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ISAIAH 8: 1 The LORD said to me, "Take a large tablet, and write on it with a man's pen, 'For Maher Shalal Hash Baz';

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Prediction respecting the conquest of Syria and Israel by the Assyrians, Isa 8:1-4. Israel, for rejecting the gentle stream of Shiloah, near Jerusalem, is threatened to be overflowed by the great river of Assyria, manifestly alluding by this strong figure to the conquests of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser over that kingdom, Isa 8:5-7. The invasion of the kingdom of Judah by the Assyrians under Sennacherib foretold, Isa 8:8. The prophet assures the Israelites and Syrians that their hostile attempts against Judah shall be frustrated, Isa 8:9, Isa 8:10. Exhortation not to be afraid of the wrath of man, but to fear the displeasure of God, Isa 8:11-13. Judgments which shall overtake those who put no confidence in Jehovah, Isa 8:14, Isa 8:15. The prophet proceeds to warn his countrymen against idolatry, divination, and the like sinful practices, exhorting them to seek direction from the word of God, professing in a beautiful apostrophe that this was his own pious resolution. And to enforce this counsel, and strengthen their faith, he points to his children, whose symbolic names were signs or pledges of the Divine promises, Isa 8:16-20. Judgments of God against the finally impenitent, Isa 8:21, Isa 8:22.

The prophecy of the foregoing chapter relates directly to the kingdom of Judah only: the first part of it promises them deliverance from the united invasion of the Israelites and Syrians; the latter part, from Isa 8:17, denounces the desolation to be brought upon the kingdom of Judah by the Assyrians. The sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of this chapter seem to take in both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. "This people that refuseth the waters of Shiloah," may be meant of both: the Israelites despised the kingdom of Judah, which they had deserted, and now attempted to destroy; the people of Judah, from a consideration of their own weakness, and a distrust of God's promises, being reduced to despair, applied to the Assyrians for assistance against the two confederate kings. But how could it be said of Judah, that they rejoiced in Rezin, and the son of Remaliah, the enemies confederated against them? If some of the people were inclined to revolt to the enemy, (which however does not clearly appear from any part of the history or the prophecy), yet there was nothing like a tendency to a general defection. This, therefore, must be understood of Israel. The prophet denounces the Assyrian invasion, which should overwhelm the whole kingdom of Israel under Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser; and the subsequent invasion of Judah by the same power under Sennacherib, which would bring them into the most imminent danger, like a flood reaching to the neck, in which a man can but just keep his head above water. The two next verses, Isa 8:9, 23 8:10, are addressed by the prophet, as a subject of the kingdom of Judah, to the Israelites and Syrians, and perhaps to all the enemies of God's people; assuring them that their attempts against that kingdom shall be fruitless; for that the promised Immanuel, to whom he alludes by using his name to express the signification of it, for God is with us, shall be the defense of the house of David, and deliver the kingdom of Judah out of their hands. He then proceeds to warn the people of Judah against idolatry, divination, and the like forbidden practices; to which they were much inclined, and which would soon bring down God's judgments upon Israel. The prophecy concludes at the sixth verse of chap. 9 with promises of blessings in future times by the coming of the great deliverer already pointed out by the name of Immanuel, whose person and character is set forth in terms the most ample and magnificent.

And here it may be observed that it is almost the constant practice of the prophet to connect in like manner deliverances temporal with spiritual. Thus the eleventh chapter, setting forth the kingdom

of Messiah, is closely connected with the tenth, which foretells the destruction of Sennacherib. So likewise the destruction of nations, enemies to God, in the thirty-fourth chapter, introduces the flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ in the thirty-fifth. And thus the chapters from 40 to 49 inclusive, plainly relating to the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, do in some parts plainly relate to the greater deliverance by Christ.

