
ISAIAH 7: 1 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

The king of Judah and the royal family being in the utmost consternation on receiving accounts of the invasion of the kings of Syria and Israel, the prophet is sent to assure them that God would make good his promises to David and his house; so that, although they might be corrected, they could not be destroyed, while these prophecies remained to be accomplished, Isa 7:1-9. The Lord gives Ahaz a sign that the confederacy against Judah shall be broken, which sign strikingly points out the miraculous conception of the Messiah, who was to spring from the tribe of Judah, Isa 7:10-16. Prediction of very heavy calamities which the Assyrians would inflict upon the land of Judea, Isa 7:17-25.

The confederacy of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, against the kingdom of Judah, was formed in the time of Jotham; and perhaps the effects of it were felt in the latter part of his reign; see 2Kgs 15:37, and note on Isa 1:7-9 (note). However, in the very beginning of the reign of Ahaz, they jointly invaded Judah with a powerful army, and threatened to destroy or to dethrone the house of David. The king and royal family being in the utmost consternation on receiving advises of their designs, Isaiah is sent to them to support and comfort them in their present distress, by assuring them that God would make good his promises to David and his house. This makes the subject of this, and the following, and the beginning of the ninth chapters, in which there are many and great difficulties.

Chap. 7 begins with an historical account of the occasion of this prophecy; and then follows, Isa 7:4-16, a prediction of the ill success of the designs of the Israelites and Syrians against Judah; and from thence to the end of the chapter, a denunciation of the calamities to be brought upon the king and people of Judah by the Assyrians, whom they had now hired to assist them. Chap. 8 has a pretty close connection with the foregoing; it contains a confirmation of the prophecy before given of the approaching destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Syria by the Assyrians, of the denunciation of the invasion of Judah by the same Assyrians. Isa 8:9, Isa 8:10, give a repeated general assurance, that all the designs of the enemies of God's people shall be in the end disappointed and brought to naught; Isa 8:11, etc., admonitions and threatenings, (I do not attempt a more particular explanation of this very difficult part), concluding with an illustrious prophecy Isa 9:1-6, of the manifestation of Messiah, the transcendent dignity of his character, and the universality and eternal duration of his kingdom.

ISAIAH 7: 2 It was told the house of David, saying, "Syria is allied with Ephraim." His heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind.

ISAIAH 7: 3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shearjashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field.

Verse 3

Now - נא na, is omitted by two MSS., the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 7: 4 Tell him, 'Be careful, and keep calm. Don't be afraid, neither let your heart be faint because of these two tails of smoking torches, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

Verse 4

The Syriac omits וארם vearam, "and Syria;" the Vulgate reads מלך ארם melech aram, "king of Syria:" one or the other seems to be the true reading. I prefer the former: or, instead of ורבן vearam uben, read בן ופקח vepekach ben, and pekah son, MS.

ISAIAH 7: 5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have plotted evil against you, saying,

Verse 5

Because - Remaliah - All these words are omitted by one MS. and the Syriac; a part of them also by the Septuagint.

ISAIAH 7: 6 "Let's go up against Judah, and tear it apart, and let's divide it among ourselves, and set up a king in its midst, even the son of Tabeel."

ISAIAH 7: 7 This is what the Lord GOD says: "It shall not stand, neither shall it happen."

ISAIAH 7: 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken in pieces, so that it shall not be a people;

Verse 8

For the head of Syria, etc. - "Though the head of Syria be Damascus, And the head of Damascus Retzin; Yet within threescore and five years Ephraim shall be broken, that he be no more a people: And the head of Ephraim be Samaria; And the head of Samaria Remaliah's son. "Here are six lines, or three distichs, the order of which seems to have been disturbed by a transposition, occasioned by three of the lines beginning with the same word וראש verosh, "and the head," which three lines ought not to have been separated by any other line intervening; but a copyist, having written the first of them, and casting his eye on the third, might easily proceed to write after the first line beginning with וראש verosh, that which ought to have followed the third line beginning with וראש verosh. Then finding his mistake, to preserve the beauty of his copy, added at the end the distich which should have been in the middle; making that the second distich, which ought to have been the third. For the order as it now stands is preposterous: the destruction of Ephraim is denounced, and then their grandeur is set forth; whereas naturally the representation of the grandeur of Ephraim should precede that of their destruction. And the destruction of Ephraim has no coherence with the grandeur of Syria, simply as such, which it now follows: but it naturally and properly follows the grandeur of Ephraim, joined to that of Syria their ally. "The arrangement then of the whole sentence seems originally to have been thus: -

Though the head of Syria be Damascus, And the head of Damascus Retsin And the head of Ephraim be Samaria; And the head of Samaria Remaliah's son: Yet within threescore and five years Ephraim shall be broken that he be no more a people." Dr. Jubb.

