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ISAIAH 29: 1 Woe to Ariel! Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts come around;

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Distress of Ariel, or Jerusalem, on Sennacherib's invasion, with manifest allusion, however, to the still greater distress which it suffered from the Romans, Isa 29:1-4. Disappointment and fall of Sennacherib described in terms, like the event, the most awful and terrible, Isa 29:5-8. Stupidity and hypocrisy of the Jews, Isa 29:9-16. Rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles, Isa 29:17. The chapter concludes by a recurrence to the favourite topics of the prophet, viz., the great extension of the Messiah's kingdom in the latter days, and the future restoration of Israel, Isa 29:18-24.

The subject of this and the four following chapters is the invasion of Sennacherib; the great distress of the Jews while it continued; their sudden and unexpected deliverance by God's immediate interposition in their favor; the subsequent prosperous state of the kingdom under Hezekiah; interspersed with severe reproofs, and threats of punishment, for their hypocrisy, stupidity, infidelity, their want of trust in God, and their vain reliance on the assistance of Egypt; and with promises of better times, both immediately to succeed, and to be expected in the future age. The whole making, not one continued discourse, but rather a collection of different discourses upon the same subject; which is treated with great elegance and variety. Though the matter is various, and the transitions sudden, yet the prophet seldom goes far from his subject. It is properly enough divided by the chapters in the common translation. - L.

#### Verse 1

Ariel - That Jerusalem is here called by this name is very certain: but the reason of this name, and the meaning of it as applied to Jerusalem, is very obscure and doubtful. Some, with the Chaldee, suppose it to be taken from the hearth of the great altar of burnt-offerings which Ezekiel plainly calls by the same name, and that Jerusalem is here considered as the seat of the fire of God, אֵל אֵר *ur el* which should issue from thence to consume his enemies: compare Isa 31:9. Some, according to the common derivation of the word, אֵל אֵרִי *ari el*, the lion of God, or the strong lion, suppose it to signify the strength of the place, by which it was enabled to resist and overcome all its enemies. Τινες δε φασι την πολιν οὕτως ειρησθαι· επει, δια Θεου, λεοντος δικην εσπαρραττε τους ανταροντας. Procop. in loc. There are other explanations of this name given: but none that seems to be perfectly satisfactory. - Lowth.

From Eze 43:15, we learn that Ari-el was the name of the altar of burnt-offerings, put here for the city itself in which that altar was. In the second verse it is said, I will distress Ari-el, and it shall be unto me as Ari-el. The first Ari-el here seems to mean Jerusalem, which should be distressed by the Assyrians: the second Ari-el seems to mean the altar of burntofferings. But why is it said, "Ari-el shall be unto me as Ari-el?" As the altar of burntofferings was surrounded daily by the victims which were offered: so the walls of Jerusalem shall be surrounded by the dead bodies of those who had rebelled against the Lord, and who should be victims to his justice. The translation of Bishop Lowth appears to embrace both meanings: "I will bring distress upon Ari-el; and it shall be to me as the hearth of the great altar."

Add ye year to year - Ironically. Go on year after year, keep your solemn feasts; yet know, that God will punish you for your hypocritical worship, consisting of mere form destitute of true piety. Probably delivered at the time of some great feast, when they were thus employed.

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ISAIAH 29: 2 then I will distress Ariel, and there will be mourning and lamentation. She shall be to me as an altar hearth.

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Verse 2

There shall be heaviness and sorrow "There shall be continual mourning and sorrow" - Instead of your present joy and festivity.

And it shall be unto me as Ariel "And it shall be unto me as the hearth of the great altar" - That is, it shall be the seat of the fire of God; which shall issue from thence to consume his enemies. See note on Isa 29:1 (note). Or, perhaps, all on flame; as it was when taken by the Chaldeans; or covered with carcasses and blood, as when taken by the Romans: an intimation of which more distant events, though not immediate subjects of the prophecy, may perhaps be given in this obscure passage.

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ISAIAH 29: 3 I will encamp against you all around you, and will lay siege against you with posted troops. I will raise siege works against you.

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Verse 3

And I will camp against thee round about "And I will encamp against thee like David" - For כדור caddur, some kind of military engine, כדוד kedavid, like David, is the reading of the Septuagint, two MSS. of Kennicott's, if not two more: but though Bishop Lowth adopts this reading, I think it harsh and unnecessary.

Forts "Towers" - For מצרות metsuroth, read מצדות metsudoth: so the Septuagint and five MSS. of Dr. Kennicott's, one of them ancient, and four of De Rossi's.

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ISAIAH 29: 4 You will be brought down, and will speak out of the ground. Your speech will mumble out of the dust. Your voice will be as of one who has a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and your speech will whisper out of the dust.

