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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
LAMENTATIONS

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

THIS book, like the several books of the Pentateuch, is denominated in Hebrew *hkya eicah*, *how*, from its first word; and sometimes *twnyq kinnoth*, *lamentations*, from its subject. In the *Septuagint* it is termed **ΟΦΗΝΟΙ ΤΟΥ ΙΕΡΕΜΟΙΥ**, for the same reason. The *Syriac* and *Arabic* copy or follow the *Septuagint*; and so does the *Vulgate*, from the *Lamentationes* of which, the book has that name which it bears in our language. In the *Chaldee* it has no name; and in it, and perhaps anciently in the Hebrew, it was written consecutively with the last chapter of Jeremiah.

It is one of the books of the *twl ygm Megilloth*, or Roll, among the Jews; and because it relates to the ruin of their affairs, and contains promises of restoration, it is peculiarly prized, and frequently read. The five *Megilloth* are: *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticles*, *Lamentations*, *Ruth*, and *Esther*.

There has been little difference among learned men concerning the *author* of this book. The whole current of antiquity and modern times has pointed out Jeremiah as the writer: of this the style is a sufficient evidence. Mr. *John Henry Pareau*, in a Dissertation prefixed to his Translation and Notes on this book, (8vo. Lugd. Bat. 1790,) has proved this point amply from a general collation of the prophecy of Jeremiah with select passages in this book. I have heard of but one learned man who has entertained serious doubts on the subject, Mr. *Herman Van der Hardt*, who has supposed the five chapters were written by *Daniel*, *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, *Abednego*, and *Jeconiah*. To this opinion I suppose none has ever been converted.

There has been more difference of opinion relative to the *subject* and *occasion*. Some have thought the book was composed on the *death of Josiah*; others that it was composed on occasion of the *destruction of Jerusalem*, and the *various desolations* connected with it. To *this* all its parts and its general phraseology seem best to apply; and this is the sentiment most generally embraced at present. This will receive much proof from a minute consideration of the book itself.

The *composition* of this poem is what may be called very technical. Every chapter, except the last, is an *acrostic*. Of the *two first*, each verse begins with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in the order of the letters,

with this exception, that in the *second*, *third*, and *fourth* chapters, the *p* *p*he is put before the [*ain*; whereas in all the acrostic Psalms the latter preceded the former, as it does in all *grammars* of the Hebrew language. In the *first* and *second* chapters each verse is composed of *three hemistichs* or half verses, except the *seventh* verse of the *first*, and the *nineteenth* of the *second* chapter, which have each *four* hemistichs.

The *third* chapter contains *sixty-four* verses, each, as before, formed of *three hemistichs*, but with this difference, that each hemistich begins with the same letter, so that the whole alphabet is *thrice* repeated in this chapter.

The *fourth* chapter is made up of *twenty-two* verses, according to the number of the Hebrew letters; but the composition is different from all the rest, for each verse consists of only *two* hemistichs, and those much shorter than any in the preceding chapters.

I have called this an inimitable poem; better judges are of the same opinion. “Never,” says Bishop *Lowth*, “was there a more rich and elegant variety of beautiful images and adjuncts arranged together within so small a compass, nor more happily chosen and applied.”

“One would think,” says Dr. *South*, “that every letter was written with a tear; every word, the sound of a breaking heart: that the author was compacted of sorrows; disciplined to grief from his infancy; one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan.”

“Nor can we too much admire,” says Dr. *Blayney*, “the full and graceful flow of that pathetic eloquence in which the author pours forth the effusions of a patriotic heart, and piously weeps over the ruins of his venerable country. But it was observed before that the prophet’s peculiar talent lay in working up and expressing the passions of grief and *pity*; and, unhappily for him as a man and a citizen, he met with a subject but too well calculated to give his genius its full display.”

David in several places has forcibly depicted the sorrows of a heart oppressed with penitential sorrow; but where, in a composition of such length, have bodily misery and mental agony been more successfully painted? All the expressions and images of sorrow are here exhibited in various combinations, and in various points of view. *Misery* has no

expression that the author of the *Lamentations* has not employed. Patriots! you who tell us you burn for your country's welfare, look at the prophecies and history of this extraordinary man; look at his *Lamentations*; take him through his life to his death, and learn from him what true patriotism means! The man who watched, prayed, and lived for the welfare of his country; who choose to share her adversities, her sorrows, her wants, her afflictions, and disgrace, where he might have been a companion of princes, and have sat at the table of kings; who only ceased to live for his country when he ceased to breathe;-that was a patriot, in comparison with whom almost all others are obscured, minished, and brought low, or are totally annihilated!

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

Chronological notes relative to the Book of the Lamentations

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3416.
- Year of the Jewish era of the world, 3173.
- Year from the Deluge, 1760.
- First year of the *forty-eighth* Olympiad.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Varronian account, 166.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 584.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 588.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4126.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, 160.
- Cycle of the Sun, 10.
- Cycle of the Moon, 3.
- Second year after the fourth Sabbatic year after the *seventeenth* Jewish jubilee, according to Helvicus.
- Twenty-ninth year of Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of the Romans: this was the *seventy-ninth year* before the commencement of the consular government.
- Thirty-eighth year of Cyaxares or Cyaraxes, the fourth king of Media.
- Eighteenth year of Agasicles, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Proclidæ.
- Twentieth year of Leon, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Eurysthenidæ.
- Thirty-second year of Alyattes II., king of Lydia. This was the father of the celebrated Cræsus.
- Fifteenth year of Æropas, the seventh king of Macedon.
- Nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.
- Eleventh year of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.

CHAPTER 1

The prophet begins with lamenting the dismal reverse of fortune that befell his country, confessing at the same time that her calamities were the just consequence of her sins, 1-6. Jerusalem herself is then personified and brought forward to continue the sad complaint, and to solicit the mercy of God, 7-22.

In all copies of the *Septuagint*, whether of the Roman or Alexandrian editions, the following words are found as a part of the text: **Και εγενετο μετα το αιχμαλωτισθηναι τον Ισραηλ, και Ιερουσαλημ ερημωθηναι, εκαθισεν ιερεμιας κλαιων, και εθρηνησεν τον θρηνον τουτον επι Ιερουσαλημ, και ειπεν,**— “And it came to pass after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem was become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping: and he lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem; and he said.”

