

## INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS

This book very properly follows the prophecy of Jeremiah, not only because wrote by him, but because of the subject matter of it, the deplorable case of the Jews upon the destruction of their city; and has been reckoned indeed as making one book with it; so Dean Prideaux<sup>f1</sup> supposes it was reckoned by Josephus<sup>f2</sup>, according to the number of the books of the Old Testament, which he gives; but it does not stand in this order in all printed Hebrew Bibles, especially in those published by the Jews; where it is placed in the Hagiographa, and among the five Megilloth; or with the books of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Solomon's Song, read at their festivals, as this on their public fast, on the ninth of Ab, for the destruction of their city; because they fancy it was not written by the gift of prophecy, but by the Holy Ghost, between which they make a distinction; and therefore remove it from the prophets; but this is the most natural place for it. It is sometimes called by the Jews "Echa", from the first word of it, which signifies "how"; and sometimes "Kinoth", "Lamentations", from the subject of it; and so by the Septuagint version "Threni", which signifies the same; and which is followed by the Vulgate Latin, and others, and by us. That Jeremiah was the writer of it is not questioned; nor is the divine authority of it doubted of. The precise place and time where and when he wrote it is not certain: some say he wrote it in a cave or den near Jerusalem; and Adrichomius<sup>f3</sup> makes mention of a place, called

"the Prophet Jeremiah's pit, where he sat in the bitterness of his soul, grieving and weeping; and lamented and described the destruction of Jerusalem made by the Chaldeans, in a fourfold alphabet in metre; where Helena the empress, according to Nicephorus, built some wonderful works;"

but it rather seems that he wrote these Lamentations after he was carried away with the rest of the captives to Ramah, and dismissed to Mizpah, at one or other of these places. It is written in Hebrew metre, though now little understood; and the first four chapters in an alphabetical manner; every verse beginning in order with the letters of the alphabet; and in the third chapter it is done three times over; three verses together beginning with the same letter: this seems to be done to make it more agreeable, and to help the memory. Jarchi thinks that this is the same book, which, having

been publicly read by Baruch, was cut to pieces by King Jehoiakim, and cast into the fire <sup>f4</sup> and burnt; which consisted of the first, second, and fourth chapters, and to which was afterwards added the third chapter; but it is without any reason or foundation; seeing that contained all Jeremiah's prophecies, not only against Israel and Judah, but against all the nations, (~~2431D~~Jeremiah 32:2); which this book has nothing of; nor even the words, which are particularly said to be in that, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, (~~24629~~Jeremiah 32:29); Josephus <sup>f5</sup> seems to have been of opinion that this book of Lamentations was written by Jeremy on account of the death of Josiah, (~~44825~~2 Chronicles 35:25); and in which he is followed by many; but the lamentation made in this book is not for a single person only, but for a city, and even for the whole nation of the Jews; nor is there anything suitable to Josiah, and his case; what seems most plausible is in (~~2900~~Lamentations 4:20); and that better agrees with Zedekiah than with him. It appears plainly to be written after the destruction of the city and temple, and the sad desolation made in the land of Judea, because of the sins of the priests and people; and the design of it is to lament these things; to bring them to repentance and humiliation for their sins, and to give some comfortable hope that God will be merciful to them, and restore them again to their former privileges, for which the prophet prays. The introduction to it, in the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, is,

“and it came to pass after Israel was carried captive, and Jerusalem laid waste, Jeremiah sat weeping, and delivered out this lamentation over Jerusalem; and said,”

what follows.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS 1

This chapter contains a complaint of the miseries of the city of Jerusalem, and the nation of the Jews; first by the Prophet Jeremiah, then by the Jewish people; and is concluded with a prayer of theirs. The prophet deplores the state of the city, now depopulated and become tributary, which had been full of people, and ruled over others; but now in a very mournful condition, and forsaken and ill used by her lovers and friends, turned her enemies, (<sup>2000</sup>Lamentations 1:1,2); and next the state of the whole nation; being carried captive for their sins among the Heathens; having no rest, being overtaken by their persecutors, (<sup>2003</sup>Lamentations 1:3); but what most of all afflicted him was the state of Zion; her ways mourning; her solemn feasts neglected; her gates desolate; her priests sighing, and virgins afflicted; her adversaries prosperous; her beauty departed; her sabbaths mocked; her nakedness seen; and all her pleasant things in the sanctuary seized on by the adversary; and all this because of her many transgressions, grievous sins, and great pollution and vileness, which are confessed, (<sup>2004</sup>Lamentations 1:4-11); then the people themselves, or the prophet representing them, lament their case, and call upon others to sympathize with them, (<sup>2012</sup>Lamentations 1:12); observing the sad desolation made by the hand of the Lord upon them for their iniquities, (<sup>2013</sup>Lamentations 1:13-15); on account of which great sorrow is expressed; and their case is represented as the more distressing, that they had no comforter, (<sup>2016</sup>Lamentations 1:16,17); then follows a prayer to God, in which his righteousness in doing or suffering all this is acknowledged, and mercy is entreated for themselves, and judgments on their enemies, (<sup>2018</sup>Lamentations 1:18-22).

