

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 13

This chapter contains a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, literally understood as a type and exemplar of the destruction of the mystical Babylon, so often spoken of in the book of the Revelation: an account is given of the persons that should be the instruments of it, and of the desolation they should make; which would issue in the utter ruin of that once famous city. The title of the prophecy, and the person that had it, and brought it, are expressed, (²³¹³⁰Isaiah 13:1) orders are given to the Medes and Persians to prepare for war, (²³¹³²Isaiah 13:2) and are described as the Lord's sanctified ones, his mighty ones, and who rejoiced in his highness, (²³¹³³Isaiah 13:3) by the multitude of them, by the length of the way they came, and the end of their coming, by divine direction, and as the instruments of God's wrath, to destroy the land of the Chaldeans, (²³¹³⁴Isaiah 13:4,5) wherefore the inhabitants of it are called to howling, because that destruction from the Lord was at hand, (²³¹³⁶Isaiah 13:6,9) the effects of which were fainting, fear, consternation, pain, and sorrow, without the least relief and comfort, (²³¹³⁷Isaiah 13:7,8,10) the causes of which were their sin and iniquity, particularly their arrogance, pride, and haughtiness, (²³¹³¹Isaiah 13:11) which destruction is further described by the fewness of men that should be left in the land, (²³¹³²Isaiah 13:12) by the strange revolution made in it, and the confusion it should be in, (²³¹³³Isaiah 13:13) by the fear and flight of men, both of their own and other nations, that should be among them, (²³¹³⁴Isaiah 13:14) by the slaughter of men and children, the plunder of their houses, and the ravishing of their wives, (²³¹³⁵Isaiah 13:15,16) the persons that should be employed as instruments are mentioned by name, and represented as not to be bribed with gold and silver; and as merciless and uncompassionate, that should spare neither young men nor children, (²³¹³⁷Isaiah 13:17,18) and the chapter is concluded with a particular account of the destruction of Babylon; which is aggravated, by observing its former glory; by comparing its ruin to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; by its being no more to be inhabited by men within, nor to have Arabian shepherds pitching their tents without

it; and by being the habitation of wild beasts, satyrs, dragons, and doleful creatures, (²³³⁹Isaiah 13:19-22).

Ver. 1. *The burden of Babylon, &c.*] That is, a prophecy concerning Babylon, as the word is rendered, (²³⁰⁰Proverbs 31:1). The Septuagint and Arabic versions translate it “the vision”; it signifies a taking up ^{f240} a speech against it, and pronouncing a heavy sentence on it, such an one as should sink it into utter destruction; which will be the case of mystical Babylon, when it shall be as a millstone cast into the sea, never to be brought up again, (⁶⁸²¹Revelation 18:21). The Targum is,

“the burden of the cup of cursing to give Babylon to drink:”

after some prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, and the church’s song of praise for salvation by him, others are delivered out concerning the enemies of the people of God, and their destruction, and begin with Babylon the chief of these enemies, and into whose hands the people of Israel would be delivered for a while; wherefore this prophecy is given forth, in order to lay a foundation for comfort and relief, when that should be their case; by which it would appear that they should have deliverance from them by the same hand that should overthrow them:

which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see: by a spirit of prophecy; for this he saw not with his bodily eyes, though it was as clear and certain to him as if he had. The Targum is,

“which Isaiah the son of Amoz prophesied.”

Ver. 2. *Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, &c.*] Or “upon the mountain Nishphah”; some high mountain in Media or Persia, proper to set a standard on, or erect a banner for the gathering men together, to enlist themselves as soldiers, and so form an army to march into the land of Chaldea. Vitringa thinks there may be an allusion to the mountain Zagrius, which divides Media and Persia from Assyria, mentioned by Strabo ^{f241}. Or “upon a high mountain”; any high mountain fit for such a purpose; or “against the high mountain”, as some ^{f242} read it; meaning Babylon, called a mountain, (²⁶²⁵Jeremiah 51:25) not because of its situation, for it was in a plain; but because of its eminence above other cities and states. The Targum is,

“against the city that dwells securely, lift up a sign;”

a token of war, proclaim war against it, that lives at ease, and is in peace; and so the word is used in the Talmudic language, as Kimchi observes; and to this agrees Jarchi's note,

“to gather against the mountain that is quiet, and trusts in its tranquillity, lift up a banner to the nations.”

