

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS 3

This chapter is a complaint and lamentation like the former, and on the same subject, only the prophet mixes his own afflictions and distresses with the public calamities; or else he represents the church in her complaints; and some have thought him to be a type of Christ throughout the whole; to whom various things may be applied. It is indeed written in a different form from the other chapters, in another sort of metre; and though in an alphabetical manner as the rest, yet with this difference, that three verses together begin with the same letter; so that the alphabet is gone through three times in it. Here is first a complaint of the afflictions of the prophet, and of the people, expressed by a rod, by darkness, by wormwood and gall, and many other things; and especially by the Lord's appearing against them as an enemy, in a most severe and terrible manner; shutting out their prayer; being as a bear and lion to them; and giving them up to the cruelty and scorn of their enemies, (~~2181E~~Lamentations 3:1-21); then follows some comfort taken by them, from the mercy, faithfulness, and goodness of God; from the usefulness of patience in bearing afflictions; and from the end of God in laying them upon men; and from the providence of God, by which all things are ordered, (~~2182E~~Lamentations 3:22-38); wherefore, instead of complaining, it would be better, it is suggested, to attend to the duties of examination of their ways, and of repentance, and of prayer, (~~2183E~~Lamentations 3:39-41); and a particular prayer is directed to, in which confession of sin is made, and their miseries deplored, by reason of the hidings of God's face, and the insults of their enemies, (~~2184E~~Lamentations 3:42-47); and then the prophet expresses his sympathy with his people under affliction, and declares what he himself met with from his enemies, (~~2185E~~Lamentations 3:48-54); and relates how he called upon the Lord, and he heard and delivered him, (~~2186E~~Lamentations 3:55-58); and concludes with a request that he would judge his cause, and avenge him on enemies, (~~2187E~~Lamentations 3:59-66).

Ver. 1. *I [am] the man [that] hath seen affliction*, etc.] Had a much experience of it, especially ever since he had been a prophet; being

reproached and ill used by his own people, and suffering with them in their calamities; particularly, as Jarchi observes, his affliction was greater than the other prophets, who indeed prophesied of the destruction of the city and temple, but did not see it; whereas he lived to see it: he was not indeed the only man that endured affliction, but he was remarkable for his afflictions; he had a large share of them, and was herein a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs:

by the rod of his wrath; that is, by the rod of the wrath of God, for he is understood; it is a relative without an antecedent, as in (²³⁰⁰Song of Solomon 1:1); unless the words are to be considered in connection (²³⁰²Lamentations 2:22). The Targum is,

“by the rod of him that chastiseth in his anger;”

so Jarchi; but God’s chastisements of his own people are in love, though thought sometimes by them to be in wrath and hot displeasure; so the prophet imagined, but it was not so; perhaps some regard may be had to the instrument of Jerusalem’s destruction, the king of Babylon, called the rod of the Lord’s anger, (²³⁰⁵Isaiah 10:5); all this was true of Christ, as the surety of his people, and as sustaining their persons, and standing in their room.

Ver. 2. *He hath led me, and brought [me into] darkness*, etc.] Which oftentimes signifies distress, calamity, and affliction, of one sort or another: thus the Jews were brought into the darkness of captivity; Jeremiah to the darkness of a dungeon, to which there may be an allusion; and Christ his antitype was under the hidings of God’s face; and at the same time there was darkness all around him, and all over the land; and all this is attributed to God; it being by his appointment, and by his direction and permission:

but not [into] light; prosperity and joy; the affliction still continuing; though God does in his due time bring his people to the light of comfort, and of his gracious presence, as he did the above persons; (see ¹⁹⁷¹Psalms 97:11 112:4).

Ver. 3. *Surely against me is he turned*, etc.] As an enemy, who used to be a friend; he has so altered and changed the course of his providence, as if his favour and affections were wholly removed; he has planted his artillery against me, and made me the butt of his arrows: or, “only against me”; so Jarchi; as if he was the only person, or the Jews the only people, so afflicted of God:

he turneth his hand [against me] all the day; to smite with one blow after another, and that continually, without ceasing; so the hand of justice was turned upon Christ, as the surety of his people, and he was smitten and stricken of God; while the hand of grace and mercy was turned upon them; (see ^{<3817>}Zechariah 13:7).

Ver. 4. *My flesh and my skin hath he made old*, etc.] His flesh with blows, and his skin with smiting, as the Targum; his flesh was so emaciated, and his skin so withered and wrinkled, that he looked like an old man; as our Lord, when little more than thirty years of age, what with his sorrows and troubles, looked like one about fifty:

he hath broken my bones; that is, his strength was greatly weakened, which lay in his bones; and he could not stir to help himself, any more than a man whose bones are broken; and was in as much pain and distress as if this had been his case; otherwise it was not literally true, either of the Jews, or of Jeremiah, or of Christ.

Ver. 5. *He hath builded against me*, etc.] Fortresses, as the Targum adds; as when forts and batteries were raised by the Chaldeans against the city of Jerusalem, in which the prophet was:

and compassed [me] with gall and travail; or “weariness” ^{f53}; the same with gall and wormwood, (^{<2519>}Lamentations 3:19); as Jarchi observes. The sense is, he was surrounded with sorrow, affliction, and misery, which were as disagreeable as gall; or like poison that drank up his spirits, and made him weary of his life. Thus our Lord was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; *περιλυπος*, encompassed with sorrows, (^{<4158>}Matthew 26:38). The Targum is,

“he hath surrounded the city, and rooted up the heads of the people, and caused them to fail.”

Ver. 6. *He hath set me in dark places*, etc.] In the dark house of the prison, as the Targum; in the dark dungeon where the prophet was put; or the captivity in which the Jews were, and which was like the dark grave or state of the dead; and hence they are said to be in their graves, (^{<2572>}Ezekiel 37:12). Christ was laid in the dark grave literally:

as [they that be] dead of old: that have been long dead, and are forgotten, as if they had never been; (see ^{<1815>}Psalm 88:5); or, “as the dead of the

world”^{f54}, or age; who, being dead, are gone out of the world, and no more in it. The Targum is,

“as the dead who go into another world.”

Ver. 7. *He hath hedged me about, that I cannot go out*, etc.] When in prison, or in the dungeon, or during the siege of Jerusalem; though the phrase may only denote in general the greatness of his troubles, with which he was encompassed, and how inextricable they were; like a hedge about a vineyard, or a wall about a city, which could not easily be got over:

he hath made my chain heavy; his affliction intolerable. It is a metaphor taken from malefactors that have heavy chains put upon their legs, that they may not make their escape out of prison: or, “my brass”^{f55}; that is, chains, or a chain made of brass; so the Targum,

“he hath made heavy upon my feet fetters of brass.”

Ver. 8. *Also when I cry and shout*, etc.] Cry, because of the distress of the enemy within; “shout”, or cry aloud for help from others without; as persons in a prison do, to make them hear and pity their case: thus the prophet in his affliction cried aloud to God; was fervent, earnest, and importunate in prayer; and yet not heard:

he shutteth out my prayer; shuts the door, that it may not enter; as the door is sometimes shut upon beggars, that their cry may not be heard. The Targum is,

“the house of my prayer is shut.”

Jarchi interprets it of the windows of the firmament being shut, so that his prayer could not pass through, or be heard; (see ^{<2184>}Lamentations 3:44). The phrase designs God’s disregard, or seeming disregard, of the prayer of the prophet, or of the people; and his shutting his ears against it. Of this, as the Messiah’s case, (see ^{<1921>}Psalms 22:2).

