

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 3

In this chapter the sins of the people of Israel and Judah are exposed; particularly their idolatry, signified by playing the harlot; which is aggravated by the number of lovers or idols they had worshipped; by the many places where they had committed it; by their impudence in doing it; and by the bad consequence of it, showers of rain being withheld from them on that account, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:1-3) and the grace of God towards them is abundantly declared by frequent calls unto them to repent and turn to him, and this after putting them away, which is not usual, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:1,8), the Lord expostulates with them, and puts words into their mouths, what they should say to him, even after they had spoken and done as evil things as they could, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:4,5) the sin of Judah is particularly aggravated, by having seen what Israel, or the ten tribes, had done; their impenitence, notwithstanding the divine call; their going into captivity for their sin; and yet all this had no effect on Judah, to restrain them from the like sins, and to engage them to repentance; so that, of the two, the men of Judah were most to blame, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:6-11), wherefore the prophet is bid to go towards the north, where Babylon lay, and Israel were carried captive, and call upon them to return to the Lord, and proclaim his grace and mercy to them, only insisting upon an acknowledgment of their sins, their idolatry and disobedience, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:12,13) and next the call to them to return is repeated; to which they are encouraged by observing the relations, they stood in to him, which continued, by promising to bring a remnant of them to Zion, and give them pastors approved of by him, and profitable to them, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:14,15) which respect Gospel times, and the latter day, when the ceremonial law would be abrogated, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:16), the Gentiles called, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:17) and an entire agreement between Judah and Israel, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:18) and yet the Lord expresses a concern how he should reckon them as his children, and treat them as such, who had behaved so ill towards him; but his grace gets over the difficulties; finds out a way, by putting it into their mouths to call him their Father, and not turn away from him, (^(2410E)Jeremiah 3:19) and this, notwithstanding their great treachery to him, perversion of their ways, and forgetfulness of the

Lord, (^{248D}Jeremiah 3:20,21), and they are again exhorted to repent and turn, with a promise of healing their backslidings, which has such an effect upon them, as to engage them to come to him, (^{248D}Jeremiah 3:22) acknowledging their salvation is only in him, and not in their idols; and that sin was the cause of all their calamities; and that shame and confusion of face belonged unto them on that account, (^{248D}Jeremiah 3:23-25).

Ver. 1. *They say, if a man put away his wife*, etc.] Or, “saying”^{f69}; wherefore some connect those words with the last verse of the preceding chapter, as if they were a continuation of what the Lord had been there saying, that he would reject their confidences; so Kimchi; but they seem rather to begin a new section, or a paragraph, with what were commonly said among men, or in the law, and as the sense of that; that if a man divorced his wife upon any occasion,

and she go from him; departs from his house, and is separated from bed and board with him:

and become another man’s, be married to another, as she might according to the law:

shall he return unto her again? take her to be his wife again; her latter husband not liking her, or being dead? no, he will not; he might not according to the law in (^{482D}Deuteronomy 24:4) and if there was no law respecting this, it can hardly be thought that he would, it being so contrary to nature, and to the order of civil society:

shall not that land be greatly polluted? either Judea, or any other, where such usages should obtain; for this, according to the law, was causing the land to sin, filling it with it, and making it liable to punishment for it; this being an abomination before the Lord. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, “shall not that woman be defiled?” she is so by the latter husband; and that is a reason why she is not to be received by the former again, (^{482D}Deuteronomy 24:4):

but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; or served many idols; the number of their gods having been according to the number of their cities, (^{242D}Jeremiah 2:28):

yet return again to me, saith the Lord; by repentance, and doing their first works, worshipping and serving him as formerly; so the Targum,

“return now from this time to my worship, saith the Lord.”

The Vulgate Latin version adds, “and I will receive thee”; this is an instance of great grace in the Lord, and which is not to be found among men.

Ver. 2. *Lift up thine eyes unto the high places*, etc.] Where idols were set and worshipped; either places naturally high, as hills and mountains, which were chosen for this service; or high places, artificially made and thrown up for this purpose; (see ^{<1270>}2 Kings 17:9,10,11 21:3 23:5 ^{<1120>}Jeremiah 2:20), Jarchi interprets the word μυρσ of “rivulets of water”; and so the Targum, where also idolatry was committed:

and see where thou hast not been lien with; see if there is a hill or mountain, or any high place, where thou hast not committed idolatry; the thing was so notorious, and the facts and instances so many, there was no denying it; every hill and mountain witnessed to their idolatry; to which agrees the Targum,

