

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 5

In this chapter, under the parable of a vineyard and its ruins, the Jews and their destruction are represented; the reasons of which are given, their manifold sins and transgressions, particularly enumerated, with the punishment threatened to them, and which is delivered in form of a song. The vineyard is described by the owner of it, a well beloved one; by the situation of it, in a fruitful hill; by the fence about it, and care and culture of it; and by its not answering the expectation of the owner, it bringing forth wild grapes instead of good ones, (<sup>(2388)</sup>Isaiah 5:1,2) wherefore the men of Judah and Jerusalem are made judges between the owner and his vineyard, what more could have been done to it, or rather what was now to be done to it, since this was the case; and the result is, that it should be utterly laid waste, and come to ruin; and the whole is applied to the house of Israel, and men of Judah, (<sup>(2388)</sup>Isaiah 5:3-7) whose sins, as the cause of their ruin, are mentioned in the following verses; their covetousness, with the punishment of it, (<sup>(2388)</sup>Isaiah 5:8-10) their intemperance, luxury, and love of pleasure, with the punishment threatened thereunto, (<sup>(2381)</sup>Isaiah 5:11-14) whereby haughty men should be humbled, the Lord be glorified, and at the same time his weak and innocent people would be taken care of, (<sup>(2385)</sup>Isaiah 5:15-17) next, other sins are taken notice of, and woes pronounced on account of them, as, an impudent course of sinning, insolent impiety against God, confusion of good and evil, conceit of their own wisdom, drunkenness, and perversion of justice, (<sup>(2388)</sup>Isaiah 5:18-23) wherefore for these things, and for their contempt and rejection of the law and word of the Lord, utter destruction is threatened them, (<sup>(2384)</sup>Isaiah 5:24) yea, the anger of God had been already kindled against them, and they had felt it in some instances, (<sup>(2385)</sup>Isaiah 5:25) but they are given to expect severer judgments, by means of foreign nations, that should be gathered against them; who are described by their swiftness, strength, and vigilance; by their armour, horses, and carriages; and by their terror and cruelty; the consequence of which would be utter darkness, distress, and calamities, in the land of Judea, (<sup>(2386)</sup>Isaiah 5:26-30).

**Ver. 1.** *Now will I sing to my well beloved, &c.*] These are the words of the Prophet Isaiah, being about to represent the state and condition of the people of Israel by way of parable, which he calls a song, and which he determines to sing to his beloved, and calls upon himself to do it; by whom he means either God the Father, whom he loved with all his heart and soul; or Christ, who is often called the beloved of his people, especially in the book of Solomon's song; or else the people of Israel, whom the prophet had a great affection for, being his own people; but it seems best to understand it of God or Christ:

*a song of my beloved*; which was inspired by him, or related to him, and was made for his honour and glory; or "a song of my uncle"<sup>f89</sup>, for another word is used here than what is in the preceding clause, and is rendered "uncle" elsewhere, (see <sup><B59></sup>Leviticus 25:49) and may design King Amaziah; for, according to tradition, Amoz, the father of Isaiah, was brother to Amaziah king of Judah, and so consequently Amaziah must be uncle to Isaiah; and this might be a song of his composing, or in which he was concerned, being king of Judah, the subject of this song, as follows:

*touching his vineyard*; not his uncle's, though it is true of him, but his well beloved's, God or Christ; the people of Israel, and house of Judah, are meant, comparable to a vineyard, as appears from (<sup><B07></sup>Isaiah 5:7 <sup><B04></sup>Psalms 80:14,15) being separated and distinguished from the rest of the nations of the world, for the use, service, and glory of God.

*My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill*; or, "in a horn, the son of oil"<sup>f90</sup>; which designs the land of Israel, which was higher than other lands; and was, as some observe, in the form of a horn, longer than it was broad, and a very fruitful country, a land of olive oil, a land flowing with milk and honey, (<sup><B0E></sup>Deuteronomy 8:7,8 <sup><B0B></sup>Exodus 3:8). The Targum is,

"the prophet said, I will sing now to Israel, who is like unto a vineyard, the seed of Abraham, my beloved, a song of my beloved, concerning his vineyard. My people, my beloved Israel, I gave to them an inheritance in a high mountain, in a fat land."

**Ver. 2.** *And he fenced it, &c.*] With good and wholesome laws, which distinguished them, and kept them separate from other nations; also with his almighty power and providence; especially at the three yearly festivals, when all their males appeared before God at Jerusalem:

*and gathered out the stones thereof*; the Heathens, the seven nations that inhabited the land of Canaan, compared to stones for their hardness and stupidity, and for their worshipping of idols of stone; (see <sup><3808></sup>Psalm 80:8)

*and planted it with the choicest vine*; the seed of Abraham, Joshua, and Caleb, who fully followed the Lord, and the people of Israel with them, who first entered into the land of Canaan, and inhabited it; such having fallen in the wilderness, who murmured and rebelled against God, (<sup><3412></sup>Jeremiah 2:21)

*and built a tower in the midst of it*; in which watchmen stood to keep the vineyard, that nothing entered into it that might hurt it; this may be understood of the city of Jerusalem, or the fortress of Zion, or the temple; so Aben Ezra, the house of God on Mount Moriah; and the Targum,

“and I built my sanctuary in the midst of them:”

*and also made a winepress therein*; to tread the grapes in; this the Targum explains by the altar, paraphrasing the words,

“and also my altar I gave to make an atonement for their sins;”

so Aben Ezra; though Kimchi interprets it of the prophets, who taught the people the law, that their works might be good, and stirred them up and exhorted them to the performance of them.

