

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 4

This chapter begins with several exhortations to repentance; first to Israel, or the ten tribes, to return to the Lord with their whole hearts, and put away their abominations, and serve him in sincerity and uprightness of soul; with promises of rest and safety to themselves; and that it would have a happy influence on the Gentiles, and issue in their conversion; who would hereupon bless themselves in the Lord, and glory in him, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 4:1,2), and next to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, to show a concern for renewing and sanctifying grace, signified by various metaphors, lest they should be consumed with the fire of divine wrath, (^{2400B}Jeremiah 4:3,4) and then the destruction of that land and city is foretold and described, partly by what was introductory to it, and the proclamation of it, signified by blowing the trumpet, and setting up the standard, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 4:5,6,15,19,20), by an account of the destroyers, their cruelty, swiftness, and diligence, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 4:7,13,16,17), and of the destruction itself, compared to a violent wind, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 4:11,12), by the effect it should have upon the inhabitants of all sorts, high and low, (^{2400B}Jeremiah 4:8,9), and had upon the prophet himself, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 4:10,19,21), and by the cause and ground of it, the sins of the people, which they are called upon to repent of, (^{2400A}Jeremiah 4:14,17,18,22) and by a vision the prophet had of the dreadful desolation of the land, (^{2400C}Jeremiah 4:23-29) and by the vain and false hopes the people would have of their recovery, and the great anxiety and distress they would be in, (^{2400B}Jeremiah 4:30,31).

Ver. 1. *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord,* etc.] To which they had been encouraged, and as they had promised they would, and said they did, (^{2400A}Jeremiah 3:14,22):

return unto me; with thy whole heart, and not feignedly and hypocritically, as Judah did, (^{2400E}Jeremiah 3:10). Some render the words (and the accents require they should be rendered so) “if thou wilt return to me, O Israel, saith the Lord, thou shalt return”^{f83}; that is, to thine own land, being now in captivity; or, “thou shalt rest”^{f84}; or “have rest”; so Kimchi interprets the last word; (see ^{2400E}Jeremiah 30:10), and these words may very well be

considered as the words of Christ, and as spoken by him, when he entered upon his ministry, who began it with calling the people of the Jews to repentance, and promising to give them rest; and all such who return to God by repentance, and come to Christ by faith, find spiritual rest for their souls now, and shall have an eternal rest hereafter, (^{<4047>}Matthew 4:17 11:28,29):

and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight; not only their sins, but their self-righteousness, and dependence upon it; the rites and ceremonies of the old law abolished by Christ, together with the traditions of the elders, by which they made void the commandments of God; all which were abominations in the sight of the Lord, (^{<2013>}Isaiah 1:13 29:13 65:5 66:3),

then shalt thou not remove; from thine own land again when restored, or further off, into more distant countries, for they were now in captivity; or rather the words may be rendered, not as a promise, but as a continuation of what is before said,

and not move to and fro^{f85}; or be unstable and wavering, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and precept of men; but be established in the faith of the Gospel, and steadfast and immovable in every good work. The Targum is: ``if thou wilt return, O Israel, to my worship, saith the Lord, thy return shall be received before thy decree is sealed; and if thou wilt take away thine abominations from before me, thou shalt not be moved;’’

or wander about.

Ver. 2. *And thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth*, etc.] Or by the living Lord, by him and him only; not by the creatures, but by the God of truth. This is sometimes put for the whole worship and service of God, (^{<0663>}Deuteronomy 6:13) and for a confession of Christ, and profession of faith in him, (^{<2453>}Isaiah 45:23), compared with (^{<5413>}Romans 14:11) and which ought to be done,

in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment; in sincerity, integrity, and uprightness of soul; in spirit and in truth; in righteousness and true holiness:

and the nations shall bless themselves in him, not in Israel, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret it; but in the Lord, even in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed

with all spiritual blessings; with which being blessed, they call and count themselves happy, being pardoned through the blood of Christ, justified by his righteousness, and having peace, life, and salvation by him, (^{<0128>}Genesis 22:18):

and in him shall they glory; not in themselves, nor in any creature, or creature enjoyment; but in the Lord, and in what he is to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; in whom all the seed of Israel, being justified, glory; (see ^{<403>}1 Corinthians 1:30,31 ^{<2365>}Isaiah 45:25). The sense of the words seems to be, that upon the Gospel being preached by Christ and his apostles to the Israelites, and some of them being converted, and their abominations put away, and they cleaving to the Lord, and to his worship; the Gentiles should have the Gospel sent to them, and receive it, and place all their blessedness in Christ, and glory in him.

