

# LAMENTATIONS

## OF JEREMIAH

Commentary by **A. R. FAUSSETT**

### INTRODUCTION

In the Hebrew Bible these Elegies of Jeremiah, five in number, are placed among the *Chetuvim*, or “Holy Writings” (“the Psalms,” etc., <sup><4244></sup>Luke 24:44), between Ruth and Ecclesiastes. But though in classification of compositions it belongs to the *Chetuvim*, it probably followed the prophecies of Jeremiah originally. For thus alone can we account for the prophetic books being enumerated by JOSEPHUS [*Against Apion*, 1.1.8] as *thirteen*: he must have reckoned Jeremiah and Lamentations as one book, as also Judges and Ruth, the two books of Samuel, etc., Ezra and Nehemiah. The Lamentations naturally follow the book which sets forth the circumstances forming the subject of the Elegies. Similar lamentations occur in <sup><4019></sup>2 Samuel 1:19, etc. <sup><4033></sup>2 Samuel 3:33. The Jews read it in their synagogues on the ninth of the month Ab, which is a fast for the destruction of their holy city. As in <sup><4455></sup>2 Chronicles 35:25, “lamentations” are said to have been “*written*” by Jeremiah on the death of Josiah, besides it having been made “an ordinance in Israel” that “singing women” should “*speak*” of that king in lamentations; JOSEPHUS [*Antiquities*, 10.5.1], JEROME, etc., thought that they are contained in the present collection. But plainly the subject here is the overthrow of the Jewish city and people, as the *Septuagint* expressly states in an introductory verse to their version. The probability is that there is embodied in these Lamentations much of the *language* of Jeremiah’s original Elegy on Josiah, as <sup><4455></sup>2 Chronicles 35:25 states; but it is now applied to the more universal calamity of the whole state, of which Josiah’s sad death was the forerunner. Thus <sup><2040></sup>Lamentations 4:20, originally applied to Josiah, was “written,” in its subsequent reference, not so much of him, as of the *throne of Judah in general*, the last representative of which, Zedekiah, had just been carried away. The language, which is true of good Josiah, is too strong in favor of Zedekiah, except when viewed as representative of the crown in general. It was natural to embody the language of the Elegy on Josiah in the more

general lamentations, as his death was the presage of the last disaster that overthrew the throne and state.

The title more frequently given by the Jews to these Elegies is, "How" (*Hebrew, Eechah*), from the first word, as the Pentateuch is similarly called by the first *Hebrew* word of <sup><0000></sup>Genesis 1:1. The *Septuagint* calls it "Lamentations," from which we derive the name. It refers not merely to the events which occurred at the capture of the city, but to the sufferings of the citizens (the penalty of national sin) from the very beginning of the siege; and perhaps from before it, under Manasseh and Josiah (<sup><4631></sup>2 Chronicles 33:11 35:20-25); under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah (<sup><4812></sup>2 Chronicles 36:3,4,6,7,10,11, etc.). LOWTH says, "Every letter is written with a tear, every word the sound of a broken heart." The style is midway between the simple elevation of prophetic writing and the loftier rhythm of Moses, David, and Habakkuk. Terse conciseness marks the *Hebrew* original, notwithstanding Jeremiah's diffuseness in his other writings. The Elegies are grouped in stanzas as they arose in his mind, without any artificial system of arrangement as to the thoughts. The five Elegies are acrostic: each is divided into twenty-two stanzas or verses. In the first three Elegies the stanzas consist of triplets of lines (excepting <sup><5007></sup>Lamentations 1:7 2:19, which contain each four lines) each beginning with the letters of the *Hebrew* alphabet in regular order (twenty-two in number). In three instances (<sup><5216></sup>Lamentations 2:16,17 3:46-51 4:16,17) two letters are transposed. In the third Elegy, each line of the three forming every stanza begins with the same letter. The stanzas in the fourth and fifth Elegies consist of two lines each. The fifth Elegy, though having twenty-two stanzas (the number of letters in the *Hebrew* alphabet), just as the first four, yet is not alphabetical; and its lines are shorter than those of the others, which are longer than are found in other *Hebrew* poems, and contain twelve syllables, marked by a caesura about the middle, dividing them into two somewhat unequal parts. The alphabetical arrangement was adopted originally to assist the memory. GROTIUS thinks the reason for the inversion of two of the *Hebrew* letters in <sup><5216></sup>Lamentations 2:16,17 3:46-51 4:16,17, is that the Chaldeans, like the Arabians, used a different order from the Hebrews; in the first Elegy, Jeremiah speaks as a Hebrew, in the following ones, as one subject to the Chaldeans. This is doubtful.

# CHAPTER (ELEGY) 1

## LAMENTATIONS 1:1-22.

### ALEPH.

1. *how is she ... widow! she that was great*, etc. — *English Version* is according to the accents. But the members of each sentence are better balanced in antithesis, thus, “how is she that was great among the nations become as a widow! (how) she who was princess among the provinces (that is, she who ruled over the surrounding provinces from the Nile to the Euphrates, <sup><1518></sup>Genesis 15:18 <sup><1001></sup>1 Kings 4:21 <sup><4028></sup>2 Chronicles 9:26 <sup><4500></sup>Ezra 4:20) become tributary!” [MAURER].

*sit* — on the ground; the posture of mourners (<sup><2000></sup>Lamentations 2:10 <sup><4508></sup>Ezra 9:3). The coin struck on the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, representing Judea as a female sitting solitary under a palm tree, with the inscription, *Judaea Capta*, singularly corresponds to the image here; the language therefore must be prophetic of her state subsequent to Titus, as well as referring retrospectively to her Babylonian captivity.

### BETH.

2. *in the night* — even in the night, the period of rest and oblivion of griefs (<sup><8008></sup>Job 7:3).

*lovers ... friends* — the heathen states allied to Judah, and their idols. The idols whom she “loved” (<sup><2420></sup>Jeremiah 2:20-25) *could* not comfort her. Her former allies *would* not: nay, some “treacherously” joined her enemies against her (<sup><1240></sup>2 Kings 24:2,7 <sup><4307></sup>Psalms 137:7).

### GIMEL.

3. (<sup><2627></sup>Jeremiah 52:27).

*because of great servitude* — that is, in a state “of great servitude,” endured from the Chaldeans. “Because” is made by VATABLUS indicative of the *cause* of her captivity; namely, her having “afflicted” and unjustly brought into “servitude” the manumitted bond-servants (<sup><2608></sup>Jeremiah 34:8-22). MAURER explains it, “Judah has *left her land* (not literally ‘gone into captivity’) because of the yoke imposed on it by Nebuchadnezzar.”

*no rest* — (<sup>4526</sup>Deuteronomy 28:64,65).

*overtook her between ... straits* — image from robbers, who in the East intercept travelers at the narrow passes in hilly regions.

### DALETH.

4. *feasts* — the passover, pentecost (or the feast of weeks), and the feast of tabernacles.

*gates* — once the place of concourse.

