

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 21

This chapter contains prophecies against Babylon, Idumea, and Arabia. The prophecy against Babylon is called “the burden of the desert of the sea”; whose enemies are described by the fierce manner of their coming, and by the land from whence they came, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:1) which vision being declared to the prophet, is called a grievous one; what made it so was treachery among themselves; and the Medes and Persians are invited to besiege them, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:2) their terror and distress upon it are represented by the pains of a woman in travail, whom the prophet personates, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:3,4) and by the methods they took to defend themselves, to which they were alarmed, when in the greatest security and jollity, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:5) all which is illustrated by the vision of the watchman, who saw the Medes and Persians on the march, signified by a chariot and a couple of horsemen, who declares the fall of Babylon, and the destruction of its gods, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:6-9) which would issue in the good and comfort of the church and people of God, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:10) then follows the prophecy against Idumea, which consists of a question put to the watchman, and his answer to it; to which an exhortation is added, (²³¹¹Isaiah 21:11,12) and the chapter concludes with another prophecy against Arabia: the calamities threatened are lodging in a forest, thirst, famine, and fleeing from the sword (²³¹³Isaiah 21:13-15), and the time is fixed when all this should be, by which their glory would fail, and the number of their archers and mighty men be lessened; for the confirmation of which the divine testimony is annexed, (²³¹⁶Isaiah 21:16,17).

Ver. 1. *The burden of the desert of the sea,* &c.] That this is a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon is clear from the express mention both of the Medes and Persians, by whom it should be, and of Babylon itself, and its fall, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 21:2,9) which, though prophesied of before, is here repeated, partly for the certainty of it, and partly for the comfort of the people of the Jews, who would be captives in it, and so break off and prevent their confidence in a nation that would be ruined; and perhaps this prophecy might be delivered out about the time or on account of Merodach

king of Babylon sending letters and a present to Hezekiah, who showed to his messengers all his treasures. Babylon is here called “the desert of the sea”, not because it was a desert land, for it was a very fruitful one; or because it would be laid desolate, and become as a wilderness; but either because there was one between that and the countries of Media and Persia, as Kimchi, from whence its destroyers would come; or rather, because it was, as the word may be rendered, a “plain”, for so the land of Chaldea was, and the city of Babylon particularly was built in a plain, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:2) and because this country abounded with pools and lakes, which with the Hebrews are called seas; and especially since the city of Babylon was situated by the river Euphrates, which ran about it, and through it and which therefore is said to dwell upon many waters, (^{<2513>}Jeremiah 51:13) hence it has this name of the desert of the sea; besides, Abydenus^{f401}, from Megasthenes, informs us, that all the places about Babylon were from the beginning water, and were called a sea; and it should be observed that mystical Babylon is represented by a woman in a desert, sitting on many waters, which are interpreted of a multitude of people and nations, (^{<6670>}Revelation 17:1,3,5,15) and some here by “sea” understand the multitude of its riches, power, and people. The Targum is,

“the burden of the armies, which come from the wilderness, as the waters of the sea;”

understanding it not of Babylon, but of its enemies and invaders, as follows:

as whirlwinds in the south pass through; and nothing can hinder them, such is their force and power; they bear all before them, come suddenly, blow strongly, and there is no resisting them; (see ^{<3094>}Zechariah 9:14):

[so] it cometh from the desert; or “he”, that is, Cyrus; or “it”, the army under him, would come with like irresistible force and power as the southern whirlwinds do, which come from a desert country; at least that part of it in which their soldiers were trained up, and which in their march to Babylon must come through the desert, that lay, as before observed, between that and their country, and through which Cyrus did pass^{f402}:

from a terrible land; a land of serpents and scorpions, as Jarchi; or a land afar off, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; whose power and usage, or customs, were not known, and so dreaded, as the Medes and Persians were by

Nitocris queen of Babylon, who took care to preserve her people, and prevent their falling into their hands. The Targum is,

“from a land in which terrible things are done.”

