
ISAIAH 59: 1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it can't save; neither his ear heavy, that it can't hear:

Thy chapter contains a more general reproof of the wickedness of the Jews, Isa 59:1-8. After this they are represented confessing their sins, and deploring the unhappy consequences of them, Isa 59:9-15. On this act of humiliation God, ever ready to pardon the penitent, promises that he will have mercy on them; that the Redeemer will come, mighty to save; and that he will deliver his people, subdue his enemies and establish a new and everlasting covenant, Isa 59:16-21.

The foregoing elegant chapter contained a severe reproof of the Jews, in particular for their hypocrisy in pretending to make themselves accepted with God by fasting and outward humiliation without true repentance; while they still continued to oppress the poor, and indulge their own passions and vices; with great promises however of God's favor on condition of their reformation. This chapter contains a more general reproof of their wickedness, bloodshed, violence, falsehood, injustice. At Isa 59:9 they are introduced as making, themselves, an ample confession of their sins, and deploring their wretched state in consequence of them. On this act of humiliation a promise is given that God, in his mercy and zeal for his people, will rescue them from this miserable condition, that the Redeemer will come like a mighty hero to deliver them; he will destroy his enemies, convert both Jews and Gentiles to himself, and give them a new covenant, and a law which shall never be abolished.

As this chapter is remarkable for the beauty, strength, and variety of the images with which it abounds; so is it peculiarly distinguished by the elegance of the composition, and the exact construction of the sentences. From the first verse to the two last it falls regularly into stanzas of four lines, (see Prelim. Dissert. p. xxi.), which I have endeavored to express as nearly as possible in the form of the original. - L.

ISAIAH 59: 2 but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Verse 2

His face - For פניִם panim, faces, I read panaiv, his face. So the Syriac, Septuagint, Alexandrian, Arabic, and Vulgate. פני panai, MS. Forte legendum פני panai, nam מ mem, sequitur, et loquitur Deus; confer cap. Isa 58:14. "We should perhaps read פני panai; for מ mem follows, and God is the speaker." - Secker. I rather think that the speech of God was closed with the last chapter, and that this chapter is delivered in the person of the prophet. - L.

ISAIAH 59: 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness.

Verse 3

Your tongue "And your tongue" - An ancient MS., and the Septuagint and Vulgate, add the conjunction.

ISAIAH 59: 4 No one sues in righteousness, and no one pleads in truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and give birth to iniquity.

Verse 4

They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity - There is a curious propriety in this mode of expression; a thought or purpose is compared to conception; a word or act, which is the consequence of it, to the birth of a child. From the third to the fifteenth verse inclusive may be considered a true statement of the then moral state of the Jewish people; and that they were, in the most proper sense of the word, guilty of the iniquities with which they are charged.

ISAIAH 59: 5 They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he who eats of their eggs dies; and that which is crushed breaks out into a viper.

ISAIAH 59: 6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

ISAIAH 59: 7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their paths.

ISAIAH 59: 8 The way of peace they don't know; and there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whoever goes therein does not know peace.

Verse 8

Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace "Whoever goeth in them knoweth not peace" - For בה bah, singular, read במ bam, plural, with the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldee. The ה he is upon a rasure in one MS. Or, for נתיבתיהם nethibotheyhem, plural, we must read נתיבתם nethibatham, singular, as it is in an ancient MS., to preserve the grammatical concord. - L.

ISAIAH 59: 9 Therefore is justice far from us, neither does righteousness overtake us: we look for light, but, behold, darkness; for brightness, but we walk in obscurity.

ISAIAH 59: 10 We grope for the wall like the blind; yes, we grope as those who have no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the twilight; among those who are lusty we are as dead men.

Verse 10

We stumble at noon day as in the night "We stumble at mid-day, as in the twilight" - I adopt here an emendation of Houbigant, נישגגה nishgegah, instead of the second, נגששה negasheshah, the repetition of which has a poverty and inelegance extremely unworthy of the prophet, and unlike his

manner. The mistake is of long standing, being prior to all the ancient versions. It was a very easy and obvious mistake, and I have little doubt of our having recovered the true reading in this ingenious correction.

