

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 6

This chapter is of the same argument with the former; and contains two things in it, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and the causes of it, which are intermixedly handled in it; a lively description is made of the notice of the approach of the enemy by blowing of trumpets and firing of beacons, (²⁴⁰¹Jeremiah 6:1), and of the siege of the city, by pitching tents around it, casting up a mount against it, and scaling its walls at noon and by night, (²⁴⁰²Jeremiah 6:2-6), and this destruction is illustrated by the simile of gleaning of grapes, (²⁴⁰³Jeremiah 6:9), and amplified by the universality of it, with respect to persons and things; it reaching to persons of every age, and in every state, as old men, young men, and children, husbands and wives, and to all sorts of possessions, houses and fields, (²⁴⁰⁴Jeremiah 6:11,12,21), a description is given of the instruments of it, the Chaldeans, (²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 6:22,23) and it is aggravated by the anxiety, distress, and sorrow, the Jews would be in on account of it, (²⁴⁰⁶Jeremiah 6:24-26), the causes of it are in general the great aboundings of sin and wickedness in the midst of them, illustrated by a fountain casting out its waters, (²⁴⁰⁷Jeremiah 6:6,7), in particular, their neglect and contempt of the word of the Lord, (²⁴⁰⁸Jeremiah 6:10), the sin of covetousness, which prevailed among all sorts of people, high and low, in civil or religious life, (²⁴⁰⁹Jeremiah 6:13), the unfaithfulness of the prophets to the people, declaring peace, when there was none, (²⁴¹⁰Jeremiah 6:14), their impenitence and hardness, (²⁴¹¹Jeremiah 6:15), their disregard to all instructions and warnings, (²⁴¹²Jeremiah 6:16,17), their rejection of the law, and the precepts of it, (²⁴¹³Jeremiah 6:18,19), their hypocritical sacrifices, (²⁴¹⁴Jeremiah 6:20), and the chapter is concluded with an address to the prophet, setting forth his character and office, and the end of it, (²⁴¹⁵Jeremiah 6:27) and his testimony concerning the people, showing their obstinacy and stubbornness, illustrated by a simile of refining metal in a furnace without success, (²⁴¹⁶Jeremiah 6:28-30).

Ver. 1. *O ye children of Benjamin*, etc.] The tribe of Benjamin was with the tribe of Judah, and continued with that in the pure worship of God

when the ten tribes revolted; and in the land of Israel, when they were carried captive; and besides, Jerusalem, at least part of it, was in the tribe of Benjamin, and particularly Anathoth, which was Jeremiah's native place, was in that tribe; and this altogether is a reason why the children of Benjamin are so distinctly addressed:

gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem; where some of this tribe lived, or had betaken themselves for safety: or the Jews in general may be meant; for, as Ephraim is often put for the ten tribes, so Benjamin may be put for the two tribes, as Judah frequently is: or the words may be rendered, “be ye strong,”^{f129} “out of the midst of Jerusalem”; as by the Septuagint, and others; and the sense may be, gather together in bodies out of Jerusalem, and form yourselves into companies, and into an army, and be prepared to meet the enemy, and fight him, who is near at hand; quit yourselves like men, and be strong; show courage and valour; perhaps this is spoken ironically, as Kimchi thinks it is; though he interprets the word, “flee ye”; that is, if ye can find a place to flee to; and the Targum is,

“remove out of the midst of Jerusalem;”

but it seems rather to be a direction to go forth and meet the enemy, by what follows:

and blow the trumpet in Tekoa; as an alarm of war, to give the people notice of an invasion; that the enemy was at hand, and therefore should provide themselves with armour, and gather together to meet and oppose him. Tekoa was a city in Judah, (^{<4115>}2 Chronicles 11:5,6), famous, for a wise woman in it, in the times of David, (^{<3042>}2 Samuel 14:2). Jerom says it was twelve miles from Jerusalem, and might be seen with the eye; so that probably it was built on a very high hill, and for that reason chosen to blow the trumpet on, that it might be heard far and near; and which may be confirmed from its being said^{f130} to be the chief place in the land of Israel for the best oil, since olives grow on hills and mountains. There is in the clause a beautiful play on words^{f131}, which those, who understand the Hebrew language, will easily observe:

and set up a fire in Bethhaccerem. This place, as Jerom says, lay between Jerusalem and Tekoa; one of this name is mentioned in (^{<1634>}Nehemiah 3:14). The Targum renders it,

“the house of the valley of the vineyards;”

and in the Misnah^{f132} mention is made of the valley of Bethhacerem, the dust of which was red, and, when water was poured upon it, became hard; and this valley perhaps took its name from the town, which might be built upon a hill, and was famous for vines, from whence it was so called; and here might be a very high tower; for, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe, it signifies a high tower, for the keepers of the vines to sit and watch the vines all about; and this was a very proper place to set up the sign of fire in, to give notice to the country all around; for it was usual with all nations, Persians, Grecians, and Romans, to signify in the night, by signs of fire, by burning torches, and the like, either the approach of an enemy, or help from friends; the former was done by shaking and moving their torches, the latter by holding them still^{f133}; (see ~~2028~~Judges 20:38,40):

for evil appeareth out of the north; Nebuchadnezzar and his army out of Babylon, which lay north of Jerusalem: and great destruction; (see ~~2014~~Jeremiah 1:14 4:6).

