In his 1986 article "The Costly Loss of Lament," Walter Brueggemann mourns the absence of lament in the contemporary "functioning canon." He claims that the loss of this speech form has serious implications for the religious faith and practice of contemporary communities. It indicates, first of all, the loss of "genuine covenant interaction" because one party in the covenant relationship has either been silenced or restricted to expressions of praise, producing what he calls "yes-men and women." Secondly, it signals the stifling of discussions of theodicy so that questions of justice cannot be asked and soon become "invisible and illegitimate." According to Brueggemann, the stakes are high, for such stifling on the religious plane will carry over onto the social plane:

A community of faith that negates laments soon concludes that the hard issues of justice are improper questions to pose at the throne, because the throne seems to be only a place of praise. I believe it thus follows that if justice questions are improper questions at the throne (which is a conclusion drawn through liturgical use), they soon appear to be improper questions in public places, in schools, in hospitals, with the government, and eventually even in the courts. Justice questions disappear into civility and docility.10

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This concern for what Brueggemann calls "psychological inauthenticity" and "social immobility" leads him to conclude: "If we care about authenticity and justice, the recovery of these texts is urgent."3

The prophetic edge of this article is difficult to ignore. How can one reject this call to authenticity and justice? But is Brueggemann's thesis correct? Do psychological inauthenticity and social immobility necessarily follow from the loss of lament? And is lament the appropriate path to psychological authenticity and social mobility? His conclusions are drawn from interaction between the ancient text and modern psychological/sociological theory, but can these conclusions be demonstrated from the life of the ancient Jewish community?

In this article we will investigate two forms within the "exilic" liturgy of Judah in which we can trace a transformation in the expression of lament. The purpose of this paper is threefold. Primarily, it will identify and explain transformations in the liturgical responses of the Jewish community to the fall of the kingdom of Judah, in particular, the modification from the expressions found in the book of Lamentations to those found in narrative accounts of the Persian period Jewish community. Secondly, it will compare Brueggemann's conclusions with the evidence from the "exilic" liturgy, and, finally, taking his lead, it will draw implications for worship in contemporary faith communities.

I. Penitential Prayer

A. Characteristics

Prayers in canonical books depicting the Persian period Jewish community reveal the emergence of a new form of expression to God for the community which has experienced or is continuing to experience the

3Brueggemann, "Costly Loss," 111.