

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 5

This chapter contains a further account of the destruction of the Jews by the Chaldeans, and the causes of it, the sins of the people, as want of justice and truth; being so corrupt, that a just and faithful man was not to be found among them; could there, the city would have been pardoned for his sake, (<sup><24R1></sup>Jeremiah 5:1), their swearing falsely by the name of the Lord, (<sup><24R2></sup>Jeremiah 5:2), their incorrigibility by chastisements, which was the case not only of the lower, but higher rank of people, (<sup><24R3></sup>Jeremiah 5:3-5), wherefore the enemy, who for his cruelty is compared to a lion, a wolf, and a leopard, is threatened to be let in among them, (<sup><24R4></sup>Jeremiah 5:6), then other sins are mentioned as the cause of it, as idolatry and adultery, (<sup><24R5></sup>Jeremiah 5:7-9) hence the enemy has a commission to scale their walls, take away their battlements, though not to make a full end, the Lord disowning them for his, (<sup><24R6></sup>Jeremiah 5:10), because of their perfidy against him, their belying of him, contradicting what he had said, and despising the word sent by his prophets, (<sup><24R7></sup>Jeremiah 5:11-13), wherefore it is threatened, that his word like fire should devour them; and that a distant, mighty, and ancient nation, of a foreign speech, should invade them; who, like an open sepulchre, would devour them, and eat up the increase of their fields, vineyards, flocks, and herds, and impoverish their cities, yet not make a full end of them, (<sup><24R8></sup>Jeremiah 5:14-18), and in just retaliation should they serve strangers in a foreign country, who had served strange gods in their own, (<sup><24R9></sup>Jeremiah 5:19) then a declaration is published, and an expostulation is made with them, who are represented as foolish, ignorant, and blind, that they would fear the Lord; which is pressed by arguments taken from the power of God, in restraining the sea, which had no effect upon them; and from the goodness of God, in giving the former and latter rain, and the appointed weeks of the harvest, which their sins turned away and withheld from them, (<sup><24R10></sup>Jeremiah 5:20-25), and then other sins are mentioned as the cause of God's visiting them in a way of vengeance, as the defrauding of men in trade, and the oppression of the fatherless and the poor in judgment; and false prophesying, to the advantage of the priests, and the king of the people, (<sup><24R11></sup>Jeremiah 5:26-31).

**Ver. 1.** *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,* etc.] These are the words of the Lord, not to the prophet only, but to any other, who thought fit to look into the reasons of the Lord's dealing in a way of judgment with the people of the Jews; these he would have go through the whole city of Jerusalem, every street of it, and that backwards and forwards, not once only, but over and over again:

*and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof;* where there is commonly the greatest concourse of people; here he would have them look out diligently, observe and take cognizance of the persons they should meet with in such places:

*if ye can find a man;* that is, as the Targum adds, whose works are good, and as it is afterwards explained; for as yet the city was not desolate, so as that there was no man dwelling in it, as it was foretold it should be, (<sup>24025</sup>Jeremiah 4:25,29). It is reported<sup>f110</sup> of Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, that he lighted up a candle in the daytime, and went through the streets with it; and, being asked the reason of it, said, I seek a man; that is, a man of virtue, honour, and honesty; by which he would be understood, that such were very rare: and so it follows,

*if there be any that executeth judgment;* in the public courts of judicature; or in private, between man and man:

*that seeketh the truth;* of doctrine and worship, that seeks to speak it, and maintain it; who is true to his word, and faithful to his promises; but was not one such to be found? were there not the Prophet Jeremiah, and Baruch, and some others? the answer of Kimchi's father is, that such were not to be found in the streets and broad places, where the direction is to seek, because such were hidden in their own houses for fear of wicked men; others think that the meaning is, that there were none to be found to make up the hedge, or stand in the gap for the land, and to intercede for them, as in (<sup>3220</sup>Ezekiel 22:30), and others are of opinion that the Lord speaks of men in public offices, as judges, priests, and prophets, who were grown so corrupt, as that a good man was not to be found among them: but it seems rather to design the body of the people, and the sense to be, that an upright faithful man was rare to be found; and that, could there be found but a few of that sort, the Lord would spare the city for their sake, as in the case of Sodom, (<sup>01832</sup>Genesis 18:32) and so it follows,

*and I will pardon it*; the city of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of it; so the Targum, Septuagint, and Arabic versions render it, “them”.