Threescore and five years - It was sixty-five years from the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, when this prophecy was delivered, to the total depopulation of the kingdom of Israel by Esarhaddon, who carried away the remains of the ten tribes which had been left by Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser, and who planted the country with new inhabitants. That the country was not wholly stripped of its inhabitants by Shalmaneser appears from many passages of the history of Josiah, where Israelites are mentioned as still remaining there, 2Chr 34:6, 2Chr 34:7, 2Chr 34:33; 2Chr 35:18; 2Kgs 23:19, 2Kgs 23:20. This seems to be the best explanation of the chronological difficulty in this place, which has much embarrassed the commentators: see Usseii Annal. 5. T. ad an. 3327, and Sir 1. Newton, Chronol. p. 283. "That the last deportation of Israel by Esarhaddon was in the sixty-fifth year after the second of Ahaz, is probable for the following reasons: The Jews, in Seder Olam Rabba, and the Talmudists, in D. Kimchi on Ezekiel iv., say that Manasseh king of Judah was carried to Babylon by the king of Assyria's captains, 2Chr 33:11, in the twenty-second year of his reign; that is, before Christ 676, according to Dr. Blair's tables. And they are probably right in this. It could not be much earlier; as the king of Assyria was not king of Babylon till 680, *ibid*. As Esarhaddon was then in the neighborhood of Samaria, it is highly probable that he did then carry away the last remains of Israel, and brought those strangers thither who mention him as their founder, Ezr 4:2. But this year is just the sixty-fifth from the second of Ahaz, which was 740 before Christ. Now the carrying away the remains of Israel, who, till then, though their kingdom was destroyed forty-five years before, and though small in number, might yet keep up some form of being a people, by living according to their own laws, entirely put an end to the people of Israel, as a people separate from all others: for from this time they never returned to their own country in a body, but were confounded with the people of Judah in the captivity; and the whole people, the ten tribes included, were called Jews." - Dr. Jubb. Two MSS. have twenty-five instead of sixty-five; and two others omit the word five, reading only sixty.

If ye will not believe "If ye believe not" - "This clause is very much illustrated by considering the captivity of Manasseh as happening at the same time with this predicted final ruin of Ephraim as a people. The near connection of the two facts makes the prediction of the one naturally to cohere with the prediction of the other. And the words are well suited to this event in the history of the people of Judah: 'If ye believe not, ye shall not be established;' that is, unless ye believe this prophecy of the destruction of Israel, ye Jews also, as well as the people of Israel, shall not remain established as a kingdom and people; ye also shall be visited with punishment at the same time: as our Savior told the Jews in his time, 'Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;' intimating their destruction by the Romans; to which also, as well as to the captivity of Manasseh, and to the Babylonish captivity, the views of the prophet might here extend. The close connection of this threat to the Jews with the prophecy of the destruction of Israel, is another strong proof that the order of the preceding lines above proposed is right." - Dr. Jubb. "If ye believe not in me." - The exhortation of Jehoshaphat, 2Chr 20:20, to his people, when God had promised to them, by the prophet Jahaziel, victory over the Moabites and Ammonites, is very like this both in sense and expression, and seems to be delivered in verse: "Hear me, O Judah; and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem;

Believe in Jehovah your God, and ye shall be established:

Believe his prophets, and ye shall prosper."

Where both the sense and construction render very probable a conjecture of Archbishop Secker on this place; that instead of כִּי ki, we should read בִּי bi. "If ye will not believe in me, ye shall not be established." So likewise Dr. Durell. The Chaldee has, "If ye will not believe in the words of the prophet;" which seems to be a paraphrase of the reading here proposed. In favor of which it may be farther observed that in one MS. כִּי ki is upon a rasure; and another for the last לֹא lo reads וְלוֹ velo, which would properly follow בִּי bi, but could not follow כִּי ki.

Some translate thus, and paraphrase thus: If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. Or, If ye do not give credit, it is because ye are unfaithful. Ye have not been faithful to the grace already given: therefore ye are now incapable of crediting my promises.

ISAIAH 7: 9 and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."

ISAIAH 7: 10 The LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,

ISAIAH 7: 11 "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above."

Verse 11

In the depth "Go deep to the grave" - So Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Vulgate.