“see where thou hast not joined thyself to worship idols:”

in the ways hast thou sat for them; for the idolaters, waiting for them, to join with them in their idolatries; as harlots used to sit by the wayside to meet with their lovers, to be picked up by them, or to offer themselves to them as prostitutes, (^{<0384>}Genesis 38:14,15) which shows that these people were not drawn into idolatry by the temptations and solicitations of others: but they put themselves in the way of it, and solicited it, and others to join with them in it:

as the Arabian in the wilderness; who dwelt in tents in the wilderness, and sat by the wayside to trade with those that passed by; or else lay in wait in desert and by places to rob all that passed by them; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it,

in the ways thou didst sit, expecting them as a thief in the wilderness; the Arabians being noted for thieves and robbers. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it,

as a crow, or raven, of the desert; the same word signifying a “raven” and an “Arabian”: (see ^{<1170>}1 Kings 17:4):

and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness; the land of Judea, where idolatry was so openly and frequently

committed, which brought a load of guilt upon it, and exposed it to the wrath and judgments of God; so the Targum,

“thou hast made the land guilty with thine idols and with thy wickedness.”

Ver. 3. *Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain,* etc.] There were two seasons of the year when rain in common fell upon the land of Israel, called the former and the latter rain, and both are designed here. The former by **מַבְּרֵר**, “showers”, so called from the multitude of drops in them: these showers, or the former rain, used to fall in the month Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October; it was in autumn, at the fall of the year, at seedtime, when great quantity of rain usually fell, to prepare the earth for sowing, and watering the seed sown; whence that month was sometimes called Bul, as Kimchi observes, from “mabbul”, a flood. The latter rain fell in Nisan, which answers to our March; it was in the spring, a little before harvest, which swelled the grain, made the skin the thinner, and the flower the finer. This is called **צְוָרִי מ**: now, because of the idolatry of these people, those rains were withheld from them, as they were in the times of Ahab, (**1 Kings 17:1**), which brought a famine upon them; and was a manifest token of the divine displeasure, and what was threatened them in case they sinned against the Lord, (**Deuteronomy 28:23,24**):

and thou hadst a whore's forehead; was impudent and unconcerned, repented not of sin, or blushed for it, though such judgments were upon them; hence the Rabbins^{f70} say rains are not withheld but for impudence, according, to this Scripture:

thou refusedst to be ashamed; to be made ashamed by the admonitions of the prophets, or by the judgments of God; (see **Jeremiah 5:3**).

Ver. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me,* etc.] These words are either a confirmation and proof of that impudence with which these people are charged; for had they not been impudent, or had not a forehead like a whorish woman; or were they truly ashamed, they would have cried to the Lord henceforward; called upon him; claimed their relation to him; and owned his favours in time past: or, if they had not been impudent, they would not have dared from this time to have called God their Father and their guide, when they had so wickedly sinned against him; so that this is a charge of hypocrisy and deceit, calling God their Father and guide, when

they were at the same time worshipping idols: or rather they are expressive of the wondrous grace and goodness of God towards this people, that had so highly offended him, yet he expostulates with them, puts words into their mouths to return unto him with, saying:

my father; I have sinned against thee, and am not worthy of the relation, yet receive me as a returning prodigal:

thou art the guide of my youth; or, “hast been”: I acknowledge the favours I have received in time past, which is an aggravation of my sin; reject me not, but receive me graciously into thy favour; (see ^{<314D>}Hosea 14:2), so the Targum interprets the words as a prayer,

“wilt thou not from this time pray before me, saying, thou art my Lord, my Redeemer, which art of old?”

or else they point to them their duty, what they ought to do from henceforward; that seeing the Lord had withheld from them the former and latter rain for their idolatry, it became them to return to him by repentance; and to call upon him, who had been their Father and their guide in time past, to have mercy on them, and avert his judgments from them.

Ver. 5. *Will he reserve his anger for ever?* etc.] These words may be considered as a continuation of the speech put into their mouths to make to the Lord and plead with him, as well as what follows:

will he keep it to the end? that is, his anger: no; he will not: this is not according to the nature of God; he retains not his anger for ever, (^{<317B>}Micah 7:18), though, according to some versions, this is to be understood of the sins of these people being reserved and kept forever, as their impudence and obstinacy; so the Syriac and Arabic versions; and to which agrees the Targum,

“is it possible that thy sins should be kept for thee for ever, or the stroke (of punishment) be strengthened upon thee to the end?”

so Kimchi,

“says the prophet, if thou dost this (call him my father, etc.) will God reserve thine iniquity for thee for ever, or keep thy sin unto the end? he will not do so; but when thou returnest unto him, he will return unto thee, and do thee good; but thou hast not done so.”