**Ver. 2.** *And though they say, the Lord liveth*, etc.] It might be said, that there were multitudes that made mention of the name of the Lord, that professed it, and swore by it; which sometimes is put for the worship and service of God, (<sup>(LXXII)</sup>Deuteronomy 10:20) and therefore it could not be so difficult a matter to find a man of integrity and uprightness among them; this is answered by allowing there were persons that did do so: but then it must be observed,

*that surely they swear falsely*; they abused the name of God, and were guilty of perjury: or the sense is, they were only nominal professors, hypocritical worshippers; in words professed to know God, but in works denied him; had a form of religion and godliness, but without the power of it.

**Ver. 3.** *O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?* etc.] That is, thou hast no regard to such deceitful men, such hypocritical worshippers and formal professors, but to true and upright men: God looks not at outward appearances, but to the heart; he can see through all masks and vizards, there is no deceiving of him; he desires truth in the inward parts, and his eyes are on that; he has respect to men that have the truth of grace, the root of the matter in them, oil in their vessels, together with the lamps of an outward profession: his eyes are on such as have a true inward sense of sin, a genuine repentance for it, and that make a sincere, hearty, and ingenuous confession of it; to this man he looks, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit; he is nigh to such, and dwells with them; when he has no regard to the sad countenances and disfigured faces of Pharisees; to the tears of a profane Esau, or to the external humiliations and concessions of a wicked Pharaoh: his eyes are upon the internal graces of his own Spirit; to love, that is in deed and in truth; to hope, that is without dissimulation, and to faith unfeigned: and so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it, “thine eyes are unto faith”; or, respect faith<sup>f111</sup>; the faith of Christians, as Jerom interprets it. Faith is a grace well pleasing to God, and everything that is done in faith is so, and nothing else; it is a grace that gives glory to God, and on which he has put much honour, in making it the receiver of all the blessings of grace, and connecting salvation with it; he has so great a regard for it, that whatever it asks it has of him. In short, the sense is, that the eyes of the Lord, of his love, favour, good will,

and delight, are upon such whose hearts are upright towards him; who draw nigh to him in truth, worship him in spirit and in truth, and are hearty to his cause and interest, and faithful to his word and ordinances; who are lovers of truth; of Christ, who is the truth itself; and of his Gospel, the word of truth, and the doctrines of it; (see <sup><0667></sup>1 Samuel 16:7 <sup><440></sup>2 Chronicles 16:9).

*Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved;* that is, the Lord had courted and chastised them with afflictive providences; he had brought his judgments upon them, and had smitten them with the sword, or famine, or pestilence, or some such sore calamity, and yet it had not brought them to a sense of their sin, and to a godly sorrow for it:

*thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction;* God had by his judgments consumed or swept away many of them, yet the rest did not take warning thereby, but went on in their sins; or they were brought near to consumption, as Kimchi interprets it; nevertheless remained obstinate and incorrigible, refused to receive any correction or instruction by such providences:

*they have made their faces harder than a rock;* becoming more impudent in sinning, not blushing at, or being ashamed for it, and unmoved by judgments and chastising providence:

*they have refused to return;* to the Lord, and to his worship, from which they revolted; or by repentance, and unto faith and truth, from which they had swerved.

**Ver. 4.** *Then I said, surely these are poor, they are foolish,* etc.] The prophet, observing that reproofs and corrections in providence had no effect upon the people, he thought within himself that surely the reason must be, because these people are poor, and in low circumstances in the world, and are so busy in their worldly employments to get bread for their families, that they were not at leisure to attend unto divine things; nor of capacity to receive instruction and correction by providences; therefore it is they were so foolish, stupid, and infatuated:

*for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God;* either the way which God takes in the salvation of the sons of men, and in justifying of them, which is revealed in his word; or that which he prescribes them to walk in, in his law, even the way of truth and righteousness, and for failure of which he judges and condemns them; but

of these things they were ignorant; (see <sup><4748></sup>John 7:48,49), not that this is observed in excuse for them, but in order to introduce what follows; and to show that this depravity, stupidity, and ignorance, obtained among all sort of people, high and low, rich and poor.

**Ver. 5.** *I will get me unto the great men, and speak unto them*, etc.] The princes, nobles, and judges, the elders of the people, the scribes and doctors of the law:

*for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God*; it might be reasonably expected that they had, having had a good education, and being at leisure from worldly business to attend to the law, and the knowledge of it, and whatsoever God had revealed in his word, both in a way of doctrine and duty:

*but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds*; the yoke of the law, and the bonds of his precepts, with which they were bound; these they broke off from them, and would not be obliged and restrained by them, but transgressed and rejected them.

