
ISAIAH 38: 1 In those days was Hezekiah sick and near death. Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you will die, and not live.'"

Account of Hezekiah's dangerous sickness and miraculous recovery, Isa 38:1-9. Tender and beautiful song of thanksgiving, in which this pious king breathed out the sentiments of a grateful heart, when his life was, as it were, restored. This ode may be adapted to other cases; and will always afford profit and pleasure to those who are not void of feeling and piety, Isa 38:10-22.

Verse 1

In those days - The reader is requested to consult the notes on 2 Kings 20 in reference to the principal parts of this chapter.

ISAIAH 38: 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,

Verse 2

Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall - The furniture of an eastern divan or chamber, either for the reception of company or for private use, consists chiefly of carpets spread on the floor in the middle; and of sofas, or couches ranged on one or more sides of the room, on a part raised somewhat above the floor. On these they repose themselves in the day, and sleep at night. It is to be observed that the corner of the room is the place of honor. Dr. Pococke, when he was introduced to the Sheikh of Furshout, found him sitting in the corner of his room. He describes another Arab Sheikh "as sitting in the corner of a large green tent, pitched in the middle of an encampment of Arabs; and the Bey of Girge as placed on a sofa in a corner to the right as one entered the room." - Harmer's Observ. 2 p. 60. Lady Mary Montague, giving an account of a visit which she made to the Kahya's lady at Adrianople, says, "She ordered cushions to be given me; and took care to place me in the corner, which is the place of honor." - Letter 33. The reason of this seems to be, that the person so placed is distinguished, and in a manner separated, from the rest of the company, and as it were guarded by the wall on each side. We are to suppose Hezekiah's couch placed in the same situation; in which turning on either side, he must turn his face to the wall; by which he would withdraw himself from those who were attending upon him in his apartment, in order to address his private prayer to God. Isa 38:3 And he said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, remember now how I have endeavored to walk before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in thine eyes. And Hezekiah wept, and lamented grievously. - L. Isa 38:4 Now [before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court] the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, Go [back], and say unto Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah the God of David thy father, I have heard thy supplication; I have seen thy tears. Behold [I will heal thee; and on the third day thou shalt go up into the house of Jehovah. Isa 38:5 And] I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee, and this city, from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will protect this city. And [Hezekiah said, By what sign shall I know that I shall go up into the house of Jehovah? Isa 38:7 And Isaiah said], This shall be the sign unto thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah still bring to effect this word which he hath spoken.

The words in the translation included within crotchets are supplied from the parallel place, 2Kgs 20:4, 2Kgs 20:5, to make the narration more perfect. I have also taken the liberty, with Houbigant, of bringing forward the two last verses of this chapter, and inserting them in their proper places of the narration with the same mark. Kimchi's note on these two verses is as follows: "This and the following verse belong not to the writing of Hezekiah; and I see no reason why they are written here after the writing; for their right place is above, after And I will protect this city, Isa 38:6. And so they stand in the book of Kings, "2Kgs 20:7, 2Kgs 20:8. The narration of this chapter seems to be in some parts an abridgment of that of 2 Kings 20. The abridger, having finished his extract here with the eleventh verse, seems to have observed, that the seventh and eighth verses of 2 Kings 20 were wanted to complete the narration: he therefore added them at the end of the chapter, after he had inserted the song of Hezekiah, probably with marks for their insertion in their proper places; which marks were afterwards neglected by transcribers. Or a transcriber might omit them by mistake, and add them at the end of the chapter with such marks. Many transpositions are, with great probability, to be accounted for in the same way.

ISAIAH 38: 3 and said, "Remember now, the LORD, I beg you, how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight." Hezekiah wept bitterly.

ISAIAH 38: 4 Then the LORD's word came to Isaiah, saying,

ISAIAH 38: 5 "Go, and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father, "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.

ISAIAH 38: 6 I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.