The sense is much the same:

behold, thou hast spoken, and done evil things as thou couldst; which were enough to cause the Lord to reserve and keep his anger for ever. There is a double reading here; the Cetib, or writing, is **ytrbd**, “I have spoken”; the prophet had spoken to them to return; or the Lord by the prophet had spoken to them, and put the above words into their mouths, and told them what they should say when they returned to the Lord; “but thou hast done evil things”^{f71}; notwithstanding such declarations of grace, and dost continue to do them:

and thou hast prevailed^{f72}; as the last clause may be rendered; that I cannot turn away mine anger from thee, but must reserve it, and keep it for ever. The Keri, or reading, is **trbd**, “thou hast spoken”; thou hast said thou wilt do evil things, and thou hast done them as thou hast said, and hast prevailed; thou hast sinned with all thy might and main, and hast spoken and done as evil things as possibly could be done. Some choose to render the words thus, “if thou hadst spoken”; the words that were put into their mouths before mentioned; “though thou hast done evil things, yet thou wouldest have prevailed”^{f73}; that is, with God, to have turned away his anger from thee.

Ver. 6. *The Lord said also unto me, in the days of Josiah the king, etc.*] For in his time Jeremiah began to prophesy, even in the thirteenth year of his reign, (^{240D}Jeremiah 1:2):

hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? the ten tribes; that is, hast thou not heard? or dost thou not know the idolatry of the ten tribes, which was the cause of their captivity? as Kimchi explains it; for the facts, or the idolatrous actions of the ten tribes, were not done in Josiah’s and Jeremiah’s time; for they were carried captive in the sixth year of Hezekiah, ninety years or more before Jeremiah began to prophesy, and their idolatry was before their captivity, and therefore could not be properly seen by him; only it had been heard of by him, it was known by him, it was notorious enough, being well attested:

she is gone upon every high mountain, and under every green tree; that is, she did so, when in her own land, before she was carried captive, as Jarchi observes; for this respects not what she did in Josiah’s and Jeremiah’s time, or when in captivity, but before, which was the reason of it:

and there hath played the harlot: or committed idolatry, which was usually done in such places; so the Targum,

“and worshipped idols of wood.”

Ver. 7. *And I said, after she had done these things*, etc.] All these idolatries, in the several places mentioned, after she had repeated them over and over; the Lord sent to them by the Prophets Hosea, Amos, Micah, and others, who prophesied before the captivity of the ten tribes, and entreated them, saying,

turn unto me: to my worship, as the Targum; from their idols, to him the living God; they were not without admonitions, exhortations, and declarations of grace, and so were without excuse:

but she returned not; to fear and serve the Lord, but remained in idolatry, obstinate and inflexible:

and her treacherous sister Judah saw it; her treachery and breach of covenant, as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions add, for explanation sake; Judah, or the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and who were allied to the ten tribes by birth and by religion, and equally treacherous to God, the husband of them both, saw all the idolatry of Israel, and the aggravations of it, and what followed upon it, namely, their captivity in Babylon, yet did not learn and take warning hereby.

Ver. 8. *And I saw, when for all the causes, whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery*, etc.] Not only Judah saw, but God, who sees all things, saw the idolatry of the ten tribes which apostatized from him, and all the springs, causes, reasons, and occasions of it, and its consequences; and also the treachery, hardness, and idolatry of Judah:

I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; as men did, when they put away their wives, as they might lawfully do in case of adultery; and here being that which answered to it, spiritual adultery or idolatry, the Lord, who was married to this people, put them away from him, and caused them to be carried captive out of their own land into another, (²2 Kings 17:6) which is meant by the bill of divorce; so the Targum,

“I caused them to go into captivity, as those that give a bill of divorce (to their wives) and dismiss them:”

yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not; to commit idolatry and offend the Lord, nor stood in awe of his righteous judgments; had no reverence of God, nor fear of punishment; so hardened and daring was she: but went and played the harlot; committed idolatry, as the ten tribes did, taking no warning by what befell them.

Ver. 9. *And it came to pass, through the lightness of her whoredom*, etc.] Or the “swiftness”¹⁷⁴ of it; when it was once set on foot, it ran through the land presently one taking it from and following the example of another; or it became a light thing with her to commit idolatry; it was looked upon as a small thing, a trivial offence at most: so the Targum,

“it came to pass that her idols were light in her eyes;”

not lightly esteemed of, but it was a light thing to commit idolatry with them; interpreting the word as the Masora, which it follows: and to the same sense the Septuagint version, “her fornication was for nothing”; it stood for nothing, it was not reckoned as a sin: the Arabic version is, “her fornication was with nothing”; with an idol, which is nothing in the world, (~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 8:4), some choose to render it, “because of the voice or fame of her whoredom”¹⁷⁵, or idolatry; it sounded forth, and the fame, or rather infamy of it, went out through the whole land: wherefore it follows,

that she defiled the land; polluted it with sin, involved it in guilt, and exposed it to punishment:

and committed adultery with stones and with stocks; that is, with images made of stone and wood, which they served and worshipped as gods; and is the adultery or idolatry they are charged with, and by which the land was defiled. The Targum is,

“she erred or committed idolatry with the worshippers of stone and wood.”