Ver. 9. *He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone*, etc.] Not with a hedge of thorns, or mud walls, but with a fence of stones; and these not rough, and laid loosely together, but hewn and put in order, and well cemented. The Targum is, with marble hewn stones, which are harder than common stones, and not so easily demolished; this may respect the case of the prophet in prison, and in the dungeon, and in Jerusalem, when besieged; or in general his afflictive state, from whence he had no prospect of

deliverance; or the state of the Jews in captivity, from which there was no likelihood of a release;

he hath made my paths crooked; or, “perverted my ways”^{f56}; so that he could not find his way out, when he attempted it; he got into a way which led him wrong; everything went cross and against him, and all his measures were disconcerted, and his designs defeated; no one step he took prospered.

Ver. 10. *He [was] unto me [as] a bear lying in wait*, etc.] For its prey, which seizes on it at once, and tears it in pieces; such were the Chaldeans to the Jews by divine permission:

[and as] a lion in secret places; lurking there, in order to take every opportunity and advantage, and fall upon any creature that comes that way. The same thing is signified here as before; (see ^{<XFI4>}Hosea 5:14).

Ver. 11. *He hath turned aside my ways*, etc.] Or caused me to depart or go back from the way I was in, and so fall into the hand of the enemy that lay in wait, as before. Jarchi interprets the word of thorns, and of scattering the way with thorns, and hedging it up with them, so that there was no passing, (^{<XIII6>}Hosea 2:6); the sense seems to be the same with (^{<XIII9>}Lamentations 3:9);

and pulled me in pieces: as any creature that falls into the hands of a bear or lion. Jarchi says it signifies a stopping of the feet, so that the traveller cannot go on in his way; and in the Talmudic language it is used for the breaking off of branches of trees, which being strowed in the way, hinder passengers from travelling; and this sense agrees with what goes before:

he hath made me desolate; or brought me into a desolate condition, into ruin and destruction, as the Jews were in Babylon.

Ver. 12. *He hath bent his bow*, etc.] Which is put for all the instruments, of war; the Chaldeans were archers, and shot their arrows into the city:

and set me as a mark for the arrow; as a target to shoot at; signifying that God dealt with him, or his people, as enemies, the object of his wrath and indignation; and if he directed his arrow against them, it must needs hit them; there was no escaping his vengeance; (see ^{<XIV2>}Job 7:20 16:12).

Ver. 13. *He hath caused the arrows of his quiver*, etc.] Or, “the sons of his quiver”^{f57}; an usual Hebraism; the quiver is compared, as Aben Ezra

observes, to a pregnant woman; and Horace has a like expression, “venenatis gravidam sagittis pharetram”^{f58}; the judgments of God are often signified by this metaphor, even his four sore ones, sword, famine, pestilence, and noisome beast, (^{<5223>}Deuteronomy 32:23,42 ^{<3516>}Ezekiel 5:16 14:21); these, says the prophet, he caused

to enter into my reins; that is, into the midst of his land and people, or into the city of Jerusalem; or these affected his mind and heart as if so many arrows had stuck in him, the poison of which drank up his spirits, (^{<3014>}Job 6:4 ^{<3812>}Psalm 38:2).

Ver. 14. *I was a derision to all my people*, etc.] So Jeremiah was to the people of the Jews, and especially to his townsmen, the men of Anathoth, (^{<3417>}Jeremiah 20:7,8); but if he represents the body of the people, others must be intended; for they could not be a derision to themselves. The Targum renders it, to the spoilers of my people; that is, either the wicked among themselves, or the Chaldeans; and Aben Ezra well observes, that “ammi” is put for “ammim”, the people; and so is to be understood of all the people round about them, the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, that laughed at their destruction; though some interpret it of the wicked among the Jews, to whom the godly were a derision; or of those who had been formerly subject to the Jews, and so their people, though not now:

[and] their song all the day; beating on their tabrets, and striking their harps, for joy; for the word^{f59} used signifies not vocal, but instrumental music; of such usage of the Messiah, (see ^{<3612>}Psalm 69:12).

Ver. 15. *He hath filled me with bitterness*, etc.] Or “with bitteresses”^{f60}; instead of food, bitter herbs; the allusion perhaps is to the bitter herbs eaten at the passover, and signify bitter afflictions, sore calamities, of which the prophet and his people had their fill. The Targum is,

“with the gall of serpents;” (see ^{<3214>}Job 20:14);

he hath made me drunken with wormwood; with wormwood drink; but this herb being a wholesome one, though bitter, some think that henbane, or wolfsbane, is rather meant, which is of a poisonous and intoxicating nature; it is no unusual thing for persons to be represented as drunk with affliction, (^{<2517>}Isaiah 51:17,21 ^{<2427>}Jeremiah 25:27).

Ver. 16. *He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones*, etc.] With gritty bread, such as is made of corn ground with new millstones, the grit of

which mixes with the flour; or with stony bread, as Seneca ^{f61} calls a benefit troublesome to others; with bread that has little stones mixed with it, by eating of which the teeth are broken, as Jarchi observes: the phrase signifies afflictions and troubles, which are very grievous and disagreeable, like gravel in the mouth, as sin in its effects often proves, (^{<2017>}Proverbs 20:17);

he hath covered me with ashes; as mourners used to be; the word rendered “covered” is only used in this place. Aben Ezra renders it, “he hath defiled me”; and Jarchi and Ben Melech, from the Misnah, “he hath pressed me”, without measure; (see ^{<4168>}Luke 6:38); and so the Targum,

“he hath humbled me:”

but the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, “he hath fed me with ashes”; which version is defended by Castel ^{f62} and Noldius ^{f63}, and best agrees with the preceding clause; the sense is the same with (^{<1927>}Psalms 102:9).

Ver. 17. *And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace*, etc.] From the time the city was besieged by the Chaldeans, and now the people was carried captive; who could have no true peace, being in a foreign land, in an enemy’s country, and out of their own, and far from the place of divine worship; nor could the prophet have any peace of soul, in the consideration of these things, the city, temple, and nation, being desolate, though he himself was not in captivity.

I forgat prosperity; or “good” ^{f64}; he had been so long from the enjoyment of it, that he had lost the idea of it, and was thoughtless about it, never expecting to see it any more.

Ver. 18. *And I said, my strength and my hope are perished from the Lord.*] The former of these words signifies, according to Aben Ezra, “my standing”, my subsistence, my continuance in being, or my perpetuity; according to Jarchi, my abiding ^{f65} in this world; it is rendered “blood” in (^{<2378>}Isaiah 63:3); which is the support of life; and which when gone, or ceases to circulate, a man ceases to be: the sense is, that the prophet, or those he represents, looked upon themselves as dead men, at least of a short continuance; their natural strength was exhausted, and they must quickly die, and had no hope of living, or of enjoying the divine favour, or good things, at the hand of God. Some understand it of spiritual strength to do good, and of hope of having good things, or deliverance from the hand

of God, which they were despairing of; for the words are the language of despondency, and betray great, weakness and infirmity; for in the Lord is everlasting strength, and he is the hope of his people, and the Saviour of them in time of trouble, (²³⁰¹Isaiah 26:4 45:24 ²⁴⁴⁸Jeremiah 14:8).