The *Vulgate* has the same, with some variations:— “Et factum est, postquam in captivitatem redactus est Israel, et Jerusalem deserta est, sedit Jeremias propheta fiens, et planxit lamentations hac in Jerusalem, et amaro animo suspirans et ejulans, digit.” The translation of this, as given in the *first translation* of the Bible into English, may be found at the end of Jeremiah, taken from an ancient MS. in my own possession.

I subjoin another taken from the *first PRINTED edition* of the English Bible, that by *Coverdale*, 1535. “And it came to passe, (after Israel was brought into captivitie, and Jerusalem destroyed;) that Jeremy the prophet sat weeping, mournynge, and makeinge his mone in Jerusalem; so that with an hevy herte he sighed and sobbed, sayenge.”

Matthew's Bible, printed in 1549, refines upon this: “It happened after Israell was brought into captivite, and Jerusalem destroyed, that Jeremy the prophet sate wepyng, and sorrowfully bewayled Jerusalem; and syghynge and hewlynge with an hevy and wooful hert, sayde.”

Becke's Bible of the same date, and *Cardmarden's* of 1566, have the same, with a trifling change in the *orthography*.

On this *Becke* and others have the following note:— “These words are read in the LXX. interpreters: but not in the Hebrue.”

All these show that it was the ancient opinion that the Book of Lamentations was composed, not over the death of *Josiah*, but on account of the *desolations of Israel and Jerusalem*.

The *Arabic* copies the *Septuagint*. The *Syriac* does not acknowledge it; and the *Chaldee* has these words only: "Jeremiah the great priest and prophet said."

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. How doth the city sit solitary] Sitting down, with the elbow on the knee, and the head supported by the hand, without any company, unless an oppressor near,—all these were signs of mourning and distress. The coin struck by Vespasian on the capture of Jerusalem, on the obverse of which there is a *palm-tree*, the emblem of Judea, and under it a woman, the emblem of Jerusalem, sitting, leaning as before described, with the legend *Judea capta*, illustrates this expression as well as that in ^{<2470>}**Isaiah 47:1**. See Clarke's note on "^{<2183>}**Isaiah 3:26**", where the subject is farther explained.

Become as a widow] Having lost her *king*. *Cities* are commonly described as the *mothers* of their *inhabitants*, the *kings* as *husbands*, and the *princes* as *children*. When therefore they are bereaved of these, they are represented as *widows*, and *childless*.

The *Hindoo* widow, as well as the *Jewish*, is considered the most destitute and wretched of all human beings. She has her hair cut short, throws off all ornaments, eats the coarsest food, fasts often, and is all but an outcast in the family of her late husband.

Is she become tributary!] Having no longer the political form of a nation; and the remnant that is left paying tribute to a foreign and heathen conqueror.

Verse 2. Among all her lovers] Her allies; her *friends*, instead of helping her, have helped her enemies. Several who sought her friendship when she was in prosperity, in the time of David and Solomon, are now among her enemies.

Verse 3. Between the straits.] She has been brought into such difficulties, that it was impossible for her to escape. Has this any reference to the circumstances in which Zedekiah and the princes of Judah endeavoured to

escape from Jerusalem, *by the way of the gates between the two walls?*

~~245207~~ **Jeremiah 52:7.**

Verse 4. The ways of Zion do mourn] A fine prosopopœia. The ways in which the people trod coming to the sacred solemnities, being now no longer frequented, are represented as *shedding tears*; and the *gates* themselves partake of the general distress. All poets of eminence among the Greeks and Romans have recourse to this image. So *Moschus*, in his Epitaph on *Bion*, ver. 1-3:—

Αιλινα μοι στροναχειτε ναπαι, και Δωριον υδωρ
 Και ποταμοι κλαιοιτε τον ιμεροεντα Βιωνα.
 Νυν φυτα μοι μυρεσθε, και αλσεα νυν γοαοισθε, κ. τ. λ.

*“Ye winds, with grief your waving summits bow,
 Ye Dorian fountains, murmur as ye flow;
 From weeping urns your copious sorrows shed
 And bid the rivers mourn for Bion dead.*

*Ye shady groves, in robes of sable hue,
 Bewail, ye plants, in pearly drops of dew;
 Ye drooping flowers, diffuse a languid breath,
 And die with sorrow, at sweet Bion’s death.”*

FAWKES.

So Virgil, *Æn.* vii., ver. 759:—

*Te nemus Anguitiæ, vitrea te Fucinus unda
 Te liquidi flevere lacus.*

*“For thee, wide echoing, sighed th’ Anguitian woods;
 For thee, in murmurs, wept thy native floods.”*

And more particularly on the *death of Daphnis*, *Eclog.* v. ver. 24:—

*Non ulli pastos illis egere diebus
 Frigida, Daphni, boves ad flumina: nulla neque amnem
 Libavit quadrupes, nec graminis attigit herbam.
 Daphni, tuum Pænos etiam ingemuisse leones
 Interitum, montesque feri, sylvæque loquuntur.*

*“The swains forgot their sheep, nor near the brink
Of running waters brought their herds to drink:
The thirsty cattle of themselves abstained
From water, and their grassy fare disdained.
The death of Daphnis woods and hills deplore;
The Libyan lions hear, and hearing roar.”*

DRYDEN.

Verse 5. Her adversaries are the chief] They have now *supreme dominion* over the whole land.

Verse 7. Did mock at her Sabbaths.] *htbvm mishbatteha*. Some contend that *Sabbaths* are not intended here. The *Septuagint* has *κατοικεσια αυτης*, “her habitation;” the *Chaldee*, *ahbwc I* [*al tubaha*, “her good things;” the *Syriac*, [Syriac] *al toboroh*, “her breach.” The *Vulgate* and *Arabic* agree with the Hebrew. Some of my oldest MSS. have the word in the plural number, *hytbvm mishbatteyha*, “her Sabbaths.” A multitude of *Kennicott’s* MSS. have the same reading. The Jews were despised by the heathen for *keeping the Sabbath*. *Juvenal* mocks them on that account:—

——— *cui septima quæque fuit lux
Ignava et partem vitæ non attigit ulla.*
Sat. v.

*“To whom every seventh day was a blank,
and formed not any part of their life.”*

St. Augustine represents Seneca as doing the same:—*Inutiliter id eos facere affirmans, quod septimani ferme partem ætatis suae perdent vacando, et multa in tempore urgentia non agendo lædantur.* “That they lost the seventh part of their life in keeping their Sabbaths; and injured themselves by abstaining from the performance of many necessary things in such times.” He did not consider that the Roman calendar and customs gave them many more idle days than God had prescribed in Sabbaths to the Jews. The Sabbath is a most wise and beneficent ordinance.

