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**COMMENTARY**

**Barnes' Notes on the Bible**  
**Volume 8 -**  
**Lamentations**

*By A. Fuller*

*To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:*

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# LAMENTATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

The prophecy of Jeremiah is immediately followed in the English Version by five lyric poems, the title of which in the versions is taken from the general nature of the contents; thus the Septuagint called these poems **Θρηνοι** <sup><2355></sup>, Threni, i.e. Dirges, and the Syriac and Vulgate “Lamentations.” In the Hebrew Bible the “Lamentations” are arranged among the Kethubim, or (holy) writings, because of the nature of their contents: the Lamentations as being lyrical poetry are classed not with prophecies, but with the Psalms and Proverbs. This classification is probably later than the translation of the Septuagint, who have appended the Lamentations to Jeremiah’s prophecy, inserting between them the apocryphal book of Baruch, and in fact counting the three as only one book. Although no name is attached to these poems in the Hebrew, yet both ancient tradition (Septuagint, Josephus, the Targum of Jonathan, the Talmud, etc.) and internal evidence point to Jeremiah as the author. The time of the composition of these poems is certainly the period immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, and probably during the month which intervened between the capture of Jerusalem and its destruction.

(See the passages which show that famine and hunger were still raging in the city, <sup><2311></sup>Lamentations 1:11,19; 2:19,20; 4:4 etc.)

Their subject is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans. In the “first” of these poems the prophet dwells upon the miseries of hunger, of death in battle, of the profanation and plundering of the sanctuary, and of impending exile, oppressed by which the city sits solitary. In the “second,” these same sufferings are described with more intense force, and in closer connection with the national sins which had caused them, and which had been aggravated by the faithlessness of the prophets. In the “third,” Jeremiah acknowledges that chastisement is for the believer’s good, and he dwells more upon the spiritual aspect of sorrow, and the certainty that finally there must be the redeeming of life for God’s people, and vengeance for His enemies. In the “fourth,” Judah’s sorrows are confessed to have been caused by her sins. Finally, in the “fifth,” Jeremiah prays that Zion’s

reproach may be taken away, and that Yahweh will grant repentance unto His people, and renew their days as of old.

The structure of the first four poems is highly artificial. They are arranged in 22 portions, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; but in the first three poems each portion is again subdivided into three double clauses, the third differing from the first and second in that each also of these divisions begins with the same letter. In Lamentations 4, again we have 22 verses beginning with the letters of the alphabet in order, but each verse is divided into only two portions. In Lamentations 5, though there are again 22 verses, the alphabetical initials are discontinued. Hence, some have thought that this prayer was added by the prophet to his Lamentations when he was in Egypt at a somewhat later time.

The Book of Lamentations has always been much used in liturgical services as giving the spiritual aspect of sorrow. It is recited in the Jewish synagogues on the ninth of Ab, the day on which the temple was destroyed. In the Church of England the whole of Lamentations 3, and portions of Lamentations 1; Lamentations 2; Lamentations 4 are read on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in holy week. For this choice two chief reasons may be given; the first, that in the wasted city and homeless wanderings of the chosen people we see an image of the desolation and ruin of the soul cast away — because of sin — from God's presence into the outer darkness; the second and chief, because the mournful words of the prophet, set Him before us who has borne the chastisement due to human sin, and of whom we think instinctively as we pronounce the words of ~~2012~~Lamentations 1:12.

# THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

## NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS 1

This poem (Lamentations 1) divides itself into two equal parts;

<500>Lamentations 1:1-11 describe the misery which has befallen the Jews; in

<5012>Lamentations 1:12-22, Jerusalem laments over her sufferings.

<500>**Lamentations 1:1,2.** In these two verses is the same sad image as appears in the well-known medal of Titus, struck to celebrate his triumph over Jerusalem. A woman sits weeping beneath a palm-tree, and below is the legend “Judaea capta.”

Translate <500>Lamentations 1:1:

*How sitteth solitary the city that was full of people:  
She is become as a widow that was great among the nations:  
A princess among provinces she is become a vassal.*

*Tributary* In the sense of personal labor (<660>Joshua 16:10).

<500>**Lamentations 1:2.** *Lovers ... friends* i.e. the states in alliance with Judaea, and all human helpers.

<500>**Lamentations 1:3.** *Because of ...* i.e. the people, not of Jerusalem only, but of the whole land, “is gone into exile to escape from the affliction and laborious servitude,” to which they are subject in their own land.

*Persecutors ... between the straits* Rather, “pursuers ... in the midst of her straits.” The Jews flee like deer to escape from the invading Chaldaeans, but are driven by them into places from where there is no escape.

<500>**Lamentations 1:4.** Zion, as the holy city, is the symbol of the religious life of the people, just as Judah in the previous verse represents their national life. The “virgins” took a prominent part in all religious festivals (<613>Jeremiah 31:13; <1250>Exodus 15:20).