Exalt the voice unto them; the Medes, mentioned by name in (²³¹⁷ Isaiah 13:17) such as were within call, or were gathered together by the lifting up of the banner; such were to be urged with great vehemency to enlist themselves, and engage in a war against Babylon:

shake the hand; beckon with it to them that are afar off, that cannot hear the voice:

that they may go into the gates of the nobles; that dwell in the city of Babylon, where they might expect to find rich plunder; though some understand this of the nobles or princes of the Medes and Persians, as Kimchi observes, that should enter through the gates of Babylon into the city; and by others it is interpreted of the soldiers coming to the doors of the leaders or generals of the army, to give in their names, and enlist themselves in their service; which well agrees with what goes before.

Ver. 3. *I have commanded my sanctified ones*, &c.] The Medes and Persians, so called, not because sanctified by the Spirit of God, or made holy persons, through the regenerating and renewing grace of God, or purified by the blood of Christ, and prepared for glory; but because they were set apart in the mind and counsel of God for a special work and service, and were qualified by him with courage and strength to perform it, and therefore said to be his; and this command that was given them was not by a voice from heaven, or in a message by one of his prophets; but by a secret instinct, and, by the power of his providence, stirring them up to engage in such an enterprise^{f243}.

I have also called my mighty ones; meaning Cyrus and Darius, and the officers of their armies, with the common soldiers, who were furnished with might and strength to do his will, to which they were called in his providence:

for mine anger; to execute his wrath upon the Babylonians; so the Targum,

“that they may avenge my wrath upon them:”

or, “in mine anger”; which being stirred up, put him upon calling those mighty ones to his service, and fitting them for it: literally it is, “to my nose”^{f244}; to be before him, to be at his beck and will, and to minister his wrath and vengeance:

[even] them that rejoice in my highness; in doing that which tended to the exaltation and glory of God; they went cheerfully about the work, and exulted and triumphed in their success: or, “that rejoice my highness”^{f245}; make me glad, because I am glorified by them. So seven angels, the Lord’s holy and mighty ones, will be employed in pouring out the vials of his wrath on mystical Babylon, (^{665b}Revelation 15:1,6,7 16:1).

Ver. 4. *The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people, &c.*] That is, like the noise of a very numerous people; this noise was heard either on the mountains of Media, where they flocked in vast numbers to the standard set; or on the mountains upon the borders of Chaldea, when the army under Cyrus was marching towards Babylon:

a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together; for Cyrus’s army consisted of several kingdoms and nations; for besides the thirty thousand Persians he brought with him into Media, where he was made general of the Medes also, and was sent with the joint forces of both nations against Babylon, the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz, were prepared, gathered together, and called forth against it, (²⁶¹⁷Jeremiah 51:27,28):

the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle; or the warlike army: it was the Lord, that has the armies of heaven and earth at his command, who in his providence caused such a numerous army to be formed, directed them where to march, and put them in battle array, and gave them the victory.

Ver. 5. *They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, &c.*] The east, as Kimchi observes; the Targum is, from the ends of the earth; the furthest parts of it, as Persia and Media were: the former is bounded on the south side by the main ocean; and the latter, part of it by the Caspian sea; and between Babylon and these kingdoms lay the large kingdom of Assyria; so that this army might be truly said to come from a far country:

[even] the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation; the Medes and Persians, who were the instruments of his wrath and vengeance against Babylon; just as Assyria is called the rod of his anger, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 10:5) with

these he is said to come, because this army was of his gathering, mustering, ordering, and directing, in his providence; the end and design of which was, *to destroy the whole land*; not the whole world, as the Septuagint render it; but the whole land of Chaldea, of which Babylon was the metropolis. The Targum is,

“to destroy all the wicked of the earth.”