*And he looked that it should bring forth grapes*; this “looking” and “expecting”, here ascribed to God, is not to be taken properly, but figuratively, after the manner of men, for from such a well formed government, from such an excellent constitution, from a people enjoying such advantages, it might have been reasonably expected, according to a human and rational judgment of things, that the fruits of righteousness and holiness, at least of common justice and equity, would have been brought forth by them; which are meant by “grapes”, the fruit of the vine, (see <sup><2387></sup>Isaiah 5:7)

*and it brought forth wild grapes*; bad grapes; corrupt, rotten, stinking ones, as the word<sup>f91</sup> used signifies; these, by a transposition of letters, are in the Misnah<sup>f92</sup> called **מַיִץ**, which word signifies a kind of bad grapes, and a small sort: evil works are meant by them, (see <sup><2387></sup>Isaiah 5:7) the Targum is,

“I commanded them to do good works before me, and they have done evil works.”

**Ver. 3.** *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, &c.*] All and everyone of them, who were parties concerned in this matter, and are designed by the vineyard, for whom so much had been done, and so little fruit brought forth by them, or rather so much bad fruit:

*judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard;* between God and themselves; they are made judges in their own cause; the case was so clear and evident, that God is as it were willing the affair should be decided by their own judgment and verdict: so the Targum,

“judge now judgment between me and my people.”

**Ver. 4.** *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? &c.*] Or “ought”, as the Vulgate Latin: this is generally understood of good things done to it in time past; as what better culture could it have had? what greater privileges, blessings, and advantages, natural, civil, and religious, could have been bestowed on this people? what greater favour could have been shown them, or honour done them? or what of this kind remains to be done for them? they have had everything that could be desired, expected, or enjoyed: though it may be rendered, “what is further or hereafter to be done to my vineyard”<sup>f93</sup>, and “I have not done in it?” that is, by way of punishment; I have reprov'd and chastis'd them, but all in vain; what remains further for me, and which I will do, because of their ingratitude and unfruitfulness? I will utterly destroy them as a nation and church; I will cause their civil and ecclesiastical state to cease. The sense may be gathered from the answer to the question in the following verse (<sup>2385</sup>Isaiah 5:5),

*wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* that is, why have these people acted so ill a part, when such and so many good things have been bestowed upon them; on account of which it might have been reasonably expected they would have behaved in another manner? or rather the words may be rendered, “why have I looked or expected<sup>f94</sup> that it should bring forth grapes, seeing it brought forth wild grapes?” why have I been looking for good fruit, when nothing but bad fruit for so long a time has been produced? why have I endured with so much patience and longsuffering? I will bear with them no longer, as follows. The Targum is for the former sense,

“what good have I said to do more to my people, which I have not done to them? and what is this I have said, that they should do good works, and they have done evil works?”

**Ver. 5.** *And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, &c.]* Not by bestowing fresh favours upon them, but by inflicting punishment on them, for abusing what they had received; and this he told by John Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, what he determined to do; and what he was about to do to the Jewish nation, in the utter ruin of it, (<sup><4012></sup>Matthew 3:12 <sup><4014></sup>Luke 19:43,44).

*I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up;* that is, the vineyard shall be eaten by the wild beasts that will enter into it, when the hedge is taken away; or “it shall be burnt”; that is, the hedge, being a hedge of thorns, as Jarchi and Kimchi observe; such there were about vineyards, besides the stone wall after mentioned:

*[and] break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down;* the vineyard, or the vines in it, (see <sup><4802></sup>Psalms 80:12,13) this is to be understood of the Lord’s removing his presence, power, and protection from the Jewish nation, and leaving them naked, destitute, and helpless, and exposed to their enemies. The Targum is,

“and now I will declare to you what I will do to my people; I will cause my Shechinah, or Majesty, to remove from them, and they shall be for a spoil; and I will break down the house of their sanctuary, and they shall be for treading.”