**Lamentations 1:5.** *Are the chief ... prosper* Or, “are become the head” ... are at rest. Judaea is so entirely crushed that her enemies did not need to take precautions against resistance on her part.

*Children* i.e. “young children,” who are driven before the enemy (literally the adversary), not as a flock of lambs which follow the shepherd, but for sale as slaves.

**Lamentations 1:6.** *Her princes ...* Jeremiah had before his mind the sad flight of Zedekiah and his men of war, and their capture within a few miles of Jerusalem (<sup>2800b</sup>Jeremiah 39:4,5).

**Lamentations 1:7.**

*Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction,  
and of her homelessness,*

*All her pleasant things which have been from the days of old:  
Now that her people fall by the hand of the adversary,  
And she hath no helper;  
Her adversaries have seen her,  
They have mocked at her sabbath-keepings.*

The word rendered “homelessless” means wanderings, and describes the state of the Jews, cast forth from their homes and about to be dragged into exile.

*sabbaths* Or, sabbath-keepings, and the cessation from labor every seventh day struck foreigners as something strange, and provoked their ridicule.

**Lamentations 1:8.** *Grievously sinned* literally, “Jerusalem hath sinned a sin,” giving the idea of a persistent continuance in wickedness.

*Removed* Or, become an abomination. Sin has made Jerusalem an object of horror, and therefore she is cast away.

*Yea, she sigheth ...* Jerusalem groans over the infamy of her deeds thus brought to open shame, and turns her back upon the spectators in order to hide herself.

**Lamentations 1:9.** *Her filthiness is in her skirts* Her personal defilement is no longer concealed beneath the raiment (<sup>2432b</sup>Jeremiah 13:22).

*She came down wonderfully* Jerusalem once enthroned as a princess must sit on the ground as a slave.

<sup><2010></sup>**Lamentations 1:10.** *Her pleasant things* Chiefly, the sacred vessels of the temple (<sup><4830></sup>2 Chronicles 36:10).

*sanctuary ... congregation* Even a Jew might not enter the innermost sanctuary, which was for the priests only; but now the tramp of pagan soldiery has been heard within its sacred precincts.

<sup><2011></sup>**Lamentations 1:11.** *Sigh ... seek* Are sighing ... are seeking. The words are present participles, describing the condition of the people. After a siege lasting a year and a half the whole country, far and near, would be exhausted.

*To relieve the soul* See the margin, i.e. to bring back life to them. They bring out their jewels and precious articles to obtain with them at least a meal.

<sup><2012></sup>**Lamentations 1:12-16.** The lamentation of the city, personified as a woman in grief over her fate.

<sup><2013></sup>**Lamentations 1:13.** *It prevaileth* Or, hath subdued.

*He hath turned me back* Judaea, like a hunted animal, endeavors to escape, but finds every outlet blocked by nets, and recoils from them with terror and a sense of utter hopelessness.

<sup><2014></sup>**Lamentations 1:14.** *Bound by his hand* As the plowman binds the yoke upon the neck of oxen, so God compels Judah to bear the punishment of her sins.

*They are wreathed, and ...* Or, they are knotted together, “they come up” etc. Judah’s sins are like the cords by which the pieces of the yoke are fastened together (<sup><272></sup>Jeremiah 27:2); they are knotted and twined like a bunch upon the neck, and bind the yoke around it so securely that it is impossible for her to shake it off.

*He hath made ...* Or, it hath made “my strength” to stumble. The yoke of punishment thus imposed and securely fastened, bows down her strength by its weight, and makes her totter beneath it.

*The Lord* The third distich of the verse begins here, and with it a new turn of the lamentation. The title Adonai (properly, my Lord) is in the Lamentations used by itself in fourteen places, while the name Yahweh is less prominent; as if in their punishment the people felt the lordship of the Deity more, and His covenant-love to them less.

<sup><2015></sup>**Lamentations 1:15.** *The Lord hath trodden under foot* Or, *Adonai* has made contemptible (i.e. put into the balance, made to go up as the lighter weight, and so made despicable) “my war-horses” (put metaphorically for heroes).

*In the midst of me* They had not fallen gloriously in the battlefield, but remained ignominiously in the city.

*Assembly* Or, “a solemn feast;” the word especially used of the great festivals (<sup><1023></sup>Leviticus 23:2.) *Adonai* has proclaimed a festival, not for me, but against me.

*The Lord hath trodden ...* Or, “*Adonai* hath trodden the winepress for the virgin daughter of Judah.” See <sup><2514></sup>Jeremiah 51:14 note. By slaying Judah’s young men in battle, God is trampling for her the winepress of His indignation.

<sup><2017></sup>**Lamentations 1:17.** *Spreadeth forth her hands* In prayer (<sup><1029></sup>Exodus 9:29,33), but Zion entreats in vain. There is no one to comfort her — not God, for He is chastising her, nor man, for all the neighboring nations have become her enemies. See <sup><2002></sup>Lamentations 1:2.

