
ISAIAH 6: 1 In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

This chapter, by a particular designation of Isaiah to the prophetic office, Isa 6:1-8, introduces, with great solemnity, a declaration of the whole tenor of the Divine conduct in reference to his people, who, on account of their unbelief and impenitence, should for a very long period be given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart, Isa 6:9, Isa 6:10; and visited with such calamities as would issue on the total desolation of their country, and their general dispersion, Isa 6:11, Isa 6:12. The prophet adds, however, that under their repeated dispersions, (by the Chaldeans, Romans, etc.), a small remnant would be preserved as a seed from which will be raised a people, in whom will be fulfilled all the Divine promises, Isa 6:13.

As this vision seems to contain a solemn designation of Isaiah to the prophetic office, it is by most interpreters thought to be the first in order of his prophecies. But this perhaps may not be so; for Isaiah is said, in the general title of his prophecies, to have prophesied in the time of Uzziah, whose acts, first and last, he wrote, 2Chr 26:22; which is usually done by a contemporary prophet; and the phrase, in the year that Uzziah died, probably means after the death of Uzziah; as the same phrase (Isa 14:28) means after the death of Ahaz. Not that Isaiah's prophecies are placed in exact order of time. Chapters 2, 3, Isa 4:1-6, 5, seem by internal marks to be antecedent to chap. 1; they suit the time of Uzziah, or the former part of Jotham's reign; whereas chap. 1 can hardly be earlier than the last years of Jotham. See note on Isa 1:7, and Isa 2:1 (note). This might be a new designation, to introduce more solemnly a general dedication of the whole course of God's dispensations in regard to his people and the fates of the nation; which are even now still depending, and will not be fully accomplished till the final restoration of Israel.

In this vision the ideas are taken in general from royal majesty, as displayed by the monarchs of the East; for the prophet could not represent the ineffable presence of God by any other than sensible and earthly images. The particular scenery of it is taken from the temple. God is represented as seated on his throne above the ark, in the most holy place, where the glory appeared above the cherubim, surrounded by his attendant ministers. This is called by God himself "the place of his throne, and the place of the soles of his feet," Eze 43:7. "A glorious throne exalted of old, is the place of our sanctuary," saith the prophet Jeremiah, chap, Jer 17:12. The very posture of sitting is a mark of state and solemnity: *Sed et ipsum verbum sedere regni significat potestatem*, saith Jerome, Comment. in Eph 1:20. See note on Isa 3:1 (note). St. John, who has taken many sublime images from the prophets of the Old Testament, and in particular from Isaiah, hath exhibited the same scenery, drawn out into a greater number of particulars; Rev 4:1-11.

The veil, separating the most holy place from the holy or outermost part of the temple, is here supposed to be taken away; for the prophet, to whom the whole is exhibited, is manifestly placed by the altar of burnt-offering, at the entrance of the temple, (compare Eze 43:5, Eze 43:6), which was filled with the train of the robe, the spreading and overflowing of the Divine glory. The Lord upon the throne, according to St. John (Joh 12:41), was Christ; and the vision related to his future kingdom when the veil of separation was to be removed, and the whole earth was to be filled with the glory of God, revealed to all mankind: which is likewise implied in the hymn of the seraphim, the design of which is, saith Jerome on the place, *Ut mysterium Trinitatis in una Divinitate demonstrant; et nequaquam templum Judaicum, sicut prius, sed omnem terram illius gloria plenam esse testentur;*

"That they may point out the mystery of the Trinity in one Godhead; and that the Jewish temple alone should not be, as formerly, the place of the Divine glory, for the whole earth should be filled with it." It relates, indeed, primarily to the prophet's own time, and the obduration of the Jews of that age, and their punishment by the Babylonish captivity; but extends in its full attitude to the age of Messiah, and the blindness of the Jews to the Gospel, (see Mat 13:14; Joh 12:40; Act 28:26; Rom 11:8), the desolation of their country by the Romans, and their being rejected by God. That nevertheless a holy seed - a remnant, should be preserved; and that the nation should spread out and flourish again from the old stock. - L.

Verse 1

The Lord - Fifty-one MSS. of Kennicott's, and fifty-four of De Rossi's, and one edition; in the 8th verse, (Isa 6:8); forty-four MSS. of Kennicott's, and forty-six of De Rossi's, and one edition; and in the 11th verse (Isa 6:11); thirty-three MSS. of Kennicott's, and many of De Rossi's, and one edition, for אֲדֹנָי Adonai, "the Lord" read יהוה "Jehovah," which is probably the true reading; (compare Isa 6:6); as in many other places, in which the superstition of the Jews has substituted אֲדֹנָי Adonai for יהוה Yehovah. One of my own MSS., a very ancient and large folio, to which the points and the masora have been added by a later hand, has יהוה Yehovah in the 1st and 8th verses, in the teeth of the masora, which orders it in both places to be read אֲדֹנָי Adonai.

