

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 23

This chapter gives an account both of the desolation and restoration of Tyre, an ancient city of Phoenicia. Its desolation is described as so complete, that a house was not left in it, (²³⁰¹Isaiah 23:1) and by the fewness and stillness of the inhabitants of it, with which it had been replenished, it having been a mart of nations, (²³⁰²Isaiah 23:2,3) and by the shame and pain Zidon, a neighbouring city, was put into, on account of it, (²³⁰⁴Isaiah 23:4,5) and by the removal of its inhabitants to other places, (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 23:6,7,12) all which is attributed to the counsel, purpose, and commandment of God, to destroy it; whose view was to stain their pride, and bring them into contempt, (²³⁰⁸Isaiah 23:8-11) the means and instruments made use of to this purpose were the Assyrians or Chaldeans, (²³¹³Isaiah 23:13) and its desolation is further aggravated by the loss of its trade; hence the merchants of other countries are called to mourning, (²³¹⁴Isaiah 23:1,14) the date and duration of this desolation were seventy years, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 23:15) after which it should be restored, and its merchandise and commerce with all the nations of the earth be revived again, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 23:15-18).

Ver. 1. *The burden of Tyre, &c.*] Or a prophecy concerning the destruction of it. The Targum is,

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

This was a famous city in Phoenicia, which exceeded in renown and grandeur all the cities of Syria and Phoenicia^{f446}, and was much known for its trade and navigation, for which it was well situated by the sea; and indeed new Tyre stood in it, about half a mile from the shore, before it was joined to the continent by Alexander the great: but this seems to be old Tyre, and, was upon the continent, which was built by the Phoenicians before the Trojan war^{f447}, and two hundred and forty years before the temple of Solomon^{f448}. It had its name **רצור**, “Tzur”, in the Hebrew language, from whence it is called Tyre, from the rock on which it was built, that word so signifying. It is written here without a vau; and it is a

rule with the Jews^{f449}, that whenever this word is written full, with all its letters, it is to be understood of the city of Tyre; but if wanting, it designs Rome; and Cocceius interprets the whole prophecy of the antichristian city.

Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; not of Carthage, as the Septuagint version; but of Tartessus in Spain, which traded with Tyre, and from whence the Phoenicians are said to have large quantities of gold and silver. Some interpret it Tarsus, a seaport in Cilicia, which lay nearer to Tyre, the same place the Apostle Paul was of, (^{<42B>}Acts 22:3) though by Tarshish may be meant the sea, as it sometimes is, and as the Targum and Jarchi here interpret it, and so designs ships in general; or, as the Targum, those that go down in the ships of the sea; or all sorts of persons, from every quarter, that sailed in ships to Tyre, and traded with it; these are now called to mourning and lamentation, because their commerce with it was now over:

for it is laid waste; not Tarshish, but Tyre; and this was done, not by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who indeed besieged it for the space of five years, but took it not; the Tyrians with twelve ships scattered his fleet, and took five hundred of his men, this was when Elulaeus was king of Tyre^{f450}; nor by Alexander the great; for though it was besieged and taken by him, yet before his time it had been besieged by Nebuchadnezzar thirteen years, and at last was taken by him, when Ithobalus was king of it^{f451}: and this seems rather intended here, since seventy years after this it was to be restored again, which best accords with those times, as will be seen hereafter:

so that there is no house, no entering in; no port or haven open to go in at, no shops to vend their goods in, no warehouses to lay them up in, nor inns to lodge at, as well as no private houses for the inhabitants to dwell in, all being destroyed by the enemy:

from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them; Chittim was one of the sons of Javan, as was also Tarshish, by whom the isles of the Gentiles were divided, (^{<01B>}Genesis 10:4,5) from whom the Ionians or Grecians descended; so that Chittim seems to design some part of Greece, or isles belonging to it. The Macedonians are called by this name; and Alexander the Macedonian is said to come out of the land of Chittim, as in the Apocrypha:

“And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chettiim, had smitten

Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece,” (1 Maccabees 1:1)

