

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS 2

This chapter contains another alphabet, in which the Prophet Jeremiah, or those he represents, lament the sad condition of Jerusalem; the destruction of the city and temple, and of all persons and things relative to them, and to its civil or church state; and that as being from the hand of the Lord himself, who is represented all along as the author thereof, because of their sins, (~~211~~Lamentations 2:1-9); and then the elders and virgins of Zion are represented as in great distress, and weeping for those desolations; which were very much owing to the false prophets, that had deceived them, (~~210~~Lamentations 2:10-14); and all this occasioned great rejoicing in the enemies of Zion, (~~215~~Lamentations 2:15-17); but sorrow of heart to Zion herself, who is called to weeping, (~~218~~Lamentations 2:18,19); and the chapter is concluded with an address to the Lord, to take this her sorrowful case into consideration, and show pity and compassion, (~~220~~Lamentations 2:20-22).

Ver. 1. *How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger*, etc.] Not their persons for protection, as he did the Israelites at the Red sea, and in the wilderness; nor their sins, which he blots out as a thick cloud; or with such an one as he filled the tabernacle and temple with when dedicated; for this was “in his anger”, in the day of his anger, against Jerusalem; but with the thick and black clouds of calamity and distress; he “beclouded”^{f41} her, as it may be rendered, and is by Broughton; he drew a veil, or caused a cloud to come over all her brightness and glory, and surrounded her with darkness, that her light and splendour might not be seen. Aben Ezra interprets it, “he lifted her up to the clouds”: that is, in order to cast her down with the greater force, as follows:

[and] cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel; all its glory, both in church and state; this was brought down from the highest pitch of its excellency and dignity, to the lowest degree of infamy and reproach; particularly this was true of the temple, and service of God in it, which was the beauty and glory of the nation, but now utterly demolished:

and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger; to spare and preserve that; meaning either the house of the sanctuary, the temple itself, as the Targum and Jarchi; or rather the ark with the mercy seat, on which the Shechinah or divine Majesty set his feet, when sitting between the cherubim; and is so called, (~~138D~~ 1 Chronicles 28:2 ~~199B~~ Psalm 99:5).

Ver. 2. *The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied*, etc.] As he regarded not his own habitation the temple, nor the ark his footstool, it is no wonder he should be unconcerned about the habitations of others; as of the inhabitants of the land of Judea and of Jerusalem, particularly of the king, his nobles, and the great men; these the Lord swallowed up, or suffered to be swallowed up, as houses in an earthquake, and by an inundation, so as to be seen no more; and this he did without showing the least reluctance, pity, and compassion; being so highly incensed and provoked by their sins and transgressions:

he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; not only the dwelling houses of the people, but the most fortified places, their castles, towers, and citadels:

he hath brought [them] down to the ground; and not only battered and shook them, but beat them down, and laid them level with the ground; and all this done in the fury of his wrath, being irritated to it by the sins of his people; even the daughter of Judah, or the congregation thereof, as the Targum:

he hath polluted the kingdom, and the princes thereof; what was reckoned sacred, the kingdom of the house of David, and the kings and princes of it, the Lord's anointed; these being defiled with sin, God cast them away, as filth to the dunghill, and gave them up into the hands of the Gentiles, who were reckoned unclean; and thus they were profaned. Jarchi interprets these princes of the Israelites in common, who were called a kingdom of priests; and makes mention of a Midrash, that explains them of the princes above, or of heaven.

Ver. 3. *He hath cut off in [his] fierce anger all the horn of Israel*, etc.] All its power and strength, especially its kingly power, which is often signified by a horn in Scripture; (see ~~207A~~ Daniel 7:24); this the Lord took away in his fierce anger, and left the land destitute of all relief, help, defence and protection; whether from its king and princes, or from its men of war or fortified places; all being cut off and destroyed:

he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy; either his own right hand, with which he had used to fight for his people, and protect them, but now withdrawing it, left them to the mercy of their enemies; or Israel's right hand, which he so weakened, that they had no power to resist the enemy, and defend themselves:

and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire [which] devoureth round about; that is, his wrath was like a burning flaming fire, which consumes all around, wherever it comes; thus the Lord in his anger consumed Jacob, and left neither root nor branch.