Ver. 2. *I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.*] That dwells at home and lives in pleasure, and deliciously, in great peace and quietness, in entire ease and security, in no fear of enemies, or apprehension of danger; and so it describes the secure state of the Jews. Kimchi and Ben Melech supply the word “woman” as we do; but others supply “land” or “pasture”; and think that the Jewish nation is compared to pleasant and delightful lands and pastures, which are inviting to shepherds to come and pitch their tents about them; as follows. The words are by some rendered, “O beautiful and delicate one, I have cut off, or destroyed the daughter of Zion”^{f134}; in which sense the word is used in (~~2005~~Isaiah 6:5 ~~2015~~Hosea 4:5) and to this purpose is the Targum,

“O beautiful and delicate one, how hast thou corrupted thy ways?
therefore the congregation of Zion is confounded;”

but the former senses seem to be best; in which the word used is understood as having the signification of likening or comparing; for which (see ~~2009~~Song of Solomon 1:9).

Ver. 3. *The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her*, etc.] Kings and their armies, as the Targum paraphrases it; kings and generals are compared to shepherds, and their armies to flocks, who are under their command and direction; here they design Nebuchadnezzar king of

Babylon, with his generals and armies, who should come up against Jerusalem, as to a good pasture:

they shall pitch their tents against her round about; their military tents, in allusion to pastoral ones. The phrase is expressive of the Chaldean army surrounding and besieging Jerusalem:

they shall feed everyone in his place; where he is ordered and fixed by his head general: or, “everyone shall feed his hand”^{f135}: the sheep of his hand; (see ⁴⁹⁸⁷Psalm 95:7), “them that are under his hand”, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; who are committed to his care and charge. The meaning is, he shall direct the company or companies of soldiers under him, where to be, and what part to take in the siege; or “with his hand”, as the Septuagint, with the skilfulness of his hands, (⁴⁹⁸²Psalm 78:72), or with might and power; or “at his hand”, as the Arabic version; what is at hand, what is nearest to him; or according to his will and pleasure. The Targum is,

“everyone shall help his neighbour.”

The sense, according to Kimchi, is, one king or general shall lay siege against a city, or against cities, and so another, until they have consumed and subdued the whole land.

Ver. 4. *Prepare ye war against her*, etc.] Not only proclaim it, but prepare themselves for it; get everything ready for the siege, and begin it. These are either the words of the Lord, calling upon the Chaldeans in his providence to act such a part against Jerusalem; or of the Chaldeans themselves, stirring up one another to it; which latter seems to be the sense; since it follows:

arise, and let us go up at noon; scale the walls, and take the city; which, though in the heat of the day, and not so proper a time, yet such was the eagerness of the army, and their confidence of carrying the place at once; and concluding there was no need of waiting till the evening, or of taking any secret measures for the siege; they propose to go up at noon, in the heat of the day, and in the sight of their enemies, and storm the city:

woe unto us, for the day goes away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out; which some take to be the words of the besiegers, lamenting they had lost time, had not proceeded according to their first purpose, had neglected going up at noontime, and now the evening was coming upon

them; or as being angry, and out of humour, that the city was not taken by them so soon as they expected: though, according to Kimchi, they are the words of the prophet; and he may represent the besieged, mourning over their unhappy case and circumstances; the day of prosperity declining, and nothing but darkness and distress coming upon them.

Ver. 5. *Arise, and let us go up by night*, etc.] Since they could not take the city at noon, and by day, as they expected, they propose to attempt it by night; they would lose no time, but proceed on, day and night, until they had accomplished their end; this shows how much they were resolved upon it, and that nothing could discourage from it; and that they were sure of carrying their point: and therefore it follows,

and let us destroy her palaces; the tower and strong hold of Zion, the temple of Jerusalem, the king's palace, the houses of the high priest, judges, counsellors, and other civil magistrates, as well as the cottages of the meaner sort of people; for the Vulgate Latin version renders it, "her houses"; which, notwithstanding her strong walls, were not secure from the enemy.

