
ISAIAH 9: 1 But there shall be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time he has made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

This chapter contains an illustrious prophecy of the Messiah. He is represented under the glorious figure of the sun, or light, rising on a benighted world, and diffusing joy and gladness wherever he sheds his beams, Isa 9:1-3. His conquests are astonishing and miraculous, as in the day of Midian; and the peace which they procure is to be permanent, as denoted by the burning of all the implements of war, Isa 9:4, Isa 9:5. The person and character of this great Deliverer are then set forth in the most magnificent terms which the language of mankind could furnish, Isa 9:6. The extent of his kingdom is declared to be universal, and the duration of it eternal, Isa 9:7. The prophet foretells most awful calamities which were ready to fall upon the Israelites on account of their manifold impieties, Isa 9:8-21.

Verse 1

Dimness "Accumulated darkness" - Either מנדחה *menuddechah*, fem. to agree with אפלה *aphelah*; or אפל המנדח *aphel hammenuddach*, alluding perhaps to the palpable Egyptian darkness, Exo 10:21.

The land of Zebulun - Zebulun, Naphtali, Manasseh, that is, the country of Galilee all round the sea of Gennesareth, were the parts that principally suffered in the first Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-pileser; see 2Kgs 15:29; 1Chr 5:26. And they were the first that enjoyed the blessings of Christ's preaching the Gospel, and exhibiting his miraculous works among them. See Mede's Works, p. 101, and 457. This, which makes the twenty-third verse of chap. 8 in the Hebrew, is the first verse in chap. 9 in our authorized version. Bishop Lowth follows the division in the Hebrew.

ISAIAH 9: 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined.

ISAIAH 9: 3 You have multiplied the nation. You have increased their joy. They rejoice before you according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the plunder.

Verse 3

And not increased the joy "Thou hast increased their joy" - Eleven MSS. of Kennicott's and six of De Rossi's, two ancient, read לו *lo*, it, according to the Masoretical correction, instead of לא *lo*, not. To the same purpose the Targum and Syriac.

The joy in harvest - כשמחת בקציר *kesimchath bakkatsir*. For בקציר *bakkatsir* one MS. of Kennicott's and one of De Rossi's have קציר *katsir*, and another הקציר *hakkatsir*, "the harvest;" one of which seems to be the true, reading, as the noun preceding is in regimine.

ISAIAH 9: 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as in the day of Midian.

ISAIAH 9: 5 For all the armour of the armed man in the noisy battle, and the garments rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.

Verse 5

Every battle of the warrior "The greaves of the armed warrior" - שון שון seon soen. This word, occurring only in this place, is of a very doubtful signification. Schindler fairly tells us that we may guess at it by the context. The Jews have explained it, by guess I believe, as signifying battle, conflict: the Vulgate renders it violenta praedatio. But it seems as if something was rather meant which was capable of becoming fuel for the fire, together with the garments mentioned in the same sentence. In Syriac the word, as a noun, signifies a shoe, or a sandal, as a learned friend suggested to me some years ago. See Luk 15:22; Act 12:8. I take it, therefore, to mean that part of the armor which covered the legs and feet, and I would render the two words in Latin by caliga caligati. The burning of heaps of armor, gathered from the field of battle, as an offering made to the god supposed to be the giver of victory, was a custom that prevailed among some heathen nations; and the Romans used it as an emblem of peace, which perfectly well suits with the design of the prophet in this place. A medal struck by Vespasian on finishing his wars both at home and abroad represents the goddess Peace holding an olive branch in one hand, and, with a lighted torch in the other, setting fire to a heap of armor. Virgil mentions the custom: - " - Cum primam aciem Praeneste sub ipsa

Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos."

Aen. lib. viii., ver. 561. "Would heaven, (said he), my strength and youth recall,

Such as I was beneath Praeneste's wall -

Then when I made the foremost foes retire

And set whole heaps of conquered shields on fire."

Dryden.

See Addison on Medals, Series 2:18. And there are notices of some such practice among the Israelites, and other nations of the most early times. God promises to Joshua victory over the kings of Canaan. "To-morrow I will deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire," Jos 11:6. See also Nah 2:13. And the psalmist employs this image to express complete victory, and the perfect establishment of peace: - "He maketh wars to cease, even to the end of the land:

He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;

And burneth the chariots in the fire. - Psa 46:9. אגלות agaloth, properly plausira, impedimenta, the baggage-wagons: which however the Septuagint and Vulgate render scuta, "shields;" and the Chaldee, "round shields," to show the propriety of that sense of the word from the etymology; which, if admitted, makes the image the same with that used by the Romans.