Verse 9. She remembereth not her last end] Although evident marks of her pollution appeared about her, and the land was defiled by her sinfulness even to its utmost borders, she had no thought or consideration of what must be the consequence of all this at the last.—*Blayney.*

Verse 11. They have given their pleasant things] Jerusalem is compared to a woman brought into great straits, who parts with her jewels and trinkets in order to purchase by them the necessaries of life.

Verse 12. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?] The desolations and distress brought upon this city and its inhabitants had scarcely any parallel. Excessive abuse of God's accumulated mercies calls for singular and exemplary punishment.

Verse 14. The yoke of my transgressions] I am now tied and bound by the chain of my sins; and it is so *wreathed*, so *doubled* and *twisted* round me, that I cannot free myself. A fine representation of the miseries of a penitent soul, which feels that nothing but the pitifulness of God's mercy can loose it.

Verse 15. Called an assembly] The Chaldean army, composed of various nations, which God commissioned to destroy Jerusalem.

Verse 17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands] Extending the hands is the form in supplication.

Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman] To whom none dared to approach, either to help or comfort, because of the law, ^{<B1519>} **Leviticus 15:19-27.**

Verse 19. I called for my lovers] My allies; the *Egyptians* and others.

Verse 20. Abroad the sword bereaveth] WAR is through the *country*; *and at home death*; the pestilence and famine rage in the city; calamity in every shape is fallen upon me.

Virgil represents the calamities of Troy under the same image:—

——— *Nec soli pœnas dant sanguine Teucri:
Quondam etiam victis redit in præcordia virtus;
Victoresque cadunt Danai. Crudelis ubique
Luctus, ubique Pavor, et plurima mortis imago.
Æneid. lib. ii. 366.*

*“Not only Trojans fall; but, in their turn,
The vanquished triumph, and the victors mourn.
Ours take new courage from despair and night;
Confused the fortune is, confused the fight.
All parts resound with tumults, plaints, and fears;
And grisly death in sundry shapes appears.”*
DRYDEN.

So Milton—

*“————— Despair
Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch;
And over them triumphant Death his dart Shook.”*
Par. Lost, B. xi. 489.

Jeremiah, ^{<24021>}Jeremiah 9:21, uses the same image:—

*Death is come up into our windows:
He hath entered our palaces,
To cut off the infants without,
And the young men in our streets.*

So Silius Italicus, II. 548:—

*Mors graditur, vasto pandens cava guttura rletu,
Casuroque inhians populo.*
*“Death stalks along, and opens his
hideous throat to gulp down the people.”*

Verse 21. They have heard that I sigh] My affliction is public enough; but no one comes to comfort me.

They are glad that thou hast done it] On the contrary, they exult in my misery; and they see that THOU hast done what *they* were incapable of performing.

Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.] Babylon shall be visited in her turn; and thy judgments poured out upon her shall equal her state with my own. See the last six chapters of the preceding prophecy for the accomplishment of this prediction.

Verse 22. Let all their wickedness come before thee] That is, Thou wilt call their crimes also into remembrance; and thou wilt do unto them by siege, sword, famine, and captivity, what thou hast done to me. Though

thy judgments, because of thy long-suffering, are slow; yet, because of thy righteousness, they are sure.

For my sighs are many] My desolations continue; and *my heart* is *faint*-my political and physical strength almost totally destroyed.

Imprecations in the sacred writings are generally to be understood as *declarative* of the evils they indicate; or, that such evils will take place. No prophet of God ever wished desolation on those against whom he was directed to prophesy.

LAMENTATIONS

CHAPTER 2

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

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud] The women in the eastern countries wear veils, and often very costly ones. Here, Zion is represented as being veiled by the hand of God's judgment. And what is the veil? A *dark cloud*, by which she is entirely obscured.

Instead of *ynda Adonai, lord, twenty-four* of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., and some of the most ancient of my own, read *hwby Yehovah, LORD*, as in ~~2016~~ **Lamentations 2:2.**

The beauty of Israel] His *Temple*.

His footstool] The ark of the covenant, often so called. The rendering of my old MS. Bible is curious:—*And record not of his litil steging-stole of his feet, in the dai of his woodnesse.* To be *wood* signifies, in our ancient language, to be *mad*.

Verse 2. The Lord hath swallowed up] It is a strange figure when thus applied: but Jehovah is here represented as having swallowed down Jerusalem and all the cities and fortifications in the land: that is, he has permitted them to be destroyed. See ~~2016~~ **Lamentations 1:5.**

Verse 3. The horn of Israel] His *power* and *strength*. It is a metaphor taken from cattle, whose principal strength lies in their *horns*.

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

Verse 4. He hath bent his bow—he stood with his right hand] This is the attitude of the archer. He first bends his bow; then sets his arrow upon

the string; and, lastly, placing his right hand on the lower end of the arrow, in connexion with the string, takes his aim, and prepares to let fly.

Verse 6. As if it were of a garden] “As it were the garden of his own hedging.”—*Blayney*.

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

Verse 7. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord] Instead of the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, nothing but the sounds of warlike instruments are to be heard.

Verse 8. He hath stretched out a line] The *line of devastation*; marking what was to be pulled down and demolished.

Verse 9. Her gates are sunk into the ground] The consequence of their being long thrown down and neglected. From this it appears that the captivity had already lasted a considerable time.

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

Verse 10. Sit upon the ground] See Clarke’s note on “^{<2010>}Lamentations 1:1”.

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

Verse 11. Swoon in the streets of the city.] Through the excess of the famine.

Verse 12. When their soul was poured out into their mothers’ bosom.] When, in endeavouring to draw nourishment from the breasts of their exhausted mothers, they breathed their last in their bosoms! How dreadfully afflicting was this!

Verse 13. What thing shall I take] Or, rather, as Dr. *Blayney*, “What shall I urge to thee?” How shall I comfort thee?

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

Verse 14. They have not discovered thine iniquity] They did not reprove for sin, they flattered them in their transgressions; and instead of turning away thy captivity, by turning thee from thy sins, they have pretended visions of good in thy favour, and false burdens for thy enemies.

