
ISAIAH 31: 1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they don't look to the Holy One of Israel, and they don't seek the LORD!

The Jews again reproved for their confidence in Egypt, finely contrasted with their neglect of the power and protection of God, Isa 31:1-3. Deliverance and protection are, notwithstanding, promised, expressed by two similes; the first remarkably lofty and poetical, the latter singularly beautiful and tender, Isa 31:4, Isa 31:5. Exhortation to repentance, joined with the prediction of a more reformed period, Isa 31:6, Isa 31:7. This chapter concludes like the preceding, with a prophecy of the fall of Sennacherib, Isa 31:8, Isa 31:9.

Verse 1

Wo to them that go down to Egypt - This is a reproof to the Israelites for forming an alliance with the Egyptians, and not trusting in the Lord.

And stay on horses "Who trust in horses" - For ועל veal, and upon, first twenty MSS. of Kennicott's, thirty of De Rossi's, one of my own, and the Septuagint, Arabic, and Vulgate, read על al, upon, without the conjunction, which disturbs the sense.

ISAIAH 31: 2 Yet he also is wise, and will bring disaster, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of those who work iniquity.

Verse 2

His words "His word" - דברו debaro, singular, without י yod, two MSS. of Dr. Kennicott's the Septuagint, and Targ. Hieros. דרכיו derachaiv, his ways, is found in one MS.

ISAIAH 31: 3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, both he who helps shall stumble, and he who is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together.

Verse 3

He that helpeth (the Egyptians) shall fall and he that is holpen (the Israelites) shall fall down-together.

ISAIAH 31: 4 For thus says the LORD to me, "As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds is called together against him, will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for their noise, so the LORD of Armies will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its heights.

 Verse 4

Like as the lion - This comparison is exactly in the spirit and manner, and very nearly approaching to the expression, of Homer. Βη ρ' ιμεν, ὥστε λεων ορεισιτροφος, ὅστ' επιδευης Δηρον εη κρειων, κελεται δε ἐ θυμος αγηνωρ, Μηλων πειρησοντα, και ες πυκινον δ ο μ ο ν ελθειν· Ειπερ γαρ χ' εὐρησι παρ' αυτοψι βωτορας ανδρας Συν κυσι και δουρεσσι φυλασσοντας περι μηλα, Ου ρα τ' απειρητος μεμονε σταθμοιο διεσθαι. Αλλ' ὄγ' ἀρ ἡ ἥρπαξε μεταλμενος, ηε και αυτος Εβλητ' εν πρωτοισι θοης απο χειρος ακοντι.

Iliad 12:299.

As the bold lion, mountain-bred, now long
 Famished, with courage and with hunger stung
 Attempts the thronged fold: him nought appals,
 Though dogs and armed shepherds stand in guard
 Collected; he nathless undaunted springs
 O'er the high fence, and rends the trembling prey;
 Or, rushing onward, in his breast receives
 The well-aimed spear.

Of metaphors, allegories, and comparisons of the Hebrew poets, in which the Divine nature and attributes are represented under images taken from brutes and other low objects; of their effect, their sublimity, and the causes of it; see De Sac. Poes. Heb., Praelect. 16 sub. fin.

ISAIAH 31: 5 As birds hovering, so the LORD of Armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it. He will pass over and preserve it."

 Verse 5

Passing over "Leaping forward" - The generality of interpreters observe in this place an allusion to the deliverance which God vouchsafed to his people when he destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians, and exempted those of the Israelites sojourning among them by a peculiar interposition. The same word is made use of here which is used upon that occasion, and which gave the name to the feast which was instituted in commemoration of that deliverance, ΠΟΨ pesach. But the difficulty is to reconcile the commonly received meaning of that word with the circumstances of the similitude here used to illustrate the deliverance represented as parallel to the deliverance in Egypt. "As the mother birds hovering over their young,

So shall Jehovah God of hosts protect Jerusalem;

Protecting and delivering, passing over, and rescuing her."