#### Verse 1

Take thee a great roll "Take unto thee a large mirror" - The word גליון gillayon is not regularly formed from גלל galal, to roll, but from גלה galah, as פדיון pidyon from פדה padah, כליון killayon from כלה calah, נקיון nikkayon from נקה nakah, עליון elyon from עלה alah, etc., the י yod supplying the place of the radical ה he. גלה galah signifies to show, to reveal; properly, as Schroederus says, (*De Vestitu Mulier. Hebr. p. 294*), to render clear and bright by rubbing; to polish. גליון gillayon, therefore, according to this derivation, is not a roll or volume: but may very well signify a polished tablet of metal, such as was anciently used for a mirror. The Chaldee paraphrast renders it by לוח luach, a tablet, and the same word, though somewhat differently pointed, the Chaldee paraphrast and the rabbins render a mirror, Isa 3:23. The mirrors of the Israelitish women were made of brass finely polished, Exo 38:8, from which place it likewise appears that what they used were little hand mirrors which they carried with them even when they assembled at the door of the tabernacle. I have a metalline mirror found in Herculaneum, which is not above three inches square. The prophet is commanded to take a mirror, or brazen polished tablet, not like these little hand mirrors, but a large one; large enough for him to engrave upon it in deep and lasting characters, בחרט אנוש becheret enosh, with a workman's graving tool, the prophecy which he was to deliver. חרט cheret in this place certainly signifies an instrument to write or engrave with: but חרית charit, the same word, only differing a little in the form, means something belonging to a lady's dress, Isa 3:22, (where however five MSS. leave out the י yod, whereby only it differs from the word in this place), either a crimping-pin, which might be not unlike a graving tool, as some will have it, or a purse, as others infer from 2Kgs 5:23. It may therefore be called here חרט אנוש cheret enosh, a workman's instrument, to distinguish it from חרט אשה cheret ishshah, an instrument of the same name, used by the women. In this manner he was to record the prophecy of the destruction of Damascus and Samaria by the Assyrians; the subject and sum of which prophecy is here expressed with great brevity in four words, מהר שלל הש בז maher shalal hash baz; i.e., to hasten the spoil, to take quickly the prey; which are afterwards applied as the name of the prophet's son, who was made a sign of the speedy completion of it; Maher-shalal-hash-baz; Haste-to-the-spoil, Quick-to-the-prey. And that it might be done with the greater solemnity, and to preclude all doubt of the real delivery of the prophecy before the event, he calls witnesses to attest the recording of it.

The prophet is commanded to take a great roll, and yet four words only are to be written in it, מהר שלל הש בז maher shalal hash baz, Make haste to the spoil; fall upon the prey. The great volume points out the land of Judea; and the few words the small number of inhabitants, after the ten tribes were carried into captivity.

The words were to be written with a man's pen; i.e., though the prophecy be given in the visions of God, yet the writing must be real; the words must be transcribed on the great roll, that they may be read and publicly consulted. Or, חרט אנוש cheret enosh, the pen or graver of the weak miserable man, may refer to the already condemned Assyrians, who though they should be the instruments of chastening Damascus and Samaria, should themselves shortly be overthrown. The four words may be considered as the commission given to the Assyrians to destroy and spoil the cities. Make haste to the spoil; Fall upon the prey, etc.

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ISAIAH 8: 2 and I will take for myself faithful witnesses to testify: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."

ISAIAH 8: 3 I went to the prophetess, and she conceived, and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name 'Maher Shalal Hash Baz.'

ISAIAH 8: 4 For before the child knows how to say, 'My father,' and, 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria."

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#### Verse 4

For before the child - For my father and my mother, one MS. and the Vulgate have his father and his mother. The prophecy was accordingly accomplished within three years; when Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin, and also took the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and carried them captive to Assyria, 2Kgs 15:29; 2Kgs 16:9; 1Chr 5:26.

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ISAIAH 8: 5 The LORD spoke to me yet again, saying,

ISAIAH 8: 6 "Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

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#### Verse 6

Forasmuch as this people refuseth "Because this people have rejected" - The gentle waters of Shiloah, a small fountain and brook just without Jerusalem, which supplied a pool within the city for the use of the inhabitants, is an apt emblem of the state of the kingdom and house of David, much reduced in its apparent strength, yet supported by the blessing of God; and is finely contrasted with the waters of the Euphrates, great, rapid, and impetuous; the image of the Babylonian empire, which God threatens to bring down like a mighty flood upon all these apostates of both kingdoms, as punishment for their manifold iniquities, and their contemptuous disregard of his promises. The brook and the river are put for the kingdoms to which they belong, and the different states of which respectively they most aptly represent. Juvenal, inveighing against the corruption of Rome by the importation of Asiatic manners, says, with great elegance, that "the Orontes has been long discharging itself into the Tiber:" -

Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes.

And Virgil, to express the submission of some of the Eastern countries to the Roman arms, says: -

Euphrates ibat jam mollior undis.

Aen. 8:726. "The waters of the Euphrates now flowed more humbly and gently."

