
ISAIAH 28: 1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine!

This chapter begins with a denunciation of the approaching ruin of the Israelites by Shalmaneser, whose power is compared to a tempest or flood, and his keenness to the avidity with which one plucks and swallows the grape that is soonest ripe, Isa 28:1-4. It then turns to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were to continue a kingdom after the final captivity of their brethren; and gives first a favorable prognostication of their affairs under Hezekiah, Isa 28:5, Isa 28:6; but soon changes to reproofs and threatenings for their intemperance and their profaneness, Isa 28:7, Isa 28:8. They are introduced as not only scornfully rejecting, but also mocking and ridiculing, the instructions of the prophet, Isa 28:9, Isa 28:10. To this God immediately retorts in terms alluding to their own mocking, but differently applied, Isa 28:11-13. The prophet then addresses these scoffers, Isa 28:14; who considered themselves as perfectly secure from every evil, Isa 28:15; and assures them that there was no method under heaven but one, by which they could be saved, Isa 28:16; that every other vain resource should fail in the day of visitation, Isa 28:17, Isa 28:18. He then farther adds, that the judgments of God were particularly levelled against them; and that all the means to which they trusted for warding them off should be to no purpose, Isa 28:19, Isa 28:20; as the Almighty, who, on account of his patience and long-suffering, is amiably described as unacquainted with punishing, had nevertheless determined to punish them, Isa 28:21, Isa 28:22. The prophet then concludes with a beautiful parable in explanation and defense of God's dealing with his people, Isa 28:23-29.

Verse 1

Woe to the crown of pride - By the crown of pride, etc., Samaria is primarily understood. "Sebaste, the ancient Samaria, is situated on a long mount of an oval figure, having first a fruitful valley, and then a ring of hills running round about it;" Maundrell, p. 58. "E regione horum rudera mons est peramoenus, planitie admodum frugifera circumseptus, super quem olim Samaria urbs condita fuit;" Fureri Itinerarium, p. 93. The city, beautifully situated on the top of a round hill, and surrounded immediately with a rich valley and a circle of other hills beyond it, suggested the idea of a chaplet or wreath of flowers worn upon their heads on occasions of festivity, expressed by the proud crown and the fading flower of the drunkards. That this custom of wearing chaplets in their banquets prevailed among the Jews, as well as among the Greeks and Romans, appears from the following passage of the book of The Wisdom of Solomon: - "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments,

And let no flower of the spring pass by us:

Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered."

The Wisdom of Solomon 2:7, 8.

ISAIAH 28: 2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one. Like a storm of hail, a destroying storm, and like a storm of mighty waters overflowing, he will cast them down to the earth with his hand.

Verse 2

Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one "Behold the mighty one, the exceedingly strong one" - לאדני לַאֲדֹנָי ammits ladonai, fortis Domino, i.e., fortissimus, a Hebraism. For לאדני לַאֲדֹנָי, to the Lord, thirty-eight MSS. Of Dr. Kennicott's and many of De Rossi's, with some of my own, and two editions, read ליהוה לַיהוָה laihovah, to Jehovah.

ISAIAH 28: 3 The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot.

Verse 3

The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim "The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim" - I read עטרות ataroth, crowns, plural, to agree with the verb תרמסנה teramasnah, "shall be trodden down."

ISAIAH 28: 4 The fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley, shall be like the first-ripe fig before the summer; which someone picks and eats as soon as he sees it.

Verse 4

The hasty fruit before the summer "The early fruit before the summer" - "No sooner doth the boccore, (the early fig), draw near to perfection in the middle or latter end of June, than the kermez or summer fig begins to be formed, though it rarely ripens before August; about which time the same tree frequently throws out a third crop, or the winter fig, as we may call it. This is usually of a much longer shape and darker complexion than the kermez, hanging and ripening upon the tree even after the leaves are shed; and, provided the winter proves mild and temperate, is gathered as a delicious morsel in the spring; "Shaw, Travels, p. 370, fol. The image was very obvious to the inhabitants of Judea and the neighboring countries, and is frequently applied by the prophets to express a desirable object; by none more elegantly than by Hos 9:10 : - "Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel;

Like the first ripe fig in her prime, I saw your fathers."