Ver. 19. *Remembering mine affliction and my misery*, etc.] The miserable affliction of him and his people; the remembrance of which, and poring upon it continually, caused the despondency before expressed: though it may be rendered imperatively, “remember my affliction, and my misery”^{f66}; so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions; and Aben Ezra observes, that the words may be considered as a request to God, and so they seem to be; the prophet, and the people he represents, were not so far gone into despair, as to cast off prayer before God; but once more looked up to him, beseeching that he would, in his great mercy and pity, remember them in their distressed condition, and deliver out of it; for none could do it but himself:

the wormwood and the gall; figurative expressions of bitter and grievous afflictions, (²³⁸⁵Lamentations 3:5,15).

Ver. 20. *My soul hath [them] still in remembrance*, etc.] That is, according to our version, affliction and misery, compared to wormwood and gall: but the words, “my soul”, are fetched from the next clause, where they ought to stand, and this to be rendered, “in remembering thou wilt remember”^{f67}; or, “thou wilt surely remember”, and so expresses the confidence of the prophet, and his firm belief, his faith and hope increasing in prayer, that God would in much mercy remember his people, and their afflictions, and save them out of them:

and is humbled in me; both under the afflicting hand of God, and in view and hope of his mercy: though rather it should be rendered, “and” or “for my soul meditateth within me”^{f68}; says or suggests such things to me, that God will in wrath remember mercy; (see ¹⁹⁷⁰Psalm 77:7). So Jarchi makes mention of a Midrash, that interprets it of his soul’s waiting till the time that God remembers.

Ver. 21. *This I recall to my mind*, etc.] Not affliction and misery, but the Lord’s remembrance of his people; what he had been used to do, and would do again; and particularly what follows, the abundant mercy of God, and his great faithfulness; these things the prophet fetched back to his mind; and revolved them in his heart; says he,

and therefore have I hope; this revived his hope, which he was ready to say was perished from the Lord, and there was no foundation for it; but now he saw there was, and therefore took heart, and encouraged himself in the grace and mercy of God.

Ver. 22. [*It is of] the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, etc.] It was true of the prophet, that he died not in prison, or in the dungeon; and of the people of the Jews, who though many of them perished by the sword, famine, and pestilence, yet God did not make a full end of them, according to his gracious promise, (^{<2811>}Jeremiah 30:11); but left them a seed, a remnant, from whence the Messiah, the mercy promised, should come, and to which it was owing they were not utterly cut off for their sins: nor are any of the Lord's special people ever consumed; their estates may be consumed, and so may their bodies by wasting diseases, and at last by death; but not their souls, not only as to their being, but as to their well being, here and hereafter; though their peace, joy, and comfort, may be gone for a while, through temptation, desertion, and the prevalence of corruption; and they may be in declining circumstances, as to the exercise of grace, yet the principle itself can never be lost; faith, hope, and love, will abide; nor can they eternally perish, or be punished with an everlasting destruction: all which is to be ascribed not to their own strength to preserve themselves, nor to any want of desert in them to be destroyed, or of power in God to consume them; but to his "mercies" and "goodnesses", the multitude of them; for there is an abundance of mercy, grace, and goodness in God, and various are the instances of it; as in the choice of his people to grace and glory; in the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it they are interested in; in redemption by Christ; in regeneration by his Spirit; in the forgiveness of their sins; and in their complete salvation; which are all so many reasons why they are not, and shall not be, consumed. The words may be rendered, "the mercies" or "goodnesses of the Lord, for they are not consumed", or, "that the mercies of the Lord", etc. ^{f69} Jarchi observes, that "tamnu" is as "tammu"; the "nun" being inserted, according to Aben Ezra, instead of doubling the letter "mem"; and the former makes the sense to be this, in connection with the (^{<2812>}Lamentations 3:21); "this I recall to mind the mercies of the Lord, that they are not consumed"; to which agrees the Targum,

"the goodnesses, of the Lord, for they cease not;"

and so the Septuagint, “the mercies of the Lord, for they have not left me”; and to the same sense the Syriac version is, “the mercies of the Lord, for they have no end”, and Aben Ezra’s note on the text is almost in the same words,

“for there is no end to the mercies of God;”

because his compassions fail not; or, “his tender mercies”^{f70}; of which he is full, and which are bestowed in a free and sovereign way, and are the spring of all good things, and a never failing one they are; and this is another reason why the Lord’s people are not consumed, and never shall, because of the mercies of the Lord, since these shall never fail; for though they are, yet should they fail, they might be consumed; but these are from everlasting to everlasting, and are kept with Christ their covenant head; (see ^{49A317}Psalm 103:17 89:28).

Ver. 23. [*They are*] *new every morning*, etc.] That is, the tender mercies or compassions of God are, which prove that they fail not; there are instances of them every day, not only in a temporal, but in a spiritual sense; they are ever new, always fresh and vigorous, constant and perpetual; such are the love, grace, and mercy of God, though of old, yet daily renewed in the manifestations thereof; and which make a morning of spiritual light, joy, and comfort; and whenever it is morning with the saints, they have new discoveries of the love of God to them; and these indeed are a bright morning to them, a morning without clouds;

great [is] thy faithfulness; some render it “thy faith concerning thee”^{f71}; this is a great grace, it is the gift of God, the operation of his Spirit, and to exercise it is a great thing; to this purpose is Jarchi’s note,

“great is thy promise, and a great thing it is to believe in thee, that it shall be performed, and that thou wilt observe or keep what thou hast promised to us;”

but the attribute of God’s faithfulness is rather meant; which is another reason why the people of God are not consumed, since that never fails; God is faithful to himself, and cannot deny himself; he is faithful to his counsels and purposes, which shall be truly accomplished; and to his covenant and promises, which shall be fulfilled; and to his Son, the surety and Saviour of his people.

Ver. 24. *The Lord [is] my portion, saith my soul*, etc.] The prophet, or the church, whom he represents, rises and increases in the exercise of faith; from considering the mercies, compassions, and faithfulness of God, concludes a sure and firm interest in him, as a portion and inheritance. The Lord is the portion of his people in life and in death, in time and to eternity; all he is, and has, is theirs; they are heirs of him, and shall enjoy him for ever, and therefore shall not be consumed; he is a portion large and full, inexpressibly rich and great, a soul satisfying one, and will last for ever. And happy are those, who from their hearts, and with their souls, under a testimony of the Spirit of God to their spirits, and through a gracious experience of him, can say he is their portion and exceeding great reward, as the church here did; and these may say with her, as follows:

therefore will I hope in him: for deliverance from all evils and enemies; for present supplies of grace; and for the enjoyment of future glory and happiness.