Ver. 6. *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand*, &c.] These words are an address to the Babylonians, who instead of rejoicing and feasting, as Belshazzar and his nobles were the night that Babylon was taken, had reason to howl and lament; seeing the day that the Lord had fixed for their destruction was very near, and he was just about to come forth as a judge to take vengeance on them; for though it was about two hundred and fifty years from the time of this prophecy, to the taking of Babylon, yet it is represented as at hand, to show the certainty of it, both for the comfort of the Jewish captives, when they should be in it, and for the awakening of the sluggish inhabitants, who were secure, and thought themselves out of danger:

it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty: suddenly, swiftly, and irresistibly: there is a beautiful paronomasia in the Hebrew text, “*ceshod mishaddai*”^{f246}; as destruction from the destroyer; from God, who is able to save, and to destroy; he is almighty and all sufficient, so some render the word; the hand of God was visible in it.

Ver. 7. *Therefore shall all hands be faint*, &c.] Or hang down; that is, the hands of all the Babylonians, the city being taken suddenly and at once, so that they should not be able to lift them up to lay hold on a weapon, and defend themselves:

and every man’s heart shall melt; like wax before the fire; be dispirited, and lose all their valour and courage, have neither power nor heart to resist their enemies, and attempt to save themselves.

Ver. 8. *And they shall be afraid*, &c.] Troubled, dismayed, frightened, at the sudden taking of the city, and at the sight of Cyrus’s troops marching up into the very heart of it, and to the king’s palace:

pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; as convulsions, pains in the bowels, &c. more fully explained in the next clause:

they shall be in pain, as a woman that travaileth; that is in labour, and ready to bring forth her child, whose pains are very sharp, and agonies great; the same is said of the king of Babylon, (²⁸⁰⁶Jeremiah 50:43):

they shall be amazed one at another; that so great a city should be so surprised, and so suddenly taken; and that they shall not be able to help one another; and that such as were so famous for courage and valour should be at once so dispirited:

their faces [shall be as] flames; not red with blushing, through shame, as Kimchi; but pale with fear, as the colour of flame, or, as the faces of smiths, that work at a forge: the words may be rendered, “their faces are as the faces of Lehabim”,^{f247}; the name of a people mentioned in (⁴¹⁰³Genesis 10:13) the same with the Libians, which were of a blackish or tawny colour; so Jarchi interprets it, and says they were a people of a yellow complexion: and Aben Ezra observes, that some interpret it of a nation like the Ethiopians; and so it denotes, that the Babylonians, their faces should be black with distress and anguish; (see ²⁹¹⁶Joel 2:6).

Ver. 9. *Behold, the day of the Lord cometh*, &c.] Or “is come”^{f248}; said in (²³³⁶Isaiah 13:6) to be at hand, but now it is represented in prophecy as already come:

cruel both with wrath and fierce anger; which, whether referred to “the Lord”, or to “the day”, the sense is the same; the day may be said to be cruel, and full of wrath and fury, because of the severity and fierceness of the Lord’s anger, exercised upon the Babylonians in it; and he may be said to be so, not that he really is cruel, or exceeds the bounds of justice, but because he seemed to be so to the objects of his displeasure; as a judge may be thought to be cruel and severe by the malefactor, when he only pronounces and executes a righteous judgment on him; a heap of words are here made use of, to express the greatness and fierceness of divine wrath:

to lay the land desolate; the land of the Chaldeans:

and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it; this shows that what is before said most properly belongs to the Lord, to whom the destruction of Babylon, and the country belonging to it, must be ascribed; and indeed it was such as could not be brought about by human force; the moving cause of which was the sin of the inhabitants, some of whom were notorious sinners, for whose sakes it was destroyed by the Lord, and they in the midst of it, or out of it; (see ⁴⁹⁴⁶Psalms 104:35).