Ver. 3. *For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem*, etc.] The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were at the time of this prophecy in their own land; and so are distinguished from Israel the ten tribes, who were in captivity; unless the same persons should be meant, who were called by these several names, the people of the Jews; and it was in Judea that our Lord appeared in the flesh, and to the inhabitants thereof he ministered, he was the minister of the circumcision; and so to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, whom he called to repentance, and would have gathered, (^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37):

break up your fallow ground; this is ground that lies untilled, not ploughed, nor sown, on which nothing grows but the produce of nature, as weeds, thorns, briars, etc. is common to men and beasts, and is trodden upon, and so is hard and unsusceptible of seed; which, if it accidentally falls upon it, makes no impression on it, and is not received by it; and the breaking of it up is by the plough. The “fallow ground” fitly represents the hearts of unregenerate men, which are unopened to the word, and unbroken by it; nor have they the seed of divine grace sown in them; but are destitute of faith, hope, love, fear, and the like; there is nothing grows there but the weeds of sin and corruption; and are like a common beaten road; are the common track of sin, where lusts pass to and fro, and dwell; and so are hardened and obdurate, as hard as a stone, yea, harder than the nether millstone; and who, though they may occasionally be under the word, it makes no impression on them; it has no place in them, but is like the seed

that falls by the wayside, (⁴¹³⁴Matthew 13:4,19), unless divine power attends it; for the Gospel is the plough, and ministers are the ploughmen; but it is the Lord alone that makes it effectual to the breaking up the fallow ground of men's hearts, (⁴¹³²Luke 9:62 ²³¹⁶Isaiah 61:5 ⁴¹³¹1 Corinthians 3:6,7,8,9), but when the Lord puts his hand to the plough it enters within, and opens the heart; it is quick, powerful, and sharp; it cuts deep, and makes long and large furrows, even strong convictions of sin; it throws a man's inside outward, as the plough does the earth; and lays all the wicked of his heart open to him; and roots up the pride, the vanity, and boasting of the creature, and other lusts; and so makes way for the seed of divine grace to be sown there:

and sow not among thorns; or, “that ye may not sow among thorns”^{f86}; for, unless the fallow ground is broken up, it will be no other than sowing among thorns; and unless the hearts of men are opened by the power and grace of God, they will not attend to the things that are spoken; preaching and eating the word will be like sowing among thorns; cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life, and the lusts thereof, which are comparable to thorns, because pricking, perplexing, and distressing, and because vain and unprofitable, choke the word, and make it unfruitful; (see ⁴¹³⁷Matthew 13:7,22), now this exhortation in the text does not suppose power in man to break up and open his heart; but to show his want of renewing grace; the necessity of it; and the danger he is in without it; and to awaken in him a concern for it; (see ²³⁸¹Ezekiel 18:31 36:26). The words may be applied to backsliding professors, since backsliding Israel and Judah are the persons addressed; and this may be done with great propriety and pertinence to the simile; for fallow ground is that which has been broke up and sown, and laid fallow. It is usual to till and sow two years, and lay fallow a third: and backsliding Christians look very much like fallow ground; so faithless, so lukewarm, and indifferent; so inattentive to the word, and unconcerned under it; so barren and unfruitful, as if they had never had any faith, or love, or good work in them; so that they need to be renewed in the spirit of their minds; to have a new face of things put upon them: and to have a clean heart, and a right spirit, created in them. The Targum is,

“make to yourselves good works, and seek not salvation in sins.”

Ver. 4. *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord*, etc.] Or, “be ye circumcised”, as the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions render it. This is to be

understood of the circumcision of the heart, as Kimchi observes; and as appears from the following words:

and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; this is the true spiritual circumcision; and they that are possessed of it are the circumcision, the only truly circumcised persons; and they are such who have been pricked to the heart, and thoroughly convinced of sin; who have had the hardness of their hearts removed, and the impurity of it laid open to them; which they have beheld with shame and loathing, and have felt an inward pain on account of it; and who have been enabled to deny themselves, to renounce their own righteousness, and put off the body of the sins of the flesh: and though men are exhorted to do this themselves, yet elsewhere the Lord promises to do it for them, (^{<6316>}Deuteronomy 30:6), and indeed it is purely his own work; or otherwise it could not be called, as it is, “circumcision without hands”, and “whose praise is not of man, but of God”, (^{<5121>}Colossians 2:11 ^{<6122>}Romans 2:29), and the reason of this exhortation, as before, is to convince those Jews, who were circumcised in the flesh, and rested and gloried in that, that their hearts were not circumcised, and that there was a necessity of it, and they in danger for want of it; as follows:

lest my fury come forth like fire; to which the wrath of God is sometimes compared, (Na 1:6) and is sometimes signified by a furnace and lake of fire, even his eternal wrath and vengeance:

and burn that none can quench it; such is the fire of divine wrath; it is unquenchable; it is everlasting, (^{<4106>}Mark 9:43,44 ^{<4112>}Matthew 3:12 25:41):

because of the evil of your doings; which are so provoking to the eyes of his glory; the sins of men are the fuel to the fire of his wrath, and cause it to burn to the lowest hell, without the least degree of mercy. The Targum is,

“turn to the worship of the Lord, and take away the wickedness of your hearts, lest my fury burn as fire, and consume without mercy, because of the evil of your doings.”