**Ver. 6.** *Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them*, etc.] Meaning King Nebuchadnezzar out of Babylon, a place full of people, and so comparable to a forest, as the king is to a lion, for his strength, fierceness, and cruelty; and who came from thence, besieged and took Jerusalem; and who not only slew their young men with the sword, but also the king's sons, and the princes and nobles of Judah, (<sup><4437></sup>2 Chronicles 36:17 <sup><4510></sup>Jeremiah 52:10 4:7)

*and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them*; which, having sought for its prey all the day, or not daring to go out for any, is hungry, raging and furious, and tears and destroys whatever it meets with; (see <sup><3488></sup>Zephaniah 3:3), so the Targum and Kimchi understand it of such a wolf; but Jarchi and Ben Melech interpret it, "a wolf of the desert", or deserts; as the word <sup>f112</sup> will bear to be rendered; one that frequents desert places, and rages about in the wilderness; as the king of Babylon with his army did among the wilderness of the people of the nations about him, and at length spoiled Judea, and laid it desolate:

*a leopard shall watch over their cities*; the same enemies, who are compared to watchers, and to keepers of a field, (<sup><2416></sup>Jeremiah 4:16,17). Kimchi interprets the lion of a king, that being the king among beasts; the

wolf, of his army; and the leopard, of the princes of the army; and so the Targum,

“wherefore a king with his army shall come up against them, as a lion out of the forest; and the people, who are strong as the wolves of the evening, shall slay them; and the rulers, who are mighty as the leopard, shall make a prey of them, watching over their cities;”

but Jarchi applies them to the several monarchies; by the lion, he understands the kingdom of Babylon; by the wolf, the kingdom of the Medes; and by the leopard, the kingdom of Greece; and so Jerom:

*everyone that goes out thence*; from any of the cities of Judea, watched by the enemy:

*shall be torn in pieces*; by those beasts of prey. Jarchi adds, by the Persians; the reason of all which follows, and shows it to be a righteous judgment of God upon them:

*because their transgressions are many*: their rebellions against God, their violations of his righteous law, were not a few, but many; God had bore long with them, and they had abused his patience and longsuffering; and therefore now he determines to punish them by such instruments:

*and their backslidings are increased*; though he had so often, and so kindly and tenderly, invited them to return unto him, (<sup>2412</sup>Jeremiah 3:12,14,22).

**Ver. 7.** *How shall I pardon thee for this?* etc.] Because of their manifold transgressions, and multiplied backslidings; or “wherefore, or for what, shall I pardon thee?”<sup>f113</sup> as the Targum; can any reason be given why I should? what goodness is there in thee, or done by thee, that I should do this unto thee? The particle *ya*, according to Kimchi, is a word of exclamation; and, according to Jarchi, of admiration; and may be rendered, “oh! for this shall I pardon?” how can it be? R. Menachem; in Jarchi, takes it to be the same with *ya*, “not”; and to be rendered, not for this will I pardon; and so is an affirmation, and fixed resolution not to pardon, and that for the following reasons:

*thy children have forsaken me*; my worship, as the Targum interprets it; that is, the children of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of it, the common people, as distinguished from their fathers, the civil and ecclesiastical rulers; (see

Matthew 23:37), though not to the exclusion of them; for they were guilty of the same sin in forsaking the word, worship, and ordinances of God:

*and sworn by them that are no gods*; by the name of idols, as the Targum; or, “by those things which are not god”, as Noldius<sup>f114</sup> renders the words; who rightly observes, that there were other things besides idols that they swore by, as the heaven and earth, temple, altar, etc. with which the Arabic version agrees; when an oath ought only to be taken in the name of the living God; or, “swore without God”; without making mention of the name of the true God:

*when I had fed them to the full*; with the good things of life; gave them all things richly to enjoy; the best provisions, and fulness of them; so that they had all that heart could wish for. There is in the Hebrew text a beautiful play on words<sup>f115</sup>, between the word used for swearing in the former clause, and this for feeding here:

*they then committed adultery*; either idolatry, which is spiritual adultery; or adultery literally taken; as it seems from the following verse. This is the consequence of their being fully fed; and that is an aggravation of this their sin against God and their neighbour; (see <sup><6213></sup>Deuteronomy 32:13-16):

*and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses*; either in the temples of idols, or in the stews or brothel houses, where harlots prostituted themselves; their going thither in troops, or in great numbers, shows both how universal and how public this sin was, and how impudent and barefaced they were in the commission of it.