Ezekiel, Eze 39:8-10, in his bold manner has carried this image to a degree of amplification which I think hardly any other of the Hebrew poets would have attempted. He describes the burning of the arms of the enemy, in consequence of the complete victory to be obtained by the Israelites over Gog and Magog: - "Behold, it is come to pass, and it is done,

Saith the Lord Jehovah.

This is the day of which I spoke:

And the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall go forth.

And shall set on fire the armor, and the shield,

And the buckler, and the bow, and the arrows,

And the clubs and the lances;

And they shall set them on fire for seven years.

And they shall not bear wood from the field;

Neither shall they hew from the forest:

For of the armor shall they make their fires;

And they shall spoil their spoilers,

And they shall plunder their plunderers."

R. D. Kimchi, on this verse says this refers simply to the destruction of the Assyrians. Other battles are fought man against man, and spear against spear; and the garments are rolled in blood through the wounds given and received: but this was with burning, for the angel of the Lord smote them by night, and there was neither sword nor violent commotion, nor blood; they were food for the fire, for the angel of the Lord consumed them.

ISAIAH 9: 6 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Verse 6

The government shall be upon his shoulder - That is, the ensign of government; the scepter, the sword, the key, or the like, which was borne upon or hung from the shoulder. See note on Isa 22:22.

And his name shall be called - אל גבור El gibbor, the prevailing or conquering God.

The everlasting Father "The Father of the everlasting age" - Or אבי עד Abi ad, the Father of eternity. The Septuagint have μεγαλης βουλης Αγγελος, "the Messenger of the Great Counsel." But instead of אבי אד Abi ad, a MS. of De Rossi has אב עזר Abezer, the helping Father; evidently the corruption of some Jew, who did not like such an evidence in favor of the Christian Messiah.

Prince of Peace - שר שלום sar shalom, the Prince of prosperity, the Giver of all blessings.

A MS. of the thirteenth century in Kennicott's collection has a remarkable addition here. "He shall be a stumbling-block, המכשלה; the government is on his shoulder." This reading is nowhere else acknowledged, as far as I know.

ISAIAH 9: 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will perform this.

Verse 7

Of the increase - In the common Hebrew Bibles, and in many MSS., this word is written with the close or final ם למרבה. But in twelve of Kennicott's MSS., and twelve of De Rossi's, it is written with the open מ mem; but here it is supposed to contain mysteries, viz., that Jerusalem shall be shut up, closed, and confined, till the days of the Messiah.

This is an illustrious prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, with an enumeration of those characters in which he stands most nearly related to mankind as their Savior; and of others by which his infinite majesty and Godhead are shown. He shall appear as a child, born of a woman, born as a Jew, under the law, but not in the way of ordinary generation. He is a Son given - the human nature, in which the fullness of the Godhead was to dwell, being produced by the creative energy of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin. See Mat 1:20, Mat 1:21, Mat 1:23, Mat 1:25, and Luk 1:35, and Isa 7:14, and the notes on those passages. As being God manifested in the flesh, he was wonderful in his conception, birth, preaching, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension; wonderful in his person, and wonderful in his working. He is the Counsellor that expounds the law; shows its origin, nature, and claims; instructs, pleads for the guilty; and ever appears in the presence of God for men. He is the mighty God; God essentially and efficiently prevailing against his enemies, and destroying ours. He is the Father of eternity; the Origin of all being, and the Cause of the existence, and particularly the Father, of the spirits of all flesh. The Prince of peace - not only the Author of peace, and the Dispenser of peace, but also he that rules by peace, whose rule tends always to perfection, and produces prosperity. Of the increase of his government - this Prince has a government, for he has all power both in heaven and in earth: and his government increases, and is daily more and more extended, and will continue till all things are put under his feet. His kingdom is ordered - every act of government regulated according to wisdom and goodness; is established so securely as not to be overthrown; and administered in judgment and justice, so as to manifest his wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth. Reader, such is that Jesus who came into the world to save sinners! Trust in Him!