Verse 15. The perfection of beauty] This probably only applied to the *temple*. Jerusalem never was a fine or splendid city; but the temple was most assuredly the most splendid building in the world.

Verse 16. This is the day that we looked for] Jerusalem was the envy of the surrounding nations: they longed for its destruction, and rejoiced when it took place.

Verse 17. The Lord hath done that] This and the *sixteenth* verse should be interchanged, to follow the order of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet; as the *sixteenth* has *p phe* for its acrostic letter, and the *seventeenth* has [*ain*, which should precede the other in the order of the alphabet.

Verse 18. O wall of the daughter of Zion] *^wyx tb tmwj chomath bath tsiyon, wall of the daughter of Zion*. These words are probably those of the passengers, who appear to be affected by the desolations of the land; and they address the people, and urge them to plead with God day and night for their restoration. But what is the meaning of *wall of the daughter of Zion*? I answer I do not know. It is certainly harsh to say “O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night.” Zion’s *ways* may *lament*, and her *streets mourn*; but how the *walls* can be said to *weep* is not so easy to be understood, because there is no parallel for it. One of my most ancient MSS. *omits* the three words; and in it the text stands thus: “Their heart cried unto the Lord, Let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest,” &c.

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

Verse 19. Arise, cry out in the night] This seems to refer to Jerusalem besieged. Ye who keep the night watches, pour out your hearts before the Lord, instead of calling the time of night, &c.; or, when you call it, send up a fervent prayer to God for the safety and relief of the place.

Verse 20. Consider to whom thou hast done this] Perhaps the best sense of this difficult verse is this: “Thou art our *Father*, we are thy *children*; wilt thou *destroy thy own offspring*? Was it ever heard that a mother devoured her own child, a helpless infant of a span long?” That it was foretold that there should be such distress in the siege,—that mothers should be obliged to eat their own children, is evident enough from ^{<1325>}**Leviticus 26:29**; ^{<1525>}**Deuteronomy 28:53, 56, 57**; but the former view of the subject seems the most natural and is best supported by the *context*. The *priest* and the *prophet* are slain; the *young* and *old* lie on the ground in the streets; the *virgins* and *young men* are fallen by the sword. “THOU hast slain them in the day of thine anger; THOU hast killed, and not pitied.” See ^{<2040>}**Lamentations 4:10**.

Verse 22. Thou hast called as in a solemn day] It is by thy influence alone that so many enemies are called together at one time; and they have so hemmed us in that none could escape, and none remained unslain or uncaptivated, Perhaps the figure is the collecting of the people in Jerusalem on one of the solemn annual festivals. God has called terrors together to feast on Jerusalem, similar to the convocation of the people from all parts of the land to one of those annual festivals. The indiscriminate slaughter of young and old, priest and prophet, all ranks and conditions, may be illustrated by the following verses from *Lucan*, which appear as if a translation of the *nineteenth*, *twentieth*, and *twenty-first* verses of this chapter:—

*Nobilitas cum plebe perit; lateque vagatur
Ensis, et a nullo revocatum est pectore ferrum.
Stat cruor in Templis; multaue rubentia cæde
Lubrica saxa madent. Nulli sua profuit ætas.
Non senes extremum piguit vergentibus annis
Præcipitasse diem; nec primo in limine vitæ,
Infanti miseri nascentia rumpere fata.
Pharsal. lib. ii., 101.*

*“With what a slide devouring slaughter passed,
And swept promiscuous orders in her haste;
O’er noble and plebeian ranged the sword,
Nor pity nor remorse one pause afford!
The sliding streets with blood were clotted o’er,
And sacred temples stood in pools of gore.
The ruthless steel, impatient of delay,
Forbade the sire to linger out his day:
It struck the bending father to the earth,
And cropped the wailing infant at its birth.”*

ROWE.

LAMENTATIONS

CHAPTER 3

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

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. I am the man that hath seen affliction] Either the prophet speaks here of himself, or he is personating his miserable countrymen. This and other passages in this poem have been applied to Jesus Christ's passion; but, in my opinion, without any foundation.

Verse 2. He hath-brought me into darkness] In the sacred writings, *darkness* is often taken for *calamity*; *light*, for *prosperity*.

Verse 5. He hath builded against me] Perhaps there is a reference here to the *mounds* and *ramparts* raised by the Chaldeans in order to take the city.

Verse 7. He hath hedged me about] This also may refer to the lines drawn round the city during the siege. But these and similar expressions in the following verses may be merely metaphorical, to point out their *straitened*, *oppressed*, and *distressed* state.

Verse 9. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone] He has put insuperable obstacles in my way; and confounded all my projects of deliverance and all my expectations of prosperity.

Verse 12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.] One might conjecture that the following thought in the *Toozek i Teemour* was borrowed from this:—

“One addressed the caliph Aaly, and said, ‘If the *heavens* were a *bow*, and the *earth* the *cord* thereof; if *calamities* were *arrows*, *man* the *butt* for those arrows; and the holy blessed *God* the unerring

marksman; where could the sons of Adam flee for succour?’ The caliph replied, ‘The children of Adam must flee unto the Lord.’”

This was the state of poor Jerusalem. It seemed as a *butt* for all God’s *arrows*; and each *arrow* of *calamity* entered into the soul, for God was the *unerring marksman*.

Verse 13. The arrows of his quiver] *wtpva ynb beney ashpatho*, “The sons of his quiver.” The *issue* or *effect*; the subject, adjunct, or accident, or produce of a thing, is frequently denominated its *son* or *child*. So *arrows* that *issue* from a *quiver* are here termed *the sons of the quiver*.

Verse 15. He hath filled me with bitterness] *pyrwrmb bimrorim*, with bitternesses, bitter upon bitter.

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

Verse 16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones] What a figure to express *disgust*, *pain*, and the consequent incapacity of *taking food* for the support of life; a man, instead of bread, being obliged to eat *small pebbles* till all his teeth are *broken to pieces* by endeavouring to grind them. One can scarcely read this description without feeling the *toothache*. The next figure is not less expressive.

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

Verse 17. Thou hast removed my soul] Prosperity is at such an utter distance from me, that it is impossible I should ever reach it; and as to *happiness*, I have forgotten whether I have ever tasted of it.

Verse 18. And my hope] That first, that last support of the miserable-it is gone! it is perished! The sovereign God alone can revive it.

