
ISAIAH 64: 1 Oh that you would tear the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence,

The whole of this chapter, which is very pathetic and tender, may be considered as a formulary of prayer and humiliation intended for the Jews in order to their conversion, Isa 64:1-12.

Verse 1

O that thou wouldest rend the heavens - This seems to allude to the wonderful manifestation of God upon Mount Sinai.

ISAIAH 64: 2 as when fire kindles the brushwood, and the fire causes the waters to boil; to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at your presence!

Verse 2

As when the melting fire burneth "As the fire kindleth the dry fuel" - המסים hamasim. "It means dry stubble, and the root is המס hamas," says Rabbi Jonah, apud Sal ben Belec in loc. Which is approved by Schultens, Orig. Hebrews p. 30. "The fire kindling the stubble does not seem like enough to the melting of the mountains to be brought as a simile to it. What if thus? - 'That the mountains might flow down at thy presence!

As the fire of things smelted burneth,

As the fire causeth the waters to boil - '

There is no doubt of the Hebrew words of the second line bearing that version." - Dr. Jubb.

I submit these different interpretations to the reader's judgment. For my own part I am inclined to think that the text is much corrupted in this place. The ancient Versions have not the least traces of either of the above interpretations. The Septuagint and Syriac agree exactly together in rendering this line by, "As the wax melted before the fire," which can by no means be reconciled with the present text. The Vulgate, for המסים hamasim, read ימסו yemasu.

That the nations - For גוים goyim, the nations, four MSS. (one of them ancient) have הרים harim, the mountains. - L.

ISAIAH 64: 3 When you did awesome things which we didn't look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

ISAIAH 64: 4 For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides you, who works for him who waits for him.

Verse 4

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard "For never have men heard" - St. Paul is generally supposed to have quoted this passage of Isaiah, 1Cor 2:9; and Clemens Romanus in his first epistle has made the same quotation, very nearly in the same words with the apostle. But the citation is so very different both from the Hebrew text and the version of the Septuagint, that it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile them by any literal emendation, without going beyond the bounds of temperate criticism. One clause, "neither hath it entered into the heart of man," (which, by the way, is a phrase purely Hebrew, על לב alah al leb, and should seem to belong to the prophet), is wholly left out; and another is repeated without force or propriety; viz., "nor perceived by the ear," after, "never have heard:" and the sense and expression of the apostle is far preferable to that of the Hebrew text. Under these difficulties I am at a loss what to do better, than to offer to the reader this, perhaps disagreeable, alternative: either to consider the Hebrew text and Septuagint in this place as wilfully disguised and corrupted by the Jews; of which practice in regard to other quotations in the New Testament from the Old, they lie under strong suspicions, (see Dr. Owen on the version of the Septuagint, sect. vi.-ix.); or to look upon St. Paul's quotation as not made from Isaiah, but from one or other of the two apocryphal books, entitled, The Ascension of Esaiiah, and the Apocalypse of Elias, in both of which this passage was found; and the apostle is by some supposed in other places to have quoted such apocryphal writings. As the first of these conclusions will perhaps not easily be admitted by many, so I must fairly warn my readers that the second is treated by Jerome as little better than heresy. See his comment on this place of Isaiah. - L. I would read the whole verse thus; "Yea, from the time of old they have not heard, they have not hearkened to, an eye hath not seen a God besides thee. He shall work for that one that waiteth for him." This I really think on the whole to be the best translation of the original.

The variations on this place are as follows: for שמעו shameu, they have heard, a MS. and the Septuagint read שמענו shamanu, we have heard: for the second לא lo, not, sixty-nine MSS. and four editions have ולא velo, and not, and the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate. And so ועין veayin, and eye, Septuagint and Syriac. את eth, the, (emphatic), is added before אלהים Elohim, God, in MS. Bodleian. למחכי limechakkey, to them that wait, plural, two MSS. and all the ancient Versions. - L.

ISAIAH 64: 5 You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned. We have been in sin for a long time; and shall we be saved?

Verse 5

Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness "Thou meetest with joy those who work righteousness" - The Syriac reads פוגע אתה שש בעשי poga attah shesh baashi, as above.

In those is continuance, and we shall be saved "Because of our deeds, for we have been rebellious" - באהם עולם ונושע bahem olam venivvashea. I am fully persuaded that these words as they stand in the present Hebrew text are utterly unintelligible; there is no doubt of the meaning of each word separately; but put together they make no sense at all. I conclude, therefore, that the copy has suffered by mistakes of transcribers in this place. The corruption is of long standing, for the ancient interpreters were as much at a loss for the meaning as the moderns, and give nothing satisfactory. The Septuagint render these words by δια τουτο ελγανθημεν, therefore we have erred: they seem to have read עליהם נפשע aleyhem niphsha, without helping the sense. In this difficulty what remains but to have recourse to conjecture? Archbishop Secker was dissatisfied with the present reading: he