Ver. 10. *For the stars of heaven, &c.*] This and what follows are to be understood, not literally, but figuratively, as expressive of the dismalness and gloominess of the dispensation, of the horror and terror of it, in which there was no light, no comfort, no relief, nor any hope of any; the heavens and all the celestial bodies frowning upon them, declaring the displeasure of him that dwells there:

and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; which are assemblages of stars, or certain configurations of the heavenly bodies, devised by the ancients; to which each of the names are given for the help of the imagination and memory; the number of them are forty eight, twelve in the Zodiac, twenty one on the northern side of it, and fifteen on the southern. R. Jonah, mentioned both by Aben Ezra and Kimchi, says that “Cesil”, the word here used, is a large star, called in the Arabic language “Suel”, and the stars that are joined unto it are called by its name “Cesilim”; so that, according to this, only one constellation is meant; and Aben Ezra observes, that there are some that say that Cesil is a star near to the south pole, on which, if camels look, they die; but, says he, in my opinion it is “the scorpion’s heart”. Jerom’s Hebrew master interpreted it to him Arcturus; and it is in (~~1300~~ Job 9:9 38:31 ~~1188~~ Amos 5:8) rendered Orion, and by the Septuagint here; which is one of the constellations, and one of the brightest; and the word being here in the plural number, the sense may be, were there ever so many Orions in the heavens, they should none of them give light. The Targum and Jarchi interpret it of the planets:

the sun shall be darkened in his going forth; as soon as it rises, when it goes forth out of its chamber, as in (~~1995~~ Psalm 19:5) either by an eclipse of it, or by dark clouds covering it:

and the moon shall not cause her light to shine: by night, which she borrows from the sun; so that it would be very uncomfortable, day and night, neither sun, moon, nor stars appearing, (see ~~4271~~ Acts 27:20) by the sun, moon, and stars, may be meant king, queen, and nobles, whose destruction is here prophesied of; it being usual in prophetic language, as well as in other writers^{f249}, to express great personages hereby.

Ver. 11. *And I will punish the world for [their] evil, &c.*] Not the whole world, but the kingdom of Babylon, so called because of its large extent, and the number of its inhabitants, just as the Roman empire is called the whole world, (~~4111~~ Luke 2:1) “evil” may be meant, either of the evil of sin, which was the cause of punishment, or else of the evil of punishment itself;

and the sense be this, I will visit, or, in a way of visitation, I will bring evil, or evils, upon the world; so the Targum,

and the wicked for their iniquity, or “on the wicked their iniquity”; that is, I will visit on them, or inflict upon them, the punishment of their iniquity; meaning the notorious and abandoned sinners among them, (see ^{<313>}Isaiah 13:9):

and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and I will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible: such as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, famous for their pride, arrogance, and haughtiness, tyranny and oppression, whereby they became terrible to others.

Ver. 12. *I will make a man more precious than fine gold*, &c.] Which may denote either the scarcity of men in Babylon, through the slaughter made of them; so things that are scarce and rare are said to be precious, (^{<311>}1 Samuel 3:1) or the resolution of the Medes to spare none, though ever so much gold were offered to them, they being not to be bribed therewith, (^{<317>}Isaiah 13:17) or that such should be the fear of men, that they would not be prevailed upon to take up arms to defend themselves or their king, whatever quantity of gold, even the best, was proposed unto them, a man was not to be got for money:

even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir; which designs the same thing in different words. The Targum gives another sense of the whole, paraphrasing it thus,

“I will love them that fear me more than gold, of which men glory; and those that keep the law more than the fine gold of Ophir;”

understanding it of the Israelites, that were in Babylon when it was taken, and who were precious and in high esteem with the Medes and Persians, more than gold, and whose lives they spared. Jarchi interprets it particularly of Daniel, and of the honour that was done him by Belshazzar, upon his reading and interpreting the writing on the wall, (^{<319>}Daniel 5:29). This is interpreted by the Jews also of the King Messiah; for in an ancient writing^{f250} of theirs, where having mentioned this passage, it is added, this is the Messiah, that shall ascend and be more precious than all the children of the world, and all the children of the world shall worship and bow before him. Some take “Phaz”, the word for fine gold, to be the name of a place from whence it came, and therefore was so called; and that the kingdom of Phez, in Africa, has its name from hence; and Ophir is taken to

be Peru in America; though others place it in India; and the Arabic version renders it, “a man shall be more precious than a little stone that is” brought “from India”; and the Septuagint version is, “than a stone in”, or “of sapphire”.