Verse 20. By soul—is humbled in me.] It is evident that in the preceding verses there is a *bitterness of complaint* against the *bitterness of adversity*, that is not becoming to *man* when under the chastising hand of God; and, while indulging this feeling, all *hope* fled. Here we find a different feeling; he *humbles* himself under the mighty hand of God, and then his *hope* revives, ^{<21121>} **Lamentations 3:21.**

Verse 22. It is of **the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed]** Being thus *humbled*, and seeing *himself* and his *sinfulness* in a proper point of view, he finds that God, instead of dealing with him in *judgment*, has dealt with him in *mercy*; and that though the affliction was excessive, yet it was less than his iniquity deserved. If, indeed, any sinner be kept out of hell, it is because God’s *compassion* faileth not.

Verse 23. They are **new every morning]** Day and night proclaim the mercy and compassion of God. Who could exist throughout the *day*, if there were not a continual superintending Providence? Who could be preserved in the *night*, if the Watchman of Israel ever slumbered or slept?

Verse 24. The Lord is my portion] See Clarke on “^{<19357>}Psalm 119:57”.

Verse 26. It is **good that a man should both hope]** *Hope* is essentially necessary to *faith*; he that *hopes not*, *cannot believe*; if there be no *expectation*, there can be no *confidence*. When a man *hopes* for salvation, he should not only *wait* for it, but use every means that may lead to it; for *hope* cannot live, if there be no *exercise*. If *hope* become *impatient*, *faith* will be impossible: for who can believe for his salvation when his mind is *agitated*? He must therefore *quietly wait*. He must *expect*, and yet be *dumb*, as the words imply; ever feeling his *utter unworthiness*; and, without *murmuring*, struggle into life.

Verse 27. That he bear the yoke in his youth.] Early *habits*, when good, are invaluable. Early *discipline* is equally so. He who has not got under wholesome restraint in youth will never make a useful man, a good man, nor a happy man.

Verse 28. He sitteth alone] He has learned that necessary lesson of *independence*, that shows him how *he is to serve himself*; to *give no*

trouble to others; and keep his troubles, as far as possible, in his own bosom.

Verse 29. He putteth his mouth in the dust] Lives in a state of deep humility.

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

Verse 30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth] He has that love that is not provoked. He is not quarrelsome, nor apt to resent injuries; he suffers long and is kind. Or, it may be rendered, “let him give his cheek.”

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

Verse 31. The Lord] *ynda Adonai*; but one of my ancient MSS. has *hwby Jehovah*. The above verse is quoted in reference to our Lord’s passion, by ~~1062~~ **Matthew 26:62.**

Verse 33. For he doth not afflict willingly] It is no pleasure to God to afflict men. He takes no delight in our pain and misery: yet, like a tender and intelligent parent, he uses the rod; not to gratify himself, but to profit and save us.

Verse 34. To crush under his feet] He can neither gain credit nor pleasure in trampling upon those who are already *bound*, and in suffering; such he knows to be the state of man here below. From which it most assuredly follows, that God never afflicts us but for our good, nor chastises but that we may be partakers of his holiness.

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

In ~~2134~~ **Lamentations 3:34-36**, certain acts of tyranny, malice, and injustice are specified, which men often indulge themselves in the practice of towards one another, but which the Divine goodness is far from countenancing or approving by any similar conduct.—*Blayney*.

Verse 35. To turn aside the right of a man] To make a man lose his right, because one of the higher orders opposes him. Dr. *Blayney* thinks that *ʿwyl* [*elyon*, instead of being referred to *God*, should be considered as pointing out one of the *chief* of the people. I do not see that we gain any thing by this. The evil fact is, *turning aside the right of a man*; and the aggravation of it is, doing it *before the face of the Most High*; that is, in a court of justice, where *God* is ever considered to be present.

Verse 36. To subvert a man in his cause] To prevent his having justice done him in a lawsuit, &c., by undue interference, as by suborning false witnesses, or exerting any kind of influence in opposition to truth and right.—*Blayney*.

The Lord approved not.] Instead of *ynda Adonai*, seventeen MSS., of *Kennicott's*, and one ancient of my own, have *hwhy Yehovah. Approveth not, har al lo raah*, doth not see, turns away his face from it, abhors it.

Verse 39. Wherefore doth a living man complain] He who has his life still lent to him has small cause of complaint. How great soever his affliction may be, he is still *alive*; therefore, he may seek and find mercy unto eternal life. Of this, *death* would deprive him; therefore let not a *living* man complain.

Verse 40. Let us search] How are we to get the pardon of our sins? The prophet tells us: 1. Let us examine ourselves. 2. “Let us turn again to the Lord.” 3. “Let us lift up our heart;” let us make fervent prayer and supplication for mercy. 4. “Let us lift up our hand;” let us solemnly promise to be his, and bind ourselves in a covenant to be the Lord’s only: so much *lifting up the hand to God* implies. Or, let us put our heart on our hand, and offer it to God; so some have translated this clause. 5. “We have transgressed;” let our confession of sin be fervent and sincere. 6. And to us who profess *Christianity* it may be added, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* as having *died for thee*; and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life. Verses 46, 47, 48, {²⁵¹³⁶**Lamentations 3:46-48,**} beginning with *p phe*, should, as to the order of the alphabet, follow 49, 50, 51, {²⁵¹³⁹**Lamentations 3:49-51,**} which begin with [*ain*, which in its grammatical position precedes the former.

Verse 47. Fear and a snare] See Clarke on “²⁴⁸¹³**Jeremiah 48:13**”.

Verse 48. Mine eye runneth down] I weep incessantly.

Verse 51. Mine eye affecteth mine heart] What I *see* I *feel*. I see nothing but *misery*; and I *feel*, in consequence, nothing but *pain*. There have been various translations of the original: but they all amount to this.

The daughters of my city.] The villages about Jerusalem.

Verse 52. Mine enemies chased me] From this to the end of the chapter the prophet speaks of his own personal sufferings, and especially of those which he endured in the *dungeon*. See ^{<2430>}**Jeremiah 38:6**, &c.

Verse 56. Hide not thine ear at my breathing] He dared not even to *complain*, nor to *cry*, nor to *pray aloud*: he was obliged to *whisper* his prayer to God. It was only a *breathing*.

Verse 57. Fear not.] How powerful is this word when spoken by the Spirit of the Lord to a disconsolate heart. To *every mourner* we may say, on the authority of God, *Fear not!* God will plead thy cause, and redeem thy soul.