Ver. 4. *He hath bent his bow like an enemy*, etc.] God sometimes appears as if he was an enemy to his people, when he is not, by his conduct and behaviour; by the dispensations of his providence they take him to be so, as Job did, (~~Job~~ Job 16:9,10,13,14); he bends his bow, or treads it, for the bending or stretching the bow was done by the foot; and as the Targum,

“and threw his arrows at me:”

he stood with his right hand as an adversary; with arrows in it, to put into his bow or with his sword drawn, as an adversary does. The Targum is,

“he stood at the right hand of Nebuchadnezzar and helped him, when he distressed his people Israel:”

and slew all [that were] pleasant to the eye; princes and priests, husbands and wives, parents and children, young men and maids; desirable to their friends and relations, and to the commonwealth:

in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion he poured out his fury like fire; that is, either in the temple, or in the city of Jerusalem, or both, which were burnt with fire, as the effect of divine wrath and fury; and which itself is comparable to fire; like a burning lamp of fire, as the Targum; or rather like a burning furnace or mountain; (see Na 1:6).

Ver. 5. *The Lord was as an enemy*, etc.] Who formerly was on their side, their God and guardian, their protector and deliverer, but now against them; and a terrible thing it is to have God for an enemy, or even to be as one; this is repeated, as being exceeding distressing, and even intolerable. Mr. Broughton renders it, “the Lord is become a very enemy”; taking “caph” for a note of reality, and not of similitude;

he hath swallowed up Israel; the ten tribes, or the Jewish nation in general; as a lion, or any other savage beast, swallows its prey, and makes nothing of it, and leaves none behind:

he hath swallowed up all her palaces: the palaces of Zion or Jerusalem; the palaces of the king, princes, nobles, and great men; as an earthquake or inundation swallows up whole streets and cities at once; (see Gill on “~~2000~~Lamentations 2:2”);

he hath destroyed his strong holds: the fortified places of the land of Israel, the towers and castles:

and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation; exceeding great lamentation, for the destruction of its cities, towns, villages, and the inhabitants of them.

Ver. 6. *And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as [if it were] of a garden*, etc.] The house of the sanctuary or temple, as the Targum; which was demolished at once with great force and violence, and as easily done as a tent or tabernacle is taken down; and no more account made of it than of a cottage or lodge in a vineyard or garden, set up while the fruit was, gathering; either to shelter from the heat of the sun in the day, or to lodge in at night; (see ~~2000~~Isaiah 1:8);

he hath destroyed his places in the assembly; the courts where the people used to assemble for worship in the temple; or the synagogues in Jerusalem, and other parts of the land:

the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion; there being neither places to keep them in, nor people to observe them:

and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest; whose persons and offices were sacred, and ought to be treated by men with honour and respect; but, for the sins of both, the Lord despised them himself, and made them the object of his wrath and indignation, and suffered them to be despised and ill used by others, by the Chaldeans; Zedekiah had his children slain before his eyes, and then they were put out, and he was carried in chains to Babylon, and there detained a captive all his days; and Seraiah the chief priest, or, as the Targum here has it, the high priest, was put to death by the king of Babylon; though not only the

persons of the king and priest are meant, but their offices also; the kingdom and priesthood ceased from being exercised for many years.

Ver. 7. *The Lord hath cast off his altar*, etc.] Whether of incense, or of burnt offerings; the sacrifices of which used to be acceptable to him; but now the altar being cast down and demolished, there were no more offerings; nor did he show any desire of them, but the reverse:

he hath abhorred his sanctuary; the temple; by suffering it to be profaned, pulled down, and burnt, it looked as if he had an abhorrence of it, and the service in it; as he had, as it was performed without faith in Christ, love to him, or any view to his glory; (see ^{<23113>}Isaiah 1:13,14);

he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; both the walls of the sanctuary, and the walls of the houses of the kin, and princes; especially thee former are meant, both by what goes before and follows:

they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast; that is the enemy, the Chaldeans, made a noise in the temple, blaspheming God, that had dwelt in it; insulting over the people of God, that had worshipped there; rejoicing in their victories over them; singing their “paeans” to their gods, and other profane songs; indulging themselves in revelling and rioting; making as great a noise with their shouts and songs as the priests, Levites, and people of Israel did, when they sung the songs of Zion on a festival day. The Targum is,

“as the voice of the people of the house of Israel, that prayed in the midst of it in the day of the passover.”