**Ver. 8.** *They were as fed horses in the morning*, etc.] Adulterers are compared to horses, because they are very salacious and lustful creatures; wherefore the Septuagint renders the word: “horses are become mad after the females”; or, “as horses mad after the females are they become”; and especially to such as are well kept and are fat, and who, having much food given them in the night, and being full in the morning, go forth neighing, as Kimchi observes; and are the more salacious in the morning, by being so well fed all night, as those persons were, as is expressed in the preceding verse; though some render the word **μυκσμ**, translated “in the morning”, (for which sense of it (see <sup><2804></sup>Hosea 6:4)) “drawing out”<sup>f116</sup>; that is, the genital member, as lascivious horses do. The word is difficult of

interpretation. The Targum calls them field or wood horses; horses that run in fields and woods, and are very vicious and wanton;

*everyone neighed after his neighbour's wife*; coveted and lusted after her, signified his lustful desires, and sought an opportunity to defile her. Neighing is a sign of lust, and keeps up the metaphor of the horse.

**Ver. 9.** *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord*, etc.] For such adulteries and lasciviousness, and that in a way of punishment. The Targum adds,

“to bring evil upon them;”

the evil of punishment for the evil of sin:

*and shall not my soul be avenged upon such a nation as this?* which cannot delight in sin, but hates it; and therefore must punish for it; vindictive and punitive justice is essential to God; as sin is contrary to his nature, it is agreeable to it to punish for it; he cannot but do it; and he does avenge all sin, either on the sinner himself, or on his surety.

**Ver. 10.** *Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy*, etc.] These are the words of the prophet, or of the Lord by the prophet, to the Chaldeans, ordering them to ascend the walls of Jerusalem, and break them down, as they did, even all the walls of it round about, (<sup><3637></sup>Jeremiah 52:7,14), there can be nothing done without the Lord's will; and there is no evil in a city but what is done, or ordered, or suffered to be done by him, (<sup><3016></sup>Amos 3:6):

*but make not a full end*; meaning not of the walls, for a full end was made of them, they were broken down all around; but of the people; there were a remnant to be preserved from the sword, and to be carried captive, and to be returned into their own land again, after a term of years:

*take away her battlements*; which must mean not the battlements of their houses, or of the temple; but of their walls, the fortifications that run out like branches without the wall<sup>f117</sup>. Kimchi interprets them the teeth of the wall; the Septuagint version renders the word, “the under props”; and the Syriac and Arabic versions, “the foundations of it”. The word properly signifies the branches of a vine; wherefore Jarchi takes the word for walls, in the preceding clause, to signify the rows of a vineyard; and the Jews are sometimes compared to a vineyard; and here the Chaldeans are called upon



to enter into it, to come upon the rows of the vines in it, and take away its branches:

*for they are not the Lord's*; either the walls and the battlements are not the Lord's, he disowns them, and will not guard them, and protect them, any more; or rather the people are not the Lord's, he has written a "loammi" upon them; they are not the people of God, nor the branches of Christ the true Vine. The Septuagint, Syriac and Arabic versions, read the words without the negative, "leave her under props", or "her foundations, because they are the Lord's". The Targum is,

"go upon her cities, and destroy, and make not a full end; destroy her palaces, for the Lord has no pleasure in them."

**Ver. 11.** *For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me*, etc.] This is a reason why such orders are given to the army of the Chaldeans to ascend the walls of Jerusalem and destroy them; namely, the perfidy both of the ten tribes, signified by the house of Israel; so Abarbinel; and of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, signified by the house of Judah; which was very great, and attended with aggravated circumstances; instances of it follow. The Targum is,

"they have dealt very falsely with my word:"

*saieth the Lord*; for this was not the charge of the prophet against them, but of the Lord himself. This can only be understood of such of the ten tribes as remained in Judea, for the body of that people had been carried captive many years ago; whose sins Judah imitated, and, being also the posterity of Israel, may be so called.

**Ver. 12.** *They have belied the Lord, and said, it is not he*, etc.] Or, "denied the Lord"<sup>f118</sup>, as some render the words, saying that there was no God; which, though they might not deliver in express words, yet inasmuch as they denied his providence, and disbelieved his word by his prophets, it was tacitly denying that there was a God, or that the Lord was God. The meaning of the phrase "not he" may be, he takes no notice of what is done by us; he does not concern himself with our affairs; nor has he given any such orders to our enemies, as above; nor said these things by the prophets which are pretended:

*neither shall evil come upon us*; they speak of:

*neither shall we see sword nor famine*; war and sieges, and famine, the consequence of them.