**Ver. 1.** *How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!* etc.] These are the words of Jeremiah; so the Targum introduces them,

“Jeremiah the prophet and high priest said;”

and began thus, “how”; not inquiring the reasons of this distress and ruin; but as amazed and astonished at it; and commiserating the sad case of the

city of Jerusalem, which a little time ago was exceeding populous; had thousands of inhabitants in it; besides those that came from other parts to see it, or trade with it: and especially when the king of Babylon had invaded the land, which drove vast numbers to Jerusalem for safety; and which was the case afterwards when besieged by the Romans; at which time, as Josephus<sup>f6</sup> relates, there were eleven hundred thousand persons; and very probably a like number was in it before the destruction of it by the Chaldeans, who all perished through famine, pestilence, and the sword; or were carried captive; or made their escape; so that the city, as was foretold it should, came to be without any inhabitant; and therefore is represented as “sitting”, which is the posture of mourners; and as “solitary”, or “alone”<sup>f7</sup>, like a menstruous woman in her separation, to which it is compared, (<sup>(2017)</sup>Lamentations 1:17); or as a leper removed from the society of men; so the Targum,

“as a man that has the plague of leprosy on his flesh, that dwells alone;”

or rather as a woman deprived of her husband and children; as follows:

*[how] is she become as a widow!* her king, that was her head and husband, being taken from her, and carried captive; and God, who was the husband also of the Jewish people, having departed from them, and so left in a state of widowhood. Jarchi<sup>f8</sup> observes, that it is not said a widow simply, but as a widow, because her husband would return again; and therefore only during this state of captivity she was like one; but Broughton takes the “caph” not to be a note of similitude, but of reality; and renders it, “she is become a very widow”. Vespasian, when he had conquered Judea, struck a medal, on one side of which was a woman sitting under a palm tree in a plaintive and pensive posture, with this inscription, “Judea Capta”, as Grotius observes:

*she [that was] great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, [how] is she become tributary!* that ruled over many nations, having subdued them, and to whom they paid tribute, as the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites, in the times of David and Solomon; but since obliged to pay tribute herself, first to Pharaohnecho, king of Egypt; then to the king of Babylon in the times of Jehoiakim; and last of all in the times of Zedekiah; so the Targum,

“she that was great among the people, and ruled over the provinces that paid tribute to her, returns to be depressed; and after this to give tribute to them.”

**Ver. 2.** *She weepeth sore in the night*, etc.] Or, “weeping weeps”<sup>f9</sup>; two weepings, one for the first, the other for the second temples<sup>f10</sup>; and while others are taking their sleep and rest; a season fit for mourners, when they can give their grief the greater vent, without any interruption from others; and it being now a night of affliction with her, which occasioned this sore weeping. Jarchi observes, that it was in the night that the temple was burnt:

*and her tears [are] on her cheeks*; continue there, being always flowing, and never wholly dried up; which shows how great her grief was, and that her weeping was without intermission; or otherwise tears do not lie long, but are soon dried up, or wiped off:

*among all her lovers she hath none to comfort [her]*; as the Assyrians formerly were, (<sup>2326</sup>Ezekiel 23:5,9,12); and more lately the Egyptians her allies and confederates, in whom she trusted; but these gave her no assistance; nor yielded her any relief in her distress; nor so much as spoke one word of comfort to her:

*all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies*; those who pretended great friendship to her, and were in strict alliance with her, acted the treacherous part, and withdrew from her, leaving her to the common enemy; and not only so, but behaved towards her in a hostile manner themselves; for “the children of Noph and Tahapanes”, places in Egypt confederate with the Jews, are said to “have broken the crown of their head”, (<sup>2426</sup>Jeremiah 2:16). The Targum interprets the “lovers” of the “idols” she loved to follow, who now could be of no use unto her by way of comfort.

**Ver. 3.** *Judah is gone into captivity*, etc.] Not only Jerusalem the metropolis of Judea was destroyed, but the whole country was ravaged, and the inhabitants of it carried captive into Babylon:

*because of affliction, and because of great servitude*; because of their sins in oppressing and afflicting their poor brethren, and retaining them in a state of bondage after their seven years’ servitude, contrary to the law of God; for which they were threatened with captivity, (<sup>2843</sup>Jeremiah 34:13-22); so the Targum,

“the house of Judah went into captivity, because they afflicted the fatherless and the widows; and because of the multitude of service which they caused their brethren the children of Israel to serve, who were sold unto them; and they did not proclaim liberty to their servants and maidens, who were of the seed of Israel:”

or, “through affliction, and through great servitude”<sup>f11</sup>; that is, through the affliction and servitude they suffered by the Chaldeans, into whose hands they fell; though some understand it of the Jews, who, to escape the affliction and servitude of the Chaldeans, went into a kind of voluntary captivity, fleeing to the countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; (see <sup><4011></sup>Jeremiah 40:11,12);