*That his adversaries ...* Rather, that those round about him should be his adversaries; all the neighboring states should regard him with aversion.

*Jerusalem is ...* i.e. is become an abomination. The words are virtually the same as in <sup><2008></sup>Lamentations 1:8.

<sup><2008></sup>**Lamentations 1:18.** *People* peoples, pagan nations.

<sup><2019></sup>**Lamentations 1:19.** *I called for ...* Rather, to “my lovers.”

*While they sought their meat* literally, “for they sought food for themselves to revive their souls.” Complete the sense by adding, “and found none.”

<sup><2020></sup>**Lamentations 1:20.** *Troubled* Or, inflamed with sorrow.

*Turned within me* Agitated violently.

*At home there is as death* i.e. “in the house” there are pale pining forms, wasting with hunger, and presenting the appearance of death.

~~<302>~~ **Lamentations 1:21.** *They have heard ...* Or, “They heard that I sigh,” that I have “no comforter.”

*Thou wilt bring the day ...* literally, thou hast brought “the day thou hast proclaimed, and they shall be like unto me.” The day of Judah’s punishment was the proof that the nations now triumphing over Jerusalem’s fall would certainly be visited.



## NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS 2

This poem (Lamentations 2) also divides itself like Lamentations 1 into two nearly equal portions; in <sup><210></sup>Lamentations 2:1-10, the prophet describes the punishment which has fallen upon Zion; <sup><211></sup>Lamentations 2:11-22 are a lamentation and a prayer.

<sup><212></sup>**Lamentations 2:1.** *How ...* Or, “How” doth “*Adonai* cover.” He hath east down etc. By God’s footstool seems to be meant the ark. See <sup><213></sup>Psalm 99:5 note.

<sup><214></sup>**Lamentations 2:2.** *Habitations* The dwellings of the shepherds in the pastures (<sup><215></sup>Jeremiah 49:19). These are described as swallowed up by an earthquake, while the storm itself throws down the fortified cities of Judah.

*Polluted* i.e. profaned it, made common or unclean what before was holy.

<sup><216></sup>**Lamentations 2:3.** Since the horn is the symbol of power, the cutting off of every horn means the depriving Israel of all power of resistance. The drawing back of God’s right hand signifies the withdrawal of that special Providence which used to protect the chosen people.

*And he burned ...* Or, “and” he kindled a fire in Jacob: as the active enemy of “Jacob,” Himself applying the torch.

<sup><217></sup>**Lamentations 2:4.** *He stood with his right hand ...* i.e. that right hand so often stretched out to help now grasped a weapon ready for Judah’s destruction.

*Were pleasant* Or, was “pleasant.” Put full stop after “eye.” Begin the third distich thus:

*In the tabernacle* (or, tent) *of the daughter of Zion.*

<sup><218></sup>**Lamentations 2:5.** Literally, *Adonai* has become “as an enemy.”

<sup><219></sup>**Lamentations 2:6.** *tabernacle* Or, covert (<sup><220></sup>Jeremiah 25:38), i.e. such a tent of boughs as was put up at the Feast of Tabernacles. The words mean, “the Lord hath (as) violently destroyed His booth. as a man might tear down a shed in “a garden.”” Compare <sup><221></sup>Isaiah 1:8.

*His places of the assembly* Or, “His great festivals” (<sup>2015</sup>Lamentations 1:15 note). It is the Word rendered “solemn feasts” in the next clause, and rightly joined there with “sabbaths,” the weekly, as the other were the annual festivals. It is no longer *Adonai*, but the LORD (Jehovah) who lets them pass into oblivion. He had once instituted them for His own honor, now He lets them lie forgotten.

*Hath despised ...* Or, “hath rejected” king and priest. With the destruction of the city the royal authority fell: with the ruined temple and the cessation of the festivals the functions of the priest ceased.

<sup>2015</sup>**Lamentations 2:7.** *sanctuary* The holy of holies; “the walls of her palaces” are those of the sacred buildings.

<sup>2015</sup>**Lamentations 2:8.** *A line* Compare <sup>2341</sup>Isaiah 34:11. The destruction is systematic and thorough.

<sup>2015</sup>**Lamentations 2:9.** *Her gates are sunk into the ground* So completely destroyed, that one might suppose they had been swallowed up in an abyss.

*Her king* The prophet’s lamentation, occupied before chiefly with the buildings of the city and temple, now turns to the people, beginning with their temporal rulers.

*The law is no more* The Jewish Law, the Torah, came to an end when it no longer had a local habitation. Its enactments were essentially those not of a universal religion, but of a national religion, and the restoration of the nation with a material temple was indispensable to its continued existence. It was only when elevated to be a universal religion, by being made spiritual, that it could do without ark, temple, and a separate people.