**Ver. 13.** *And the prophets shall become wind*, etc.] Their prophecies shall vanish into air; they shall become of no effect; they shall never be accomplished:

*and the word is not in them*; not the word of the Lord; he never spoke by them; they speak of themselves; they never were inspired or commissioned by him to say what they do: thus shall it be done unto them; the same evils they say shall befall us shall come upon them; they shall perish by the sword or famine; we have reason to believe that our predictions are as good as theirs, and will be fulfilled: or, “thus let it be done to them”<sup>f119</sup>; as they have prophesied shall be done to us; and so are an imprecation. The Targum interprets the whole of the false prophets, as if they were the words of the Lord concerning them, which is,

“but the false prophets shall be for nothing, and their false prophecy shall not be confirmed; this revenge shall be taken of them;”

and so Kimchi interprets it of the prophets that prophesied peace to them, and said that the above mentioned should not come upon them; and Jarchi takes the last clause to be the words of the prophet to them that say the above words; namely, that thus it shall be done to them, what the Lord has said.

**Ver. 14.** *Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, because ye speak this word*, etc.] That it is not the Lord; it is not he that speaks; it is no prophecy of him, and therefore shall become wind, and come to nothing:

*behold, I will make my word in thy mouth fire*: it shall have its effect, and a dreadful one; it shall not become wind, but be as fire, not to enlighten the understanding, to purify the conscience, and warm the heart; but to torture, distress, and destroy, as the fire of the word out of the mouths of the two witnesses, (<sup>f116</sup>Revelation 11:5):

*and this people wood, and it shall devour them*; as wood is devoured by fire, so shall this people be destroyed by sword and famine, as the word of the prophecy has declared they should; and which was done by the following means.

**Ver. 15.** *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far*, etc.] From Babylon, as in (<sup><24046></sup>Jeremiah 4:16):

*O house of Israel, saith the Lord*; though the house of Israel is generally taken for the ten tribes, especially when distinguished from the house of Judah; yet here it seems to design the Jews, the posterity of Jacob, or Israel in the land of Judea; for Israel, or the ten tribes, were carried captive into Assyria before this time:

*it is a mighty nation*; strong and powerful; so mighty that they would not be able to oppose them, and stand before them: “it is an ancient nation”; the Babylonish monarchy was the most ancient; it began in the times of Nimrod, (<sup><0100></sup>Genesis 10:10) and therefore must be a nation of great power and experience that had so long subsisted, and consequently must be formidable to others:

*a nation whose language thou knowest not*; which was the Syriac language: this, it is plain, was not known by the common people among the Jews in Hezekiah’s time, though some of the chief men understood it; wherefore Rabshakeh, the king of Assyria’s general, would not deliver his railing speech in the Syriac language, which only the princes understood; but in the Hebrew language, the language of the common people, (<sup><12836></sup>2 Kings 18:26,28), though, after the captivity, this language was understood by the Jews, and was commonly spoken by them, as it was in our Lord’s time:

*neither understandest what they say*; so would be barbarians to each other; nor could they expect any mercy from them, or that quarters would be given them, when their petitions for favour and life could not be understood.

**Ver. 16.** *Their quiver is an open sepulchre*, etc.] The Chaldeans used bows and arrows in fighting; and the quiver is a case for arrows; and the phrase denotes, that their arrows would do great execution, and be very mortal; so that a quiver of them would be as devouring as an open grave, into which many dead are cast. The Septuagint and Arabic versions have not this clause; and the Syriac version renders it, “whose throats are as open sepulchres”; (see <sup><8183></sup>Romans 3:13):

*they are all mighty men*; strong in body, of bold and courageous spirits, expert in war, and ever victorious; so that there was no hope of being delivered out of their hands.