Ver. 25. *The Lord [is] good to them that wait for him*, etc.] For the enjoyment of him as their portion in this world, and in that to come; for his presence here and hereafter; which they are sometimes now deprived of, but should wait patiently for it; since he has his set time to arise and favour them with it; to such is he “good” communicatively, and in a special way and manner. They that wait for him shall not be ashamed, or disappointed of what they expect; they shall renew their spiritual strength, and grow stronger and stronger; they shall inherit the earth, the new heavens and the new earth; enjoy many blessings now, and have good things laid up for them hereafter, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, (²³⁴²³ Isaiah 49:23 40:31 64:4 ²³⁷¹⁹ Psalm 37:9); perhaps some regard may be had to the coming of Christ in the flesh, which the saints then expected, and were waiting for in faith and hope; to whom the Lord was good and gracious in due time, by performing the mercy promised them, (²³⁷¹⁹ Isaiah 25:9);

to the soul [that] seeketh him; that seeketh him aright; that seeks him by prayer and supplication; that seeks him in his house and ordinances, where he is to be found; that seeks him early, in the first place, and above all things else; that seeks him earnestly, diligently, with his whole spirit, heart, and soul; that seeks his face, his favour, grace, and glory, and all in Christ, through whom all are to be enjoyed. God is good to such souls; he is a rewarder of them in a way of grace; with himself, as their shield and exceeding great reward; with his Son, and all things freely with him; with

his Spirit and graces, and with eternal glory and happiness; such find what they seek for, Christ, his grace, and eternal fire; the Lord never forsakes them, nor the work of his hand in them, and they shall live spiritually and eternally; (see ^{<S106>}Hebrews 11:6 ^{<I187>}Proverbs 8:17 ^{<I177>}Matthew 7:7 ^{<S117>}Romans 2:7 ^{<S110>}Psalm 9:10 69:32).

Ver. 26. [*It is*] *good that [a man] should both hope and quietly wait*, etc.]

This follows from the former; for if God is good to such, it must be good for them to hope and wait for him; it is both their duty and their interest: and it may be observed, that hope is the ground of patient waiting, and is here promised to it; where there is no hope of a thing, there will be no waiting for it, much less quietly: hope is of things unseen, future, difficult, and yet possible, or there would be no hope; and where there is that, there will be waiting; for “if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”, (^{<S125>}Romans 8:25); here in the original text it is, “hope, and be silent”^{f72}; or, “a good man will both hope” or “wait, and be silent”^{f73}; that is, under the present dispensation, though an afflictive one; men should be still, as David exhorts, and be dumb, as he was; and hold their peace, as Aaron did, at such seasons: not that they should indulge a stoical apathy, or be insensible of their condition, and disregard the rod, and him that has appointed it, or be altogether silent and speechless; but should own the hand of God, and their deserts, cry to him for deliverance, be thankful it is no worse, and speak of the gracious dealings of God with them; yet should not murmur and complain, or charge God foolishly; but be resigned to his will, and wait the issue of Providence quietly, even wait

for the salvation of the Lord; for temporal deliverance from outward evils and present afflictions, and for spiritual and eternal salvation. The saints, under the Old Testament, waited for Christ, the author of salvation, appointed and promised by the Lord. He is come, and has obtained salvation, which is published in the Gospel. Sensible sinners are made acquainted with their need of it, and see the fulness and suitableness of it, and are earnestly desirous of knowing their interest in it; this is not immediately had; it is good to wait quietly for it, in an attendance on the word and ordinances; and this being come at, still the complete enjoyment is yet behind: saints are now heirs of it, are kept unto it; it is nearer them than when they believed; Christ will appear unto it, and it becomes them to wait patiently for it; which will be a salvation from the very being of sin; from the temptations of Satan; from all troubles inward and outward; from all troublesome persons and things; from all doubts, fears, darkness, and

unbelief; and will consist in perfect happiness and glory, and is worth waiting for.

Ver. 27. [*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*] Either the yoke of the commandments, as the Targum; or of correction, as Aben Ezra; of afflictions, as fatherly chastisements; both senses may be retained. It is good to bear the yoke of the moral law, or the commandments of God, as they are in the hands of Christ, a rule of walk and conversation; a yoke obliging all mankind, and especially saints; it is the duty of all to submit their necks to this yoke; it is but their reasonable service to love the Lord their God, and their neighbour as themselves; as must be judged by all but sons of Belial, who are without this yoke, having cast it off; and especially it is “good” to bear the yoke of Christ, to embrace his doctrines, and profess them, and submit to his ordinances, since his yoke is easy, and leads to true rest, (~~11:29~~ Matthew 11:29,30); it is commendable so to do; since it is a following Christ, and those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises; and, besides, is both pleasant and profitable, being the means of increasing spiritual strength, light, and joy: and it is right to do this “in youth”; which is the choices, time of life, and most acceptable to Christ, and when a man is capable of doing him most service; and especially, if men do not take upon them this yoke in the day of their espousals, and while their first love lasts, it is much if they ever do it after, and therefore should not neglect it: and so it is good to bear the yoke of afflictions, though disagreeable to flesh and blood, to take up the cross, and bear it after Christ, willingly, and cheerfully, and patiently; this is “good”, for hereby souls are brought to a sense of sin, to be humbled for it, and confess it; it is a means of purging from it, and preventing it; hereby the graces of the Spirit are tried, exercised, and become brighter; saints are instructed in many useful lessons in the word of God, in humility faith, and fear; herein they enjoy much of the presence of God, and all work for their good, spiritual and eternal. And as there is a close connection between a profession of faith in Christ, and submission to his ordinances, and suffering reproach and persecution for the same; it is good for a man to bear the one, as well as the other, “in his youth”; this will serve to keep him humble, and hide pride from him, which youth are addicted to; to wean him from the world, the lusts and pleasures of it, which are ensnaring to that age; to prevent many sins and evils such might be tempted to go into; and to inure them to hardships, and make them good soldiers of Christ.

Ver. 28. *He sitteth alone*, etc.] Retires from the world, and the men of it, who takes upon him the yoke of Christ; though he is not alone, but God, Father, Son, and Spirit, are with him; and he is with the saints, the excellent of the earth, and has communion with them; and so he is that under the afflicting hand of God bears it patiently, and does not run from place to place complaining of it, but sits still, and considers the cause, end, and use of it. Some render the words in connection with the preceding, it is good “that he sit alone”^{f74}; it is good for a man to be alone; in his closet, praying to God; in his house or chamber, reading the word of God; in the field, or elsewhere, meditating upon it, and upon the works of God, of nature, providence, and grace:

and keepeth silence, because he hath borne [it] on him: or, “took it on him”; either because he took it upon him willingly, and therefore should bear it patiently; or because he (God) hath put it upon him^{f75}, and therefore should be silent, and not murmur and repine, since he hath done it, (~~39:9~~ Psalm 39:9).

Ver. 29. *He putteth his mouth in the dust*, etc.] Of self-aborrence; sensible of his own vileness and nothingness, his unworthiness, and the unprofitableness of all his duties; ascribing the whole of his salvation to the free grace of God, (~~42:6~~ Job 42:6); humbling himself under the mighty hand of God; not daring to open his mouth in a complaining way against him; but prostrating himself before him to the earth, as the manner of the eastern people in prayer was, to which the allusion is; licking as it were the dust of the earth, under a sense of the distance and disproportion between God and him, who is but dust and ashes; so the Targum adds,

“and is prostrate before the Lord:”

if so be there may be hope; or, “peradventure there is hope”^{f76}; for, as some interpreters observe, these words do not express hesitation and doubt, but hope and expectation of help, to bear the yoke of God’s commandments, and in due time to be delivered from affliction and distress.

Ver. 30. *He giveth [his] cheek to him that smiteth him*, etc.] Either to God that afflicts him, and patiently bears it; (see ~~9:13~~ Isaiah 9:13); or rather to men. To be smitten on the cheek is always reckoned a very great affront; to turn the cheek to an injurious man is to give him an opportunity and leave

to smite, and signifies the taking of it patiently, and agrees both with our Lord's advice and example, (^{<4169>}Matthew 5:39 ^{<2816>}Isaiah 50:6);

he is filled full with reproach; has many reproaches, and the reproaches of many upon him; as such must expect, that take Christ's yoke upon them; (see ^{<4338>}Psalm 123:3,4); and yet revile not again, but esteem reproaches for Christ's sake great riches, and wear them as crowns, and bind them about their necks as chains of gold; esteeming it an honour and a happiness to suffer shame for his name.