*she dwelleth among the Heathen; the uncircumcised and the unclean*; and so was deprived of both her civil and religious liberties; having no opportunity of worshipping God, and enjoying him in his courts, as formerly; and which must be very uncomfortable living, especially to those who were truly gracious:

*she findeth no rest*. The Targum adds,

“because of the hard service to which they subjected her;”

she found no natural rest, being carried from place to place; nor civil rest, being kept in hard bondage; nor spiritual rest, being deprived of the worship and ordinances of God; and being conscious of her sins, which had brought all this misery on her:

*all her persecutors overtook her between the straits*; having hunted her as men hunt wild beasts, and get them into some strait and difficult place, and then seize on them. The Targum interprets it, between the borders; or between the hedges, as Ben Melech; and so Jarchi, of the borders of a field and vineyard; and of a ditch on the one side and the other, that there is no room to escape; and who makes mention of a Midrash, that explains it not of place, but time, between the seventeenth day of Tammuz, and the ninth of Ab; (see <sup><4517></sup>Jeremiah 52:7,8).

**Ver. 4.** *The ways of Zion do mourn*, etc.] Being unoccupied, as in (<sup><1016></sup>Judges 5:6); or unfrequented: this is said by a rhetorical figure; as ways may be said to rejoice, or look pleasant and cheerful, when there are many passengers in them, going to and fro; so they may be said to mourn, or to look dull and melancholy, when no person is met with, or seen in them;

thus Jerusalem and the temple being destroyed, the ways which led from the one to the other, and in which used to be seen great numbers going up to the worship of God, which was pleasant to behold, (~~1901~~ Psalm 42:4); now not one walking in them, and all overgrown with grass; and those roads which led from the several parts of the land to Jerusalem, whither the ten tribes went up to worship three times in the year, and used to travel in companies, which made it delightful and comfortable, and pleasant to look at, now none to be seen upon them; which was matter of grief to those that wished well to Zion; as it is to all truly godly persons to observe that the ways and worship of God are not frequented; that there are few inquiring the way to Zion above, or travelling in the road to heaven; as also when there are few that worship God in Zion below, or ask the way unto it, or walk in the ordinances of it:

*because none come to the solemn feasts.* Aben Ezra understands this of the sanctuary itself; which sense Abendana mentions; expressed by the word here used; and so called, because all Israel were convened here; but the Targum and Jarchi more rightly interpret it of the feasts, the three solemn feasts of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, at which all the males in Israel were obliged to appear; but now, the temple and city being in ruins, none came to them, which was a very distressing case; as it is to good men, when upon whatever occasion, either through persecution, or through sloth and negligence, the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances, particularly the Lord's supper, the solemn feasts under the Gospel dispensation, are not attended to:

*all her gates are desolate;* the gates of the temple; none passing through them into it to worship God, pray unto him, praise him, or offer sacrifice; or the gates of the city, none going to and fro in them; nor the elders sitting there in council, as in courts of judicature, to try causes, and do justice and judgment:

*her priests sigh;* the temple burnt; altars destroyed, and no sacrifices brought to be offered; and so no employment for them, and consequently no bread; but utterly deprived of their livelihood, and had good reason to sigh. The Targum adds,

“because the offerings ceased:”

*her virgins are afflicted*; or, “are sorrowful”<sup>f12</sup>; are in grief and mourning, that used to be brisk and gay, and to play with timbrels at their festivals; so the Targum paraphrases it,

“the virgins mourn because they cease to go out on the fifteenth of Ab, and on the day of atonement, which was the tenth of Tisri, to dance in the dances:”

*and she [is] in bitterness*; that is, Zion; or the congregation of Israel is in bitterness of spirit, in great affliction and distress; her name might be rightly called Marah; (see <sup>(R012)</sup>Ruth 1:20).

**Ver. 5.** *Her adversaries are the chief*, etc.] Or, “for the head”<sup>f13</sup>; or are the head, as was threatened, (<sup>(R034)</sup>Deuteronomy 28:44); and now fulfilled; the Chaldeans having got the dominion over the Jews, and obliged them to be subject to them:

*her enemies prosper*; in wealth and riches, in grandeur and glory; live in ease and tranquillity, enjoying all outward felicity and happiness; while Zion was in distress; which was an aggravation of it; and yet this was but righteous judgment:

*for the Lord hath afflicted her*; who is righteous in all his ways: the Chaldeans were but instruments; the evil was from the Lord, according to his will and righteous determination, as appears by what follows:

*for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy*; that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea were carried captive by the enemy, and drove before them as a flock of sheep, and that for the sins of the nation; and these not a few, but were very numerous, as Mordecai and Ezekiel, and others, who were carried captive young with Jeconiah, as well as many now.

**Ver. 6.** *And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed*, etc.] The kingdom removed; the priesthood ceased; the temple, their beautiful house, burnt; the palaces of their king and nobles demolished; and everything in church and state that was glorious were now no more:

*her princes are become like harts [that] find no pasture*; that are heartless and without courage, fearful and timorous, as harts are, especially when destitute of food. The Targum is



“her princes run about for food, as harts run about in the wilderness, and find no place fit for pasture:”

*and they are gone without strength before the pursuer*; having no spirit nor courage to oppose the enemy, nor strength to flee from him, they fell into his hands, and so were carried captive; (see <sup>2618</sup>Jeremiah 52:8-10). Jarchi observes, that the word for “pursuer” has here all its letters, and nowhere else; and so denotes the full pursuit of the enemy, and the complete victory obtained by him.