“Beside this, how they had discomfited in battle Philip, and Perseus, king of the Citims, with others that lifted up themselves against them, and had overcome them:” (1 Maccabees 8:5)

hence some think he is designed here, and the destruction of Tyre by him; and the words may be rendered, “from the land of Chittim he is revealed”, or “appears unto them”; that is, as Jarchi glosses it, the destroyer to the men of Tyre, though he by Chittim understands the Cuthites. Josephus says^{f452} Chittim the son of Javan possessed the island Chethima, now called Cyprus, and from hence all islands, and most maritime places, are called Chittim by the Hebrews; and observes, that one of the cities of Cyprus is called Citium. And in the lamentation for Tyre, (³⁷¹⁶Ezekiel 27:6), we read of the isles of Chittim; by which are meant perhaps the isles in the Aegean and Ionian seas, who traded with Tyre, and from these first came the tidings of Tyre’s destruction to the ships or merchants of Tarshish; which agrees with a Hebrew exposition mentioned by Jarchi,

“from the land of Chittim is revealed to the men of Tarshish the destruction of Tyre; for the inhabitants of Tyre fled to Chittim, and from thence the rumour was heard.”

The sense which R. Joseph Kimchi gives of the passage, as his son David relates, is this,

“Chittim were merchants that went to Babylon, and told them that they might go to Tyre, and would be able to take it, and they would help them, and carry them there by sea.”

But it seems more likely that those trading people, by going from one country to another, got knowledge of the design of the Babylonians against Tyre, and acquainted that city with it. Some join the words, “from the land of Chittim”, to the preceding, thus, “no entering in from the land of Chittim, it is revealed”, or made known; that is, it is some way or other made known to the merchants of Chittim^{f453} that there is no entrance into Tyre, the city being laid waste and its port ruined, so that it is in vain for them to send their ships; to which the Septuagint in some measure agrees,

“because it perishes, and there are none come from the land of Chittim, it is carried captive.”

The Targum is,

“they shall come from the land of Chittim against them;”

which seems to favour the first sense.

Ver. 2. *Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle*, &c.] Either the isles of Chittim, or other islands that traded with Tyre, the singular being put for the plural, called upon to grieve and mourn, because the city of their merchandise was destroyed, as Kimchi; or of Tyre itself, which being situated at some distance from the shore, was an island itself, until it was joined to the continent by Alexander^{f454}; and even old Tyre might be so called, it being usual in Scripture to call places by the seashore isles; and besides, old Tyre included in it new Tyre, the island, as Pliny^{f455} suggests; who are instructed to be silent as mourners, and to cease from the hurries of business, which they would be obliged to, and not boast of their power and wealth, as they had formerly done, or attempt to defend themselves, which would be in vain:

thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished; Zidon was a very ancient city of Phoenicia, more ancient than Tyre; for Tyre was a colony of the Zidonians, and built by them, and so might be said to be replenished by them with men from the first, as it also was with mariners, (²⁷⁰⁸Ezekiel 27:8) and likewise with merchants and wares, they being a trading and seafaring people; wherefore they are spoken of as merchants, and as passing over the sea: or this may be understood of the isles replenished with goods by the merchants of Tyre and Zidon, but now no more, and therefore called to mourning.

Ver. 3. *And by great waters the seed of Sihor*, &c.] Sihor is the river Nile in Egypt; it had its name from the black colour of its waters, as in (²⁴²⁸Jeremiah 2:18) hence called by the Greeks Melas, and by the Latins Melo: the “seed” of it intends what was sown and grew upon the banks of it, or was nourished by the overflow of this river throughout the land, and includes corn, flax, paper, &c. with which Egypt abounded; and when this is said to be “by great waters”, the meaning either is, that it grew by great waters, the waters of the Nile, and through the influence of them; or that it came by great waters to Tyre; that is, by the waters of the sea, the Mediterranean Sea:

the harvest of the river [is] her revenue; this clause is the same with the former, and serves to explain it; the river is the river Nile, the harvest is the

seed that was sown and grew by it, and which at the proper season, when ripe, was gathered from it, and carried in ships to Tyre, with which that city was supplied and enriched, as if it had been its own produce:

and she is a mart of nations; Tyre was a city to which all nations traded, it was a mart for them all, and where they brought their wares to sell, and always found a market for them, here they had vent. The twenty seventh chapter of Ezekiel (²⁷⁰⁰Ezekiel 27:1-13) is a proper commentary on this clause.