ISAIAH 6: 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face. With two he covered his feet. With two he flew.

Verse 2

Above it stood the seraphim - שֵׁרָפִים seraphim, from שָׂרַף seraph, to burn. He saw says Kimchi, the angels as flames of fire, that the depravity of that generation might be exhibited, which was worthy of being totally burnt up.

He covered his feet "He covereth his feet" - By the feet the Hebrews mean all the lower parts of the body. But the people of the East generally wearing long robes, reaching to the ground, and covering the lower parts of the body down to the feet, it may hence have been thought want of respect and decency to appear in public and on solemn occasions with even the feet themselves uncovered. Kempfer, speaking of the king of Persia giving audience, says, *Rex in medio supremi atrii cruribus more patrio inflexis sedebat: corpus tunica investiebat flava, ad suras cum staret protensa; discumbentis vero pedes discalceatos pro urbanitate patria operiens.* - *Amoen. Exot. p. 227.* "The king sat on the floor cross-legged, as is the custom of the country. He was covered with a yellow garment, which reached down to the feet when standing, but covered the feet for decency when sitting with his slippers off." Sir John Chardin's MS. note on this place of Isaiah is as follows: *Grande marque de respect en orient de se cacher les pieds, quand on est assis, et de baisser le visage. Quand le souverain se monstre en Chine et a Japon, chacun se jette le visage contre terre, et il n'est pas permis de regarder le roi; "It is a great mark of respect in the East to cover the feet, and to bow down the head in the presence of the king."*

ISAIAH 6: 3 One called to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Armies! The whole earth is full of his glory!"

 Verse 3

Holy, holy, holy - This hymn performed by the seraphim, divided into two choirs, the one singing responsively to the other, which Gregory Nazian., Carm. 18, very elegantly calls Συμφωνον, αντιφωνον, αγγελων στασιον, is formed upon the practice of alternate singing, which prevailed in the Jewish Church from the time of Moses, whose ode at the Red Sea was thus performed, (see Exo 15:20, Exo 15:21), to that of Ezra, under whom the priests and Levites sung alternately, "O praise Jehovah, for he is gracious;

For his mercy endureth for ever;" Ezr 3:11. See De Sac. Poes. Hebr. Prael. xix., at the beginning.

ISAIAH 6: 4 The foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

ISAIAH 6: 5 Then I said, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies!"

Verse 5

Wo is me! for I am undone - נדמיתי nidmeythi, I am become dumb. There is something exceedingly affecting in this complaint. I am a man of unclean lips; I cannot say, Holy, holy, holy! which the seraphs exclaim. They are holy; I am not so: they see God, and live; I have seen him, and must die, because I am unholy. Only the pure in heart shall see God; and they only can live in his presence for ever, Reader, lay this to heart; and instead of boasting of thy excellence, and trusting in thy might, or comforting thyself in thy comparative innocence, thou wilt also be dumb before him, because thou hast been a man of unclean lips, and because thou hast still an unclean heart.

I am undone "I am struck dumb" - נדמיתי nidmeythi, twenty-eight MSS. (five ancient) and three editions. - I understand it as from דום dum or דמם damam, silere, "to be silent;" and so it is rendered by the Syriac, Vulgate, Symmachus, and by some of the Jewish interpreters, apud Sal. b. Melec. The rendering of the Syriac is תויר אני tavor ani, stupens, attonitus sum, "I am amazed." He immediately gives the reason why he was struck dumb: because he was a man of polluted lips, and dwelt among a people of polluted lips, and was unworthy, either to join the seraphim in singing praises to God, or to be the messenger of God to his people. Compare Exo 4:10; Exo 6:12; Jer 1:6.

ISAIAH 6: 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.

Verse 6

A live coal - The word of prophecy, which was put into the mouth of the prophet.

From off the altar - That is, from the altar of burnt-offerings, before the door of the temple, on which the fire that came down at first from heaven (Lev 9:24; 2Chr 7:1) was perpetually burning. It was never to be extinguished, Lev 6:12, Lev 6:13.

ISAIAH 6: 7 He touched my mouth with it, and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin forgiven."

ISAIAH 6: 8 I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am. Send me!"

ISAIAH 6: 9 He said, "Go, and tell this people, 'You hear indeed, but don't understand; and you see indeed, but don't perceive.'

Verse 9

And he said - ל' li, to me, two MSS. and the Syriac. Thirteen MSS. have ראה raah, in the regular form.