This, by what follows, seems to be understood not of Judah, but of Israel.

Ver. 10. *And yet for all this*, etc.] Though the two tribes saw the lightness and filthiness of the sin Israel was guilty of, and how the land was defiled with it, the stupidity of it, and the punishment inflicted on account of it:

her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord; there was a show of reformation in Josiah’s time, but it was but a show; there was no true, hearty cordial

repentance for the sin of idolatry, only a feigned one; there was an outward removal of it, and reformation from it, but inwardly the desires of the heart were to it; the good king, with some few others, were hearty in it, but the greater part played the hypocrite; the following reigns proved the truth of this.

Ver. 11. *And the Lord said unto me*, etc.] To the Prophet Jeremiah, as in (^{<24186>}Jeremiah 3:6) and at or about the same time:

the backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah; that is, was comparatively more righteous; of the two she appeared the most righteous; though neither of them could vindicate their conduct, or justify themselves before God; (see ^{<21814>}Luke 18:14). Judah was most to blame, because that after Israel committed idolatry, and was carried captive, she took no warning by it, but fell into the same sin; and in Manasseh's time committed greater idolatries, and more wickedness, than ever Israel did; and more than even the Amorites themselves, and other Heathen nations, had done, (^{<12116>}2 Kings 21:6-11) and though a reformation was made in Josiah's time, it was only feignedly, it was not cordial and hearty; and therefore she is all along here charged with perfidy and treachery.

Ver. 12. *Go and proclaim these words towards the north*, etc.] With his face thitherwards, towards Babylon, which lay north of Judea, and was the metropolis of Assyria, where the ten tribes were carried captive; and though they were dispersed in the cities of Media and Persia, which lay eastward, yet Babylon being the head of the empire, respect is had to that; not that the prophet was to go thither to them, or to prophesy in the land of the north, as the Targum paraphrases the words: for the word "go", as Jarchi observes, is only expressive of a command on the part of God; and of readiness, as Kimchi says, on the part of the prophet to obey, but not of local motion; he was to read these words, as the latter of these suggests, in Jerusalem, before the elders of Judah, with a respect to Israel, as if they were before him; and the design of this was to show that the Lord was gracious and merciful, and ready to receive backsliders; and to stimulate Judah to repentance, and to turn unto the Lord:

and say, return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord not return from the land of their captivity, though that they shall return in the last day Kimchi thinks is here intimated; and Jarchi says some of them did return, in the

eighteenth year of Josiah; but return from their idols to the living God: and for their encouragement it is added,

and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; or, “my face”^{f76}; by frowning upon them, expressing displicency with them, and anger towards them; the meaning is, that he would not continue his resentments, or cause his anger to fall upon them any more, or at least not for ever, as Kimchi interprets it; he had caused his anger to fall upon them like a mighty storm of rain, by carrying them captive; but now he intimates, should they repent and return, he would remove his anger from them, and not cause it to return any more:

for I am merciful, saith the Lord; so he proclaimed himself before Moses, (^{<4346>}Exodus 34:6) and of this they had had often instances and proofs:

and I will not keep anger for ever; or, “thy sins”, as the Targum; I will not mark and observe them, or reserve them for punishment, but will mercifully forgive them; (See Gill on “^{<4185>}Jeremiah 3:5”).

Ver. 13. *Only acknowledge thine iniquity*, etc.] Or, “know”^{f77} it; unless a man knows his sin, and is convicted of it, he will never repent of it, or turn from it; and when he is made sensible of it, and sorry for it, he ought to acknowledge and confess it before God, against whom he has sinned; this is what is insisted upon, and all that is insisted upon; and it is the least that can be done, and is what every sensible sinner will do, who upon it may expect the discovery of pardoning grace and mercy, (^{<4315>}Psalm 32:5 51:3,4 ^{<4183>}Proverbs 28:13 ^{<4100>}1 John 1:9):

that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God; against his law, his declared mind and will, and notwithstanding he is the Lord thy God; against a God of love, grace, and mercy, who had loaded them with his benefits, and followed them with his goodness; all which aggravates the sin they had been guilty of:

and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree; a phrase expressive of whoredom; it is an euphemism, the same with μυλ gr qwçyp, as Jarchi observes, “the opening of the feet”, to everyone that passes by, to be lain with, (^{<4365>}Ezekiel 16:25) and is to be understood of the multiplied idolatries of Israel; and that as harlots run about here and there, and prostitute themselves to whomsoever they meet with, so they worshipped the strange gods of the Heathens everywhere, in all their cities,

upon every mountain and hill, and under every green tree; (see ⁽²¹⁷⁾Jeremiah 2:20,28) so the Targum,

“and thou hast corrupted thy way, thou hast joined thyself to the people that worship idols under every green tree:”

and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord: the voice of his command in the law, which forbids idolatry; and his voice by his prophets, which reprov'd them for it, and exhorted them to repentance; but they regarded neither.

