

LAMENTATIONS 3: 1 I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

The prophet, by enumerating his own severe trials, vv. 1-20, and showing his trust in God, Lam 3:21, encourages his people to the like resignation and trust in the Divine and never-failing mercy, Lam 3:22-27. He vindicates the goodness of God in all his dispensations, and the unreasonableness of murmuring under them, Lam 3:28-39. He recommends self-examination and repentance; and then, from their experience of former deliverances from God, encourages them to look for pardon for their sins, and retribution to their enemies, vv. 40-66.

Verse 1

I am the man that hath seen affliction - Either the prophet speaks here of himself, or he is personating his miserable countrymen. This and other passages in this poem have been applied to Jesus Christ's passion; but, in my opinion, without any foundation.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 2 He has led me and caused me to walk in darkness, and not in light.

Verse 2

He hath - brought me into darkness - In the sacred writings, darkness is often taken for calamity, light, for prosperity.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 3 Surely against me he turns his hand again and again all the day.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 4 My flesh and my skin has he made old; he has broken my bones.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 5 He has built against me, and surrounded me with gall and travail.

Verse 5

He hath builded against me - Perhaps there is a reference here to the mounds and ramparts raised by the Chaldeans in order to take the city.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 6 He has made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 7 He has walled me about, that I can't go out; he has made my chain heavy.

Verse 7

He hath hedged me about - This also may refer to the lines drawn round the city during the siege. But these and similar expressions in the following verses may be merely metaphorical, to point out their straitened, oppressed, and distressed state.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 8 Yes, when I cry, and call for help, he shuts out my prayer.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 9 He has walled up my ways with cut stone; he has made my paths crooked.

Verse 9

He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone - He has put insuperable obstacles in my way; and confounded all my projects of deliverance and all my expectations of prosperity.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 10 He is to me as a bear lying in wait, as a lion in secret places.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 11 He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces; he has made me desolate.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 12 He has bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

Verse 12

He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow - One might conjecture that the following thought in the Toozek i Teemour was borrowed from this: - "One addressed the caliph Aaly, and said, 'If the heavens were a bow, and the earth the cord thereof; if calamities were arrows, man the butt for those arrows; and the holy blessed God the unerring marksman; where could the sons of Adam flee for succor?' The caliph replied, 'The children of Adam must flee unto the Lord.'" This was the state of poor Jerusalem. It seemed as a butt for all God's arrows; and each arrow of calamity entered into the soul, for God was the unerring marksman.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 13 He has caused the shafts of his quiver to enter into my kidneys.

Verse 13

The arrows of his quiver - בני אשפתו beney ashpatho, "The sons of his quiver." The issue or effect; the subject, adjunct, or accident, or produce of a thing, is frequently denominated its son or child. So arrows that issue from a quiver are here termed the sons of the quiver.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 14 I am become a derision to all my people, and their song all the day.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 15 He has filled me with bitterness, he has sated me with wormwood.

Verse 15

He hath filled me with bitterness - במרורים bimrorim, with bitteresses, bitter upon bitter.

He hath made me drunken with wormwood - I have drunk the cup of misery till I am intoxicated with it. Almost in all countries, and in all languages, bitterness is a metaphor to express trouble and affliction. The reason is, there is nothing more disagreeable to the taste than the one; and nothing more distressing to the mind than the other. An Arabic poet. Amralkeis, one of the writers of the Moallakat, terms a man grievously afflicted a pounder of wormwood.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 16 He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones; he has covered me with ashes.

Verse 16

He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones - What a figure to express disgust, pain, and the consequent incapacity of taking food for the support of life; a man, instead of bread, being obliged to eat small pebbles till all his teeth are broken to pieces by endeavoring to grind them. One can scarcely read this description without feeling the toothache. The next figure is not less expressive.

He hath covered me with ashes - באפר הכפישני hichphishani beepher, "he hath plunged me into the dust." To be thrown into a mass or bed of perfect dust, where the eyes are blinded by it, the ears stopped, and the mouth and lungs filled at the very first attempt to respire after having been thrown into it - what a horrible idea of suffocation and drowning! One can scarcely read this without feeling a suppression of breath, or a stricture upon the lungs! Did ever man paint sorrow like this man?

LAMENTATIONS 3: 17 You have removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity.

Verse 17

Those hast removed my soul - Prosperity is at such an utter distance from me, that it is impossible I should ever reach it; and as to happiness, I have forgotten whether I have ever tasted of it.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 18 I said, My strength is perished, and my expectation from the LORD.

Verse 18

And my hope - That first, that last support of the miserable - it is gone! it is perished! The sovereign God alone can revive it.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 19 Remember my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 20 My soul still remembers them, and is bowed down within me.

Verse 20

By soul - is humbled in me - It is evident that in the preceding verses there is a bitterness of complaint against the bitterness of adversity, that is not becoming to man when under the chastising hand of God; and, while indulging this feeling, all hope fled. Here we find a different feeling; he humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, and then his hope revives, Lam 3:21.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 21 This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 22 It is because of the LORD's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassion doesn't fail.