**Ver. 7.** *Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries*, etc.] When carried captive, and in exile in a foreign land; when surrounded with distresses and calamities of various kinds; which are a means sometimes of rubbing up and refreshing the memories of persons with those good things they take little notice of in the times of prosperity; the worth of such things being best known and prized by the want of them: even

*all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old*; her civil and religious liberties; the word, worship, and ordinances of God; the temple, altars, and courts of the Lord; the ark of the testimony, the symbol of the divine Presence; and the revelation of the will of God by the prophets; their peace, prosperity, and enjoyment of all good things: these were remembered

*when her people fell into the hand of the enemy*; the Chaldeans. The Targum is,

“into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the wicked, and he oppressed them:”

*and none did help her*; not the Egyptians, her allies and confederates, in whom she trusted:

*her adversaries saw her, [and] did mock at her sabbaths*; as the Heathens used to do; calling the Jews Sabbatarians <sup>f14</sup>; by way of derision; representing them as an idle lazy people, who observed a seventh day merely out of sloth, and so lost a seventh part of time <sup>f15</sup>; or they mocked at them for keeping them in vain; since, notwithstanding their religious observance of them, they were suffered to be carried captive out of their land; or, as Jarchi thinks, the Chaldeans mocked at them for keeping their sabbaths strictly, now they were in other lands, when they neglected them

in their own country; or they jeered them with their weekly and yearly sabbaths; suggesting to them that now they had leisure enough to observe them; and that their land ceased from tillage with a witness now: some think, that because of the observance of a sabbath, they were obliged to by their law, therefore the Heathens made them work the harder, and imposed greater tasks upon them on that day than on others, like the Egyptians of old; though the words may be rendered, “they mocked at her cessations”<sup>f16</sup>; from joy and pleasure, peace and comfort, and the enjoyment of all good things; so the Targum,

“the enemies saw her when she went into captivity; and they mocked at the good things which ceased out of the midst of her.”

**Ver. 8.** *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned*, etc.] Or, “hath sinned a sin”<sup>f17</sup>; a great sin, as the Targum; the sin of idolatry, according to some; or of covenant breaking, as others; though perhaps no particular sin is meant, but many grievous sins; since she was guilty of a multitude of them, as in (~~2016~~ Lamentations 1:5);

*therefore she is removed*; out of her own land, and carried captive into another: or, is “for commotion”<sup>f18</sup>; for scorn and derision; the head being moved and shook at her by way of contempt: or rather, “for separation”<sup>f19</sup>; she being like a menstruous woman, defiled and separate from society:

*all that honoured her despise her*; they that courted her friendship and alliance in the time of her prosperity, as the Egyptians, now neglected her, and treated her with the utmost contempt, being in adversity:

*because they have seen her nakedness*; being stripped of all her good things she before enjoyed; and both her weakness and her wickedness being exposed to public view. The allusion is either to harlots, or rather to modest women, when taken captive, whose nakedness is uncovered by the brutish and inhuman soldiers:

*yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward*; being covered with shame, because of the ill usage of her, as modest women will, being so used.

**Ver. 9.** *Her filthiness [is] in her skirts*, etc.] Her sin is manifest to all, being to be seen in her punishment. The allusion is to a menstruous woman, to whom she is compared, both before and after; whose blood flows down to the skirts of her garments, and there seen; by which it is known that she is in her separation. So the Targum,

“the filthiness of the blood of her separation is in her skirts; she is not cleansed from it, nor does she repent of her sins:”

*she remembereth not her last end*; she did not consider in the time of her prosperity what her sins would bring her to; what would be the issue of them; nay, though she was warned by the prophet, and was told what things would come to at last, yet she laid it not to heart; nor did she lay it up in her mind, or reflect upon it; but went on in her sinful courses:

*therefore she came down wonderfully*; or, “with wonders” <sup>f20</sup>; from a very exalted estate to a very low one; from the height of honour and prosperity to the depth of distress and misery; to the astonishment and wonder of all about her, that so flourishing a city and kingdom should be brought to ruin at once, in so strange a manner; (see <sup><2007></sup>Daniel 8:24);

*she had no comforter*; as none to help her against her enemies, (<sup><2007></sup>Lamentations 1:7); and to prevent her ruin; so none to pity her, and have compassion upon her, and speak a comfortable word to her now she was in it:

*O Lord, behold my affliction*: not with his eye of omniscience only, which he did, and, of which she had no doubt; but with an eye of pity and compassion: thus Zion is at once and suddenly introduced, breaking out in this pathetic manner, being in great affliction and distress, having none else to apply to; and the enemy bearing hard upon her, and behaving in a very insolent and audacious manner, transgressing all bounds of humanity and decency; and therefore hoped the Lord would have compassion on her, though she had sinned against him:

*for the enemy hath magnified [himself]*; behaved haughtily both against God and his people; attributing great things to himself; magnifying his own power and wisdom.