Ver. 14. *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord,* etc.] All of them were children by national adoption, and some by special grace, and yet “backsliders”, O monstrous ingratitude! “backsliders”, and yet “children”, still the relation continues, O marvellous grace! God’s own children may backslide, and often do; either in heart, when love waxes cold, faith declines, zeal wanting; when they get into a carnal sleepy frame of spirit, and have not that quick sense of sin, and of duty, as heretofore: or in practice, when private prayer is restrained; public worship is neglected; get into bad company, and fall into gross sins; all which is owing to the prevalence of indwelling sin, the force of Satan’s temptations, and the enticing snares of the world; but God will not leave them, he calls unto them again and again to turn unto him by repentance, and to doing their first works; which calls, at length, through powerful grace, become effectual; (see ⁽²¹⁸⁾Jeremiah 3:22) and the arguments used to engage to it follow,

for I am married unto you; in a civil sense as a nation, (⁽²¹⁹⁾Jeremiah 31:32), and in a spiritual sense to a remnant of them; Christ is the bridegroom, the church is the bride, which he has secretly betrothed to himself in eternity; openly in time, at the conversion of everyone of them; and will more publicly at the last day, when all are gathered in and prepared for him. This relation, as it is a very near one, so it is very astonishing, considering the disparity between the two parties, and it always continues; love, the bond of it, never alters; the covenant, in which this transaction is carried on, is ever sure; and Christ always behaves agreeably to it; wherefore it is base ingratitude to backslide; and reason there is sufficient why his backsliding spouse should return to him. The Septuagint version is, “because I will rule over you.” agreeable to which is Jarchi’s note,

“because I am your Lord, and it is not for my glory, (or honour) to leave you in the hand of enemies.”

Kimchi’s father interprets the word used by *yt xq*, “I loath you”, or I am weary of you; the reverse of which is the Targum,

“for I am well pleased with you;”

and so the Syriac version, “I delight in you”; which carries in it a much more engaging argument to return, and agrees with what follows:

and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family: or tribe, or country; for sometimes a whole country is called a family, as in (²⁰¹⁵Jeremiah 1:15 ³⁸⁴⁷Zechariah 14:17,18) and here it must design more than a city; for otherwise there are many families in a city; the meaning is, according to Kimchi, that though there may be but one Jew in a city of the Gentiles, or two only in a nation, the Lord would take them from thence; and, according to others, that though one or two, or a few, here and there one of the backsliders, should return to him by true repentance, he would receive them graciously; the smallness of their number would be no objection to him; which is a sense not to be despised: but the phrase seems to denote the distinguishing grace of God to his people; which appears in the choice of them in his Son; the redemption of them by him; and the sanctification of them by his Spirit; and very few are the objects of his grace, as it were one of a city, and two of a tribe; however, they shall none of them be lost, notwithstanding their backslidings, to which they are bent: for it is added,

and I will bring you to Zion; to the church of God here, a Gospel church state, whither to come is the great privilege of the saints, (³⁸²²Hebrews 12:22) and to the Zion above, the heavenly state, where all the chosen and ransomed, and sanctified ones, shall come, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, (²³⁵⁰Isaiah 35:10) and all as the fruit of distinguishing and efficacious grace.

Ver. 15. *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart*, etc.] Which is to be understood not of political rulers and governors, but ministers of the word; who are “pastors” or “shepherds” under Christ the great Shepherd, and are “gifts” of his to the churches, and “according to his heart”; or “conformable to his mind”, as the Arabic version; whom he calls, qualifies, puts into the ministry, and sends forth; whom he holds in his right

hand, and keeps as the apple of his eye; who do his will, as the Targum, and feed men according to his heart: and as this prophecy belongs to Gospel times, as appears both by what goes before and by what follows, the apostles of Christ and first ministers of the Gospel are chiefly designed; though it might have some accomplishment in Nehemiah and Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at and after the Jews return from Babylon; but a more complete one in the times mentioned: so Kimchi says, these are they that shall be with the King Messiah, according to (^{<3885>}Micah 5:5):

which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding; with things worthy to be known and understood; with the solid and substantial truths of the Gospel, and by faithfully administering the ordinances of it; and in all directing to Christ the bread of life: or, “shall rule you”^{>f78} not in an arbitrary way, according to their own wills, but according to the laws of Christ: these words, with knowledge and understanding, may either intend the matter with which these pastors should feed the church; which is what tends to spiritual knowledge and understanding, and an increase thereof; and which is blessed of God to such a purpose, though they themselves cannot give it: or else the manner in which they should feed or rule; that is, wisely and “prudently”, as the Arabic version renders it: they feed wisely and prudently when they rightly divide the word of truth, and give to every one their portion of meat in due season; and feed them in proportion to their age and capacity, give milk to babes, and meat to strong men: and they rule with wisdom and prudence when they govern according to the laws of Christ, and take care that they are put in execution; and do all things decently and in order; and, as David, feed the flock according to the integrity of their hearts, and guide them by the skilfulness of their hands, (^{<4982>}Psalms 78:72).