Ver. 2. *A grievous vision is declared unto me*, &c.] The prophet; meaning the vision of Babylon’s destruction, which was “hard”, as the word signifies, and might seem harsh and cruel; not to him, nor to the Jews, but to the Chaldeans:

the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth; that is, according to Jarchi, one treacherous dealer deals treacherously with another, and one spoiler spoils another; the Medes and Persians deal treacherously with and spoil the Babylonians, who had dealt treacherously with and spoiled other nations: and to this sense some read the words, “the treacherous dealer hath found a treacherous dealer, and the spoiler one that spoileth”^{f403}: some take it to be a compellation of the Medes and Persians, calling upon them, under these characters, to go up and besiege Babylon, as, “O treacherous dealer, O spoiler”^{f404}; though the words may be understood of the perfidy and treachery of the Babylonians, of which they had been frequently guilty, and which is given as a reason of their fall and ruin; or rather they suggest the treacherous means by which they should be ruined, even by some from among themselves; particularly, history^{f405} informs us, that Gobrias and Gadates, two noblemen of the king of Babylon, being used ill by him, revolted from him, and joined with Cyrus; and when the river Euphrates was drained, went at the head of his army in two parties, and guided them into the city, and took it; or rather Belshazzar king of Babylon himself is meant, who acted, and continued to act, most impiously and wickedly: and therefore,

go up, O Elam; or Elamites, as the Targum and Septuagint; (see ^{<400>}Acts 2:9) these were Persians, so called from Elam, a province in Persia; who are here called upon by the Lord of armies, through the mouth of the prophet, to go up to war against Babylon; and these are mentioned first, because Cyrus, who commanded the whole army, was a Persian: or if Elam is taken for a province, which was indeed subject to Babylon, of which Shushan was the capital city, (^{<700>}Daniel 8:2) the governor of it, Abradates, revolted from the Babylonians, and joined Cyrus, and fought with him^{f406}:

besiege, O Media; or, O ye Medes, join with the Persians in the siege of Babylon; as they did:

all the sighing thereof have I made to cease; either of the army of the Medes and Persians, who, by reason of long and tedious marches, frequent battles, and hard sieges, groaned and sighed; but now it would be over with them, when Babylon was taken; or of the Babylonians themselves, who would have no mercy shown them, nor have any time for sighing, being cut off suddenly, and in a moment; or rather of other people oppressed by them, and particularly the Lord's people the Jews, who had been in captivity for the space of seventy years, during which they had sighed and groaned, because of the hardships they endured; but now sighing would be at an end, and they should have deliverance, as they had, by Cyrus the Persian. The sighing is not that with which they sighed, but which they caused in others.

Ver. 3. *Therefore are my loins filled with pain*, &c.] As a woman at the time of childbirth, as the following words show: these words are spoken by the prophet, not with respect to himself, as if he was pained at heart at the prophecy and vision he had of the ruin of Babylon, since that was a mortal enemy of his people; and besides, their sighing being made to cease could never be a reason of distress in him, but of joy: these words are spoken by him in the person of the Babylonians, and particularly of Belshazzar their king:

pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth; which come suddenly and at once, are very sharp and strong, and inevitable, which cannot be escaped; so the sudden destruction of the wicked, and particularly of antichrist at the last day, and the terror that shall attend it, are expressed by the same metaphor, (^{518D}1 Thessalonians 5:2,3):

I was bowed down at the hearing [of it]; distorted and convulsed; not the prophet at the hearing of the prophecy, but Belshazzar, whom he personated, at hearing that Cyrus had entered the city, and was at the gates of his palace:

I was dismayed at the seeing [of it]; the handwriting upon the wall, at which his countenance changed, his thoughts were troubled, his loins loosed, and his knees smote one against another, (^{218B}Daniel 5:6).