But the happy contrast between the brook and the river gives a peculiar beauty to this passage of the prophet, with which the simple figure in the Roman poets, however beautiful, yet uncontrasted, cannot contend.

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ISAIAH 8: 7 now therefore, behold, the Lord brings upon them the mighty flood waters of the River: the king of Assyria and all his glory. It will come up over all its channels, and go over all its banks.

ISAIAH 8: 8 It will sweep onward into Judah. It will overflow and pass through; it will reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, Immanuel.

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#### Verse 8

He shall reach even to the neck - He compares Jerusalem, says Kimchi, to the head of the human body. As when the waters come up to a man's neck, he is very near drowning, (for a little increase of them would go over his head), so the king of Assyria coming up to Jerusalem was like a flood reaching to the neck - the whole country was overflowed, and the capital was in imminent danger. Accordingly the Chaldee renders reaching to the neck by reaching to Jerusalem.

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ISAIAH 8: 9 Make an uproar, you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Listen, all you from far countries: dress for battle, and be shattered! Dress for battle, and be shattered!

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#### Verse 9

Associate yourselves "Know ye this" - God by his prophet plainly declares to the confederate adversaries of Judah, and bids them regard and attend to his declaration, that all their efforts shall be in vain.

The present reading, רעו rou, is subject to many difficulties; I follow that of the Septuagint, δευ δευ, γνωστε. Archbishop Secker approves this reading. רעו δευ know ye this, is parallel and synonymous to האזינו haazinu, give ear to It, in the next line. The Septuagint have likewise very well paraphrased the conclusion of this verse: "When ye have strengthened yourselves, ye shall be broken; and though ye again strengthen yourselves, again shall ye be broken;" taking חתו chottu as meaning the same with נשברו, shall be broken.

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ISAIAH 8: 10 Take counsel together, and it will be brought to nothing; speak the word, and it will not stand: for God is with us."

ISAIAH 8: 11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

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#### Verse 11

With a strong hand "As taking me by the hand" - Eleven MSS., (two ancient), of Kennicott's, thirty-four of De Rossi's, and seven editions, read כחזקת kechezkath; and so Symmachus, the Syriac, and Vulgate. Or rather with a strong hand, that is, with a strong and powerful influence of the prophetic Spirit.

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ISAIAH 8: 12 "Don't say, 'A conspiracy!' concerning all about which this people say, 'A conspiracy!' neither fear their threats, nor be terrorised.

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Verse 12

Say ye not, A confederacy "Say ye not, It is holy" - קֶשֶׁר keshher. Both the reading and the sense of this word are doubtful. The Septuagint manifestly read קֶשֶׁה kashah; for they render it by ἀκλήρον, hard. The Syriac and Chaldee render it מֶרְדָּא merda, and מֶרֶד merod, rebellion. How they came by this sense of the word, or what they read in their copies, is not so clear. But the worst of it is, that neither of these readings or renderings gives any clear sense in this place. For why should God forbid his faithful servants to say with the unbelieving Jews, It is hard; or, There is a rebellion; or, as our translators render it, a confederacy? And how can this be called "walking in the way of this people?" Isa 8:11, which usually means, following their example, joining with them in religious worship. Or what confederacy do they mean? The union of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel against Judah? That was properly a league between two independent states, not an unlawful conspiracy of one part against another in the same state; this is the meaning of the word קֶשֶׁר keshher. For want of any satisfactory interpretation of this place that I can meet with, I adopt a conjecture of Archbishop Secker, which he proposes with great diffidence, and even seems immediately to give up, as being destitute of any authority to support it. I will give it in his own words: "Videri potest ex cap. Isa 5:16, et hujus cap. Isa 8:13, Isa 8:14, Isa 8:19, legendum קֶשֶׁר vel קָדוֹשׁ kadosh, eadem sententia, qua אֱלֹהֵינוּ Eloheynu, Hos 14:3. Sed nihil necesse est. Vide enim Jer 11:9; Eze 22:25. Optime tamen sic responderent huic versiculo versiculi Isa 8:13, Isa 8:14."

The passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel above referred to seem to me not at all to clear up the sense of the word קֶשֶׁר keshher in this place. But the context greatly favors the conjecture here given, and makes it highly probable: "Walk not in the way of this people; call not their idols holy, nor fear ye the object of their fear:" (that is, the θεῶν ἰδωλῶν, or gods of the idolaters; for so fear here signifies, to wit, the thing feared. So God is called "The fear of Isaac," Gen 31:42, Gen 31:53): "but look up to Jehovah as your Holy One; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be a holy Refuge unto you." Here there is a harmony and consistency running through the whole sentence; and the latter part naturally arises out of the former, and answers to it. Idolatry, however, is full of fears. The superstitious fears of the Hindoos are very numerous. They fear death, bad spirits generally, and hobgoblins of all descriptions. They fear also the cries of jackals, owls, crows, cats, asses, vultures, dogs, lizards, etc. They also dread different sights in the air, and are alarmed at various dreams. See Ward's Customs. Observe that the difference between קֶשֶׁר keshher and קָדוֹשׁ kadosh is chiefly in the transposition of the two last letters, for the letters ר resh and ד dalet are hardly distinguishable in some copies, printed as well as MS.; so that the mistake, in respect of the letters themselves, is a very easy and a very common one. - L.

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ISAIAH 8: 13 The LORD of Armies is who you must respect as holy. He is the one you must fear. He is the one you must dread.

ISAIAH 8: 14 He will be a sanctuary, but for both houses of Israel, he will be a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

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Verse 14

And he shall be for a sanctuary "And he shall be unto you a sanctuary" - The word לַחֶם lachem, unto you, absolutely necessary, as I conceive, to the sense, is lost in this place: it is preserved by the Vulgate, "et erit vobis in sanctificationem." The Septuagint have it in the singular number: εσται σοι εις αγιασμον, it shall be to Thee. Or else, instead of מִקְדָּשׁ mikdash, a sanctuary, we must read מוֹקֵשׁ mokesheh, a snare, which would then be repeated without any propriety or elegance, at the end of the verse. The Chaldee reads instead of it מִשְׁפָּט mishpat, judgment; for he renders it by פּוֹרְעָן purean, which word frequently answers to מִשְׁפָּט mishpat in his paraphrase. One MS. has in stead of מִקְדָּשׁ מִלְּאֵבֶיךָ mikdash uleeben, מִלְּאֵבֶיךָ lahem leeben, which clears the sense and construction. But the reading of the Vulgate is, I think, the best remedy to this difficulty; and is in some degree authorized by מִלְּאֵבֶיךָ lahem, the reading of the MS. above mentioned.

ISAIAH 8: 15 Many will stumble over it, fall, be broken, be snared, and be captured."

ISAIAH 8: 16 Wrap up the testimony. Seal the law among my disciples.

#### Verse 16

Among my disciples - בְּלִמּוּדַי belimmudai. The Septuagint render it του μη μαθειν. Bishop Chandler, Defence of Christianity, p. 308, thinks they read מִלְּמֹד, that it be not understood, and approves of this reading. - Abp. Secker.

ISAIAH 8: 17 I will wait for the LORD, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

ISAIAH 8: 18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of Armies, who dwells in Mount Zion.

#### Verse 18

Lord of hosts - One MS. reads מֵלֹאֵהִי Elohey tsebaoth, God of hosts.

ISAIAH 8: 19 When they tell you, "Consult with those who have familiar spirits and with the wizards, who chirp and who mutter:" shouldn't a people consult with their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

#### Verse 19

Should not a people seek "Should they seek" - After יִדְרֹשׁ yidrosheh, the Septuagint, repeating the word, read הַיִּדְרֹשׁ hayidrosheh: Ουκ εθνος προς Θεον αυτου εκζητησους; τι εκζητησους περι των ζωντων τους νεκρους; Should not a nation seek unto its God? Why should you seek unto the dead concerning the living? and this repetition of the verb seems necessary to the sense; and, as Procopius on the place observes, it strongly expresses the prophet's indignation at their folly.

ISAIAH 8: 20 Turn to the law and to the testimony! If they don't speak according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.

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Verse 20

To the law and to the testimony "Unto the command, and unto the testimony" - "Is not תעודה teudah here the attested prophecy, Isa 8:1-4? and perhaps תורה torah the command, Isa 8:11-15? for it means sometimes a particular, and even a human, command; see Pro 6:20, and Pro 7:1, Pro 7:2, where it is ordered to be hid, that is, secretly kept." - Abp. Secker. So Deschamps, in his translation, or rather paraphrase, understands it: "Tenons nous a l'instrument authentique mis en depot par ordre du Seigneur," "Let us stick to the authentic instrument, laid up by the command of the Lord." If this be right, the sixteenth verse must be understood in the same manner.