*Her prophets also find ...* With the Torah, the special gift of prophecy also ceased, since both were unique to the theocracy; but it was not until the establishment of Christianity that they were finally merged in higher developments of grace.

<sup>2015</sup>**Lamentations 2:11.** *Troubled* See the margin reference note.

*Liver* As the heart was regarded by the Jews as the seat of the intellect, so the liver (or bowels) was supposed to be the seat of the emotions. The pouring out of the liver upon the ground meant that feelings had entirely

given way under the acuteness of sorrow, and he could no longer restrain them.

<sup><212></sup>**Lamentations 2:12.** *They say* Or, “They keep saying:” it was an oft-repeated cry, even while expiring upon their mother’s bosom.

<sup><213></sup>**Lamentations 2:13.** *Equal* i.e. “compare.” Zion’s breach, i.e. her destruction, is measureless, like the ocean.

<sup><214></sup>**Lamentations 2:14.** *Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee* The Septuagint and Vulgate give the true meaning, “stupidity” (see <sup><213></sup>Jeremiah 23:13 note).

*To turn away thy captivity* The right sense is, “They have not disclosed to thee thy sins, that so thou mightest repent, and I might have turned away thy captivity.”

*Burdens* Applied contemptuously to predictions which proved “false” or “empty,” i.e. failed of accomplishment. On the deduction to be drawn from this, see <sup><215></sup>Jeremiah 28:9.

*Causes of banishment* The result of the teaching of the false prophets would be that God would “drive out” the Jews from their land.

Some render the words “false ... banishment” by “oracles of falsehood and seduction.”

<sup><215></sup>**Lamentations 2:15.** Compare the scene round the cross of the Redeemer (<sup><173></sup>Matthew 27:39).

<sup><216></sup>**Lamentations 2:16.** *Seen it* Omit “it.” The intensity of the enemy’s exultation is shown by the heaping up of unconnected words. We have found what we sought, have seen what we looked for.

<sup><217></sup>**Lamentations 2:17.** *That which he had devised* Or, what he purposed. Zion’s ruin was the fulfillment of God’s determination, of which they had been forewarned from the days of old (see the margin reference).

*Fulfilled* Or, finished.

<sup><218></sup>**Lamentations 2:18.** *Their heart* That of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The prophet bids the wall, as the representative of the people who had dwelt secure under its protection, shed floods of tears on their

behalf. Broken up by the enemy, it could be their guardian no longer, but by its ruins it might still cry unto the Lord in their behalf.

*A river* Or, a brook or torrent.

*Rest* Properly, the torpor and numbness which follows upon excessive grief.

*Apple of thine eye* See <sup><4978></sup>Psalm 17:8 note.

<sup><2119></sup>**Lamentations 2:19.** *In* (or at) *the beginning of the watches* “At the beginning of each night-watch” means all the night through. The Hebrews divided the night into three watches.

<sup><2120></sup>**Lamentations 2:20.** The sense is: “See, Yahweh, and look! whom hast Thou treated thus? Shall women eat their fruit — children whom they must still carry?” the swaddled child being one still needing to be nursed and borne in their arms.

<sup><2121></sup>**Lamentations 2:21.** Omit “them” and “and,” which weaken the intensity of the passage.

<sup><2122></sup>**Lamentations 2:22.** *Thou hast called as in a solemn day* i.e. “Thou” callest “like a feast day,” i.e. like the proclaiming of a festival.

*My terrors round about* The prophet’s watch-word (<sup><2123></sup>Jeremiah 6:25 note). God now proclaims what Jeremiah had so often called out before, “Magor-missabib.” On every side were conquering Chaldeans.

## NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS 3

This elegy (Lamentations 3) is both the most elaborate in form and the most sublime in its ideas of the five poems which compose the Book of Lamentations. It presents the image of the deepest suffering, passing on to the confession of sin, the acknowledgment of God's justice, and the prayer of faith for forgiveness. It is the ideal representation of that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of (2 Corinthians 12:10).

**Lamentations 3:1.** *That hath seen affliction* i.e. hath experienced, suffered it.

**Lamentations 3:3.** *Is he turned; he turneth* Or, "surely against me" hath he turned "his hand" again and again "all the day long."

**Lamentations 3:4.** *Made old* Or, wasted: his strength slowly wasted as he pined away in sorrow.

*He hath broken my bones* This clause completes the representation of the sufferer's physical agonies. Here the idea is that of acute pain.

**Lamentations 3:5.** *He hath builded ...* The metaphor is taken from the operations in a siege.

*Gall and travel* Or "travail;" i.e. bitterness and weariness (through toil).

**Lamentations 3:6.** Or, "He hath" made me to dwell "in darkness," i.e. in Sheol or Hades, "as those" forever "dead."

**Lamentations 3:7.** The prophet feels as if enclosed within walls, and fettered.

**Lamentations 3:8.** *Shout* i.e. call for help.

*Shutteth out* Or, "shutteth in." God has so closed up the avenues to the place in which he is immured, that his voice can find no egress.