Ver. 4. *My heart panted*, &c.] Fluttered about, and could hardly keep its place: or, "my mind wandered"^{f407}; like a person in distraction and confusion, that knew not what to think say or do:

fearfulness affrighted me; the terror of Cyrus's army seized him, of its irruption into the city, and of his being destroyed by it; the writing on the wall threw him into a panic, and the news of the Medes and Persians being entered the city increased it:

the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me; in which he promised himself so much pleasure, at a feast he had made for his princes, wives, and concubines; either in honour of his god, as some think^{f408}, being an annual one; or, as Josephus ben Gorion^{f409} says, on account of the victory he had obtained over the Medes and Persians; and so was quite secure, and never in the least thought of destruction being at hand; but in the midst of all his revelling, mirth, and jollity, the city was surprised and taken, and he slain, (~~צריב~~ Daniel 5:1,30). So mystical Babylon, in the midst of her prosperity, while she is saying that she sits a queen, and knows no sorrow, her judgment and plagues shall come upon her, (~~צריב~~ Revelation 18:7,8).

Ver. 5. *Prepare the table*, &c.] Set it, spread it, furnish it with all kind of provisions, as at a feast; and such an one Belshazzar made, the night the city was taken: these words are directed to him by his courtiers or queen, as represented by the prophet, in order to remove his fears; (see ~~צריב~~ Daniel 5:10):

watch in the watchtower; this is said to his servants, his soldiers, or sentinels, that were placed on watchtowers to observe the motions of the enemy, who were ordered on duty, and to be on guard, that he and his nobles might feast the more securely; and all this being done, a table furnished, and a guard set, he, his nobles, and all his guests, are encouraged to “eat” and “drink” liberally and cheerfully, without any fear of the Medes and Persians, who were now besieging the city; when, at the same time, by the Lord it would be said,

arise, ye princes; not, ye nobles of Babylon, from your table, quit it, and your feasting and mirth:

[and] anoint the shield; prepare your arms, see that they are in good order, get them in readiness, and defend your king, yourselves, and your city, as some; but the princes of the Medes and Persians, Cyrus and his generals, are bid to take their arms, and enter the city while indulging themselves at their feast: it was usual to anoint shields, and other pieces of armour, partly that they might be smooth and slippery, as Jarchi, that so the darts of the

enemy might easily slide off; and partly for the polishing and brightening of them, being of metal, especially of brass; so the Targum,

“polish and make the arms bright;”

(see ^{f402}2 Samuel 1:21). Aben Ezra understands the words as an exhortation to the princes, to arise and anoint Darius king, in the room of Belshazzar slain; the word “shield” sometimes signifying a king, for which he mentions (^{f3849}Psalm 84:9) so Ben Melech; but they are a call of the prophet, or of the Lord, to the princes of the Medes and Persians, to take the opportunity, while the Babylonians were feasting, to fall upon them; and the words may be rendered thus ^{f410},

“in or while preparing the table, watching in the watchtower, eating and drinking, arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield;”

which was done by their servants, though they are called upon.

Ver. 6. *For thus hath the Lord said unto me, &c.*] This is a confirmation of the above prophecy from the Lord himself, he showing to the prophet, in a visionary way, the ruin of Babylon, and the means and instruments of it:

go, set a watchman; not Habakkuk, as Jarchi; nor Urias, as the Septuagint; nor Jeremiah, as others; but himself, who, in a way of vision, represented a watchman on the walls of Babylon; and which was no way unsuitable to his character and office as a prophet:

let him declare what he seeth; what he sees coming at a distance, or at hand, let him faithfully and publicly make it known: these are not the words of the king of Babylon to one of his watchmen; but of the Lord of hosts to his prophet.