This difficulty is, I think, well solved by Vitringa, whose remark is the more worthy of observation, as it leads to the true meaning of an important word, which hitherto seems greatly to have been

misunderstood, though Vitringa himself, as it appears to me, has not exactly enough defined the precise meaning of it. He says, "Πασαχ signifies to cover, to protect by covering: σκεπασω ὑμας, Septuagint. Jehovah obteget ostium; 'The Lord will cover or protect the door:'" whereas it means that particular action or motion by which God at that time placed himself in such a situation as to protect the house of the Israelite against the destroying angel; to spring forward, to throw one's self in the way, in order to cover and protect. Cocceius comes nearer to the true meaning than Vitringa, by rendering it gradum facere, to march, to step forward; Lexicon in voc. The common meaning of the word Πασαχ upon other occasions is to halt, to be lame, to leap, as in a rude manner of dancing, (as the prophets of Baal did, 1Kgs 18:26), all which agrees very well together; for the motion of a lame person is a perpetual springing forward, by throwing himself from the weaker upon the stronger leg. The common notion of God's passage over the houses of the Israelites is, that in going through the land of Egypt to smite the first-born, seeing the blood on the door of the houses of the Israelites, he passed over, or skipped, those houses, and forbore to smite them. But that this is not the true notion of the thing, will be plain from considering the words of the sacred historian, where he describes very explicitly the action: "For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood on the lintels and on the two side posts, Jehovah will spring forward over (or before) the door, יהוה על הפתח ופסח יehovah al happethach, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you," Exo 12:23. Here are manifestly two distinct agents, with which the notion of passing over is not consistent, for that supposes but one agent. The two agents are the destroying angel passing through to smite every house, and Jehovah the Protector keeping pace with him; and who, seeing the door of the Israelite marked with the blood, the token prescribed, leaps forward, throws himself with a sudden motion in the way, opposes the destroying angel, and covers and protects that house against the destroying angel, nor suffers him to smite it. In this way of considering the action, the beautiful similitude of the bird protecting her young answers exactly to the application by the allusion to the deliverance in Egypt. As the mother bird spreads her wings to cover her young, throws herself before them, and opposes the rapacious bird that assaults them, so shall Jehovah protect, as with a shield, Jerusalem from the enemy, protecting and delivering, springing forward and rescuing her; ὑπερβαινων, as the three other Greek interpreters, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, render it. The Septuagint, περιποιησεται instead of which MS. Pachom. has περιβησεται, circumeundo proteget, "in going about he shall protect, "which I think is the true reading. - Homer, 2 viii. 329, expresses the very same image by this word: - Αιας δ' ουκ αμελησε κασιγνητοιο πεσοντος, Αλλα θεων περιβη, και ο ι σακος αμφεκαλυψε: " - But Ajax his broad shield displayed,

And screened his brother with a mighty shade." - Ὁς Χρυσην αμφιβεβηκας.

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Which the scholiast explains by περιβεβηκας, ὑπερμαχεις, i.e., "Thou who strictly guardest Chryses." - L. On this verse Kimchi says, "The angel of the Lord which destroyed the Assyrians is compared to a lion, Isa 31:4, for his strength: and here (Isa 31:5) to flying birds, for his swiftness."

ISAIAH 31: 6 Return to him from whom you have deeply revolted, children of Israel.

Verse 6

Have deeply revolted "Have so deeply engaged in revolt" - All the ancient Versions read תעמיקו taamiku, in the second person, instead of העמיקו heemiku, they have deeply revolted, etc.

ISAIAH 31: 7 For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—sin which your own hands have made for you.

Verse 7

Which your own hands have made unto you for a sin "The sin, which their own hands have made" - The construction of the word חט chet, sin, in this place is not easy. The Septuagint have omitted it: MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. 2 and Cod. Marchal. in margine, supply the omission by the word ἁμαρτιαν, sin, or ἁμαρτημα, said to be from Aquila's Version, which I have followed. The learned Professor Schroeder, Institut. Ling. Hebrews p. 298, makes it to be in regimine with ידיכם yedeychem, as an epithet, your sinful hands. The Septuagint render the pronoun in the third person, αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν, their hands; and an ancient MS. has, agreeable to that rendering, להם lahem, to them, for לך lachem, to you; which word they have likewise omitted, as not necessary to complete the sense.

ISAIAH 31: 8 "The Assyrian will fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of mankind, shall devour him. He will flee from the sword, and his young men will become subject to forced labour.

Verse 8

Then shall the Assyrian fall, etc. - Because he was to be discomfited by the angel of the Lord, destroying in his camp, in one night, upwards of one hundred and eighty thousand men; and Sennacherib himself fell by the hands of the princes, his own sons. Not mighty men, for they were not soldiers; not mean men, for they were princes.

ISAIAH 31: 9 His rock will pass away by reason of terror, and his princes will be afraid of the banner," says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.