**Lamentations 3:9.** *Inclosed* Or, hedged (Lamentations 3:7).

*Hath, made crooked* Or, “hath” turned aside. A solid wall being built across the main road, Jeremiah turns aside into by-ways, but finds them turned aside, so that they lead him back after long wandering to the place from where he started.

<sup><2810></sup>**Lamentations 3:10-18.** Having dwelt upon the difficulties which hemmed in his path, he now shows that there are dangers attending upon escape.

<sup><2811></sup>**Lamentations 3:11.** The meaning is, “God, as a lion, lying in wait, has made me turn aside from my path, but my flight was in vain, for springing upon me from His ambush lie has torn me in pieces.”

*Desolate* Or, astonished, stupefied that he cannot flee. The word is a favorite one with Jeremiah.

<sup><2812></sup>**Lamentations 3:12.** This new simile arises out of the former one, the idea of a hunter being suggested by that of the bear and lion. When the hunter comes, it is not to save him.

<sup><2814></sup>**Lamentations 3:14.** Metaphor is dropped, and Jeremiah shows the real nature of the arrows which rankled in him so deeply.

<sup><2815></sup>**Lamentations 3:15.** “He hath” filled me to the full with bitterness, i.e. bitter sorrows (<sup><3808></sup>Job 9:18).

<sup><2816></sup>**Lamentations 3:16.** *Broken my teeth with gravel stones* His bread was so filled with grit that in eating it his teeth were broken.

<sup><2817></sup>**Lamentations 3:17.** *Prosperity* literally, as in the margin, i.e. I forgot what good was, I lost the very idea of what it meant.

<sup><2818></sup>**Lamentations 3:18.** The prophet reaches the verge of despair. But by struggling against it he reaches at length firm ground.

<sup><2819></sup>**Lamentations 3:19.** *Remembering* Or, as in the margin. It is a prayer to Yahweh.

*My misery* Or, “my” homelessness (<sup><2807></sup>Lamentations 1:7 note).

<sup><2821></sup>**Lamentations 3:21.** *This I recall* Rather, “This will I bring back to my heart, therefore will I hope.” Knowing that God hears the prayer of the contrite, he begins again to hope.

**Lamentations 3:22-42.** The center of the present poem, as it also holds the central place in the whole series of the Lamentations. In them the riches of God's grace and mercy are set forth in the brightest colors, but no sooner are they ended than the prophet resumes the language of woe.

**Lamentations 3:22.** *That we* He is speaking as the representative of all sufferers.

**Lamentations 3:24.** *The LORD is my portion* "My portion is Yahweh," see <sup>Q1812</sup>Numbers 18:20; <sup>19165</sup>Psalms 16:5ff.

*Therefore will I hope in him* A more full expression of the confidence present in the prophet's mind in <sup>21212</sup>Lamentations 3:21, but based now upon God's faithfulness in showing mercy.

**Lamentations 3:25-27.** In these three verses, each beginning in the Hebrew with the word good, we have first the fundamental idea that Yahweh Himself is good, and if good to all, then especially is He so to those who being in adversity can yet wait in confidence upon His mercy.

**Lamentations 3:26.** *And quietly wait* literally, "and be in silence," i.e. abstain from all complaining.

**Lamentations 3:27.** *The yoke* Or, a "yoke." By bearing a yoke in his youth, i.e. being called upon to suffer in early age, a man learns betimes the lesson of silent endurance, and so finds it more easy to be calm and patient in later years.

**Lamentations 3:28-30.** Translate:

*Let him sit alone and keep silence;  
For He (God) hath laid the yoke upon him.*

*Let him place his mouth in the dust;  
Perchance there is hope.*

*Let him offer his cheek to him that smiteth him;  
Let him be filled to the full with reproach.*

It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, but only if he bear it rightly. To attain this result, let him learn resignation, remembering who has laid the yoke upon him. This reverential silence is described (<sup>21212</sup>Lamentations 3:29), as putting the mouth in the dust, and so lying

prostrate before the Deity; while (~~2818~~) Lamentations 3:30) the harder task is imposed of bearing contumely with meekness (margin reference), and not shrinking from the last dregs of the cup of reproach. Many who submit readily to God are indignant when the suffering comes through men.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:31-33.** Reasons for the resignation urged in the previous triplet.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:34-36.** Neither does God approve of wanton cruelty inflicted by one man on another. Three examples are given: the treatment of prisoners of war; the procuring an unjust sentence before a legal tribunal acting in the name of God (see ~~0216~~ Exodus 21:6); and the perversion of justice generally.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:37-39.** Why then does a loving God, who disapproves of suffering when inflicted by man upon man, Himself send sorrow and misery? “Because of sins.”