Ver. 16. *And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land*, etc.] That is, when the number of the disciples and followers of Christ, and true believers in him, shall be multiplied and increased in the land of Judea, and in the Gentile world also, under the ministry of the above said pastors, apostles, and ministers of the Gospel, who should be succeeded everywhere, as they were; (see ^{<4401>}Acts 6:1,2,7):

in those days, saith the Lord of hosts, they shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord; because the antitype of it would be come, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word that is made flesh and dwelt among men; and in whom the Shechinah, or divine Majesty, dwells in a more glorious

manner than it did over the ark, for in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and the ark may be put for the whole ceremonial law, which was abolished at the death of Christ, and to be used and spoken of no more; and whereas it was, for a good while after the abrogation of it, a matter of debate and contention, and was not wholly under the church's feet until about the times of Constantine, when there was a great multiplication and increase of Christians throughout the Roman empire, the prophecy may be thought to belong to those times, at least there was then a greater accomplishment of it; (see ~~611~~ Revelation 12:1):

neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it; as it should not be spoken of, so it should not be thought of any more than if it had never been:

neither shall they visit it; to inquire of the Lord, before it, about what they wanted to be informed of, as they used to do, (~~612~~ Judges 20:23,27,28):

neither shall that be done any more; or, “made any more”^{f79} the Jews^{f80} say, the ark was wanting in the second temple, and was never afterwards remade: all the expressions denote the utter abolition of legal rites and ceremonies, never to be revived more. The Targum paraphrases the last clause,

“neither shall they make war with it any more;”

and so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it as if it was a prophecy of such a time of profound peace, that there would be no need of bringing out the ark as formerly; this use of it would be quite forgotten; but this was not the principal use of the ark, and very rarely was it ever used in this way.

Ver. 17. *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord*, etc.] That is, the Gospel church, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, that is free, and the mother of us all; which is Christ's kingdom, where he has his throne and subjects, and where he sits and reigns as King of saints; and where they yield a cheerful and ready subjection to him, signified by calling the church his throne:

and all the nations shall be gathered unto it: which shows that Jerusalem, literally understood, cannot be meant, but the church of Christ; to which the Gentiles, being converted, should join themselves in great numbers in all nations, as they have done; and which will be more largely accomplished and verified in the latter day, (~~211~~ Isaiah 2:2,3 60:3-5)

to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; to name his name, to trust in his name, to call upon it, and to worship him in Jerusalem, in his church, and among his people; and so the Targum,

“and all nations shall give themselves to worship in it the name of the Lord, in Jerusalem:”

neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart; for the Gospel being preached to all nations, according to Christ’s commission, by the pastors he promises, and that being blessed to the turning of the Gentiles from their idols to serve the living God, they shall no more worship the gods they chose for themselves, and their evil hearts devised.

Ver. 18. *In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel*, etc.] Which had its accomplishment when some of the ten tribes, scattered among the nations whither the Gospel came, as well as in the land of Judea, being converted under it, joined together in a Gospel church state, and walked together in all the commandments and ordinances of Christ: and it may also denote the agreement of all Christian confessors, as Judah signifies, and of all Israelites indeed, in worship, whether Jews or Gentiles; becoming through Christ members of one body, fellow heirs and partakers of the same grace, promises, and privileges; and which harmony will still be more manifest in the latter day, (^{2310D}Isaiah 11:7-9,13 ^{2310E}Jeremiah 50:4,5 ^{2310F}Hosea 1:11):

and they shall come together out of the land of the north; out of these northern kingdoms of ours, and other parts of Europe, where they chiefly are; this will be when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and the Jews are converted and joined to Christian churches: the allusion is to the return of the Jews from Babylon, which lay north of Judea:

to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers; for when the Jews are converted they shall return to their own land, which God gave for an inheritance to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their seed after them.