Ver. 5. *Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem, and say*, etc.] Exhortations to repentance being without effect in general, though they might have an influence on some few particular persons, the Lord directs the prophet to lay before the people a view of their destruction as near at hand; who calls upon some persons as a sort of heralds, to publish and

declare in the land of Judea, and in Jerusalem the metropolis of it, what follows:

blow ye the trumpet in the land; as an alarm of an approaching enemy, and of an invasion by him, and of danger from him; and this was to be done, not in order to gather together, and put themselves in a posture of defence, to meet the enemy, and give him battle; but to get together, that were in the fields, and in country villages, and hide themselves from him:

cry, gather together, and say; or cry with a full mouth, with a loud voice, that all might hear; which shows imminent danger:

assemble yourselves and let us go into the defenced cities; such as Jerusalem, and others, where they might think themselves safe and secure; (see ⁴²⁴⁶Matthew 24:16).

Ver. 6. *Set up the standard toward Zion*, etc.] Not on the tower of Zion, as Kimchi interprets it; but on some high place, pointing to Zion, and directing the country people to flee thither for safety; for the setting up of the standard here is not for enlisting of soldiers in order to fight, but as a sign of danger, and a direction where to flee from it:

retire; gather yourselves together in order to flee, as the word ^{f87} is rendered in (²³⁰¹Isaiah 10:31), though some render it, “be ye strengthened”^{f88}; take heart, and play the man; but this does not seem so agreeable to the context:

stay not; or, “stand not”; stand not in the place ye are in, but move from it in all haste, because of present danger:

for I will bring evil from the north; from Babylon, as Kimchi interprets it; which lay north to the land of Israel; and so designs the captivity Judah should be brought into there:

and a great destruction or, “breach”^{f89}; which the Babylonians should make on the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem.

Ver. 7. *The lion is come up from his thicket*, etc.] Meaning Nebuchadnezzar^{f90}, from Babylon, who is compared to a lion for his strength, fierceness, and cruelty; (see ²⁵⁰⁷Jeremiah 50:17) so the Roman emperor is called a lion, (⁵⁰¹⁷2 Timothy 4:17), agreeably to this the Targum paraphrases it,

“a king is gone from his fortress;”

or tower; and the Syriac version,

“a certain most powerful king is about to go up as a lion out of his wood:”

and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he who had conquered and destroyed other nations not a few, and these mighty and strong; and therefore the Jews could not expect but to be destroyed by him. This tyrant was a type of antichrist, whose name is Apollyon, a destroyer of the nations of the earth, (⁴⁰¹Revelation 9:11 9:18)

he is gone forth from his place, to make thy land desolate; from Babylon, where his royal palace was, in order to lay waste the land of Judea; and he is represented as being come out, and on the road with this view, to strike the inhabitants of Judea with the greater terror, and to hasten their flight, their destruction being determined and certain:

and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant; they shall become so utterly desolate, that there should be none dwelling in them, partly by reason of the multitudes of the slain, and partly by reason of multitudes that should flee; and should be laid waste to such a degree, that they should be covered with grass growing upon them; which is the signification of the word^{f91} here used, according to R. Joseph Kimchi.

Ver. 8. *For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl*, etc.] That is, because of this destruction threatened, which was so near at hand, and so sure and certain:

for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it “from you” and some render it “from it”^{f92}; from his purpose and design to destroy the Jews. Jarchi interprets this of Josiah, and his times, who, though he turned to the Lord with all his heart, yet the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath and anger against Judah, (¹²³⁵2 Kings 23:25,26).

Ver. 9. *And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord*, etc.] When Nebuchadnezzar should be come up from Babylon into the land of Judea, and lay waste the cities thereof, and besiege Jerusalem:

that the heart of the king shall perish; meaning Zedekiah king of Judah, who should be in the utmost fright and consternation, not knowing what to do, being devoid both of wisdom and courage; (see ^{<280>}Jeremiah 39:4):

and the heart of the princes; who being seized with the same panic, and at their wits' end, would not be able to give any advice and counsel to the king; so that the people would have no help from the king and his nobles, in whom they put their confidence:

and the priests shall be astonished; which Kimchi interprets of the priests of the high places, the idolatrous priests, whose service would now cease, and whose idols would not save them:

and the prophets shall wonder; which he also interprets of the false prophets; as does the Targum; who prophesied peace, and now they shall see it was a lie they prophesied, since sudden destruction now comes upon them.

Ver. 10. *Then said I, ah, Lord God!* etc.] Expressing great sorrow and concern: this “ah” is by way of lamentation. The Targum interprets it as a petition,

“and I said, receive my prayer, O Lord God:”

surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem: what the false prophets did, that God is said to do, because he suffered them to deceive the people; (see ^{<1221>}1 Kings 22:20-23). The Targum ascribes the deception to the false prophets, and not to God,

“surely behold the false prophets deceive this people, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem;”

or this may be ironically said, because the false prophets pretended to speak in the name of the Lord; wherefore Jeremiah says, “surely thou hast greatly deceived”, etc. “saying, ye shall have peace”; as the false prophets did, (^{<2034>}Jeremiah 6:14):

whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul; takes away the life, many are slain by it; so the Targum,

“and now behold the sword killeth among the people;”

great slaughter is made by it. L'Empereur^{f93} observes that the word here used signifies, in the Arabic language, to educate or bring up; and then the sense is,

“ah, Lord, thou hast brought up this people with great tenderness, and promised them all manner of happiness; but now thou thunderest out threatenings of calamities of all sorts, and death itself; and assigned a place for the sword to enter into their very souls;”

so the Arabic word <Arabic> used in the version of (~~4212~~ Acts 22:2 ~~5046~~ 1 Timothy 4:6).