Ver. 31. *For the Lord will not cast off for ever.*] Which is not to be understood of all his creatures; for there are some he does cast off for ever, as the angels that sinned; reprobate men, profligate and abandoned sinners, that live and die impenitent; and unbelievers, carnal professors, and apostates; but not his own special and peculiar people, the people whom he has foreknown and loved with an everlasting love, his spiritual Israel; or, as the Targum supplies it, "his servants"; (see ^{<4944>}Psalm 94:14 ^{<4610>}Romans 11:2 ^{<4837>}Jeremiah 31:37 33:25,26); he may seem for a while to reject them, but not in reality and for ever; as when he hides his face from them, lays his afflicting hand on them, or suffers them, to be afflicted by others, and defers his help, and does not immediately appear to their deliverance and salvation; but in reality he never rejects them from being his people, his servants, and his sons; they have always a place in his heart, and are ever under his eye and care; they continue in his covenant, and abide in his family; and though they may be cast down in their souls, and cast out by men, yet are not cast off by God, neither in youth nor old age, in time or eternity; his love is unchangeable; his purposes firm and unalterable; his counsel, covenant, oath, and promise, immutable; and they are his jewels, his portion, and inheritance; and this is a ground and reason of bearing patiently all afflictions, injuries, and reproaches; for though men cast off, God will not.

Ver. 32. *But though he cause grief*, etc.] As he sometimes does in his own people; by convincing them of sin, and producing in them godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto life, not to be repented of; by correcting and chastising them for it, and by hiding his face from them; all which are grievous to them:

yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; his mercies are many, both temporal and spiritual, and his compassion is answerable; which he shows to his people by an application of pardoning

grace, through the blood of Christ, by sympathizing with them under their afflictions, and delivering from them; by granting them his gracious presence, and restoring to them the joys of his salvation; all which is not according to their merits, but his mercies.

Ver. 33. *For he doth not afflict willingly*, etc.] Or, “from his heart”^{f77}; he does afflict; for all afflictions are from God, but they do not come from the mere motion of his heart, or are the effects of his sovereign will and pleasure, as the good things he bestows upon his people do, without any respect to any cause or occasion in them; but sin is the cause and occasion of these, as Jarchi well observes: it is with reluctance the Lord afflicts his people; he is as it were forced to it, speaking after the manner of men; (see ^{<A10B>}Hosea 11:8); he does not do it with delight and pleasure; he delights in mercy, but judgment is his strange act; nor does he do it with all his heart and soul, with all his might and strength; he does not stir up all his wrath: for then the spirit would fail before him, and the souls that he has made; and especially he does not do it out of ill will, but in love, and for their good:

nor grieve the children of men: that is, he does not from his heart, or willingly, grieve the children of men, by, afflicting them; which must be understood of those sons of men whom he has loved, and made his sons and heirs; those sons of men that wisdom’s delights were with from everlasting, (^{<A10B>}Proverbs 8:31).

Ver. 34. *To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth.*] These words, with what follow in (^{<A10B>}Lamentations 3:35,36); either depend upon the preceding, and are to be connected with them, “he doth not afflict”, etc. (^{<A10B>}Lamentations 3:33); though he lays his hand on men, he do not crush them under his feet, or break them in pieces, and utterly destroy them, even such, and all such, as are bound in affliction and iron; or, in a spiritual sense, such as are prisoners to sin, Satan, and the law, as all men by nature are; he does not crush these to pieces, though they deserve it, at least not “all” of them; for he proclaims in the Gospel liberty to the captives, and says, by the power of his grace, to the prisoners, go forth, and encourages the prisoners of hope to turn to their strong hold: and also, though he afflicts, he does no injustice to them, does not turn aside their right, or subvert their cause, (^{<A10B>}Job 8:3 34:5,12); or rather these depend upon, and are to be connected with, the last clause of (^{<A10B>}Lamentations 3:36); “the Lord approveth not”: as he does not do these things himself, he

do not approve of them in others; that they should use captives cruelly, trample upon them like mire in the streets, or as the dust of their feet; particularly regard may be had to the Jews in Babylon, used ill by those that detained them; for though it was by the will of God they were carried captive, yet the Chaldeans exceeded due bounds in their usage of them, and added affliction to their affliction, which the Lord approved not of, but resented, (³⁰¹⁵Zechariah 1:15).

Ver. 35. *To turn aside the right of a man*, etc.] The Targum is, of a poor man; not to do him justice in a court of judicature; to cause judgment to incline to the wrong side; to give the cause against a man, to give a wrong sentence; this is disapproved of by the Lord, and forbidden by him:

before the face of the most High; either before the most high God, he being present and among the gods, the judges, when they pass sentence; and yet, to pass a wrong one in his presence, without any regard to him, or fear of him, must be provoking to him: or, “before a superior”^{f78}, as some render it; before a judge that sits upon the bench; endeavouring by unjust charges, wrong pleas, and false witnesses, to deprive a man of his right; (see ²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 5:8).

Ver. 36. *To subvert a man in his cause*, etc.] A poor man, as the Targum, which aggravates it; as by courses and methods taken in an open court, so by secret underhand ways, to get the cause from him, and injure him in his property:

the Lord approveth not; or, “seeth not”^{f79}; which some understand as spoken by wicked men, who do the above things, and flatter themselves that God sees not, and takes no notice of them, (³⁰⁰⁰Ezekiel 9:9); and others read it interrogatively, “doth not the Lord see?”^{f80} he does; he sees all the actions of men, nothing is hid from him; but he sees not with approbation; he do not look upon such things with delight and pleasure, but with abhorrence, (³⁰¹³Habakkuk 1:13). The Targum is,

“is it possible that it should not be revealed before the Lord?”

Ver. 37. *Who [is] he [that] saith, and it cometh to pass?* etc.] Or, “who [that] says [this shall be], and it cometh to pass?” or, “who [is] he [that] saith [this shall] come to pass?”^{f81} this, or that, or the other thing, he wills and desires, and his heart is set upon:

[when] the Lord commandeth [it] not? has not willed and decreed it, but determined the contrary; for nothing escapes his knowledge and foreknowledge; or can resist his will; or control his power; or frustrate his councils, and counterwork his designs; whatever schemes men form to get riches, obtain honour, do mischief to others, prolong life to themselves, and perpetuate their names to posterity, being contrary to the purpose of God, never succeed; whenever they do succeed in any of the above instances, it is because God has commanded, or he has determined, it should be so; as in the instances of Joseph's brethren, in their usage of him; and of the Jews, in the crucifixion of Christ, (^{<216D>}Proverbs 16:9 19:21). The Targum is,

“who is the man that saith, and evil is done in the world; but because they have done what was not commanded from the mouth of the Lord?”