Ver. 19. *But I said*, etc.] Within himself, in the thoughts of his heart, when he took up a resolution concerning their conversion, open adoption, and return to their own land, as a symbol of the eternal inheritance:

how shall I put thee among the children? among the children of God, who are so by special adopting grace, which is a high and honourable privilege, greater than to be the sons and daughters of the greatest potentate on earth; who as they are high birth, being born of God, so they are brought up, and fed, and clothed as the children of the King of kings; they have great nearness to and freedom with God their Father; they are heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ, and shall ever remain in this relation. There is a secret and an open putting of the sons of men among the children of God. The secret putting of them among the children is by God the Father, when he predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Christ; when he promised in covenant he would be their Father, and they should be his sons and daughters; and as an act of his own will, secretly, in his own breast, adopted them into his family, his will to adopt being the adoption of them; hence they are called the children of God, previous to their redemption and sanctification, (^{<B013>}Hebrews 2:13,14 ^{<B115>}John 11:52 ^{<B016>}Galatians 4:6). Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ was concerned in this affair by espousing these persons to himself in covenant, whereby his Father became their Father, and his God their God; and by assuming their nature, whereby they became his brethren, and so the children of God; and by redeeming them, whereby way is made for their actual reception of the adoption of children; when they are openly put among them in the effectual calling, in which the Holy Spirit is concerned, who regenerates them, works faith in them, and witnesses their adoption to them, from whence he is called the Spirit of adoption; regeneration and faith are the evidences of adoption, (^{<B012>}John 1:12,13 ^{<B016>}Galatians 3:26) and the Spirit the witness, (^{<B015>}Romans 8:15,16). Now, as all things were seen in one view by the Lord from eternity, as well when he secretly as openly puts them among the children, it may well be thought there were difficulties, at least seeming ones, in the way of it; or, however, such as make it wonderful and marvellous that any of the sons of Adam should be put among the children of God; seeing they that are, sinned in Adam as the rest, fell with him in his transgression into a state of condemnation and death; are corrupt in their first birth, defiled in soul and body, and cast out like the wretched infant, to the loathing of their persons; are as the children of the Ethiopians, black with original and actual sins; are children of disobedience, traitors and rebels against God, and children of wrath, even as others. And though these words may have a principal respect to the Jews, who dealt treacherously with God, in departing from his pure worship, rejecting the Messiah, and continuing in their obstinacy and infidelity, having a “loammi”

upon them, and notwithstanding shall be called the children of the living God, (~~300~~Hosea 1:9,10), yet may be applied to any of the sons and daughters of men, whether Jews or Gentiles, that are put among the children of God.

And give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations? the allusion, doubtless, is to the land of Israel, which was a goodly and desirable land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and was the heritage or inheritance of the children of Israel, but not of the hosts of nations; wherefore heaven and eternal happiness is ultimately meant, the better country Christian pilgrims are seeking after, and the desired haven Christian sailors make unto: this is a “pleasant land”; pleasantly situated on high, where are great plenty of provisions, solid substance, enduring riches, the greatest liberty and choices, privileges, and the best of inhabitants and company, Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and glorified saints: this is

a goodly heritage or “inheritance”; not only a house not made with hands, a city that has foundations, but a kingdom and glory, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fades not away, reserved in the heavens: and it may be said to be

of the hosts of nations; for, though it is but one inheritance, vast numbers will share in it, and possess it; even an innumerable company of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, which are chosen, redeemed, and called out of them: and this is in, the “gift” of God; he regenerates to a lively hope of it, makes meet for it, and of his own good pleasure bestows it; and marvellous it is that he should give it to the persons before described; the putting of them among the children of God, and giving them such an inheritance, are entirely owing to his sovereign grace and goodness, which only can answer the question put, concerning these things.

And I said, thou shalt call me my father; not merely saying these words, but expressing them with affection and faith, under the witnessings of the Spirit of God; and declaring the relation by deeds, by honouring and obeying him, and being a follower of him in his ways and worship: and shalt not turn away from me; either from calling him Father, through the prevalence of unbelief; or from his service and worship, through the power of corruptions, backsliding and revolting from him, with which they are often charged in this chapter; so the Targum,

“shalt not turn from my worship.”

Ver. 20. *Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband*, etc.] Or, “her friend”^{f81}; who loves her, takes care of her, and provides for her, and goes after another man, and cohabits with him; which is a violation of the marriage covenant, and acting a base and treacherous part unto him to whom she is married

so have you dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord; who was their Father, friend, and husband; who loved them and distinguished them from all other people, by a variety of blessings and privileges; and yet they departed from his commandments and ordinances, and held the traditions of the elders, and taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and rejected the Messiah, and still continue in their disbelief of him, and hatred to him; and therefore it need not be wondered at that he should make any difficulty about their adoption and inheritance; and a marvellous thing it must be to take such persons, and put them openly among his children, and give them a right and meetness for the goodly inheritance.