**Ver. 17.** *And they shall eat up thine harvest*, etc.] The standing corn in the fields, cut it down, and give it as fodder to their horses, which is usually done by armies; or the increase of the earth, when gathered into the barn, which so great an army would consume:

*and thy bread*; which includes all kind of provisions:

*which thy sons and thy daughters should eat*; which is an aggravation of the calamity and misery, that that should become the prey of their enemies, which they with so much labour and pains had provided for their children, who would now be deprived of it, and suffer want, The Targum renders it,

“shall kill thy sons and thy daughters;”

that is, with the sword; and so Kimchi interprets it; and so other versions read, “they shall eat up, or devour, thy sons and thy daughters”<sup>f120</sup>; the sword ate them up, or devoured them; and they who besieged them were the cause or occasion of their being eaten literally, even by their own parents; (see <sup><2120></sup>Lamentations 2:20 4:10):

*they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds*; their sheep and oxen, as the Targum interprets it:

*they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees*: that is, the fruit of them, as the same paraphrase explains it:

*they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword*; that is, such strong and fortified cities as Jerusalem, and others, in which the Jews trusted they should be safe from their enemies; these the Chaldeans would enter into, kill with the sword those they found in garrisons, demolish the fortifications, take away what wealth and riches were laid up there, and so impoverish them, and render them weak and defenceless. The Targum of this clause is,

“shall destroy the fortified cities of thy land, in which thou trustedst thou shouldst be safe from those that kill with the sword.”

**Ver. 18.** *Nevertheless, in those days*, etc.] When these things should be done by the king of Babylon and his army:

*saith the Lord, I will not make a full end with you*: this was to be done at another time, not now; (See Gill on “<sup><2027></sup>Jeremiah 4:27”), (See Gill on “<sup><2150></sup>Jeremiah 5:10”), though some think that this is a threatening of more

and greater calamities; that this would not be all he would do to them; he had not yet done; he had other evils and calamities, to bring upon them, particularly a long captivity.

**Ver. 19.** *And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say*, etc.] That is, the people of the Jews, to whom the prophet belonged, after they had been spoiled by the enemy, and carried captive:

*wherefore doth the Lord our God all these things unto us?* as if they were innocent and guiltless, and had done nothing to provoke the Lord to anger; and it may be observed, that they professed to know the Lord in words, and call him their God, though in works they had denied him; and they own the hand of the Lord in all those evils that would now be come upon them; though before they had said they were not spoken by the Lord, nor would they befall them, (<sup>24512</sup>Jeremiah 5:12):

*thou shalt then answer them*; that is, the Prophet Jeremiah, in the name of the Lord:

*like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land*; when they were in their own land they forsook the worship and ordinances of God, and served the idols of the Gentiles, as the Targum rightly explains it:

*so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours*: which some understand of strange gods; but rather it designs strange lords, as the Chaldeans in the land of Babylon, a land not theirs; and so it is measure for measure, a just retaliation in righteous judgment upon them.

**Ver. 20.** *Declare this in the house of Jacob*, etc.] That a mighty nation should come and destroy them, and they should be servants in a strange land; or rather the words seem to be an order to declare war against the Jews, and even in their own land; and do not seem to be addressed to the prophet, but to others, seeing the words are in the plural number; (see <sup>24015</sup>Jeremiah 4:5):

*and publish it in Judah*: the house of Jacob and Judah are the same, namely, the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah; for, as for the ten tribes, as observed on (<sup>24155</sup>Jeremiah 5:15), they had been carried captive before this time:

*saying*: as follows:

**Ver. 21.** *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding,* etc.] or, “heart”<sup>f121</sup>; (See Gill on “<sup>3102</sup>Jeremiah 4:22”):

*which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not;* like the idols they served, (<sup>3104</sup>Psalm 115:4-8). this is an upbraiding of them with their folly and stupidity, their want of common sense, their blindness and ignorance; notwithstanding they had the means of light and knowledge, the law, and the prophets.

**Ver. 22.** *Fear ye not me? saith the Lord,* etc.] They did not fear the Lord, and this is a reproof to them for the want of it, which is a reproof of their ignorance and folly; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, (<sup>3106</sup>Proverbs 9:10), and where that is there is true wisdom; but, where it is not, there is nothing but ignorance and stupidity:

*will ye not tremble at my presence?* or “face”; his wrath and anger, justly resenting their carriage to him. The Targum is,

“from before my Word;”

the essential Word, his Son: or, “will ye not be in pain?” as a woman in travail; as Kimchi observes the word<sup>f122</sup> signifies:

*which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it.* This is a very wonderful thing in nature, that the earth and sea, being spherical, and making one terraqueous globe, and the waters of the sea being higher than the earth, should be so bounded and restrained, by the power and providence of God, as not to overflow the earth, and that by means of the sand, which is penetrable, flexible, and movable; and yet this is set as a bound, and by the decree of God remains firm and stable, and that for ever, so that the sea cannot bear it down, go through it, or over it:

*and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it;* even when the sea is the most tumultuous and raging. This is an instance of the mighty power of God, and carries in it an argument and reason why he should be feared; and yet such was the stupidity of this people, that though they saw this with their eyes, the sea and the tossings of it, and the sand set as a bound to it, and an effectual one, and heard the roarings and ragings of the waves of it in vain; yet they feared not the Lord that did all this; and so showed themselves more stupid and disobedient than the sea and its waves, which

obeyed their Maker, though destitute of sense and reason; (see <sup><18310></sup>Job 26:10 38:8-11 <sup><19416></sup>Psalms 104:6,9 <sup><20829></sup>Proverbs 8:29).

**Ver. 23** *But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart*, etc.] They are not so obedient as the sea and its waves; nor so firm and stable as the sand that is set for the bound of it. This is a reproof and an aggravation of the revoltings and rebellions of this people:

*they are revolted and gone*; they had departed from the ways of the Lord, and were gone back from his worship, as the Targum; and were gone into evil ways, and to a false worship; they not only had revolted, but they went on, they continued therein, and went further and further, off from God and his worship.

**Ver. 24.** *Neither say in their heart*, etc.] It came not into their mind, they never once thought of it, namely, of what follows,

*let us now fear the Lord our God*; they were not influenced and engaged to the fear of God, neither by his power in the preceding instance, nor by his goodness in the following one:

*that giveth rain*; in common, all the year round, at proper times, for the use of men and beasts. This is a pure gift of God, and an instance of his goodness, and is peculiar to him, what none of the gods of the Gentiles could give, (<sup><21442></sup>Jeremiah 14:22):

*both the former and the later, in his season*; there were two particular seasons in the year in which the land of Israel had rain; the one was in the month Marchesvan, answering to part of October and part of November, and this was the former rain, after the seed was sown in the earth; and the other was in the month of Nisan, answering to part of March and part of April, just before the time of harvest, and this was the latter rain:

*he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest*; which was reckoned by weeks, because of the seven weeks between the passover and pentecost: the barley harvest began at the former, and the wheat harvest at the latter, called the feast of weeks, (<sup><03422></sup>Exodus 34:22) and these were appointed of God, the harvest itself, (<sup><00822></sup>Genesis 8:22) and the weeks in which it was gathered in, (<sup><02315></sup>Leviticus 23:15,16), and these appointments and promises the Lord carefully observed, and faithfully kept.

**Ver. 25.** *Your iniquities have turned away these things*, etc.] Whereas of late years rain was withheld from them in common, and they had not the former and latter rain in its season, nor the appointed weeks of the harvest, and so their land was barren, and famine ensued. This was to be ascribed, not to the want of goodness and faithfulness in God, but to their own iniquities; these mercies were kept back from them in order to humble them, and bring them to a sense of their sins, and an acknowledgment of them:

*and your sins have withholden good things from you*; as rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and had also brought many evil things upon them; for more is understood than is expressed.

**Ver. 26.** *For among my people are found wicked men*, etc.] Not a few only, but in general they appeared to be so, upon an inquiry into their character and conduct; for otherwise it would not have been so difficult to find a good man among them, as is suggested (<sup><3101></sup>Jeremiah 5:1),

*they lay wait as he that setteth snares*; or, “they look about”<sup>f123</sup>; that is, as Kimchi interprets it, every man looks in the ways, to see if a man passed by, that he might rob him of what he had; as a man that lays snares, or sets a trap to catch birds in: or, “everyone looks out, when they that lay snares rest”<sup>f124</sup>; and so they are more diligent and constant in catching men than such persons are in catching birds:

*they set a trap*; or “dig a pit, or ditch”<sup>f125</sup>; for men to fall in; (see <sup><3075></sup>Psalms 7:15):

*they catch men*; and rob them of their substance; or by their ill examples and counsels draw them into sin, and so into ruin; or circumvent them in trade and business.