Ver. 4. *Be thou ashamed, O Zidon, &c.*] A city near to Tyre, about twenty five miles from it; Jarchi says it was within a day's walk of it; these two cities, as they were near to each other, so they were closely allied together, and traded much with one another, so that the fall of Tyre must be distressing and confounding to Zidon; and besides, Tyre was a colony of the Zidonians, and therefore, (²³³⁰Isaiah 23:12), is called the daughter of Zidon, and could not but be affected with its ruin, and the more, as it might fear the same would soon be its case:

for the sea hath spoken; which washed the city of Tyre; or those that sailed in it; or rather Tyre itself, so called because its situation was by the sea, the island was encompassed with it:

[even] the strength of the sea; which was enriched by what was brought by sea to it, and was strengthened by it, being surrounded with the waters of it as with a wall, and had the sovereignty over it:

saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, [nor] bring up virgins; either the sea itself, which now no more brought great numbers of young people to Tyre, children to be educated, young men to be instructed in trade and business, and virgins to be given in marriage, the city being destroyed; or Tyre, which before was very populous, full of children, young men, and maidens, but now desolate; and which formerly sent out colonies abroad, and was a mother city to many, as Pliny says⁴⁵⁶; it was famous for the birth of many cities, as Lepti, Utica, Carthage, and Gades or Cales; but now it was all over with her. Some render it as a wish, "O that I had never travailed", &c. and so the Targum.

Ver. 5. *As at the report concerning Egypt, &c.*] Its future destruction prophesied of, (²⁸⁹⁰Isaiah 19:1-25) or what had in times past befallen it when the ten plagues were inflicted on it, and Pharaoh and his host were

drowned in the Red Sea; the report of which filled the neighbouring nations with fear and trembling, and put them into a panic; so the Targum,

“as they heard the plague with which the Egyptians were smitten:”

[so] shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre; of the destruction of that; this should have the like effect upon the nations round about them, especially such as traded with them, as the judgments on Egypt had upon their neighbours; for, as for what was to come, the destruction of Tyre was before the destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar: though some read the words, and they will bear to be read thus, “when the report” was made, or came “to the Egyptians, they will be in pain at”, or “according to the report of Tyre”^{f457};

“when it was heard in Egypt, pain shall take them for Tyre;”

as soon as the Egyptians heard of the taking and ruin of Tyre, they were in pain, as a woman in travail, partly fearing their own turn would be next, Tyre lying in the way of the Chaldeans unto them; and partly because of the loss of trade they sustained through the destruction of that city. In like pain will be the kings or merchants of the earth, at the destruction of Rome, (^{f689}Revelation 18:9,10,15-17) and, according to an exposition mentioned by Jarchi, Tyre here is Edom; that is, Rome, for that with the Jews is commonly meant by Edom.

Ver. 6. *Pass ye over to Tarshish,* &c.] Either to Tartessus in Spain, or to Tarsus in Cilicia, which lay over against them, and to which they might transport themselves, families, and substance, with greater ease; or “to a province of the sea”, as the Targum, any other seaport; the Septuagint says to Carthage, which was a colony of the Tyrians; and hither the Assyrian^{f458} historians say they did transport themselves; though Kimchi thinks this is spoken, not to the Tyrians, but to the merchants that traded with them, to go elsewhere with their merchandise, since their goods could no more be disposed of in that city as usual.

Howl, ye inhabitants of the isle: of Tyre, as in (^{221D}Isaiah 23:2) or of every isle, as Aben Ezra, which traded here, because now their commerce was at an end; so Kimchi.

Ver. 7. *[Is] this your joyous [city]?* &c.] Which the other day looked so gay, brisk, and cheerful, through the number of its inhabitants, largeness of

trade, fullness of provisions, and pleasures of every kind; and now distressed and desolate, and no voice of joy and gladness heard in it:

whose antiquity [is] of ancient days; the most ancient city in Phoenicia, excepting Zidon, as Strabo^{f459} says; and it was in being in the days of Joshua, (~~1680~~ Joshua 19:29) if the words there are rightly rendered; and if so, Josephus must be mistaken, unless he speaks of insular Tyre, when he says^{f460}, that from the building of Tyre to the building of the temple (of Song of Solomon) were two hundred and forty years, which must fall very short of the times of Joshua; such^{f461} seem to be nearer the truth, who make Agenor, the father of Cadmus, to be the builder of this city, who lived about the times of Joshua. The Tyrians indeed boasted of a still greater antiquity, and to which boasts perhaps reference is here had; for one of the priests of Tyre told Herodotus^{f462} that their city had been inhabited two thousand three hundred years; and Herodotus lived in the times of Artaxerxes and Xerxes, about the year of the world 3500. According to Sanchoniatho^{f463}, it was inhabited by Hypsuranius, who first built cottages of rushes, &c. in it; but these things are beyond all credit; however, certain it is that it was a very ancient city; it had the name of Palaetyrus, or old Tyre:

her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn; the sense is, that though the Tyrians had lived very delicately, and in great affluence, while their city was flourishing, yet now they should be very coarsely and roughly used; they should not ride on horses, or be drawn in carriages, but should be obliged to walk on foot, and be led or driven into a foreign country, Assyria or Chaldea, or to some province or provinces belonging to that empire; where they should be, not as inhabitants, but as sojourners and strangers; and should be used, not as freemen, but as captives and slaves. Grotius, by “her feet”, understands the feet of her ships, sails and oars, and mariners themselves, by means of which she got into distant places, for safety; and so it is reported in history^{f464}, that the Tyrians being long besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and having no hopes of being delivered, prepared a convenient number of ships, abandoned their city, transported themselves, wives, children, and riches, and sailed from thence to Cyprus, Carthage, and other maritime cities of their tributaries, or confederates; so that the Babylonians, when they took the city, found little or nothing in it; (see ~~208~~ Ezekiel 29:18) though the words will bear another sense, being, according to the accents, to be read in connection with the preceding clauses, thus, “[Is] this the joyous city? from the first days of her antiquity

her feet brought unto her [inhabitants] from afar to sojourn”; that is, by her labour and pains, by her journeys and voyages for the sake of merchandise, which may be meant by her feet, she brought a great number of persons to sojourn in her^{f465}.

Ver. 8. *Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning [city], &c.*] Which had a king over it, to whom it gave a crown; and which crowned its inhabitants with riches and plenty, and even enriched the kings of the earth, (~~3273~~Ezekiel 27:33) this is said as wondering who could lay a scheme to destroy such a city, or ever think of succeeding in it; who could take it into his head, or how could it enter into his heart, or who could have a heart to go about it, and still less power to effect the ruin of such a city, which was the queen of cities, and gave laws and crowns, riches and wealth, to others; surely no mere mortal could be concerned in this; (see ~~6118~~Revelation 13:3,4):

whose merchants [are] princes; either really such, for even princes and kings of the earth traded with her, (~~3271~~Ezekiel 27:21,33) or they were as rich as princes in other countries were:

whose traffickers [are] the honourable of the earth; made rich by trafficking with her, and so attained great honour and glory in the world; (see ~~6118~~Revelation 18:3,15).

Ver. 9. *The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, &c.*] To destroy Tyre; who is wonderful in counsel, capable of forming a wise scheme, and able to put it in execution; being the Lord of armies in heaven and in earth: and his end in it was,

to stain the pride of all glory; Tyre being proud of its riches, the extent of its commerce, and the multitude of its inhabitants, God was resolved, who sets himself against the proud, to abase them; to pollute the glorious things they were proud of; to deal with them as with polluted things; to trample upon them:

[and] to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth: or, “to make light all the heavy ones of the earth”^{f466}; all such, who are top heavy with riches and honour, God can, and sometimes does, make as light as feathers, which the wind carries away, and they fall into contempt and disgrace with their fellow creatures; and the Lord’s thus dealing with Tyre was not merely on their account, to stain their pride and glory, and disgrace their honourable ones; but for the sake of others also, that the great ones of the

earth might see and learn, by this instance of Tyre, how displeasing to the Lord is the sin of pride; what a poor, vain, and perishing thing, worldly honour and glory is; and what poor, weak, feeble creatures, the princes and potentates of the earth are, when the Lord takes them in hand.