Ver. 11. *At that time shall it be said to this people, and to Jerusalem, etc.]* The inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, the people of the Jews; or “concerning”^{f94} them, as Jarchi interprets it:

a dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people. The Targum is,

“as the south wind upon the heads of floods of water in the wilderness, so is the way of the congregation of my people;”

but rather the north wind is designed, since that is a dry one, and the south wind a moist one; and the rather, since this wind intends Nebuchadnezzar and his army, which should come from Babylon, from the north. Some render it, “a neat clean wind”^{f95}; which strips the trees, lays bare rocks and mountains, carries away the earth and dust before it, and makes the stones look white and clean: it denotes a very strong, rushing, stormy, and boisterous wind. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “a burning one”; and it represents the force and power with which the enemy should come, without any opposition or resistance to him; for a wind on high places, hills, and mountains, and which comes through deserts and wildernesses, has nothing to hinder it, as Kimchi observes; whereas, when it blows in habitable places, there are houses, walls, hedges, and fences, which resist it; and it is observed, that in the way from Babylon to Judea, which the prophet calls “the daughter of my people”, were many desert places. The Septuagint version is, “the spirit of error in the desert, the way of the daughter of my people”; which the Syriac and Arabic versions seem to follow; the former rendering it, “as the wind that wanders through the paths of the desert, so is the way of the daughter of my people”; and the

latter thus, “there is a spirit of error in the desert, in the way of the daughter of my people”;

not to purity, nor to holiness, as it with the Septuagint renders the next clause: “not to fan, nor to cleanse”; of which use a more moderate wind is in winnowing and cleansing the corn from chaff, and light and useless grain.

Ver. 12. *Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me*, etc.] That is, a strong one, very vehement; or, “a wind which is fuller than these”, as the Syriac version renders it; which is stronger than those winds which are fit for fanning and winnowing the chaff from the wheat. Jarchi interprets it, a wind full of those punishments which God had threatened, and determined to bring upon this people, and would not turn from, nor repent of: and the phrase “shall come unto me” regards not the prophet, nor the people of the Jews, whom he represented, but the Lord himself; and shows that the wind is at his command, and when he calls, it comes unto him, and obeys his will, (⁴⁹³⁰⁸Psalm 148:8) and that all afflictions, judgments, and punishments for sin, are from him:

now also will I give sentence against them; not the prophet, but the Lord, who would now call them to his bar, try their cause, reprove them for their sins, pronounce sentence against them, and execute it. The Targum is,

“because they have wandered after the false prophets, who prophesied to them in a spirit of falsehood; therefore the armies of the people, higher than those, as the wind shall come against them; even now by my word I will bring them, and pronounce the vengeance of my judgments on them.”

Ver. 13. *Behold, he shall come up as clouds*, etc.] Meaning the lion, Nebuchadnezzar, (²⁴⁰⁷Jeremiah 4:7),

“the king with his army (as the Targum paraphrases it); he shall come up against them as a cloud that ascendeth and covers the earth.”

“come up against them as a cloud that ascendeth and covers the earth.”

The metaphor denotes the swiftness of his coming, and the multitudes he should come with, and that darkness and distress he should bring with him upon the people of the Jews:

and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind; for swiftness, power, and violence: chariots for war are intended; (see ~~238~~ Isaiah 5:28):

his horses are swifter than eagles: the swiftest of birds. The same thing is designed as by the other metaphors; the swiftness and suddenness of the Jews' destruction:

woe unto us, for we are spoiled; their destruction was inevitable, there was no escaping it; and therefore their case was woeful and miserable.

Ver. 14. *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness*, etc.] These are the words of the prophet, or of God by the prophet, showing the cause of all their ruin and destruction, the wickedness of their hearts; and they are expressed in such form and language, as to be accommodated to the case of any unregenerate sinner: every man's heart is wicked, desperately wicked, even wickedness itself; everything in it is wicked; the thoughts, and the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, the mind, the understanding, the will, the conscience, and the affections; and everything that is wicked is in that: it is the womb in which all sin is conceived; the shop and forge in which it is wrought; it is the habitation of every unclean lust; the seeds and principles of all sin are in it; it is the fountain spring and source of all evil; of all evil thoughts, words, and actions; all come out of it, and have their rise in it: and this wickedness is of a defiling nature, and has left a pollution on it; and what comes out of it defiles the man, that he stands in need of washing; which cannot be done to purpose by ceremonial ablutions and sacrifices, by moral acts of righteousness, by humiliation and tears, nor by submission to Gospel ordinances; nor indeed is this to be done by man at all, any other way than by faith dealing with the blood of Christ, by which only the heart is purified: for this is God's work, as appears from his promises to cleanse his people from all sins; from their prayers to him, to create in them clean hearts, to wash them thoroughly from their iniquity, and cleanse them from their sin; from the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, and the washing of regeneration ascribed to him; and from the end and efficacy of the bloodshed of Christ, to cleanse from sin, and purge the conscience from dead works; and the design of such exhortations as these is to convince men of the wickedness and pollution of their hearts, of the necessity of being washed from it, and of their own inability to do it of