Verse 6

I will defend this city - The other copy, 2Kgs 20:6, adds:" for mine own sake, and for the sake of David my servant;" and the sentence seems somewhat abrupt without it.

ISAIAH 38: 7 This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has spoken.

ISAIAH 38: 8 Behold, I will cause the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down on the sundial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the sundial on which it had gone down."""

Verse 8

Which is gone down "By which the sun is gone down" - For שמש bashshemesh, the Septuagint, Syriac, and Chaldee read שמש, hashshemesh. - Houbigant. In the history of this miracle in the book of Kings, (2Kgs 20:9-11), there is no mention at all made of the sun, but only of the going backward of the shadow: which might be effected by a supernatural refraction. The first ὁ ἥλιος, the sun, in this verse is omitted in the Septuagint, MS. Pachom.

ISAIAH 38: 9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and had recovered of his sickness.

Verse 9

The writing of Hezekiah - Here the book of Kings deserts us, the song of Hezekiah not being inserted in it. Another copy of this very obscure passage (obscure not only from the concise poetical style, but because it is probably very incorrect) would have been of great service.

The MSS. and ancient Versions, especially the latter, will help us to get through some of the many difficulties which we meet with in it.

ISAIAH 38: 10 I said, "In the middle of my life I go into the gates of Sheol. I am deprived of the residue of my years."

ISAIAH 38: 11 I said, "I won't see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living. I will see man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

Verse 11

The Lord "Jehovah" - יה יה, יה יה, seems to be יהוה Yehovah, in MS. Bodl., and it was so at first written in another. So the Syriac. See Houbigant. I believe יהוה Yehovah was the original reading. See the note on Isa 12:2 (note).

ISAIAH 38: 12 My dwelling is removed, and is carried away from me like a shepherd's tent.

I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life. He will cut me off from the loom. From day even to night you will make an end of me.

Verse 12

Mine age - is removed from me as a shepherd's tent - רעי roi is put for רעה roeh, say the rabbis (Sal. Den Melec on the place); but much more probably is written imperfectly for רעים roim, shepherds. See note on Isa 5:1.

I shall be removed from this state to another, as a shepherd removes his tent from one place to another for the sake of his flock. Is not this a strong intimation of his belief in a future state?

I have cut off like a weaver my life "My life is cut off as by the weaver" - קפדתי kippadti. This verb is rendered passively, and in the third person, by the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 38: 13 I waited patiently until morning. He breaks all my bones like a lion. From day even to night you will make an end of me.

 Verse 13

The last line of the foregoing verse **עד לילה תשלימני** miyom ad layelah tashlimeni, "In the course of the day thou wilt finish my web; "or, as the common version has it, "From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me, "is not repeated at the end of this verse in the Syriac version; and a MS. omits it. It seems to have been inserted a second time in the Hebrew text by mistake.

I reckoned till morning, etc. "I roared until the morning like the lion" - For **שוייתי** shivvithi, the Chaldee has **נהמיית** nihameith: he read **שאגתי** shaagti, the proper term for the roaring of a lion; often applied to the deep groaning of men in sickness. See Psalm 22, Psa 32:3; Psa 38:9; Job 3:24. The Masoretes divide the sentence, as I have done; taking **כארי** caari, like a lion, into the first member; and so likewise the Septuagint.

ISAIAH 38: 14 I chattered like a swallow or a crane. I moaned like a dove. My eyes weaken looking upward. Lord, I am oppressed. Be my security."

 Verse 14

Like - a swallow "Like the swallow" - **כסיס** kesis; so read two MSS., Theodot., and Hieron.

Mine eyes fail - For **דלו** dallu the Septuagint read **כלו** calu, **εξελεπτον**. Compare Psa 69:4; Psa 119:82, Psa 119:123; Lam 2:11; Lam 4:17, in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint.

O Lord "O Lord" - For **יהוה** Jehovah, thirty MSS. and eight editions read **אדני** Adonai.