Ver. 10. *Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish, &c.*] Or, “of the sea”, as the Vulgate Latin; meaning Tyre, which was situated in the sea, and did, as it were, spring from it, and was fortified by it, and supported by ships of merchandise on it, from various places; but now, being about to be destroyed, the inhabitants of it are called upon to pass through it, and get out of it as fast as they could, even as swiftly as a river runs, and in great abundance or multitudes. Kimchi thinks the Tyrians are bid to pass to the daughter of Tarshish, that is, to Tarshish itself, to make their escape out of their own land, and flee thither for safety; this the accents will not admit of, there being an “athnach” upon the word “river”; rather the merchants of Tarshish, that were in Tyre, are exhorted to depart to their own land with all possible haste, lest they should be involved in its ruin; though the Targum inclines to the other sense,

“pass out of thy land, as the waters of a river flee to a province of the sea:”

[there is] no more strength; in Tyre, to defend themselves against the enemy, to protect their trade, and the merchants that traded with them; or, “no more girdle”^{f467}; about it; no more girt about with walls, ramparts, and other fortifications, or with soldiers and shipping, or with the sea, with which it was encompassed, while an island, but now no more, being joined to the continent by the enemy. Some think, because girdles were a part of merchandise, (³¹²⁴Proverbs 31:24), that this is said to express the meanness and poverty of the place, that there was not so much as a girdle left in it; rather that it was stripped of its power and authority, of which the girdle was a sign; (see ²³²¹Isaiah 22:21).

Ver. 11. *He stretched out his hand over the sea, &c.*] That is, the Lord of hosts, who had purposed to destroy Tyre, stretched out his hand of power over it, called the sea, as in (²³¹⁴Isaiah 23:4) because situated in it, supported by it, and had the sovereignty of it; in like manner as he stretched out his hand on the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians in it; to which the allusion may be:

he shook the kingdoms; of Tyre and Zidon, which were both kingdoms, and distinct ones; and also made other neighbouring kingdoms shake and tremble when these fell, fearing it would be their case next. Some understand this of the moving of Nebuchadnezzar, and of the kings of the provinces under him, to come against Tyre:

the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant [city]; the city of Tyre, so famous for merchandise, that it was the mart of nations, as in (²³¹³Isaiah 23:3) or “against Canaan”, in which country Tyre and Zidon were, being originally built and inhabited by the posterity of Canaan, (¹⁰¹⁵Genesis 10:15,19):

to destroy the strong holds thereof; either of the merchant city Tyre, whose fortifications were strong, both by nature and art; or “of Canaan”, whose strong holds, or fortified cities, the principal of them were Tyre and Zidon; so Jarchi: and if the Lord of hosts gives a commandment to destroy it and its strong holds, as he did to Nebuchadnezzar and his army, and afterwards to Alexander and his, who could save them? that is, God said it, who gave commandment to destroy it.

Ver. 12. *And he said, thou shalt no more rejoice*, &c.] Not meaning that she should never more rejoice, but not for a long time, as Kimchi interprets it; when her calamity should come upon her, her jovial time, her time of mirth, jollity, and revelling, would be over for a time; for, at the end of seventy years, she should take her harp, and sing again, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 23:15,16) for the words seem to be spoken of Tyre, concerning whom the whole prophecy is; though some think Zidon is here meant, which, being near, suffered at the same time with Tyre, or quickly after:

O thou oppressed virgin! Tyre is called a “virgin”, because of her beauty, pride, and lasciviousness, and because never before subdued and taken: and “oppressed”, because now deflowered, ransacked, plundered, and ruined, by Nebuchadnezzar:

daughter of Zidon: some think Zidon itself is meant, just as daughter of Zion means Zion herself, &c.; but it may be also observed, that such cities that have sprung from others, or have their dependence on them, are called their daughters; so we read of Samaria and her daughters, and Sodom and her daughters, (²³⁶⁶Ezekiel 16:46,48) and so Tyre is called the daughter of Zidon, because it was a colony of the Zidonians^{f468}; and at first built and supported by them, though now grown greater than its mother:

arise, pass over to Chittim; to the isle of Cyprus, which was near them, and in which was a city called Citium; or to Macedonia, which was called the land of Chittim, as in the Apocrypha: “And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chettiim, had smitten Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece,” (1 Maccabees 1:1)

or to the isles of the Aegean and Ionian seas; or to Greece and Italy; which latter sense is approved by Vitranga, who thinks the islands of Corsica, and Sardinia, and Sicily, are meant, which were colonies of the Tyrians; and so in (²²³¹Isaiah 23:1,6):

there also shalt thou have no rest; since those countries would also fall into the enemy’s hands, either the Babylonians, or the Medes and Persians, or the Romans; into whose hands Macedonia, Carthage, and other colonies of the Tyrians fell, so that they had no rest in any of them.