themselves; and to lead them to the fountain of Christ's blood, to wash in for sin and for uncleanness:

that thou mayest be saved; not only with a temporal salvation, which may be here primarily meant; but with a spiritual and eternal one; for without purification of the heart there is no salvation: this is the meetness for the undefiled inheritance; without the washing of regeneration, there is no seeing nor entering into the kingdom of God; and unless we are washed by Christ, and in his blood, we can have no part nor portion with him in the heavenly glory; none shall ascend the holy hill, or dwell in the holy place, but such who have clean hands, and a pure heart; without this there is no seeing of God, nor having communion with him; this is the way in which he saves men, (³⁰⁸⁵Titus 3:5):

how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? or, “wilt thou suffer them to lodge within thee?”¹⁹⁶ if the question is of right, the answer is, they ought not to lodge one night, one hour, one moment; but if it is of fact, the answer is, they will have a place in the heart as long as we are in this tabernacle; but the words are spoken by way of complaint and reproof: the thoughts of men's hearts are vain, are taken up about vain and foolish things; and these not only pass to and fro, but have a lodging in the heart; and particularly vain are the thoughts of those who think themselves pure, and that their hearts are good, and trust in them; or that they can wash themselves from their wickedness; and that an outward reformation of life and manners is sufficient; and who think they can be saved without the washing of regeneration, and the blood of Christ. The Targum is,

“cleanse thine heart from doing evil, O Jerusalem, that ye may be saved; how long shall they endure and be stable who do violence, which is in the midst of thee?”

Ver. 15. *For a voice declareth from Dan*, etc.] The coming of the enemy, as Kimchi explains it, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Chaldeans; a messenger was come from Dan, which was on the border of the land of Israel to the north, on which side Babylon lay, and from whence the evil was to come predicted; who declared the enemy was approaching, just entering the land; not that this was now the case in fact, but this is represented in a prophetic manner, as what would be, in order to arouse and awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin and danger; (see ²⁴⁸⁰Jeremiah 8:10)

and publisheth affliction from Mount Ephraim: which lay on the border of the tribe of Benjamin, and nearer to Jerusalem; and this publication represents the enemy as advancing nearer, and being just at hand. The word for “affliction” signifies “iniquity”^{f97}; and it denotes, that the affliction spoken of, which is the destruction of the Jews, and their captivity in Babylon, were occasioned by their sins. Some think that Daniel and Ephraim are mentioned, because of the calves that were worshipped in Dan, and in Bethel, which was in the tribe of Ephraim. The Targum favours this, which paraphrases the words thus,

“for the voice of the prophets that prophesied against them that go into captivity, because they worshipped the calf, which is at Dan; and they that bring evil tidings, shall come upon them, because they served the image which Micah set up in the mount of the house of Ephraim;”

and the Vulgate Latin version is,

“the voice of him that declares from Dan, and that makes known the idol from Mount Ephraim.”

Ver. 16. *Make ye mention to the nations,* etc.] This, according to Kimchi, is the sum and substance of the voice from Dan. It seems to be a summons to the nations to gather together to join the king of Babylon in his enterprise against Jerusalem; (see ^{<124B>}2 Kings 24:2):

publish against Jerusalem; what follows:

that watchers come from afar country; from Babylon, which is said to be a far country, (^{<230B>}Isaiah 39:3), these are the soldiers of the king of Babylon; they are called Notzerim; which word agrees with the latter part of Nebuchadnezzar’s name; to which some^{f98} think there is some reference, showing that his army is meant. It should be rendered “besiegers”, as it is by some^{f99}; for these were not Nebuchadnezzar’s bodyguard, but his whole army, who were come up to besiege Jerusalem; and they are compared to watchers and keepers of a field in the next verse, where another word is used. The Targum is,

“the army of a rapacious people, like the grape gatherers, come from a far country:”

and give out their voice against the cities of Judah; threaten the ruin of them; blow the trumpet, the alarm of war; give the orders to besiege; and, being sure of victory, triumph before the attack is made.

Ver. 17. *As keepers of a field, are they against her round about*, etc.] As those that are set to watch a field, in which are fruit and corn of any sort, that thieves and robbers, and wild beasts, may not enter to waste and destroy, and are placed on all sides for that purpose; so the Chaldeans were round about Jerusalem, that none could make their escape out of it; (see ^{<12714>}2 Kings 25:4):

because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the Lord; it was not without reason that the Lord suffered the Chaldeans to come against Jerusalem, besiege, and take it; the inhabitants of it had rebelled against him, their King and their God; and therefore he delivers them up into the hands of another lord, and a cruel one; they had provoked him to anger with their sins, and caused him to stir up his wrath against them in this way: rebellion against a prince, or against a parent, is a provoking sin; (see ^{<191523>}1 Samuel 15:23 ^{<231012>}Isaiah 1:2).