Verse 60. Thou hast seen—all their imaginations] Every thing is open to the eye of God. Distressed soul! though *thou* knowest not *what* thy enemies *meditate* against thee; yet he who *loves thee* does, and will infallibly defeat all *their* plots, and save *thee*.

Verse 65. Give them sorrow of heart] They shall have a *callous* heart, *covered* with *obstinacy*, and thy *execration*. The former is their *state*, the latter their *fate*. This is the consequence of their hardening their hearts from thy fear. *Blayney* translates, “Thou wilt give with a hearty concordance thy curse unto them.” That is, Thou wilt give it to them freely, and without reserve; intimating that God felt no longer any bowels of compassion for them. Formerly he inflicted punishments with reluctance, while there was any hope of amendment: but, in the instance before us, the case was so hopeless, that God acts according to the simple principle of vindictive justice. The prophet therefore considers them on the utmost verge of final reprobation: another plunge, and they are lost for ever.

Verse 66. Persecute and destroy them] Thou wilt pursue them with destruction. These are all *declaratory*, not *imprecatory*.

From under the heavens of the Lord.] This verse seems to allude to the Chaldaic prediction, in ^{<2401>}**Jeremiah 10:11**. By their conduct they will bring on themselves the curse denounced against their enemies.

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

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

LAMENTATIONS

CHAPTER 4

The present deplorable state of the nation is now contrasted with its ancient prosperity, 1-12; and the unhappy change ascribed, in a great degree, to the profligacy of the priests and prophets, 13-16. The national calamities are tenderly lamented, 17-20. The ruin of the Edomites also, who had insulted the Jews in their distress, is ironically predicted, 21. See ^{<19070>}Psalm 137:7, and ^{<31010>}Obadiah 1:10-12. The chapter closes with a gracious promise of deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, 22.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4

Verse 1. How is the gold become dim] The prophet contrasts, in various affecting instances, the wretched circumstances of the Jewish nation, with the flourishing state of their affairs in former times. Here they are compared to gold, **bhz** *zahab*, native gold from the mine, which, contrary to its nature, is become *dim*, is tarnished; and even the *fine*, the *sterling gold*, **µtk** *kethem*, that which was stamped to make it *current*, is *changed* or *adulterated*, so as to be no longer passable. This might be applied to the *temple*, but particularly to the fallen *priests* and apostate *prophets*.

The stones of the sanctuary] **vdq ynba** *abney kodesh*, the *holy stones*; the Jewish godly men, who were even then the *living stones* of which God built his *Church*.

Verse 2. The precious sons of Zion] The Jewish priests and Jewish believers.

Comparable to fine gold] Who were of the *pure standard* of holiness; holy, because God who called them is holy; but now esteemed no better than *earthen pitchers*-vessels of dishonour in comparison of what they once were.

Verse 3. Even the sea monsters draw out the breast] The *whales* give suck to their young ones. The word **ˆynt** *tannin*, signifies all *large* and *cruel* creatures, whether *aquatic* or *terrestrial*; and need not here be restrained to the *former* sort. My Old MS. Bible translates curiously: ~~Bot~~

and the cruel bestis that ben clepid Lamya, and thei nakeden ther tetis, geve ther whelpis souken.

Like the ostriches in the wilderness.] For her carelessness about her eggs, and her inattention to her *young*, the ostrich is proverbial.

Verse 4. The tongue of the sucking child] See Clarke's note on "La 2:12".

Verse 5. Embrace dunghills.] Lie on *straw* or *rubbish*, instead of the costly carpets and sofas on which they formerly stretched themselves.

Verse 6. For the punishment] He thinks the punishment of *Jerusalem* far greater than that of *Sodom*. That was destroyed *in a moment*, while all her inhabitants were in *health* and *strength*; Jerusalem fell by the most *lingering* calamities; *her men partly destroyed by the sword, and partly by the famine*.

Instead of *no hands stayed on her*, Blayney translates, "Nor were hands weakened in her." Perhaps the meaning is, "Sodom was destroyed in a moment without any human labour." It was a judgment from *God himself*: so the sacred text: "The LORD rained down fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven." See ^{<011924>}Genesis 19:24.

Verse 7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow] *ryzn nazir* does not always signify a *person separated* under a *religious vow*; it sometimes denotes what is *chief* or *eminent*. It is applied to *Joseph*, ^{<014926>}Genesis 49:26. Blayney therefore translates here, HER NOBLES.

"Her nobles were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk; They were ruddier on the bone than rubies; their veining was the sapphires."

On which he remarks:—"In the first line the *whiteness* of their skin is described, and in the second, their flesh;" and as *rzg gazar* signifies to *divide* and *intersect*, as the *blue veins* do on the surface of the body, these are without doubt intended.

Milk will most certainly well apply to the *whiteness* of the *skin*; the beautiful *ruby* to the *ruddiness* of the *flesh*; and the *sapphire*, in its clear transcendent *purple*, to the *veins* in a fine complexion. The reverse of this state, as described in the following verse, needs no explanation. The *face* was a dismal *dark brown*, the *flesh gone*, the *skin shrivelled*, and apparently wrapped round the *bones*.

Verse 10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children] See Clarke on “La 2:20”. But here there is a reference to mothers eating their own children; and this was done, not by mothers cruel and brutal, but by *twynmj r myvn* *nashim rachmaniyoth*, the *compassionate*, the *tender-hearted mothers*. From these horrible scenes it is well to pass with as hasty a step as possible.

Verse 12. The kings of the earth] Jerusalem was so well fortified, both by nature and art, that it appeared as a miracle that it should be taken at all.

Verse 13. For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests] These most wretched beings, under the pretense of *zeal for the true religion*, persecuted the *genuine prophets, priests, and people of God*, and caused their blood to be shed in the midst of the city, in the most open and public manner; exactly as the murderous priests, and blood-thirsty preachers, under the reign of bloody Queen Mary, did in England. However, the profligate priests and idolatrous prophets in Jerusalem, only *shed* the blood of the saints of God there: but the sanguinary papists, in the above reign, *burnt* the blood here, for they *burnt the people alive*; and at the same time, in their worse than Molochean cruelty, consigned, with all the fervour peculiar to their then ruthless Church, the *souls* of those whom they thus massacred, to the bitter pains of eternal death! O earth, cover not thou their blood!