Ver. 7. *And he saw a chariot [with] a couple of horsemen, &c.*] The drivers of it, or the riders in it; perhaps meaning Cyrus and Darius:

a chariot of asses, [and] a chariot of camels; by the former may be meant the Persians, who very much used mules or asses; and the Medes by the latter, who abounded in camels: the words are in the singular number, and may be rendered, “a rider of an ass, and a rider of a camel”^{f411}; and so may describe the couple of riders along with the chariot, which may signify the whole army of the Medes and Persians, chariots being much used in war; and the rider of the ass or mule may design Cyrus, who was called a mule, because of his mixed descent, being a Persian by his father, and a Mede by

his mother's side; so the oracle of Apollo told the Babylonians, that their city should stand, until a mule was king of the Medes; and the rider of the camel may point at Darius:

and he hearkened diligently with much heed; the watchman that was set to watch used the utmost attention to what he saw, and listened diligently to the noise of this chariot and horsemen, as they came nearer.

Ver. 8. *And he cried, a lion, &c.*] That is, the watchman cried, a lion, or that he saw a lion; not Uriah the priest, as the Septuagint; nor Habakkuk, as some Jewish writers; but Cyrus, at the head of the Persian and Median armies, compared to a lion for his fierceness, courage, and strength; (see ^{<50417>}2 Timothy 4:17) a type of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, by whom antichrist, or mystical Babylon, will be destroyed, (^{<6115>}Revelation 5:5). The Targum is,

“the prophet said, the voice of armies, coming with coats of mail, as a lion.”

Aben Ezra interprets it, the watchman cried as a lion, with a great voice; upon sight of the chariots and horsemen, he lifted up his voice, and roared like a lion, to express the terror he was in, and the greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the city.

I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime: so that nothing could escape his notice:

and I am set in my ward whole nights: which expresses his diligence, vigilance, and constancy, in the discharge of his duty; and therefore what he said he saw might be depended on.

Ver. 9. *And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, &c.*] Or “of a man”^{f412}; a chariot with a man in it, Cyrus or Darius:

[with] a couple of horsemen; the army of the Medes and Persians, with their two leaders or generals, as before; only now seen nearer the city, just entering into it; for so the word may be rendered, “goeth”, or “is gone in a chariot”, &c.:

and he answered, and said; either the watchman, upon seeing the chariot and horsemen go into the city; or one of the horsemen that went in; so the Syriac and Arabic versions; or rather the prophet, and the Lord by him:

Babylon is fallen, is fallen: which is repeated to show the certainty of it. The same words are used of the fall of mystical Babylon, (⁶⁴¹⁸Revelation 14:8 18:2). The Targum is,

“it is fallen, and also it shall be, that Babylon shall fall;”

that is, a second time, and hereafter: and so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it of two falls, one by the Medes and Persians, and the other by the hand of heaven, or God himself: literal Babylon fell by the former; mystical Babylon will fall by the latter, even by the breath of Christ’s mouth, and the brightness of his coming:

and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground; either Cyrus or Darius, who might do this, not from any detestation of them, but for the sake of the gold, and silver, and riches, that were about them; or rather the Lord by them, and so put an end to idolatry; as will be, when mystical Babylon is destroyed.

Ver. 10. *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor, &c.*] Which may be understood either of the Babylonians, now threshed or punished by the Lord, and whom he had made use of as instruments for the punishment of others; or rather of the people of the Jews, whom the prophet calls “his”, as being his countrymen, to whom he was affected, and with whom he sympathized; and besides, he speaks in the name of the Lord; or it is the Lord that speaks by him, calling the church of the Jews his floor, and the people his corn, which were dear and valuable to him, as choice grain, wheat, and other things; and therefore, though he threshed or afflicted them, it was for their good, to purge and cleanse them, and separate the chaff from them; and indeed it was on their account, and for their good, that all this was to be done to Babylon, before predicted; where they were, as corn under the threshing instrument, greatly oppressed and afflicted, but now should be delivered; for the confirmation of which it is added:

that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you; the preceding prophecy was not a dream of his, but a vision from the Lord of hosts; it was not devised by him, but told him by the Lord, and that for the good and comfort of the people of Israel, whose covenant God he was; and the prophet acted a faithful part, in delivering it just as he received it, which might be depended on.