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Verse 4

And thy speech shall be low out of the dust "And from out of the dust thou shalt utter a feeble speech" - That the souls of the dead uttered a feeble stridulous sound, very different from the natural human voice, was a popular notion among the heathens as well as among the Jews. This appears from several passages of their poets; Homer, Virgil, Horace. The pretenders to the art of necromancy, who were chiefly women, had an art of speaking with a feigned voice, so as to deceive those who applied to them, by making them believe that it was the voice of the ghost. They had a way of uttering sounds, as if they were formed, not by the organs of speech, but deep in the chest, or in the belly; and were thence called εγγαστριμυθοι, ventriloqui: they could make the voice seem to come from beneath the ground, from a distant part, in another direction, and not from themselves; the better to impose upon those who consulted them. Εξεπιτηδες το γενοσ τουτο του

αμυδρον ηχον επιτηδευονται, ινα δια την ασαφειαν της φωνης του τ ο υ ψευδους αποδιδρασκωσιν ελεγχον. Psellus De Daemonibus, apud Bochart, 1 p. 731. "These people studiously acquire, and affect on purpose, this sort of obscure sound; that by the uncertainty of the voice they may the better escape being detected in the cheat. "From these arts of the necromancers the popular notion seems to have arisen, that the ghost's voice was a weak, stridulous, almost inarticulate sort of sound, very different from the speech of the living.

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ISAIAH 29: 5 But the multitude of your foes will be like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones like chaff that blows away. Yes, it will be in an instant, suddenly.

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#### Verse 5

The multitude of thy strangers "The multitude of the proud" - For זריריך zarayich, thy strangers, read זדדד zedim, the proud, according to the Septuagint; parallel to and synonymous with עריצים aritsim, the terrible, in the next line: the ר resh was at first ד daleth in a MS. See note on Isa 25:2.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh verses contain an admirable description of the destruction of Sennacherib's army, with a beautiful variety of the most expressive and sublime images: perhaps more adapted to show the greatness, the suddenness, and horror of the event, than the means and manner by which it was effected. Compare Isa 30:30-33.

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ISAIAH 29: 6 She will be visited by the LORD of Armies with thunder, with earthquake, with great noise, with whirlwind and storm, and with the flame of a devouring fire.

ISAIAH 29: 7 The multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, will be like a dream, a vision of the night.

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#### Verse 7

As a dream - This is the beginning of the comparison, which is pursued and applied in the next verse. Sennacherib and his mighty army are not compared to a dream because of their sudden disappearance; but the disappointment of their eager hopes is compared to what happens to a hungry and thirsty man, when he awakes from a dream in which fancy had presented to him meat and drink in abundance, and finds it nothing but a vain illusion. The comparison is elegant and beautiful in the highest degree, well wrought up, and perfectly suited to the end proposed. The image is extremely natural, but not obvious: it appeals to our inward feelings, not to our outward senses; and is applied to an event in its concomitant circumstances exactly similar, but in its nature totally different. See De S. Poes. Hebr. Praelect. 12. For beauty and ingenuity it may fairly come in competition with one of the most elegant of Virgil, greatly improved from Homer, Iliad 22:199, where he has applied to a different purpose, but not so happily, the same image of the ineffectual working of imagination in a dream: -

Ac veluti in somnis, oculos ubi languida pressit

Nocte quies, necquicquam avidos extendere cursus

Velle videmur, et in mediis conatibus aegri

Succidimus; non lingua valet, non corpore notae

Sufficiunt vires, nec vox, nec verba sequuntur.

Aen., 12:908. "And as, when slumber seals the closing sight,

The sick wild fancy labors in the night;

Some dreadful visionary foe we shun

With airy strides, but strive in vain to run;

In vain our baffled limbs their powers essay;

We faint, we struggle, sink, and fall away;

Drain'd of our strength, we neither fight nor fly,

And on the tongue the struggling accents die."

Pitt.

Lucretius expresses the very same image with Isaiah: -

Ut bibere in somnis sitiens quum quaerit, et humor

Non datur, ardorem in membris qui stinguere possit;

Sed laticum simulacra petit, frustra que laborat,

In medioque sitit torrenti flumine potans.

As a thirsty man desires to drink in his sleep,

And has no fluid to allay the heat within,

But vainly labors to catch the image of rivers,

And is parched up while fancying that he is drinking at a full stream.

Bishop Stock's translation of the prophet's text is both elegant and just: - "As when a hungry man dreameth; and, lo! he is eating:

And he awaketh; and his appetite is unsatisfied.

And as a thirsty man dreameth; and, lo! he is drinking:

And he awaketh; and, lo! he is faint,

And his appetite craveth."

Lucretius almost copies the original.

All that fight against her and her munition "And all their armies and their towers" - For צביה ומצדתה tsebeyha umetsodathah, I read, with the Chaldee, צבאם ומצדתם tsebaam umetsodatham.

ISAIAH 29: 8 It will be like when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he eats; but he awakes, and his hunger isn't satisfied; or like when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he drinks; but he awakes, and behold, he is faint, and he is still thirsty. The multitude of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion will be like that.

ISAIAH 29: 9 Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

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#### Verse 9

Stay yourselves, and wonder - התמהמהו hithmahmehu, go on what-what-whatting, in a state of mental indetermination, till the overflowing scourge take you away. See the note on Psa 119:60 (note).

