
ISAIAH 5: 1 Let me sing for my well beloved a song of my beloved about his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.

This chapter begins with representing, in a beautiful parable, the tender care of God for his people, and their unworthy returns for his goodness, Isa 5:1-7. The parable or allegory is then dropped; and the prophet, in plain terms, reproves and threatens them for their wickedness; particularly for their covetousness, Isa 5:8-10; intemperance, Isa 5:11; and inattention to the warnings of Providence, Isa 5:12. Then follows an enumeration of judgments as the necessary consequence. Captivity and famine appear with all their horrors, Isa 5:13. Hades, or the grave, like a ravenous monster, opens wide its jaws, and swallows down its myriads, Isa 5:14. Distress lays hold on all ranks, Isa 5:15; and God is glorified in the execution of his judgments, Isa 5:16; till the whole place is left desolate, a place for the flocks to range in, Isa 5:17. The prophet then pauses; and again resumes his subject, reproving them for several other sins, and threatening them with woes and vengeance, Isa 5:18-24; after which he sums up the whole of his awful denunciation in a very lofty and spirited epiphonema or conclusion. The God of armies, having hitherto corrected to no purpose, is represented with inimitable majesty, as only giving a hiss, and a swarm of nations hasten to his standard, Isa 5:25-27. Upon a guilty race, unpitied by heaven or by earth, they execute their commission; and leave the land desolate and dark, without one ray of comfort to cheer the horrid gloom, Isa 5:28-30.

This chapter likewise stands single and alone, unconnected with the preceding or following. The subject of it is nearly the same with that of the first chapter. It is a general reproof of the Jews for their wickedness; but it exceeds that chapter in force, in severity, in variety, and elegance; and it adds a more express declaration of vengeance by the Babylonian invasion.

Verse 1

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved "Let me sing now a song," etc. - A MS., respectable for its antiquity, adds the word שיר shir, a song, after נא na; which gives so elegant a turn to the sentence by the repetition of it in the next member, and by distinguishing the members so exactly in the style and manner in the Hebrew poetical composition, that I am much inclined to think it genuine.

A song of my beloved "A song of loves" - דודי dodey, for דודים dodim: status constructus pro absoluto, as the grammarians say, as Mic 6:16; Lam 3:14, Lam 3:66, so Archbishop Secker. Or rather, in all these and the like cases, a mistake of the transcribers, by not observing a small stroke, which in many MSS., is made to supply the מ mem, of the plural, thus, דודי dodi. שירת דודים shirath dodim is the same with שיר ידידת shir yedidoth, Psa 45:1. In this way of understanding it we avoid the great impropriety of making the author of the song, and the person to whom it is addressed, to be the same.

In a very fruitful hill "On a high and fruitful hill" - Hebrew בקרן בן שמן bekeren ben shamen, "on a horn the son of oil." The expression is highly descriptive and poetical. "He calls the land of Israel a horn, because it is higher than all lands; as the horn is higher than the whole body; and the son of oil, because it is said to be a land flowing with milk and honey." - Kimchi on the place. The parts of animals are, by an easy metaphor, applied to parts of the earth, both in common and poetical language. A promontory is called a cape or head; the Turks call it a nose. "Dorsum immane mari summo;" Virgil, a back, or ridge of rocks: - "Hanc latus angustum jam se cogentis in arctum

Hesperiae tenuem producit in aequora linguam,

Adriacas flexis claudit quae cornibus undas."

Lucan, 2:612, of Brundisium, i.e., Βρεντεσιον, which, in the ancient language of that country, signifies stag's head, says Strabo. A horn is a proper and obvious image for a mountain or mountainous country. Solinus, cap. viii., says, "Italiam, ubi longius processerit, in cornua duo scindi;" that is, the high ridge of the Alps, which runs through the whole length of it, divides at last into two ridges, one going through Calabria, the other through the country of the Brutii. "Cornwall is called by the inhabitants in the British tongue Kernaw, as lessening by degrees like a horn, running out into promontories like so many horns. For the Britons call a horn corn, in the plural kern." - Camden. "And Sammes is of opinion, that the country had this name originally from the Phoenicians, who traded hither for tin; keren, in their language, being a horn." - Gibson.

