terrorism. Considered in this light, this is a scholarly outrage.

Yet, the whole scholarly world seems to remain silent on this subject.

We don’t care who does the work: yet, we sincerely hope that this humble paper incites many masters’ theses and doctoral dissertations, all striving to resolve this thorny problem. Chet 3 simply must not be left unaddressed.

We are not speaking to the credibility or truth of Chet 3. It is obviously true. Many have memorized it. Hymns have been written about it. But is it actually in the prototypical autograph as found recorded in Bible manuscripts? How could some scribe simply overlook the essential? the vital? If this predicament stands: then we must revise our entire analysis of Lamentations. Moreover, if this outrage remains unaddressed: then our respect of Greek manuscripts, and families of manuscripts, commonly called Septuagint, is considerably damaged.

Yet, if you can disprove my working hypothesis, we can lay this vexing puzzle to rest.

Our method.

At the suggestion of Dr. Kevin Youngblood, we took the following Ziegler apparatuses:

“(22) οτι ουκ εξελιπε με] αʹ οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν σʹ οτι ουκ αναλωθημεν Syh

(23) καινα εις τας πρωιας] σʹ καινη (s. καινον) πασης πρωιας Syh[[2]](#footnote-2)”

“21 init.—μου] ταυτα εταξαμην εν τη καρδια μου L′ | ὑπομενῶ] ελπιω επ αυτω (-τον 198) L′: cf. Pesch. et 24; + (22) τα ελεη (+ του 239) κυριου (+ πολλα L′ Syhmg Tht.) οτι (> Law Arm) ουκ (> 91) εξελ(ε)ιπεν (-πον 51c-62-449) με (εξελιπομεν pro εξελ. με L-407 538 Tht. Ambr.) οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι (-τειρ. Qc) αυτου (> Law; + (23) μηνας εις τας πρωιας ελεησον (+ με 490; + nostri Co) κυριε οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι αυτου C Co (sim.)) (23) καινα (> Syh-Qmg c-239) εις τας πρωιας πολλη (επληθυνεν Qmg; repleta est Law; απωλετο 239) η πιστις (επληθυνας πιστεις pro πολλη η π. c) σου (23) ανακαινισον (renovavit Ambr.) αυτους ως ορθρον πρωινον επληθυνθη (πληθυνθειη 22c) η πιστις σου εις τας πρωιας πολλοι εισιν οι στεναγμοι (συστεν. 311) μου και η καρδια μου εξελιπε(ν) pro καινα—η πιστις σου 88-Syh (ανακαινισον αυτους ως ο. πρ.mg; πολλοι—εξελιπενtxt sub ~ et mg; om. επληθ.—πρωιας) L′-538 Tht. Ambr. (om. επληθ.—πρωιας)) (24) μερις μου κυριος (κυριε C-239 Law) ειπεν η ψυχη μου (dixi pro ειπεν η ψ. μου Ambr. Spec.) δια τουτο υπομενω αυτον (-τω C; + εις τας πρωιας επληθυνεν η πιστις σου μερις μου κυριος ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω αυτον 88) O-Qmg L′-26 (om. ελεησον κυριε (v. 22)-fin.)-538 C′-239 Law Co Arm Tht. Ambr. V 157 VII 334 Spec. (testatur v. 24)[[3]](#footnote-3)”

We compared and contrasted these with the following Elpenor text. Elpenor would not divulge the source of their text: it might, in fact, be Dr. Kevin Youngblood’s reconstruction.

“22 Τὰ ἐλέη Κυρίου, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξέλιπέ με, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ· μῆνας εἰς τὰς πρωΐας ἐλέησον, Κύριε, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθημεν, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ. 23 καινὰ εἰς τὰς πρωΐας, πολλὴ ἡ πίστις σου. 24 μερίς μου Κύριος, εἶπεν ἡ ψυχή μου· διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομενῶ αὐτῷ.”

We separated both the Ziegler apparatuses and the Elpenor text verse by verse; then we grouped apparatuses verses with their corresponding text verses. Finally, we searched for any correspondence between apparatus and text; carefully ***marking*** (bold, italic, and underline) the apparatus when any correspondence was found. The correspondence discovered was nearly one to one. Indeed, we might have almost arrived at the same reconstruction simply by crossing out connecting remarks.

21 ταύτην τάξω εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου, διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομενῶ.

(21) init.—μου] ταυτα εταξαμην εν τη καρδια μου L′ | ὑπομενῶ] ελπιω επ αυτω (-τον 198) L′: cf. Pesch. et 24; +.

These appear to be ancient commentary, rather than textual variants.

22 Τὰ ἐλέη Κυρίου, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξέλιπέ με, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ· μῆνας εἰς τὰς πρωΐας ἐλέησον, Κύριε, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθημεν, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ.