ISAIAH 7: 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD."

ISAIAH 7: 13 He said, "Listen now, house of David. Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God also?"

ISAIAH 7: 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Verse 14

The Lord "Jehovah" - For אֲדֹנָי Adonai, twenty-five of Kennicott's MSS., nine ancient, and fourteen of De Rossi's, read יהוה Jehovah. And so Isa 7:20, eighteen MSS.

Immanuel - For עִמָּנוּאֵל Immanuel, many MSS. and editions have עִמָּנוּ El, God with us.

ISAIAH 7: 15 He shall eat butter and honey when he knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Verse 15

That he may know "When he shall know" - "Though so much has been written on this important passage, there is an obscurity and inconsequence which still attends it, in the general run of all the interpretations given to it by the most learned. And this obscure incoherence is given to it by the false rendering of a Hebrew particle, viz., לֵל le, in לִדְעָתוֹ ledato. This has been generally rendered,

either 'that he may know,' or 'till he know.' It is capable of either version, without doubt; but either of these versions makes Isa 7:15 incoherent and inconsistent with Isa 7:16. For Isa 7:16 plainly means to give a reason for the assertion in Isa 7:15, because it is subjoined to it by the particle כִּי ki, for. But it is no reason why a child should eat butter and honey till he was at an age to distinguish, that before that time the land of his nativity should be free from its enemies. This latter supposition indeed implies, what is inconsistent with the preceding assertion. For it implies, that in part of that time of the infancy spoken of the land should not be free from enemies, and consequently these species of delicate food could not be attainable, as they are in times of peace. The other version, 'that he may know,' has no meaning at all; for what sense is there in asserting, that a child shall eat butter and honey that he may know to refuse evil and choose good? Is there any such effect in this food? Surely not. Besides, the child is thus represented to eat those things, which only a state of peace produces, during its whole infancy, inconsistently with Isa 7:16, which promises a relief from enemies only before the end of this infancy: implying plainly, that part of it would be passed in distressful times of war and siege, which was the state of things when the prophecy was delivered. "But all these objections are cut off, and a clear, coherent sense is given to this passage, by giving another sense to the particle לֵּ le. which never occurred to me till I saw it in Harmer's Observat., vol. i., p. 299. See how coherent the words of the prophet run, with how natural a connection one clause follows another, by properly rendering this one particle: 'Behold this Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel; butter and honey, shall he eat, when he shall know to refuse evil, and choose good. For before this child shall know to refuse evil and choose good, the land shall be desolate, by whose two kings thou art distressed.' Thus Isa 7:16 subjoins a plain reason why the child should eat butter and honey, the food of plentiful times, when he came to a distinguishing age; viz., because before that time the country of the two kings, who now distressed Judea, should be desolated; and so Judea should recover that plenty which attends peace. That this rendering, which gives perspicuity and rational connection to the passage, is according to the use of the Hebrew particle, is certain. Thus לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר liphnoth boker, 'at the appearing of morning, or when morning appeared,' Exo 14:27; לֵעֵת הָאֹכֵל leeth haochel, 'at mealtime, or when it was time to eat,' Rut 2:14. In the same manner, לְדַעְתּוֹ ledato, 'at his knowing, that is, when he knows.' "Harmer (ibid.) has clearly shown that these articles of food are delicacies in the East, and, as such, denote a state of plenty. See also Jos 5:6. They therefore naturally express the plenty of the country, as a mark of peace restored to it. Indeed, in Isa 7:22 it expresses a plenty arising from the thinness of the people; but that it signifies, Isa 7:15, a plenty arising from deliverance from war then present, is evident; because otherwise there is no expression of this deliverance. And that a deliverance was intended to be here expressed is plain, from calling the child which should be born Immanuel, God with us. It is plain, also, because it is before given to the prophet in charge to make a declaration of the deliverance, Isa 7:3-7; and it is there made; and this prophecy must undoubtedly be conformable to that in this matter." - Dr. Jubb.

The circumstance of the child's eating butter and honey is explained by Jarchi, as denoting a state of plenty: "Butter and honey shall this child eat, because our land shall be full of all good." Comment in locum. The infant Jupiter, says Callimachus, was tenderly nursed with goat's milk and honey. Hymn, in Jov. 48. Homer, of the orphan daughters of Pandareus: - Κομισσε δε δι' Αφροδιτη Τυρω και μελιτι γλυκερω, και ηδει οινω.