Ver. 13. *Therefore will I shake the heavens, &c.*] Some think this was literally fulfilled at the taking of Babylon, when the heavens were shook with dreadful thunders and lightnings; as well as what is said above of the sun, moon, and stars, not giving their light; and so is likewise what follows,

and the earth shall remove out of her place; and that there was a violent shock by an earthquake at the same time; but rather all this is to be understood figuratively, as expressive of the great confusion men would then be in, it being as if all nature was convulsed, and heaven and earth were coming together, or rather dissolving:

in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger; when that should be; or through it, or because of it, as the Septuagint, (see ²³¹⁶Isaiah 13:6,9) compare with this (⁴⁶¹⁸Revelation 16:18-20) which expresses the destruction of mystical Babylon in much such language.

Ver. 14. *And it shall be as the chased roe, &c.*] That is, Babylon, and the inhabitants thereof, shall be like a roe when hunted by the dogs; which is a very fearful creature, and at the sight and noise of the dogs flies here and there for safety; just so should be the most courageous of the Babylonians, when their city should be taken. The Syriac version renders it, “they shall be”; and the Septuagint and Arabic versions, “they that are left shall be as the fleeing roe”, such who fall not by the sword. Kimchi interprets it of people of other nations that should be in Babylon when taken, which agrees with the latter part of the verse:

and as a sheep that no man taketh up; the Septuagint and Arabic versions read, “as a straying sheep”, that flees from the wolf; and there being none to fetch it back, and bring it to the flock, it wanders about and perishes:

they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee everyone into his own land; this is to be understood of such foreigners, who were called in by the king of Babylon to his assistance, and the defence of the city; who perceiving it to be taken, or in danger, fled to their own countries, from whence they came, and so left the city naked and defenceless, (see ²⁸¹⁶Jeremiah 50:16 51:9).

Ver. 15. *Every one that is found shall be thrust through, &c.*] With a sword, spear, or lance, and be slain; that is, everyone that is found in the city of Babylon; and so the Targum adds,

“and everyone that is found in it shall be slain;”

so Kimchi, in the midst of it, or without; in the street, as Jarchi. The orders of Cyrus^{f251} were, that those that were found without (in the streets) should be slain; and to proclaim in the Syriac language, that those that were within doors should continue there, but, if they were found without, they should be put to death; which orders were executed, and well agrees with this prophecy:

and everyone that is joined [unto them] shall fall by the sword; or “added” unto them; any of other nations that joined them as auxiliaries, (see ^{f6904}Revelation 18:4) or “that is gathered”; so the Septuagint, “they that are gathered”; that are gathered together in a body to resist the enemy, and defend themselves. Some render the word, “every one that is consumed”, with age; neither old nor young, as follows, should be spared. The Targum is,

“everyone that enters into the fortified cities,”

flees there for safety and protection.

Ver. 16. *Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, &c.*] Upon the ground, or against the wall, as was foretold should be, (^{f1078}Psalm 137:8,9) and in way of retaliation for what they did to the Jews, (^{f467}2 Chronicles 36:17) and this was to be done “before their eyes”, in the sight of the inhabitants, which must make it the more distressing and afflicting; and, as Kimchi observes, this phrase is to be applied to the following clauses:

their houses shall be spoiled; plundered of the substance, wealth, and riches in them, by the Persian soldiers:

and their wives ravished; by the same, and both before their eyes, and after that slain, in like manner as they had ravished the women in Zion, (^{f2511}Lamentations 5:11).