**Ver. 6.** *And I will lay it waste, &c.]* Or “desolate”, as it was by the Romans: the whole land of Judea, as well as the city and temple (<sup><4238></sup>Matthew 23:38),

*it shall not be pruned nor digged;* as vineyards are, to make them more fruitful; but no care shall be taken of it, no means made use of to cultivate it, all being ineffectual:

*but there shall come up briars and thorns;* sons of Belial, wicked and ungodly men; immoralities, errors, heresies, contentions, quarrels, &c. which abounded about the time of Jerusalem’s destruction, and before:

*I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them;* by “the clouds” are meant the apostles of Christ, who were full of the doctrines of

grace, from whom they dropped as rain upon the mown grass; these, when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel, and judged themselves unworthy of it, were commanded by Christ to turn from them, and go to the Gentiles, (<sup><4135></sup>Acts 13:45-47 <sup><3847></sup>Zechariah 14:17,18 <sup><6116></sup>Revelation 11:6) agreeably to this sense is the Targum,

“and I will command the prophets, that they do not prophesy upon them prophecy.”

**Ver. 7.** *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, &c.]*

This is the explication of the parable, or the accommodation and application of it to the people of Israel, by whom are meant the ten tribes; they are signified by the vineyard, which belonged to the Lord of hosts, who had chosen them to be a peculiar people to him, and had separated them from all others:

*and the men of Judah his pleasant plant;* they were so when first planted by the Lord; they were plants of delight, in whom he took great delight and pleasure, (<sup><6505></sup>Deuteronomy 10:15) these design the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, in distinction from Israel:

*and he looked for judgment;* that the poor, and the fatherless, and the widow, would have their causes judged in a righteous manner, and that justice and judgment would be executed in the land in all respects; for which such provision was made by the good and righteous laws that were given them:

*but behold oppression;* or a “scab”, such as was in the plague of leprosy; corruption, perverting of justice, and oppressing of the poor: Jarchi interprets it a gathering of sin to sin, a heaping up iniquities:

*for righteousness, but behold a cry;* of the poor and oppressed, for want of justice done, and by reason of their oppressions. Here ends the song; what has been parabolically said is literally expressed in the following part of the chapter.

**Ver. 8.** *Woe unto them that join house to house, &c.]* Or “O ye that join”, &c.; for, as Aben Ezra observes, it signifies calling, as in (<sup><2801></sup>Isaiah 55:1) though Jarchi takes it to be expressive of crying and groaning, on account of future punishments; and he observes, that as there are twenty two blessings pronounced in the book of Psalms, on those that keep the law, so there are twenty two woes pronounced by Isaiah upon the wicked:

*[that] lay field to field*; the sin of covetousness is exposed and condemned in these words; not that it is unlawful in itself for a man that has a house or field of his own to purchase another that is next unto it; but when he is insatiable, and not content with his houses and lands, but is always coveting more, this is his sin, and especially if he seeks to get them by fraud or force:

*till [there] be no place*; for others to dwell in and possess; and so the Targum,

“and say, until we possess every place;”

or “unto the end of the place”<sup>f95</sup>, city, or field; till they have got all the houses in the town or city, and all the pieces of ground in the field, in their own possession:

*that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth*, or land; that is, of Judea; wholly inhabit it themselves, and have the sole power and jurisdiction over it. It is in the Hebrew text<sup>f96</sup> “that ye may be placed”, &c.; the Targum is,

“and they think they shall dwell alone in the midst of the land.”

**Ver. 9.** *In mine ears, [said] the Lord of hosts, &c.*] This may be understood either of the ears of the Lord of hosts, into which came the cry of the sins of covetousness and ambition before mentioned; these were taken notice of by the Lord, and he was determined to punish them; or of the ears of the prophet, in whose hearing the Lord said what follows: so the Targum,

“the prophet said, with mine ears I have heard, when this was decreed from before the Lord of hosts:”

*of a truth many houses shall be desolate*; or “great” ones<sup>f97</sup>; such as the houses of the king, of the princes, and nobles, judges, counsellors, and great men of the earth; not only the house of God, the temple, but a multitude of houses in Jerusalem and elsewhere; which was true not only at the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, but at the destruction of it by the Romans, to which this prophecy belongs, (<sup>4238</sup>Matthew 23:38) the words are a strong asseveration, and in the form of an oath, as Jarchi and Kimchi observe; **al ma**, “if not”; if many houses are not left desolate, let it be so or so, I swear they shall:

*[even] great and fair, without inhabitants:* houses of large and beautiful building shall be laid in such a ruinous condition, that they will not be fit for any to dwell in, nor shall any dwell in them: and this is the judgment upon them for joining house to house; that for laying field to field follows.

**Ver. 10.** *Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,* &c.] They shall get nothing by laying field to field, for their fields shall be barren and unfruitful; though Jarchi and Kimchi take this to be a reason why their houses should be desolate, and without inhabitants, because there would be a famine, rendering the words, “for ten acres”, &c. The Targum makes this barrenness to be the punishment of their sin, in not paying tithes; paraphrasing the words thus,

“for because of the sin of not giving tithes, the place of ten acres of vineyard shall produce one bath.”