Odyss. XX., 68. "Venus in tender delicacy rears

With honey, milk, and wine, their infant years."

Pope. Τρυφης εστιν ενδειξις; "This is a description of delicate food," says Eustathius on the place.

Agreeably to the observations communicated by the learned person above mentioned, which perfectly well explain the historical sense of this much disputed passage, not excluding a higher secondary sense, the obvious and literal meaning of the prophecy is this: "that within the time that a young woman, now a virgin, should conceive and bring forth a child, and that child should arrive at such an age as to distinguish between good and evil, that is, within a few years, (compare Isa 8:4), the enemies of Judah should be destroyed." But the prophecy is introduced in so solemn a manner; the sign is so marked, as a sign selected and given by God himself, after Ahaz had rejected the offer of any sign of his own choosing out of the whole compass of nature; the terms of the prophecy are so peculiar, and the name of the child so expressive, containing in them much more than the circumstances of the birth of a common child required, or even admitted; that we may easily suppose that, in minds prepared by the general expectation of a great Deliverer to spring from the house of David, they raised hopes far beyond what the present occasion suggested; especially when it was found, that in the subsequent prophecy, delivered immediately afterward, this child, called Immanuel, is treated as the Lord and Prince of the land of Judah. Who could this be, other than the heir of the throne of David; under which character a great and even a Divine person had been promised? No one of that age answered to this character except Hezekiah; but he was certainly born nine or ten years before the delivery of this prophecy. That this was so understood at that time is collected, I think, with great probability, from a passage of Micah, a prophet contemporary with Isaiah, but who began to prophesy after him; and who, as I have already observed, imitated him, and sometimes used his expressions. Micah, having delivered that remarkable prophecy which determines the place of the birth of Messiah, "the Ruler of God's people, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" that it should be Bethlehem Ephrathah; adds immediately, that nevertheless, in the mean time, God would deliver his people into the hands of their enemies: "He will give them up, till she, who is to bear a child, shall bring forth," Mic 5:3. This obviously and plainly refers to some known prophecy concerning a woman to bring forth a child; and seems much more properly applicable to this passage of Isaiah than to any others of the same prophet, to which some interpreters have applied it. St. Matthew, therefore, in applying this prophecy to the birth of Christ, does it, not merely in the way of accommodating the words of the prophet to a suitable case not in the prophet's view, but takes it in its strictest, clearest, and most important sense; and applies it according to the original design and principal intention of the prophet. - L.

After all this learned criticism, I think something is still wanting to diffuse the proper light over this important prophecy. On Mat 1:23 I have given what I judge to be the true meaning and right application of the whole passage, as there quoted by the evangelist, the substance of which it will be necessary to repeat here: -

At the time referred to, the kingdom of Judah, under the government of Ahaz, was reduced very low. Pekah, king of Israel, had slain in Judea one hundred and twenty thousand persons in one day; and carried away captives two hundred thousand, including women and children, together with much spoil. To add to their distress, Rezin, king of Syria, being confederate with Pekah, had taken Elath, a fortified city of Judah, and carried the inhabitants away captive to Damascus. In this critical conjuncture, need we wonder that Ahaz was afraid that the enemies who were now united against him must prevail, destroy Jerusalem, end the kingdom of Judah, and annihilate the family of David? To meet and remove this fear, apparently well grounded, Isaiah is sent from the Lord to Ahaz, swallowed up now both by sorrow and by unbelief, in order to assure him that the counsels of his enemies should not stand; and that they should be utterly discomfited. To encourage Ahaz, he commands him to ask a sign or miracle, which should be a pledge in hand, that God should, in due time, fulfill the predictions of his servant, as related in the context. On Ahaz humbly refusing to ask any sign, it is immediately added, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin

shall conceive and bear a son; and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat," etc. Both the Divine and human nature of our Lord, as well as the miraculous conception, appear to be pointed out in the prophecy quoted here by the evangelist: He shall be called עִמְנוּאֵל Immanuel; literally, The Strong God with Us: similar to those words in the New Testament: The word which was God - was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; Joh 1:1, Joh 1:14. And God was manifested in the flesh, 1Tim 3:16. So that we are to understand God with us to imply, God incarnated - God in human nature. This seems farther evident from the words of the prophet, Isa 7:15 : Butter and honey shall he eat - he shall be truly man - grow up and be nourished in a human natural way; which refers to his being With Us, i.e., incarnated. To which the prophet adds, That he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good; or rather, According to his knowledge, לדעתו ledato, reprobating the evil, and choosing the good; this refers to him as God, and is the same idea given by this prophet, chap. Isa 53:11 : By (or in) his knowledge, בדעתו bedato, (the knowledge of Christ crucified), shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their offenses. Now this union of the Divine and human nature is termed a sign or miracle, אות oth, i.e., something which exceeds the power of nature to produce. And this miraculous union was to be brought about in a miraculous way: Behold, a Virgin shall conceive: the word is very emphatic, העלמה haalmah, The virgin; the only one that ever was, or ever shall be, a mother in this way. But the Jews, and some called Christians, who have espoused their desperate cause, assert that "the word עלמה almah does not signify a Virgin only; for it is applied Pro 30:19 to signify a young married woman." I answer, that this latter text is no proof of the contrary doctrine: the words גבר דרך גבר בעלמה derech geber bealmah, the way of a man with a maid, cannot be proved to mean that for which it is produced. Besides, one of De Rossi's MSS. reads בעלמיניו bealmaiv, the way of a strong or stout man (גבר geber) In His Youth; and in this reading the Syriac, Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic agree; which are followed by the first version in the English language, as it stands in a MS. in my own possession: the weie of a man in his waxing youth: so that this place, the only one that can with any probability of success be produced, were the interpretation contended for correct, which I am by no means disposed to admit, proves nothing. Besides, the consent of so many versions in the opposite meaning deprives it of much of its influence in this question.

The word עלמה almah, comes from עלם alam, to lie hid, be concealed: and we are told, that "virgins were so called, because they were concealed or closely kept up in their father's houses till the time of their marriage." This is not correct: see the case of Rebecca, Gen 24:43 (note), and my note there; that of Rachel, Gen 29:6-9 (note), and the note there also; and see the case of Miriam, the sister of Moses, Exo 2:8, and also the Chaldee paraphrase on Lam 1:4, where the virgins are represented as going out in the dance. And see also the whole history of Ruth. This being concealed or kept at home, on which so much stress is laid, is purely fanciful; for we find that young unmarried women drew water, kept sheep, gleaned publicly in the fields, etc., etc., and the same works they perform among the Turcomans to the present day. This reason, therefore, does not account for the radical meaning of the word; and we must seek it elsewhere. Another well-known and often-used root in the Hebrew tongue will cast light on this subject. This is גלה galah, which signifies to reveal, make manifest, or uncover; and is often applied to matrimonial connections in different parts of the Mosaic law: עלם alam, therefore, may be considered as implying the concealment of the virgin, as such, till lawful, marriage had taken place. A virgin was not called עלמה almah, because she was concealed by being kept at home in her father's house, which is not true; but, literally and physically, because as a woman she had not been uncovered - she had not known man. This fully applies to the blessed virgin, see Luk 1:34. "How can this be, seeing I know no man?" And this text throws much light on the subject before us. This also is in perfect agreement with the ancient prophecy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Gen 3:15; for the person who was to destroy the

work of the devil was to be the progeny of the woman, without any concurrence of the man. And hence the text in Genesis speaks as fully of the virgin state of the person from whom Christ, according to the flesh, should come, as that in the prophet, or this in the evangelist. According to the original promise there was to be a seed, a human being, who should destroy sin: but this seed or human being, must come from the woman Alone; and no woman Alone could produce such a human being without being a virgin. Hence, A virgin shall bear a son, is the very spirit and meaning of the original text, independently of the illustration given by the prophet; and the fact recorded by the evangelist is the proof of the whole. But how could that be a sign to Ahaz which was to take place so many hundreds of years after? I answer, the meaning of the prophet is plain: not only Rezin and Pekah should be unsuccessful against Jerusalem at that time, which was the fact; but Jerusalem, Judea, and the house of David should be both preserved, notwithstanding their depressed state, and the multitude of their adversaries, till the time should come when a Virgin should bear a son. This is a most remarkable circumstance the house of David could never fail, till a virgin should conceive and bear a son - nor did it: but when that incredible and miraculous fact did take place, the kingdom and house of David became extinct! This is an irrefragable confutation of every argument a Jew can offer in vindication of his opposition to the Gospel of Christ. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled, or the kingdom and house of David are yet standing. But the kingdom of David, we know, is destroyed: and where is the man, Jew or Gentile, that can show us a single descendant of David on the face of the earth? The prophecy could not fail: the kingdom and house of David have failed; the virgin, therefore, must have brought forth her son, and this son is Jesus, the Christ. Thus Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew concur; and facts the most unequivocal have confirmed the whole! Behold the wisdom and providence of God!