Ver. 11. *The burden of Dumah, &c.*] Whether this prophecy concerns the Edomites or Idumeans, or whether the Arabians, particularly the Dumean

Arabians, is a question, since Dumah was a son of Ishmael, (^{<0254>}Genesis 25:14) and there was a place in Arabia called Dumatha^{f413}; and Aben Ezra and Kimchi interpret it here of Dumah the son of Ishmael; but inasmuch as mention is made of Seir, a mountain, which belonged to the Edomites, (^{<0308>}Genesis 36:8,9) and a distinct prophecy afterwards follows concerning Arabia, it is more generally thought that Dumah signifies Edom or Idumea; the Septuagint version renders it, the vision of Idumea; and the Arabic version calls it, a prophecy concerning Edom and Seir; and Jarchi, by Dumah, understands Edom; and Kimchi himself observes, that in a book of R. Meir's, it was found written,

“the burden of Duma, the burden of Edom.”

Jerom says, Duma is not the whole province of Idumea, but a certain country in it, that lay to the south, twenty miles distant from a city of Palestine, in his days called Eleutheropolis; and further observes, that some of the Hebrews read “Roma” for “Duma”, and suppose that the Roman empire is designed; and certain it is, that nothing is more common with them than to call the Roman empire, and Rome itself, by the name of Edom, and the Romans, or Christians, Edomites^{f414}:

he calleth to me out of Seir; a mountain inhabited by the Edomites, the posterity of Esau, so called from Seir the Horite, (^{<0308>}Genesis 36:8,9,20). The Targum understands this of God calling from heaven to the prophet to prophesy; and Jarchi of an angel, or a prophet out of Seir, calling to God, who he supposes is meant by the watchman; but it seems best to interpret it of an Edomite, or an inhabitant of Mount Seir, calling to the watchman, and saying, as follows:

watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? what time of night is it? what o'clock is it? how much of the night is gone, and what remains to come? it is the business of watchmen to give or tell the time of night: or, “what from the night?”^{f415} what has happened since it was night? hast thou observed nothing? is not the enemy nigh, or danger at hand? or, “what” sayest thou “concerning the night?” the night of darkness, affliction, and distress, in which we are, when will it be over? the question is repeated, as is usual with persons in a panic, and fearing the watchman should not hear them the first time; or it may denote one coming after another in a fright, asking the same question. Some, by the watchman, understand God himself, as Jarchi and Abarbinel, who is Israel's keeper, (^{<0304>}Psalms 121:4,5) where the same word is used as here; and well agrees

with God, who is the keeper and preserver of all men in a way of providence; and of his own people in a way of grace; and who, as he watches over the evil of sin, to bring the evil of affliction or punishment for it; so he watches over his, to do good unto them; and, as the times and seasons are in his power only, and are known by him, it is most proper to apply unto him. Others think Christ is meant, as Cocceius; and so the Jews say^{f416}, this is Metatron the keeper of Israel, which with them is one of the names of the Messiah; and to whom this character of a watchman agrees, as he is the shepherd of his flock, and the keeper of his people; and who, as the omniscient God, knows all things that are, and shall be, and which will quickly come to pass: though it may be best of all to understand it of a prophet or prophets, who were called watchmen under the Old Testament, (~~2916~~ Isaiah 21:6,8 ~~4187~~ Ezekiel 3:17) as ministers of the word are under the New, in allusion to shepherds and watchmen of cities; and whose business it is, as to show sinners the danger of their ways, and to arouse sleepy saints, so to give the time of night, that the churches of Christ may know whereabouts they are. Now let it be observed, that this prophecy may refer to the times when Dumah, Edom, or Idumea, was possessed by the Jews, according to the prophecy in (~~0248~~ Numbers 24:18,19) as it was before the coming of Christ; Herod, an Idumean, was upon the throne of Judea when he came, at which time the Jews and Idumeans were mixed together; and the latter, at least many of them, embraced the Jewish religion^{f417}, and so had knowledge of the Messiah and his coming, after which they may be thought to be inquiring here. The Mosaic dispensation was a night season, there was much obscurity in it, the shadows of darkness were stretched out on it; and though there was the moon of the ceremonial law, and there were the stars the prophets, yet the sun of righteousness was not risen; and it was a time of gross darkness with the Gentile world: now one or more of these proselyted Idumeans, or of the Jews among them, may be supposed to be inquiring of the prophet or prophets of the Lord in their time, how much of this night was gone, when it would be over, or the Messiah would appear, and bring in the morning, and make the bright day of the Gospel dispensation. And again, as Edom and Seir were typical of Rome Papal, or the Romish antichrist, the person calling out to the watchman may design such of the people of God in the midst of them, for which (see ~~6804~~ Revelation 18:4) who, sensible of the night of darkness they are in, are looking for and inquiring after latter day light and glory. The Targum of the whole verse is,

