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JEREMIAH 10: 1 Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, house of Israel!

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The Jews, about to be carried into captivity, are here warned against the superstition and idolatry of that country to which they were going. Chaldea was greatly addicted to astrology, and therefore the prophet begins with warning them against it, Jer 10:1, Jer 10:2. He then exposes the absurdity of idolatry in short but elegant satire; in the midst of which he turns, in a beautiful apostrophe, to the one true God, whose adorable attributes repeatedly strike in view, as he goes along, and lead him to contrast his infinite perfections with those despicable inanities which the blinded nations fear, Jer 10:3-16. The prophet again denounces the Divine judgments, Jer 10:17, Jer 10:18; upon which Jerusalem laments her fate, and supplicates the Divine compassion in her favor, Jer 10:19-25.

Verse 1

Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you - Dr. Dahler supposes this discourse to have been delivered in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. It contains an invective against idolatry; showing its absurdity, and that the Creator alone should be worshipped by all mankind.

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JEREMIAH 10: 2 Thus says the LORD, "Don't learn the way of the nations, and don't be dismayed at the signs of the sky; for the nations are dismayed at them.

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Verse 2

Learn not the way of the heathen - These words are more particularly addressed to the ten tribes scattered among the heathen by the Assyrians, who carried them away captive; they may also regard those in the land of Israel who still had the customs of the former heathen settlers before their eyes.

Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed - The Chaldeans and Egyptians were notoriously addicted to astrology; and the Israelites here are cautioned against it. The signs of the heavens may mean either the sun, moon, planets, and particular stars or constellations; or the figures or characters by which they represented these heavenly bodies.

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JEREMIAH 10: 3 For the customs of the peoples are vanity; for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe.

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Verse 3

The customs of the people are vain - חוקי חכמה chukkoth; the statutes and principles of the science are vain, empty, and illusory. They are founded in nonsense, ignorance, idolatry, and folly.

One cutteth a tree out of the forest - See the notes on Isa 40:19 (note), and Isa 44:9 (note), etc., which are all parallel places and where this conduct is strongly ridiculed.

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JEREMIAH 10: 4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it not move.

JEREMIAH 10: 5 They are like a palm tree, of turned work, and don't speak: they must be carried, because they can't go. Don't be afraid of them; for they can't do evil, neither is it in them to do good."

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Verse 5

They are upright as the palm tree - As straight and as stiff as the trees out of which they are hewn.

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JEREMIAH 10: 6 There is no one like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might.

JEREMIAH 10: 7 Who should not fear you, King of the nations? For it belongs to you; because among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their royal estate, there is no one like you.

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Verse 7

Who would not fear thee - Who would not worship thee as the Author and Giver of all good? The fear of God is often taken for the whole of true religion.

Among all the wise men of the nation - Not even the wisest and most cultivated of the nations have ever found out any one equal to thee; but so exalted and holy art thou, that in all their wisdom and research they have never been able to find out the true God.

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JEREMIAH 10: 8 But they are together brutish and foolish: the instruction of idols! it is but a stock.

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Verse 8

The stock is a doctrine of vanities - Dr. Blayney translates, - "The wood itself is a rebuker of vanities." The very tree out of which the god is hewn demonstrates the vanity and folly of the idolaters; for, can all the art of man make out of a log of wood an animate and intelligent being?

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JEREMIAH 10: 9 There is silver beaten into plates, which is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the artificer and of the hands of the goldsmith; blue and purple for their clothing; they are all the work of skilful men.

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Verse 9

Brought from Tarshish - Some suppose this to be Tartessus in Spain, from which the Phoenicians brought much silver. Uphaz, Calmet thinks to be the river Pison; some think Ophir is intended.

Blue and purple is their clothing - These were the most precious dyes; very rare, and of high price.

JEREMIAH 10: 10 But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth trembles, and the nations are not able to withstand his indignation.

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Verse 10

But the Lord - The original word should be preserved, however we agree to pronounce it: יהוה Jehovah is the true God. He is without beginning, and without end. This is true of no being else.

He is the living God - His being is underived; and he gives life to all. He is the very Fountain whence all life is derived.

And an everlasting king - As he has made, so he governs, all things. His sway is felt both in the heavens and in the earth.

