
ISAIAH 4: 1 Seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own clothing: only let us be called by your name. Take away our reproach."

The havoc occasioned by war, and those other calamities which the prophet had been describing in the preceding chapter, are represented as so terribly great that seven women should be left to one man, Isa 4:1. Great blessedness of the remnant that shall be accounted worthy to escape these judgments, Isa 4:2-4. The privileges of the Gospel set forth by allusions to the glory and pomp of the Mosaic dispensation, Isa 4:5, Isa 4:6.

Verse 1

And seven women - The division of the chapters has interrupted the prophet's discourse, and broken it off almost in the midst of the sentence. "The numbers slain in battle shall be so great, that seven women shall be left to one man." The prophet has described the greatness of this distress by images and adjuncts the most expressive and forcible. The young women, contrary to their natural modesty, shall become suitors to the men: they will take hold of them, and use the most pressing importunity to be married. In spite of the natural suggestions of jealousy, they will be content with a share only of the rights of marriage in common with several others; and that on hard conditions, renouncing the legal demands of the wife on the husband, (see Exo 21:10), and begging only the name and credit of wedlock, and to be freed from the reproach of celibacy. See Isa 54:4, Isa 54:5. Like Marcia, on a different occasion, and in other circumstances: -

Da tantum nomen inane

Connubii: liceat tumulo scripsisse, Catonis Marcia.

Lucan, 2:342. "This happened," says Kimchi, "in the days of Ahaz, when Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judea one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day; see 2Chr 18:6. The widows which were left were so numerous that the prophet said, 'They are multiplied beyond the sand of the sea,'" Jer 15:8.

In that day - These words are omitted in the Septuagint, and MSS.

ISAIAH 4: 2 In that day, the LORD's branch will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the beauty and glory of the survivors of Israel.

Verse 2

The branch of the Lord "the branch of Jehovah" - The Messiah of Jehovah, says the Chaldee. And Kimchi says, The Messiah, the Son of David. The branch is an appropriate title of the Messiah; and the fruit of the land means the great Person to spring from the house of Judah, and is only a parallel expression signifying the same; or perhaps the blessings consequent upon the redemption procured by him. Compare Isa 45:8 (note), where the same great event is set forth under similar images, and see the note there.

Them that are escaped of Israel "the escaped of the house of Israel" - A MS. has בית ישראל beith yisrael, the house of Israel.

ISAIAH 4: 3 It will happen, that he who is left in Zion, and he who remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone who is written among the living in Jerusalem;

Verse 3

Written among the living - That is, whose name stands in the enrolment or register of the people; or every man living, who is a citizen of Jerusalem. See Eze 13:9, where, "they shall not be written in the writing of the house of Israel," is the same with what immediately goes before, "they shall not be in the assembly of my people." Compare Psa 69:28; Psa 87:6; Exo 32:32. To number and register the people was agreeable to the law of Moses, and probably was always practiced; being, in sound policy, useful, and even necessary. David's design of numbering the people was of another kind; it was to enroll them for his army. Michaelis Mosaisches Recht, Part iii., p. 227. See also his Dissert. de Censibus Hebraeorum.

ISAIAH 4: 4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst, by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning.

Verse 4

The spirit of burning - Means the fire of God's wrath, by which he will prove and purify his people; gathering them into his furnace, in order to separate the dross from the silver, the bad from the good. The severity of God's judgments, the fiery trial of his servants, Ezekiel (Eze 22:18-22) has set forth at large, after his manner, with great boldness of imagery and force of expression. God threatens to gather them into the midst of Jerusalem, as into the furnace; to blow the fire upon them, and to melt them. Malachi, Mal 3:2, Mal 3:3, treats the same subject, and represents the same event, under the like images: - "But who may abide the day of his coming?"

And who shall stand when he appeareth?

For he is like the fire of the refiner,

And like the soap of the fullers.

And he shall sit refining and purifying the silver;

And he shall purify the sons of Levi;

And cleanse them like gold, and like silver;

That they may be Jehovah's ministers,

Presenting unto him an offering in righteousness."

This is an allusion to a chemist purifying metals. He first judges of the state of the ore or adulterated metal. Secondly, he kindles the proper degree of fire, and applies the requisite test; and thus separates the precious from the vile.

ISAIAH 4: 5 The LORD will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.

Verse 5

And the Lord will create - One MS., the Septuagint, and the Arabic, have יביא yabi, He shall bring: the cloud already exists; the Lord will bring it over. This is a blessed promise of the presence of God in all the assemblies of his people.

Every dwelling place "the station" - The Hebrew text has, every station: but four MSS. (one ancient) omit כל col, all; very rightly, as it should seem: for the station was Mount Zion itself, and no other. See Exo 15:17. And the Septuagint, Arabic, and MSS., add the same word כל col, before מקראה mikraeha, probably right: the word has only changed its place by mistake. מקראיה mikrayeh, "the place where they were gathered together in their holy assemblies," says Sal ben Melech. But twenty-five of Kennicott's MSS., and twenty-two of De Rossi's fifty-three editions, besides the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic, have the word in the plural number.

A cloud and smoke by day - This is a manifest allusion to the pillar of a cloud and of fire which attended the Israelites in their passage out of Egypt, and to the glory that rested on the tabernacle, Exo 13:21; Exo 40:38. The prophet Zechariah, Zac 2:5, applies the same image to the same purpose: - "And I will be unto her a wall of fire round about;

And a glory will I be in the midst of her."

That is, the visible presence of God shall protect her. Which explains the conclusion of this verse of Isaiah; where the makkaph between כל col, and כבוד cabod, connecting the two words in construction, which ought not to be connected, has thrown an obscurity upon the sentence, and misled most of the translators.

For upon all the glory shall be a defense - Whatever God creates, he must uphold, or it will fail, Every degree of grace brings with it a degree of power to maintain itself in the soul.

ISAIAH 4: 6 There will be a pavilion for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a refuge and for a shelter from storm and from rain.

Verse 6

A tabernacle - In countries subject to violent tempests, as well as to intolerable heat, a portable tent is a necessary part of a traveller's baggage, for defense and shelter. And to such tents the words of the text make evident allusion. They are to be met with in every part of Arabia and Egypt, and in various other places in the East.