
ISAIAH 50: 1 Thus says the LORD, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, with which I have put her away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities were you sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away."

In this chapter God vindicates his dealings unth his people, whose alienation is owing to themselves, Isa 50:1. And, by allusion to the temporal deliverances connected with the drying up of the Red Sea and the Euphrates, asserts his power to save, Isa 50:2, Isa 50:3; namely, by the obedience and sufferings of the Messiah, Isa 50:4-6; who was at length to prove victorious over all his enemies, Isa 50:7-9. The two last verses exhort to faith and trust in God in the most disconsolate circumstances; with a denunciation of vengeance on those who should trust to their own devices, Isa 50:10, Isa 50:11.

Verse 1

Thus saith the Lord - This chapter has been understood of the prophet himself; but it certainly speaks more clearly about Jesus of Nazareth than of Isaiah, the son of Amos.

Where is the bill "Where is this bill" - Husbands, through moroseness or levity of temper, often sent bills of divorcement to their wives on slight occasions, as they were permitted to do by the law of Moses, Deu 24:1. And fathers, being oppressed with debt, often sold their children, which they might do for a time, till the year of release, Exo 21:7. That this was frequently practiced, appears from many passages of Scripture, and that the persons and the liberty of the children were answerable for the debts of the father. The widow, 2Kgs 4:1, complains "that the creditor is come to take unto him her two sons to be bondmen." And in the parable, Mat 18:25 : "The lord, forasmuch as his servant had not to pay, commands him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." Sir John Chardin's MS. note on this place of Isaiah is as follows: En Orient on paye ses dettes avec ses esclaves, car ils sont des principaux meubles; et en plusieurs lieux on les paye aussi de ses enfans. "In the east they pay their debts by giving up their slaves, for these are their chief property of a disposable kind; and in many places they give their children to their creditors." But this, saith God, cannot be my case, I am not governed by any such motives, neither am I urged by any such necessity. Your captivity therefore and your afflictions are to be imputed to yourselves, and to your own folly and wickedness.

ISAIAH 50: 2 Why, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst.

Verse 2

Their fish stinketh "Their fish is dried up" - For תבאוש tibaosh, stinketh, read תיבש tibash, is dried up; so it stands in the Bodl. MS., and it is confirmed by the Septuagint, ξηρανθησονται, they shall be dried up.

ISAIAH 50: 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.”

ISAIAH 50: 4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him who is weary: he wakens morning by morning, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

ISAIAH 50: 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward.

Verse 5

Neither turned away back "Neither did I withdraw myself backward" - Eleven MSS. and the oldest edition prefix the conjunction I *vau*; and so also the Septuagint and Syriac.

ISAIAH 50: 6 I gave my back to the strikers, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; I didn't hide my face from shame and spitting.

Verse 6

And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair - The greatest indignity that could possibly be offered. See the note on Isa 7:20 (note).

I hid not my face from shame and spitting - Another instance of the utmost contempt and detestation. It was ordered by the law of Moses as a severe punishment, carrying with it a lasting disgrace; Deu 25:9. Among the Medes it was highly offensive to spit in any one's presence, Herod. 1:99; and so likewise among the Persians, Xenophon, Cyrop. Lib. i., p. 18. "They abhor me; they flee far from me;

They forbear not to spit in my face." Job 30:10. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?" Num 22:14. On which place Sir John Chardin remarks, that "spitting before any one, or spitting upon the ground in speaking of any one's actions, is through the east an expression of extreme detestation." - Harmer's Observ. 2:509. See also, of the same notions of the Arabs in this respect, Niebuhr, Description de l'Arabie, p. 26. It so evidently appears that in those countries spitting has ever been an expression of the utmost detestation, that the learned doubt whether in the passages of Scripture above quoted any thing more is meant than spitting, - not in the face, which perhaps the words do not necessarily imply, - but only in the presence of the person affronted. But in this place it certainly means spitting in the face; so it is understood in St. Luke, where our Lord plainly refers to this prophecy: "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, *εμπυσθησεται*, "Luk 18:31, Luk 18:32, which was in fact fulfilled; *και ηρξαντο τινες εμπτυειν αυτω*, "and some began to spit on him," Mar 14:65, Mar 15:19. If spitting in a person's presence was such an indignity, how much more spitting in his face?

ISAIAH 50: 7 For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore I have not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be disappointed.

 Verse 7

Therefore have I set my face like a flint - The Prophet Ezekiel, Eze 2:8, Eze 2:9, has expressed this with great force in his bold and vehement manner: "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces,

And thy forehead strong against their foreheads:

As an adamant, harder than a rock, have I made thy forehead;

Fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks,

Though they be a rebellious house."