**Ver. 10.** *The enemy hath spread out his hands on all her pleasant things*, etc.] Meaning not the wealth and riches, the goods and substance, or the rich furniture in their own houses; but the precious things in the house of God, the ark, the table, the altar, the priests garments, and vessels of the sanctuary, and the gifts of the temple, and everything valuable in it; these the enemy stretched out his hands and seized upon, and claimed them as his own; took them as a booty, prey, and plunder. Jarchi <sup>f21</sup> interprets the enemy of the Moabites and Ammonites, who seized upon the books of the law, in which are things more desirable than gold and silver, and burnt

them; because there was a law in them that forbid them entering into the congregation of Israel; but the Targum better explains it of Nebuchadnezzar the wicked; for he and the Chaldean army are doubtless meant; who plundered and ransacked the temple of all its pleasant, precious, and valuable things:

*for she hath seen [that] the Heathen entered into her sanctuary*; not into the land of Israel only, the holy land; but into the temple, the sanctuary of the Lord; but called hers, because it was built for her use, that the congregation of Israel might worship the Lord in it; into this with her own eyes, though forced to it, and sore against her will, and to her great grief and trouble, she saw the Chaldeans enter, and ravage and spoil it:

*whom thou didst command [that] they should not enter into thy congregation*; these Jarchi interprets of the Moabites and Ammonites again; and so does the Targum here; paraphrasing them thus,

“whom thou didst command by the hand of Moses the prophet, concerning Ammon and Moab, that they were not worthy to enter into thy congregation;”

and concerning whom there is an express law forbidding it, (<sup>(~~2301~~)</sup>Deuteronomy 23:1-3); and it may be there were Moabites and Ammonites in the Chaldean army, assisting in the taking of Jerusalem; and who entered into the temple when it was taken.

**Ver. 11.** *All her people sigh*, etc.] Not her priests only, (<sup>(~~25004~~)</sup>Lamentations 1:4); but all the common people, because of their affliction, particularly for want of bread. So the Targum,

“all the people of Jerusalem sigh because of the famine;”

for it follows:

*they seek bread*; to eat, as the Targum; inquire where it is to be had, but in vain:

*they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul*: or, “to cause the soul to return”<sup>f22</sup>; to fetch it back when fainting and swooning away through famine; and therefore would give anything for food; part with their rich clothes, jewels, and precious stones; with whatsoever they had that was valuable in their cabinets or coffer, that they might have meat

to keep from fainting and dying; to refresh and recruit their spirits spent with hunger:

*see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile*; mean, base, and contemptible, in the eyes of men, through penury and want of food; through poverty, affliction, and distress; and therefore desires the Lord would consider her case, and look with pity and compassion on her.

**Ver. 12.** [*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?* etc.] O ye strangers and travellers that pass by, and see my distress, does it not at all concern you? does it not in the least affect you? can you look upon it, and have no commiseration? or is there nothing to be learned from hence by you, that may be instructive and useful to you? Some consider the words as deprecating; may the like things never befall you that have befallen me, O ye passengers; be ye who ye will; I can never wish the greatest stranger, much less a friend, to suffer what I do; nay, I pray God they never may: others, as adjuring. So the Targum,

“I adjure you, all ye that pass by the way, turn aside hither:”

or as calling; so the words may be rendered, “O all ye that pass by”<sup>f23</sup>; and Sanctius thinks it is an allusion to epitaphs on tombs, which call upon travellers to stop and read the character of the deceased; what were his troubles, and how he came to his end; and so what follows is Jerusalem’s epitaph:

*behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me*; as it is natural for everyone to think their own affliction greatest, and that none have that occasion of grief and sorrow as they have; though there is no affliction befalls us but what is common unto men; and when it comes to be compared with others, perhaps will appear lighter than theirs:

*wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger*; signifying, that her affliction was not a common one; it was not from the hand of man only, but from the hand of God; and not in the ordinary way of his providence; but as the effect of his wrath and fury, in all the fierceness of it.

**Ver. 13.** *From above hath he sent fire into my bones*, etc.] Which the Targum interprets of her fortified cities, towns, or castles; as Jerusalem, more especially the temple, and the palaces of the king and nobles in it; which, though burnt by the fire of the Chaldeans, yet, this being according

to the determination and by the direction of the Lord, is said to be sent from above, from heaven; so that they seemed to be as it were struck with lightning from heaven; unless it should be thought rather to be understood of the fire of divine wrath, of which the people of the Jews had a quick sense, and was like a burning fever in them:

*and it prevails against them*; or “it” <sup>f24</sup>; that is, the fire prevails against or rules over everyone of the bones, to the consumption of them: or rather, “he rules over it” <sup>f25</sup>; that is, God rules over the fire; directs it, and disposes of it, according to his sovereign will and pleasure, to the destruction of the strength of the Jewish nation:

*he hath spread a net for my feet*; in which she was entangled, so that she could not flee from the fire, and escape it, if she would. The allusion is to the taking of birds and wild beasts in nets; if God had not spread a net for the Jews, the Chaldeans could never have taken them; (see <sup><3123></sup>Ezekiel 12:13 <sup><3072></sup>Hosea 7:12);

*he hath turned me back*; her feet being taken in the net, she could not go forward, but was obliged to turn back, or continue in the net, not being able to extricate her feet: or, “turned me upon my back”; as the Arabic version; laid me prostrate, and so an easy prey to the enemy; or, as the Targum,

“he hath caused me to turn the back to mine enemies:”

*he hath made me desolate [and] faint all the day*; the cities being without inhabitants; the land uncultivated; the state in a sickly and languishing condition; and which continued so to the end of the seventy years’ captivity.

**Ver. 14.** *The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand*, etc.] That is, the punishment of her sins was laid upon her by the Lord himself; his hand was in it; it came from him; the Chaldeans were only instruments; and a heavy yoke this was. So the Targum renders it,

“the yoke of my rebellions is made heavy by his hand:”

*they are wreathed, [and] come upon my neck*; or, “twisted together” <sup>f26</sup>; as lines to make a cord; or as several cords to make a rope; or as branches of trees or withes are implicated and entwined; and so the Targum,

“they are twisted together as the branches of a vine.”

It denotes the complication of judgments upon the Jewish nation for their sins, with which they were holden as with cords; and which were like ropes about their necks, very heavy and distressing to them, and from which they could not deliver themselves. Mr. Broughton thinks the apostle has reference to this passage; and explains it by the sin that easily besets, or cunningly wraps about, (<sup>800</sup> Hebrews 12:1);

*he hath made my strength to fall*; by the weight of punishment laid upon her, which she could not stand up under, but sunk and fell: this may be understood of her strong and mighty men; her men of valour and courage, who yet stumbled and fell:

*the Lord hath delivered me into [their] hands, [from whom] I am not able to rise up*; meaning the Chaldeans; nor were the Jews at last delivered from them by their own strength, but by the means of Cyrus the Persian conquering Babylon.

**Ver. 15.** *The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty [men] in the midst of me*, etc.] As a causeway is trodden; or as mire is trodden under foot in the streets; so were the mighty and valiant men, the soldiers and men of war, trodden under foot and destroyed by the Chaldeans in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the midst of Judea; the Lord so permitting it:

*he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men*; the army of the Chaldeans, which were brought against Jerusalem by a divine appointment and call; against whom the choicest and stoutest of them, even their young men, could not stand; but were crushed and broken to pieces by them. The word for “assembly” sometimes signifies an appointed time; a time fixed for solemn festivals, and for calling the people to them; and so the Targum here,

“he hath called or appointed a time to break the strength of my young men;”

the time of Jerusalem’s destruction by the Babylonians:

*the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, [as] in a winepress*; in the winepress of his wrath; or however in the winepress of the Babylonians, who are compared to one; into whose hands the Jews falling, were like grapes cast into a winepress, and there trodden by men, in order to squeeze and get out the wine; and in like manner were their blood squeezed out of them and shed. The Targum interprets it of the blood of

virginity being poured out, as wine in a press; the virgins of Judah being ravished and defiled by the enemy.

**Ver. 16.** *For these [things] I weep*, etc.] The congregation of Judah, the godly among them, particularly Jeremiah, who represented them, wept for the sins the people had been guilty of, and for the punishment inflicted on them, or the sore calamities that were brought upon them. The Targum goes into particulars, and paraphrases it thus,

“for the little ones that are dashed in pieces, and for the women big with child, whose bellies are ripped up, the congregation of Israel saith, I weep:”

*mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water*: which doubling of the words seems to express the vehemency of her passion; the greatness of the grief she was overwhelmed with. The Targum is,

“my both eyes flow with tears as a fountain of water:”

*because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me*; meaning God himself, who is the principal comforter of his people: saints may be comforters of one another, by relating to each other their gracious experiences; praying with one another, and building up each other in their most holy faith; by behaving in a kind, tender, and loving manner to each other; forgiving mutual offences; and conversing together about the glories of heaven, and being for ever with the Lord; but these sometimes are at a distance; or, like Job’s friends, are miserable comforters. Ministers of the Gospel are by their character and office “Barnabases”, “sons of consolation”; are trained up, appointed, and sent by the Lord to comfort his people; which they do by preaching the Gospel to them purely; by opening the Scriptures of truth clearly; by administering ordinances faithfully, and in all directing to Christ: but these sometimes are removed afar off by persecution or death; or those who bear this name do not perform their work aright. God is the chief comforter of his people; God, Father, Son, and Spirit: the Father comforts with his gracious presence; with views of covenant interest, and of the firmness and stability of it; with the precious promises of the word; with his everlasting and unchangeable love; and with discoveries of his pardoning grace and mercy. The Son is a comforter; one of the names of the Messiah with the Jews<sup>f27</sup> is “Menachem”, “the Comforter”; and who they say is here meant; and he is called the Consolation of Israel, (<sup><4125></sup>Luke 2:25); who comforts by bringing