### HE.

5. *the chief* — rule her (<sup>4526</sup>Deuteronomy 28:43,44).

*adversaries ... prosper; for the Lord* — All the foes' attempts would have failed, had not God delivered His people into their hands (<sup>3915</sup>Jeremiah 30:15).

### VAU.

6. *beauty ... departed* — her temple, throne, and priesthood.

*harts that find no pasture* — an animal timid and fleet, especially when seeking and not able to "find pasture."

### ZAIN.

7. *remembered* — rather, "remembers," now, in her afflicted state. In the days of her prosperity she did not appreciate, as she ought, the favors of God to her. Now, awakening out of her past lethargy, she feels from what high privileges she has fallen.

*when her people fell*, etc. — that is, after which days of prosperity "her people fell."

*mock at her sabbaths* — The heathen used to mock at the Jews' Sabbath, as showing their idleness, and term them *Sabbatarians* [MARTIAL, 4.4]. Now, said they ironically, ye may keep a continuous Sabbath. So God appointed the length of the captivity (seventy years) to be exactly that of the sum of the Sabbaths in the four hundred ninety years in which the land was denied its Sabbaths (<sup>4933</sup>Leviticus 26:33-35). MAURER translates it "ruin." But *English Version* better expresses the point of their "mocking," namely, their involuntary "Sabbaths," that is, the *cessation* of all national

movements. A fourth line is added in this stanza, whereas in all the others there are but three. So in <sup><1086></sup>Lamentations 2:19.

## CHETH.

8. (<sup><1086></sup>1 Kings 8:46).

*is removed* — as a woman separated from the congregation of God for legal impurity, which is a type of moral impurity. So <sup><2017></sup>Lamentations 1:17 <sup><6117></sup>Leviticus 12:2 15:19, etc.

*her nakedness* — They have treated her as contumeliously as courtesans from whom their clothes are stripped.

*turneth backward* — as modest women do from shame, that is, she is cast down from all hope of restoration [CALVIN].

## TETH.

9. Continuation of the image in <sup><2108></sup>Lamentations 1:8. Her ignominy and misery cannot be concealed but are apparent to all, as if a woman were suffering under such a flow as to reach the end of her skirts.

*remembereth not ... last end* — (<sup><6229></sup>Deuteronomy 32:29 <sup><2407></sup>Isaiah 47:7). She forgot how fatal must be the end of her iniquity. Or, as the words following imply: She, in despair, cannot lift herself up to lay hold of God's promises as to her "latter end" [CALVIN].

*wonderfully* — *Hebrew*, "wonders," that is, with amazing dejection.

*O Lord, behold* — Judah here breaks in, speaking for herself.

*for the enemy hath magnified himself* — What might seem ground for despair, the elated insulting of the enemy, is rather ground for good hope.

## JOD.

10. *for* — *surely* she hath seen, etc.

*heathen ... command ... not enter ... congregation* — for instance, the Ammonites and Moabites (<sup><6238></sup>Deuteronomy 23:3 <sup><4631></sup>Nehemiah 13:1,2). If the heathen, as such, were not allowed to enter the sanctuary for worship, much less were they allowed to enter in order to rob and destroy.

## CAPH.

11. (<sup><2472></sup>Jeremiah 37:21 38:9 52:6).

*given ... pleasant things for meat* — (<sup>4165</sup>2 Kings 6:25 <sup>8014</sup>Job 2:4).

*relieve ... soul* — literally, “to cause the soul or life to return.”

*for I am become vile* — Her sins and consequent sorrows are made the plea in craving God’s mercy. Compare the like plea in <sup>4251</sup>Psalm 25:11.

### LAMED.

**12.** The pathetic appeal of Jerusalem, not only to her neighbors, but even to the strangers “passing by,” as her sorrow is such as should excite the compassion even of those unconnected with her. She here prefigures Christ, whom the language is prophetically made to suit, more than Jerusalem. Compare Israel, that is, Messiah, <sup>2348</sup>Isaiah 49:3. Compare with “pass by,” <sup>4179</sup>Matthew 27:39 <sup>4159</sup>Mark 15:29. As to Jerusalem, <sup>2792</sup>Daniel 9:12. MAURER, from the *Arabic* idiom, translates, “do not go off on your way,” that is, stop, whoever ye are that pass by. *English Version* is simpler.

### MEM.

**13. bones** — a fire which not only consumes the skin and flesh, but penetrates even to my “bones” (that is, my vital powers).

*prevaileth against* — not as ROSENMULLER, “He (Jehovah) hath *broken* them”; a sense not in the *Hebrew*.

*net* — (<sup>3423</sup>Ezekiel 12:13); image from hunting wild beasts. He has so entangled me in His judgments that I cannot escape.

*turned me back* — so that I cannot go forward and get free from His meshes.

### NUN.

**14. yoke ... is bound by his hand** — (<sup>4528</sup>Deuteronomy 28:48). Metaphor from husbandmen, who, after they have bound the yoke to the neck of oxen, hold the rein firmly twisted *round the hand*. Thus the translation will be, “*in His hand*.” Or else, “the yoke of my transgressions” (that is, of punishment for my transgressions) is held so fast fixed on me “*by*” God, that there is no loosening of it; thus *English Version*, “*by His hand*.”

*wreathed* — My sins are like the withes *entwined* about the neck to fasten the yoke to.

*into their hands, from whom* — into the hands of those, from whom, etc. MAURER translates, “*before whom I am not able to stand*.”

## SAMECH.

15. *trodden*, etc. — MAURER, from *Syriac* root, translates, “cast away”; so <sup><1237></sup>2 Kings 23:27. But <sup><13918></sup>Psalm 119:118, supports *English Version*.

*in ... midst of me* — They fell not on the battlefield, but in the heart of the city; a sign of the divine wrath.

*assembly* — the collected forces of Babylon; a very different “assembly” from the solemn ones which once met at Jerusalem on the great feasts. The *Hebrew* means, literally, such a solemn “assembly” or feast (compare <sup><2122></sup>Lamentations 2:22).

*trodden ... virgin ... in a wine-press* — hath forced her blood to burst forth, as the red wine from the grapes trodden in the press (<sup><2318></sup>Isaiah 63:3 <sup><6449></sup>Revelation 14:19,20 19:15).

## AIN.

16. (<sup><2437></sup>Jeremiah 13:17 14:17). Jerusalem is the speaker.

*mine eye, mine eye* — so <sup><2448></sup>Lamentations 4:18, “our end ... our end”; repetition for emphasis.

## PE.

17. Like a woman in labor-throes (<sup><2461></sup>Jeremiah 4:31).

*menstruous woman* — held unclean, and shunned by all; separated from her husband and from the temple (compare <sup><2508></sup>Lamentations 1:8 <sup><6449></sup>Leviticus 14:19, etc.).

## TZADDI.

18. The sure sign of repentance; justifying God, condemning herself (<sup><1483></sup>Nehemiah 9:33 <sup><4504></sup>Psalm 51:4 <sup><2707></sup>Daniel 9:7-14).