Here the precise idea seems to be that of a high mountain standing by itself; "vertex montis, aut pars montis ad aliis divisa;" which signification, says I. H. Michaelis, Bibl. Hallens., Not. in loc., the word has in Arabic.

Judea was in general a mountainous country, whence Moses sometimes calls it The Mountain, "Thou shalt plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance;" Exo 15:17. "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land beyond Jordan; that goodly mountain, and Lebanon;" Deu 3:25. And in a political and religious view it was detached and separated from all the nations round it. Whoever has considered the descriptions given of Mount Tabor, (see Reland, Palaestin.; Eugene Roger, Terre Sainte, p. 64), and the views of it which are to be seen in books of travels, (Maunderell, p. 114; Egmont and Heyman, vol. ii., p. 25; Thevenot, vol. i., p. 429), its regular conic form rising singly in a plain to a great height, from a base small in proportion, and its beauty and fertility to the very top, will have a good idea of "a horn the son of oil," and will perhaps be induced to think that the prophet took his image from that mountain.

ISAIAH 5: 2 He dug it up, gathered out its stones, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in its midst, and also cut out a wine press therein. He looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

Verse 2

And gathered out the stones "And he cleared it from the stones" - This was agreeable to the husbandry: "Saxa, summa parte terrae, et vites et arbores laeduct; ima parte refrigerant;" Columell. de arb. 3: "Saxosum facile est expedire lectione lapidum;" Id. 2:2. "Lapides, qui supersunt, [al. insuper sunt], hieme rigent, aestate fervescent; idcirco satis, arbustis, et vitibus nocent;" Pallad. 1:6. A piece of ground thus cleared of the stones Persius, in his hard way of metaphor, calls "exossatus ager," an unboned field; Sat. 6:52.

The choicest vine "Sorek" - Many of the ancient interpreters, the Septuagint, Aquila, and Theod., have retained this word as a proper name; I think very rightly. Sorek was a valley lying between Ascalon and Gaza, and running far up eastward in the tribe of Judah. Both Ascalon and Gaza were anciently famous for wine; the former is mentioned as such by Alexander Trallianus; the latter by several authors, quoted by Reland, Palaest., p. 589 and 986. And it seems that the upper part of the valley of Sorek, and that of Eshcol, where the spies gathered the single cluster of grapes, which they

were obliged to bear between two upon a staff, being both near to Hebron were in the same neighborhood, and that all this part of the country abounded with rich vineyards. Compare Num 13:22, Num 13:23; Jdg 16:3, Jdg 16:4. P. Nau supposes Eshcol and Sorek to be only different names for the same valley. Voyage Nouveau de la Terre Sainte, lib. iv., chap. 18. See likewise De Lisle's posthumous map of the Holy Land. Paris, 1763. See Bochart, Hieroz. ii., Colossians 725. Thevenot, i, p. 406. Michaelis (note on Jdg 16:4 (note), German translation) thinks it probable, from some circumstances of the history there given, that Sorek was in the tribe of Judah, not in the country of the Philistines.

The vine of Sorek was known to the Israelites, being mentioned by Moses, Gen 49:11, before their coming out of Egypt. Egypt was not a wine country. "Throughout this country there are no wines;" Sandys, p. 101. At least in very ancient times they had none. Herodotus, 2:77, says it had no vines and therefore used an artificial wine made of barley. That is not strictly true, for the vines of Egypt are spoken of in Scripture, Psa 78:47; Psa 105:33; and see Gen 40:11, by which it should seem that they drank only the fresh juice pressed from the grape, which was called οἶνος ἀμπέλινος; Herodot., 2:37. But they had no large vineyards, nor was the country proper for them, being little more than one large plain, annually overflowed by the Nile. The Mareotic in later times is, I think, the only celebrated Egyptian wine which we meet with in history. The vine was formerly, as Hasselquist tells us it is now, "cultivated in Egypt for the sake of eating the grapes, not for wine, which is brought from Candia," etc. "They were supplied with wine from Greece, and likewise from Phoenicia," Herodot., 3:6. The vine and the wine of Sorek therefore, which lay near at hand for importation into Egypt, must in all probability have been well known to the Israelites, when they sojourned there. There is something remarkable in the manner in which Moses, Gen 49:11, makes mention of it, which, for want of considering this matter, has not been attended to; it is in Jacob's prophecy of the future prosperity of the tribe of Judah: - "Binding his foal to the vine,

And his ass's colt to his own sorek;

He washeth his raiment in wine,

And his cloak in the blood of grapes."