Which when he that looketh upon it seeth "Which whoso seeth, he plucketh it immediately" - For יראה yireh, which with הראה haroeh makes a miserable tautology, read, by a transposition of a letter, יארֶה yoreh; a happy conjecture of Houbigant. The image expresses in the strongest manner the great ease with which the Assyrians shall take the city and the whole kingdom, and the avidity with which they shall seize the rich prey without resistance.

ISAIAH 28: 5 In that day, the LORD of Armies will become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people;

Verse 5

In that day - Thus far the prophecy relates to the Israelites, and manifestly denounces their approaching destruction by Shalmaneser. Here it turns to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the remnant of God's people who were to continue a kingdom after the final captivity of the Israelites. It begins with a favorable prognostication of their affairs under Hezekiah; but soon changes to reproofs and threatenings for their intemperance, disobedience, and profaneness.

Jonathan's Targum on this verse is worthy of notice: "In that time Messiah, the Lord of hosts מְשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת meshicha dayai tsebaoth, shall be a crown of joy and a diadem of praise to the residue of his people." Kimchi says the rabbins in general are of this opinion. Here then the rabbins, and their most celebrated Targum, give the incommunicable name, יהוה צְבָאוֹת Yehovah tsebaoth, the Lord of hosts, to our ever blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

ISAIAH 28: 6 and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgement, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

Verse 6

The battle to the gate "The war to the gate of the enemy" - That is, who pursue the fleeing enemy even to the very gates of their own city. "But we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate," 2Sam 11:23; that is, we drove the enemy back to their own gates. See also 1Sam 17:52. The Targum says, The Messiah shall give the victory to those who go out to battle, that he may bring them back to their own houses in peace.

ISAIAH 28: 7 They also reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They are swallowed up by wine. They stagger with strong drink. They err in vision. They stumble in judgement.

ISAIAH 28: 8 For all tables are completely full of filthy vomit and filthiness.

ISAIAH 28: 9 Whom will he teach knowledge? To whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?

Verse 9

Whom shall he teach knowledge?" Whom, say they, would he teach knowledge?" - The scoffers mentioned below, Isa 28:14, are here introduced as uttering their sententious speeches; they treat God's method of dealing with them, and warning them by his prophets, with contempt and derision. What, say they, doth he treat us as mere infants just weaned? doth he teach us like little children, perpetually inculcating the same elementary lessons, the mere rudiments of knowledge; precept after precept, line after line, here and there, by little and little? imitating at the same time, and ridiculing, in Isa 28:10, the concise prophetic manner. God, by his prophet, retorts upon them with great severity their own contemptuous mockery, turning it to a sense quite different from what they intended. Yes, saith he, it shall be in fact as you say; ye shall be taught by a strange tongue and a stammering lip; in a strange country; ye shall be carried into captivity by a people whose language shall be unintelligible to you, and which ye shall be forced to learn like children. And my dealing with you shall be according to your own words: it shall be command upon command for your

punishment; it shall be line upon line, stretched over you to mark your destruction, (compare 2Kgs 21:13); it shall come upon you at different times, and by different degrees, till the judgments, with which from time to time I have threatened you, shall have their full accomplishment.

Jerome seems to have rightly understood the general design of this passage as expressing the manner in which the scoffers, by their sententious speeches, turned into ridicule the warnings of God by his prophets, though he has not so well explained the meaning of the repetition of their speech in Isa 28:13. His words are on Isa 28:9 "Solebant hoc ex persona prophetarum ludentes dicere:" and on Isa 28:14 "Quod supra diximus, cum irrisione solitos principes Judaeorum prophetis dicere, manda, remanda, et caetera his similia, per quae ostenditur, nequaquam eos prophetarum credidisse sermonibus, sed prophetiam habuisse despectui, praesens ostendit capitulum, per quod appellatur viri illusores." Hieron. in loc.