Ver. 13. *Behold the land of the Chaldeans, &c.*] Not Tyre, as some think, so called, because founded by the Chaldeans, who finding it a proper place for “ships”, so they render the word “tziim”, afterward used, and which is so interpreted by Jarchi, built the city of Tyre; but the country called Chaldea is here meant, and the Babylonish empire and monarchy, particularly Babylon, the head of it:

this people was not; a people, or of any great note and figure:

[till] the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness; Nimrod was the first builder of Babel, in the land of Shinar, and from that land went forth Ashur, and built Nineveh, the city Rehoboth, and Calah, which were built for people that lived scattered up and down in fields and desert places; so that the Assyrians were the first founders of Chaldea; and after it had been inhabited by the Chaldeans, it was seized upon by the Assyrians, and became a province of theirs:

they set up the towers thereof; the towers of Babylon, not of Tyre. Jarchi interprets it of building bulwarks against Tyre:

they raised up the palaces thereof; the stately buildings of Babylon; or razed them; so Jarchi; also the Targum,

“they destroyed the palaces thereof:”

[and] he brought it to ruin: or he will do it; the past tense for the future, i.e. God will bring Babylon to ruin; and therefore it need not seem strange that Tyre should be destroyed, since this would be the case of Babylon. Sir John Marsham^{f469} interprets the words thus,

“look upon Babylon, the famous metropolis of the Chaldeans; the people, that possess that city, not long ago dwelt in deserts, having no certain habitation; Nabonassar the Assyrian brought men thither, the Scenites (the inhabitants of Arabia Deserta, so called from their dwelling in tents); he fortified the city, he raised up towers, and built palaces; such now was this city, founded by the Assyrian; yet God hath brought it to ruin; Babylon shall be destroyed as Tyre;”

and this instance is brought to show that a city and a people, more ancient and powerful than Tyre, either had been or would be destroyed; and therefore need not call in question the truth or credibility of the prophecy relating to Tyre; but the sense of the whole, according to Vitranga, seems rather to be this: “behold the land of the Chaldeans”; the country they now inhabit; take notice of what is now about to be said; it may seem strange and marvellous: “this people was not”; not that they were of a late original, for they were an ancient people, who descended from Chesed, the son of Nahor, but for a long time of no account, that lived scattered up and down in desert places: till “the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness”; he drove out the Arabians from Mesopotamia, and translated the Chaldeans thither, who before inhabited the wilderness: “they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces”; that is, the Assyrians fortified and adorned the city of Babylon, the metropolis of the country; so Herodotus^{f470} says the Assyrian kings adorned the walls and temples of Babylon; now behold this land of the Chaldeans, or the people that inhabit it, as poor and as low as they have been, who owe their all to the Assyrians, even these “shall bring” Tyre “to ruin”; so that the instruments of the ruin of Tyre are here described; which, when this prophecy was delivered, might seem improbable, the Assyrians being possessors of monarchy.

Ver. 14. *Howl, ye ships of Tarshish, &c.*] As in (²²³¹Isaiah 23:1). (See Gill on ²²³⁰Isaiah 23:1”):

for your strength is laid waste; meaning Tyre, a strong seaport, where their ships were safe, and always found vent for their goods and merchandise;

and so it was the strength and support of their country; but was now destroyed, and therefore was matter of lamentation and mourning.

Ver. 15. *And it shall come to pass in that day*, &c.] When Tyre is destroyed, from that time forward:

that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years; shall so long lie in its ruin, and not be rebuilt; it shall be without inhabitants, and unfrequented by men; there shall be no merchandise in it during that time; no merchants will come nigh it; she will be like a harlot cast off and forgotten by her lover: the term of time is the same with that of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and great part of it at least run out along with it; for Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, as Jerusalem was, though some time after it, and was restored when the Babylonish empire was destroyed, at the expiration of seventy years:

according to the days of one king; or kingdom, the Babylonish kingdom, which lasted so long in Nebuchadnezzar's family; whose family, he himself, his son, and son's son, are here meant, as Aben Ezra thinks; and seems to be the more commonly received sense; though Kimchi and others understand it of the days of a man, which are seventy years, (³⁹⁰⁰Psalm 90:10) and so it is added in the Septuagint version, "as the time of a man"; which perhaps was a marginal note, way of explanation, and crept into the text. Jarchi is of opinion King David is meant, whose age was seventy years, though he is at a loss to give a reason for this his opinion; but Kimchi suggests one, and that is, the covenant which was between Hiram king of Tyre and David; and this is mentioned to put the Tyrians in mind of the breach of it, which had brought desolation upon them; some understand this of the King Messiah^{f471}:

after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot; being rebuilt and restored to its former state; as a harlot who has been cast off by her lovers, on account of some disease she has laboured under, and through a dislike of her; but, having recovered her health, makes use of her arts, and this among others, to sing a song, in order to draw, by her melodious voice, her lovers to her again; and so Tyre being built again, and out of the hands of its oppressors, and restored to its former liberty, should make use of all arts and methods to recover her trade, and draw merchants from all parts to her again.

Ver. 16. *Take a harp, go about the city, &c.*] As harlots used to do, that by their music, both vocal and instrumental, they might allure men into their company to commit fornication with them; so Tyre is directed to, or rather this is a prophecy that she should take very artful and ensnaring methods to restore her commerce and merchandise:

thou harlot that hast been forgotten; (see Gill on “²³⁹¹⁵Isaiah 23:15”):

make sweet melody; or, “do well by striking”^{f472}; that is, the harp in her hand; strike it well with art and skill, so as to make melody, and give pleasure:

sing many songs; or, “multiply a song”^{f473}; sing one after another, till the point is carried aimed at:

that thou mayest be remembered; men may look at thee again, and trade with thee as formerly, who had been so long forgotten and neglected.

Ver. 17. *And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, &c.*] When the seventy years before mentioned are ended:

that the Lord will visit Tyre; not in judgment, as before, but in mercy:

and she shall return to her hire; trade and merchandise; that shall revive, and be as in times past:

and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world, upon the face of the earth; be a mart of nations again, as in (^{233B}Isaiah 23:3) that is, trade and traffic with all nations of the earth, in the most ample and public manner; this is called committing fornication, in agreement with the simile of a harlot before used, whereunto Tyre is compared; as well as to observe the illicit ways and methods used in her commerce. The Targum is,

“and her merchandise shall be sufficient to all the kingdoms of the people, which are upon the face of the earth;”

and so the Septuagint,

“and shall be a mart to all the kingdoms of the world, upon the face of the earth.”

The phrase is used of mystical Tyre or Babylon, and of her merchants, in (^{668B}Revelation 18:3).

Ver. 18. *And her merchandise, and her hire, &c.]* Or, “but her merchandise”, &c. not the same as before; or, however, not as carried on at the same time, but many ages after, even in the times of the Gospel; for this part of the prophecy respects the conversion of the Tyrians, in the first ages of Christianity; this is prophesied of elsewhere, (^{<9612>}Psalm 45:12 87:4) and was fulfilled in the times of the apostles, (^{<4119>}Acts 11:19 21:3,4) and so Kimchi and Jarchi say this is a prophecy to be fulfilled in the days of the Messiah^{f474}; and then the trade of this people, and what they got by it,

should be holiness to the Lord; that is, devoted, at least, great part of it, to holy uses and service; that is, in defraying of all expenses in carrying on the worship of God, for the maintenance of Gospel ministers, and for the supply and support of the poor saints:

it shall not be treasured, nor laid up: in order to be laid out in pride and luxury; or to be kept as useless, to gratify a covetous disposition; or for posterity to come:

for her merchandise shall be laid up for them, that dwell before the Lord; part of what should be gained by trading, at least, should be laid by for religious uses, as is directed, (^{<4101>}1 Corinthians 16:1) even for the relief of poor saints in general, who assemble together before the Lord, for the sake of his worship; and particularly for the support of the ministers of the Gospel, who stand before the Lord, and minister in holy things, in his name, to the people:

to eat sufficiently; that they may have food convenient for them, and enough of it; or, in other words, have a sufficient maintenance, a comfortable supply of food for themselves and families, and raiment also; as follows:

and for durable clothing; that they may have a supply of clothing, and never want a coat to put upon their backs. This prophecy, as it belongs to Gospel times, is a proof of the maintenance of Gospel ministers, that they ought to be liberally provided for; and care should be taken that they want not food and raiment, but have a fulness and sufficiency of both, and that which is convenient for them.