Ver. 18. *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*, etc.] The way in which they walked, which was an evil one; and the actions which they committed; their idolatries, backslidings, and rebellions, before spoken of in this and the preceding chapter, were the cause of this siege, and those calamities coming upon them; they had none to blame but themselves; it was their own sinful ways and works which brought this ruin and destruction on them:

this is thy wickedness; the fruit of thy wickedness; or, “this thy calamity”; that is, is owing to these things; so the word is rendered in (^{<34115>}Psalm 141:5):

because it is bitter; not sin, as in (^{<24129>}Jeremiah 2:19), but the punishment of it; the calamity before mentioned; which was hard and heavy, and grievous to be borne, and yet very just; it was by way of retaliation; “they had bitterly provoked the Lord”, as the word may be rendered in the preceding verse; and now he sends them a bitter calamity, and a heavy judgment:

because it reacheth unto thine heart; into the midst of them, and utterly destroyed them. The two last clauses may be rendered, “though it is bitter, though it reacheth unto thine heart”^{f100}; though it is such a sore distress,

and such an utter destruction, yet it was to be ascribed to nothing else but their own sins and transgressions.

Ver. 19. *My bowels, my bowels*, etc.] These are either the words of the people, unto whose heart the calamity reached, as in the preceding verse; or rather of the prophet, who either, from a sympathizing heart, expresses himself in this manner; or puts on an appearance of mourning and distress, in order to awaken his people to a sense of their condition. The repetition of the word is after the manner of persons in pain and uneasiness, as, “my head, my head”, (^{Q1419}2 Kings 4:19):

I am pained at my very heart; as a woman in labour. In the Hebrew text it is, “as the walls of my heart”^{f101}; meaning either his bowels, as before; or the “praecordia”, the parts about the heart, which are as walls unto it; his grief had reached these walls, and was penetrating through them to his heart, and there was danger of breaking that:

my heart makes a noise in me; palpitates, beats and throbs, being filled with fears and dread, with sorrow and concern, at what was coming on; it represents an aching heart, all in disorder and confusion:

I cannot hold my peace; or be silent; must speak, and vent grief:

because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war; Kimchi observes, he does not say “my ears”, but “my soul”; for as yet he had not heard with his ears the sound of the trumpet; for the enemy was not yet come, but his soul heard by prophecy: here is a Keri and a Cetib, a reading and a writing; it is written yt [mç, “I have heard”; it is read t [mç, “thou hast heard”, which is followed by the Targum: the sense is the same, it is the hearing of the soul. The prophet, by these expressions, represents the destruction as very near, very certain, and very distressing. The trumpet was sounded on different accounts, as Isidore^{f102} observes; sometimes to begin a battle; sometimes to pursue those that fled; and sometimes for a retreat.

Ver. 20. *Destruction upon destruction is cried*; etc.] Or, “breach upon breach”^{f103}; as soon as one affliction is over, another comes on; and upon the news of one calamity, tidings are brought of another, as in Job’s case: it signifies, that distress and troubles would come thick and fast, and that there would be no end of them, until there was an utter destruction, as this phrase signifies, and the following words show. Kimchi interprets it of the

destruction of the ten tribes which came first, and of the destruction of Judah that came now.

For the whole land is spoiled, or “wasted”^{f104}; that is, the land of Judea:

suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment: meaning either the armies of his people, which dwelt in tents, and were destroyed at once; or the cities, towns, and habitations of his countrymen, which he compares to tents, as being easily beat down or overthrown; and so the Targum interprets it of cities; and the prophet seems to intimate that this destruction would reach to Anathoth, where his tent; cottage, and curtains were. So sudden destruction some times comes, when men are crying Peace, peace, (^{<18B>}1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Ver. 21. *How long shall I see the standard*, etc.] “Ensign” or “banner” displayed; either by the watchmen placed on high hills or towers, who, when they see the enemy approaching, lift up their ensign or banner, and blow with their trumpets, to give the people warning and notice of it, and to call them to battle, and that they might prepare for the same, as Kimchi observes; or else by the Chaldean army, which came with colours flying, trumpets blowing, and set in array for battle, which was very terrible, as an army with banners is, (^{<21B>}Song of Solomon 6:4,10):

and hear the sound of the trumpet? either of the watchmen giving notice of danger, and summoning to battle, or of the enemy preparing to attack; (see ^{<64B>}1 Corinthians 14:8).

Ver. 22. *For my people is foolish*, etc.] This, as Kimchi says, is the answer of the Lord to the prophet; for not the prophet says this, but the Lord to the prophet, giving a reason why this sore destruction came upon the people of the Jews, and so reconciling his mind to the providence; seeing those whom he had chosen to be his people, above all people upon the face of the earth, and who professed themselves to be his people, had acted such a foolish part as they had done, in backsliding from him, revolting from his ways and worship, rebelling against him, and in committing such gross idolatries as they had been guilty of. So a people may be a professing people, and yet a foolish one; there are foolish professors of religion; such who take up a profession foolishly, without an experience of the grace of God; without any true faith in Christ; without having on the wedding garment of his righteousness; without laying it upon a good foundation; and without considering the cost and charge of a profession, and the