Ver. 8. *The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*, etc.] Either the wall of the city, as Aben Ezra; or the wall that encompassed the temple, and all the outward courts of it, as Dr. Lightfoot ^{f42} thinks; this the Lord had determined to destroy, and according to his purposes did destroy it, or suffer it to be demolished; and so all were laid open for the enemy to enter:

he hath stretched out a line; a line of destruction, to mark out how far the destruction should go, and how much should be laid in ruins; all being as exactly done, according to the purpose and counsel of God, as if it was done by line and rule; (see ^{<23411>}Isaiah 34:11);

he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying; till he made a full end of the city and temple, as he first designed:

therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament: the “chel” and the wall; all that space between the courts of the temple and the wall that surrounded it was called the “chel”; and so the Targum, the circumference or enclosure; and these were laid waste together, and so said to lament: according to others they were two walls, a wall the son of a wall, as Jarchi interprets it; an outward and an inward wall, one higher than another; a low wall over against a high wall; which was as a rampart or bulwark, for the strength and support of it:

they languished together; or fell together, as persons in a fit faint away and fall to the ground.

Ver. 9. *Her gates are sunk into the ground*, etc.] Either the gates of the city or temple, or both; being broke and demolished, and laid level with the ground, and covered with rubbish; for as for the Midrash, or exposition, that Jarchi mentions, that the gates sunk into the earth upon the approach of the enemy, that they might not have power over them, through which the ark passed, is a mere fable of their Rabbins; and equally as absurd is the additional gloss of the Targum,

“her gates sunk into the earth, because they sacrificed a hog, and brought of the blood of it to them:”

he hath destroyed and broken her bars; with which the gates were bolted and barred, that so the enemy might enter; it was God that did it, or suffered it to be done, or it would not have been in the power of the enemy:

her king and her princes [are] among the Gentiles; Zedekiah, and the princes that were not slain by the king of Babylon, were carried captive thither; and there they lived, even among Heathens that knew not God, and despised his worship:

the law [is] no [more]; the book of the law was burnt in the temple, and the tables of it carried away with the ark, or destroyed; and though, no doubt, there were copies of the law preserved, yet it was not read nor expounded; nor was worship performed according to the direction of it; nor could it be in a strange land. Mr. Broughton joins this with the

preceding clause, as descriptive of the Heathens: “her king and her princes [are] among Heathen that have no law”; (see ^{<R12>}Romans 2:12);

her prophets also find no vision from the Lord; there was none but Jeremiah left in the land, and none but Ezekiel and Daniel in the captivity; prophets were very rare at this time, as they were afterwards; for we hear of no more after the captivity, till the coming of the Messiah, but Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; so that there was very little open vision; the word of the Lord was precious or scarce; there was a famine of hearing it, (^{<H11>}1 Samuel 3:1 ^{<A11>}Amos 8:11 ^{<P11>}Psalms 74:9).

Ver. 10. *The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground, [and] keep silence*, etc.] Who used to sit in the gate on thrones of judgment, and passed sentence in causes tried before them; or were wont to give advice and counsel, and were regarded as oracles, now sit on the ground, and dumb, as mourners; (see ^{<R13>}Job 2:13);

they have cast up dust upon their heads; on their white hairs and gray locks, which bespoke wisdom, and made them grave and venerable:

they have girded themselves with sackcloth: after the manner of mourners; who used to be clothed in scarlet and rich apparel, in robes suitable to their office as civil magistrates:

the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground: through shame and sorrow; who used to look brisk and gay, and walk with outstretched necks, and carried their heads high, but now low enough. Aben Ezra interprets it of the hair of their heads, which used to be tied up, but now loosed and dishevelled, and hung down as it were to the ground.

