1:1 God speaks as if He is married to Israel, and that even in their sufferings, He would suffer with them, as a husband suffers with his wife: “the destroyer will come upon *us”* (Jer. 6:22,26) even sounds as if God let Himself in a way be ‘destroyed’ in Israel’s destruction; for each of us dies a little in the death of those we love. The idea of God being destroyed in the destruction of His people may be the basis of the descriptions of Zion as being left widowed (here and Is. 54:1-8). We ask the question- if she was a widow, who died? Her husband, God, was as it were dead. The very idea of the death of the immortal God is awful and obnoxious. But this was and is the depth of God’s feelings at His peoples’ destruction, but it paves the way for the idea of God somehow being “in Christ” at His death.

1:9 *No comforter*-Seeing God knows all things, we should have total openness with God; this is why some of the great heroes of faith apparently openly question God, because they realized that if they felt something internally, then God knew this anyway. Thus Jeremiah complains that Zion has no comforter- in clear reference to the prophecies of Is. 40:1 that when Judah went into captivity, they would have a comforter. When Jeremiah complains that “The comforter who should refresh my soul is far from me” (:16) he is surely saying ‘The prophesied comforter of Isaiah just simply hasn’t come!’. He had his doubts- and he expresses them openly to God. We can find this same openness in prayer before God if we have a living relationship with Him.

1:18 In Jer. 15:15-19, Jeremiah asks for vengeance on his persecutors, and accuses God of deceiving him. God’s response is to ask him to repent of this, so that he can resume his prophetic work. Perhaps Jeremiah had this incident in mind when he commented: “Yahweh is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment”. This indicates that at least in Jeremiah’s case, he was not irresistibly carried along by the Spirit in some kind of ecstasy, having no option but to speak God’s word. His speaking of God’s word required that he shared the essentially loving and gracious spirit / disposition of his God; and he struggled to have this. Note too how repentance requires a specific, sober recognition that God is right and we were wrong- repentance isn’t a mere shrugging of the shoulders and half-second acceptance that we messed up.

2:1 Ascending to heaven and falling from heaven are Biblical idioms often used for increasing in pride and being humbled respectively - see too Job 20:6; Jer. 51:53 (about Babylon); Mt. 11:23 (about Capernaum). The language of falling from Heaven which we meet in the Bible isn’t therefore to be taken literally.

2:14 before the Babylonian invasion, Judah had been offered the prospect of eternally remaining in their land, if they repented (Jer. 7:7). And after it happened, Jeremiah commented: “Your prophets…did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity”. It could have been ‘warded off’ by the peoples’ repentance and the more powerful entreaty of the prophets. Note how Jeremiah, himself a prophet at the time, so wishes to take the blame upon himself for not pleading more powerfully with the people. Perhaps we will have similar feelings when the time of tribulation breaks forth in the very last days. Others’ repentance to some degree depends upon the depth of our entreaty.

#### 2:15 Christ on the cross was so clearly bearing the judgment of Israel’s sins when He was offered gall to quench His thirst (3:15) and when those from Jerusalem mocked and wagged their heads at Him. By baptism into His death we accept that the just judgment for our sins has been laid upon Him, and we will rise again with Him in resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). We will therefore avoid the tendency to transfer our sin and the judgment for it onto others, and judge them harshly.

2:16 *Gnash the teeth-* There will be "gnashing of teeth" for the rejected at the last day (Mt. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28). In the Old Testament, gnashing of teeth always means to hate somebody, often the righteous (here and Job 16:9; Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10). Could it not be that the rejected hate their Lord and His people, who will be watching the judgment in some form, and therefore go and join the ranks of the embittered armies that come against Him? Or is their extreme hatred against themselves?

2:18 Jeremiah wanted his grief to be reflective of the grieving prayer of the remnant to their God. His grief really was and is to be the pattern for others. Attitudes to prayer influence others. Doubtless it influenced the Lord Himself, who wept over Zion (Lk. 19:41), inevitably holding Jeremiah in His mind. Note that Isaiah had prophesied that God would not rest until Zion be restored. Watchmen would be set upon Zion’s walls who would give Him no rest until the walls be rebuilt (Is. 62:1,6,7). At this time, Zion was felt by God to be the “apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8). This prophesy started to be fulfilled straight after the Babylonian invasion when Jeremiah urged the desolated people to pray: “Let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no respite; don’t let the apple of your eye cease”. The prayerful remnant gave themselves no rest; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy that God would have no rest. Sincere prayer according to God’s will meant that there was a strong mutuality between the Father and those who prayed to Him. The apple of *His* eye was also theirs; and thus the prayers were ultimately answered and Zion was restored. Our spirit and His are united. All this speaks of an incredible personal bonding in prayer between the Creator and each, specific one of His creatures.

#### 3:7 Jeremiah felt himself totally identified with sinful Judah. Instead of turning away in disgust from God’s sinful people who had so abused him, he instead strongly identified with them and on that basis pleaded with God for them; and in this he sets us an amazing challenge and pattern. He was “afflicted” (1:9; 3:1; as Judah, 1:3,7; “built against”, :5, as Judah was, Jer. 52:4; “made old”, i.e. prematurely aged, :4, as Judah, Ps. 102:26; 50:9; 51:6; felt his prayers not heard, :8, as Judah’s weren’t; walled about and inclosed,:7,9, as Judah (Hos. 2:6); had God act to him “as a bear”, :10, as He was to Judah (Hos. 13:8; Am. 5:19); and “as a lion”, :10, as He was to Judah (Jer. 5:6; 49:19; 50:44); God bent His bow against him (:12), as He did against Judah (2:4 s.w.); suffered affliction and misery, :19, as Judah did (1:7 s.w.); drank gall (:5,19) as Judah had to (Jer. 8:14; 9:15; 23:15); had none to comfort him (1:21), as Judah didn’t (1:9); bore a yoke (:27), as did Judah (Jer. 27:8,12).