Ver. 17. *Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, &c.*] The Babylonians; this explains who are meant by the sanctified and mighty ones, (^{f2338}Isaiah 13:3) the Medes were a people that descended from

Medai, one of the sons of Japheth, (⁰¹⁰²Genesis 10:2) as Josephus observes^{f252}; under these the Persians are included, though they are only mentioned, because Cyrus was sent by Cyaxares king of Media on this expedition against Babylon, and was made by him general of the Medes, and acted as such under him; and when Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain, Darius the Median took the kingdom, (²⁰⁶³Daniel 5:31) now these are mentioned by name some hundreds of years before the thing came to pass, as Cyrus their general in (²³⁸⁰Isaiah 45:1) which is a strong proof of the truth of prophecy, and of divine revelation; and, whatever might be the moving causes of this expedition, the affair was of God; it was he that put it into the hearts of the Medes, and stirred up their spirits to make war against Babylon; and though God is not the author of sin, yet he not only suffered the things to be done before and after mentioned, but in his providence ordered them as just punishments on a sinful people:

which shall not regard silver; and [as for] gold, they shall not delight in it; not but that they had a regard for, gold and silver, as appears by their spoiling of the houses of the Babylonians, (²³³⁶Isaiah 13:16) but that they had not so great a regard for these things as to spare the lives of any for the sake of them; they were so intent upon taking away their lives, that they disregarded their substance; their first work was to slay, and then to spoil; they first destroyed, and then plundered; no man with his gold and silver could obtain a ransom of his life from them. Cyrus^{f253} in his speech to his army said,

“O ye Medes, and all present, I truly know that not for want of money are ye come out with me,” &c.

Ver. 18. [*Their bows also shall dash their young men to pieces, &c.*] That is, the bows of the Medes should dash in pieces the young men of the Babylonians. The meaning is, either that they should put them into their bows, instead of arrows, and shoot them upon the ground, or against a wall, and so dash them to pieces; or that they should first shoot them through with their arrows, and then dash them with their bows; according to Xenophon^{f254}, Cyrus came to Babylon with great numbers of archers and slingers:

and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; even of those that were in the womb, but should rip up women with child, and cut them in pieces:

their eyes shall not spare children; in the arms of their parents, or running to them, shrieking and crying, and in the utmost fright; and yet their tender and innocent age would meet with no mercy. The Medes were notorious for their cruelty^{f255}, and which issued at last in the ruin of their empire.

Ver. 19. *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, &c.*] The first and most ancient kingdom, (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:10) and now, at the time of its fall, the largest and most extensive; wherefore of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, which was a representation of several kingdoms, this was the head, the head of gold, (^{<2031>}Daniel 2:31,38) so Babylon is called the “lady of kingdoms”, (^{<2346>}Isaiah 47:5) the word here used for “glory” is the same with that which is rendered a “roe”, (^{<2334>}Isaiah 13:14). Babylon was once as a pleasant roe, but now a chased one:

the beauty of the Chaldees excellency; the glory of that nation; what they gloried in, being so famous for pompous buildings, number of inhabitants, riches and wealth, (see ^{<2040>}Daniel 4:30). Pliny^{f256} calls it the head of the Chaldean nations, and says it obtained great fame in the whole world:

shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; which, though not at once, and by fire from heaven, as that was, yet was of God, and, when completed, was, like that, irrecoverable; which was begun by Cyrus and Darius, and in after times finished; and besides there was a circumstance which made it similar to that; for as the men of Sodom were eating and drinking, when their destruction came upon them, so Belshazzar, and his nobles, were feasting and revelling when the city was taken. The Jews^{f257} say, that, after Belshazzar was slain, Darius reigned one year, and in his second year the city was overthrown, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven; but without any foundation; for certain it is that Babylon was in being many years after this, and continued to the time of Alexander the great.