ISAIAH 6: 10 Make the heart of this people fat. Make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed."

Verse 10

Make the heart of this people fat "Gross" - The prophet speaks of the event, the fact as it would actually happen, not of God's purpose and act by his ministry. The prophets are in other places said to perform the thing which they only foretell: - "Lo! I have given thee a charge this day

Over the nations, and over the kingdoms;

To pluck up, and to pull down;

To destroy, and to demolish;

To build, and to plant." Jer 1:10.

And Ezekiel says, "When I came to destroy the city," that is, as it is rendered in the margin of our version, "when I came to prophesy that the city should be destroyed;" Eze 43:3. To hear, and not understand; to see, and not perceive; is a common saying in many languages. Demosthenes uses it, and expressly calls it a proverb: ὥστε το της παροιμιας ὀρωντας μη ὀραν, και ακουοντας μη ακουειν; Contra Aristogit. I., sub fin. The prophet, by the bold figure in the sentiment above mentioned, and the elegant form and construction of the sentence, has raised it from a common proverb into a beautiful mashal, and given it the sublime air of poetry.

Or the words may be understood thus, according to the Hebrew idiom: "Ye certainly hear, but do not understand; ye certainly see, but do not acknowledge." Seeing this is the case, make the heart of this people fat - declare it to be stupid and senseless; and remove from them the means of salvation, which they have so long abused.

There is a saying precisely like this in Aeschylus: - - - βλεποντες εβλεπον ματην, κλυοντες ουκ ηκουον.

Aesch. Prom. Vinct. 456. "Seeing, they saw in vain; and hearing, they did not understand."

And shut "Close up" - השע hasha. This word Sal. ben Melec explains to this sense, in which it is hardly used elsewhere, on the authority of Onkelos. He says it means closing up the eyes, so that one cannot see; that the root is שוע shava, by which word the Targum has rendered the word טח tach, Lev 14:42, וטח את בית vetach eth beith, "and shall plaster the house." And the word טח tach is used in the same sense, Isa 44:18. So that it signifies to close up the eyes by some matter spread upon the lids. Mr. Harmer very ingeniously applies to this passage a practice of sealing up the eyes as a ceremony, or as a kind of punishment used in the East, from which the image may possibly be taken. Observ. 2:278.

With their heart "With their hearts" - ובלבבו ubilebabo, fifteen MSS. of Kennicott's and fourteen of De Rossi's, and two editions, with the Septuagint, Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate.

And be healed "And I should heal" - ואר פא veer pa, Septuagint, Vulgate. So likewise Mat 13:14; Joh 12:40; Act 28:27.

ISAIAH 6: 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" He answered, "Until cities are waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land becomes utterly waste,

Verse 11

Be utterly desolate "Be left" - For תשאה tishaeh, the Septuagint and Vulgate read תשאר tishshaer.

ISAIAH 6: 12 And the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

ISAIAH 6: 13 If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stock."

Verse 13

A tenth - This passage, though somewhat obscure, and variously explained by various interpreters, has, I think, been made so clear by the accomplishment of the prophecy, that there remains little room to doubt of the sense of it. When Nebuchadnezzar had carried away the greater and better part of the people into captivity, there was yet a tenth remaining in the land, the poorer sort left to be vinedressers and husbandmen, under Gedaliah, 2Kgs 25:12, 2Kgs 25:22, and the dispersed Jews gathered themselves together, and returned to him, Jer 40:12; yet even these, fleeing into Egypt after the death of Gedaliah, contrary to the warning of God given by the prophet Jeremiah, miserably perished there. Again, in the subsequent and more remarkable completion of the prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the commonwealth by the Romans, when the Jews, after the loss of above a million of men, had increased from the scanty residue that was left of them, and had become very numerous again in their country; Hadrian, provoked by their rebellious behavior, slew above half a million more of them, and a second time almost extirpated the nation. Yet after these signal and almost universal destructions of that nation, and after so many other repeated exterminations and massacres of them in different times and on various occasions since, we yet see, with astonishment, that the stock still remains, from which God, according to his

promise frequently given by his prophets, will cause his people to shoot forth again, and to flourish. - L.

A tenth, עשיריה asiriyah. The meaning, says Kimchi, of this word is, there shall yet be in the land ten kings from the time of declaring this prophecy. The names of the ten kings are Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Jostah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; then there shall be a general consumption, the people shall be carried into captivity, and Jerusalem shall be destroyed.

For בם bam, in them, above seventy MSS., eleven of Kennicott's, and thirty-four of De Rossi's, read בה bah, in it; and so the Septuagint.