(22) ***οτι ουκ εξελιπε με***] … αʹ ***οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν*** σʹ οτι ουκ αναλωθημεν Syh

(22) ***τα ελεη*** (+ του 239) ***κυριου*** (+ πολλα L′ Syhmg Tht.) ***οτι*** (> Law Arm) ***ουκ*** (> 91) ***εξελ(ε)ιπεν*** (-πον 51c-62-449) ***με*** (εξελιπομεν pro εξελ. με L-407 538 Tht. Ambr.) ***οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι*** (-τειρ. Qc) ***αυτου*** (> Law; +

The words, μῆνας εἰς τὰς πρωΐας ἐλέησον, Κύριε, … could not be confirmed from the available evidence. They appear to belong with verse 23, where they are confirmed at least twice.

The words, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ, are an exact repetition, which may or may not be in the original.

23 καινὰ εἰς τὰς πρωΐας, πολλὴ ἡ πίστις σου.

(23) ***καινα εις τας πρωιας***] σʹ ***καινη*** (s. καινον) πασης ***πρωιας*** Syh

(23) ***μηνας εις τας πρωιας ελεησον*** (+ με 490; + nostri Co)… verse 22? Is this an apparatus error?

The words ***κυριε οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι αυτου*** C Co (sim.)) seem to belong to 22. Were they not listed against 23 in the apparatus. Is this an apparatus error?

(23) ***καινα*** (> Syh-Qmg c-239) ***εις τας πρωιας πολλη*** (επληθυνεν Qmg; repleta est Law; απωλετο 239) ***η πιστις*** (επληθυνας πιστεις pro πολλη η π. c) ***σου*** (23) ανακαινισον (renovavit Ambr.) αυτους ως ορθρον πρωινον επληθυνθη (πληθυνθειη 22c) ***η πιστις σου εις τας πρωιας*** [word order reversal] πολλοι εισιν οι στεναγμοι (συστεν. 311) μου και η καρδια μου εξελιπε(ν) pro ***καινα—η πιστις σου*** 88-Syh (ανακαινισον αυτους ως ο. πρ.mg; πολλοι—εξελιπεν txt sub ~ et mg; om. επληθ.—πρωιας) L′-538 Tht. Ambr. (om. επληθ.—πρωιας))

24 μερίς μου Κύριος, εἶπεν ἡ ψυχή μου· διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομενῶ αὐτῷ.

***μερις μου κυριος*** (κυριε C-239 Law) ***ειπεν η ψυχη μου*** (dixi pro ειπεν η ψ. μου Ambr. Spec.) ***δια τουτο υπομενω*** αυτον (-τω C; + εις τας πρωιας επληθυνεν η πιστις σου ***μερις μου κυριος ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω*** αυτον 88) O-Qmg L′-26 (om. ελεησον κυριε (v. 22)-fin.)-538 C′-239 Law Co Arm Tht. Ambr. V 157 VII 334 Spec. (testatur v. 24)

25 ᾿Αγαθὸς Κύριος τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν αὐτόν, ψυχὴ ἣ ζητήσει αὐτὸν ἀγαθὸν

Here is the reconstruction attempted by the deletion of excess words and explanatory remarks:

“21 … μου … τη[ν] καρδια[ν] μου … ὑπομενῶ.”

“(22) τα ελεη Κυριου … οτι ουκ εξελ(ε)ιπε[~~ν~~] με, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.”

“(22) … οτι ουκ εξελιπε με … οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν.”

“(22-23?) μηνας εις τας πρωιας ελεησον, Κυριε, οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν, οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.”

“(23) καινα εις τας πρωιας πολλη η πιστις σου.”

“(23) ανακαινισον αυτους ως ορθρον πρωινον επληθυνθη” (???)

“(23) η πιστις σου εις τας πρωιας πολλ[~~οι~~]η.” reversed phrase sequence

“(21-22-23?) εισιν οι στεναγμοι μου και η καρδια μου εξελιπε(ν).”

“(23) καινα … η πιστις σου.”

“(23) ανακαινισον αυτους ως ο. πρ.”

“(23) πολλ[~~οι~~]η”

“(22) εξελιπε[~~ν~~]”

“(23) καινα … εις τας πρωιας.”

Or. “καινη … [~~πασης~~] πρωιας.”

“(24) μερις μου, Κυριος, ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω αυτ[ον]ω.”

“(22) εις τας πρωιας [~~επληθυνεν~~]

“(23) η πιστις σου

“(24) μερις μου, Κυριος, ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω αυτ[ον]ω.”

Some clauses appear to be complete and intact. There is some “minor” (?) dispute over a few endings. Phrase inversions seem like a small problem, and are neglected. In other places, some words seem to be removed from their proper location; which, would be the case if the source were not a quotation; but, rather a commentary developing interrelationships by taking words from several verses. We continue, neglecting verse 21:

“(22) τα ελεη, Κυριου, οτι ουκ εξελιπε με, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.”