difficulties and troubles attending it; and such are they who foolishly trust in it, when they have taken it up; and hold it foolishly, very remissly, and in a wavering manner; and who walk not agreeably to it, and at last foolishly drop it:

they have not known me; men may be the people of God by profession, and yet not know him; not know him so as to glorify him; not know him as their God, truly and experimentally; not know him in Christ, and have communion with him through him; not know the Lord Christ himself, the worth, glory, and excellency of him; their need of him; of his blood to cleanse them from sin; of his righteousness to justify them; of his sacrifice to atone for them; and of his fulness to supply their need; nor know the way of life, peace, and salvation by him, or at most only notionally, not experimentally; whereas the only true wisdom is to know Christ, and God in him; this is real and solid knowledge; it is science truly so called; it is delightful and satisfactory; it is useful and profitable, and is what issues in eternal life; and let men know what they will else, if they know not the Lord, they are “sottish children”; they are children indeed in understanding; and though they may be the children of God by profession, they are not the true and genuine children of God, since they know neither the Father nor the Son:

and they have no understanding; though they are not without a natural understanding, or an understanding of things natural and civil, yet they have no spiritual understanding, or an understanding of spiritual things; and at best only in a speculative, and not in an experimental way and manner:

they are wise to do evil; cunning inventors of evil things, crafty schemers that way, may be full of all wicked subtlety, and expert at over reaching and defrauding their brethren; when professors of religion especially ought to be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil,
(~~469~~Romans 16:19):

but to do good they have no knowledge; to do good, or to do a good thing well, is to do it according to the revealed will of God, from a principle of love to him, in the exercise of faith upon him, in the name and strength of Christ, and with a view to the glory of God; to do good in this sense, and in such a way and manner, carnal men and carnal professors have no knowledge, no practical knowledge; they have no inclination to it, but the reverse; nor do they, nor can they, perform it: if they had a knowledge how to do it, or a power to perform it, there would have been, in one age or

another, some, more or fewer, that would have done it; but there is none of all Adam's descendants that does good, no, not one, (^{<680B>}Romans 3:9-12), the grace of God is absolutely necessary to the right doing of a good work, and the knowledge of it.

Ver. 23. *I beheld the earth*, etc.] The land of Judea, not the whole world; and this the prophet says, either in spirit, as Jerom; or in prophecy, as Kimchi; or in a visionary way; for these are not the words of God continued, as Cocceius, but of the prophet; who, by a prophetic spirit, describes the dreadful destruction of the Jewish nation, as follows:

and, lo, it was without form, and void; as the first earth or chaos was, before it was brought into form and order; the same words, "tohu" and "bohu", are used here, as in (^{<000E>}Genesis 1:2), the land of Judea now was, in the prophet's view of it, like the first earth, when darkness covered it; no grass sprung out of it, not a tree to be seen in it, and neither man nor beast as yet upon it, but all an undigested mass, and in the utmost wild disorder and confusion; and this may denote not only the natural, but the political, and ecclesiastical, disorder of the Jewish nation and state:

and the heavens, and they had no light; that were over the land of Judea; "their lights did not shine,"

as the Targum paraphrases it; that is, the sun, moon, and stars, which were darkened by the smoke of the burning of Jerusalem; or which withdrew their light, as blushing at, and being ashamed of, the iniquities of his people, and who were unworthy of enjoying the light of them; and which this phrase may denote.

Ver. 24. *I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled*, etc.] At the presence of God, at the tokens of his displeasure, and at his awful vengeance in the destruction of the Jews, as they are sometimes said to do, (^{<580B>}Psalms 68:8 114:6,7 ^{<580B>}Habakkuk 3:6,10):

and all the hills moved lightly; so Kimchi's father says the word used has the signification of lightness; though Jarchi, from Menachem, explains it, they were plucked up, and thrown out of their place; and some render it, were pulled down and destroyed, so the Targum. Mountains and hills are most stable, and not easily moved, wherefore this is said, to aggravate the desolation and destruction.

Ver. 25. *And I beheld, and, lo, there was no man*, etc.] No people dwelling in it, as the Targum; the land was without inhabitants, they were either killed with the sword, or taken and carried captive into Babylon, or fled into Egypt and other countries:

and all the birds of the heavens were fled; at the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war; at the blackness of the heavens, filled with smoke; at the barrenness of the earth, there being no seed sown; and the earth, as at the first creation, having no herb, nor trees bearing fruit, and so no food for birds; and therefore they went elsewhere, both wild and tame.

Ver. 26. *I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness*, etc.] Or, “I beheld, and, lo, Carmel was a wilderness”; which was a particular part of the land of Israel, and was very fertile, and abounded in pastures and fruit trees, and yet this, as the rest, became desolate as a wilderness; (see ²³²⁵Isaiah 32:15 35:2) though it may be put for the whole land, which was very fruitful; and so the Targum,

“I saw, and, lo, the land of Israel, which was planted as Carmel, was turned to be as a wilderness:”

and all the cities thereof; not of Carmel only, but of the whole land:

were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger; for though this was done by the Chaldeans, yet it was by the will and appointment of God, and as a token of his fierce anger against the people of the Jews, for their sins and transgressions. Jarchi cites a Midrash Agadah, or an allegorical exposition of this place, which interprets the “mountains”, the Jewish fathers; the “hills”, the mothers, and their merits; “no man”, the worthiness of Moses, who was meeker than any man; and “Carmel”, Elijah; without any manner of foundation.