Verse 14. They have wandered as blind men in the streets] Rather, “They ran frantic through the streets, they were stained with blood.” This was in their pretended zeal for their cause. Bishop *Bonner*, who was at the head of those sanguinary executions in England, was accustomed to *buffet* the poor Protestants, when on their examinations they were too powerful for him in argument:—

*“He proved his doctrine orthodox,
By apostolic blows and knocks.”*

Just as his *elder brethren*, the false priests and prophets of Jerusalem.

Verse 15. When they fled away] These priests and prophets were so *bad*, that the very *heathen* did not like to permit them to sojourn among them. The prophet now resumes the history of the siege.

Verse 17. We have watched for a nation] Viz., the Egyptians, who were their pretended allies, but were neither *able* nor *willing* to help them against the Chaldeans.

Verse 18. We cannot go in our streets] Supposed to refer to the *darts* and other *missiles* cast from the mounds which they had raised on the outside of the walls, by which those who walked in the streets were grievously annoyed, and could not shield themselves.

Verse 19. They pursued us upon the mountains] They hunted down the poor Jews like wild beasts in every part of the country by their marauding parties, whilst the great army besieged Jerusalem. But this may apply to the pursuit of Zedekiah. See what follows.

Verse 20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord] That is, Zedekiah the king, who was as *the life of the city*, was taken in his flight by the Chaldeans, and his eyes were put out; so that he was wholly unfit to perform any function of government; though they had fondly hoped that if they surrendered and should be led captives, yet they should be permitted to live under their own laws and king in the land of their bondage.

Verse 21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom] A strong irony.

The cup also shall pass through unto thee] Thou who hast triumphed in our disasters shalt shortly have enough of thy own. They had joined themselves to the Chaldeans, (see ^{<13070>} **Psalm 137:7**;) and therefore they should share in the desolations of Babylon.

Verse 22. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion] On the contrary: Rejoice, O Jerusalem, for thy captivity will soon end; thy sufferings are nearly completed; thou shalt soon return to thy own land: but he will *visit thy iniquity, O Edom; he will discover thy sins*. When sin is *pardoned*, it is said to be *covered*: here, God says he will *not cover the sins of Edom*—he will not *pardon them*; they shall drink the cup of wrath.

The promise in this last verse may refer to Jerusalem under the Gospel. When they receive Christ crucified, they shall be gathered from all nations, become one with the Church among the Gentiles, be one flock under one and the same Shepherd, and shall be *carried no more into captivity*.

LAMENTATIONS

CHAPTER 5

This chapter is, as it were, an epiphonema, or conclusion to the four preceding, representing the nation as groaning under their calamities, and humbly supplicating the Divine favour, 1-22.

NOTES ON CHAP. 5

Verse 1. Remember, O Lord] In the *Vulgate*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, this is headed, "The prayer of Jeremiah." In my old MS. Bible: *Here bigynmeth the orison of Jeremye the prophete.*

Though this chapter consists of exactly *twenty-two* verses, the *number of letters* in the *Hebrew alphabet*, yet the *acrostic* form is no longer observed. Perhaps any thing so technical was not thought proper when in agony and distress (under a sense of God's displeasure on account of sin) they prostrated themselves before him to ask for mercy. Be this as it may, no attempt appears to have been made to throw these verses into the form of the preceding chapters. It is properly a *solemn prayer of all the people*, stating their past and present sufferings, and praying for God's mercy.

Behold our reproach.] *cybh hebita*. But many MSS. of *Kennicott's*, and the oldest of my own, add the *h he, paragodic, hcybh hebitah*, "Look down earnestly with commiseration;" for *paragodic letters* always *increase* the sense.

Verse 2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers] The greater part of the Jews were either slain or carried away captive; and even those who were left under *Gedaliah* were not *free*, for they were vassals to the *Chaldeans*.

Verse 4. We have drunken our water for money] I suppose the meaning of this is, that every thing was taxed by the Chaldeans, and that they kept the management in their own hands, so that *wood* and *water* were both sold, the people not being permitted to help themselves. They were now so lowly reduced by servitude, that they were obliged to pay dearly for those things which formerly were *common* and of *no price*. A poor *Hindoo* in the country never buys *fire-wood*, but when he comes to the city he is obliged to purchase his fuel, and considers it as a matter of great hardship.

Verse 5. Our necks are under persecution] We feel the yoke of our bondage; we are driven to our work like the *bullock*, which has a yoke upon his neck.

Verse 6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians] We have sought alliances both with the Egyptians and Assyrians, and made covenants with them in order to get the necessaries of life. Or, wherever we are now driven, we are obliged to submit to the people of the countries in order to the preservation of our lives.

Verse 7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not] *Nations*, as such, cannot be punished in the *other world*; therefore national judgments are to be looked for only in this life. The punishment which the Jewish nation had been meriting for a series of years came now upon them, because they copied and increased the sins of their fathers, and the cup of their iniquity was full. Thus the *children* might be said to *bear the sins of the fathers*, that is, in *temporal punishment*, for in no other way does God visit these upon the children. See ^{<5180>}**Ezekiel 18:1**, &c.

Verse 8. Servants have ruled over us] To be subject to such is the most painful and dishonourable bondage:—

Quio domini faciant, audent cum talia fures?

Virg. Ecl. iii. 16.

*“Since slaves so insolent are grown,
What may not masters do?”*

Perhaps he here alludes to the Chaldean *soldiers*, whose will the wretched Jews were obliged to obey.

Verse 9. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives] They could not go into the wilderness to feed their cattle, or to get the necessaries of life, without being harassed and plundered by marauding parties, and by these were often exposed to the peril of their lives. This was predicted by Moses, ^{<6231>}**Deuteronomy 28:31**.

Verse 10. Our skin was black—because of the terrible famine.]

Because of the *searching winds* that burnt up every green thing, destroying vegetation, and in consequence producing a famine.

Verse 11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah.] The evil mentioned here was predicted by Moses, ^{<6283>}**Deuteronomy 28:30, 32**, and by Jeremiah, ^{<24612>}**Jeremiah 6:12**.

Verse 12. Princes are hanged up by their hand] It is very probable that this was a species of punishment. They were suspended from hooks in the wall by their hands till they died through torture and exhaustion. The body of Saul was fastened to the wall of Bethshan, probably in the same way; but his head had already been taken off. They were hung in this way that they might be devoured by the fowls of the air. It was a custom with the Persians after they had slain, strangled, or beheaded their enemies, to hang their bodies upon poles, or empale them. In this way they treated *Histiaeus* of Miletum, and *Leonidas* of Lacedæmon. See *Herodot.* lib. vi. c. 30, lib. vii. c. 238.