I take the liberty of rendering שֶׁרְקָה sorekah, for שֶׁרְקוֹ soreko, his sorek, as the Masoretes do by pointing עִירוֹ iroh, for עִירוֹ iro, his foal. עִיר ir, might naturally enough appear in the feminine form; but it is not at all probable that שֶׁרְקָה sorek ever should. By naming particularly the vine of Sorek, and as the vine belonging to Judah, the prophecy intimates the very part of the country which was to fall to the lot of that tribe. Sir John Chardin says, "that at Casbin, a city of Persia, they turn their cattle into the vineyards after the vintage, to browse on the vines." He speaks also of vines in that country so large that he could hardly compass the trunks of them with his arms. Voyages, tom. iii., p. 12, 12mo. This shows that the ass might be securely bound to the vine, and without danger of damaging the tree by browsing on it.

And built a tower in the midst of it - Our Savior, who has taken the general idea of one of his parables, Mat 21:33; Mar 12:1, from this of Isaiah, has likewise inserted this circumstance of building a tower; which is generally explained by commentators as designed for the keeper of the vineyard to watch and defend the fruits. But for this purpose it was usual to make a little temporary hut, (Isa 1:8), which might serve for the short season while the fruit was ripening, and which was removed afterwards. The tower therefore should rather mean a building of a more permanent nature and use; the farm, as we may call it, of the vineyard, containing all the offices and implements, and the whole apparatus necessary for the culture of the vineyard, and the making of the wine. To which

image in the allegory, the situation the manner of building, the use, and the whole service of the temple, exactly answered. And so the Chaldee paraphrast very rightly expounds it: Et statui eos (Israelitas) ut plantam vineae selectae et aedificavi Sanctuarium meum in medio illorum. "And I have appointed the Israelites as a plant of a chosen vine, and I have built my sanctuary in the midst of them." So also Hieron. in loc. Aedificavit quoque turrim in medio ejus; templum videlicet in media civitate. "He built also a tower in the midst of it, viz., his own temple in the midst of the city." That they have still such towers or buildings for use or pleasure, in their gardens in the East, see Harmer's Observations, 2 p. 241.

And also made a wine-press therein. "And hewed out a lake therein" - This image also our Savior has preserved in his parable. יקֵב yekeb; the Septuagint render it here προληνιον, and in four other places υποληνιον, Isa 16:10; Joe 3:13; Hag 2:17; Zac 14:10, I think more properly; and this latter word St. Mark uses. It means not the wine-press itself, or calcatorium, which is called גַּת gath, or פּוּרָה purah; but what the Romans called lacus, the lake; the large open place or vessel, which by a conduit or spout received the must from the wine-press. In very hot countries it was perhaps necessary, or at least very convenient, to have the lake under ground, or in a cave hewed out of the side of the rock, for coolness, that the heat might not cause too great a fermentation, and sour the must. Vini confectio instituitur in cella, vel intimae domus camera quadam a ventorum ingressu remota. Kempfer, of Shiras wine. Amaen. Exot. p. 376. For the wind, to which that country is subject, would injure the wine. "The wine-presses in Persia," says Sir John Chardin, "are formed by making hollow places in the ground, lined with masons' work." Harmer's Observations, i., p. 392. See a print of one in Kempfer, p. 377.

Nonnus describes at large Bacchus hollowing the inside of a rock, and hewing out a place for the wine-press, or rather the lake: - Και σκοπελους ελαχνη· πεδοσκαφεος δε σιδηρου Θηγαλεη γλωχινη μυχον κοιληνατο πετρης· Λειηνας δε μετωπα βαθυνομενων κενεωνων Αφρον [f. ακρον] εϋστραφυλοιο τυπον ποιησατο λενου.

Dionysiac. lib. xii., 50:331. "He pierced the rock; and with the sharpen'd tool

Of steel well-temper'd scoop'd its inmost depth:

Then smooth'd the front, and form'd the dark recess

In just dimensions for the foaming lake."