Notwithstanding what has been said above, it may be asked, In what sense could this name, Immanuel, be applied to Jesus Christ, if he be not truly and properly God? Could the Spirit of truth ever design that Christians should receive him as an angel or a mere man; and yet, in the very beginning of the Gospel history, apply a character to him which belongs only to the most high God? Surely no. In what sense, then, is Christ God with Us? Jesus is called Immanuel, or God with us, in his incarnation; God united to our nature; God with man, God in man; God with us, by his continual protection; God with us, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, in the holy sacrament, in the preaching of his word, in private prayer. And God with us, through every action of our life, that we begin, continue, and end in his name. He is God with us, to comfort, enlighten, protect, and defend us, in every time of temptation and trial, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment; and God with us and in us, and we with and in him, to all eternity. Isa 7:17

The Lord shall bring "But Jehovah will bring" - Houbigant reads וַיָּבִי־אֵי vaiyabi, from the Septuagint, ἀλλὰ ἐπαξει ὁ Θεός, to mark the transition to a new subject.

Even the king of Assyria - Houbigant supposes these words to have been a marginal gloss, brought into the text by mistake; and so likewise Archbishop Secker. Besides their having no force or effect here, they do not join well in construction with the words preceding, as may be seen by the strange manner in which the ancient interpreters have taken them; and they very inelegantly forestall the mention of the king of Assyria, which comes in with great propriety in the 20th verse (Isa 7:20). I have therefore taken the liberty of omitting them in the translation.

ISAIAH 7: 16 For before the child knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings you abhor shall be forsaken.

ISAIAH 7: 17 The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.

ISAIAH 7: 18 It will happen in that day that the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

Verse 18

Hiss for the fly "Hist the fly" - See note on Isa 5:26.

Egypt, and - Assyria - Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Pharaoh-necho, and Nebuchadnezzar, who one after another desolated Judea.

ISAIAH 7: 19 They shall come, and shall all rest in the desolate valleys, in the clefts of the rocks, on all thorn hedges, and on all pastures.

Verse 19

Holes of the rocks "Caverns" - So the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate, whence Houbigant supposes the true reading to be הנחללים hannachalolim. One of my oldest MSS. reads הנחלולים hannochalolim.

ISAIAH 7: 20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired in the parts beyond the River, even with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.

Verse 20

The river - That is, the Euphrates: הנהר hanahar. So read the Septuagint and two MSS.

Shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired "Jehovah shall shave by the hired razor" - To shave with the hired razor the head, the feet, and the beard, is an expression highly parabolical, to denote the utter devastation of the country from one end to the other; and the plundering of the people, from the highest to the lowest, by the Assyrians, whom God employed as his instrument to punish the Jews. Ahaz himself, in the first place, hired the king of Assyria to come to help him against the Syrians, by a present made to him of all the treasures of the temple, as well as his own. And God himself considered the great nations, whom he thus employed as his mercenaries; and paid them their wages. Thus he paid Nebuchadnezzar for his services against Tyre, by the conquest of Egypt, Eze 29:18-20. The hairs of the head are those of the highest order in the state; those of the feet, or the lower parts, are the common people; the beard is the king, the high priest, the very supreme in dignity and majesty. The Eastern people have always held the beard in the highest veneration, and have been extremely jealous of its honor. To pluck a man's beard is an instance of the greatest indignity that can be offered. See Isa 50:6. The king of the Ammonites, to show the utmost contempt of David, "cut off half the beards of his servants, and the men were greatly ashamed; and David bade them tarry at Jericho till their beards were grown," 2Sam 10:4, 2Sam 10:6. Niebuhr, Arabie, p. 275, gives a modern instance of the very same kind of insult. "The Turks," says Thevenot, "greatly esteem

a man who has a fine beard; it is a very great affront to take a man by his beard, unless it be to kiss it; they swear by the beard." *Voyages*, i., p. 57. D'Arvieux gives a remarkable instance of an Arab, who, having received a wound in his jaw, chose to hazard his life, rather than suffer his surgeon to take off his beard. *Memoires*, tom. iii., p. 214. See also Niebuhr, *Arabie*, p. 61.