The word *ydmx* signifies “yokes”, and is used of yokes of oxen; hence the Septuagint and Arabic versions render the words thus, “for where ten yoke of oxen work”, or “plough, it shall make one flagon”; and so Kimchi explains them, the place in a vineyard, which ten yoke of oxen plough in one day, shall yield no more wine than one bath. A bath is a measure for liquids; according to Godwin<sup>f98</sup>, it held four gallons and a half; a small quantity indeed, to be produced out of ten acres of ground; an acre, according to our English measure, being a quantity of land containing four square roods, or one hundred sixty square poles or perches:

*and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah:* that is, as much seed as an “homer” would hold, which was a dry measure, and which, according to the above writer, contained five bushels and five gallons, should yield only an ephah, which was the tenth part of an homer, (<sup>3651</sup>Ezekiel 45:11) so that it would only produce a tenth part of the seed sown.

**Ver. 11.** *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning,* &c.] To rise up early in the morning is healthful, and to rise to do business is commendable; but to spend the day in drunkenness and intemperance is very criminal, which is here meant:

*[that] they may follow, strong drink;* not only drink it, but follow on to drink; diligently seek after it, where the best is to be had; go from house to house till they have found it; closely follow the drinking of it, till inebriated with it:



*that continue until night*; at their pots, with their drinking companions, even all the day till night comes, the twilight either of the evening or of the morning:

*[till] wine inflame them*; their bodies with heat, and their souls with lust.

**Ver. 12.** *And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, &c.*] Instruments of music; some struck with a bow or quill, or touched with the fingers; and others blown with the mouth:

*and wine are in their feasts*; so that they lived jovially and merrily, like sons of Bacchus, more than like the people of God:

*but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands*; meaning not the law, as the Targum and Kimchi, which was the work of the Lord, and the writing of his hands; rather, as Aben Ezra, the punishment inflicted on the ten tribes being carried into captivity; or else the works of creation and providence, and the daily mercies of life; or, best of all, the great work of redemption by Christ, and the conversion of sinners, both among Jews and Gentiles, by the preaching of his Gospel; for this refers to the Jews in the times of Christ and his apostles, which immediately preceded their utter destruction; and those sins here mentioned were the cause of it. (see <sup><28:5></sup> Psalm 28:5).

**Ver. 13.** *Therefore my people are gone into captivity, &c.*] Or rather, as Kimchi explains it, “shall go into captivity”; the past for the future; for this cannot be understood even of the captivity of the ten tribes, for they were not carried captive until the sixth year of Hezekiah’s reign, (<sup><27:6></sup> 2 Kings 17:6 18:1) whereas this prophecy was delivered out many years before, even in the time of Uzziah, as is manifest from the following chapter, (<sup><26:1></sup> Isaiah 6:1) and much less it cannot design the captivity of Judah, but respects the captivity by the Romans, in future time.

*Because [they have] no knowledge*; of the work of the Lord, and the operations of his hands; the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “because they knew not the Lord”, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the true Messiah; they knew not his person, office, grace, and Gospel; they did not own and acknowledge him, but despised and rejected him; their ignorance was affected and voluntary; they had the means of knowledge, but did not make use of them; they would not know him, they would not attend to the strong and clear evidence of his being the Messiah, which prophecies, miracles, and his doctrines, gave of him; the things

belonging to their peace they knew not, these were righteously hid from them, and hence destruction came upon them, (<sup><299D></sup>Luke 19:42-44) the words may be rendered in connection with the former, “therefore my people shall go into captivity without knowledge”<sup>f99</sup>, unawares, unthought of, and unexpected; and the Jews, to the last; did not think their city would be taken, but that in some way of other salvation and deliverance would be wrought for them:

*and their honourable men [are] famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst*; or “shall be”; this is expressive of a famine of bread and water, which all, both high and low, prince and people, should be affected with; (see <sup><288E></sup>Isaiah 3:1) and was true not only when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, (<sup><285B></sup>Jeremiah 52:6 <sup><290D></sup>Lamentations 4:4,5,8-10) (<sup><215D></sup>Jeremiah 5:10) but when it was besieged by the Romans, in which the rich suffered as well as the poor; and was so great, that even women ate their own children, as Josephus<sup>f100</sup> relates: this is threatened as a punishment of their rioting and drunkenness, (<sup><215E></sup>Isaiah 5:11,12).

**Ver. 14.** *Therefore hell hath enlarged herself*, &c.] That is, the grave, to receive the dead which die with famine and thirst; signifying that the number of the dead would be so great, that the common burying places would not be sufficient to hold them; but additions must be made to them; or some vast prodigious pit must be dug, capable of receiving them; like Tophet, deep and large: or “hath enlarged her soul”<sup>f101</sup>; her desire after the dead, (see <sup><388B></sup>Habakkuk 2:5) being insatiable, and one of those things which are never satisfied, or have enough, (<sup><285D></sup>Proverbs 30:15,16) wherefore it follows:

*and opened her mouth without measure*; immensely wide; there being no boundary to its desires, nor any end of its cravings, or of filling it. And so the Targum renders it, “without end”. Moreover, by “hell” may be meant the miserable estate and condition of the Jews upon the destruction of Jerusalem, when they were in the utmost distress and misery, (see Gill on “<sup><216D></sup>Luke 16:23”).