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:37.** Literally, “Who is this that spake and it was done, though *Adonai* commanded it not?”

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:39.** So long as God spares a man’s life, why does he complain? The chastisement is really for his good; only let him use it aright, and he will be thankful for it in the end.

*A man for the punishment of his sins* Translate: Let “each man sigh for,” i.e. because of, “his sins.” Instead of complaining because God sends him sorrow, let him rather mourn over the sins which have made punishment necessary. The sense of the King James Version is, Why does a man ... complain “for his sins?” i.e. for the necessary results of them in chastisement.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:40-42.** The prophet urges men to search out their faults and amend them.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:40.** *And turn again to the LORD* Or, “and return to Yahweh.” The prep. (to) in the Hebrew implies not half way, but the whole.

~~2818~~ **Lamentations 3:41.** Literally, “Let us lift up our heart unto our hands unto God in heaven;” as if the heart first lifted up the hands, and then



with them mounted up in prayer to God. In real prayer the outward expression is caused by the emotion stirring within.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:43-66.** Far from pardoning, God is still actively punishing His people.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:43.** Rather, “Thou hast covered” Thyself “with wrath and pursued (<sup><28B></sup>Lamentations 1:3 note) us.” The covering (here and in <sup><28B4></sup>Lamentations 3:44) is that of clothing and enwrapping.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:45.** Omit “as.”

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:47.** *Desolation* Or, devastation.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:48-51.** The deep sympathy of the prophet, which pours itself forth in abundant tears over the distress of his people.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:51.** Or, “Mine eye” causeth pain to my soul, i.e. maketh my soul ache, because of the sad fate of the maidens (<sup><28B4></sup>Lamentations 1:4,18, ...).

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:52.** Or, “They who without cause are mine enemies have hunted me sore like a bird.” Probably the prophet is speaking of his personal sorrows.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:53.** *They have cut off my life in the dungeon* Or, “They destroyed my life in the pit,” i.e. tried to destroy it by casting me into the cistern, and covering the month with a stone. See the margin reference.

<sup><28B4></sup>**Lamentations 3:54.** *Waters flowed over mine head* A figurative expression for great mental trouble.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:55-66.** A prayer for deliverance and for vengeance upon his enemies.

<sup><28B></sup>**Lamentations 3:55.** *Out of the low dungeon* “The lowest pit” of <sup><28B6></sup>Psalms 88:6. Some consider that Psalm 69 was composed by Jeremiah, and is the prayer referred to here (<sup><28B6></sup>Jeremiah 38:6 note).

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:56.** *Thou hast heard* In sending Ebedmelech to deliver me. The next clause signifies “Hide not thine ear to my relief to my cry,” i.e. to my cry for relief.

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:58.** God now appears as the prophet’s next of kin, pleading the lawsuits of his soul, i.e. the controversies which concern his salvation. and rescuing his life, in jeopardy through the malice of his enemies.

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:59.** *Wrong* Done to him by the perversion of justice.

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:60,61.** *Imaginations* Or, devices.

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:63.** *Their sitting down, and their rising up* i.e. all the ordinary actions of their life.

*Musick* Or, song, “the subject of it.”

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:64-66.** The versions render the verbs in these verses as futures, “Thou shalt render unto them a recompence,” etc.

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:65.** *Give them sorrow of heart* Or, “Thou wilt give them” blindness “of heart.”

~~2886~~ **Lamentations 3:66.** *Persecute ...* Or, pursue them in anger and destroy them, etc.

## NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS 4

In this poem (Lamentations 4) the distinctive idea is, that the miseries (<sup><2901></sup>Lamentations 4:1-11) which have befallen Judah are the punishment of her sin (<sup><29012></sup>Lamentations 4:12-20), and will therefore end — when chastisement has had its proper effect — in her restoration (<sup><2902></sup>Lamentations 4:21,22).

<sup><2901></sup>**Lamentations 4:1.** *The stones of the sanctuary* Or, the hallowed stones, literally stones of holiness, a metaphor for the people themselves. The actual stones of the temple would not be thus widely thrown about as to be seen everywhere, but the prophet has already affirmed this of the young children dying of hunger (compare <sup><29019></sup>Lamentations 2:19).

<sup><29012></sup>**Lamentations 4:2.** *The precious sons of Zion* The whole nation was consecrated to God, and formed “a kingdom of priests” (<sup><29016></sup>Exodus 19:6): in this respect, a type of the Christian Church (<sup><1015></sup>1 Peter 2:5).

*Comparable to fine gold* literally, “weighed with” solid gold, and so equal to their weight in it. With this is contrasted the hollow pitcher easily broken, and made of materials of no intrinsic value.

<sup><29013></sup>**Lamentations 4:3.** *Sea monsters* Rather, jackals.

*Their young ones* “Their” whelps. The term is applied only to the young of dogs, lions, and the like.