3:13 Notice how Jeremiah’s innermost being was turned for his people, because he felt that he had shared in their sin. The arrows of God entered into his kidneys, and this is why he so cried out. But God’s arrows were against a sinful Judah (2:4). Yet Jeremiah so identified with them that he felt they had entered him; and this is why he could cry out in the way he did. Even though he hadn’t sinned as they had, he felt that because they had, so had he, as he was so identified with them. He reached such a level of grief through identifying himself so closely with those for whom he grieved. Time and again, the descriptions of his personal suffering and grief are expressed in the terms of the very sufferings which he had prophesied as coming upon a sinful Israel. And so with us, if we feel and show a solidarity with the people of this world, with our brethren, then we will grieve for them. If we maintain a selfish, postmodern detachedness from them, then we will never have a heart that bleeds for them. Jeremiah could so easily have shrugged his shoulders and reasoned that Judah had had their chance; and it wasn’t on his head. But he didn’t. His attitude was that he had to seek the sheep until he found it.

3:15- see on 2:15.

3:38 *Evil and good come out of the mouth of the Most High*- As in Is. 45:5-7 we see that both positive and negative experiences come from God; He is truly almighty and doesn’t just provide the good whilst the evil, or disaster, comes from some sinful ‘Satan’ being. This isn’t taught in the Bible; in fact, the very opposite.

3:40 God *now* tries our hearts (Job 7:18; Ps. 11:4; 17:3; 26:2; 139:23). In likely allusion to the these descriptions of God searching and trying our hearts in the Psalms, Jeremiah says that we should search and try our hearts- we should seek to know ourselves as God does, seeing ourselves as He sees us.

3:45 Paul described himself as the offscouring of all things- using the very language of condemned Israel (1 Cor. 4:13). Paul so wanted to see their salvation that he identified with them to this extent. By doing so he was reflecting in essence the way the Lord Jesus so identified Himself with us sinners, as our representative, "made sin" [whatever precisely this means] for the sake of saving us from that sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

3:48-51 What he saw with his eye affected his mind / heart. Let us not see the doom of others, the pain and suffering of another life, and walk on by not permanently moved. What we see should affect our heart- if we have a heart that bleeds. And a bleeding heart doesn’t merely bleed- it does something concrete, in prayer and action. Consider other examples of the bleeding heart of Jeremiah in 1:16,20; 2:11.

4:6 By an interesting metonymy in the Hebrew language, the idol, the thing that facilitated sin, is put for their punishment / ruin. Sin and the punishment for it are inextricably linked. The Hebrew language reflects this identity here too, in that the Hebrew word for “punishment” is the same as for “iniquity”. And so it is with all the things of this present evil world; movies, music, novels, the needle, the bottle.... there is nothing unclean in itself, but these things can all be put by metonymy for the condemnation that can arise from the sin they facilitate. It's a powerful thought, as we face hourly temptation.

4:11 Both Yahweh and Israel are described as kindling the fire of judgment; He responded to what they had done (Jer. 11:16; 15:14; Lam. 4:11 cp. Jer. 17:4). Those who will be condemned will be only those who really wanted it.

4:15 Israel were made to depart into captivity because of their self-righteous rejection of their brethren, telling them to ‘depart’ from them because they considered them unclean- when they themselves were unclean.

5:7 In this very context, Ez. 18 later emphasized that the people at that time were suffering for their own sins, not just for those of their fathers. Yet Jeremiah seems in his grief to have overlooked that; and yet by grace he remained amongst the faithful, despite circumstances leading him to overlook parts of God’s truth and not facing up to the seriousness of Israel’s sin as he ought to have done.

5:20,21 Jeremiah’s prophecies of gracious restoration were known by the exiles; but many passages in Isaiah, the Psalms (e.g. Ps. 137:7-9) and Lamentations (:20,21) indicate that the exiles had little conviction they would be fulfilled, considering Judah as “utterly rejected” by God, and just getting on with their lives in Babylon without any real hope in God’s salvation. Considering the prosperity of their lives there, this was an all too convenient conclusion for them to draw. Once again we see that false interpretation of Scripture invariably has a moral subtext to it. Is. 40:1,2 speaks a message of comfort to the exiles: “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God”. But [in full allusion to this prophecy], the exiles were like Rachael who refused to be comforted over her loss (Jer. 31:15); they claimed they found “none to comfort” (1:2,16,17,21). But they were wilfully refusing the comfort of God’s repeated word of hope and restoration. They didn’t grasp the plain teaching of the prophetic word because they didn’t want to- it demanded too much of them, and a giving up of the comfortable Babylon life. Hence Is. 43:19 laments: “I am doing a new thing: now it springs forth [in the decree to return to Zion?], do you not perceive it?”. And do we "not perceive it?" time and again in our own lives, as to the potentials God is opening up?