And he looked "And he expected" - Jeremiah, Jer 2:21, uses the same image, and applies it to the same purpose, in an elegant paraphrase of this part of Isaiah's parable, in his flowing and plaintive manner: - "But I planted thee a sorek, a scion perfectly genuine: How then art thou changed, and become to me the degenerate shoots of the strange vine!"

Wild grapes "poisonous berries" - באשִׁים beushim, not merely useless, unprofitable grapes, such as wild grapes; but grapes offensive to the smell, noxious, poisonous. By the force and intent of the allegory, to good grapes ought to be opposed fruit of a dangerous and pernicious quality; as, in the explication of it, to judgment is opposed tyranny, and to righteousness, oppression. גֶּפֶן gephén, the vine, is a common name or genus, including several species under it; and Moses, to distinguish the true vine, or that from which wine is made, from the rest. calls it, Num 6:4, גֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן gephén haiyayin, the wine-vine. Some of the other sorts were of a poisonous quality, as appears from the story related among the miraculous acts of Elisha, 2Kgs 4:39-41. "And one went out into the field to gather potherbs; and he found a Seld vine, and he gathered from it wild fruit, his lapful; and he went and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not. And they poured it out for the men to

eat: and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, There is death in the pot, O man of God; and they could not eat of it. And he said, Bring meal, (leg. יִחַךְ kechu, nine MSS., one edition), and he threw it into the pot. And he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was nothing hurtful in the pot."

From some such sorts of poisonous fruits of the grape kind Moses has taken these strong and highly poetical images, with which he has set forth the future corruption and extreme degeneracy of the Israelites, in an allegory which has a near relation, both in its subject and imagery, to this of Isaiah: Deu 32:32, Deu 32:33. "Their vine is from the vine of Sodom,

And from the fields of Gomorrah:

Their grapes are grapes of gall;

Their clusters are bitter:

Their wine is the poison of dragons,

And the cruel venom of aspics." "I am inclined to believe," says Hasselquist, "that the prophet here, Isa 5:2-4, means the hoary nightshade, solanum incanum; because it is common in Egypt, Palestine, and the East; and the Arabian name agrees well with it. The Arabs call it anab el dib, i.e., wolf grapes. The באושים beushim, says Rab. Chai., is a well known species of the vine, and the worst of all sorts. The prophet could not have found a plant more opposite to the vine than this; for it grows much in the vineyards, and is very pernicious to them; wherefore they root it out: it likewise resembles a vine by its shrubby stalk;" Travels, p. 289. See also Michaelis Questions aux Voyageurs Danois, No. 64.

ISAIAH 5: 3 "Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, please judge between me and my vineyard.

Verse 3

Inhabitants - יושבי yoshebey, in the plural number; three MSS., (two ancient), and so likewise the Septuagint and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 5: 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why, when I looked for it to yield grapes, did it yield wild grapes?

ISAIAH 5: 5 Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it will be eaten up. I will break down its wall of it, and it will be trampled down.

ISAIAH 5: 6 I will lay it a wasteland. It won't be pruned nor hoed, but it will grow briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it."

Verse 6

There shall come up briers and thorns "The thorn shall spring up in it" - One MS. has בשמיר beshamir. The true reading seems to be בו שמור bo shamir, which is confirmed by the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 5: 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of Armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry of distress.

Verse 7

And he looked for judgment - The paronomasia, or play on the words, in this place, is very remarkable; mishpat, mishpach, tzedakah, tseakah. There are many examples of it in the other prophets, but Isaiah seems peculiarly fond of it. See Isa 13:6, Isa 24:17, Isa 32:7, Isa 28:1, Isa 57:6, Isa 61:3, Isa 65:11, Isa 65:12. Rabbi David Kimchi has noticed the paronomasia here: he expected משפט mishpat, judgment, but behold משפח mishpach, oppression; he expected צדקה tzedakah, righteousness, but behold צעקה tseakah, a cry. The rabbins esteem it a great beauty; their term for it is צחות הלשון tsachoth haltashon, elegance of language.

Oppression "tyranny" - משפח mishpach, from שפח shaphach, servum fecit, Arab. Houbigant: שפחה shiphchah is serva, a handmaid or female slave. משפח mishpach, eighteen MSS.