near his righteousness and salvation; by his peace speaking blood, and atoning sacrifice; by directing to his fulness, and favouring with his presence. And the Holy Spirit is another comforter; who comforts by taking of the things of God, Christ, and the Gospel, and showing them to the saints; by opening and applying the promises to his people; by being the spirit of adoption, and the seal, earnest, and pledge of eternal glory: and thus, by being a comforter, the Lord “relieves the souls” of his people, under the weight of sin, the temptations of Satan, and the various afflictions of life; and prevents their fainting, and returns their souls, as the word <sup>f28</sup> signifies; or fetches them back, when fainting and swooning away: but sometimes he withdraws himself, and stands at a distance, at least in their apprehensions; and this is matter of great grief and sorrow to them; which was the case of the church at this time:

*my children are desolate*: those which should help and relieve her, and be a comfort to her, were destitute themselves: or, were “destroyed” <sup>f29</sup>, and were not; and which was the cause of her disconsolate state, as was Rachel’s, (~~2815~~ Jeremiah 31:15);

*because the enemy prevailed*; that is, over them, as the Targum adds; over her children; and either put them to death or carried them captive.

**Ver. 17.** *Zion spreadeth forth her hands*, etc.] Either as submitting to the conqueror, and imploring mercy; or rather as calling to her friends to help and relieve her. The Targum is,

“Zion spreadeth out her hands through distress, as a woman spreads out her hands upon the seat to bring forth;”

(see ~~2061~~ Jeremiah 4:31). Some render the words, “Zion breaks with her hands” <sup>f30</sup>; that is, breaks bread; and Joseph Kimchi observes, that it was the custom of comforters to break bread to the mourner; but here she herself breaks it with her hands, because there was none to comfort her:

*[and there is] none to comfort her*; to speak a word of comfort to her, or to help her out of her trouble; her children gone into captivity; her friends and lovers at a distance; and God himself departed from her; (see Gill on ~~2016~~ Lamentations 1:16”);

*the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, [that] his adversaries [should be] round about him*; that he should be surrounded by them, and carried captive, and should be in the midst of them in captivity: this was the

decree and determination of God; and, agreeably to it, he ordered it in his providence that the Chaldeans should come against him, encompass him, and overcome him; and that because he had slighted and broken the commandments of the Lord; and therefore was justly dealt with, as is acknowledged in (<sup>2018</sup>Lamentations 1:18). So the Targum,

“the Lord gave to the house of Jacob commandments, and a law to keep, but they transgressed the decree of his word; therefore his enemies encompassed the house of Jacob round about:”

*Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them*; reckoned filthy and unclean, abominable and nauseous; whom none cared to come near, but shunned, despised, and abhorred; as the Jews separated from the Gentiles, and would not converse with them; so neither now would the Chaldeans with the Jews; but treat them as the offscouring of all things.

**Ver. 18.** *The Lord is righteous*, etc.] Or, “righteous [is] he the Lord”<sup>f31</sup>; in all these dispensations of his providence, how afflictive and severe soever they may seem to be; however the enemies of the church and people of God might transgress just bounds, and act the cruel and unrighteous part; yet good men will always own that God is righteous in all his ways, and that there is no unrighteousness in him; though they sometimes know not how to reconcile his providences to his promises, and especially to his declared love and affection to them; (see <sup>2412</sup>Jeremiah 12:1); the reason, clearing God of all injustice, follows:

*for I have rebelled against his commandment*; or, “his mouth”<sup>f32</sup>: the word of his mouth, which he delivered by word of mouth at Mount Sinai, or by his prophets since; and therefore was righteously dealt with, and justly chastised. The Targum makes these to be the words of Josiah before his death, owning he had done wrong in going out against Pharaohnecho, contrary to the word of the Lord; and the next clause to be the lamentation of Jeremiah upon his death: though they are manifestly the words of Jerusalem or Zion, whom the prophet personates, saying,

*hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow*; directing herself to all compassionate persons, to hearken and attend to her mournful complaint, and to consider her sorrow, the nature and cause of it, and look upon her with an eye of pity in her sorrowful circumstances:

*my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity*; in Babylon; being taken and carried thither by the Chaldeans; had it been only her ancient

men and women, persons worn out with age, that could have been of little use, and at most but of a short continuance, the affliction had not been so great; but her virgins and young men, the flower of the nation, and by whom it might have been supported and increased; for these to be carried away into a strange land must be matter of grief and sorrow.