Ver. 20. *It shall never be inhabited, &c.*] As it has not been since its utter destruction. Pausanias^{f258}, who lived in the times of Adrian, says, Babylon, the greatest city that ever the sun saw, that then there was nothing left of it but a wall: what is now called Babylon is a new city, and built in another place:

neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; which is the same thing repeated in other and stronger terms, for the confirmation of it:

neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; that sort of the Arabians called Scenitae, because they dwelt in tents, and moved from place to place with their flocks, for the sake of pasture; but here there should be none for them, and therefore would not pitch their tents at it:

neither shall the shepherds make their folds there; as they had used to do in the pastures adjoining to it, which were formerly exceeding good, but now would be barren and unfruitful; and as there would be no shepherds in the city, so neither would any neighbouring ones come hither, or any from distant parts; partly because of the unfruitfulness of the place, and partly through fear of wild beasts, which had their habitation there, as follows. Pliny^{f259} says it was reduced to a mere desert.

Ver. 21. *But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there*, &c.] What sort of creatures are meant is not certain. The Targum renders it by a word which signifies monstrous, astonishing creatures; the Latin interpreter of it calls them apes. Jarchi and Kimchi say such are intended as are called martens or sables, a creature of the weasel kind. The Hebrew word does not much differ from the Arabic one used for “wild cats”:

and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; whose voices are very mournful and unpleasant. Aben Ezra says such creatures are meant, that those that see them are amazed at them. Jarchi declares they are a kind of creatures he was ignorant of; and Kimchi thinks they are the same with “furon”, or “ferrets”: and the Latin interpreter of the Targum renders the word that uses by “weasels”:

and owls shall dwell there; or “the daughters of the owl”, or “of the ostriches”, as the Targum and Syriac version; with which agrees the Vulgate Latin, rendering the word “ostriches”, as it is in (^{294B}Lamentations 4:3); the Septuagint version translates it “sirens”, or “mermaids”:

and satyrs shall dance there; a sort of monstrous creatures with the ancients, painted half men and half goats; the upper part of them like men, except the horns on their heads, and the lower parts like goats, and all over hairy; and the word here used signifies hairy; and is used for goats, and sometimes for devils, either because they have appeared in this form, as Kimchi says, to them that believe them; or because they, by their appearance, inject such horror in men, as cause their hair to stand upright: hence the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret it of devils here; and so the Septuagint version, and those that follow it, the Syriac and Arabic, render

it, “and demons shall dance there”: with this agrees the account of mystical Babylon, (~~f68D~~ Revelation 18:2).

Ver. 22. *And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses*, &c.] The Targum and Syriac version, “in their palaces”, and so the Vulgate Latin; or “with their widows”, such as have lost their mates: what creatures are here meant is very uncertain; we in general call them the wild beasts of the islands, because the word is sometimes used for islands; the Targum renders it “cats”, wild ones; the Syriac version, “sirens”; and the Arabic, the “hyaenae”; the Septuagint version, “onocentaurs”; and the Vulgate Latin version, “owls”, which live in desolate houses, and cry or answer to one another, which is the sense of the phrase here:

and dragons in [their] pleasant palaces; where they delight to be, though otherwise very dismal. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “hedgehogs”: the Syriac version, “wild dogs”; and the Vulgate Latin version, “sirens”; the word is commonly used for “whales”, and sometimes for serpents, which seems to be the sense here; and to this agrees the account that R. Benjamin Tudelensis^{f260} gives of Babylon, who, when he was there, about five or six hundred years ago, saw the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in ruins, but men were afraid to enter into it, because of serpents and scorpions, which were within it. Rauwolff, a German traveller, about the year 1574, reports of the tower of Babylon, that it was so ruinous, so low, and so full of venomous creatures, which lodge in holes made by them in the rubbish, that no one durst approach nearer to it than within half a league, excepting during two months in the winter, when these animals never stir out of their holes^{f261}:

and her time [is] near to come; that is, the time of the destruction of Babylon, as the Targum expresses it; which, though two hundred years or more from the time of this prophecy, yet but a short time with God; and when this was made known to the Jews in captivity, for whose comfort it is written, it was not afar off:

and her days shall not be prolonged; the days of her prosperity and happiness, but should be shortened.