

LAMENTATIONS 2: 1 How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger! He has cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, And hasn't remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

The prophet shows the dire effects of the Divine anger in the miseries brought on his country; the unparalleled calamities of which he charges, on a great measure, on the false prophets, Lam 2:1-14. In thus desperate condition, the astonishment and by-word of all who see her, Jerusalem is directed to sue earnestly for mercy and pardon, Lam 2:15-22.

Verse 1

How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud - The women in the eastern countries wear veils, and often very costly ones. Here, Zion is represented as being veiled by the hand of God's judgment. And what is the veil? A dark cloud, by which she is entirely obscured.

Instead of אֲדֹנָי Adonai, lord, twenty-four of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., and some of the most ancient of my own, read יְהוָה Yehovah, Lord, as in Lam 2:2.

The beauty of Israel - His Temple.

His footstool - The ark of the covenant, often so called. The rendering of my old MS. Bible is curious:

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And record not of his lital steging-stole of his feet, in the dai of his woodnesse.

To be wood signifies, in our ancient language, to be mad.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 2 The Lord has swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and has not pitied: He has thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; he has profaned the kingdom and its princes.

Verse 2

The Lord hath swallowed up - It is a strange figure when thus applied: but Jehovah is here represented as having swallowed down Jerusalem and all the cities and fortifications in the land: that is, he has permitted them to be destroyed. See Lam 2:6.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 3 He has cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel; He has drawn back his right hand from before the enemy: He has burned up Jacob like a flaming fire, which devours all around.

Verse 3

The horn of Israel - His power and strength. It is a metaphor taken from cattle, whose principal strength lies in their horns.

Hath drawn back his right hand - He did not support us when our enemies came against us.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 4 He has bent his bow like an enemy, he has stood with his right hand as an adversary, Has killed all that were pleasant to the eye: In the tent of the daughter of Zion he has poured out his wrath like fire.

Verse 4

He hath bent his bow - he stood with his right hand - This is the attitude of the archer. He first bends his bow; then sets his arrow upon the string; and, lastly, placing his right hand on the lower end of the arrow, in connection with the string, takes his aim, and prepares to let fly.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 5 The Lord has become as an enemy, he has swallowed up Israel; He has swallowed up all her palaces, he has destroyed his strongholds; He has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 6 He has violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he has destroyed his place of assembly: The LORD has caused solemn assembly and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion, Has despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

Verse 6

As if it were of a garden - "As it were the garden of his own hedging." - Blayney.

The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts - By delivering us up into the hands of the enemy our religious worship is not only suspended, but all Divine ordinances are destroyed.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 7 The Lord has cast off his altar, he has abhorred his sanctuary; He has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces: They have made a noise in the LORD's house, as in the day of a solemn assembly.

Verse 7

They have made a noise in the house of the Lord - Instead of the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, nothing but the sounds of warlike instruments are to be heard.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 8 The LORD has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; He has stretched out the line, he has not withdrawn his hand from destroying; He has made the rampart and wall to lament; they languish together.

Verse 8

He hath stretched out a line - The line of devastation; marking what was to be pulled down and demolished.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 9 Her gates are sunk into the ground; he has destroyed and broken her bars: Her king and her princes are among the nations where the law is not; Yes, her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

Verse 9

Her gates are sunk into the ground - The consequence of their being long thrown down and neglected. From this it appears that the captivity had already lasted a considerable time.

Her king and her princes are among the Gentiles - Zedekiah and many of the princes were then prisoners in Babylon, another proof that the captivity had endured some time, unless all this be spoken prophetically, of what should be done.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground, they keep silence; They have cast up dust on their heads; they have clothed themselves with sackcloth: The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

Verse 10

Sit upon the ground - See the note on Lam 1:1.

Keep silence - No words can express their sorrows: small griefs are eloquent, great ones dumb.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 11 My eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled; My liver is poured on the earth, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, Because the young children and the infants swoon in the streets of the city.

Verse 11

Swoon in the streets of the city - Through the excess of the famine.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 12 They tell their mothers, Where is grain and wine? When they swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city, When their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom.

Verse 12

When their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom - When, in endeavoring to draw nourishment from the breasts of their exhausted mothers, they breathed their last in their bosoms! How dreadfully afflicting was this!

LAMENTATIONS 2: 13 What shall I testify to you? what shall I liken to you, daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare to you, that I may comfort you, virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great like the sea: who can heal you?

Verse 13

What thing shall I take - Or, rather, as Dr. Blayney, "What shall I urge to thee?" How shall I comfort thee?

Thy breach is great like the sea - Thou hast a flood of afflictions, a sea of troubles, an ocean of miseries.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 14 Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; They have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captivity, but have seen for you false oracles and causes of banishment.