ISAIAH 59: 11 We roar all like bears, and moan bitterly like doves: we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

Verse 11

But it is far off from us "And it is far distant from us" - The conjunction I vau must necessarily be prefixed to the verb, as the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate found it in their copies; ורחקה verachakah, "and far off."

ISAIAH 59: 12 For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them:

ISAIAH 59: 13 transgressing and denying the LORD, and turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

ISAIAH 59: 14 Justice is turned away backward, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness can't enter.

Verse 14

Justice standeth afar off - צדקה tzedakah, righteousness, put here, says Kimchi, for alms to the poor. This casts some light on Mat 6:1 : "Take heed that you do not your alms," ελεημοσυνην. But the best copies have δακαιοσυνην, righteousness; the former having been inserted in the text at first merely as the explanation of the genuine and original word.

ISAIAH 59: 15 Yes, truth is lacking; and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.

Verse 15

And the Lord saw it "And Jehovah saw it" - This third line of the stanza appears manifestly to me to be imperfect by the loss of a phrase. The reader will perhaps more perfectly conceive my idea of the matter if I endeavor to supply the supposed defect, I imagine it might have stood originally in this manner: - וירא יהוה וירא veyachar Yehovah vaiyar וירע בעיניו אין כי משפט אין כי beeyinaiv veyera "And Jehovah saw it, and he was wroth;

And it displeased him, that there was no judgment."

We have had already many examples of mistakes of omission; this, if it be such, is very ancient, being prior to all the versions. - L.

ISAIAH 59: 16 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation to him; and his righteousness, it upheld him.

Verse 16

And wondered that there was no intercessor - This and the following verses some of the most eminent rabbins understand as spoken of the Messiah. Kimchi says that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi proposes this objection: "It is written, 'Behold, he will come in the clouds of heaven as the son of man,' Dan 7:13; and elsewhere it is written, 'He cometh lowly, and riding upon an ass,' Zac 9:9. How can these texts be reconciled? Thus: If the Jews have merit, he will come unto them in the clouds of heaven; but if they be destitute of merit, he will come unto them riding upon an ass." Now out of their own mouth they may be condemned. They were truly destitute of all merit when Jesus Christ came into Jerusalem riding upon an ass, according to the letter of the above prophecy; and they neither acknowledged nor received him. And that they were destitute of merit their destruction by the Romans, which shortly followed their rejection of him, sufficiently proves.

ISAIAH 59: 17 He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a mantle.

Verse 17

For clothing "For his clothing" - תלבשת tilbosheth. "I cannot but think that this word, תלבשת tilbosheth, is an interpolation.

1. It is in no one ancient version.
2. It is redundant in the sense, as it is before expressed in בגדי bigdey.
3. It makes the hemistich just so much longer than it ought to be, if it is compared with the others adjoining.
4. It makes a form of construction in this clause less elegant than that in the others.
5. It might probably be in some margin a various reading for בגדי bigdey, and thence taken into the text.

This is more probable, as its form is such as it would be if it were in regimine, as it must be before נקם nakam." - Dr. Jubb. Two sorts of armor are mentioned: a breast-plate and a helmet, to bring righteousness and salvation to those who fear him; and the garments of vengeance and the cloak of zeal for the destruction of all those who finally oppose him, and reject his Gospel.

ISAIAH 59: 18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, wrath to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense.

Verse 18

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay "He is mighty to recompense; he that is mighty to recompense will requite" - The former part of this verse, as it stands at present in the Hebrew text, seems to me to be very imperfect, and absolutely unintelligible. The learned Vitringa has taken a great deal of pains upon it after Cocceius, who he says is the only one of all the interpreters, ancient or modern, who has at all understood it, and has opened the way for him. He thinks that both of them together have clearly made out the sense; I do not expect that any third person will ever be of that opinion. He says, Videtur sententia ad verbum sonare: quasi propter facta [adversariorum] quasi propter rependet; excandescantiam, etc., et sic reddidit Pagninus. "According to the height of their demerits, he will repay them to the height: fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies," etc. - Waterland. This he converts, by a process which will not much edify my reader, into Secundum summe merita, secundum summe (merita) rependet; which is his translation. They that hold the present Hebrew text to be absolutely infallible must make their way through it as they can; but they ought surely to give us somewhat that has at least the appearance of sense. However, I hope the case here is not quite desperate; the Chaldee leads us very fairly to the correction of the text, which is both corrupted and defective. The paraphrase runs thus: מרי גמליא hu simla yeshallem, "The Lord of retribution, he will render recompense." He manifestly read בעל baal instead of כעל keal. מרי גמליא mery gumlaiya is בעל baal gemuloth; as מרי גמלות mery merirutha is בעל אף baal aph. Pro 22:24. And so in the Chaldee paraphrase on Isa 35:4 : הוא יתגלי : מרי גמליא hu yithgeley, "The Lord of retribution, Jehovah himself, shall be revealed;" words very near to those of the prophet in this place.