ISAIAH 5: 8 Woe to those who join house to house, who lay field to field, until there is no room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!

Verse 8

Wo unto them that - lay field to field "You who lay field unto field" - Read תקריבו takribu, in the second person; to answer to the verb following. So Vulgate.

ISAIAH 5: 9 In my ears, the LORD of Armies says: "Surely many houses will be desolate, even great and beautiful, unoccupied.

Verse 9

In mine ears. "To mine ear" - The sentence in the Hebrew text seems to be imperfect in this place; as likewise in Isa 22:14 (note), where the very same sense seems to be required as here. See the note there; and compare 1Sam 9:15 (note). In this place the Septuagint supply the word ηκουσθη, and the Syriac אשתמע eshtama, auditus est Jehovah in auribus meis, i.e., נגלה niglah, as in Isa 22:14.

Many houses - This has reference to what was said in the preceding verse: "In vain are ye so intent upon joining house to house, and field to field; your houses shall be left uninhabited, and your fields shall become desolate and barren; so that a vineyard of ten acres shall produce but one bath (not eight gallons) of wine, and the husbandman shall reap but a tenth part of the seed which he has sown." Kimchi says this means such an extent of vineyard as would require ten yoke of oxen to plough in one day.

ISAIAH 5: 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield an ephah."

ISAIAH 5: 11 Woe to those who rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; who stay late into the night, until wine inflames them!

Verse 11

Woe unto them that rise up early - There is a likeness between this and the following passage of the prophet Amos, Amo 6:3-6, who probably wrote before Isaiah. If the latter be the copier, he seems hardly to have equalled the elegance of the original: - "Ye that put far away the evil day

And affect the seat of violence;

Who lie upon beds of ivory,

And stretch yourselves upon your couches;

And eat the lambs from the flock,

And calves from the midst of the stall;

Who chant to the sound of the viol,

And like David invent for yourselves instruments of music;

Who quaff wine in large bowls,

And are anointed with the choicest ointments:

But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

Kimchi says, "they consider not the heavens nor their hosts: they pray not the morning nor the evening prayer unto the Lord."

Follow strong drink - Theodoret and Chrysostom on this place, both Syrians, and unexceptionable witnesses in what belongs to their own country, inform us that שכר shechar (σικερα in the Greek of both Testaments, rendered by us by the general term strong drink) meant properly palm wine, or date wine, which was and is still much in use in the Eastern countries. Judea was famous for the abundance and excellence of its palm trees; and consequently had plenty of this wine. "Fiunt (vina) et e pomis; primumque e palmis, quo Parthi et Indi utuntur, et oriens totus: maturarum modio in aquae congiis tribus macerato expressoque." Plin. lib. 14:19. "Ab his cariotae [palmae] maxime celebrantur; et cibo quidem, sed et succo, uberrimae. Ex quibus praecipua vina orienti; iniqua capiti, unde porno nomen." Id. 13:9. Καρος signifies stupefaction: and in Hebrew likewise the wine has its name from its remarkably inebriating quality.

ISAIAH 5: 12 The harp, lyre, tambourine, and flute, with wine, are at their feasts; but they don't respect the work of the LORD, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

ISAIAH 5: 13 Therefore my people go into captivity for lack of knowledge. Their honourable men are famished, and their multitudes are parched with thirst.

Verse 13

And their honorable men "And the nobles" - These verses have likewise a reference to the two preceding. They that indulged in feasting and drinking shall perish with hunger and thirst; and Hades shall indulge his appetite as much as they had done, and devour them all. The image is strong and expressive in the highest degree. Hab 2:5, uses the same image with great force: - the ambitious and avaricious conqueror. "Enlargeth his appetite like Hades;

And he is like Death, and will never be satisfied,"

But, in Isaiah, Hades is introduced to much greater advantage, in person; and placed before our eyes in the form of a ravenous monster, opening wide his immeasurable jaws, and swallowing them all together: "Therefore Shoel hath dilated her soul, she hath opened her mouth beyond limit." Destruction expects more than a common meal, when God visits Jerusalem for her iniquities. This seems to refer to the ruin brought on the Jews by the Romans. Our blessed Lord repeats this parable, and applies it to this very transaction, Mat 21:33.