Ver. 21. *A voice was heard upon the high places*, etc.] And so might be heard afar off; it shows that the repentance and confession of the Jews, when convinced and converted, will be very public, and made upon those places where they have committed their sins; (see ^{<3420>}Jeremiah 2:20 3:16), for this and the following verses declare the humiliation, repentance, and conversion of the Jews, and the manner in which they shall be brought to it, and be openly put among the children:

weeping and supplications of the children of Israel; not so much lamenting their calamities, as mourning over their sins, supplicating the pardon of them, and freely and ingenuously confessing them:

for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God; or, “because they have”^{f82}, etc. this they shall be sensible of, that they have perverted the right ways of the Lord by their traditions, and have forgotten the worship of the Lord, as the Targum paraphrases it; yea, the Lord himself, their covenant God and kind benefactor, and lightly esteemed of the true Messiah, the Rock of their salvation. The consideration of which will cause them to weep and mourn; which they will do when the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them; and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, (^{<3820>}Zechariah 12:10). Some interpret this as the cause of their calamities, and not as the subject matter of their mourning; but the latter seems best to agree with what follows,

which shows by what means they were brought to repentance, and were converted.

Ver. 22. *Return, ye backsliding children*, etc.] This is the call of the Jews to repentance in the latter day; (See Gill on “~~2434~~Jeremiah 3:14”).

and I will heal your backslidings; that is, I will forgive your sins. Sins are the diseases of the soul, and the wounds made in it; and pardoning them is healing them. So the Targum,

“I will forgive you when ye return;”

(see ~~1947B~~Psalm 103:3), this is done by the application of the blood of Christ, the only physician, and whose blood is the balm that heals every wound; and this springs from the love of God, and his free favour to his people, even the riches of his grace and abounding mercy through Christ; and is the great motive and inducement, and what gives the greatest encouragement to return unto the Lord, (~~2840E~~Hosea 14:1-4 ~~2557E~~Isaiah 55:7).

Behold, we come unto thee; the Targum represents this as what the Jews pretended always to say, and did say, in a hypocritical manner, with which they are upbraided,

“lo, at all times ye say, we return to thy worship, save us;”

and Jarchi is of opinion that these are words the prophet put into their mouths, and taught them to say, and to confess in this manner: but they are rather their own words, arising from a true sense of sin, under the influence of divine grace, and encouraged with the hope and assurance of pardon; declaring that as they were called upon to return, so they did return, and now were come to God by repentance, with confession and acknowledgment of sin, and by prayer and supplication for pardon and by the exercise of faith upon him for it; and also were come into his house to wait upon him, and worship him in his ordinances:

for thou art the Lord our God; not merely as the God of nature and providence, or in a natural way, but in a way of special grace, of which they now will have an application by the Spirit of God.

Ver. 23. *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains*, etc.] From any natural defence, by hills and mountains encompassing; or from idols worshipped on hills and mountains. So the Targum,

“truly in vain we worship upon the hills, and for no profit are we gathered upon the mountains;”

and to this purpose Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it; or from the multitude of the people, the kingdoms of the world, and the nations of the earth, from whom the Jews have in vain expected salvation and deliverance:

truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel; or, “in the Word of the Lord our God”, as the Targum; in Christ, the essential Word of God, is the salvation of all the chosen people, both Jews and Gentiles; it was put into his hands by his Father, and it is wrought out by him; and it resides in him, and it is to be had in him, and in him only, (^{<4012>}Acts 4:12), who is God the Lord, and therefore was able to effect it, and to give it; and hence these repenting ones, discarding all other saviours, apply to him for it.

Ver. 24. *For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth*, etc.] That is, sin, which is the cause of shame, and of which sinners ought to be ashamed, and will be sooner or later; so the Targum renders it, “the confusion of sins”; and the Jewish writers generally interpret it of idolatry, and of the idol Baal, as Kimchi and others, called “shame”, or that “shameful thing”, (^{<3113>}Jeremiah 11:13 ^{<3090>}Hosea 9:10), this idol, because of the multitude of the sacrifices offered to it, consumed what their fathers laboured for, ever since they had known them; or, for their worshipping of this idol, such judgments came upon them as consumed all they got by hard labour; or rather it may regard their shameful sin of rejecting the Messiah, and crucifying him; which they will be ashamed of at the time of their conversion, when they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and on account of which they suffer the many calamities they now do:

their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters; whatever evils have befallen them in their persons, families, and estates, they will confess are owing to sin they have committed, of which they will now be ashamed; hence it follows:

Ver. 25. *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us*, etc.] As persons overwhelmed with a sense of sin, and so pressed with the guilt of it on their consciences, that they can neither stand up, nor look up, but throw themselves on the ground, and cover their faces, being ashamed of what they have done:

for we have sinned against the Lord our God; as by breaking the law of God, so by despising the Gospel; rejecting the ordinances of it; disbelieving the Messiah, and speaking reproachfully of him and his people:

we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day; in a long series of years, from the time that Christ was upon earth, to the day of their conversion, in the latter times of the Gospel dispensation:

and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God; the voice of his forerunner, John the Baptist, of the Messiah himself, and of his apostles, and of his ministers, since; so the Targum,

“and have not obeyed the Word of the Lord our God.”

Christ the essential Word.