*his commandment* — literally, “mouth”; His word in the mouth of the prophets.

## KOPH.

19. *lovers* — (<sup><2502></sup>Lamentations 1:2 <sup><2444></sup>Jeremiah 30:14).

*elders* — in dignity, not merely age.

*sought ... meat* — Their dignity did not exempt them from having to go and seek bread (<sup><2011></sup>Lamentations 1:11).

## RESH.

**20. *bowels ... troubled*** — (<sup><1817></sup>Job 30:27; <sup><2361></sup>Isaiah 16:11 <sup><2049></sup>Jeremiah 4:19 31:20). Extreme mental distress affects the bowels and the whole internal frame.

*heart ... turned* — (<sup><2108></sup>Hosea 11:8); is agitated or fluttered.

*abroad ... sword ... at home ... as death* — (<sup><1625></sup>Deuteronomy 32:25 <sup><2075></sup>Ezekiel 7:15). The “as” does not modify, but intensifies. “Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home *as it were death itself*” (personified), in the form of famine and pestilence (<sup><2282></sup>2 Kings 25:3 <sup><2448></sup>Jeremiah 14:18 52:6). So Habakkuk 2:5, “as death” [MICHAELIS].

## SCHIN.

**21. *they are glad that thou hast done it*** — because they thought that therefore Judah is irretrievably ruined (<sup><2408></sup>Jeremiah 40:3).

*the day ... called* — (but) thou wilt bring on them the day of calamity which thou hast *announced*, namely, by the prophets (<sup><2601></sup>Jeremiah 50:1-46 48:27).

*like ... me* — in calamities (<sup><1508></sup>Psalms 137:8,9 <sup><2625></sup>Jeremiah 51:25, etc.).

## TAU.

**22.** Such prayers against foes are lawful, if the foe be an enemy of God, and if our concern be not for our own personal feeling, but for the glory of God and the welfare of His people.

*come before thee* — so <sup><669></sup>Revelation 16:19, “Babylon *came in remembrance before God*” (compare <sup><1995></sup>Psalms 109:15).



# CHAPTER (ELEGY) 2

## LAMENTATIONS 2:1-22.

### ALEPH.

1. **How** — The title of the collection repeated here, and in <sup><2001></sup>Lamentations 4:1.

**covered ... with a cloud** — that is, with the darkness of ignominy.

**cast down from heaven unto ... earth** — (<sup><41123></sup>Matthew 11:23); dashed down from the highest prosperity to the lowest misery.

**beauty of Israel** — the beautiful temple (<sup><1920></sup>Psalm 29:2 74:7 96:9, *Margin*; <sup><2401></sup>Isaiah 60:7 64:11).

**his footstool** — the ark (compare <sup><1382></sup>1 Chronicles 28:2, with <sup><1991></sup>Psalm 99:5 132:7). They once had gloried more in the ark than in the God whose symbol it was; they now feel it was but His “footstool,” yet that it had been a great glory to them that God deigned to use it as such.

### BETH.

2. **polluted** — by delivering it into the hands of the profane foe. Compare <sup><1883></sup>Psalm 89:39, “*profaned ... crown.*”

### GIMEL.

3. **horn** — worn in the East as an ornament on the forehead, and an emblem of power and majesty (<sup><9120></sup>1 Samuel 2:10 <sup><19217></sup>Psalm 132:17; see on <sup><1485></sup>Jeremiah 48:25).

**drawn back ... fight hand** — (<sup><19711></sup>Psalm 74:11). God has withdrawn the help which He before gave them. Not as HENDERSON, “He has turned back his (*Israel’s*) right hand” (<sup><1898></sup>Psalm 89:43).

### DALETH.

4. (<sup><2501></sup>Isaiah 63:10).

**stood with ... right hand** — He took His stand so as to use His right hand as an adversary. HENDERSON makes the image to be that of an archer *steadying* his right hand to take aim. Not only did He *withdraw* His help, but also took arms against Israel.

**all ... pleasant to ... eye** — (<sup><3825></sup>Ezekiel 24:25). All that were conspicuous for youth, beauty, and rank.

**in ... tabernacle** — the dwellings of Jerusalem.

## HE.

**5. an enemy** — (<sup><2614></sup>Jeremiah 30:14).

**mourning and lamentation** — There is a play of similar sounds in the original, “sorrow and sadness,” to heighten the effect (<sup><8318></sup>Job 30:3, *Hebrew*; <sup><3818></sup>Ezekiel 35:3, *Margin*).

## VAU.

**6. tabernacle** — rather, “He hath violently taken away His *hedge* (the hedge of the place sacred to Him, <sup><8312></sup>Psalm 80:12 89:40 <sup><2315></sup>Isaiah 5:5), as that of a garden” [MAURER]. CALVIN supports *English Version*, “His tabernacle (that is, temple) as (one would take away the temporary cottage or booth) of a garden.” <sup><2108></sup>Isaiah 1:8 accords with this (<sup><8278></sup>Job 27:18).

**places of ... assembly** — the temple and synagogues (<sup><3417></sup>Psalm 74:7,8).

**solemn feasts** — (<sup><2104></sup>Lamentations 1:4).

## ZAIN.

**7. they ... made a noise in ... house of ... Lord, as in ... feast** — The foe’s shout of triumph in the captured temple bore a resemblance (but oh, how sad a contrast as to the *occasion* of it!) to the joyous thanksgivings we used to offer in the same place at our “solemn feasts” (compare <sup><2122></sup>Lamentations 2:22).

## CHETH.

**8. stretched ... a line** — The Easterns used a measuring-line not merely in building, but in destroying edifices (<sup><1213></sup>2 Kings 21:13 <sup><2341></sup>Isaiah 34:11); implying here the unsparing rigidity with which He would exact punishment.

**TETH.**

9. Her gates cannot oppose the entrance of the foe into the city, for they are sunk under a mass of rubbish and earth.

*broken ... bars* — (<sup><26133></sup>Jeremiah 51:30).

*her king ... among ... Gentiles* — (<sup><15286></sup>Deuteronomy 28:36).

*law ... no more* — (<sup><44518></sup>2 Chronicles 15:3). The civil and religious laws were one under the theocracy. “All the legal ordinances (prophetical as well as priestly) of the theocracy, are no more” (<sup><497419></sup>Psalms 74:9 <sup><31723></sup>Ezekiel 7:26).

**JOD.**

10. (<sup><8122></sup>Job 2:12,13). The “elders,” by their example, would draw the others to violent grief.

*the virgins* — who usually are so anxious to set off their personal appearances to advantage.

**CAPH.**

11. *liver is poured*, etc. — that is, as the liver was thought to be the seat of the passions, “all my feelings are poured out and prostrated for,” etc. The “liver,” is here put for the bile (“gall,” <sup><38163></sup>Job 16:13; “bowels,” <sup><32214></sup>Psalms 22:14) in a bladder on the surface of the liver, copiously discharged when the passions are agitated.

*swoon* — through faintness from the effects of hunger.