ISAIAH 5: 14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, their multitude, their pomp, and he who rejoices among them, descend into it.

ISAIAH 5: 15 So man is brought low, mankind is humbled, and the eyes of the arrogant ones are humbled;

ISAIAH 5: 16 but the LORD of Armies is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness.

ISAIAH 5: 17 Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture, and strangers will eat the ruins of the rich.

Verse 17

The lambs "And the kids" - גרים gerim, "strangers." The Septuagint read, more agreeably to the design of the prophet, כרים carim, αρνες, "the lambs." גדים gedayim, "the kids," Dr. Durell; nearer to the present reading: and so Archbishop Secker. The meaning is, their luxurious habitations shall be so entirely destroyed as to become a pasture for flocks.

After their manner "Without restraint" - כדברם kedobram, secundum duetum eorum; i.e. suo ipsorum ductu; as their own will shall lead them.

ISAIAH 5: 18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and wickedness as with cart rope;

Verse 18

With a cart-rope "As a long cable" - The Septuagint, Aquila, Sym., and Theod., for בחבלי bechabley, read כחבלי kechahley, ὡς σχοινοῦ, or σχοινοῦ; and the Septuagint, instead of שוא shau, read some other word signifying long; ὡς σχοινοῦ μακρῶ; and so likewise the Syriac, אריכא arecha. Houbigant conjectures that the word which the Septuagint had in their copies was שרוע sarua, which is used

Lev 21:18, Lev 22:23, for something in an animal body superfluous, lengthened beyond its natural measure. And he explains it of sin added to sin, and one sin drawing on another, till the whole comes to an enormous length and magnitude; compared to the work of a rope-maker still increasing and lengthening his rope, with the continued addition of new materials. "Eos propheta similes facit homini restiario, qui funem torquet, cannabe addita et contorta, eadem iterans, donec funem in longum duxerit, neque eum liceat protrahi longius." "An evil inclination," says Kimchi on this place, from the ancient rabbins, "is at the beginning like a fine hair-string, but at the finishing like a thick cart-rope." By a long progression in iniquity, and a continued accumulation of sin, men arrive at length to the highest degree of wickedness; bidding open defiance to God, and scoffing at his threatened judgments, as it is finely expressed in the next verse. The Chaldee paraphrast explains it in the same manner, of wickedness increasing from small beginnings, till it arrives to a great magnitude. - L.

I believe neither the rabbins nor Bishop Lowth have hit on the true meaning of this place, the prophet seems to refer to idol sacrifices. The victims they offered were splendidly decked out for the sacrifice. Their horns and hoofs were often gilded, and their heads dressed out with fillets and garlands. The cords of vanity may refer to the silken strings by which they were led to the altar, some of which were unusually thick. The offering for iniquity was adorned with fillets and garlands; the sin-offering with silken cords, like unto cart-ropes. Pride, in their acts of humiliation, had the upper hand.

ISAIAH 5: 19 Who say, "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it!"

Verse 19

Let the counsel of the Holy One - Tryphiodorus has an expression something like this: - - επει Διος ηλυθε βουλη.

Tryph. II Excid. 239.

Because the counsel of Jupiter was come. "This expression, ηλυθε βουλη, is, I believe, something uncommon; but it is exactly paralleled and explained by a passage in Isaiah, Isa 5:19. The Septuagint has expressed it in the very same words with Tryphiodorus: και ελθοι η βουλ η του αγιου Ισραηλ, ινα γνωμεν." - Merrick's note, ad loc.

ISAIAH 5: 20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

ISAIAH 5: 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

ISAIAH 5: 22 Woe to those who are mighty to drink wine, and champions at mixing strong drink;

Verse 22

Mighty to drink wine - "They show not," says Kimchi, "their strength in combating their enemies, but in drunkenness and debauchery."

ISAIAH 5: 23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice for the innocent!

Verse 23

The righteous - צַדִּיק tsaddik, singular, Sept. Vulg., and two editions.

ISAIAH 5: 24 Therefore as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as the dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of Armies, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Verse 24

The flame "The tongue of fire" - "The flame, because it is in the shape of a tongue; and so it is called metaphorically." Sal. ben Melec. The metaphor is so exceedingly obvious, as well as beautiful, that one may wonder that it has not been more frequently used. Virgil very elegantly intimates, rather than expresses, the image; -

Ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli

Fundere lumen apex; tactuque innoxia molli

Lambere flamma comas, et circum tempora pasci.