The second כעל keal, which the Chaldee has omitted, must be read בעל baal likewise. With this only addition to the Chaldee, which the Hebrew text justifies, we are supplied with the following clear reading of the passage: - הוא גמלות בעל hu gemuloth baal בעל גמלות yeshallem gemuloth baal The Lord of retributions he

The Lord of retributions, shall repay.

The כ caph in כעל keal twice seems to have been at first ב beth, in MS. This verse in the Septuagint is very imperfect. In the first part of it they give us no assistance: the latter part is wholly omitted in the printed copies; but it is thus supplied by MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. II: Τοις ὑπεναντιοις αὐτοῦ· ἀμυναν τοις ἐχθροῖς αὐτοῦ· ταις νησοῖς ἀποδομα ἀποτισει. - L.

ISAIAH 59: 19 So shall they fear the LORD's name from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come as a rushing stream, which the breath of the LORD drives.

Verse 19

When the enemy shall come in like a flood - This all the rabbins refer to the coming of the Messiah. If ye see a generation which endures much tribulation, then (say they) expect him, according to what is written: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Kimchi says, he that was the standard-bearer always began the battle by first smiting at the enemy. Here then the Spirit of the Lord is the standard-bearer, and strikes the first blow. They who go against sin and Satan with the Holy Spirit at their head, are sure to win the day.

The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him "Which a strong wind driveth along" - Quam spiritus Domini cogit, "Which the Spirit of the Lord drives on." - Vulg. נוססה nosesah, pihel a נוס nus fugit. Kimchi says his father thus explained this word: נוססה nosesah interpretatur in significatione fugae, et ait, spiritus Domini fugabit hostem;-nam secundum eum נוססה nosesah est ex conjugatione quadrata, ejusque radix est נוס nus: "nosesah he interpreted in the signification of flight, - The Spirit of the Lord shall put the enemy to flight; for according to him the root of the word is נוס nus, he put to flight." The object of this action I explain otherwise. The conjunction ו vau, prefixed to רוח ruach, seems necessary to the sense, it is added by the corrector in one of the Koningsberg MSS., collated by Lilienthal. It is added also in one of my own.

ISAIAH 59: 20 "A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from disobedience in Jacob," says the LORD.

Verse 20

Unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob "And shall turn away iniquity from Jacob" - So the Septuagint and St. Paul, Rom 11:26, reading instead of לשובי leshabey and ביעקב beyaacob, והשיב veheshib and מיעקב meyaacob. The Syriac likewise reads והשיב veheshib; and the Chaldee, to the same sense, ולהשיב ulehashib. Our translators have expressed the sense of the present reading of the Hebrew text: "And unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob."

ISAIAH 59: 21 "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit who is on you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed," says the LORD, "from henceforth and forever."

Verse 21

This is my covenant with them "This is the covenant which I make with them" - For אותם otham, them, twenty-four MSS., (four ancient), and nine editions have אתם ittam, with them.

My Spirit that is upon thee - This seems to be an address to the Messiah; Kimchi says it is to the prophet, informing him that the spirit of prophecy should be given to all Israelites in the days of the Messiah, as it was then given to him, i.e., to the prophet.

And my words which I have put in thy mouth - Whatsoever Jesus spoke was the word and mind of God himself; and must, as such, be implicitly received.

Nor out of the mouth of thy seed - The same doctrines which Jesus preached, all his faithful ministers preach; and his seed - genuine Christians, who are all born of God, believe; and they shall continue, and the doctrines remain in the seed's seed through all generations - for ever and ever. This is God's covenant, ordered in all things and sure.