*And their glory*; their glorious ones, their nobles, as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions; and the Targum, their princes, rulers, civil and ecclesiastical; which were the glory of the nation:

*and their multitude*; meaning the common people; or rather their great and honourable ones, as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions render the

word; and in which sense it may be used in the preceding verse (<sup>2163</sup>Isaiah 5:13); since not of the poor, but of the rich, the context speaks; even of such who indulged themselves in luxury and pleasure:

*and their pomp*; the Septuagint version, “their rich ones”; such who live in pomp and splendour: but the word<sup>f102</sup> signifies noise and tumult; and so the Targum renders it; and it designs noisy and tumultuous ones, who sing and roar, halloo and make a noise at feasts; and who may be called *ˆwac̄ ynb*, “sons of tumult”, or “tumultuous ones”; (<sup>2485</sup>Jeremiah 48:45 <sup>2346</sup>Isaiah 24:6-9) wherefore it follows:

*and he that rejoiceth*, that is, at their feasts,

*shall descend into it*; into hell, or the grave: or, “he that rejoiceth in it”, that is, in the land or city; so the Targum,

“he that is strong among them;”

so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it.

**Ver. 15.** *And the mean man shall be brought down*, &c.] To hell, or the grave, as well as the rich and noble:

*and the mighty man shall be humbled*; laid low in the dust, and be equal to the poor; for, in the grave, princes and peasants are alike; or they shall be all alike, in the same low and miserable condition:

*and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled*; when famine and distress, ruin and misery, come upon them, then shall the pride of those be abased, as it was; who boasted of their riches and honour, of their descent and parentage, as the children of Abraham, and as being free men, and never in bondage; of their righteousness and good works; not submitting to the righteousness of Christ; but despising it, and looking with disdain upon, and treating with contempt, such as they thought less holy than themselves. The Scribes and Pharisees, the members of the sanhedrim, and rulers of the people, together with the whole body of the nation, are meant; who were all of the same cast and complexion, being conceited of themselves, and proud boasters.

**Ver. 16.** *But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment*, &c.] By the “Lord of hosts” is meant Christ, the Lord of the armies, and of the inhabitants of the earth, of angels, and of men; who, though in our nature, in his state of humiliation, was brought very low, yet is now highly exalted;

and which exaltation of his is seen and known, as it is here foretold it should be, by his judgments inflicted on the Jewish nation, for their contempt and rejection of him; (see <sup><39916></sup>Psalm 9:16) so Kimchi interprets judgment of the judgment which the Lord would inflict on the ungodly of Israel: thus Christ's exaltation is seen in their humiliation, and his kingdom and power in their destruction:

*and God that is holy*; Christ is truly and properly God, God over all, blessed for ever; and he is holy, both as God and man; as God he is essentially and perfectly holy; and, as man, without sin original or actual; he is the Holy One of God, and the Holy One of Israel; and of him it is said, he

*shall be sanctified in righteousness*, or be declared to be holy; by the obedience and righteousness of his life, wrought out for his people, whereby he becomes their sanctification and righteousness; and by his justice, in punishing his and his people's enemies. Were all this to be understood of Jehovah the Father, it might very well be interpreted, as it is by Cocceius, of his being exalted and honoured by the condemnation of sin in the flesh of Christ; and of his being "glorified", as the Arabic version renders it, by the obedience and righteousness of his son, whereby his justice is satisfied, and his law magnified, and made honourable; and by the faith of his people, laying hold on that righteousness, and receiving it to the glory of God; in all which the purity, holiness, and justice of God appears.

**Ver. 17.** *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner*, &c.] That is, the people of God, the disciples of Christ, either apostles and ministers of the Gospel, whom he sent forth as lambs among wolves, (<sup><2103></sup>Luke 10:3) who fed the flock of Christ after their usual manner, and as directed by him; even with knowledge and understanding, by the ministry of the word, and administration of ordinances; or the people of God fed by them, who are comparable to lambs for their harmlessness and innocence; and who feed in green pastures, "according as they are led"; as the word used may be rendered <sup>f103</sup>; or "according to their word"; the doctrine of the ministers of the Gospel, by whom they are instructed and directed to feed on Christ, as he is held forth in the word and ordinances. The Targum is,

"and the righteous shall be fed as is said of them;"

and so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it of the righteous:

*and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat*; that is, the Gentiles, who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; the other sheep that were not of the Jewish fold, (~~402~~ Ephesians 2:12 ~~8106~~ John 10:16) these shall come in the room of the fat ones of the land of Judea, the rulers, elders, Scribes, and Pharisees; and feed on those pastures which were despised and left desolate by them; enjoy the Gospel they put away from them, and the ordinances of it, which they rejected. The Targum is,

“and they shall be multiplied, and the substance of the ungodly shall the righteous possess.”