Aen. 2:682. "Strange to relate! from young Iulus' head

A lambent flame arose, which gently spread

Around his brows, and on his temples fed."

And more boldly of Aetna darting out flames from its top: -

Interdumque atram prorumpit ad aethera nubem,

Turbine fumantem piceo, et candente favilla:

Attollitque globos flammaram, et sidera lambit.

Aen. 3:574. "By turns a pitchy cloud she rolls on high,

By turns hot embers from her entrails fly,

And flakes of mountain flames, that lick the sky."

The disparted tongues, as it were of fire, Act 2:3, which appeared at the descent of the Holy Spirit, on the apostles, give the same idea; that is, of flames shooting diversely into pyramidal forms, or points, like tongues. It may be farther observed that the prophet in this place has given the metaphor its full force, in applying it to the action of fire in eating up and devouring whatever comes

in its way, like a ravenous animal whose tongue is principally employed in taking in his food or prey; which image Moses has strongly exhibited in an expressive comparison: "And Moab said to the elders of Midian Now shall this collection of people lick up all that are around about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field," Num 22:4. See also 1Kgs 18:38.

Their root shall be as rottenness - כמק cammak, like mak; whence probably our word muck, dung, was derived.

ISAIAH 5: 25 Therefore the LORD's anger burns against his people, and he has stretched out his hand against them, and has struck them. The mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is still stretched out.

Verse 25

The hills did tremble "And the mountains trembled" - Probably referring to the great earthquakes in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, in or not long before the time of the prophet himself, recorded as a remarkable era in the title of the prophecies of Amos., Amo 1:1, and by Zechariah, Zac 14:5.

ISAIAH 5: 26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from far, and he will whistle for them from the end of the earth. Behold, they will come speedily and swiftly.

Verse 26

He will - hiss "He will hist" - "The metaphor is taken from the practice of those that keep bees, who draw them out of their hives into the fields, and lead them back again, συρισμασι, by a hiss or a whistle." - Cyril, on this place; and to the same purpose Theodoret, ib. In Isa 7:18, the metaphor is more apparent, by being carried farther, where the hostile armies are expressed by the fly and the bee: - "Jehovah shall hist the fly That is in the utmost parts of Egypt; And the bee, that is in the land of Assyria."

On which place see Deu 1:44; Psa 118:12; and God calls the locusts his great army, Joe 2:25; Exo 23:28. See Huet, Quest. Alnet. 2:12. שרק sharak or shrak, he shall whistle for them, call loud and shrill; he shall shriek, and they (their enemies) shall come at his call.

With speed - This refers to the Isa 5:19. As the scoffers had challenged God to make speed, and to hasten his work of vengeance, so now God assures them that with speed and swiftly it shall come.

ISAIAH 5: 27 No one shall be weary nor stumble among them; no one shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the belt of their waist be untied, nor the strap of their sandals be broken:

Verse 27

None - among them - Kimchi has well illustrated this continued exaggeration or hyperbole, as he rightly calls it, to the following effect: "Through the greatness of their courage they shall not be

fatigued with their march, nor shall they stumble though they march with the utmost speed: they shall not slumber by day, nor sleep by night; neither shall they ungird their armor, or put off their sandals to take their rest. Their arms shall be always in readiness, their arrows sharpened, and their bows bent. The hoofs of their horses are hard as a rock. They shall not fail, or need to be shod with iron: the wheels of their carriages shall move as rapidly as a whirlwind."

Neither shall the girdle - The Eastern people, wearing long and loose garments, were unfit for action or business of any kind, without girding their clothes about them. When their business was finished they took off their girdles. A girdle therefore denotes strength and activity; and to unloose the girdle is to deprive of strength, to render unfit for action. God promises to unloose the loins of kings before Cyrus, Isa 45:1. The girdle is so essential a part of a soldier's accoutrements, being the last that he puts on to make himself ready for action, that to be girded, ζωννυσθαι, with the Greeks means to be completely armed and ready for battle: - Ατρείδης δ εβόησεν, ιδε ζωννυσθαι ανωγεν Αργειους.