At his wrath the earth shall tremble - All storms, tempests, tornadoes, and earthquakes are the effects of his power; and when the nations are destroyed, or turned upside down, it is the effect of his displeasure.

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JEREMIAH 10: 11 You shall say this to them: The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens.

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Verse 11

Thus shall ye say unto them - This is the message you shall deliver to the Chaldean idolaters.

The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish - Both they and their worshippers shall be destroyed; and idolatry shall finally be destroyed from the earth; and the heavens shall look no more on so great an abomination. It is suffered for a while: but in the end shall be destroyed. This verse is written in a sort of Hebraeo-Syriaco-Chaldee; such a dialect as I suppose was spoken at that time in Babylon, or during the captivity. As it is a message to the Babylonians therefore, it is given in their own language. The Chaldee makes it the beginning of the copy of the epistle which the Prophet Jeremiah sent to the rest of the elders of the captivity who were in Babylon. All the ancient Versions acknowledge this verse; and it is found in all MSS. hitherto collated, except one of Dr. Kennicott's numbered 526; and he has included it between lines, as doubting its authenticity. Dr. Blayney supposes that some public teacher during the captivity, deducing it by direct inference from the prophet's words, had it inserted in the margin, and perhaps usually read together with this section, in the assemblies of the people, in order that they might have their answer always ready, whenever they were molested on the point of religion, or importuned to join the idolatrous worship of the Chaldeans.

Dahler has left it entirely out of the text, and introduces it in a note thus: - "After Jer 10:10 the Hebrew text is interrupted by a verse written in the Chaldean or Babylonish tongue. It is thus expressed: -

Ye shall say unto them, Let the gods perish!

Who have not made the heavens and the earth.

Let them be banished from above the earth, and from under the heavens.

This verse can be considered only as a foreign insertion, not only on account of the difference of the language, but also because it interrupts the natural course of the ideas, and of the connection of the tenth and twelfth verses."

As a curiosity I shall insert it in Hebrew, which the reader may compare with the Chaldee text, which I also subjoin. כזאת תאמרו להם האלהים אשר לא עשו השמים והארץ יאבדו מן הארץ ומן תחת השמים אלה. cazoth tomeru lahem; haelohim asher lo asu hashshamayim vехаarets, yobedu min haarets, umin tachath hashshamayim elleh. כדנא תאמרון להון אלהיא די שמיא וארקא לא עבדו יאבדו מארעא ומן תחות. kidna temerun lehon; elahaiya di shemaiya vearka la abadu, yebadu meara umin techoth shemaiya elleh.

The Hebrew is the translation of Leusden; the Chaldee is that of the common text. Had not all the ancient Versions acknowledged it, I also, principally on account of the strangeness of the language, as being neither Chaldee nor Syriac, should have doubted its authenticity.

JEREMIAH 10: 12 He has made the earth by his power, he has established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding has he stretched out the heavens:

JEREMIAH 10: 13 when he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he makes lightnings for the rain, and brings the wind out of his treasures.

#### Verse 13

When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters - This is a plain allusion to a storm of thunder and lightning, and the abundance of rain which is the consequence. Water is composed of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen: the electric or galvanic spark decomposes them, and they become air; when recomposed, they form water. The lightning acts upon the hydrogen and oxygen, which are found in the atmospheric air: they are decomposed, and water or rain is the consequence; which, being heavier than the air falls down in the form of rain.

This verse and the three following are the same in substance, and nearly in words, as Jer 51:16, and following.

JEREMIAH 10: 14 Every man has become brutish and without knowledge; every goldsmith is disappointed by his engraved image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

#### Verse 14

Every man is brutish - נבער nibar, is a boor, acts as a brute, who may suppose that a stock of a tree, formed like a man, may be an intellectual being; and therefore shuns the form as though it had life. See Isa 44:10, Isa 44:11. Of which verses, by the way, Dr. Blayney gives the following version to correct that of Bishop Lowth: - Isa 44:10. Who hath formed a god? Or set up a graven image that

profiteth not? Isa 44:11. Behold, all that are connected with it shall be ashamed, And the artificers, they above all men! They shall assemble all of them; they shall stand forth; They shall fear; they shall be ashamed at the same time. "That is, while they stand before the image they have set up, and worship it with a religious dread, the glaring absurdity of their conduct shall lead to their shame and disgrace."

With due deference to this learned man, I think this interpretation too refined.