The remaining verses of this chapter, Isa 7:21-25, contain an elegant and very expressive description of a country depopulated, and left to run wild, from its adjuncts and circumstances: the vineyards and cornfields, before well cultivated, now overrun with briars and thorns; much grass, so that the few cattle that are left, a young cow and two sheep, have their full range, and abundant pasture, so as to yield milk in plenty to the scanty family of the owner; the thinly scattered people living, not on corn, wine, and oil, the produce of cultivation; but on milk and honey, the gifts of nature; and the whole land given up to the wild beasts, so that the miserable inhabitants are forced to go out armed with bows and arrows, either to defend themselves against the wild beasts, or to supply themselves with necessary food by hunting.

A Very judicious friend has sent me the following observations on the preceding prophecy, which I think worthy of being laid before the reader; though they are in some respects different from my own view of the subject. "To establish the primary and literal meaning of a passage of Scripture is evidently laying the true foundation for any subsequent views or improvements from it. "The kingdom of Judah, under the government of Ahaz, was reduced very low. Pekah, king of Israel, had slain in Judea one hundred and twenty thousand in one day; and carried away captive two hundred thousand including women and children, with much spoil. To add to this distress, Rezin, king of Syria, being confederate with Pekah, had taken Elath, a fortified city of Judah, and carried the inhabitants to Damascus. I think it may also be gathered from the sixth verse of chap. 8, that the kings of Syria and Israel had a considerable party in the land of Judea, who, regardless of the Divine appointment and promises, were disposed to favor the elevation of Tabeal, a stranger, to the throne of David. "In this critical conjuncture of affairs, Isaiah was sent with a message of mercy, and a promise of deliverance, to Ahaz. He was commanded to take with him Shearjashub, his son whose name contained a promise respecting the captives lately made by Pekah, whose return from Samaria, effected by the expostulation of the prophet Oded and the concurrence of the princes of Ephraim, was now promised as a pledge of the Divine interposition offered to Ahaz in favor of the house of David. And as a farther token of this preservation, notwithstanding the incredulity of Ahaz, Isaiah was directed to predict the birth of another son which should be born to him within the space of a year, and to be named Emmanuel, signifying thereby the protection of God to the land of Judah and family of David at this present conjuncture, with reference to the promise of the Messiah who was to spring from that family, and be born in that land. Compare Isa 8:8. Hence Isaiah testifies, Isa 8:18 : 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for types in Israel.' Compare Zac 3:8 : 'Thy companions are men of sign and type:' see Dr. Lowth on this verse. The message of Divine displeasure against Israel is in like manner expressed by the names the prophet Hosea was directed to give his children; see Hos 1:1-11 and 2. "Concerning this child, who was to be named Immanuel, the prophet was commissioned to declare, that notwithstanding the present scarcity prevailing in the land from its being harassed by war, yet within the space of time wherein this child should be of age to discern good and evil, both these hostile kings, viz., of Israel and Syria, should be cut off; and the country enjoy such plenty, that butter and honey, food accounted of peculiar delicacy, should be a common repast. See Harmer's *Observations*, p. 299. "To this it may be objected that Isaiah's son was not named Immanuel, but Maher-shalal-hash-baz; the signification of which bore a threatening aspect, instead of a consolatory one. To this I think a satisfactory answer may be given. Ahaz, by his unbelief and disregard of the message of mercy sent to him from God, (for instead of depending upon it he sent and made a treaty with the king of Assyria), drew upon