Verse 22

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed - Being thus humbled, and seeing himself and his sinfulness in a proper point of view, he finds that God, instead of dealing with him in judgment, has dealt with him in mercy; and that though the affliction was excessive, yet it seas less than his iniquity deserved. If, indeed, any sinner be kept out of hell, it is because God's compassion faileth not.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Verse 23

They are new every morning - Day and night proclaim the mercy and compassion of God. Who could exist throughout the day, if there were not a continual superintending Providence? Who could be preserved in the night, if the Watchman of Israel ever slumbered or slept?

LAMENTATIONS 3: 24 The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Verse 24

The Lord is my portion - See on Psa 119:67 (note).

LAMENTATIONS 3: 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 26 It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

Verse 26

It is good that a man should both hope - Hope is essentially necessary to faith; he that hopes not, cannot believe; if there be no expectation, there can be no confidence. When a man hopes for salvation, he should not only waft for it, but use every means that may lead to it; for hope cannot

live, if there be no exercise. If hope become impatient, faith will be impossible: for who can believe for his salvation when his mind is agitated? He must therefore quietly wait. He must expect, and yet be dumb, as the words imply; ever feeling his utter unworthiness; and, without murmuring, struggle into life.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

Verse 27

That he bear the yoke in his youth - Early habits, when good, are invaluable. Early discipline is equally so. He who has not got under wholesome restraint in youth will never make a useful man, a good man, nor a happy man.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 28 Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he has laid it on him.

Verse 28

He sitteth alone - He has learned that necessary lesson of independence, that shows him how he is to serve himself; to give no trouble to others; and keep his troubles, as far as possible, in his own bosom.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.

Verse 29

He putteth his mouth in the dust - Lives in a state of deep humility.

If so be there may be hope - Because there is room for hope.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 30 Let him give his cheek to him who strikes him; let him be filled full with reproach.

Verse 30

He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth - He has that love that is not provoked. He is not quarrelsome, nor apt to resent injuries; he suffers long and is kind. Or, it may be rendered, "let him give his cheek."

He is filled full with reproach - Though all this take place, yet let his "trust be in God, who will not cast off for ever." God will take his part, and bring him safely through all hardships.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 31 For the Lord will not cast off forever.

Verse 31

The Lord - אֲדֹנָי Adonai; but one of my ancient MSS. has יהוה Jehovah. The above verse is quoted in reference to our Lord's passion, by Mat 26:62.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 32 For though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 33 For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

Verse 33

For he doth not afflict willingly - It is no pleasure to God to afflict men. He takes no delight in our pain and misery: yet, like a tender and intelligent parent, he uses the rod; not to gratify himself, but to profit and save us.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 34 To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth,

Verse 34

To crush under his feet - He can neither gain credit nor pleasure in trampling upon those who are already bound, and in suffering; such he knows to be the state of man here below. From which it most assuredly follows, that God never afflicts us but for our good, nor chastises but that we may be partakers of his holiness.

All the prisoners of the earth - By the prisoners of the earth, or land, Dr. Blayney understands those insolvent debtors who were put in prison, and there obliged to work out the debt. Yet this is mercy in comparison with those who put them in prison, and keep them there, when they know that it is impossible, from the state of the laws, to lessen the debt by their confinement.

In Lam 3:34, Lam 3:35, and Lam 3:36, certain acts of tyranny, malice, and injustice are specified, which men often indulge themselves in the practice of towards one another, but which the Divine goodness is far from countenancing or approving by any similar conduct. - Blayney.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 35 To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High,

Verse 35

To turn aside the right of a man - To make a man lose his right, because one of the higher orders opposes him. Dr. Blayney thinks that עליון elyon, instead of being referred to God, should be considered as pointing out one of the chief of the people. I do not see that we gain any thing by this.

The evil fact is, turning aside the right of a man; and the aggravation of it is, doing it before the face of the Most High; that is, in a court of justice, where God is ever considered to be present.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 36 To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord doesn't approve.

Verse 36

To subvert a man in his cause - To prevent his having justice done him in a lawsuit, etc., by undue interference, as by suborning false witnesses, or exerting any kind of influence in opposition to truth and right. - Blayney.

The Lord approved not - Instead of אֲדֹנָי Adonai, seventeen MSS., of Kennicott's, and one ancient of my own, have יהוה Yehovah. Approveth not, לֹא רָאָה so laah, doth not see, turns away his face from it, abhors it.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 37 Who is he who says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord doesn't command it?

LAMENTATIONS 3: 38 Doesn't evil and good come out of the mouth of the Most High?