<sup><29015></sup>**Lamentations 4:5.** *They that were brought up in scarlet* literally, “those that were carried upon scarlet;” young children in arms and of the highest birth now lie on the dirt-heaps of the city.

<sup><29016></sup>**Lamentations 4:6.** Rather, “For” the iniquity “of the daughter of my people was greater than” the sin “of Sodom.” The prophet deduces this conclusion from the greatness of Judah’s misery (compare <sup><29017></sup>Jeremiah 30:11; see also <sup><29018></sup>Luke 13:1-5).

*No hands stayed on her* Or, “no hands were round about her.” Sodom’s sufferings in dying were brief: there were no starving children, no mothers cooking their offspring for food.

**Lamentations 4:7.** The Nazarites from their temperance were remarkable for health and personal beauty, besides being held in religious veneration.

*Rubies* Or, corals.

*Their polishing was of sapphire* Or, their shape was “a sapphire.” The allusion is no longer to color, but to form. Their shape was exact and faultless as the cutting of a precious stone.

**Lamentations 4:8.** *Their visage ...* Their form (their whole person, see <sup><1034></sup>1 Samuel 28:14) ... as in the margin. See <sup><830></sup>Job 30:30.

*It is withered, it is become like a stick* Or, It has become dry like a piece of wood.

**Lamentations 4:10.** *Pitiful* i.e. tender-hearted, compassionate. meat is used for food (<sup><932></sup>Psalms 69:21). What is here stated actually occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus.

**Lamentations 4:12.** Though Jerusalem had been several times captured (<sup><1145></sup>1 Kings 14:26; <sup><243></sup>2 Kings 14:13; 23:33-35), yet it had been so strongly fortified by Uzziah and his successors as to have been made virtually impregnable. Its present capture by Nebuchadnezzar had cost him a year and a half’s siege.

**Lamentations 4:13.** *The blood of the just* <sup><240></sup>Jeremiah 26:7-24 exhibits priests and prophets as the prime movers in an attempt to silence the word of God by putting Jeremiah to death. Compare the margin reference to Matthew.

**Lamentations 4:14.** *They have wandered* God’s ministers, consecrated to His service, wandered through the city blinded by the insatiable lust of slaughter. It was a pollution to touch their garments.

**Lamentations 4:15.** Men cried to these priests, “Away! Unclean! Away! Away! Touch not.” “Unclean” was the cry of the leper whenever he appeared in public: here it is the warning shout of those who meet the murderers.

*When they fled away and wandered* These priests fled away from the city, but with uncertain steps, not knowing where to find refuge. They find themselves abhorred abroad as well as at home.

It is quite possible that this verse records a real occurrence, if not during the siege, at all events during the last years of Zedekiah's reign.

<sup><25016></sup>**Lamentations 4:16.** Literally, The countenance of Yahweh hath scattered them, has driven these outlawed priests here and there, "and He will no more regard them" with favor.

<sup><25017></sup>**Lamentations 4:17-20.** A rapid sketch of the last days of the siege and the capture of the king.

<sup><25017></sup>**Lamentations 4:17.** Rather, "Still do our eyes waste away looking for our vain help."

*In our watching* Or, "on our watchtower."

<sup><25018></sup>**Lamentations 4:18.** Or, They hunted "our steps that we could not go out into the streets. To hunt" means here to lie in ambush, and catch by snares; and the streets are literally "the wide places," especially at the gates. Toward the end of the siege the towers erected by the enemy would command these places.

<sup><25019></sup>**Lamentations 4:19.** *Our persecutors are ...* Our pursuers (<sup><25013></sup>Lamentations 1:3 note) "were swifter than the eagles of heaven."

*They pursued us* Or, they chased us.

*Mountains ... wilderness* The route in going from Jerusalem to Jericho leads first over heights, beginning with the Mount of Olives, and then descends into the plain of the Ghor.

<sup><25020></sup>**Lamentations 4:20.** *The breath of our nostrils* Zedekiah is not set before us as a vicious king, but rather as a man who had not strength enough of character to stem the evil current of his times. And now that the state was fallen he was as the very breath of life to the fugitives, who would have no rallying point without him.

*In their pits* The words are metaphorical, suggesting that Zedekiah was hunted like a wild animal, and driven into the pitfall.

**Lamentations 4:21,22.** The prophet ends his elegy with the language of Messianic hope. The earthly king had fallen (<sup>250B</sup>Lamentations 4:20); but Israel cannot really perish. First then Edom, the representative of the Church's foes, is ironically told to rejoice. Rejoice she did at the capture of Jerusalem (<sup>240E</sup>Jeremiah 49:7-22); but her punishment is quickly to follow.

**Lamentations 4:22.** *The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished* literally, Thy iniquity is ended. This is the result of Judah having borne her punishment. And as it is not just to punish twice for the same thing, therefore Jeremiah adds, "He will not send thee again into captivity;" not meaning that under all circumstances Judah would have immunity from exile; — for that would depend upon her future conduct: but that her present guilt being expiated, she would have nothing to fear on its account.