Iliad, 11:15. Το δε ενδυναι τα όπλα εκαλουν οι παλαιοι ζωννυσθαι.

Pausan. Boeot.

It is used in the same manner by the Hebrews: "Let not him that girdeth himself boast as he that unlooseth his girdle," 1Kgs 20:11; that is, triumph not before the war is finished.

ISAIAH 5: 28 whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent. Their horses' hoofs will be like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind.

Verse 28

Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint "The hoofs of their horses shall be counted as adamant" - The shoeing of horses with iron plates nailed to the hoof is quite a modern practice, and was unknown to the ancients, as appears from the silence of the Greek and Roman writers, especially those that treat of horse medicine, who could not have passed over a matter so obvious and of such importance that now the whole science takes its name from it, being called by us farriery. The horseshoes of leather and iron which are mentioned; the silver and gold shoes with which Nero and Poppaea shod their mules, used occasionally to preserve the hoofs of delicate cattle, or for vanity, were of a very different kind; they enclosed the whole hoof as in a case, or as a shoe does a man's foot, and were bound or tied on. For this reason the strength, firmness and solidity of a horse's hoof was of much greater importance with them than with us, and was esteemed one of the first praises of a fine horse. Xenophon says that a good horse's hoof is hard, hollow, and sounds upon the ground like a cymbal. Hence the χαλκοποδες ιπποιοι, of Homer, and Virgil's solido graviter sonat ungula cornu. And Xenophon gives directions for hardening the horses' hoofs by making the pavement on which he stands in the stable with roundheaded stones. For want of this artificial defense to the foot which our horses have, Amos, Amo 6:12, speaks of it as a thing as much impracticable to make horses run upon a hard rock as to plough up the same rock with oxen: - "Shall horses run upon a rock?"

Shall one plough it up with oxen?"

These circumstances must be taken into consideration in order to give us a full notion of the propriety and force of the image by which the prophet sets forth the strength and excellence of the

Babylonish cavalry, which made a great part of the strength of the Assyrian army. Xenop. Cyrop. lib. ii.

Like a whirlwind - כסופה cassuphah, like the stormy blast. Here sense and sound are well connected.

ISAIAH 5: 29 Their roaring will be like a lioness. They will roar like young lions. Yes, they shall roar, and seize their prey and carry it off, and there will be no one to deliver.

ISAIAH 5: 30 They will roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land behold, darkness and distress. The light is darkened in its clouds.

Verse 30

If one look unto the land, etc. "And these shall look to the heaven upward, and down to the earth" - ונבט לארץ venibbat laarets. Και εμβλεψονται εις την γην. So the Septuagint, according to the Vatican and Alexandrian copies; but the Complutensian and Aldine editions have it more fully, thus: - Και εμβλεψονται εις τον ουρανον ανω, και κατω; and the Arabic from the Septuagint, as if it had stood thus: Και εμβλεψονται εις ουρανον, και εις την γην κατω, both of which are plainly defective; the words εις την γην, unto the earth, being wanted in the former, and the word ανω, above, in the latter. But an ancient Coptic version from the Septuagint, supposed to be of the second century, some fragments of which are preserved in the library of St. Germain des Prez at Paris, completes the sentence; for, according to this version, it stood thus in the Septuagint. - Και εμβλεψονται εις τον ουρανον ανω, και εις την γην κατω; "And they shall look unto the heavens above and unto the earth beneath," and so it stands in the Septuagint MSS., Pachom. and 1. D. II., according to which they must have read their Hebrew text in this manner: - ונבט לשמים למעלה ולארץ למטה. This is probably the true reading, with which I have made the translation agree. Compare Isa 8:22; where the same sense is expressed in regard to both particulars, which are here equally and highly proper, the looking upwards, as well as down to the earth: but the form of expression is varied. I believe the Hebrew text in that place to be right, though not so full as I suppose it was originally here; and that of the Septuagint there to be redundant, being as full as the Coptic version and MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. 2 represent it in this place, from which I suppose it has been interpolated.

Darkness "The gloomy vapor" - The Syriac and Vulgate seem to have read בערפלח bearphalach; but Jarchi explains the present reading as signifying darkness; and possibly the Syriac and Vulgate may have understood it in the same manner.