And so Jarchi interprets the word משלים mishelim in the next verse: Qui dicunt verba irrisionis parabolice." And the Chaldee paraphrases Isa 28:11 to the same purpose, understanding it as spoken, not of God, but of the people deriding his prophets: "Quoniam in mutatione loquela et in lingua subsannationis irridebant contra prophetas, qui prophetabant populo huic." - L.

ISAIAH 28: 10 For it is precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little.

Verse 10

For precept must be upon precept - The original is remarkably abrupt and sententious. The hemistichs are these: - לצו לצו לטאב טאב לטאב טאב קו קו לקו קו lakau kau lakau kau שם זעיר שם זעיר sham zeeir sham zeeir

For, - Command to command, command to command.

Line to line, line to line.

A little there, a little there.

Kimchi says צו tsau, precept, is used here for מצוה mitsuah, command, and is used in no other place for it but here. צו tsau signifies a little precept, such as is suited to the capacity of a child; see Isa 28:9. קו kau signifies the line that a mason stretches out to build a layer of stones by. After one layer or course is placed, he raises the line and builds another; thus the building is by degrees regularly completed. This is the method of teaching children, giving them such information as their narrow capacities can receive; and thus the prophet dealt with the Israelites. See Kimchi in loc., and see a fine parallel passage, Heb 5:12-14, by which this may be well illustrated.

My old MS. Bible translates oddly: -

For sende efter sende, sende efter sende:

Abide efter abiide, abide efter abiide:

Lytyl ther, lytyl ther.

Coverdale is also singular: -

Commande that may be commanded;

Byd that maye be bydden:

Foorbyd that maye be forbydden;

Kepe backe that maye be kepte backe:

Here a litle, there a litle.

ISAIAH 28: 11 But he will speak to this nation with stammering lips and in another language;

ISAIAH 28: 12 to whom he said, "This is the resting place. Give rest to weary"; and "This is the refreshing"; yet they would not hear.

Verse 12

This is the rest "This is the true rest" - The sense of this verse is: God had warned them by his prophets that their safety and security, their deliverance from their present calamities and from the apprehensions of still greater approaching, depended wholly on their trust in God, their faith and obedience; but they rejected this gracious warning with contempt and mockery.

ISAIAH 28: 13 Therefore the LORD's word will be to them precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, fall backward, be broken, be snared, and be taken.

ISAIAH 28: 14 Therefore hear the LORD's word, you scoffers, that rule this people in Jerusalem:

ISAIAH 28: 15 "Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it won't come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and we have hidden ourselves under falsehood.'"

Verse 15

A covenant with death - To be in covenant with, is a kind of proverbial expression to denote perfect security from evil and mischief of any sort: - "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;

And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." Job 5:23. "And I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field. And with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." Hos 2:18.

That is, none of these shall hurt them. But Lucan, speaking of the Psylli, whose peculiar property it was to be unhurt by the bite of serpents, with which their country abounded, comes still nearer to the expression of Isaiah in this place: -

Gens unica terras

Incolit a saevo serpentum innoxia morsu

Marmaridae Psylli. -

Pax illis cum morte data est.

Pharsal. 9:891. "Of all who scorching Afric's sun endure,

None like the swarthy Psyllians are secure:

With healing gifts and privileges graced,

Well in the land of serpents were they placed:

Truce with the dreadful tyrant death they have,

And border safely on his realm the grave."

Rowe.