“the burden of the cup of curse, to give Dumah to drink: to me he calls out of heaven, prophet, declare unto them the prophecy; prophet, declare unto them what shall hereafter come to pass.”

Ver. 12. *The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night, &c.]*

Not only a morning, but a night; and as sure as the morning comes, so shall the night; there will be a constant succession of morning and night; as a morning of prosperity, so a night of adversity: the morning of the Gospel dispensation was coming on, or of Christ's coming in the flesh, which was attended with joy and cheerfulness; like the morning, it dispersed the shadows of the law, introduced light, which gradually and irresistibly spread itself over the Gentile world; but then followed a night of darkness to the Jews, blindness happened to them, which still continues; and to the Arabians, Saracens, and Turks, when the bottomless pit was opened by Mahomet, which let out smoke and locusts in the eastern part of the world; and to the western part, when the Romish antichrist established himself as universal bishop: a morning came on again at the Reformation, and a night will follow, which is now begun; it is already a time of darkness, coldness, sleepiness, and of error and heresy, which will issue in an eventide, in a dark night: if it be asked what time it is with us, or how far we are gone toward the night? the answer is, we are in and toward the close of the Sardinian church state; we are in the twilight, or in that part of time which is neither day nor night, (^{<3846>}Zechariah 14:6,7) the slaying of the witnesses is yet to come, which, with the general spread of Popery all over Christendom, will make it entire night; after which will come on the morning of the spiritual reign of Christ, when the light of the Gospel will be spread everywhere, and joy and gladness will attend the saints in all places; and it will be a time of great prosperity, both spiritual and temporal; which will be succeeded by another night of coldness, deadness, and carnal security, and will last till the second and personal coming of Christ; which will bring on the morning of a glorious resurrection to the saints, after which there will be no more night to them, though there will be an eternal one to the wicked. The Targum is,

“the prophet said, there is a reward for the righteous, and punishment for the wicked;”

and so the Jews elsewhere^{f418} interpret it of the morning of redemption to the righteous, and of the night of darkness to the wicked; or, as they sometimes express it^{f419}, the morning is for the righteous, and the night for

the wicked; the morning for Israel, and the night for the nations of the world. Dumah they sometimes^{f420} make to be the angel appointed over spirits, who they suppose gather together, and say to him, “watchman”, &c.

if ye will inquire, inquire ye; seriously and in good earnest, diligently and constantly, with all humility and reverence, by prayer to God and by searching the Scriptures, and by application to the watchmen, the ministers of the word, who make it their business to study it, and have the mind of Christ:

return, come; return by repentance, and come to God, who receives backsliders, heals their backslidings, and loves them freely; or, “come again”, to the watchman, and to the Lord, and renew your inquiries till you get satisfaction.

Ver. 13. *The burden upon Arabia*, &c.] Which lay heavy upon it, as a burden upon a beast; or “concerning” it, or “against” it, as Kimchi notes; which Arabia, or what part thereof, is meant, may be gathered from the names after mentioned. The Targum is,

“the burden of the cup of cursing, to give the Arabians to drink.”