Ver. 11. *Mine eyes do fail with tears*, etc.] According to Aben Ezra, everyone of the elders before mentioned said this; but rather they are the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, who had wept his eyes dry, or rather blind, on account of the calamities of his people; though he himself obtained liberty and enlargement by means thereof:

my bowels are troubled; all his inward parts were distressed:

my liver is poured upon the earth; his gall bladder, which lay at the bottom of his liver, broke, and he cast it up, and poured it on the earth; (see ^{<R13>}Job 16:13); and all this was

for the destruction of the daughter of my people; or, the “breach” of them ^{f43}; their civil and church state being destroyed and broke to shivers; and for the ruin of the several families of them: particularly

because the children and sucklings swoon in the streets of the city; through famine, for want of bread, with those that could eat it; and for want of the milk of their mothers and nurses, who being starved themselves could not give it; and hence the poor infants fainted and swooned away; which was a dismal sight, and heart melting to the prophet.

Ver. 12. *They say to their mothers, where [is] corn and wine?* etc.] Not the sucklings who could not speak, nor were used to corn and wine, but the children more grown; both are before spoken of, but these are meant, even the young men of Israel, as the Targum; and such as had been brought up in the best manner, had been used to wine, and not water, and therefore ask for that as well as corn; both take in all the necessaries of life; and which they ask of their mothers, who had been used to feed them, and were most tender of them; but now not seeing and having their usual provisions, and not knowing what was the reason of it, inquire after them, being pressed with hunger:

when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city; having no food given them, though they asked for it time after time, they fainted away, and died a lingering death; as wounded persons do who are not killed at once, which is the more distressing:

when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom; meaning not the desires of their souls for food, expressed in moving and melting language as they sat in their mothers' laps, and lay in their bosoms; which must be piercing unto them, if no more was designed; but their souls or lives themselves, which they gave up through famine, as the Targum; expiring in their mothers' arms.

Ver. 13. *What thing shall I take to witness for thee?* etc.] What argument can be made use of? what proof or evidence can be given? what witnesses can be called to convince thee, and make it a clear case to time, that ever any people or nation was in such distress and calamity, what with sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, as thou art?

what thing shall I liken thee to, O daughter of Jerusalem? what kingdom or nation ever suffered the like? no example can be given, no instance that comes up to it; not the Egyptians, when the ten plagues were inflicted on

them; not the Canaanites, when conquered and drove out by Joshua; not the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians, when subdued by David; or any other people:

what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for this is one way that friends comfort the afflicted, by telling them that such an one's case was as bad, and worse, than theirs; and therefore bid them be of good heart; bear their affliction patiently; before long it will be over; but nothing of this kind could be said here; no, nor any hope given it would be otherwise; they could not say their case was like others, or that it was not desperate:

for thy breach [is] great like the sea; as large and as wide as that: Zion's troubles were a sea of trouble; her afflictions as numerous and as boisterous as the waves of the sea; and as salt, as disagreeable, and as intolerable, as the waters of it: or her breach was great, like the breach of the sea; when it overflows its banks, or breaks through its bounds, there is no stopping it, but it grows wider and wider:

who can heal thee? it was not in the power of man, in her own power, or of her allies, to recover her out of the hands of the enemy; to restore her civil or church state; her wound was incurable; none but God could be her physician. The Targum is,

“for thy breach is great as the greatness of the breach of the waves of the sea in the time of its tempest; and who is the physician that can heal thee of thy infirmity?”

Ver. 14. *Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee,* etc.] Not the prophets of the Lord; but false prophets, as the Targum; which were of the people's choosing, and were acceptable to them; prophets after their own hearts, because they prophesied smooth things, such as they liked; though in the issue they proved “vain” and “foolish”, idle stories, impertinent talk, the fictions of their own brains; and yet they pretended to have visions of them from the Lord; as that within two years Jeconiah, and all the vessels of the temple carried away by the king of Babylon, should be returned; and that he would not come against Jerusalem, nor should it be delivered into his hands; (see ~~243D~~ Jeremiah 28:2-4);

and they have not discovered thine iniquity: they did not tell them of their sins; they took no pains to convince them of them, but connived at them; instead of reproofing them for them, they soothed them in them; they did

not “remove” the covering that was “over [their] iniquity”^{f44}, as it might be rendered; which they might easily have done, and laid their sirs to open view: whereby they might have been ashamed of them, and brought to repentance for them. The Targum is,