proposed **הבט עלינו ונושע** hebet aleynu venivvashea; "look upon us, and we shall, or that we may, be saved:" which gives a very good sense, but seems to have no sufficient foundation. Besides, the word **ונושע** venivvashea, which is attended with great difficulties, seems to be corrupted as well as the two preceding; and the true reading of it is, I think, given by the Septuagint, **ὠνόμασθημεν** veniphsha, **ἐπλανηθημεν**, we have erred, (so they render the verb **פשע** pasha, Isa 46:8, and Eze 23:12), parallel to **ונוחטא** vannecheta, **ἡμαρτομεν**, we have sinned. For **בהם עולם** bahem olam, which means nothing, I would propose **המעללינו** hammaaleleynu, "because of our deeds;" which I presume was first altered to **במעלליהם** bemaaleleyhem, an easy and common mistake of the third person plural of the pronoun for the first, (see note on Isa 33:2), and then with some farther alteration to **בהם עולם** behem olam. The **עליהם** aleyhem, which the Septuagint probably found in their copy, seems to be a remnant of **במעלליהם** bemaaleleyhem.

This, it may be said, is imposing your sense upon the prophet. It may be so; for perhaps these may not be the very words of the prophet: but however it is better than to impose upon him what makes no sense at all; as they generally do, who pretend to render such corrupted passages. For instance, our own translators: "in those is continuance, and we shall be saved:" in those in whom, or what? There is no antecedent to the relative. "In the ways of God," say some: "with our fathers," says Vitringa, joining it in construction with the verb, **קעפפת** katsaphta, "thou hast been angry with them, our fathers;" and putting **ונוחטא** vannecheta, "for we have sinned," in a parenthesis. But there has not been any mention of our fathers: and the whole sentence, thus disposed, is utterly discordant from the Hebrew idiom and construction. In those is continuance; **עולם** olam means a destined but hidden and unknown portion of time; but cannot mean continuation of time, or continuance, as it is here rendered. Such forced interpretations are equally conjectural with the boldest critical emendation; and generally have this farther disadvantage, that they are altogether unworthy of the sacred writers. - L.

Coverdale renders the passage thus: -

But lo, thou art angrie, for we offende, and have been ever in synne; and there is not one whole.

This is, I am afraid, making a sense.

After all that this very learned prelate has done to reduce these words to sense and meaning, I am afraid we are still far from the prophet's mind. Probably **בהם** bahem, in them, refers to **דרכיך** deracheycha, thy ways, above. **עולם** olam may be rendered of old, or during the whole of the Jewish economy; and **ונושע** venivvashea, "and shall we be saved?" Thus: - Thou art wroth, for we have sinned in them (thy ways) of old; and can we be saved? For we are all as an unclean thing, etc.

ISAIAH 64: 6 For we have all become as one who is unclean, and all our righteousness is as a polluted garment: and we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Verse 6

As filthy rags - **עדים** iddim. Rab. Mosheh ben Maimon interpretatur **עדים** iddim, vestes quibus mulier se abstergit post congressum cum marito suo. Alii pannus menstruatus. Alii panni mulieris parientis. - And we ben made as unclene alle we: and as the cloth of the woman rooten blode flowing, all our rigitwisnesses. - Old MS. Bible. If preachers knew properly the meaning of this word, would they make such a liberal use of it in their public ministry? And why should any use a word, the meaning of

which he does not understand? How many in the congregation blush for the incautious man and his "filthy rags!"

ISAIAH 64: 7 There is no one who calls on your name, who stirs up himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have consumed us by means of our iniquities.

Verse 7

There is none - Twelve MSS. have אין ein, without the conjunction ו vau prefixed; and so read the Chaldee and Vulgate.

And hast consumed us because of our iniquities "And hast delivered us up into the hands of our iniquities" - For ותמוגנו vattemugenu, "hast dissolved us," the Septuagint, Syriac, and Chaldee had in their copies תמגננו temaggenenu, "hast delivered us up." Houbigant. Secker.

ISAIAH 64: 8 But now, LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you our potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

Verse 8

But, now, O Lord, thou art our Father "But thou, O Jehovah, thou art our Father" - For ועתה veattah, and now, five MSS., one of them ancient, and the two oldest editions, 1486 and 1488, have ואתה veattah, and thou, and so the Chaldee seems to have read. The repetition has great force. The other word may be well spared. "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father." How very affectionate is the complaint in this and the following verses! But how does the distress increase, when they recollect the desolations of the temple, and ruin of public worship, Isa 64:11 : "Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire," etc.

We all are the work of thy hand - Three MSS. (two of them ancient) and the Septuagint read מעשה maaseh, the work, without the conjunction ו vau prefixed. And for ידך yadecha, thy hand, the Bodleian, and two others MSS., the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read ידיך yadeycha, thy hands, in the plural number. - L.

ISAIAH 64: 9 Don't be furious, LORD, neither remember iniquity forever: see, look, we beg you, we are all your people.

Verse 9

Neither remember iniquity - For לעד תזכר laad tizcor, one of my MSS. has לעד תקצף laad tiktsoph, "be not angry," as in the preceding clause. This has been partially obliterated, and תזכר tizcor, written in the margin by a later hand: but this MS. abounds with words of this kind, all altered by later hands.

ISAIAH 64: 10 Your holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

ISAIAH 64: 11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste.

ISAIAH 64: 12 Will you refrain yourself for these things, LORD? Will you hold your peace, and afflict us very severely?