Verse 14

They have not discovered thine iniquity - They did not reprove for sin, they flattered them in their transgressions; and instead of turning away thy captivity, by turning thee from thy sins, they have pretended visions of good in thy favor, and false burdens for thy enemies.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 15 All that pass by clap their hands at you. They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Verse 15

The perfection of beauty - This probably only applied to the temple. Jerusalem never was a fine or splendid city; but the temple was most assuredly the most splendid building in the world.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 16 All your enemies have opened their mouth wide against you; They hiss and gnash the teeth; they say, We have swallowed her up; Certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it.

Verse 16

This is the day that we looked for - Jerusalem was the envy of the surrounding nations: they longed for its destruction, and rejoiced when it took place.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 17 The LORD has done that which he purposed; he has fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old; He has thrown down, and has not pitied: He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you; he has exalted the horn of your adversaries.

Verse 17

The Lord hate done that - This and the sixteenth verse should be interchanged, to follow the order of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet; as the sixteenth has פ phe for its acrostic letter, and the seventeenth has ו ain, which should precede the other in the order of the alphabet.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 18 Their heart cried to the Lord: wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; Give yourself no respite; don't let the apple of your eye cease.

Verse 18

O wall of the daughter of Zion - חומת בת ציון chomath bath tsiyon, wall of the daughter of Zion. These words are probably those of the passengers, who appear to be affected by the desolations of the land; and they address the people, and urge them to plead with God day and night for their restoration. But what is the meaning of wall of the daughter of Zion? I answer I do not know. It is certainly harsh to say "O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night." Zion's ways may lament, and her streets mourn; but how the walls can be said to weep is not so easy to be understood, because there is no parallel for it. One of my most ancient MSS. omits the three words; and in it the text stands thus: "Their heart cried unto the Lord, Let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest," etc.

Let not the apple of thine eye cease - בת עין bath ayin means either the pupil of the eye, or the tears. Tears are the produce of the eye, and are here elegantly termed the daughter of the eye. Let not thy tears cease. But with what propriety can we say to the apple or pupil of the eye, Do not cease! Tears are most certainly meant.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 19 Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: Lift up your hands toward him for the life of your young children, that faint for hunger at the head of every street.

Verse 19

Arise, cry out in the night - This seems to refer to Jerusalem besieged. Ye who keep the night watches, pour out your hearts before the Lord, instead of calling the time of night, etc.; or, when you call it, send up a fervent prayer to God for the safety and relief of the place.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 20 Look, LORD, and see to whom you have done thus! Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in the hands? Shall the priest and the prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?

 Verse 20

Consider to whom thou hast done this - Perhaps the best sense of this difficult verse is this: "Thou art our Father, we are thy children; wilt thou destroy thy own offspring? Was it ever heard that a mother devoured her own child, a helpless infant of a span long?" That it was foretold that there should be such distress in the siege, - that mothers should be obliged to eat their own children, is evident enough from Lev 26:29; Deu 28:53, Deu 28:56, Deu 28:57; but the former view of the subject seems the most natural and is best supported by the context. The priest and the prophet are slain; the young and old lie on the ground in the streets; the virgins and young men are fallen by the sword. "Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; Thou hast killed, and not pitied." See Deu 4:10.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 21 The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets; My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword: You have killed them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered, and not pitied.

LAMENTATIONS 2: 22 You have called, as in the day of a solemn assembly, my terrors on every side; There was no one that escaped or remained in the day of the LORD's anger: Those that I have dandled and brought up has my enemy consumed.

Verse 22

Thou hast called as in a solemn day - It is by thy influence alone that so many enemies are called together at one time; and they have so hemmed us in that none could escape, and none remained unslain or uncaptured, Perhaps the figure is the collecting of the people in Jerusalem on one of the solemn annual festivals. God has called terrors together to feast on Jerusalem, similar to the convocation of the people from all parts of the land to one of those annual festivals. The indiscriminate slaughter of young and old, priest and prophet, all ranks and conditions, may be illustrated by the following verses from Lucan, which appear as if a translation of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first verses of this chapter: -

Nobilitas cum plebe perit; lateque vagatur

Ensis, et a nullo revocatum est pectore ferrum.

Stat cruor in Templis; multaque rubentia caede

Lubrica saxa madent. Nulli sua profuit aetas.

Non senes extremum piguit vergentibus annis

Praecipitasse diem; nec primo in limine vitae,

Infanti miseri nascentia rumpere fata.

Pharsal. lib. ii., 101. "With what a slide devouring slaughter passed,

And swept promiscuous orders in her haste;

O'er noble and plebeian ranged the sword,

Nor pity nor remorse one pause afford!
The sliding streets with blood were clotted o'er,
And sacred temples stood in pools of gore.
The ruthless steel, impatient of delay,
Forbade the sire to linger out his day:
It struck the bending father to the earth,
And cropped the wailing infant at its birth."
Rowe.