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JEREMIAH 10: 15 They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

JEREMIAH 10: 16 The portion of Jacob is not like these; for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance: the LORD of Armies is his name.

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#### Verse 16

The Portion of Jacob is not like them - Every nation had its tutelary god; this was its portion; in reference to this God says Deu 4:19, "He has divided the sun, moon, and stars, to all the nations under the heaven." And the Lord had taken the Israelites to be his portion; for "the Lord's portion is his people," Deu 32:9, and David says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance," Psa 16:5; Psa 119:67. And hence Isaiah terms the smooth stones of the brook, to which Divine honors were paid, the portion of those idolaters, Isa 57:6. But in the text he says, "The Portion, i.e., the God of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things," and they are formed by their foolish worshippers.

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JEREMIAH 10: 17 Gather up your wares out of the land, you who live under siege.

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#### Verse 17

Gather up thy wares - Pack up your goods, or what necessaries of life your enemies will permit you to carry away; for,

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JEREMIAH 10: 18 For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and will distress them, that they may feel it.

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#### Verse 18

I will sling out the inhabitants of the land - I will project you with violence from your country. I will send you all into captivity. This discourse, from Jer 10:17, is supposed to have been delivered in the eleventh year of Jehoiakim.

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JEREMIAH 10: 19 Woe is me because of my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it.

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Verse 19

This is a grief, and I must bear it - Oppressive as it is, I have deserved it, and worse; but even in this judgment God remembers mercy.

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JEREMIAH 10: 20 My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken: my children have gone away from me, and they are no more. There is no one to spread my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

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Verse 20

My tabernacle is spoiled - The city is taken, and all our villages ruined and desolated.

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JEREMIAH 10: 21 For the shepherds are become brutish, and have not inquired of the LORD: therefore they have not prospered, and all their flocks are scattered.

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Verse 21

The pastors are become brutish - The king and his counselors, who, by refusing to pay the promised tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, had kindled a new war.

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JEREMIAH 10: 22 The voice of news, behold, it comes, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah a desolation, a dwelling place of jackals.

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Verse 22

The noise of the bruit is come - How this silly French word bruit, which signifies noise, got in here, I cannot imagine. The simple translation is this: "The voice of the report! behold, it is come; yea, great commotion from the land of the north; (Chaldea); to make the cities of Judea a desolation, a habitation of wild beasts." That is, the report we had heard of the projected invasion of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar is confirmed. He has entered the land; the Chaldeans are at the doors, and the total desolation of Judea is their sole object.

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JEREMIAH 10: 23 LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

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Verse 23

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself - I will not pretend to dispute with thee; thou dost every thing wisely and justly; we have sinned, and thou hast a right to punish; and to choose

that sort of punishment thou thinkest will best answer the ends of justice. We cannot choose; thou hast appointed us to captivity; we must not repine: yet,

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JEREMIAH 10: 24 LORD, correct me, but in measure: not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.

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Verse 24

Correct me, but with judgment - Let not the punishment be to the uttermost of the demerit of the offense; else we shall be brought to nothing - totally and irrecoverably ruined.

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JEREMIAH 10: 25 Pour out your wrath on the nations that don't know you, and on the families that don't call on your name: for they have devoured Jacob, yes, they have devoured him and consumed him, and have laid waste his habitation.

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Verse 25

Pour out thy fury upon the heathen - Even those who are now the executors of thy justice upon us will, in their turn, feel its scourge; for if judgment begins at us, who have been called thy house and thy people, shall they who have not acknowledged thee escape? It is impossible. The families and tribes which invoke thee not shall have thy fury poured out upon them, and especially they who "have eaten up Jacob and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate." This was fulfilled in the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar was punished with madness, his son was slain in his revels, and the city was taken and sacked by Cyrus; and the Babylonish empire was finally destroyed! This verse has been often quoted against those ungodly families who set not up the worship of God in their houses. These are spiritual Chaldeans, worse indeed than the Chaldeans ever were: they acknowledge God and his Christ; and yet neither worship nor serve him. How can that family expect the blessing of God, where the worship of God is not daily performed? No wonder their servants are wicked, their children profligate, and their goods cursed! What an awful reckoning shall such heads of families have with the Judge in the great day, who have refused to petition for that mercy which they might have had for the asking.