Ver. 27. *For thus hath the Lord said*, etc.] What follows is an explanation and confirmation of the above vision the prophet had:

the whole land shall be desolate; as he had seen; it should not be manured, ploughed, and sown, or bring forth fruit; and should be without inhabitants, at least have very few:

yet I will not make a full end; there should be some inhabitants, who, with those that should hereafter return from captivity, would repeople it, rebuild the temple, and restore it to its pristine form and order, both as to things

natural, civil, and ecclesiastical; but though a full end of them, as a church and people, was not to be made now by the Chaldeans, yet it would be; as it has been done by the Romans, in the times of Vespasian and Hadrian.

Ver. 28. *For this shall the earth mourn*, etc.] That is, for the full end that will be made hereafter, though not now; the earth may be said to mourn when the inhabitants of it do; or when it is destroyed, and is become desolate, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, explain it; when it is uncultivated and uninhabited:

and the heavens above be black; with thick clouds, and storms, and tempests; in allusion to mourners, that are clothed with black: these figures, of the earth's mourning, and the heavens being clothed in black, denote the horribleness of that dispensation, when there would be an utter destruction of the Jewish nation, church, and polity, of which Daniel prophesies, (^{<2>}Daniel 9:27):

because I have spoken it; in my word, as the Targum; in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, by Moses and the prophets:

I have purposed it; or I have thought of it, in my counsel, as the Targum; it was a thing deliberately devised and determined, and therefore can never be frustrated, or made void:

and will not repent; of what was purposed and predicted:

neither will I turn back from it; revoke, or retract it; it shall surely come to pass: the Jews, upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, and afterwards, might flatter themselves that a full end would not be made of them, because it was not then done; and therefore these several strong expressions are used, to confirm and assure them of it; for the word of God cannot fail, his counsel shall stand; he is not a man, that he should lie or repent; he will do all his pleasure.

Ver. 29. *The whole city shall flee*, etc.] Or, "every city"; for not Jerusalem only is meant, but every city, or the inhabitants of every city; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

"all the inhabitants of the land,"

who would be put into a panic, and flee: "for" or

at the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; of which the army of the enemy would greatly consist: it intimates that the inhabitants of Judea would not stand a battle; but at hearing the sound of the trampling of the horses, and the clattering of the bows and arrows, that the men upon them had, they would flee at once:

they shall go into the thickets, and climb upon the rocks; that is, either the horsemen and bowmen, who would pursue the inhabitants into those places: or rather the inhabitants themselves, who would flee thither to hide themselves from their enemies; namely, get into woods and forests, and among the thick trees, and cover themselves; and upon the highest mountains and rocks, and into the holes and caverns of them, and secure themselves from the enemy; (see ^{<1246>}Matthew 24:16), the word for “thickets” signifies “clouds”^{f105}; and Kimchi interprets it of places as high as the clouds, as the tops of some mountains are, so that going up to them is like entering into the clouds; and which are sometimes covered with thick trees, and look like clouds; but the Targum explains it of woods or forests:

every city shall be forsaken; of its inhabitants:

and not a man dwell therein; as the prophet had seen in his vision, (^{<3025>}Jeremiah 4:25), this was to be when a full end was made, not by the Babylonians, but by the Romans.

Ver. 30. *And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do?* etc.] Or, “O thou spoiled”^{f106}, wasted, and undone creature, how wilt thou help thyself? by what means dost thou think thou canst be delivered? it suggests that her ruin was inevitable; that she could not be recovered from it by herself, or any other:

though thou clothest thyself with crimson; and so look like some rich and noble person; hoping thereby to find mercy, and to have quarter given and kindness shown:

though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold; as a person of high and princely dignity: or rather all this is to be understood of the manner of harlots, who dress rich and grand, in order to allure men; since it follows,

though thou rendest thy face with painting; or, eyes^{f107}; which painting dilates as Jezebel did, (^{<1233>}2 Kings 9:30),

in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; so as to be loved and admired: far from it:

thy lovers will despise thee; as an old harlot is despised by her former gallants, notwithstanding all her dressing and painting; yea, their love is often turned into hatred and abhorrence, as would be the case here,

they will seek thy life; to take it away; so far would there be from being any ground of expectations of help and deliverance from them.

Ver. 31. *For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail*, etc.] So the distress of the Jews, at the time of their destruction, is compared to the sorrows of a woman in travail; and a word, that signifies that is used to express it, (^{4B18}Matthew 24:8):

and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child; whose time is more difficult, her pains sharper, her anguish greater, and, having less experience, the more impatient:

the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself; her unhappy condition, and miserable circumstances:

that spreadeth her hands; as persons in distress do, and particularly women in travail: saying,

woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers: these abounded: under the second temple, and was the reason, the Jews say:^{f108}, of the sanhedrim removing from their usual place in the temple; and why they ceased from the beheading of the red heifer^{f109}.