**LAMED.**

12. *as the wounded* — famine being as deadly as the sword (<sup><26116></sup>Jeremiah 52:6).

*soul ... poured ... into ... mothers bosom* — Instinctively turning to their mother’s bosom, but finding no milk there, they *breathe out their life* as it were “into her bosom.”

**MEM.**

13. *What thing shall I take to witness* — What can I bring forward as a witness, or instance, to prove that others have sustained as grievous ills as thou? I cannot console thee as mourners are often consoled by showing that thy lot is only what others, too, suffer. The “sea” affords the only suitable

emblem of thy woes, by its boundless extent and depth (<sup><2112></sup>Lamentations 1:12 <sup><2192></sup>Daniel 9:12).

## NUN.

**14. *Thy prophets*** — not God's (<sup><1336></sup>Jeremiah 23:26).

***vain ... for thee*** — to gratify thy appetite, not for truth, but for false things.

***not discovered thine iniquity*** — in opposition to God's command to the true prophets (<sup><2301></sup>Isaiah 58:1). Literally, "*They have not taken off (the veil) which was on thine iniquity, so as to set it before thee.*"

***burdens*** — Their prophecies were soothing and flattering; but the result of them was *heavy* calamities to the people, worse than even what the prophecies of Jeremiah, which they in derision called "burdens," threatened. Hence he terms their pretended prophecies "false burdens," which proved to the Jews "causes of their banishment" [CALVIN].

## SAMECH.

**15. *clap ... hands*** — in derision (<sup><1372></sup>Job 27:23 34:37).

***wag ... head*** — (<sup><1291></sup>2 Kings 19:21 <sup><1444></sup>Psalms 44:14).

***perfection of beauty ... joy of ... earth*** — (<sup><1482></sup>Psalms 48:2 50:2). The Jews' enemies quote their very words in scorn.

## PE.

**16, 17.** For the transposition of *Hebrew* letters (*Pe* and *Ain*, <sup><2126></sup>Lamentations 2:16,17) in the order of verses, see *Introduction*.

***opened ... mouth*** — as ravening, roaring wild beasts (<sup><1319></sup>Job 16:9,10 <sup><1273></sup>Psalms 22:13). Herein Jerusalem was a type of Messiah.

***gnash ... teeth*** — in vindictive malice.

***we have seen it*** — (<sup><1352></sup>Psalms 35:21).

## AIN.

**17. *Lord*** — Let not the foe exult as if it was *their* doing. It was "the Lord" who thus fulfilled the threats uttered by His prophets for the guilt of Judea (<sup><1336></sup>Leviticus 26:16-25 <sup><1336></sup>Deuteronomy 28:36-48,53 <sup><1419></sup>Jeremiah 19:9).

## TZADDI.

**18. wall** — (<sup><2108></sup>Lamentations 2:8). Personified. “*Their heart*,” that is, the Jews’; while their heart is lifted up to the Lord in prayer, their speech is addressed to the “wall” (the part being put for *the whole city*).

**let tears**, etc. — (<sup><2447></sup>Jeremiah 14:17). The wall is called on to weep for its own ruin and that of the city. Compare the similar personification (<sup><2104></sup>Lamentations 1:4).

**apple** — the pupil of the eye (<sup><9708></sup>Psalms 17:8).

## KOPH.

**19. cry ... in ... night** — (<sup><9947></sup>Psalms 119:147).

**beginning of ... watches** — that is, the *first* of the three equal divisions (four hours each) into which the ancient Jews divided the night; namely, from sunset to ten o’clock. The second was called “the middle watch” (<sup><0079></sup>Judges 7:19), from ten till two o’clock. The third, “the morning watch,” from two to sunrise (<sup><0149></sup>Exodus 14:24 <sup><0111></sup>1 Samuel 11:11). Afterwards, under the Romans, they had *four* watches (<sup><0425></sup>Matthew 14:25 <sup><0238></sup>Luke 12:38).

**for ... thy ... children** — that God, if He will not spare thee, may *at least* preserve “thy young children.”

**top of ... street** — (<sup><2510></sup>Isaiah 51:20 <sup><Na 3:10></sup>Na 3:10).

*Resh.*

**20. women eat ... fruit** — as threatened (<sup><0329></sup>Leviticus 26:29 <sup><0329></sup>Deuteronomy 28:53,56,57 <sup><2499></sup>Jeremiah 19:9).

**children ... span long** — or else, “children whom they carry in their arms” [MAURER].

## SCHIN.

**21.** (<sup><4867></sup>2 Chronicles 36:17).

## TAU.

**22. Thou hast called as in ... solemn day ... terrors** — Thou hast summoned my enemies against me from all quarters, just as multitudes used to be convened to Jerusalem, on the solemn feast days. The objects, for which the enemies and the festal multitude respectively met, formed a

sad contrast. Compare ~~2015~~ Lamentations 1:15: “called an assembly against me.”

# CHAPTER (ELEGY) 3

## LAMENTATIONS 3:1-66.

Jeremiah proposes his own experience under afflictions, as an example as to how the Jews should behave under theirs, so as to have hope of a restoration; hence the change from *singular* to *plural* (<sup><A182></sup>Lamentations 3:22,40-47). The stanzas consist of three lines, each of which begins with the same *Hebrew* letter.

### ALEPH.

**1-3. *seen affliction*** — his own in the dungeon of Malchiah (<sup><A1816></sup>Jeremiah 38:6); that of his countrymen also in the siege. Both were types of that of Christ.

**2. *darkness*** — calamity.

***light*** — prosperity.

**3. *turneth ... hand*** — to inflict again and again new strokes. “His hand,” which once used to protect me. “Turned ... turneth” implies *repeated* inflictions.

### BETH.

**4-6.** (<sup><B168></sup>Job 16:8).

**5. *builed*** — mounds, as against a besieged city, so as to allow none to escape (so <sup><A1814></sup>Lamentations 3:7,9).

**6. *set me*** — HENDERSON refers this to the custom of placing the dead in a sitting posture.

***dark places*** — sepulchers. As those “dead long since”; so Jeremiah and his people are consigned to oblivion (<sup><B1816></sup>Psalm 88:5,6 143:3 <sup><A1813></sup>Ezekiel 37:13).

### GIMEL.

**7-9. *hedged*** — (<sup><B1823></sup>Job 3:23 <sup><A1816></sup>Hosea 2:6).

***chain*** — literally, “chain of *brass*.”

**8. *shutteth out*** — image from a door *shutting out* any entrance (<sup><1810></sup>Job 30:20). So the antitype. Christ (<sup><1921></sup>Psalm 22:2).