**Ver. 19.** *I called for my lovers, [but] they deceived me*, etc.] Either her idols, with whom she had committed spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry; but these could not answer her expectations, and help her: or the Egyptians, that courted her friendship, and with whom she was in alliance, and in whom she trusted; and these, in the times of her distress, she called upon to make good their engagements, but they disappointed her, and stood not to their covenant and promises, but left her to stand and fall by herself; this Jerusalem said, according to the Targum, when she was delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar; but these words, “they deceived me”, it makes to be the Romans, that came with Titus and Vespasian, and built bulwarks against Jerusalem:

*my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city*; or died in the city of Jerusalem; not by the sword of the enemy, but through famine; and so, in the Arabic language, the word <Arabic><sup>f33</sup> signifies to labour under famine, and want of food, and perish through it; and if this was the case of their priests that officiated in holy things, and of their elders or civil magistrates, what must be the case of the common people?

*while they sought their meat to relieve their souls*; or “fetch<sup>f34</sup> [them] back”; which were just fainting and dying away through hunger; and who did expire while they were begging their bread, or inquiring in one place after another where they could get any, either freely or for money.

**Ver. 20.** *Behold, O Lord, for I [am] in distress*, etc.] Thus she turns from one to another; sometimes she addresses strangers, people that pass by; sometimes she calls to her lovers; and at other times to God, which is best of all, to have pity and compassion on her in her distress; and from whom it may be most expected, who is a God of grace and mercy:

*my bowels are troubled*; as the sea, agitated by winds, which casts up mire and dirt; or as any waters, moved by anything whatsoever, become thick and muddy; or like wine in fermentation; so the word <Arabic><sup>f35</sup>, in the Arabic language, signifies, expressive of great disturbance, confusion, and uneasiness:

*mine heart is turned within me*; has no rest nor peace:

*for I have grievously rebelled*; against God and his word; her sins were greatly aggravated, and these lay heavy on her mind and conscience, and greatly distressed her:

*abroad the sword bereaveth*; this, and what follows in the next clause, describe the state and condition of the Jews, while the city was besieged; without it, the sword of the Chaldeans bereaved mothers of their children, and children of their parents, and left them desolate:

*at home [there is] as death*; within the city, and in the houses of it, the famine raged, which was as death, and worse than immediate death; it was a lingering one: or, “in the house [was] certain death”<sup>f36</sup>; for the “caph” here is not a mere note of similitude, but of certainty and reality; to abide at home was sure and certain death, nothing else could be expected. The Targum is

“within the famine kills like the destroying angel that is appointed over death;”

(see <sup><324></sup>Hebrews 2:14); and Jarchi interprets it of the fear of demons and noxious spirits, and the angels of death.

**Ver. 21.** *They have heard that I sigh: [there is] none to comfort me*, etc.] That is, the nations, as the Targum; the neighbouring ones, those that were her confederates and allies; the same with her lovers, as before, as Aben Ezra observes; these being near her, knew full well her sorrowful and distressed condition, being as it were within the hearing of her sighs and groans; and yet none of them offered to help her, or so much as to speak a comfortable word to her:

*all mine enemies have heard of my trouble*; not only her friends, but foes; meaning the Tyrians, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, and as the following description of them shows; for it must design others from the Chaldeans, that were the immediate cause of it:

*they are glad that thou hast done [it]*; brought all this ruin and destruction on Jerusalem, which could never have been done, if the Lord had not willed it; and at this the above mentioned nations rejoiced; (see <sup><328></sup>Ezekiel 25:3 Obadiah 1:12); there being a considerable stop on the word glad, it may be rendered, as by some, “they are glad; but thou hast done it”<sup>f37</sup>; not

they, but thou; and therefore must be patiently bore, and quietly submitted to, it being the Lord's doing:

*thou wilt bring the day [that] thou hast called*; the time of, he destruction of, he Chaldeans, who had the chief hand in the ruin of the Jewish nation, and of those that rejoiced at it; which time was fixed by the Lord, and proclaimed and published by his prophets, and would certainly and exactly come, as and when it was pointed out: some <sup>f38</sup> take it to be a wish or prayer, that God would bring it, as he had declared; though others interpret it in a quite different sense, "thou hast brought the day" <sup>f39</sup>; meaning on herself, the determined destruction; so the Targum,

"thou hast brought upon me the day of vengeance; thou hast called a time upon me to my desolation:"

*and they shall be like unto me*; in the same distressed, desolate, and sorrowful condition, being brought to ruin and destruction; which afterwards was the case of the Chaldeans, and all the other nations.

**Ver. 22.** *Let all their wickedness come before thee*, etc.] The Targum adds,

"in the day of the great judgment;"

but it seems to refer to present time, at least to the time fixed by the Lord for their ruin; and which the church imprecates, not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God; desiring that the wickedness of her enemies might be remembered by the Lord, so as to punish them in righteous judgment for the same:

*and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions*; she owns that what was done to her was for her sins, and therefore could not charge God with injustice; only she desires the same might be done to her enemies, who were equally guilty: some render it, "glean them" <sup>f40</sup>; or rather, "gather them as a vintage"; or as grapes are gathered: "as thou hast gathered me"; as thou hast took me, and cast me into the winepress of thy wrath, and there hast trodden and squeezed me; (see <sup>2015</sup> Lamentations 1:15); so do unto them:

*for my sighs [are] many, and my heart [is] faint*; her sighs were many because of her afflictions, and her heart faint because of her sighing.