Ver. 38. *Out of the mouth of the most High proceed not evil and good?* Certainly they do; they come to pass, both one and the other, as God has pronounced, and his will determined; even “evils”, as it is in the plural number; not the evil of sin, or of fault; this comes not out of the mouth of God, but is forbidden and condemned by him; much less is he the author of it, or tempter to it; indeed it is not without his knowledge, nor in some sense without his will; not with his will of approbation, but by his permissive will, which he suffers to be, and overrules for good; but evils here design the judgments of God, or punishment inflicted on sinners, and chastisement on his own people; the evil of affliction, or adverse dispensations of providence, (^{<287D>}Isaiah 45:7 ^{<300B>}Amos 3:6 ^{<310D>}Micah 6:9); they are all by his appointment; he has said or determined what shall be the kind and nature of them; the measure, how far they shall go; and the duration, how long they shall last; and the end and use of them; (see ^{<810D>}Job 2:10 5:6,7 23:14); and so all good comes from God, who is goodness itself; all created good, as every creature of God is good; every good thing in providence; all temporal good things; as to have a being; to be preserved in it; to have a habitation to dwell in; to have food and raiment, health and long life; these are all by the appointment of God, and according to the determination of his will: all spiritual good things are purposed, promised, and prepared by him in council and covenant; the great good of all, salvation by Christ; this is what God has appointed his son for, and his people to, and fixed the time of it, and all things relating to it; the effectual calling of the redeemed ones is according to his purpose and grace; the

persons, thing itself, time, place, and means; also eternal glory and happiness, which is the kingdom prepared, the crown laid up, and inheritance reserved in heaven, according to the purpose of God; all good things, in time and eternity, are as God has pronounced them.

Ver. 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain?* etc.] Or murmur, or fret and vex, or bemoan himself; all which the word ^{f82} may signify; as the prophet had done in his own person; or as representing the church, (~~2881~~Lamentations 3:1-19); and here checks himself for it; and especially since the mercies and compassions of God never fail, and are daily renewed; and the Lord himself is the portion of his people, (~~2883~~Lamentations 3:23,24); and seeing he is good to them that seek him, and it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of God, and to bear the yoke patiently, (~~2885~~Lamentations 3:25-27); and because of the unwillingness of God to afflict men, and his sympathy and compassion towards them under affliction, (~~2887~~Lamentations 3:32,33); and especially since all is from the sovereignty of God, who does according to his will; and from whom all good and evil come, (~~2889~~Lamentations 3:37,38); he is not to be complained of, or against, for anything he does; or to be murmured at; nor should men vex and fret themselves at their own adversity, or at the prosperity of others; or bemoan themselves, as if no case was like theirs, or so bad. It does not become “a man”, a reasonable creature, a man grown up, to behave in this manner; as such should quit themselves like men, and conduct as such; a “man” that God is so mindful of, and cares for, and visits every moment, and follows with his goodness continually; a “man”, sinful man, that has rendered himself unworthy of the least favour; and yet such is the lovingkindness, favour, and good will of God to man, that he has provided his own Son to be his Saviour; and therefore man, of all God’s creatures, has no reason to complain of him; and is a “living” man too, in a natural sense; is upheld in life by the Lord, and has the common mercies of life; is in health, or however in the land of the living; out of hell, where he deserves to be; and therefore should praise, and not complain, (~~2889~~Isaiah 38:19); especially if he is a living man in a spiritual sense; has a principle of spiritual life implanted in him; Christ lives in him, and his life is hid with him in God, and has a right and title to eternal life:

a man for [the punishment] of his sins? the word “punishment” is not in the text; but, admitting the supplement, if a man is a wicked man (and so the Targum interprets it), and is punished for his sins, no injustice is done him; he has no reason to complain; and especially of his punishment in this

world, which is greatly less than his sins deserve, (^{159B}Ezra 9:13); and if he is a good man, and is chastised for his sins, he ought not to complain “for the chastisement” of them; since it is the chastisement of a father, is in love, and for his good: but the words may be rendered literally, “a man for”, or “of his sins”¹⁸³; and be considered as a distinct clause, and as an answer to the former, so Jarchi; if a man will complain, let him complain of his sins; of the corruptions of his heart; of the body of sin and death he carries about with him of his daily iniquities; let him mourn over them, and bemoan himself for them; and if he does this in an evangelic manner, he is happy; for he shall be comforted.

Ver. 40. *Let us search and try our ways*, etc.] instead of murmuring and complaining, let us search for something that may support and comfort, teach and instruct, under afflictive providences; let us search into the love of God, which, though it cannot be fully searched out, it will be found to be from everlasting to everlasting; and that all afflictions spring from it; and that it continues notwithstanding them: let us search into the covenant of grace, in which provision is made for afflictions in case of disobedience, and for supports under them: let us search the Scriptures, which are written for our comfort; and it is much if we do not find some in the instances, examples, and experiences of other saints therein recorded: let us search after a greater degree of the knowledge of Christ, and of his grace; so shall we be more conformable to his sufferings and death, and patient under our troubles: let us search into our own hearts, and examine ourselves, whether we have true repentance for sin, true faith in Christ; and whether he is in us, or not; and we have a part in him, which will make us easy in every state: let us search into the present dispensation, in order to find out the cause of it, which is sin; and the end of it, which God has in it for our good: let us search “our ways”, and “try them”, by the word of God, the standard of faith and practice; and see what agreement there is between them: let us try our thoughts, words, and actions, by the law of God, which is holy, spiritual, just, and good; and we shall see how abundantly short they come of it: and let us try “our ways”, and compare them with the ways of God, which he has prescribed in his word; and we shall find that the one are holy, the other unholy; the one plain, the other crooked; the one dark, the other light; the one pleasant, and peace is in them, the other not; the one lead to life, the other to death; (see ^{250J}Isaiah 55:7-9);

and turn again to the Lord; by repentance, as the Targum adds; let us turn out of our sinful ways, upon a search and examination of them; and turn to

the Lord, his ways and worship, from whom we have departed, and against whom we have sinned; acknowledging our iniquities, who receives graciously, is ready to forgive, and does abundantly pardon.

Ver. 41. *Let us lift up our heart with [our] hands*, etc.] Lifting up of the hands is a prayer gesture, and is put for prayer itself; (see ^{<401D>}Psalm 141:2 ^{<401B>}1 Timothy 2:8); but the heart must go along with it, or it is of no avail; the soul must be lifted up to God; there must be an ascending of that unto him, in earnest desires after him; in affection and love to him; in faith and dependence on him; and in hope and expectation of good things from him, (^{<427B>}Psalm 25:1); this is the way in which men return to God, even by prayer and supplication. The Targum is,

“let us lift up our hearts, and cast away rapine and prey out of our hands;”

and Jarchi and Abendana mention a Midrash, that paraphrases it,

“let us lift up our hearts in truth to God, as a man washes his hands in purity, and casts away all filthiness from them;”

(see ^{<381D>}Hebrews 10:22);

unto God in the heavens; who has made them, and dwells in them; and therefore prayer must be directed to him, as being there; so our Lord taught his disciples to pray, (^{<408B>}Matthew 6:9); and which is a very great encouragement to faith in prayer; when it is considered that God is the Maker and possessor of heaven and earth; and that our help is in and expected from him who made all these; and besides the saints have a High Priest, an Advocate with the Father there, to plead their cause for them; and many great and good things are there laid up for them.

Ver. 42. *We have transgressed, and have rebelled*, etc.] Here begins the prayer, the sense of which is directed to, though the words are not dictated; and it begins with confession of sin, as prayer should, especially when in such circumstances as the people of the Jews now were; and with confession of it, as a transgression of the law of God; and as rebellion against him, as every sin is, a breach of his law, a contempt of his authority, and a trampling under foot his legislative power, and an act of hostility against him; and so downright rebellion; every sin being an overt act of that kind; and which is aggravated by the favours before acknowledged to have been received:

thou hast not pardoned; as they apprehended; they had not the discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy; otherwise pardon of sin with God is past, and includes all sin present and future, as well as past; but temporal afflictions being upon them, they concluded their sins were not pardoned; pardon of sin in Scripture often signifying the removal of such afflictions.