Ben Melech says, these are the Arabians that dwell in the wilderness:

in the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge; not in their tents and huts, which they had used to carry with them, and set up where they pleased; since now in their fright and flight they would leave them behind them, and so be obliged to take up their lodging in woods and forests; perhaps the desert of Arabia Petraea is meant:

O ye travelling companies of Dedanim; or Dedanites; these were Arabians that descended from Jokshan, a son of Abraham by Keturah, (⁴¹²¹⁸Genesis 25:3) who were either shepherds, who went in companies together with their flocks, and moved from place to place for the sake of pasture; or rather were merchants, who went in caravans and troops with their merchandise from one country to another; (see ⁴²⁷¹⁵Ezekiel 27:15,20) and who, because of the ravages of the enemy, would be glad of a lodging in the woods for security.

Ver. 14. *The inhabitants of the land of Tema*, &c.] This country had its name from Tema, one of the sons of Ishmael, (⁴¹²¹⁵Genesis 25:15). The

Targum calls it the land of the south, as if it was Teman. These people were Arabians, and are here said to assist their countrymen, the Dedanites, in distress:

brought water to him that was thirsty; as travellers are wont to be, especially in a desert land, and when fleeing from an enemy; in which circumstances the travelling companies of Dedanim now were:

they prevented with their bread him that fled; gave it to him, being hungry and necessitous, without asking for it. Now all this seems to show what calamities should come upon the inhabitants of some parts of Arabia; that they should lodge in a forest, be hungry and thirsty, and flee before their enemy, as follows.

Ver. 15. *For they fled from the swords*, &c.] Of their enemy, whom they could not withstand; perhaps the Assyrian army:

from the drawn sword; just ready to be sheathed in them:

and from the bent bow; just going to let the arrow fly at them:

and from the grievousness of war: too heavy for them to bear.

Ver. 16. *For thus hath the Lord said unto me*, &c.] The prophet; which confirms what is before said, as well as assures the accomplishment of what follows:

within a year, according to the years of an hireling; that is, exactly and precisely, as soon as ever the year is come to an end; for the hireling, when his year is up, instantly demands dismissal from his service, or his wages, or both. The time is to be reckoned from the delivery of this prophecy; and so the calamity predicted was brought upon them by the Assyrians, perhaps under Sennacherib, when he invaded the cities of Judah, and might take Arabia in his way; less time is allowed than was the Moabites, who suffered by the same hand; (see ^{<23164>}Isaiah 16:14):

and all the glory of Kedar shall fail; these were another sort of Arabians, as the Targum calls them: they descended from Kedar, a son of Ishmael, (^{<02513>}Genesis 25:13) their “glory” were their multitude, their riches and substance, and which chiefly lay in their flocks; for the sake of which they moved from place to place for pasture, and dwelled in tents, which they carried with them, and pitched where it was most convenient for them;

hence they were called Scenites; (see ^{<19015>}Psalm 120:5 ^{<2015>}Song of Solomon 1:5).

Ver. 17. *And the residue of the number of archers, &c.]* Or of “bow”^{f421}, for “bows”: that is, of men that use the bow, or are expert at it, as the Kedarenes were, both for taking wild beasts, and fighting with men, in which they followed their original ancestor Ishmael, (^{<0213>}Genesis 21:20) the number of these archers it seems had been great, but would be lessened by the calamity threatened; and those that would escape that, and be preserved from it, should be lessened still, as follows:

the mighty men of the children of Kedar shall be diminished; their military men, the most expert at the use of the bow, and the most valiant and courageous; the few of those that were left, and did not fall by the sword of the Assyrians, should gradually diminish, and be fewer and fewer:

for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken [it]; who cannot lie, nor will repent, and whose word never fails, what he has said he will do, nor will he alter the thing that is gone out of his lips; and he is spoken of as the God of Israel, because it was to the Israelites that this was said, and for their sakes; either because these Arabians some way or other were injurious to them, or they had put some confidence in them. The Targum is,

“because by the word of the Lord God of Israel it is so decreed.”