LAMENTATIONS 3: 39 Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

Verse 39

Wherefore doth a living man complain - He who has his life still lent to him has small cause of complaint. How great soever his affliction may be, he is still alive; therefore, he may seek and find mercy unto eternal life. Of this, death would deprive him; therefore let not a living man complain.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Verse 40

Let us search - How are we to get the pardon of our sins? The prophet tells us:

1. Let us examine ourselves.
2. "Let us turn again to the Lord."
3. "Let us lift up our heart;" let us make fervent prayer and supplication for mercy.
4. "Let us lift up our hand;" let us solemnly promise to be his, and bind ourselves in a covenant to be the Lord's only: so much lifting up the hand to God implies. Or, let us put our heart on our hand, and offer it to God; so some have translated this clause.
5. "We have transgressed;" let our confession of sin be fervent and sincere.

6. And to us who profess Christianity it may be added, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as having died for thee; and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life. Lam 3:46, Lam 3:47, Lam 3:48, beginning with ϑ phe, should, as to the order of the alphabet, follow Lam 3:49, Lam 3:50, Lam 3:51, which begin with υ ain, which in its grammatical position precedes the former.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 41 Let us lift up our heart with our hands to God in the heavens.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 42 We have transgressed and have rebelled; you have not pardoned.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 43 You have covered with anger and pursued us; you have killed, you have not pitied.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 44 You have covered yourself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 45 You have made us an off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 46 All our enemies have opened their mouth wide against us.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 47 Fear and the pit have come on us, devastation and destruction.

Verse 47

Fear and a snare - See on Jer 48:13 (note).

LAMENTATIONS 3: 48 My eye runs down with streams of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Verse 48

Mine eye runneth down - I weep incessantly.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 49 My eye pours down, and doesn't cease, without any intermission,

LAMENTATIONS 3: 50 Until the LORD look down, and see from heaven.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 51 My eye affects my soul, because of all the daughters of my city.

Verse 51

Mine eye affecteth mine heart - What I see I feel. I see nothing but misery; and I feel, in consequence, nothing but pain. There have been various translations of the original: but they all amount to this.

The daughters of my city - The villages about Jerusalem.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 52 They have chased me relentlessly like a bird, those who are my enemies without cause.

Verse 52

Mine enemies chased me - From this to the end of the chapter the prophet speaks of his own personal sufferings, and especially of those which he endured in the dungeon. See Jer 38:6, etc.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and have cast a stone on me.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 54 Waters flowed over my head; I said, I am cut off.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 55 I called on your name, LORD, out of the lowest dungeon.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 56 You heard my voice; don't hide your ear at my breathing, at my cry.

Verse 56

Hide not thine ear at my breathing - He dared not even to complain, nor to cry, nor to pray aloud: he was obliged to whisper his prayer to God. It was only a breathing.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 57 You drew near in the day that I called on you; you said, Don't be afraid.

Verse 57

Fear not - How powerful is this word when spoken by the Spirit of the Lord to a disconsolate heart. To every mourner we may say, on the authority of God, Fear not! God will plead thy cause, and redeem thy soul.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 58 Lord, you have pleaded the causes of my soul; you have redeemed my life.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 59 LORD, you have seen my wrong. Judge my cause.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 60 You have seen all their vengeance and all their devices against me.

Verse 60

Thou hast seen - all their imaginations - Every thing is open to the eye of God. Distressed soul! though thou knowest not what thy enemies meditate against thee; yet he who loves thee does, and will infallibly defeat all their plots, and save thee.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 61 You have heard their reproach, LORD, and all their devices against me,

LAMENTATIONS 3: 62 The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 63 You see their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their song.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 64 You will render to them a recompense, LORD, according to the work of their hands.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 65 You will give them hardness of heart, your curse to them.

Verse 65

Give them sorrow of heart - They shall have a callous heart, covered with obstinacy, and thy execration. The former is their state, the latter their fate. This is the consequence of their hardening their hearts from thy fear. Blayney translates, "Thou wilt give with a hearty concordance thy curse unto them." That is, Thou wilt give it to them freely, and without reserve; intimating that God felt no longer any bowels of compassion for them. Formerly he inflicted punishments with reluctance, while there was any hope of amendment: but, in the instance before us, the case was so hopeless, that God acts according to the simple principle of vindictive justice. The prophet therefore considers them on the utmost verge of final reprobation: another plunge, and they are lost for ever.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 66 You will pursue them in anger, and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.

Verse 66

Persecute and destroy them - Thou wilt pursue them with destruction. These are all declaratory, not imprecatory.

From under the heavens of the Lord - This verse seems to allude to the Chaldaic prediction, in Jer 10:11. By their conduct they will bring on themselves the curse denounced against their enemies.

The Septuagint and Vulgate seem to have read "From under heaven, O Jehovah:" and the Syriac reads, "Thy heavens, O Jehovah!" None of these makes any material change in the meaning of the words.

It has already been noticed in the introduction, that this chapter contains a triple acrostic, three lines always beginning with the same letter; so that the Hebrew alphabet is thrice repeated in this chapter, twenty-two multiplied by three being equal to sixty-six.