Ver. 43. *Thou hast covered with anger*, etc.] Either himself; not as a tender father, that cannot bear to see the affliction of a child; this does not suit with anger; but rather as one greatly displeased, in whose face anger appears, being covered with it; or who covers his face with it, that he may not be seen, withdrawing his gracious presence; or hast put anger as a wall between thee and us, as Jarchi: so that there was no coming nigh to him: or else it means covering his people with it; so the Targum,

“thou hast covered “us” with anger;”

denoting the largeness and abundance of afflictions upon them; they were as it were covered with them, as tokens of the divine displeasure; one wave and billow after another passing over them. Sanctius thinks the allusion is to the covering of the faces of condemned malefactors, as a token of their being guilty:

and persecuted us; the Targum adds, in captivity; that is, pursued and followed us with fresh instances of anger and resentment; to have men to be persecutors is bad, but to have God to be a persecutor is dreadful:

thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied; had suffered them to be slain by the sword of the enemy, and had shown no compassion to them; (see Gill on “²¹Lamentations 2:21”); here, and in some following verses, the prophet, or the people he represents, are got to complaining again; though before he had checked himself for it; so hard it is under afflictions to put in practice what should be done by ourselves and others.

Ver. 44. *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud*, etc.] With wrath and anger, as a cloud; he wrapped up himself in thick darkness, so as not to be seen or come at: sin, when it appears not pardoned, is as a cloud between God and his people; and this causes him to show his anger and displeasure; which is the cloud about him, Or the hiding of his face. The Targum is,

“thou hast covered the heavens with the clouds of thy glory:”

that [our] prayer should not pass through; in such circumstances God seems to his people to be inexorable; and not a God hearing and answering prayer, as he is; as if there was no access unto him, or audience to be had of him, or acceptance of persons and prayers with him; whereas the throne of grace is always open and accessible: and there is a new and living way for believers always to approach unto God in; he is on a mercy seat, ready to receive and hear their prayers.

Ver. 45. *Thou hast made us [as] the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.*] Had given them up into the hands of the Gentiles, the Chaldeans, to be treated as the dirt of the streets, as the sweepings of a house; or the dross of metal; or anything that is vile, mean, and contemptible. The apostle seems to have some reference to this passage; and his words may be an illustration of it, (^{<40413>}1 Corinthians 4:13).

Ver. 46. *All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.*] Like lions and other beasts of prey, to devour us; or in way of scorn and derision; pouring out their reproaches upon us, and scoffs at us, for our religion, and the worship of God, and on account of present miseries and distresses; (see ^{<2126>}Lamentations 2:16). The Targum adds,

“to decree against us evil decrees.”

Ver. 47. *Fear and a snare is come upon us,* etc.] Or, “fear and a pit”^{f84}; the fear of falling into the pit of ruin and destruction, on the brink of which they saw themselves; or fear seized us, and caused us to flee; and a snare or pit was prepared for us to fall into; so that there was no escaping hence:

desolation and destruction; desolation or devastation of their land; and destruction of their city and temple; and of multitudes of them by the sword, famine, and pestilence; and the rest carried into captivity, excepting a few left desolate in the land.

Ver. 48. *Mine eye runneth down with rivers of waters,* etc.] Denoting the greatness of his grief and trouble at the afflictions of his people, and the vast profusion of tears on that account. Here the prophet speaks in his own person, expressing the anguish of his soul he felt, and the floods of tears he shed:

for the destruction of the daughter of my people; for those that were slain of them, or carried captive; (see ^{<2101>}Jeremiah 9:1 ^{<49136>}Psalms 119:136). The Targum is,

“for the destruction of the congregation of my people.”

Ver. 49. *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not*, etc.] From weeping, as the Targum: the prophet was continually weeping; the distresses of his people were always uppermost in his mind; and which so affected him, that it drew tears from his eyes, which constantly trickled down his cheeks:

without any intermission; or, “without intermissions”^{f85}; there were no stops or pauses in his grief, and in the expressions of it: or it may be rendered, “because [there were] no intermissions”^{f86}; that is, of the miseries of his people; so Jarchi,

“because there were no changes and passing away;”

that is of evils; and to the same purpose the Targum,

“because there is none that intermits my distress, and speaks comforts to me.”

Ver. 50. *Till the Lord look do: on, and behold from heaven.*] Disperses and dissipates the cloud that was about him; shines forth and manifests himself, and looks favourably upon his people, and delivers them out of their troubles: this the prophet was in hope of, and was waiting for; but, till it came to pass, could have no rest and comfort. The Targum is,

“till he look and behold my injury;”

as if he had regard to his own personal injury done him; but the former sense is best.

Ver. 51. *Mine eye affecteth mine heart*, etc.] Seeing the desolation of his country; the ruins of the city and temple of Jerusalem; and the multitudes of those that were slain, and carried captive; and the distresses the rest were in; this affected his heart, and filled it with grief; as his heart also affected his eyes, and caused them to run down in rivers of water, as before expressed; or, as the Targum,

“the weeping of mine eyes is the occasion of hurt to my soul or life;”

his excessive weeping endangered his life:

because of all the daughters of my city; not Anathoth, his native place, but Jerusalem; so the Targum,

“of Jerusalem my city.”

The meaning is, that his heart was affected at seeing the ruin of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; or of the towns and cities round about it, which that was the metropolis of. Some, as Jarchi, render it, “more than all the daughters of my city”^{f87}; his heart was more affected with those calamities than those of the most tender sex, even than any or all of them.

Ver. 52. *Mine enemies chased me sore like a bird*, etc.] That is weak and helpless, fearful and timorous; that flees from place to place when pursued; so it was with the prophet, or rather with the people of the Jews he represents; for here and in the following verses he speaks not only of himself, but of them; who, when they fled out of the city, were chased and pursued by the Chaldeans like a bird, till they were taken; (see ^{<3517>}Jeremiah 52:7-9);

without cause; which may be connected with the word “enemies”, so the Targum; who were so without cause; they had done them no injury, to make them their enemies; and without reason pursued and chased them in the manner they did.

Ver. 53. *They have cut off my life in the dungeon*, etc.] Jarchi interprets it, “they bound me in the prison.”

Jeremiah was both in a prison and in a dungeon, where he was deprived of the society of men, as if he had been dead; and he was in danger of losing his life; but whether any respect is had to it here is not certain: it seems rather to respect the people of the Jews in captivity, who were deprived of their rights and liberties, and of the comforts of life; and were like dead men in their graves, to whom they are compared, (^{<3571>}Ezekiel 37:11); but since Jeremiah was not dead, nor did he die in the dungeon, Jarchi’s sense seems best, and agrees with what follows; and is confirmed by the version of others, who render it, “they shut up my life in the dungeon”^{f88}; or himself there:

and cast a stone upon me; to see if he was dead, or to prevent him from rising. The allusion is to the putting of stones at the mouths of dens and dungeons, caves and graves, to keep in those there put: or they stoned me, as the Targum; that is, they endeavoured to do it: or the Jews in captivity were like persons stoned to death, or like dead men covered with a heap of stones; for that Jeremiah was stoned to death there is no reason to believe.