We have made a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement - עשינו חזה - asinu chozeh, we have made a vision, we have had an interview, struck a bargain, and settled all preliminaries. So they had made a covenant with hell by diabolic sacrifice, כרתנו ברית carathnu berith. "We have cut the covenant sacrifice;" they divided it for the contracting parties to pass between the separated victim; for the victim was split exactly down the middle, so that even the spinal marrow was exactly divided through its whole length; and being set opposite to each other, the contracting parties entered, one at the head part, the other at the feet; and, meeting in the center, took the covenant oath. Thus, it is intimated, these bad people made an agreement with שאול sheol, with demons, with whom they had an interview; i.e., meeting them in the covenant sacrifice! To such a pitch had the Israelitish idolatry reached at that time!

ISAIAH 28: 16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. He who believes shall not act hastily.

Verse 16

Behold, I lay in Zion - See the notes on Gen 49:32; Psa 118:22 (note); Mat 21:42 (note); Act 4:11 (note); Rom 9:33 (note); Rom 10:11 (note); Eph 2:20 (note); 1Pet 2:6-8 (note). Kimchi understands this of Hezekiah; but it most undoubtedly belongs to Jesus Christ alone; and his application of it to himself, even the Jews could not contest.

ISAIAH 28: 17 I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plumb line. The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place.

ISAIAH 28: 18 Your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it.

Verse 18

Your covenant with death shall be disannulled "Your covenant with death shall be broken" - For כפר caphar, which seems not to belong to this place, the Chaldee reads תפר taphar, which is approved by Houbigant and Secker. See Jer 33:21, where the very same phrase is used. See Prelim. Dissert. p. I.

ISAIAH 28: 19 As often as it passes through, it will seize you; for morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by night; and it will be nothing but terror to understand the message.”

ISAIAH 28: 20 For the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket is too narrow to wrap oneself in.

Verse 20

For the bed is shorter - A mashal or proverbial saying, the meaning of which is, that they will find all means of defense and protection insufficient to secure them, and cover them from the evils coming upon them. מַסֵּךְ massek, Isa 22:8, the covering, is used for the outworks of defense, the barrier of the country; and here, in the allegorical sense, it means much the same thing. Their beds were only mattresses laid on the floor; and the coverlet a sheet, or in the winter a carpet, laid over it, in which the person wrapped himself. For כֶּהִי־תִכְנֹס kehithcannes, it ought probably to be מֶהִי־תִכְנֹס mehithcannes. Houbigant, Secker.

ISAIAH 28: 21 For the LORD will rise up as on Mount Perazim. He will be angry as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his unusual work, and bring to pass his act, his extraordinary act.

Verse 21

As in Mount Perazim - כֶּהָרִי kehar; but בַּהָרִי bahar, In the mount, is the reading of two of Kennicott's, one of De Rossi's, and one of my own MSS.

ISAIAH 28: 22 Now therefore don't be scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord, the LORD of Armies, on the whole earth.

Verse 22

The Lord God - אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה Adonai Jehovah. Adonai is omitted by four of Kennicott's MSS., and in the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic.

ISAIAH 28: 23 Give ear, and hear my voice! Listen, and hear my speech!

Verse 23

Give ye ear, and hear my voice "Listen ye, and hear my voice" - The foregoing discourse, consisting of severe reproofs, and threatenings of dreadful judgments impending on the Jews for their vices, and their profane contempt of God's warnings by his messengers, the prophet concludes with an explanation and defense of God's method of dealing with his people in an elegant parable or allegory; in which he employs a variety of images, all taken from the science of agriculture. As the

husbandman uses various methods in preparing his land, and adapting it to the several kinds of seeds to be sown, with a due observation of times and seasons; and when he hath gathered in his harvest, employs methods as various in separating the corn from the straw and the chaff by different instruments, according to the nature of the different sorts of grain; so God, with unerring wisdom, and with strict justice, instructs, admonishes, and corrects his people; chastises and punishes them in various ways, as the exigence of the case requires; now more moderately, now more severely; always tempering justice with mercy; in order to reclaim the wicked, to improve the good, and, finally, to separate the one from the other.