They are drunken, but not with wine - See note on Isa 51:21.

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ISAIAH 29: 10 For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets; and he has covered your heads, the seers.

ISAIAH 29: 11 All vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is educated, saying, "Read this, please"; and he says, "I can't, for it is sealed:"

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#### Verse 11

I cannot; for it is sealed "I cannot read it; for it is sealed up" - An ancient MS. and the Septuagint have preserved a word here, lost out of the text; לקרות likroth, (for לקראות), αναγνωναί, read it.

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ISAIAH 29: 12 and the book is delivered to one who is not educated, saying, "Read this, please"; and he says, "I can't read."

ISAIAH 29: 13 The Lord said, "Because this people draws near with their mouth and with their lips to honour me, but they have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which has been taught;

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#### Verse 13

The Lord "Jehovah" - For אדני Adonai, sixty-three MSS. of Kennicott's, and many of De Rossi's, and four editions, read יהוה Yehovah, and five MSS. add יהוה.

Kimchi makes some just observations on this verse. The vision, meaning the Divine revelation of all the prophets, is a book or letter that is sealed - is not easily understood. This is delivered to one that is learned - instructed in the law. Read this; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed; a full proof that he does not wish to know the contents else he would apply to the prophet to get it explained. See Kimchi on the place.

And their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men "And vain is their fear of me teaching the commandments of men" - I read for וַתְּהִי וַתְּהוּ vattehi, vethohu, with the Septuagint, Mat 15:9; Mar 8:7; and for מלמדה מלמדיים melummedah, melummedim, with the Chaldee.

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ISAIAH 29: 14 therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the understanding of their prudent men will be hidden."

ISAIAH 29: 15 Woe to those who deeply hide their counsel from the LORD, and whose works are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us?" and "Who knows us?"

ISAIAH 29: 16 You turn things upside down! Should the potter be thought to be like clay; that the thing made should say about him who made it, "He didn't make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding?"

ISAIAH 29: 17 Isn't it yet a very little while, and Lebanon will be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be regarded as a forest?

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#### Verse 17

And Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field "Ere Lebanon become like Carmel" - A mashal, or proverbial saying, expressing any great revolution of things; and, when respecting two subjects, an entire reciprocal change: explained here by some interpreters, I think with great probability, as having its principal view beyond the revolutions then near at hand, to the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. The first were the vineyard of God, כרם אל kerem El, (if the prophet, who loves an allusion to words of like sounds, may be supposed to have intended one here), cultivated and watered by him in vain, to be given up, and to become a wilderness: compare Isa 5:1-7. The last had been hitherto barren; but were, by the grace of God, to be rendered fruitful. See Mat 21:43; Rom 11:30, Rom 11:31. Carmel stands here opposed to Lebanon, and therefore is to be taken as a proper name.

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ISAIAH 29: 18 In that day, the deaf will hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

ISAIAH 29: 19 The humble also will increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

ISAIAH 29: 20 For the ruthless is brought to nothing, and the scoffer ceases, and all those who are alert to do evil are cut off—

ISAIAH 29: 21 who cause a person to be indicted by a word, and lay a snare for the arbiter in the gate, and who deprive the innocent of justice with false testimony.

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#### Verse 21

Him that reproveth in the gate "Him that pleaded in the gate" - "They are heard by the treasurer, master of the horse, and other principal officers of the regency of Algiers, who sit constantly in the

gate of the palace for that purpose:" that is, the distribution of justice. - Shaw's Travels, p. 315, fol. He adds in the note, "That we read of the elders in the gate. Deu 21:15; Deu 25:7; and, Isa 29:21; Amo 5:10, of him that reproveth and rebuketh in the gate. The Ottoman court likewise seems to have been called the Porte, from the distribution of justice and the dispatch of public business that is carried on in the gates of it."

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ISAIAH 29: 22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall no longer be ashamed, neither shall his face grow pale.

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#### Verse 22

Who redeemed Abraham - As God redeemed Abraham from among idolaters and workers of iniquity, so will he redeem those who hear the words of the Book, and are humbled before him, Isa 29:18, Isa 29:19.

Concerning the house of Jacob "The God of the house of Jacob" - I read אל El as a noun, not a preposition: the parallel line favors this sense; and there is no address to the house of Jacob to justify the other.

Neither shall his face now wax pale "His face shall no more be covered with confusion" - "יחורו yechoro, Chald. ut ó μεταβαλει, Theod. εντραπησεται, Syr. נחפרו necaphro, videtur legendum יחפרו yechepheru: hic enim solum legitur verbum, חור chavar, nec in linguis affinibus habet pudoris significationem." - Secker. "Here alone is the verb חור charar read; nor has it in the cognate languages the signification of shame."

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ISAIAH 29: 23 But when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they will sanctify my name. Yes, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

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#### Verse 23

But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands "For when his children shall see the work of my hands" - For בראותו birotho I read בראות biroth, with the Septuagint and Syriac.

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ISAIAH 29: 24 They also who err in spirit will come to understanding, and those who grumble will receive instruction."

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