**9. *hewn stone*** — which coheres so closely as not to admit of being broken through.

***paths crooked*** — thwarted our plans and efforts so that none went right.

## DALETH.

**10-13.** (<sup><1806></sup>Job 10:16 <sup><2837></sup>Hosea 13:7,8).

**11. *turned aside*** — made me wander out of the right way, so as to become a prey to wild beasts.

***pulled in pieces*** — (<sup><2001></sup>Hosea 6:1), as a “bear” or a “lion” (<sup><2180></sup>Lamentations 3:10).

**12.** (<sup><1807></sup>Job 7:20).

## HE.

**13-15. *arrows*** — literally, “sons” of His quiver (compare <sup><1804></sup>Job 6:4).

**14.** (<sup><2007></sup>Jeremiah 20:7).

***their song*** — (<sup><1902></sup>Psalm 69:12). Jeremiah herein was a type of Messiah. “All my people” (<sup><1011></sup>John 1:11).

**15. *wormwood*** — (<sup><2095></sup>Jeremiah 9:15). There it is regarded as *food*, namely, the leaves: here as *drink*, namely, the juice.

## VAU.

**16-18. *gravel*** — referring to the *grit* that often mixes with bread baked in ashes, as is the custom of baking in the East (<sup><1007></sup>Proverbs 20:17). We fare as hardly as those who eat such bread. The same allusion is in “Covered me with ashes,” namely, as bread.

**17.** Not only present, but all hope of future prosperity is removed; so much so, that I am as one who never was prosperous (“I forgot prosperity”).

**18. *from the Lord*** — that is, my hope derived from Him (<sup><1912></sup>Psalm 31:22).



**ZAIN.**

**19-21.** This gives the reason why he gave way to the temptation to despair. The *Margin*, “Remember” does not suit the sense so well.

*wormwood ... gall* — (<sup>2495</sup>Jeremiah 9:15).

**20.** As often as *my soul calls them to remembrance, it is humbled* or bowed down in me.

**21. *This*** — namely, what follows; the view of the divine character (<sup>2182</sup>Lamentations 3:22,23). CALVIN makes “this” refer to Jeremiah’s infirmity. His very weakness (<sup>2389</sup>Lamentations 3:19,20) gives him hope of God interposing His strength for him (compare <sup>1521</sup>Psalms 25:11,17 42:5,8 <sup>4719</sup>2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

**CHETH.**

**22-24.** (Malachi 3:6).

**23.** (<sup>2381</sup>Isaiah 33:2).

**24.** (<sup>4883</sup>Numbers 18:20 <sup>1916</sup>Psalms 16:5 73:26 119:57 <sup>2406</sup>Jeremiah 10:16). To have God for our portion is the one only foundation of hope.

**TETH.**

**25-27.** The repetition of “good” at the beginning of each of the three verses heightens the effect.

*wait* — (<sup>2388</sup>Isaiah 30:18).

**26. *quietly wait*** — literally, “be in silence.” Compare <sup>2133</sup>Lamentations 3:28 and <sup>1391</sup>Psalms 39:2,9, that is, to be patiently quiet under afflictions, resting in the will of God (<sup>1971</sup>Psalms 37:7). So Aaron (<sup>1801</sup>Leviticus 10:2,3); and Job (<sup>1810</sup>Job 40:4,5).

**27. *yoke*** — of the Lord’s *disciplinary* teaching (<sup>1902</sup>Psalms 90:12 119:71). CALVIN interprets it, The Lord’s *doctrine* (<sup>4119</sup>Matthew 11:29,30), which is to be received in a docile spirit. The earlier the better; for the old are full of prejudices (<sup>2187</sup>Proverbs 8:17 <sup>2111</sup>Ecclesiastes 12:1). Jeremiah himself received the yoke, both of doctrine and chastisement in his youth (<sup>2106</sup>Jeremiah 1:6,7).

**JOD.**

**28-30.** The fruit of true docility and patience. He does not fight against the yoke (<sup><3618></sup>Jeremiah 31:18 <sup><4095></sup>Acts 9:5), but accommodates himself to it.

*alone* — The heathen applauded magnanimity, but they looked to display and the praise of men. The child of God, in the absence of any witness, “alone,” silently submits to the will of God.

*borne it upon him* — that is, because he is used to bearing it on him. Rather, “because He (the Lord, <sup><2183></sup>Lamentations 3:26) *hath laid it on him*” [VATABLUS].

**29.** (<sup><8006></sup>Job 42:6). The mouth in the dust is the attitude of suppliant and humble submission to God’s dealings as righteous and loving in design (compare <sup><3306></sup>Ezra 9:6 <sup><4925></sup>1 Corinthians 14:25).

*if so be there may be hope* — This does not express doubt as to whether GOD be willing to receive the penitent, but the *penitent’s* doubt as to himself; he whispers to himself this consolation, “Perhaps there may be hope for me.”

**30.** Messiah, the Antitype, fulfilled this; His practice agreeing with His precept (<sup><2806></sup>Isaiah 50:6 <sup><4059></sup>Matthew 5:39). Many take patiently afflictions from God, but when man wrongs them, they take it impatiently. The godly bear resignedly the latter, like the former, as sent by God (<sup><19713></sup>Psalms 17:13).

**CAPH.**

**31-33.** True repentance is never without hope (<sup><19944></sup>Psalms 94:14).

**32.** The punishments of the godly are but for a time.

**33.** He does not afflict any willingly (literally, “from His heart,” that is, as if He had any pleasure in it, <sup><6511></sup>Ezekiel 33:11), much less the godly (<sup><8201></sup>Hebrews 12:10).

**LAMED.**

**34-36.** This triplet has an infinitive in the beginning of each verse, the governing finite verb being in the end of <sup><2183></sup>Lamentations 3:36, “the Lord approveth not,” which is to be repeated in each verse. Jeremiah here anticipates and answers the objections which the Jews might start, that it was by His connivance they were “crushed under the feet” of those who “turned aside the right of a man.” God approves (literally, “seeth,” <sup><3013></sup>Habakkuk 1:13; so “behold,” “look on,” that is, look on *with approval*)

not of such unrighteous acts; and so the Jews may look for deliverance and the punishment of their foes.

**35. *before ... face of ... most High*** — Any “turning aside” of justice in court is done *before the face of God*, who is present, and “regardeth,” though unseen (<sup>2168</sup>Ecclesiastes 5:8).

**36. *subvert*** — to wrong.

### MEM.

**37-39.** Who is it that can (as God, <sup>4889</sup>Psalm 33:9) effect by a word anything, without the will of God?

**38. *evil ... good*** — *Calamity* and prosperity alike proceed from God (<sup>8120</sup>Job 2:10 <sup>2387</sup>Isaiah 45:7 <sup>3016</sup>Amos 3:6).

**39. *living*** — and so having a time yet given him by God for repentance. If sin were punished as it deserves, *life* itself would be forfeited by the sinner. “Complaining” (murmuring) ill becomes him who enjoys such a favor as life (<sup>2168</sup>Proverbs 19:3).

***for the punishment of his sins*** — Instead of blaming God for his sufferings, he ought to recognize in them God’s righteousness and the just rewards of his own sin.

### NUN.

**40-42. *us*** — Jeremiah and his fellow countrymen in their calamity.

***search*** — as opposed to the torpor wherewith men rest only on their outward sufferings, without attending to the cause of them (<sup>4923</sup>Psalm 139:23,24).