**Ver. 18.** *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity*, &c.] The prophet returns to the wicked again, and goes on with the account of their sin and punishment; and here describes such, not that are drawn into sin unawares, through the prevalence of their own hearts’ lusts and corruptions, through the temptations of Satan, the snares of the world, or the persuasions of others; but such who draw it to themselves, seek after it, and willingly commit it; who rush and force themselves into it; who solicit it, and seek and take all occasions and opportunities of doing it; and take a great deal of pains about it; and make use of all arguments, reasonings, and pretences they can devise, to engage themselves and others in the practice of it; which are all cords of vanity, fallacious and deceitful.

*And sin as it were with a cart rope*; using all diligence, wisdom, policy, and strength; labouring with all might and main to effect it. Some by “iniquity” and “sin” understand punishment, as the words used sometimes signify; and that the sense is, that such persons described by their boldness and impudence in sinning, by their impenitence and hardness of heart, and by adding sin to sin, draw upon themselves swift destruction, and the greater damnation. The Targum interprets it of such that begin with lesser sins, and increase to more ungodliness; paraphrasing it thus,

“woe to them that begin to sin a little, and they go on and increase until that they are strong, and “their” sins “are” as a cart rope;”

to which agrees that saying in the Talmud<sup>f104</sup>,

“the evil imagination or corruption of nature at first is like a spider’s thread, but at last it is like to cart ropes; as it is said, “woe to them that draw iniquity”, &c.”

**Ver. 19.** *That say, let him make speed, [and] hasten his work, &c.*] Either the punishment of their sins, threatened by the prophets; which, because not speedily and immediately executed, therefore they did not believe it ever would; and in a daring and insolent manner call upon God to inflict it:

*that we may see [it]*, or feel it; for, as for words or threatenings, they regarded them not; thus deriding God and his judgments, and disbelieving both, like the mockers in the last days, described in (<sup><608B></sup>2 Peter 3:3,4) and, in contempt of him, do not so much as mention his name; though the Syriac version expresses the word “Lord”, and the Arabic version “God”: or rather the great work of redemption and salvation by the Messiah; for, as they did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, so they ridiculed and despised salvation by him, mocking him as a Saviour, and calling upon him, in a sarcastic way, to hasten and do his work he pretended to come about; (see <sup><47D></sup>Matthew 27:42) for to the Jews in Christ’s time this prophecy belongs. The Targum interprets it, “his miracle”; the Jews were always for signs and miracles; they sought them of Jesus of Nazareth; they urged the doing of them; they were very solicitous and importunate, and in haste to have them done, that they might see and believe, as they pretended; and expressed themselves in almost the same words as here; “what sign shewest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?” (<sup><8FB></sup>John 6:30) this is an instance of their drawing iniquity and sin in the manner before complained of:

*and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know [it]!* not that they believed him to be the Holy One of Israel, but because the prophet had made mention of this title, (<sup><210B></sup>Isaiah 1:4) as he often does in this prophecy afterwards, and applies it to the Redeemer; therefore they use it: so the Jews put an “if” upon Christ being the King of Israel, (<sup><47D></sup>Matthew 27:42) wherefore, in a daring, jeering, and ironic manner, urge that what is said to be in the purposes and decrees of God, or what was agreed upon between him and the Messiah, who said he was the son of God, in the council and covenant of grace and peace, as pretended, might speedily come to pass; all which expresses their blasphemy, impiety, and unbelief; and shows that they did not believe, but derided any counsel or decree of God, respecting spiritual and eternal salvation by the Messiah, especially by Jesus of Nazareth: or the conversion of the Gentiles, or the spread of the Gospel, and the enlargement of the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world, are meant, Kimchi, on the text, owns that these words belong to the Jews in the present day, and makes this confession,

“it appears that our prophets said the truth for now we believe not.”

**Ver. 20.** *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.]* That call evil actions good, and good actions evil; that excuse the one, and reproach the other; or that call evil men good, and good men evil; to which the Targum agrees. Some understand this of false prophets rejecting the true worship of God, and recommending false worship; others of wicked judges, pronouncing the causes of bad men good, and of good men evil; others of sensualists, that speak in praise of drunkenness, gluttony, and all carnal pleasures, and fleshly lusts, and treat with contempt fear, worship, and service of God. It may very well be applied to the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ’s time, who preferred the evil traditions of their elders, both to the law of God, that is holy, just, and good, and to the Gospel, the good word of God, preached by John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles, and to the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation:

*that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;* for calling good evil, and evil good, is all one as putting these things one for another; there being as great a difference between good and evil, as between light and darkness, sweet and bitter; and it suggests, as if the perversion of these things was not merely through ignorance and mistake, but purposely and wilfully against light and knowledge; so the Jews acted when they preferred the darkness of their rites and ceremonies, and human traditions, before the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ; which showed they loved darkness rather than light, (~~John~~ John 3:19) and chose that which would be bitter to them in the end, than the sweet doctrines of the grace of God; the bitter root of error, rather than the words of Christ’s mouth, which are sweeter than the honey, or the honeycomb. The Targum is,

“woe to them that say to the wicked who prosper in this world, ye are good; and say to the meek, ye are wicked: when light cometh to the righteous, shall it not be dark with the wicked? and sweet shall be the words of the law to them that do them; but bitterness (some read “rebellion”) shall come to the wicked; and they shall know, that in the end sin is bitter to them that commit it.”