himself the Divine displeasure, which was expressed by the change of the child's name, and the declaration that though Damascus and Samaria should, according to the former prediction, fall before the king of Assyria, yet that this very power, i.e., Assyria, in whom Ahaz trusted for deliverance, (see 2Kgs 16:7, etc.), should afterwards come against Judah, and 'fill the breadth of the land,' which was accomplished in the following reign, when Jerusalem was so endangered as to be delivered only by miracle. The sixth and seventh verses of chap. 8 indicate, I think, as I before observed, that the kings of Syria and Israel had many adherents in Judah, who are said to refuse the peaceful waters of Shiloah or Siloam, him that is to be sent, who ought to have been their confidence, typified by the fountain at the foot of Mount Zion, whose stream watered the city of Jerusalem; and therefore, since the splendor of victory, rather than the blessings of peace, was the object of their admiration, compared to a swelling river which overflowed its banks, God threatens to chastise them by the victorious armies of Ashur. The prophet at the same time addresses words of consolation to such of the people who yet feared and trusted in Jehovah, whom he instructs and comforts with the assurance (Isa 8:10) that they shall prove the fulfillment of the promise contained in the name Immanuel. "But it may still be objected, that according to this interpretation of the fourteenth verse of chap. 7 nothing miraculous occurs, which is readily admitted; but the objection rests upon the supposition that something miraculous was intended; whereas the word $\tau\omicron\lambda\alpha$ oth, 'sign,' does by no means generally imply a miracle, but most commonly an emblematic representation, (see Eze 4:3-12; 11; Eze 20:20; Zac 6:14), either by actions or names, of some future event either promised or threatened. Exo 3:12; 1Sam 2:34; 2Kgs 19:29; Jer 44:29, Jer 44:30, are all examples of a future event given as a sign or token of something else which is also future. The birth of Isaiah's son was indeed typical of him whose name he was, at first, appointed to bear, viz., Immanuel, even as Oshea the son of Nun had his name changed to Jehoshua, the same with Jesus, of whom he was an eminent type. Hence the prophet, in the ninth chapter, breaks forth into a strain of exultation: 'To us a child is born;' after which follow denunciations against Rezin and the kingdom of Israel, which are succeeded by declarations, that when Assyria had completed the appointed chastisement upon Judah and Jerusalem, that empire should be destroyed. The whole of the tenth chapter is a very remarkable prophecy, and was probably delivered about the time of Sennacherib's invasion. "But still it will be urged, that St. Matthew, when relating the miraculous conception of our Lord, says, 'Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,' etc. To this it may readily be answered, that what was spoken by the prophet was indeed now fulfilled in a higher, more important, and also in a more literal sense, than the primary fulfillment could afford, which derived all its value from its connection with this event, to which it ultimately referred. "In like manner the prophecy of Isaiah, contained in the second chapter, received a complete fulfillment in our Savior's honoring Capernaum with his residence, and preaching throughout Galilee; though there appears reason to interpret the passage as having a primary respect to the reformation wrought by Hezekiah and which, at the eve of the dissolution of the kingdom of Israel by the captivity of the ten tribes, extended to the tribes of Asher and Zebulun, and many of the inhabitants of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were hereby stirred up to destroy idolatry in their country. See 2Chr 31:1. And without doubt the great deliverance wrought afterwards for Judah by the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, and the recovery of Hezekiah in so critical a conjuncture from a sickness which had been declared to be unto death, contributed not a little to revive the fear of God in that part of Israel which, through their defection from the house of David, had grievously departed from the temple and worship of the true God; and as Galilee lay contiguous to countries inhabited by Gentiles, they had probably sunk deeper into idolatry than the southern part of Israel. "In several passages of St. Matthew's Gospel, our translation conveys the idea of things being done in order to fulfill certain prophecies; but I apprehend that if the words $\iota\upsilon\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\ \iota\ \acute{\omicron}\tau\omega\varsigma$ were rendered as simply denoting the event, so that and

thus was fulfilled, the sense would be much clearer. For it is obvious that our Lord did not speak in parables or ride into Jerusalem previously to his last passover, simply for the purpose of fulfilling the predictions recorded, but also from other motives; and in chap. 2 the evangelist only remarks that the circumstance of our Lord's return from Egypt corresponded with the prophet Hosea's relation of that part of the history of the Israelites. So in the twenty-third verse Joseph dwelt at Nazareth because he was directed so to do by God himself; and the sacred historian, having respect to the effect afterwards produced, (see Joh 7:41, Joh 7:42, Joh 7:52), remarks that this abode in Nazareth was a means of fulfilling those predictions of the prophets which indicate the contempt and neglect with which by many the Messiah should be treated. Galilee was considered by the inhabitants of Judea as a degraded place, chiefly from its vicinity to the Gentiles; and Nazareth seems to have been proverbially contemptible; and from the account given of the spirit and conduct of the inhabitants by the evangelists, not without reason." - E. M. B.

To my correspondent, as well as to many learned men, there appears some difficulty in the text; but I really think this is quite done away by that mode of interpretation which I have already adopted; and as far as the miraculous conception is concerned, the whole is set in the clearest and strongest light, and the objections and cavils of the Jeers entirely destroyed.

ISAIAH 7: 21 It shall happen in that day that a man shall keep alive a young cow, and two sheep;

ISAIAH 7: 22 and it shall happen, that because of the abundance of milk which they shall give he shall eat butter: for everyone will eat butter and honey that is left in the midst of the land.

ISAIAH 7: 23 It will happen in that day that every place where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silver shekels, shall be for briers and thorns.

ISAIAH 7: 24 People will go there with arrows and with bow, because all the land will be briers and thorns.

ISAIAH 7: 25 All the hills that were cultivated with the hoe, you shall not come there for fear of briers and thorns; but it shall be for the sending out of oxen, and for the treading of sheep."
