
JEREMIAH 9: 1 Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a spring of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

The prophet bitterly laments the terrible judgments about to be inflicted upon his countrymen, and points out some of the evils which have provoked the Divine Majesty, Jer 9:1-9. Judea shall be utterly desolated, and the inhabitants transplanted into heathen countries, Jer 9:10-17. In allusion to an ancient custom, a band of mourning women is called to lament over the ruins of Jerusalem, Jer 9:17, Jer 9:18; and even the funeral dirge is given in terms full of beauty, elegance, and pathos, Jer 9:19-22. God is the fountain of all good; man, merely an instrument by which a portion of this good is distributed in the earth; therefore none should glory in his wisdom, might, or riches, Jer 9:23, Jer 9:24. The judgments of God shall fall, not upon the land of Judea only, but also upon many heathen nations, Jer 9:25, Jer 9:26.

Verse 1

O that my head were waters - *מי יתן ראשי מים* mi yitten roshi mayim, "who will give to my head waters?" My mourning for the sins and desolations of my people has already exhausted the source of tears: I wish to have a fountain opened there, that I may weep day and night for the slain of my people. This has been the sorrowful language of many a pastor who has preached long to a hardened, rebellious people, to little or no effect. This verse belongs to the preceding chapter.

JEREMIAH 9: 2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

Verse 2

O that I had in the wilderness - In the eastern countries there are no such inns or houses of entertainment as those in Europe. There are in different places public buildings called caravanserais, where travelers may lodge: but they are without furniture of any kind, and without food. Indeed they are often without a roof being mere walls for a protection against the wild beasts of the desert. I wish to hide myself any where, in the most uncomfortable circumstances, that I may not be obliged any longer to witness the abominations of this people who are shortly to be visited with the most grievous punishments. Several interpreters suppose this to be the speech of God. I cannot receive this. I believe this verse to be spoken by the prophet, and that God proceeds with the next verse, and so on to the ninth inclusive.

JEREMIAH 9: 3 They bend their tongue, as their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they don't know me, says the LORD.

Verse 3

They bend their tongues like their bow for lies - And their lies are such that they as fully take away life as the keenest arrow shot from the best strung bow. The false prophets told the people that there was no desolation at hand: the people believed them; made no preparation for their defense; did not return to the Lord; and the sword came and destroyed them.

They are not valiant for the truth - They are bold in sin, and courageous to support their lies; but the truth they neither patronize nor support.

JEREMIAH 9: 4 Take heed everyone of his neighbour, and don't trust in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will go about with slanders.

JEREMIAH 9: 5 They will deceive everyone his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Verse 5

And weary themselves to commit iniquity - O, what a drudgery is sin! and how much labor must a man take in order to get to hell! The tenth part of it, in working together with God, would bring him to the gate of glory.

JEREMIAH 9: 6 Your habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, says the LORD.

JEREMIAH 9: 7 Therefore thus says the LORD of Armies, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how should I deal with the daughter of my people?

Verse 7

Behold, I will melt them - I will put them in the furnace of affliction, and see if this will be a means of purging away their dross. See on Jer 6:27 (note).

JEREMIAH 9: 8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceit: one speaks peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he lays wait for him.

JEREMIAH 9: 9 Shall I not visit them for these things? says the LORD; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

JEREMIAH 9: 10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that no one passes through; neither can men hear the voice of the livestock; both the birds of the sky and the animals are fled, they are gone.

Verse 10

Both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled - The land shall be so utterly devastated, that neither beast nor bird shall be able to live in it.

JEREMIAH 9: 11 I will make Jerusalem heaps, a dwelling place of jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

Verse 11

A den of dragons - תַּנִּים tannim is supposed to mean here jackals; the chakal is a beast frequent in the east, an attendant on the lion, the refuse of whose prey he devours. It is an animal that seems to have been bred originally between the wolf and the dog. The original is sometimes interpreted, dragons, whales, etc.

JEREMIAH 9: 12 Who is the wise man, that may understand this? Who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land perished and burned up like a wilderness, so that no one passes through?

Verse 12

Who is the wise man - To whom has God revealed these things? He is the truly wise man. But it is to his prophet alone that God has revealed these things, and the speedy fulfillment of the predictions will show that the prophet has not spoken of himself.

JEREMIAH 9: 13 The LORD says, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein,

JEREMIAH 9: 14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their own heart, and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them;

JEREMIAH 9: 15 therefore thus says the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

Verse 15

I will feed them - with wormwood - They shall have the deepest sorrow and heaviest affliction. They shall have poison instead of meat and drink.

JEREMIAH 9: 16 I will scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.

JEREMIAH 9: 17 Thus says the LORD of Armies, Consider, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the skilful women, that they may come:

Verse 17

Call for the mourning women - Those whose office it was to make lamentations at funerals, and to bewail the dead, for which they received pay. This custom continues to the present in Asiatic countries. In Ireland this custom also prevails, which no doubt their ancestors brought from the east. I have often witnessed it, and have given a specimen of this elsewhere. See the note on Mat 9:23. The first lamentations for the dead consisted only in the sudden bursts of inexpressible grief, like that of David over his son Absalom, 2Sam 19:4. But as men grew refined, it was not deemed sufficient for the surviving relatives to vent their sorrows in these natural, artless expressions of wo, but they endeavored to join others as partners in their sorrows. This gave rise to the custom of hiring persons to weep at funerals, which the Phrygians and Greeks borrowed from the Hebrews. Women were generally employed on these occasions, because the tender passions being predominant in this sex, they succeeded better in their parts; and there were never wanting persons who would let out their services to hire on such occasions. Their lamentations were sung to the pipe as we learn from Mat 9:23. See the funeral ceremonies practiced at the burial of Hector, as described by Homer: - Οἱ δ' ἐπει εἰσαγαγον κλυτα δωματα, τον μεν επειτα Τρητοις εν λεχεεσσι θεσαν, παρα δ' εἰσαν αιιδους, Θρηνων εξαρχους, οἱ τε στονοεσσαν αιιδην Οἱ μεν αρ' εθρηνεον, επι δε στεναχοντο γυναικες.