“neither have they manifested the punishment that should come upon thee for thy sins;”

but, on the contrary, told them it should not come upon them; had they dealt faithfully with them, by showing them their transgressions, and the consequences of them, they might have been a means of preventing their ruin: and, as it here follows,

to turn away thy captivity; either to turn them from their backslidings and wanderings about, as Jarchi; or to turn them by repentance, as the Targum; or to prevent their going into captivity:

but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment; that is, false prophecies against Babylon, and in favour of the Jews; prophecies, even those that are true, being often called “burdens”, as the “burden of Egypt”, and “the burden of Damascus”, etc. and the rather this name is here given to those false prophecies because the prophecies of Jeremiah were reproached by them with it, (^{<2033>}Jeremiah 23:33), etc. and because these proved in the issue burdensome, sad, and sorrowful ones though they once tickled and pleased; and were the cause of the people’s going into exile and captivity they listening to them: or they were “depulsions” or “expulsions”^{f45}; drivings, that drove them from the right way; from God and his worship; from his word and prophets; and, at last, the means of driving them out of their own land; of impelling them to sin, and so of expelling them from their own country. The Targum renders it,

“words of error.”

Ver. 15. *All that pass by clap [their] hands at thee*, etc.] Travellers that passed by, and saw Jerusalem in ruins, clapped their hands at it, by way of rejoicing, as well pleased at the sight. This must be understood, not of the inhabitants of the land, but of strangers, who had no good will to it; though they seem to be distinguished from their implacable enemies in (^{<2116>}Lamentations 2:16):

they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem; by way of scorn and derision; hereby expressing their contempt of her, and the pleasure and satisfaction they took in seeing her in this condition:

[saying, is] this the city that [men] call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? a complete city, a most beautiful one for its situation; for its fortifications by nature and art; for its spacious buildings, palaces, and towers; and especially for the magnificent temple in it, and the residence of the God of heaven there, and that pompous worship of him there performed; on account of all which, and the abundant blessings of goodness bestowed upon the inhabitants, they had reason to rejoice more than all the men of the world besides; as well as they contributed many ways to the good and happiness of all nations; this is what had been said by themselves, (^{<98E>}Psalm 48:2 50:2); and had even been owned by others; by the forefathers of those very persons that now insult over it. So the Targum,

“is this the city which our fathers that were of old said? etc.”

nor do they by these words deny, but rather own, that it had been what was said of it; but now the case was otherwise; instead of being a perfect beauty, it was a perfect heap of rubbish; instead of being the joy of the whole earth, it was the offscouring of all things.

Ver. 16. *All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee*, etc.] Or “widened”^{f46} them; stretched them out as far as they could, to reproach, blaspheme, and insult; or, like gaping beasts, to swallow up and devour:

they hiss and gnash their teeth; hiss like serpents, and gnash their teeth in wrath and fury; all expressing their extreme hatred and abhorrence of the Jews, and the delight they took in their ruin and destruction:

they say, we have swallowed [her] up; all her wealth and riches were come into their hands, and were all their own; as well as they thought these were all their own doings, owing to their wisdom and skill, courage and strength; not seeing and knowing the hand of God in all this. These words seem to be the words of the Chaldeans particularly:

certainly this [is] the day that we have looked for; we have found, we have seen [it]: this day of Jerusalem’s destruction, which they had long looked for, and earnestly desired; and now it was come; and they had what they so much wished for; and express it with the utmost pleasure. In this verse the

order of the alphabet is not observed the letter **p**, “pe”, being set before the letter **l**, “ain”, which should be first, according to the constant order of the alphabet; and which was so before the times of Jeremiah, even in David’s time, as appears by the ninety ninth Psalm, and others. Grotius thinks it is after the manner of the Chaldeans; but the order of the Hebrew and Chaldee alphabets is the same Dr Lightfoot thinks ^{f47} the prophet, by this charge, hints at the seventy years that Jerusalem should be desolate, which were now begun; the letter **l**, “ain”, in numbers, denoting seventy. So Mr. Bedford ^{f48}, who observes, that the transposition of these letters seems to show the confusion in which the prophet was, when he considered that this captivity should last seventy years. Jarchi ^{f49} says one is put before the other, because they spoke with their mouths what they saw not with their eyes; “pe” signifying the mouth, and “ain” an eye.