Undertake for me "Contend for me" - **עשקה** ashekah, with **ש** shin, Jarchi: this sense of the word is established by Gen 26:20 : "He called the name of the well **עשק** esek, because they strove with him:" **התעשקו** hithasseku, equivalent to **יריבו** yaribu, at the beginning of the verse.

ISAIAH 38: 15 What will I say? He has both spoken to me, and himself has done it. I will walk carefully all my years because of the anguish of my soul.

 Verse 15

I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul "Through the rest of my years will I reflect on this bitterness of my soul" - **אדדה** eddaddeh; recogitabo, Vulg., reputabo, Hieron. in loc.

ISAIAH 38: 16 Lord, men live by these things; and my spirit finds life in all of them: you restore me, and cause me to live.

 Verse 16

By these things men live "For this cause shall it be declared" - Περι αυτης γαρ ανηγγελη σοι, και εξηγειρας μου την πνοην, Sept. They read in their copies יחוּו לך ותחיי רוחי not very different from the present text, from which all the ancient Versions vary. They entirely omit two words, ולכל בהן ulecol bahen; as to which there is some variation in the MSS. One MS. has ובכל ubechol, and in all; two others וכל vechol, and all, and ten MSS. have בהם bahem, in them, in the masculine gender.

Taking this as in the common Version, we may observe, it is not an unfrequent case, that afflictions, and especially such as tend to a speedy death, become the means, not only of saving the soul, but also of lengthening the life.

Make me to live "Hast prolonged my life" - A MSS. and the Babylonish Talmud read ותחיני vetachayeni, and so the ancient Versions. It must necessarily be in the second person.

ISAIAH 38: 17 Behold, for peace I had great anguish, but you have in love for my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

Verse 17

For peace I had great bitterness "My anguish is changed into ease" - מר לי מר mar li mar, "mutata mthi est amaritudo." Paronomasia; a figure which the prophet frequently admits. I do not always note it, because it cannot ever be preserved in the translation, and the sense seldom depends upon it. But here it perfectly clears up the great obscurity of the passage. See Lowth on the place.

Thou hast rescued - חשכת chashachta, with כ caph, instead of ק koph; so the Septuagint and Vulgate; Houbigant. See Chappelow on Job 33:18.

From perdition - משחת בלי mishshachath beli, ἵνα μη αποληται, Sept. ut non periret, "that it may not perish." Vulg. Perhaps inverting the order of the words. See Houbigant.

Thou hast in love to my soul - חשקת chashakta, "thou hast lovingly embraced" or kissed "my soul out of the pit of corruption."

ISAIAH 38: 18 For Sheol can't praise you. Death can't celebrate you. Those who go down into the pit can't hope for your truth.

ISAIAH 38: 19 The living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day. The father shall make known your truth to the children.

Verse 19

Thy truth - אל אמתך el amittecha. A MS. omits אל el; and instead of אל el, an ancient MS. and one edition read את eth. The same mistake as in Psa 2:7.

ISAIAH 38: 20 The LORD will save me. Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the LORD's house.

ISAIAH 38: 21 Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover."

Verse 21

Let them take a lump of figs, etc. - God, in effecting this miraculous cure, was pleased to order the use of means not improper for that end. "Folia, et, quae non maturuere, fici, strumis illinuntur omnibusque quae emollienda sunt discutiendave." - Plin. Nat. Hist. 23:7. "Ad discutienda ea, quae in corporis parte aliqua coierunt, maxime possunt-ficus arida," etc. - Celsus, 5:11.

See the note on 2Kgs 20:7 (note). Philemon Holland translates the passage as a medical man: "The milke or white juice that the figge tree yieldeth is of the same nature that vinegre: and therefore it will cruddle milke as well as rennet, or rendles. The right season of gathering this milkie substance is before that the figs be ripe upon the tree; and then it must be dried in the shadow: thus prepared, it is good to break impostumes, and keepe ulcer open."

ISAIAH 38: 22 Hezekiah also had said, "What is the sign that I will go up to the LORD's house?"