**41. *heart with ... hands*** — the antidote to hypocrisy (<sup>4804</sup>Psalm 86:4 <sup>4108</sup>1 Timothy 2:8).

**42. *not pardoned*** — The Babylonian captivity had not yet ended.

### SAMECH.

**43-45. *covered*** — namely, thyself (so <sup>2184</sup>Lamentations 3:44), so as not to see and pity our calamities, for even the most cruel in seeing a sad spectacle are moved to pity. Compare as to God “hiding His face,” <sup>4901</sup>Psalm 10:11 22:25.

44. (<sup><2188></sup>Lamentations 3:8). The “cloud” is our sins, and God’s wrath because of them (<sup><2342></sup>Isaiah 44:22 59:2).

45. So the apostles were treated; but, instead of murmuring, they rejoiced at it (<sup><4043></sup>1 Corinthians 4:13).

## PE.

46-48. *Pe* is put before *Ain* (<sup><2186></sup>Lamentations 3:43,46), as in <sup><2126></sup>Lamentations 2:16,17 4:16,17. (<sup><2126></sup>Lamentations 2:16.)

47. Like animals fleeing in fear, we fall into the snare laid for us.

48. (<sup><2049></sup>Jeremiah 4:19).

## AIN.

49-51. *without ... intermission* — or else, “because there is no intermission” [PISCATOR], namely, Of my miseries.

50. *Till* — His prayer is not without hope, wherein it differs from the blind grief of unbelievers.

*look down*, etc. — (<sup><2365></sup>Isaiah 63:15).

51. *eye affecteth mine heart* — that is, causeth me grief with continual tears; or, “affecteth my *life*” (literally, “soul,” *Margin*), that is, my health [GROTIUS].

*daughters of ... city* — the towns around, dependencies of Jerusalem, taken by the foe.

## TZADDI.

52-54. *a bird* — which is destitute of counsel and strength. The allusion seems to be to <sup><2017></sup>Proverbs 1:17 [CALVIN].

*without cause* — (<sup><4904></sup>Psalms 69:4 109:3,4). Type of Messiah (<sup><4855></sup>John 15:25).

53. *in ... dungeon* — (<sup><2676></sup>Jeremiah 37:16).

*stone* — usually put at the mouth of a dungeon to secure the prisoners (<sup><6108></sup>Joshua 10:18 <sup><2067></sup>Daniel 6:17 <sup><4261></sup>Matthew 27:60).

54. *Waters* — not literally, for there was “no water” (<sup><2806></sup>Jeremiah 38:6) in the place of Jeremiah’s confinement, but emblematical of overwhelming calamities (<sup><4902></sup>Psalms 69:2 124:4,5).

**cut off** — (<sup><2330></sup>Isaiah 38:10,11). I am abandoned by God. He speaks according to carnal sense.

### KOPH.

**55-57. *I called out of dungeon*** — Thus the spirit resists the flesh, and faith spurns the temptation [CALVIN], (<sup><300E></sup>Psalm 130:1 Jon 2:2).

**56. *Thou hast heard*** — namely formerly (so in <sup><2157></sup>Lamentations 3:57,58).

***breathing ... cry*** — two kinds of prayer; the sigh of a prayer silently *breathed* forth, and the loud, earnest cry (compare “prayer,” “*secret speech*,” <sup><2306></sup>Isaiah 26:16, *Margin*; with “cry aloud,” <sup><4517></sup>Psalm 55:17).

**57. *Thou drewest near*** — with Thy help (<sup><3008></sup>James 4:8).

### RESH.

**58-60.** Jeremiah cites God’s gracious answers to his prayers as an encouragement to his fellow countrymen, to trust in Him.

***pleaded*** — (<sup><451E></sup>Psalm 35:1 <sup><3109></sup>Micah 7:9).

**59.** God’s past deliverances and His knowledge of Judah’s wrongs are made the grounds of prayer for relief.

**60. *imaginations*** — devices (<sup><2419></sup>Jeremiah 11:19).

***Their vengeance*** — means *their malice*. Jeremiah gives his conduct, when plotted against by his foes, as an example how the Jews should bring their wrongs at the hands of the Chaldeans before God.

### SCHIN.

**61-63. *their reproach*** — their reproachful language against me.

**62. *lips*** — speeches.

**63. *sitting down ... rising up*** — whether they sit or rise, that is, whether they be actively engaged or sedentary, and at rest “all the day” (<sup><2162></sup>Lamentations 3:62), I am the subject of their derisive songs (<sup><2164></sup>Lamentations 3:14).

### TAU.

**64-66.** (<sup><241D></sup>Jeremiah 11:20 <sup><5144></sup>2 Timothy 4:14).

**65. *sorrow*** — rather, *blindness* or *hardness*; literally, “a veil” covering their heart, so that they may rush on to their own ruin (<sup><3360></sup>Isaiah 6:10 <sup><4014></sup>2 Corinthians 3:14,15).

**66. *from under ... heavens of ... Lord*** — *destroy* them so that it may be seen everywhere *under heaven* that thou sittest above as Judge of the world.

# CHAPTER (ELEGY) 4

## LAMENTATIONS 4:1-22.

**THE SAD CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM, THE HOPE OF RESTORATION, AND THE RETRIBUTION AWAITING IDUMEA FOR JOINING BABYLON AGAINST JUDEA.**

### ALEPH.

1. *gold* — the splendid adornment of the temple [CALVIN] (<sup>25110</sup>Lamentations 1:10 <sup>11022</sup>1 Kings 6:22 <sup>35219</sup>Jeremiah 52:19); or, *the principal men* of Judea [GROTIUS] (<sup>25102</sup>Lamentations 4:2).

*stones of ... sanctuary* — the gems on the breastplate of the high priest; or, metaphorically, the priests and Levites.

### BETH.

2. *comparable to ... gold* — (<sup>38316</sup>Job 28:16,19).

*earthen pitchers* — (<sup>23014</sup>Isaiah 30:14 <sup>24911</sup>Jeremiah 19:11).

### GIMEL.

3. *sea monsters ... breast* — Whales and other cetaceous monsters are mammalian. Even they suckle their young; but the Jewish women in the siege, so desperate was their misery, ate theirs (<sup>25110</sup>Lamentations 4:10 <sup>25122</sup>Lamentations 2:20). Others translate, “jackals.”

*ostriches* — see on <sup>18314</sup>Job 39:14; <sup>18316</sup>Job 39:16, on their forsaking their young.

### DALETH.

4. *thirst* — The mothers have no milk to give through the famine.

### HE.

5. *delicately* — on dainties.

*are desolate* — or, “perish.”

**in scarlet embrace dunghills** — Instead of the *scarlet* couches on which the grandees were nursed, they must lie on *dunghills*.

**embrace** — They who once shrank sensitively from any soil, gladly *cling close* to heaps of filth as their only resting-place. Compare “embrace the rock” (<sup><K248></sup>Job 24:8).