ISAIAH 50: 8 He is near who justifies me; who will bring charges against me? Let us stand up together: who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

Verse 8

Who will contend with me - The Bodleian MS. and another add the word **הוא יריב** *mi hu yarib*, as in the like phrase in the next verse; and in the very same phrase Job 13:19, and so likewise in many other places, Job 17:3; Job 41:1. Sometimes on the like occasions it is **זה מי** *mi zeh*, and **מי זה** *mi hu zeh*, "Who is this one?" The word has probably been lost out of the present text; and the reading of the MSS. above mentioned seems to be genuine.

ISAIAH 50: 9 Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he who shall condemn me? Behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up.

ISAIAH 50: 10 Who is among you who fears the LORD, who obeys the voice of his servant? He who walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the LORD's name, and rely on his God.

Verse 10

Who is among you that feareth the Lord - I believe this passage has been generally, if not dangerously, misunderstood. It has been quoted, and preached upon, to prove that "a man might conscientiously fear God, and be obedient to the words of the law and the prophets; obey the voice of his servant-of Jesus Christ himself, that is, be sincerely and regularly obedient to the moral law and the commands of our blessed Lord, and yet walk in darkness and have no light, no sense of God's approbation, and no evidence of the safety of his state. "This is utterly impossible; for Jesus hath said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." If there be some religious persons who, under the influence of morbid melancholy, are continually writing bitter things against themselves, the word of God should not be bent down to their state. There are other modes of spiritual and Scriptural comfort. But does not the text speak of such a case? And are not the words precise in reference to it? I think not: and Bishop Lowth's translation has set the whole in the clearest light, though he does not appear to have been apprehensive that the bad use I

mention had been made of the text as it stands in our common Version. The text contains two questions, to each of which a particular answer is given: -

Q. 1. "Who is there among you that feareth Jehovah?"

Ans. Let him hearken unto the voice of his servant.

Q. 2. Who that walketh in darkness and hath no light?"

Ans. Let him trust in the name of Jehovah;

And lean himself (prop himself) upon his God."

Now, a man awakened to a sense of his sin and misery, may have a dread of Jehovah, and tremble at his word, and what should such a person do? Why he should hear what God's servant saith: "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." There may be a sincere penitent, walking in darkness, having no light of salvation; for this is the case of all when they first begin to turn to God. What should such do? They should trust, believe on, the Lord Jesus, who died for them, and lean upon his all-sufficient merits for the light of salvation which God has promised. Thus acting, they will soon have a sure trust and confidence that God for Christ's sake has forgiven them their sin, and thus they shall have the light of life.

That obeyeth the voice of his servant "Let him hearken unto the voice of his servant" - For שמע שומע, pointed as the participle, the Septuagint and Syriac read ישמע י' yishma, future or imperative. This gives a much more elegant turn and distribution to the sentence.

ISAIAH 50: 11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who adorn yourselves with torches around yourselves; walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled. You shall have this of my hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.

Verse 11

Ye that kindle a fire - The fire of their own kindling, by the light of which they walk with security and satisfaction, is an image designed to express, in general, human devices and mere worldly policy, exclusive of faith, and trust in God; which, though they flatter themselves for a while with pleasing expectations and some appearance of success, shall in the end turn to the confusion of the authors. Or more particularly, as Vitranga explains it, it may mean the designs of the turbulent and factious Jews in the times succeeding those of Christ, who, in pursuit of their own desperate schemes, stirred up the war against the Romans, and kindled a fire which consumed their city and nation.

That compass yourselves about with sparks "Who heap the fuel round about" - "מגוזלי" megozeley, accendentes, Syr.; forte leperunt pro מאזרי מאירי meirey; nam sequitur אור ur." - Secker. Lud. Capellus, in his criticism on this place, thinks it should be מאזרי meazzerey, from the Septuagint, κατασχουντες.

There are others who are widely different from those already described. Without faith, repentance, or a holy life, they are bold in their professed confidence in God - presumptuous in their trust in the mercy of God; and, while destitute of all preparation for and right to the kingdom of heaven, would think it criminal to doubt their final salvation! Living in this way, what can they have at the hand of God but an endless bed of sorrow! Ye shall lie down in sorrow.

But there is a general sense, and accordant to the design of the prophecy, in which these words may be understood and paraphrased: Behold, all ye that kindle a fire - provoke war and contention; compass yourselves about with sparks - stirring up seditions and rebellions: walk in the light of your fire - go on in your lust of power and restless ambition. Ye shall lie down in sorrow - it will turn to your own perdition. See the Targum. This seems to refer to the restless spirit of the Jews, always stirring up confusion and strife; rebelling against and provoking the Romans, till at last their city was taken, their temple burnt to the ground, and upwards of a million of themselves destroyed, and the rest led into captivity!