
ISAIAH 19: 1 The burden of Egypt: "Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.

Prophecy concerning Egypt, in which her lamentable condition under the Babylonians, Persians, etc., is forcibly pointed out, vv. 1-17. The true religion shall be propagated in Egypt; referring primarily to the great spread of Judaism in that country in the reign of the Ptolemies, and ultimately to its reception of the Gospel in the latter days, Isa 19:18-22. Profound peace between Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, and their blessed condition under the Gospel, Isa 19:23-25.

Not many years after the destruction of Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem, by which the Egyptians were freed from the yoke with which they were threatened by so powerful an enemy, who had carried on a successful war of three years' continuance against them; the affairs of Egypt were again thrown into confusion by intestine broils among themselves, which ended in a perfect anarchy, that lasted some few years. This was followed by an aristocracy, or rather tyranny, of twelve princes, who divided the country between them, and at last by the sole dominion of Psammitichus, which he held for fifty-four years. Not long after that followed the invasion and conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, and then by the Persians under Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. The yoke of the Persians was so grievous, that the conquest of the Persians by Alexander may well be considered as a deliverance to Egypt; especially as he and his successors greatly favored the people and improved the country. To all these events the prophet seems to have had a view in this chapter; and in particular, from Isa 19:18, the prophecy of the propagation of the true religion in Egypt seems to point to the flourishing state of Judaism in that country, in consequence of the great favor shown to the Jews by the Ptolemies. Alexander himself settled a great many Jews in his new city Alexandria, granting them privileges equal to those of the Macedonians. The first Ptolemy, called Soter, carried great numbers of them thither, and gave them such encouragement that still more of them were collected there from different parts; so that Philo reckons that in his time there were a million of Jews in that country. These worshipped the God of their fathers; and their example and influence must have had a great effect in spreading the knowledge and worship of the true God through the whole country. See Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Dissert. xii.

Verse 1

The burden of Egypt - That is, the prophet's declaration concerning Egypt.

ISAIAH 19: 2 I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they will fight everyone against his brother, and everyone against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

ISAIAH 19: 3 The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst. I will destroy its counsel. They will seek the idols, the charmers, those who have familiar spirits, and the wizards.

Verse 3

They shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards - And they shall ask their symulacres, and their debynouris, and their devyl clepers, and

their devyl sacristers. - Old Bible. The import of the original words has already been given where they occur in the Pentateuch. See Deu 18:10, etc.

ISAIAH 19: 4 I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord. A fierce king will rule over them," says the Lord, the LORD of Armies.

Verse 4

A cruel lord "Cruel lords" - Nebuchadnezzar in the first place, and afterwards the whole succession of Persian kings, who in general were hard masters, and grievously oppressed the country. Note, that for קשה kasheh, lord, a MS. reads קשימ kashim, lords, agreeable to which is the rendering of the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 19: 5 The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and become dry.

Verse 5

The river shall be wasted and dried up - The Nile shall not overflow its banks; and if no inundation, the land must become barren. For, as there is little or no rain in Egypt, its fertility depends on the overflowing of the Nile.

ISAIAH 19: 6 The rivers will become foul. The streams of Egypt will be diminished and dried up. The reeds and flags will wither away.

Verse 6

Shall turn the rivers far away "Shall become putrid" - האזניחו heeznichu. This sense of the word, which Simonis gives in his Lexicon, from the meaning of it in Arabic, suits the place much better than any other interpretation hitherto given; and that the word in Hebrew had some such signification, is probable from 2Chr 29:19, where the Vulgate renders it by polluit, polluted, and the Targum, by profaned, and made abominable, which the context in that place seems plainly to require. The form of the verb here is very irregular; and the rabbins and grammarians seem to give no probable account of it.

ISAIAH 19: 7 The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all the sown fields of the Nile, will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.

ISAIAH 19: 8 The fishermen will lament, and all those who fish in the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will languish.

Verse 8

The fishers also "And the fishers" - There was great plenty of fish in Egypt; see Num 11:5. "The Nile," says Diodorus, lib. i., "abounds with incredible numbers of all sorts of fish." And much more the lakes. So Egmont, Poccoke, etc.

ISAIAH 19: 9 Moreover those who work in combed flax, and those who weave white cloth, will be confounded.

Verse 9

They that work in fine flax - שריקות פשתים pishtim sericoth, heckled flax, i.e., flax dressed on the heckle, or comb used for that purpose. The Vulgate uses the word pectentes, combing.

They that weave networks shall be confounded - And confoundeden schul ben that wrogten flax, plattinge and webynge sotel thingis. - Old MS. Bible.

ISAIAH 19: 10 The pillars will be broken in pieces. All those who work for hire will be grieved in soul.

Verse 10

And they shall be broken, etc. "Her stores" - שתתיה shathotheyha, αποθηκαι, granaries. - Aquila.