Verse 13. They took the young men to grind] This was the work of female slaves. See **Clarke's note on** "^{<23470>}**Isaiah 47:2**".

Verse 14. The elders have ceased from the gate] There is now no more justice administered to the people; they are under military law, or disposed of in every sense according to the caprice of their masters.

Verse 16. The crown is fallen from our head] At feasts, marriages, &c., they used to crown themselves with garlands of flowers; all festivity of this kind was now at an end. Or it may refer to their having lost all *sovereignty*, being made *slaves*.

Verse 18. The foxes walk upon it.] *Foxes* are very numerous in Palestine, see on ^{<07150>}**Judges 15:4**. It was usual among the Hebrews to consider all desolated land to be the resort of wild beasts; which is, in fact, the case every where when the inhabitants are removed from a country.

Verse 19. Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever] THOU sufferest no *change*. Thou didst once *love* us, O let that love be renewed towards us!

Verse 21. Renew our days as of old.] Restore us to our former state. Let us regain our country, our temple, and all the Divine offices of our religion; but, more especially, thy favour.

Verse 22. But thou hast utterly rejected us] It appears as if thou hadst sealed our final reprobation, because thou showest against us *exceeding great wrath*. But *convert us, O Lord, unto thee, and we shall be converted*.

We are now greatly humbled, *feel* our *sin*, and *see* our *folly*: once more restore us, and we shall never again forsake thee! He heard the prayer; and at the end of *seventy* years they were restored to their own land.

This last verse is well rendered in the first printed edition of our Bible, 1535:—*Renue our daies as in olde tyme, for thou hast now banished us longe ynough, and bene sore displeased at us.*

My old MS. Bible is not less nervous: *Neue thou our dais as fro the begynnynge: bot castand aweie thou put us out: thou wrathedist ugein us hugely.*

Dr. *Blayney* translates, “For surely thou hast cast us off altogether:” and adds, “*y* *ki* ought certainly to be rendered as *causal*; God’s having rejected his people, and expressed great indignation against them, being the *cause* and *ground* of the preceding application, in which they pray to be restored to his favour, and the enjoyment of their ancient privileges.”

Pareau thinks no good sense can be made of this place unless we translate interrogatively, as in ^{<2449>}**Jeremiah 14:19**:—

*“Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?
Hath thy soul loathed Sion?”*

On this ground he translates here,

*An enim prorsus nos rejecisses?
Nobis iratus esses usque adeo?*

*“Hast thou indeed utterly cast us off?
Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?”*

Wilt thou extend thy wrath against us so as to show us no more mercy?
This agrees well with the state and feelings of the complainants.

MASORETIC NOTES

Number of verses in this Book, 154.

Middle verse, ^{<2134>}**Lamentations 3:34**.

In one of my oldest MSS., the *twenty-first* verse is repeated at the conclusion of the *twenty-second* verse. In another, yet older, there is only the first word of it, *w**n**b**y**v**h* *hashibenu*, *Convert us!*

Having given in the preceding *preface* and *notes* what I judge necessary to explain the principal difficulties in this very fine and affecting poem, very fitly termed THE LAMENTATIONS, as it justly stands at the *head* of every composition of the kind, I shall add but a few words, and these shall be by way of recapitulation chiefly.

The Hebrews were accustomed to make *lamentations* or *mourning songs* upon the death of great men, princes, and heroes, who had distinguished themselves in arms; and upon any *occasion of public miseries and calamities*. *Calmet* thinks they had *collections* of these sorts of Lamentations: and refers in proof to ^{<14825>}**2 Chronicles 35:25**: “And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations, to this day; and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations.”

From this verse it is evident, that Jeremiah had composed a funeral elegy on *Josiah*: but, from the complexion of *this Book*, it is most evident that it was not composed on the death of *Josiah*, but upon the *desolations of Jerusalem*, &c., as has already been noted. His *lamentation for Josiah* is therefore lost. It appears also, that on particular occasions, perhaps *anniversaries*, these *lamentations* were sung by men and women singers, who performed their *several parts*; for these were all *alternate* or *responsive songs*. And it is very likely, that this book was sung in the same way; the *men* commencing with **a** *aleph*, the *women* responding with **b** *beth* and so on. Several of this sort of songs are still extant. We have those which David composed on the death of his son *Absalom*, and on the death of his friend *Jonathan*. And we have those made by *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, on the desolation of *Egypt*, *Tyre*, *Sidon*, and *Babylon*. See ^{<23140>}**Isaiah 14:4, 5; 15:1-9; 16:1-14**; ^{<24072>}**Jeremiah 7:29; 9:10; 48:32**; ^{<25190>}**Ezekiel 19:1; 28:11; 32:2**; ^{<24017>}**Jeremiah 9:17**. Besides these, we have *fragments* of others in different places; and references to some, which are now finally lost.

In the *two* first *chapters* of this book, the prophet describes, principally, the calamities of the siege of Jerusalem.

In the *third*, he deplores the persecutions which he himself had suffered; though he may in this be *personifying* the city and state; many of his own sufferings being illustrative of the calamities that fell generally upon the city and people at large.

The *fourth* chapter is employed chiefly on the ruin and desolation of the city and temple; and upon the misfortunes of *Zedekiah*, of whom he speaks in a most respectful, tender, and affecting manner:—

“The anointed of Jehovah, the breadth of our nostrils, was taken in their toils, Under whose shadow we said, We shall live among the nations.”

At the end he speaks of the cruelty of the Edomites, who had insulted Jerusalem in her miseries, and contributed to its demolition. These he threatens with the wrath of God.

The *fifth* chapter is a kind of *form of prayer* for the Jews, in their dispersions and captivity. In the conclusion of it, he speaks of their fallen royalty; attributes all their calamities to their rebellion and wickedness; and acknowledges that there can be no end to their misery, but in their restoration to the Divine favour.

This last chapter was probably written some considerable time *after* the rest: for it supposes the temple to be so deserted, that the *foxes walked undisturbed among its ruins*, and that the people were already in captivity.

The poem is a monument of the *people's* iniquity and rebellion; of the displeasure and judgment of GOD against them; and of the piety, eloquence, and incomparable ability of the *poet*.