Abarbinel interprets this of the ten tribes preferring the worship at Daniel and Bethel, before that at Jerusalem.

**Ver. 21.** *Woe unto [them that are] wise in their own eyes, &c.*] And yet betray such stupidity and sottishness, as to call things by their wrong names; and make such a perverse judgment of them, as before described. This is a true description of the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time; who said, "dost thou teach us? are we blind also?" (~~438~~John 9:34-40)

*and prudent in their own sight;* being wise above what was written; leaving the word of God, and following the traditions of the elders.

**Ver. 22.** *Woe unto [them that are] mighty to drink wine, &c.*] That can bear a great deal, and not be overcome and intoxicated with it; that try their strength this way with others, and get the mastery and glory in it: not mighty to fight their enemies, as Kimchi observes, and defend their country, but to drink wine; by which their strength was weakened: wherefore some think soldiers are particularly designed, given to drinking, who are derided and mocked, as being valiant in the warfare of Bacchus, and not of Mars:

*and men of strength, to mingle strong drink;* in the cup, and then drink it: or "men of war"; the same with "mighty" before. The Targum interprets it, "men of riches": who can afford to drink wine and strong drink; which carries the sense not to the strength of their bodies, but of their purses: the former sense seems best. The Scribes and Pharisees loved the cup and the platter, and to be at feasts, and to have the uppermost seats there, (~~423~~Matthew 23:6,25) and that those that sat in Moses's chair are intended appears from the following words.

**Ver. 23.** *Which justify the wicked for reward, &c.*] This is either spoken of judges, and civil magistrates, who gave the cause in favour of the wicked, that bribed them, contrary to law, (~~416~~Deuteronomy 16:19) or rather of the Scribes and Pharisees, who pronounced the wicked righteous men, provided they kept the traditions of the elders, and paid tithes of all they possessed, and gave them money for their long prayers, (~~424~~Matthew 23:14,23):

*and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him;* by condemning them as unrighteous persons: so the Jews did Christ and his apostles; they pronounced them wicked, and condemned them to death; and as much as in them lay took away their righteousness from them, by taking away their character from them as righteous persons among men;



though their righteousness itself could not be taken away, it being an everlasting one.

**Ver. 24.** *Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, &c.*] Or “tongue of fire”<sup>f105</sup>; meaning the flame, the same as in the next clause; because it is in the form of a tongue; (see ~~411B~~ Acts 2:3):

*and the flame consumeth the chaff*; which is done easily, speedily, and entirely; the metaphors denote that their destruction would be easy, swift, sudden, irresistible, and irrecoverable. Reference may be had to the burning of Jerusalem, literally understood:

*[so] their root shall be rottenness*; and so utterly perish; meaning their fathers, as Aben Ezra and Abarbinel think; or their chief and principal men, before mentioned; or their riches and substance, and whatever they gloried of, or trusted in; (see ~~411B~~ Matthew 3:10):

*and their blossom shall go up as dust*; before the wind; either their children, or whatever was excellent or valuable with them; so Jarchi interprets it of their grandeur, pomp, and glory; it seems to express an utter destruction of them, root and branch, as in (~~301B~~ Malachi 4:1):

*because they have cast away the law of the Lord*; or doctrine of the Lord; that is, the Gospel; which the Jews blasphemed, contradicted, and put away from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life: the preaching of a crucified Christ, and salvation by him, and justification by his righteousness, were a stumbling block to them: this is to be understood not of the law of works, but of the law or doctrine of faith:

*and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel*; meaning either the same as before; expressing their great contempt of the Gospel, and the reason why they rejected it, because they loathed, abhorred, and despised it: or else Christ, the essential Word of God; so the Targum,

“they rejected the Word, the Holy One of Israel;”

as the Messiah, and received him not; and this their rejection of him, and ill treatment of his Gospel and ministers, were the cause of the burning of Jerusalem, and of their utter ruin and destruction, (~~411B~~ Matthew 22:4-7).

**Ver. 25.** *Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, &c.*] His professing people; which character, as it aggravated their sin in

rejecting and despising the word of the Lord, so it increased his anger and indignation against them:

*and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them;* which some understand of past judgments and afflictions upon them, under Joash, Amaziah, and Ahaz; and others of future ones, under Shalmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar:

*and the hills did tremble;* which Jarchi interprets of their kings and princes; or it may be only a figurative expression, setting forth the awfulness of the dispensation:

*and their carcasses [were] torn in the midst of the streets.* The Targum renders it, “were as dung”; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions; being slain there, and lying unburied, were trampled upon, and trodden down like “clay”, as the Syriac version; or like the mire of the streets.