### VAU.

**6. greater than ... Sodom** — (<sup><0123></sup>Matthew 11:23). No prophets had been sent to Sodom, as there had been to Judea; therefore the punishment of the latter was heavier than that of the former.

**overthrown ... in a moment** — whereas the Jews had to endure the protracted and manifold hardships of a siege.

**no hands stayed on her** — No *hostile force*, as the Chaldeans in the case of Jerusalem, *continually pressed on her* before her overthrow. Jeremiah thus shows the greater severity of Jerusalem’s punishment than that of Sodom.

### ZAIN.

**7. Nazarites** — literally, “separated ones” (<sup><0002></sup>Numbers 6:2). They were held once in the highest estimation, but now they are degraded. God’s blessing formerly caused their body not to be the less fair and ruddy for their abstinence from strong drink. Compare the similar case of Daniel, etc. (<sup><2008></sup>Daniel 1:8-15). Also David (<sup><0912></sup>1 Samuel 16:12 17:42). Type of Messiah (So 5:10).

**rubies** — GESENIUS translates, “corals,” from a *Hebrew* root, “to divide into branches,” from the branching form of corals.

**polishing** — They were like exquisitely cut and *polished sapphires*. The “sapphires” may represent the *blue* veins of a healthy person.

### CHETH.

**8. blacker than ... coal** — or, “than blackness” itself (<sup><2008></sup>Joel 2:6 Na 2:10).

**like a stick** — as withered as a dry stick.

### TETH.

**9.** The speedy death by the sword is better than the lingering death by famine.



*pine away* — literally, “flow out”; referring to the flow of blood. This expression, and “stricken through,” are drawn from death by “the sword.”

*want of ... fruits* — The words in italics have to be supplied in the original (<sup><0183></sup>Genesis 18:28 <sup><19021></sup>Psalms 109:24).

## JOD.

10. (<sup><2121></sup>Lamentations 2:20 <sup><1336></sup>Deuteronomy 28:56,57).

*pitiful* — naturally at other times compassionate (<sup><305></sup>Isaiah 49:15).

JOSEPHUS describes the unnatural act as it took place in the siege under Titus.

*sodden* — boiled.

## CAPH.

11. *fire ... devoured ... foundations* — (<sup><1322></sup>Deuteronomy 32:22 <sup><2114></sup>Jeremiah 21:14). A most rare event. Fire usually consumes only the surface; but this reached even to the *foundation*, cutting off all hope of restoration.

## LAMED.

12. Jerusalem was so fortified that all thought it impregnable. It therefore could only have been the hand of God, not the force of man, which overthrew it.

## MEM.

13. *prophets* — the false prophets (<sup><2031></sup>Jeremiah 23:11,21). Supply the sense thus: “For the sins ... *these calamities have befallen her.*”

*shed the blood of the just* — (<sup><1231></sup>Matthew 23:31,37). This received its full fulfillment in the slaying of Messiah and the Jews’ consequent dispersion (<sup><3116></sup>James 5:6).

## NUN.

14. *blind* — with mental aberration.

*polluted ... with blood* — both with blood of one another mutually shed (for example, <sup><1031></sup>Jeremiah 2:34), and with their blood shed by the enemy [GLASSIUS].

**not touch ... garments** — as being defiled with blood (<sup><4019></sup>Numbers 19:16).

## SAMECH.

**15. They ... them** — “They,” that is, “men” (<sup><23044></sup>Lamentations 4:14). Even the very *Gentiles*, regarded as unclean by *the Jews*, who were ordered most religiously to avoid all defilements, cried unto the *latter*, “depart,” as being unclean: so universal was the defilement of the city by blood.

**wandered** — As the false prophets and their followers had “wandered” blind with infatuated and idolatrous crime in the city (<sup><23044></sup>Lamentations 4:14), so they must now “wander” among the heathen in blind consternation with calamity.

**they said** — that is, the Gentiles said: *it was said* among the heathen, “The Jews shall no more sojourn in their own land” [GROTIUS]; or, wheresoever they go in their wandering exile, “they shall not stay long” [LUDOVICUS DE DIEU], (<sup><4526></sup>Deuteronomy 28:65).

## PE.

**16. Ain and Pe** are here transposed (<sup><23016></sup>Lamentations 4:16,17), as in <sup><23016></sup>Lamentations 2:16,17 3:46-51.

**anger** — literally, “face”; it is the countenance which, by its expression, manifests anger (<sup><43816></sup>Psalms 34:16). GESENIUS translates, “the *person* of Jehovah”; Jehovah present; Jehovah Himself (<sup><12334></sup>Exodus 33:14 <sup><10712></sup>Samuel 17:11).

**divided** — dispersed the Jews.

**they respected not ... priests** — This is the language of the *Gentiles*. “The Jews have no hope of a return: for *they respected not* even good *priests*” (<sup><42492></sup>2 Chronicles 24:19-22) [GROTIUS]. MAURER explains it, “They (the victorious foe) regard not the (Jewish) priests when imploring their pity” (<sup><2312></sup>Lamentations 5:12). The evident antithesis to “As for *us*” (<sup><20471></sup>Lamentations 4:17) and the language of “the heathen” at the close of <sup><23015></sup>Lamentations 4:15, of which <sup><2016></sup>Lamentations 4:16 is the continuation, favor the former view.

## AIN.

**17. As for us** — This translation forms the best antithesis to the language of *the heathen* (<sup><23015></sup>Lamentations 4:15,16). CALVIN translates, “While as yet we stood as a state, our eyes failed,” etc.

*watched for a nation that could not save us* — Egypt (<sup><1241></sup>2 Kings 24:7  
<sup><2307></sup>Isaiah 30:7 <sup><2676></sup>Jeremiah 37:5-11).

## TZADDI.

18. *They* — the Chaldeans.

*cannot go* — without danger.

## KOPH.

19. The last times just before the taking of the city. There was no place of escape; the foe intercepted those wishing to escape from the famine-stricken city, “on the mountains and in the wilderness.”

*swifter ... than ... eagles* — the Chaldean cavalry (<sup><2013></sup>Jeremiah 4:13).

*pursued* — literally, “to be hot”; then, “to pursue hotly” (<sup><0833></sup>Genesis 31:36). Thus they pursued and overtook Zedekiah (<sup><2618></sup>Jeremiah 52:8,9).

## RESH.

20. *breath ... anointed of ... Lord* — our king, with whose life ours was bound up. The original reference seems to have been to Josiah (<sup><4852></sup>2 Chronicles 35:25), killed in battle with Pharaoh-necho; but the language is here applied to Zedekiah, who, though worthless, was still lineal representative of David, and type of Messiah, the “Anointed.” Viewed *personally* the language is too favorable to apply to him.

*live among the heathen* — Under him we hoped to live securely, even in spite of the surrounding heathen nations [GROTIUS].