**Ver. 27.** *As a cage is full of birds*, etc.] Jarchi and Kimchi understand it of a place in which fowls, are brought up and fattened, what we call a “pen”; and, so the Targum renders it, a house or place of fattening. The word is rendered a “basket” in (<sup><3081></sup>Amos 8:1,2) and may here design one in which birds taken in snares, or by hawking, were put. The Septuagint version, and those that follow it, render it, “a snare”: which agrees with what goes before. It seems to intend a decoy, in which many birds are put to allure others; and, what with them, and those that are drawn in by them, it becomes very full; and this sense of the comparison is favoured by the rendition or application, which follows:



*so are their houses full of deceit*; of mammon, gathered by deceit, as Kimchi interprets it; ungodly mammon; riches got in a fraudulent way, by cozening and cheating, tricking and overreaching:

*therefore they are become great*; in worldly things, and in the esteem of men, and in their own opinion, though of no account with God:

*and waxen rich*; not with the true riches, the riches of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, his durable riches and righteousness; nor indeed with the riches of the world, honestly and lawfully gotten; but with unrighteous mammon.

**Ver. 28.** *They are waxen fat, they shine*, etc.] Becoming rich they grew fat, and their faces shone through fatness; so oil, delicious food, and good living, as it fattens men, it makes their faces to shine; (see <sup><19415></sup>Psalm 104:15),

*yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked*; though they pretended to religion, the fear and worship of God, yet they committed crimes more heinous than the most abandoned and profligate sinners: or, “they exceed the words of the wicked”<sup>f126</sup>; either they speak words more wicked than they; or do such actions as are not to be expressed by words, and which even a wicked man would hardly choose to name. The Targum is,

“they transgress the words of the law;”

and the Vulgate Latin version comes pretty near it, “they have passed over my words very badly”; as if they referred to the words of the law and the prophets:

*they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless*; this shows that it was not the common people only that were become so wicked, but the judges and civil magistrates; and who were so far from doing justice between man and man, in all civil cases that came before them, that they would not even exercise right judgment in the case of the fatherless; who not only require justice to be done them, but mercy and pity to be shown them:

*yet they prosper*; in the world, and increase in riches; have health of body and prosperity in their families; nor are they in trouble, as other men: this sometimes has been trying to good men to observe; (see <sup><19718></sup>Psalm 73:3-14) and particularly to the Prophet Jeremiah, (<sup><24121></sup>Jeremiah 12:1,2): or, “that

they may prosper”<sup>f127</sup>; as Jarchi interprets it; and to the same sense is the Targum,

“if they had judged the judgment of the fatherless they would have prospered;”

but the former sense is best; and which Kimchi gives into, and agrees with what goes before, concerning the riches and prosperous estate of those men:

*and the right of the needy do they not judge*: because they are poor, and can not fee them, they will not undertake their cause; or, if it comes before them, they will not do them justice, being bribed by the rich that oppose them.

**Ver. 29.** *Shall I not visit for these things?* etc.] (See Gill on “<sup><248B></sup>Jeremiah 5:9”).

**Ver. 30.** *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land.*] What may justly raise admiration in some, and horror in others, or both in all: it is so amazing that it can hardly be conceived of, and so shameful and filthy as not to be expressed; what it is follows:

**Ver. 31.** *The prophets prophesied falsely*, etc.] That the people would have peace and prosperity, and not be carried captive into Babylon, as Jeremiah and other true prophets of the Lord had predicted:

*and the priests bear rule by their means*; or rather “the princes”; for the word signifies princes as well as priests, and to the former government more properly belongs; and so Jarchi interprets it of the judges of the people, and their exactors; these governed the people according to the words of the false prophets, as the same writer explains it; they were “under” their influence and direction, they went after them, as the phrase **ry l** [ is sometimes used; (see <sup><327></sup>1 Chronicles 25:2,3,6 <sup><474></sup>2 Chronicles 17:14 31:15 <sup><158></sup>2 Samuel 15:8) or, as Kimchi understands it, the priests received gifts by their hands to pervert judgment, and they declined doing justice, according to their will. The Targum is,

“the priests helped upon their hands;”

took the false prophets, as it were, and carried them in their hands. Some render it, “the priests remove, or depart by their means”<sup>f128</sup>; through their false prophesies they departed from the law, and the worship of God and

his ordinances, from attending to them, and performing them in the manner appointed; in the whole it denotes great friendship, unity, and agreement between the priests, or princes, and the false prophets; they agreed together to keep the people in awe and in bondage; and what was of all the most surprising is what follows:

*and my people love to have it so*; both that the prophets prophesy smooth things to them, though false; and that the princes should govern as they directed:

*and what will ye do in the end thereof?* that these evils will bring unto; namely, the destruction of the city and nation. The meaning is, what will become of them at last? or what would they do, when this wicked government would come to an end, and they should be taken and carried captive by the Chaldeans? which would be their case; and how would they like that, who love to have things as they were, which would bring on their ruin?