Because there is no light in them "In which there is no obscurity" - שחר shachor, as an adjective, frequently signifies dark, obscure; and the noun שחר shachar signifies darkness, gloominess, Joe 2:2, if we may judge by the context: - "A day of darkness and obscurity;

Of cloud, and of thick vapor;

As the gloom spread upon the mountains:

A people mighty and numerous."

Where the gloom, שחר shachar, seems to be the same with the cloud and thick vapor mentioned in the line preceding. See Lam 4:8, and Job 30:30. See this meaning of the word שחר shachar well supported in Christ. Muller. Sat. Observat. Philippians p. 53, Lugd. Bat. 1752. The morning seems to have been an idea wholly incongruous in the passage of Joel; and in this of Isaiah the words in which there is no morning (for so it ought to be rendered if שחר shachar in this place signifies, according to its usual sense, morning) seem to give no meaning at all. "It is because there is no light in them," says our translation. If there be any sense in these words, it is not the sense of the original; which cannot justly be so translated. Qui n'a rien d'obscur, "which has no obscurity." - Deschamps. The reading of the Septuagint and Syriac, שחד shochad, gift, affords no assistance towards the clearing up of any of this difficult place. R. D. Kimchi says this was the form of an oath: "By the law and by the testimony such and such things are so." Now if they had sworn this falsely, it is because there is no light, no illumination, שחר shachar, no scruple of conscience, in them.

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ISAIAH 8: 21 They will pass through it, very distressed and hungry; and it will happen that when they are hungry, they will worry, and curse by their king and by their God. They will turn their faces upward,

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Verse 21

Hardly bestead "Distressed" - Instead of נקשה niksseh, distressed, the Vulgate, Chaldee, and Symmachus manifestly read נכשל nichshal, stumbling, tottering through weakness, ready to fall; a sense which suits very well with the place.

And look upward "And he shall cast his eyes upward" - The learned professor Michaelis, treating of this place (Not. in de Sacr. Poes. Hebr. Prael. ix.) refers to a passage in the Koran which is similar to

it. As it is a very celebrated passage, and on many accounts remarkable, I shall give it here at large, with the same author's farther remarks upon it in another place of his writings. It must be noted here that the learned professor renders נִבְּבַת nibbat, הִבִּיט hibbit, in this and the parallel place, Isa 5:30, which I translate he looketh by it thundereth, from Schultens, Orig. Ling. Hebr. Lib. 1 cap. 2, of the justness of which rendering I much doubt.

This brings the image of Isaiah more near in one circumstance to that of Mohammed than it appears to be in my translation: - "Labid, contemporary with Mohammed, the last of the seven Arabian poets who had the honor of having their poems, one of each, hung up in the entrance of the temple of Mecca, struck with the sublimity of a passage in the Koran, became a convert to Mohammedism; for he concluded that no man could write in such a manner unless he were Divinely inspired. "One must have a curiosity to examine a passage which had so great an effect upon Labid. It is, I must own, the finest that I know in the whole Koran: but I do not think it will have a second time the like effect, so as to tempt any one of my readers to submit to circumcision. It is in the second chapter, where he is speaking of certain apostates from the faith. 'They are like,' saith he, 'to a man who kindles a light. As soon as it begins to shine, God takes from them the light, and leaves them in darkness that they see nothing. They are deaf, dumb, and blind; and return not into the right way. Or they fare as when a cloud, full of darkness, thunder, and lightning, covers the heaven. When it bursteth, they stop their ears with their fingers, with deadly fear; and God hath the unbelievers in his power. The lightning almost robbeth them of their eyes: as often as it flasheth they go on by its light; and when it vanisheth in darkness, they stand still. If God pleased, they would retain neither hearing nor sight.' That the thought is beautiful, no one will deny; and Labid, who had probably a mind to flatter Mohammed, was lucky in finding a passage in the Koran so little abounding in poetical beauties, to which his conversion might with any propriety be ascribed. It was well that he went no farther; otherwise his taste for poetry might have made him again an infidel." Michaelis, Erpenii Arabische Grammatik abgekürzt, Vorrede, s. 32.

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ISAIAH 8: 22 and look to the earth, and see distress, darkness, and the gloom of anguish. They will be driven into thick darkness.

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