*He will discover thy sins* See the margin. As Edom rejoices when the Church is chastised, so is the day of the Church's triumph that also on which the wicked meet with retribution.

## NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS 5

This final chapter (Lamentations 5) consists of the same number of verses as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet, but they no longer begin with the letters in regular order. Strict care is shown in the form and arrangement of the poem, each verse being compressed into a very brief compass, consisting of two members which answer to one another both in idea and expression. It is mainly occupied with the recapitulation of sufferings (<sup>ABD</sup>Lamentations 5:2-18), and finally closes with earnest prayer.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:1.** *What is come upon us* literally, “what” has happened “to us:” our national disgrace.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:2.** *Turned* “transferred.” The inheritance was the land of Canaan (<sup>ABD</sup>Leviticus 20:24).

*Aliens* Or, “foreigners:” i.e. the Chaldaeans upon their conquest of the country.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:3.** *Our mothers are as widows* The particle “as” suggests that the whole verse is metaphorical. Our distress and desolation is comparable only to that of fatherless orphans or wives just bereaved of their husbands.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:4.** Better as in the margin cometh to us for price. The rendering of the King James Version spoils the carefully studied rhythm of the original. The bitterness of the complaint lies in this, that it was their own property which they had to buy.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:5.** *Our necks ...* i.e. we were pursued so actively that our enemies seemed to be leaning over our necks ready to seize us.

*We labor* We were wearied, “there was no rest for us:” being chased incessantly.

<sup>ABD</sup>**Lamentations 5:6.** “To give the hand” means to submit oneself. Absolutely it was Babylon that had just destroyed their national existence, but Jeremiah means that all feelings of patriotism were crushed, and the sole care that remained was the desire for personal preservation. To secure this the people would readily have submitted to the yoke either of Egypt or

Assyria, the great powers from which in their past history they had so often suffered.

<sup>2358</sup>**Lamentations 5:7.** *And are not; and we ...* Or, they are not; “we have borne their iniquities.” Our fathers who began this national apostasy died before the hour of punishment.

<sup>2359</sup>**Lamentations 5:8.** *Servants* i.e. Slaves. A terrible degradation to a high-spirited Jew.

<sup>2360</sup>**Lamentations 5:9.** *We gat* Or, We get “our bread at the peril of our lives.” This verse apparently refers to those who were left in the land, and who in gathering in such fruits as remained, were exposed to incursions of the Bedouin, here called “the sword of the desert.”

<sup>2361</sup>**Lamentations 5:10.** *Our skin ...* Or, is fiery red like an oven because of the fever-blast “of famine.”

<sup>2362</sup>**Lamentations 5:11.** *They ravished* They humbled.

<sup>2363</sup>**Lamentations 5:12.** After the princes had been put to death their bodies were hung up by the hand to expose them to public contumely. Old age, again, no more availed to shield men from shameful treatment than the high rank of the princes. Such treatment of conquered enemies was not uncommon in ancient warfare.

<sup>2364</sup>**Lamentations 5:13.** *They took the young men to grind* Or, “The young men” have borne the mill, a menial and laborious task usually performed by slaves (compare <sup>2365</sup>Isaiah 47:2).

*The children fell under the wood* Or, lads have stumbled under burdens of wood. By lads are meant youths up to the age of military service; another form of menial labor.

<sup>2366</sup>**Lamentations 5:14.** *The gate* The gate was the place for public gatherings, for conversation, and the music of stringed instruments.

<sup>2367</sup>**Lamentations 5:16.** Literally, “The crown of our head is fallen,” i.e. what was our chief ornament and dignity is lost; the independence of the nation, and all that gave them rank and honor.



**Lamentations 5:17.** *Is faint ...* Or, has become “faint” — have become “dim.” “For this,” i.e. for the loss of our crown etc.

**Lamentations 5:18.** *The foxes* Or, jackals. As these animals live among ruins, and shun the presence of man, it shows that Zion is laid waste and deserted.

**Lamentations 5:19.** *Remainest* Or, reignest. The earthly sanctuary is in ruins, but the heavenly throne in unchangeable glory.

**Lamentations 5:22.** Literally, “Unless thou hast utterly rejected us,” unless “thou art very wroth against us.” This is stated as a virtual impossibility. God’s anger can be but temporary (<sup>1915</sup>Psalm 30:5), and therefore the very supposition is an indirect expression of hope.

This verse speaks of the possibility of an utter rejection through God’s wrath. Therefore, to remove so painful a thought, and to make the book more suited for public reading, <sup>1921</sup>Lamentations 5:21 is repeated in many manuscripts intended for use in the synagogue. The same rule is observed in the synagogue with the two last verses of Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Malachi.