Il. lib. 24., ver. 719. "Arrived within the royal house, they stretched

The breathless Hector on a sumptuous bed,

And singers placed beside him, who should chant

The strain funereal; they with many a groan

The dirge began; and still at every close

The female train with many a groan replied."

Cowper.

St. Jerome tells us that even to his time this custom continued in Judea; that women at funerals, with dishevelled hair and naked breasts, endeavored in a modulated voice to invite others to lament with them. The poem before us, from the seventeenth to the twenty-second verse, is both an illustration and confirmation of what has been delivered on this subject, and worthy of the reader's frequent perusal, on account of its affecting pathos, moral sentiments, and fine images, particularly in the twenty-first verse, where death is described in as animated a prosopopoeia as can be conceived. See Lototh's twenty-second Prelection, and Dodd. The nineteenth verse is supposed to be the funeral song of the women. "How are we spoiled!

We are greatly confounded!

For we have forsaken the land;

Because they have destroyed our dwellings."

JEREMIAH 9: 18 and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

JEREMIAH 9: 19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we ruined! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because they have cast down our dwellings.

JEREMIAH 9: 20 Yet hear the LORD's word, you women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth; and teach your daughters wailing, and everyone her neighbour lamentation.

Verse 20

Teach your daughters - This is not a common dirge that shall last only till the body is consigned to the earth; it must last longer; teach it to your children, that it may be continued through every generation, till God turn again your captivity.

JEREMIAH 9: 21 For death has come up into our windows, it is entered into our palaces; to cut off the children from outside, and the young men from the streets.

Verse 21

For death is come up into our windows - Here Death is personified, and represented as scaling their wall; and after having slain the playful children without, and the vigorous youth employed in the labors of the field, he is now come into the private houses, to destroy the aged and infirm; and into the palaces, to destroy the king and the princes.

JEREMIAH 9: 22 Speak, Thus says the LORD, The dead bodies of men shall fall as dung on the open field, and as the handful after the harvester; and no one shall gather them.

Verse 22

And as the handful after the harvestman - The reapers, after having cut enough to fill their hand, threw it down; and the binders, following after, collected those handfuls, and bound them in sheaves. Death is represented as having cut down the inhabitants of the land, as the reapers do the corn; but so general was the slaughter, that there was none to bury the dead, to gather up these handfuls; so that they lay in a state of putrescence, as dung upon the open field.

JEREMIAH 9: 23 Thus says the LORD, Don't let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, don't let the rich man glory in his riches;

Verse 23

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom - Because God is the Fountain of all good, neither wisdom, nor might, nor riches, nor prosperity can come but from or through him. Nothing can be more rational than that the Source of all our blessings should be acknowledged. Riches cannot deliver in the day of death; strength cannot avail against him; and as a shield against him, our wisdom is foolishness.

JEREMIAH 9: 24 but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the LORD.

Verse 24

But let him that glorieth - To glory in a thing is to depend on it as the means or cause of procuring happiness. But there can be no happiness but in being experimentally acquainted with that God who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. He who has God's mercy for his portion may well exult; for he need not fear the power of any adversary.

Sometimes the ancient heathen poets uttered sentiments of morality far beyond their dispensation. Witness Phocylides on this subject: - Μη γαυρου σοφιη, μητ' αλκη, μητ' ενι πλουτω· εις Θεος εστι σοφος, δυνατος θ' άμα, και τολυολβος. "If wisdom, strength, or riches be thy lot,

Boast not; but rather think thou hast them not.

One God alone from whom those gifts proceed

Is wise, is mighty, and is rich indeed."

JEREMIAH 9: 25 Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will punish all those who are circumcised in uncircumcision:

Verse 25

I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised - Do not imagine that you, because of your crimes, are the only objects of my displeasure; the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the Jew and the Gentile, shall equally feel the stroke of my justice, their transgressions being alike, after their advantages and disadvantages are duly compared. In like manner, other nations also were delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, these he immediately enumerates: Egypt and Edom, and the Moabites and the Ammonites, and the Arabians of the desert. All these nations were uncircumcised in that way which God required that rite to be practiced as a sign of his covenant; and the Israelites, that did practice it as a sign of that covenant, did not attend to its spiritual meaning, for they were all uncircumcised in heart. And it may be remarked, that these people were in general confederated against the Chaldeans.

JEREMIAH 9: 26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that have the corners of their hair cut off, who dwell in the wilderness; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

Verse 26

All that are in the utmost corners - כל קצוצי פאה col ketsutsey pheah. These words have been variously understood. The Vulgate translates: Omnes qui attonsi sunt in comam; "All who have their

hair cut short." The Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic have understood it nearly in the same way; and so our margin. Others think that the insular or peninsular situation of the people is referred to. Dr. Blayney thinks the Arabians are meant, who dwelt in the great desert, between Mesopotamia and Palestine. I really think our marginal reading should be preferred, as expressing the sense of all the ancient Versions.