ISAIAH 28: 24 Does he who ploughs to sow plough continually? Does he keep turning the soil and breaking the clods?

ISAIAH 28: 25 When he has levelled its surface, doesn't he plant the dill, and scatter the cumin seed, and put in the wheat in rows, the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in its place?

ISAIAH 28: 26 For his God instructs him in right judgement, and teaches him.

Verse 26

For his God doth instruct him - All nations have agreed in attributing agriculture, the most useful and the most necessary of all sciences, to the invention and to the suggestions of their deities. "The Most High hath ordained husbandry, "saith the son of Sirach, Eccclus. 7:15.

Namque Ceres fertur fruges, Liberque liquoris

Vitigeni laticem mortalibus instituisse.

Lucretius, 5:14. "Ceres has taught mortals how to produce fruits; and Bacchus has taught them how to cultivate the vine." Ὁ δ' ἠπιος ἀνθρωποισι Δεξια σημαίνει, λαους δ' ἐπι ἐργων ἐχειρει Μιμνησκων βιοτοιο· λεγει δ' ὅτε βωλος ἀριστη Βουσι τε και μακελησι· λ ε γ ε ι δ' ὅτε δεξιαι ὦραι Και φυτα γυρωσαι, και σπερματα παντα βαλεσθαι.

Aratus, Phantom. v. "He, Jupiter, to the human race

Indulgent, prompts to necessary toil

Man provident of life; with kindly signs

The seasons marks, when best to turn the glebe

With spade and plough, to nurse the tender plant,

And cast o'er fostering earth the seeds abroad."

ISAIAH 28: 27 For the dill are not threshed with a sharp instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned over the cumin; but the dill is beaten out with a stick, and the cumin with a rod.

Verse 27

Four methods of threshing are here mentioned, by different instruments; the flail, the drag, the wain, and the treading of the cattle. The staff or flail was used for the infirmiora semina, says Jerome, the grain that was too tender to be treated in the other methods. The drag consisted of a sort of strong planks, made rough at the bottom, with hard stones or iron; it was drawn by horses or oxen over the corn sheaves spread on the floor, the driver sitting upon it. Kempfer has given a print representing the manner of using this instrument, Amaen. Exot. p. 682, fig. 3. The wain was much like the former; but had wheels with iron teeth, or edges like a saw: Ferrata carpenta rotis per medium in serrarum modum se volventibus. Hieron. in loc. From this it would seem that the axle was armed with iron teeth or serrated wheels throughout. See a description and print of such a machine used at present in Egypt for the same purpose in Niebuhr's Voyage en Arabie, Tab. 17 p. 123; it moves upon three rollers armed with iron teeth or wheels to cut the straw. In Syria they make use of the drag, constructed in the very same manner as above described; Niebuhr, Description de l'Arabie, p. 140. This not only forced out the grain, but cut the straw in pieces for fodder for the cattle; for in the eastern countries they have no hay. See Harmer's Observ. 1 p. 425. The last method is well known from the law of Moses, which "forbids the ox to be muzzled, when he treadeth out the corn;" Deu 25:4.

ISAIAH 28: 28 Bread flour must be ground; so he will not always be threshing it. Although he drives the wheel of his threshing cart over it, his horses don't grind it.

Verse 28

The bread-corn - I read ולהם velahem, on the authority of the Vulgate and Symmachus; the former expresses the conjunction ו vau, omitted in the text, by autem; the latter by δε.

Bruise it with his horsemen "Bruise it with the hoofs of his cattle" - For פרשיו parashaiv, horsemen or teeth, read פרסיו perasaiv, hoofs. So the Syriac, Synmachus, Theodotion, and the Vulgate. The first is read with ש shin, the latter with ס samech, the pronunciation is nearly the same.

ISAIAH 28: 29 This also comes out from the LORD of Armies, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.