“(22 or 23) μηνας εις τας πρωιας ελεησον, Κυριε, οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν, οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.”

“(23) καινα εις τας πρωιας πολλη η πιστις σου.”

(???) “ανακαινισον αυτους ως ορθρον πρωινον επληθυνθη”

“(21-22-23?) εισιν οι στεναγμοι μου και η καρδια μου εξελιπε(ν).”

“(23) ανακαινισον αυτους ως ο. πρ.”

“(24) μερις μου, Κυριος, ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω αυτ[ον]ω.”

Whatever will we do with that clause, “ανακαινισον αυτους ως ορθρον πρωινον επληθυνθη”, which appears to be supported at least once. It translates, “Renew them as early dawn was filled. This has the look and feel of a liturgical response inserted into the passage for worship services: consequently we delete it.

The clause, “εισιν οι στεναγμοι μου και η καρδια μου εξελιπε(ν)”, is also troubling. “They are my groans or sighs. My heart fails”. This appears to be the notation of a scribe understanding both the words and the historical context. Indeed, Jeremiah writes of a heart rending topic: but, his words are about why his heart is not rent: so we neglect these words also.

“τα ελεη, Κυριου, οτι ουκ εξελιπε με, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.

“μηνας εις τας πρωιας ελεησον, Κυριε, οτι ου συνετελεσθημεν, οτι ου συνετελεσθησαν, οι οικτιρμοι αυτου.

“καινα εις τας πρωιας πολλη η πιστις σου.

“μερις μου, Κυριος, ειπεν η ψυχη μου δια τουτο υπομενω αυτ[ον]ω.”

And we have arrived at the very same conclusion. All credits to whomever made the reconstruction found in Elpenor. We can make no better and no other reconstruction.

My working hypothesis is sufficiently disproved from the Ziegler apparatus to show that Lamentations 3:22-24 have substance even though they are completely absent from manuscript B. This also implies that there is no reason to doubt the existence of the acrostic construction of Lamentations 3 based on the evidence found in the Ziegler apparatus.

Moreover, there may be some remaining dispute over which verse particular clauses and phrases might belong:

“22 Τὰ ἐλέη Κυρίου, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξέλιπέ με, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ· μῆνας εἰς τὰς πρωΐας ἐλέησον, Κύριε, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθημεν, ὅτι οὐ συνετελέσθησαν οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ αὐτοῦ. 23 καινὰ εἰς τὰς πρωΐας, πολλὴ ἡ πίστις σου. 24 μερίς μου Κύριος, εἶπεν ἡ ψυχή μου· διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομενῶ αὐτῷ.”

The Elpenor reconstruction is reliably consistent with the Ziegler apparatus in every detail: even though the source of the Elpenor reconstruction is not identified at this time.[[4]](#footnote-4) Whoever did the work has no evidentiary reason to be faulted: virtually every word has been verified. This is not to claim with absolute certainty that the Elpenor reconstruction is the exact LXX text of Lamentations 3:22-24; we await some sort of scholarly consensus to develop: but, at least we have established the credibility of the ancient text, and reestablished Lamentations 3:22-24 as the theme or core argument text for all of Lamentations.

We offer the following translation:

“I will treasure[[5]](#footnote-5) this in my heart; through this I will endure[[6]](#footnote-6).” — Lamentations 3:21 LXX

“The Lord’s mercies: since, He did not forsake me; since, His compassions were not consumed[[7]](#footnote-7). Indeed, have mercy in the morning, Lord: since, we were not consumed; since, His compassions were not consumed. New in the morning: great [is] Your faithfulness. [The] Lord my portion[[8]](#footnote-8), my soul said, through this I will endure[[9]](#footnote-9) in Him.” — Lamentations 3:21-24 LXX

Be well.

[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. From personal correspondence with Emanuel Tov, “the goettingen edition of joseph ziegler of jeremiah, baruch, lam, 1957, p 482”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ziegler, J. (Ed.). (2006). [*Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae*](https://ref.ly/logosres/gsxvjercapp2?ref=BibleLXXG.La3.22&off=0&ctx=%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%84%CE%BF+%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83%CE%B4%CE%BF%CE%BA%CE%B7%CF%83%CF%89+Syh%0a~(22)+%CE%BF%CF%84%CE%B9+%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BA+%CE%B5%CE%BE%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%80%CE%B5) (Vol. XV, p. 483). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ziegler, J. (Ed.). (2006). [*Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae*](https://ref.ly/logosres/gsxvjercapp1?ref=BibleLXXG.La3.21&off=0&ctx=%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%85%5d+tr.+L%E2%80%B2+verss.p%0a~21+init.%E2%80%94%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%85%5d+%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%85%CF%84%CE%B1+) (Vol. XV, pp. 482–483). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=46&page=3 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. to guard-post, to set a watch, protect [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. persevere, keep going, wait [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ended, exhausted, finished, terminated [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. part [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. possibly wait [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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