## SCHIN.

21. *Rejoice* — at our calamities (<sup><4970></sup>Psalms 137:7). This is a *prophecy* that Edom should exult over the fall of Jerusalem. At the same time it is implied, Edom’s joy shall be short-lived. *Ironically* she is told, Rejoice while thou mayest (<sup><2109></sup>Ecclesiastes 11:9).

*cup* — for this image of the confounding effects of God’s wrath, see <sup><2432></sup>Jeremiah 13:12 25:15,16,21; as to Edom, <sup><2407></sup>Jeremiah 49:7-22.

## TAU.

22. (<sup><2012></sup>Isaiah 40:2). Thou hast been punished enough: the end of thy punishment is at hand.

*no more carry thee ... into captivity* — that is, by the Chaldeans. The Romans carried them away subsequently. The *full* accomplishment of this prophecy must therefore refer to the Jews' final restoration.

*discover* — By the severity of His punishments on thee, God shall let men see how great was thy sin (<sup><3490></sup>Jeremiah 49:10). God “covers” sin when He forgives it (<sup><4911></sup>Psalm 32:1,5). He “discovers,” or “reveals,” it, when He punishes it (<sup><4317></sup>Job 20:27). <sup><2490></sup>Jeremiah 49:10 shows that *Margin* is wrong, “carry captive” (this rendering is as in Na 2:7; compare “discovered,” *Margin*).

# CHAPTER (ELEGY) 5

## LAMENTATIONS 5:1-22.

### EPIPHONEMA, OR A CLOSING RECAPITULATION OF THE CALAMITIES TREATED IN THE PREVIOUS ELEGIES.

1. (<sup><1887></sup>Psalm 89:50,51).

2. *Our inheritance* — “Thine inheritance” (<sup><15918></sup>Psalm 79:1). The land given of old to us by Thy gift.

3. *fatherless* — Our whole land is full of orphans [CALVIN]. Or, “we are fatherless,” being abandoned by Thee our “Father” (<sup><2189></sup>Jeremiah 3:19), [GROTIUS].

4. *water for money* — The Jews were compelled to pay the enemy for the water of their own cisterns after the overthrow of Jerusalem; or rather, it refers to their sojourn in Babylon; they had to pay tax for access to the rivers and fountains. Thus, “our” means the water which we need, the commonest necessary of life.

*our wood* — In Judea each one could get wood without pay; in Babylon, “our wood,” the wood we need, must be paid for.

5. Literally, “On our necks we are persecuted”; that is, Men tread on our necks (<sup><1862></sup>Psalm 66:12 <sup><25123></sup>Isaiah 51:23; compare <sup><16124></sup>Joshua 10:24). The extremest oppression. The foe not merely galled the Jews face, back, and sides, but their neck. A just retribution, as they had been stiff in neck against the yoke of God (<sup><1818></sup>2 Chronicles 30:8, *Margin*; <sup><16129></sup>Nehemiah 9:29 <sup><3806></sup>Isaiah 48:4).

6. *given ... hand to* — in token of submission (see on <sup><25157></sup>Jeremiah 50:15).

*to ... Egyptians* — at the death of Josiah (<sup><1862></sup>2 Chronicles 36:3,4).

*Assyrians* — that is, the Chaldeans who occupied the empire which Assyria had held. So <sup><2128></sup>Jeremiah 2:18.

*to be satisfied with bread* — (<sup><1638></sup>Deuteronomy 28:48).

7. (<sup><26129></sup>Jeremiah 31:29).

**borne their iniquities** — that is, the punishment of them. The accumulated sins of our fathers from age to age, as well as our own, are visited on us. They say this as a plea why God should pity them (compare <sup><3819></sup>Ezekiel 18:2, etc.).

**8. Servants ... ruled ... us** — Servants under the Chaldean governors ruled the Jews (<sup><4165></sup>Nehemiah 5:15). Israel, once a “kingdom of priests” (<sup><02916></sup>Exodus 19:6), is become like Canaan, “a servant of servants,” according to the curse (<sup><00025></sup>Genesis 9:25). The Chaldeans were designed to be “servants” of Shem, being descended from Ham (<sup><00026></sup>Genesis 9:26). Now through the Jews’ sin, their positions are reversed.

**9. We gat our bread with ... peril** — that is, those of us left in the city after its capture by the Chaldeans.

**because of ... sword of ... wilderness** — because of the liability to attack by the robber Arabs of the wilderness, through which the Jews had to pass to get “bread” from Egypt (compare <sup><25116></sup>Lamentations 5:6).

**10.** As an oven is scorched with too much fire, so our skin with the hot blast of famine (*Margin*, rightly, “storms,” like the hot simoom). Hunger dries up the pores so that the skin becomes like as if it were scorched by the sun (<sup><33113></sup>Job 30:30 <sup><11833></sup>Psalms 119:83).

**11.** So in just retribution Babylon itself should fare in the end. Jerusalem shall for the last time suffer these woes before her final restoration (*Zechariah* 14:2).

**12. hanged ... by their hand** — a piece of wanton cruelty invented by the Chaldeans. GROTIUS translates, “Princes were hung by the hand of the enemy”; hanging was a usual mode of execution (<sup><04019></sup>Genesis 40:19).

**elders** — officials (<sup><25116></sup>Lamentations 4:16).

**13. young men ... grind** — The work of the lowest *female* slave was laid on young men (<sup><07621></sup>Judges 16:21 <sup><18310></sup>Job 31:10).

**children fell under ... wood** — Mere children had to bear burdens of wood so heavy that they sank beneath them.

**14.** Aged men in the East meet in the open space round the gate to decide judicial trials and to hold social converse (<sup><18217></sup>Job 29:7,8).

**16. The crown** — all our glory, the kingdom and the priesthood (<sup><18813></sup>Job 19:9 <sup><18833></sup>Psalms 89:39,44).

**17.** (<sup><25112></sup>Lamentations 1:22 2:11).

18. *foxes* — They frequent desolate places where they can freely and fearlessly roam.

19. (<sup>19A212</sup>Psalm 102:12). The perpetuity of God's rule over human affairs, however He may seem to let His people be oppressed for a time, is their ground of hope of restoration.

20. *for ever* — that is, for “so long a time.”

21. (<sup>21B118</sup>Psalm 80:3 <sup>21B18</sup>Jeremiah 31:18). “Restore us to favor with Thee, and so we shall be restored to our old position” [GROTIUS]. Jeremiah is not speaking of spiritual conversion, but of that outward turning whereby God receives men into His fatherly favor, manifested in bestowing prosperity [CALVIN]. Still, as Israel is a type of the Church, temporal goods typify spiritual blessings; and so the sinner may use this prayer for God to convert him.

22. Rather, “Unless haply Thou hast utterly rejected us, and art beyond measure wroth against us,” that is, Unless Thou art implacable, which is impossible, hear our prayer [CALVIN]. Or, as *Margin*, “For wouldest Thou utterly reject us?” etc. — No; that cannot be. The Jews, in this book, and in Isaiah and Malachi, to avoid the ill-omen of a mournful closing sentence, repeat the verse immediately preceding the last [CALVIN].