Isaiah 9:8-10:4

This whole passage reduced to its proper and entire form, and healed of the dislocation which it suffers by the absurd division of the chapters, makes a distinct prophecy, and a just poem, remarkable for the regularity of its disposition and the elegance of its plan. It has no relation to the preceding or following prophecy; though the parts, violently torn asunder, have been, on the one side and the other, patched on to them. Those relate principally to the kingdom of Judah, this is addressed exclusively to the kingdom of Israel. The subject of it is a denunciation of vengeance awaiting their crimes. It is divided into four parts, each threatening the particular punishment of some grievous offense - of their pride, of their perseverance in their vices, of their impiety, and of their injustice. To which is added a general denunciation of a farther reserve of Divine wrath, contained in a distich, before used by the prophet on a like occasion, Isa 5:25, and here repeated after each part. This makes the intercalary verse of the poem; or, as we call it, the burden of the song. "Post hoc comma (cap. Isa 9:4) interponitur spatium unius lineae, in Cod. 2 et 3: idemque observatur in 245. in quo nullum est spatium ad finem capituli 9." Kennicott, Var. Lect. "After this

clause (Isa 9:4) is interposed the space of one line in Cod. 2 and 3. The same is likewise observed in Cod. 245, in which no space exists at the end of chap. 9."

ISAIAH 9: 8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it falls on Israel.

Verse 8

Lord "Jehovah" - For אֲדֹנָי Adonai, thirty MSS. of Kennicott's, and many of De Rossi's, and three editions, read יְהוָה Yehovah.

ISAIAH 9: 9 All the people will know, including Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart,

Verse 9

Pride and stoutness of heart "Carry themselves haughtily" - וַיֵּדְעוּ veyadeu, "and they shall know;" so ours and the Versions in general. But what is it that they shall know? The verb stands destitute of its object; and the sense is imperfect. The Chaldee is the only one, as far as I can find, that expresses it otherwise. He renders the verb in this place by וַיִּתְרַבְּרוּ veithrababu, "they exalt themselves, or carry themselves haughtily; the same word by which he renders גָּבְהוּ gabehu, Isa 3:16. He seems, therefore, in this place to have read וַיִּגְבְּהוּ vaiyigbehu, which agrees perfectly well with what follows, and clears up the difficulty. Archbishop Secker conjectured וַיִּדְבְּרוּ vayedabberu, referring it to לֵאמֹר lemor, in the next verse, which shows that he was not satisfied with the present reading. Houbigant reads וַיִּרְעוּ vaiyereu, et pravi facti sunt, they are become wicked, which is found in a MS.; but I prefer the reading of the Chaldee, which suits much better with the context.

Houbigant approves of this reading; but it is utterly unsupported by any evidence from antiquity: it is a mere mistake of ר resh for ד daleth; and I am surprised that it should be favored by Houbigant.

ISAIAH 9: 10 "The bricks have fallen, but we will build with cut stone. The sycamore fig trees have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."

Verse 10

The bricks - "The eastern bricks," says Sir John Chardin, (see Harmer's Observ. I., p. 176), "are only clay well moistened with water, and mixed with straw, and dried in the sun." So that their walls are commonly no better than our mud walls; see Maundrell, p. 124. That straw was a necessary part in the composition of this sort of bricks, to make the parts of the clay adhere together, appears from Exodus 5. These bricks are properly opposed to hewn stone, so greatly superior in beauty and durability. The sycamores, which, as Jerome on the place says, are timber of little worth, with equal propriety are opposed to the cedars. "As the grain and texture of the sycamore is remarkably coarse and spongy, it could therefore stand in no competition at all (as it is observed, Isa 9:10) with the cedar, for beauty and ornament." - Shaw, Supplement to Travels, p. 96. We meet with the same

opposition of cedars to sycamores, 1Kgs 10:27, where Solomon is said to have made silver as the stones, and cedars as the sycamores in the vale for abundance. By this mashal, or figurative and sententious speech, they boast that they shall easily be able to repair their present losses, suffered perhaps by the first Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-pileser; and to bring their affairs to a more flourishing condition than ever.

Some of the bricks mentioned above lie before me. They were brought from the site of ancient Babylon. The straw is visible, kneaded with the clay; they are very hard, and evidently were dried in the sun; for they are very easily dissolved in water.

ISAIAH 9: 11 Therefore the LORD will set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and will stir up his enemies,

Verse 11

The adversaries of Rezin against him "The princes of Retsin against him" - For צרי tsarey, enemies, Houbigant, by conjecture, reads שרי sarey, princes; which is confirmed by thirty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., (two ancient), one of my own, ancient; and nine more have צ tsaddi, upon a rasure, and therefore had probably at first שרי sarey. The princes of Retsin, the late ally of Israel, that is, the Syrians, expressly named in the next verse, shall now be excited against Israel.