All that make sluices and ponds for fish "All that make a gain of pools for fish" - This obscure line is rendered by different interpreters in very different manners. Kimchi explains אגמי agmey as if it were the same with אגמה agemah, from Job 30:25, in which he is followed by some of the rabbins, and supported by the Septuagint: and שכר secher, which I translate gain, and which some take for nets or enclosures, the Septuagint render by ζυθον, strong drink or beer, which it is well known was much used in Egypt; and so likewise the Syriac, retaining the Hebrew word שכרא sekra. I submit these very different interpretations to the reader's judgment. The Version of the Septuagint is as follows: και παντες οι ποιουντες τον ζυθον λυπηθησονται, και τας ψυχας πονεσ ο υ σ ι · "And all they that make barley wine shall mourn, and be grieved in soul."

ISAIAH 19: 11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish. The counsel of the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh has become stupid. How do you say to Pharaoh, "I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?"

Verse 11

The counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish "Have counseled a brutish counsel" - The sentence as it now stands in the Hebrew, is imperfect: it wants the verb. Archbishop Secker conjectures that the words פרעה יעצי פרעה goatsey pharoh should be transposed; which would in some degree remove the difficulty. But it is to be observed, that the translator of the Vulgate seems to have found in his copy the verb יעצו yaetsu added after פרעה pharoh: Sapientes consilii Pharaonis dederunt consilium insipientis, "The wise counsellors of Pharaoh gave unwise counsel." This

is probably the true reading: it is perfectly agreeable to the Hebrew idiom, makes the construction of the sentence clear, and renders the transposition of the words above mentioned unnecessary. - L.

ISAIAH 19: 12 Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you now; and let them know what the LORD of Armies has purposed concerning Egypt.

Verse 12 "Let them come" - Here too a word seems to have been left out of the text. After חַכְמֵיךְ chochameycha, thy wise men, two MSS., one ancient, add יָבֹאוּ yibu, let them come; which, if we consider the form and construction of the sentence, has very much the appearance of being genuine: otherwise the connective conjunction at the beginning of the next member is not only superfluous but embarrassing. See also the Version of the Septuagint, in which the same deficiency is manifest.

Let them tell thee now "And let them declare" - For יִדְעוּ yidu, let them know, perhaps we ought to read יִדְעוּ יוֹדִיעוּ yodiu, let them make known. - Secker. The Septuagint and Vulgate favor this reading, ἐπατάωσαν, let them declare.

ISAIAH 19: 13 The princes of Zoan have become fools. The princes of Memphis are deceived. They have caused Egypt to go astray, who are the cornerstone of her tribes.

Verse 13

Are deceived "They have caused," etc. - The text has וְחָתְעוּ vehithu, And they have caused to err. Fifty of Kennicott's MSS., fifty-three of De Rossi's, and one of my own, ancient, thirty-two editions, and the Vulgate and Chaldee. omit the וּ vau, and.

Stay "Pillars" - פְּנֵתַי pinnath, to be pointed as plural pinnoth, without doubt. So Grotius, and so the Chaldee.

ISAIAH 19: 14 The LORD has mixed a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her; and they have caused Egypt to go astray in all of its works, like a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

Verse 14

In the midst thereof - בְּקִרְבָּם bekirbam; so the Septuagint, and perhaps more correctly." - Secker. So likewise the Chaldee.

ISAIAH 19: 15 Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which head or tail, palm branch or rush, may do.

Verse 15

The head or tail, branch or rush - R. D. Kimchi says, there are some who suppose that these words mean the dragon's head and tail; and refer to all those who are conversant in astronomy, astrology, etc.

ISAIAH 19: 16 In that day the Egyptians will be like women. They will tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of Armies, which he shakes over them.

Verse 16

Shall Egypt be "The Egyptians shall be" - יהיו יהיו yihyu, they shall be, plural, MS. Bodl. Septuagint, and Chaldee. This is not proposed as an emendation, for either form is proper.

ISAIAH 19: 17 The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt. Everyone to whom mention is made of it will be afraid, because of the plans of the LORD of Armies, which he determines against it.

Verse 17

And the land of Judah - The threatening hand of God will be held out and shaken over Egypt, from the side of Judea; through which the Assyrians will march to invade it. It signifies that kind of terror that drives one to his wit's end, that causes him to reel like a drunken man, to be giddy through astonishment. Such is the import of חג chag, and חגה chagah. Five MSS. and two editions have לחגה lechagah.

ISAIAH 19: 18 In that day, there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of Armies. One will be called "The city of destruction."