Ver. 54. *Waters flowed over mine head*, etc.] As in a pit or dungeon, where there is not only mire and clay, but much water, into which persons being put, sink, and are covered therewith; (see ~~1891~~ Psalm 69:1,2); this is to be understood metaphorically of the waters of afflictions, which overflowed and overwhelmed the people of the Jews. Jarchi interprets it of the nations of the world, as much people are often compared to waters; and here the Chaldeans may be particularly intended, whose army overflowed the land of Judea; and, like a mighty torrent, carried away the people, and wealth of it, and brought them into troubles, which were like deep waters:

[then] I said, I am cut off; while the waters are only up to a man's loins, he does not apprehend himself in danger; but there is hope of his wading through, and getting out; but when they rise above his head, his hopes are gone; he reckons it all over with him, and that he is just perishing, and his life in the utmost danger; there being scarce any probability or possibility of saving him; so it was with these people.

Ver. 55. *I called upon thy name, O Lord*, etc.] As in times past, so in the present distress; when all hope was gone, and all help failed, still there was a God to go to, and call upon:

out of the low dungeon; or “dungeon of lownesses”^{f89}; the lowest dungeon, the deepest distress, a man or people could be in; yet then and there it is not too late to call upon the Lord; and there may be hope of deliverance out of such an estate by him.

Ver. 56. *Thou hast heard my voice*, etc.] Either in times past, when he cried unto him, and was delivered; and this was an encouragement to call upon him again in such extremity, who had shown himself to be a God hearing and answering prayer; hence it follows:

hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry; turn not a deaf ear to me, who hast been wont to hear me heretofore; stop not thine ear at my cry now, at my prayer, which he calls his “breathing”; prayer is the breath of a soul regenerated by the Spirit, and is a sign and evidence of life, when it is spiritual; in it a soul pants after God, and communion with him, and salvation by him. Some render it, “at my gasping”^{f90}; or “panting”, for breath; just ready to expire, unless immediate help is given: or else the whole of this refers to the present time, when the Lord heard and answered, not only the first clause, but this also; which may be rendered,

not by way of petition, but affirmation, “thou didst not hide thine ear at my breathing, at my cry”^{f91}; and this agrees both with what goes before, and with what is expressed in (²³¹⁸⁷Lamentations 3:57).

Ver. 57. *Thou drewest near in the day [that] I called upon thee*, etc.]

When persons draw nigh to God in a way of duty, and particularly in this of prayer, and calling on his name; he draws nigh to them in a way of grace and mercy, and manifests himself to them, and works salvation for them. The Targum is,

“thou didst cause an angel to draw near to deliver me in the day that I prayed unto thee:”

thou saidst, fear not; any of thine enemies; or that thou shouldest not be delivered from them; (see ²³⁴¹⁰Isaiah 41:10).

Ver. 58. *O Lord, thou hast pleaded the cause of my soul*, etc.] Or, causes of “my soul”, or “life”^{f92}; such as concerned his soul and life: not one only, but many of them; and this respects not Jeremiah only, and the Lord’s pleading his cause against Zedekiah and his nobles; but the people of the Jews in former times, when in Egypt, and in the times of the judges:

thou hast redeemed my life; by delivering out of the pit and dungeon, where it was in danger; and not only him, but the whole body of the people of old out of Egypt, and out of the hands of their enemies, the Philistines and others.

Ver. 59. *O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong*, etc.] Or, “my perverseness”^{f93}; not that he or they had been guilty of; but the wrong that was done to him and them by their enemies; how perverse and ill natured they had been to them; how badly they had used them; what injuries they had done them; none of which escaped the omniscience of God, to which the appeal is made; and upon this follows a petition:

judge thou my cause; the present one; as thou hast pleaded and judged many already, do me justice, right my wrongs, and save me from mine enemies; and let it appear to all the world my cause is just, and they are in the wrong.

Ver. 60. *Thou hast seen all their vengeance*, etc.] The spirit of revenge in them; their wrath and fury, and how they burn with a desire of doing mischief; as well as their revengeful actions, carriage, and behaviour:

[and] all their imaginations against me; their secret contrivances of mischief, their plots and schemes they devise to do hurt unto me.

Ver. 61. *Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord*, etc.] Their reproachful words uttered against the prophet and his people, against God himself; their spiteful language, their taunts, and scoffs and jeers:

[and] all their imaginations against me; those he not only saw, as they appeared in their actions; but heard them, as they were expressed by their words; yea, they were manifest to him, while they only were in silent thought forming in the mind.

Ver. 62. *The lips of those that rose up against me*, etc.] This is to be connected with the preceding words; and expresses the same thing in different language. The sense is, that the Lord heard the words which dropped from the lips of his enemies; their sarcasms, flouts, and jeers; their bitter reflections, severe invectives, and scornful language:

and their device against me all the day; or, “their meditation of ill against me”; or, “their speech”, or discourse^{f94}; which all turned upon the same topic. Schultens^{f95} derives the word from the Arabic word which signifies to mock and scoff, or pursue anyone with ironical and satirical expressions; and so may intend here contumelious and reproachful language.

Ver. 63. *Behold their sitting down, and their rising up*, etc.] All their actions; the whole course of their lives; all which fell under the divine omniscience, (^{400B}Psalm 139:2); but that is not barely here meant; but that he would take particular notice hereof, and punish for the same. It may have respect both to their lying down at night, and rising in the morning; and to their sitting down at meals, and rising from them; at which times they were always meditating mischief against the people of God, or speaking opprobriously of them; when they made sport of them, as follows:

I [am] their music; or “music maker”^{f96}; as Samson was to the Philistines; the matter of their mirth; the subject of their song; and the object of their derision.

Ver. 64. *Render unto them a recompence, O Lord, according to the work of their hands.*] The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions render this, and the following verses, not as petitions, but as prophecies of what should be; but they seem rather to be expressed by way of request; and here, that God would deal with them according to the law of retaliation, and requite them

according to what they had done; that he would do to them as they had done to the Lord's people, and others; and this is ordered to be done particularly to the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, (^{<2615>}Jeremiah 50:15,29).

Ver. 65. *Give them sorrow of heart*, etc.] That which will cause sorrow of heart; such judgments and punishments as will be grievous to them. Some have observed a likeness between the word here used and that translated "music", (^{<2815>}Lamentations 3:63); and think some respect may be had to it; that whereas the people of God had been matter of mirth and music to them, God would give them music, but of another sort; a song, but a doleful one. The Septuagint version renders it, "a covering of the heart"; the word ^{f97} having the signification of a shield, which covers; and may signify blindness, hardness, and stupidity of heart, that they might not see the evils coming upon them, and how to escape them. A modern learned interpreter, Christianus Benedictus Michaelis, would have it compared with the Arabic word <Arabic>, "ganan", which signifies "to be mad", and from whence is "mugahah", "madness"; and so the sense be, give them distraction of mind:

lay curse unto them: and what greater curse is there than to be given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, or to madness and distraction? it may include all the curses of the law denounced against transgressors.

Ver. 66. *Persecute and destroy them in anger*, etc.] As they have persecuted the people of God, do thou persecute them; and never leave pursuing them until thou hast made a full end of them, as the effect of vindictive wrath and vengeance:

from under the heavens of the Lord; which are made by him, and in which he dwells; let them not have the benefit of them, nor so much as the sight of them; but let them perish from under them, (^{<2401>}Jeremiah 10:11).