The Septuagint in this place give us another variation; for רצין Retsin, they read הר ציון har tsiyon, ορος Σιων, Mount Sion, of which this may be the sense; but Jehovah shall set up the adversaries of Mount Sion against him, (i.e., against Israel), and will strengthen his enemies together; the Syrians, the Philistines, who are called the adversaries of Mount Sion. See Simonis Lex. in voce סכך sachach.

ISAIAH 9: 12 The Syrians in front, and the Philistines behind; and they will devour Israel with open mouth. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Verse 12

With open mouth "On every side" - בכל פה bechol peh, in every corner, in every part of their country, pursuing them to the remotest extremities, and the most retired parts. So the Chaldee בכל אתר bechol athar, in every place.

ISAIAH 9: 13 Yet the people have not turned to him who struck them, neither have they sought the LORD of Armies.

ISAIAH 9: 14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed, in one day.

Verse 14

In one day - Thirteen MSS. of Kennicott and De Rossi read ביום beyond in a day; and another has a rasure in the place of the letter ב beth.

ISAIAH 9: 15 The elder and the honourable man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail.

ISAIAH 9: 16 For those who lead this people lead them astray; and those who are led by them are destroyed.

ISAIAH 9: 17 Therefore the Lord will not rejoice over their young men, neither will he have compassion on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is profane and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Verse 17

The Lord "Jehovah" - For אדני Adonai, a great number of MSS. read יהוה Yehovah.

ISAIAH 9: 18 For wickedness burns like a fire. It devours the briers and thorns; yes, it kindles in the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke.

Verse 18

For wickedness - Wickedness rageth like a fire, destroying and laying waste the nation: but it shall be its own destruction, by bringing down the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn up the briers and the thorns; that is, the wicked themselves. Briers and thorns are an image frequently applied in Scripture, when set on fire, to the rage of the wicked; violent, yet impotent, and of no long continuance. "They are extinct as the fire of thorns," Psa 118:12. To the wicked themselves, as useless and unprofitable, proper objects of God's wrath, to be burned up, or driven away by the wind. "As thorns cut up they shall be consumed in the fire," Isa 33:12. Both these ideas seem to be joined in Psa 58:9 : - "Before your pots shall feel the thorn,

As well the green as the dry, the tempest shall bear them away."

The green and the dry is a proverbial expression, meaning all sorts of them, good and bad, great and small, etc. So Ezekiel: "Behold, I will kindle a fire, and it shall devour every green tree, and every dry tree," Eze 20:47. D'Herbelot quotes a Persian poet describing a pestilence under the image of a conflagration: "This was a lightning that, falling upon a forest, consumed there the green wood with the dry." See Harmer's Observations, Vol. II., p. 187.

ISAIAH 9: 19 Through the wrath of the LORD of Armies, the land is burnt up; and the people are the fuel for the fire. No one spares his brother.

ISAIAH 9: 20 One will devour on the right hand, and be hungry; and he will eat on the left hand, and they will not be satisfied. Everyone will eat the flesh of his own arm:

Verse 20

The flesh of his own arm "The flesh of his neighbor" - "Του βραχίονος του αδελφου αυτου, the Septuagint Alexand. Duplex versio, quarum altera legit רעו reo, quae vox extat, Jer 6:21. Nam רע rea, αδελφος, Gen 43:33. Recte ni fallor." - Secker. I add to this excellent remark, that the Chaldee manifestly reads רעו reo, his neighbor, not זרעו zeroo, his arm; for he renders it by קריביה karibeyh, his neighbor. And Jeremiah has the very same expression: ואיש בשר רעהו יאכלו veish besar reehu yochelu, "and every one shall eat the flesh of his neighbor," Jer 19:9. This observation, I think, gives the true reading and sense of this place: and the context strongly confirms it by explaining the general idea by particular instances, in the following verse: "Every man shall devour the flesh of his neighbor;" that is, they shall harass and destroy one another. "Manasseh shall destroy Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh;" which two tribes were most closely connected both in blood and situation as brothers and neighbors; "and both of them in the midst of their own dissensions shall agree in preying upon Judah." The common reading, "shall devour the flesh of his own arm," in connection with what follows, seems to make either an inconsistency, or an anticlimax; whereas by this correction the following verse becomes an elegant illustration of the foregoing. - L.

ISAIAH 9: 21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh; and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.