Ver. 17. *The Lord hath done [that] which he had devised*, etc.] It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it, though they ascribed it to themselves; but it was the Lord’s doing, and what he had deliberately thought of, purposed and designed within himself; all whose purposes and devices certainly come to pass:

he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old; not only by the mouth of Jeremiah, years ago, or in the times of Isaiah, long before him; but even in the days of Moses; (see ^{<R37>}Leviticus 26:17), etc. (^{<R38>}Deuteronomy 28:20), etc. So the Targum,

“which he commanded to Moses the prophet from ancient days, that if the children of Israel would not keep the commands of the Lord, he would take vengeance on them:”

he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied; he hath thrown down, or caused to be thrown down, without any pity, the walls of Jerusalem; and not only the houses and palaces in it, but also his own house, the temple:

and he hath caused [thine] enemy to rejoice over thee; giving thorn victory, and putting all into their hands; on which they insulted them, and gloried over them:

he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries; increased their strength and power, their kingdom and authority; and which swelled their pride, and made them more haughty and insolent.

Ver. 18. *Their heart cried unto the Lord*, etc.] Either the heart of their enemies, as Aben Ezra; which cried against the Lord, and blasphemed him; or rather the heart of the Jews in their distress, when they saw the walls of the city breaking down, they cried unto the Lord for help and protection, whether sincerely or not; no doubt some did; and all were desirous of preservation:

O wall of the daughter of Zion! this seems to be an address of the prophet to the people of Jerusalem carried captive, which was now without houses and inhabitants, only a broken wall standing, some remains and ruins of that; which is mentioned to excite their sorrow and lamentation:

let tears run down like a river, day and night; incessantly, for the destruction and desolation made:

give thyself no rest; or intermission; but weep continually:

let not the apple of thine eye cease; from pouring out tears; or from weeping, as the Targum; or let it not “be silent”^{f50}, or asleep; but be open and employed in beholding the miseries of the nation, and in deploring them.

Ver. 19. *Arise, cry out in the night*, etc.] That is, O daughter of Zion, or congregation of Israel, as the Targum; who are addressed and called upon by the prophet to arise from their beds, and shake off their sleep, and sloth, and stupidity, and cry to God in the night season; and be earnest and importunate with him for help and assistance. Aben Ezra rightly observes, that the word used signifies a lifting up of the voice both in singing and in lamentation; here it is used in the latter sense; and denotes great vehemency and earnestness in crying unto God, arising from deep distress and sorrow, which prevents sleep:

in the beginning of the watches; either at the first of them; so Broughton renders it, “at the first watch”; which began at the time of going to bed: or at the beginning of each of them; for with the ancient Jews there were three of them; in later times four: or in the beginning of the morning watch, as the Targum; very early in the morning, before sun rising; as they are called upon to pray late at night, so betimes in the mottling:

pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord; use the utmost freedom with him; tell him, in the fullest manner, thy whole case, fit thy complaints; unbosom thyself to him; keep nothing from him; speak out

freely all lily soul needs; do all this publicly, and in the most affectionate way and manner, thy soul melted in floods of tears, under a sense of sin, and pressing evils for it. The Targum is,

“pour out as water the perverseness of thine heart, and return by repentance, and pray in the house of the congregation (or synagogue) before the face of the Lord:”

lift up thine hands towards him; in prayer, as the Targum adds; for this is a prayer gesture, as in (~~2181~~ Lamentations 3:41 ~~518~~ 1 Timothy 2:8);

for the life of thy young children that faint for hunger in the top of every street; pray for them, that they might have food and sustenance, to preserve them alive; who, for want of it, were ready to swoon and die the public streets; in the top of them, where they met, and where was the greatest concourse of people, and yet none able to relieve them.