*For all this his anger is not turned away;* this being abundantly less than their sins deserved; which shows how great were their sins, and how much the Lord was provoked to anger by them:

*but his hand [is] stretched out still;* to inflict yet sorer judgments. The Targum is

“by all this they turn not from their sins, that his fury may turn from them; but their rebellion grows stronger, and his stroke is again to take vengeance on them;”

which expresses their impenitence and hardness of heart, under the judgments of God, which caused him to take more severe methods with them.

**Ver. 26.** *And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far,* &c.] Not to the Chaldeans or Babylonians, for they were not nations, but one nation, and were a people near; but to the Romans, who consisted of many nations, and were afar off, and extended their empire to the ends of the earth; these, by one providence or another, were stirred up to make an expedition into the land of Judea, and besiege Jerusalem: and this lifting up of an ensign is not, as sometimes, for the gathering and enlisting of soldiers, or to prepare them for the battle, or to give them the signal when

to begin the fight; but as a direction to decamp and proceed on a journey, on some expedition:

*and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth*, or “to him”<sup>f106</sup>; the king, or general of them, wherever he is, even though at the end of the earth: and the phrase denotes the secret and powerful influence of divine Providence, in moving upon the hearts of the Romans, and their general, to enter upon such a design against the Jews; and which was as easily done as for one man to hiss or call to another; or as for a shepherd to whistle for his sheep; to which the allusion seems to be; the Lord having the hearts of all in his hands, and can turn them as he pleases, to do his will:

*and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly*; or “he shall come”; the king with his army; and so the Targum paraphrases it;

“and behold, a king with his army shall come swiftly, as light clouds;”

this shows the swift and sudden destruction that should come upon the Jews; and is an answer to their scoffs, (<sup>2369</sup>Isaiah 5:19).

**Ver. 27.** *None shall be weary nor stumble among them*, &c.] Though they should come from far, and make long marches, yet none should be weary by the way, but go on with great cheerfulness and strength; and though they should make such haste, they should not stumble at any thing by the way, nor rush one against another, but proceed with great order in their several ranks:

*none shall slumber nor sleep*; day nor night, in any fixed stated times, as men usually do:

*neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed*; with which they should be girded both for strength and greater expedition; this they should not unloose, in order to lie down and take sleep:

*nor the latchet of their shoes be broken*, which might hinder their journey; they never plucked off their shoes: all the expressions show their indefatigableness, diligence, intenseness, and resolution, and the good order observed by them; (see <sup>2377</sup>Joel 2:7,8).

**Ver. 28.** *Whose arrows [are] sharp, and all their bows bent*, &c.] Ready to shoot their arrows upon any occasion; and which being sharp, penetrated deep, and were deadly. This includes all kind of warlike

instruments, with which they should come furnished, and ready prepared to do execution:

*their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint*; by those who rode upon them; who knowing how strong and firm they were, and that they were not worn out, nor hurt by the length of the way they came, would not spare to make haste upon them:

*and their wheels like a whirlwind*; that is, the wheels of their chariots, they used in battle, as Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret it; and so the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it: this metaphor denotes both the swiftness with which they should come, and the noise and rattling they should make, and the power and force in bearing down all before them. The Targum is,

“and his wheels swift as a tempest.”

**Ver. 29.** *Their roaring [shall be] like a lion*, &c.] When engaged in war, just seizing on their prey. The phrase denotes their fierceness and cruelty, and the horror they should inject into the hearts of their enemies:

*they shall roar like young lions*; that are hungry, and almost famished, and in sight of their prey; (see <sup><1040></sup>Job 4:10):

*yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey*; seize it with great noise and greediness:

*and shall carry [it] away safe*; into their own den, the country from whence they come:

*and none shall deliver [it]*; this shows that respect is had; not to the Babylonish captivity, from whence there was a deliverance in a few years; but the Roman captivity, from thence there is no deliverance as yet to this day.

**Ver. 30.** *And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea*, &c.] That is, the Romans against the Jews; whose attacks upon them should be with so much fierceness and power, that it should be like the roaring of the sea, which is very dreadful, and threatens with utter destruction; the roaring of the sea and its waves is mentioned among the signs preceding Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans, (<sup><125></sup>Luke 21:25):

*and if [one] look unto the land*: the land of Judea, when wasted by the Romans, or while those wars continued between them and the Jews; or “into it”,<sup>f107</sup>

*behold darkness*; great affliction and tribulation being signified by darkness and dimness; (see <sup><2182></sup>Isaiah 8:21 9:1)

*[and] sorrow* or “distress”, great straits and calamities:

*[and]*, or “even”,

*the light is darkened in the heavens thereof*; in their civil and church state, the kingdom being removed from the one, and the priesthood from the other; and their principal men in both, signified by the darkness of the sun, moon, and stars. (<sup><4182></sup>Matthew 24:29).