Verse 18

The city of destruction "The city of the sun" - עיר החרס ir hacheres. This passage is attended with much difficulty and obscurity. First, in regard to the true reading. It is well known that Onias applied it to his own views, either to procure from the king of Egypt permission to build his temple in the Hieropolitan Nome, or to gain credit and authority to it when built; from the notion which he industriously propagated, that Isaiah had in this place prophesied of the building of such a temple. He pretended that the very place where it should be built was expressly named by the prophet, עיר החרס ir hacheres, the city of the sun. This possibly may have been the original reading. The present text has עיר ההרס ir haheres, the city of destruction; which some suppose to have been introduced into the text by the Jews of Palestine afterwards, to express their detestation of the place, being much offended with this schismatical temple in Egypt. Some think the latter to have been the true reading, and that the prophet himself gave this turn to the name out of contempt, and to intimate the demolition of this Hieropolitan temple; which in effect was destroyed by Vespasian's orders, after that of Jerusalem, "Videtur propheta consulto scripsisse הרס heres, pro חרס cheres, ut alibi scribitur בית און beith aven pro בית אל beith El: איש בשת ish bosheth for איש בעל ish baal, etc. Vide

Lowth in loc." - Secker. "It seems that the prophet designedly wrote חרס heres, destruction, for חרס cheres, the sun: as elsewhere און בית און beith aven, the house of iniquity, is written for אל בית אל beith El, the house of God; איש בשת ish bosheth for איש בעל ish baal," etc. But on the supposition that עיר החרס air haheres is the true reading, others understand it differently. The word חרס heres in Arabic signifies a lion; and Conrad Ikenius has written a dissertation (Dissert. Philol. Theol. XVI.) to prove that the place here mentioned is not Heliopolis, as it is commonly supposed to be, but Leontopolis in the Heliopolitan Nome, as it is indeed called in the letter, whether real or pretended, of Onias to Ptolemy, which Josephus has inserted in his Jewish Antiquities, lib. 13 c. 3. And I find that several persons of great learning and judgment think that Ikenius has proved the point beyond contradiction. See Christian. Muller. Saturae Observ. Philolog. Michaelis Bibliothecae Oriental, Part v., p. 171. But, after all, I believe that neither Onias, Heliopolis, nor Leontopolis has any thing to do with this subject. The application of this place of Isaiah to Onias's purpose seems to have been a mere invention, and in consequence of it there may perhaps have been some unfair management to accommodate the text to that purpose; which has been carried even farther than the Hebrew text; for the Greek version has here been either translated from a corrupted text, or wilfully mistranslated or corrupted, to serve the same cause. The place is there called πολις Ασεδεκ, the city of righteousness; a name apparently contrived by Onias's party to give credit to their temple, which was to rival that of Jerusalem. Upon the whole, the true reading of the Hebrew text in this place is very uncertain; fifteen MSS. and seven editions have חרס cheres, the city of Hacheres, or, of the sun. So likewise Symmachus, the Vulgate, Arabic, Septuagint, and Complutensian. On the other hand, Aquila, Theodotion, and the Syriac read חרס heres, destruction; the Chaldee paraphrase takes in both readings.

The reading of the text being so uncertain, no one can pretend to determine what the city was that is here mentioned by name; much less to determine what the four other cities were which the prophet does not name. I take the whole passage from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter, to contain a general intimation of the future propagation of the knowledge of the true God in Egypt and Syria, under the successors of Alexander; and, in consequence of this propagation, of the early reception of the Gospel in the same countries, when it should be published to the world. See more on this subject in Prideaux's Connect. An. 145; Dr. Owen's Inquiry into the present state of the Septuagint Version, p. 41; and Bryant's Observations on Ancient History, p. 124. - L.

ISAIAH 19: 19 In that day, there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border.

Verse 19

An altar to the Lord - צבאות tsebaoth, "of hosts," or Yehovah tsebaoth, is added by eight MSS. of good repute, and the Syriac Version.

ISAIAH 19: 20 It will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of Armies in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and he will send them a saviour and a defender, and he will deliver them.

ISAIAH 19: 21 The LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. Yes, they will worship with sacrifice and offering, and will vow a vow to the LORD, and will perform it.

ISAIAH 19: 22 The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing. They will return to the LORD, and he will be entreated by them, and will heal them.

ISAIAH 19: 23 In that day there will be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

Verse 23

Shall there be a highway - Under the latter kings of Persia, and under Alexander, Egypt, Judea, and Assyria lived peaceably under the same government, and were on such friendly terms that there was a regular, uninterrupted intercourse between them, so that the Assyrian came into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and Israel became the third, i.e., was in strict union with the other two; and was a blessing to both, as affording them some knowledge of the true God, Isa 19:24.

ISAIAH 19: 24 In that day, Israel will be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth;

ISAIAH 19: 25 because the LORD of Armies has blessed them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."

Verse 25

Blessed be Egypt - Assyria - and Israel - All these countries shall be converted to the Lord. Concerning Egypt, it was said, Isa 18:7, that it should bring gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem. Here it is predicted, Isa 19:19, that there shall be an altar to the Lord in Egypt itself; and that they, with the Assyrians shall become the people of God with the Israelites. This remains partly to be fulfilled. These countries shall be all, and perhaps at no very distant time from this, converted to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.