Ver. 20. *Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this*, etc.]

On whom thou hast brought these calamities of famine and sword; not upon thine enemies, but upon thine own people, that are called by thy name, and upon theirs, their young ones, who had not sinned as their fathers had: here the church does not charge God with any injustice, or complain of hard usage; only humbly entreats he would look upon her, in her misery, with an eye of pity and compassion; and consider her sorrowful condition; and remember the relation she stood in to him; and so submits her case, and leaves it with him. These words seem to be suggested to the church by the prophet, as what might be proper for her to use, when praying for the life of her young children; and might be introduced by supplying the word “saying” before “behold, O Lord”, etc.

shall the women eat their fruit; their children, the fruit of their womb, as the Targum; their newborn babes, that hung at their breasts, and were carried in their arms; it seems they did, as was threatened they should, (~~1839~~ Leviticus 26:29 ~~535~~ Deuteronomy 28:57); and so they did at the siege of Samaria, and at the siege of Jerusalem, both by the Chaldeans and the Romans:

[and] children of a span long? or of a hand’s breadth; the breadth of the palms of the hand, denoting very little ones: or “children handled”, or “swaddled with the hands”^{f51}; of their parents, who are used to stroke the limbs of their babes, to bring them to; and keep them in right form and

shape, and swaddle them with swaddling bands in a proper manner; (see ~~2122~~Lamentations 2:22); and so the Targum,

“desirable children, who are wrapped in fine linen.”

Jarchi ^{f52} interprets it of Doeg Ben Joseph, whom his mother slew, and ate:

shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? as very probably some were, who fled thither for safety when the city was broken up; but were not spared by the merciless Chaldeans, who had no regard to their office and character; nor is it any wonder they should not, when the Jews themselves slew Zechariah, a priest and prophet, between the porch and the altar; of whom the Targum here makes mention; and to whom Jarchi applies these words.

Ver. 21. *The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets,* etc.]

Young men and old men, virgins and aged women; these promiscuously lay on the ground in the public streets, fainting and dying for want of food; or lay killed there by the sword of the enemy; the Chaldeans sparing neither age nor sex. The Targum interprets it of their sleeping on the ground,

“young men slept on the ground in the villages, and old men who used to lie on pillows of fine wool, and on beds of ivory;”

but the former sense is confirmed by what follows:

my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; by the sword of the Chaldeans, when they entered the city:

thou hast slain [them] in the day of thine anger: thou hast killed, [and] not pitied; the Chaldeans were only instruments; it was the Lord’s doing; it was according to his will; it was what he had purposed and decreed; what he had solemnly declared and threatened; and now in his providence brought about, for the sins of the Jews, by which he was provoked to anger; and so gave them up into the hands of their enemies, to slay them without mercy; and which is here owned; the church takes notice of the hand of God in all this.

Ver. 22. *Thou hast called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about,* etc.] Terrible enemies, as the Chaldeans; these came at the call of God, as soldiers at the command of their general; and in as great numbers as men from all parts of Judea flocked to Jerusalem on any of the three solemn

feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles. The Targum paraphrases it very foreign to the sense;

“thou shall proclaim liberty to thy people, the house of Israel, by the Messiah, as thou didst by Moses and Aaron on the day of the passover:”

so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped or remained; in the city of Jerusalem, and in the land of Judea; either they were put to death, or were carried captive; so that there was scarce an inhabitant to be found, especially after Gedaliah was slain, and the Jews left in the land were carried into Egypt:

those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed; or “whom I could span”, as Broughton; or “handled”; whose limbs she had stroked with her hands, whom she had swathed with bands, and had carried in her arms, and had most carefully and tenderly brought up: by those she had “swaddled” are meant the little ones; and by those she had “brought up” the greater ones, as Aben Ezra observes; but both the enemy, the Chaldeans, consumed and destroyed without mercy, without regard to their tender years, or the manner in which they were brought up; but as if they were nourished like lambs for the day of slaughter.