Ver. 6. *For thus hath the Lord of hosts said*, etc.] To the Chaldeans; for as it was the Lord that brought them out of their own country, and directed them to Jerusalem, and ordered them to prepare war against it; so they were as an army under his command, and he it was that ordered them to do this, and that, and the other thing: the whole affair was of the Lord, and the Jews had more to fear from him, who is the Lord of armies, than from the army of the Chaldeans; for, as they could do nothing without his divine permission, so, having that, there was a certainty of succeeding:

hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: in the Hebrew text it is, "pour out a mount"^{f136}; the reason of which is, because there were a ditch or ditches about the city; and into these they poured in stones, and dirt, and trees, and pieces of wood, and so filled them up, and cast up a mount, on which they could raise their batteries, and demolish the walls and houses; hence mention is made of hewing down of trees, in order to cast the mount; for these were to be cut down, not so much to make battering rams, and other instruments of war, as to fill up the ditch, and raise the mount, so that the walls might be more easily battered and scaled: though some^{f137} interpret it of taking precise, fixed, determined counsel, about the war, and the manner of carrying it:

this is the city to be visited; or punished; not only that deserves to be so visited, but which would certainly be visited, and that immediately; its punishment was not far off; vengeance would soon be taken on it, and that for its sins: and so the Targum,

“this is the city whose sins are visited;”

as it follows:

she is wholly oppression in the midst of her; there were nothing but oppression and oppressors in her; not only full of oppressors, but oppression itself. This is instanced in for all kind of wickedness; the meaning is, that she was a sink of sin, and very wickedness itself.

Ver. 7. *As a fountain casteth out her waters*, etc.] In great abundance, and continually:

so she casteth out her wickedness; this metaphor expresses the multitude of her sins, the frequent and constant commission of them, and the source and spring of them, the corrupt fountain of the heart; (see ⁴¹²³Matthew 12:34,35 15:19):

violence and spoil is heard in her; that is, the cry of those that are oppressed and spoiled is heard, and that by the Lord himself, whose ears are open to the cries of the oppressed, and will avenge them:

before me continually is grief and wounds; the poor, who were grieved and wounded by their oppressors; the Lord was an eye and ear witness of their grievances, and would redress them; nor could their enemies expect to escape his wrath, since they were all known to him; or else the sense is, that because of their violence and spoil of the poor, it was continually before the Lord, in his mind and purpose, and he was just ready to bring upon them, by way of punishment for these things, what would grieve and wound them; so Jarchi interprets it, which Kimchi mentions; and to it the Targum agrees,

“the voice of robbers and plunderers is heard in her before me continually, therefore will I bring upon her evil and smiting.”

Ver. 8. *And be thou instructed, O Jerusalem*, etc.] Or “corrected”^{f138}; receive discipline or instructions by chastisements and corrections, return by repentance, that the evils threatened may not come: this shows the affection of the Lord to his people, notwithstanding all their sins; that their

amendment, and not their destruction, were pleasing to him; that it was with reluctance he was about to visit them in the manner threatened; and that even now it was not too late, provided they were instructed and reformed; but, if not, they must expect what follows:

lest my soul depart from thee; his Shechinah, or divine Presence, and all the tokens of his love, favour, and good will. The Targum interprets it of the Word of the Lord,

“lest my Word cast thee off;”

(see ⁴¹⁰⁰Romans 11:1), or, “lest my soul pluck itself from thee”; or “be plucked”^{f139}, and separated from thee: the phrase denotes an utter separation, a forcible one, joined with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. In (²⁶³⁸Ezekiel 23:18), it is rendered, “my mind was alienated”; it denotes disunion and disaffection.

Lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited; the Targum adds, by way of illustration,

“as the land of Sodom;”

so that not a man should dwell in it; (see ²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 4:25,27,29).

Ver. 9. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] Finding that all his threatenings, admonitions, and exhortations, were in vain, he says of the Chaldeans, with respect to the Israelites,

they shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine; by “the remnant of Israel” are meant the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were left in the land when the ten tribes were carried captive; and these the Chaldeans should come and carry away also, just as the poor come into a vineyard, after the vintage has been gathered in, and pick off and glean what is left upon the branches:

turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets; these words, according to Kimchi, are the words of the Chaldeans to one another, to turn their hands to the spoil, and to the prey, again and again, just as the grape gatherer does; he gathers a bunch of grapes, and puts it into his basket, and then turns his hand, time after time, till he has gleaned the whole vine: and, according to Jarchi, it seems to be his sense, that they are the words of God unto them; and so Abarbinel; and it is as if he should say, O thou enemy, turn thine hand to the spoil a second time, as a grape

gatherer turns his hand to the baskets; and who observes that so it was, that when Jehoiakim was carried captive, and slain, Jeconiah was made king: then, at the end of three months, the enemy returned, and carried him captive; and, at the end of twelve years, returned again, and carried Zedekiah captive; nay, even of the poor of the people, and it may be observed, that they were carried away at different times; (see ^{<2675>}Jeremiah 52:15,16,28-30).

Ver. 10. *To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?* etc.] These are the words of the prophet, despairing of any success by his ministry; suggesting that the people were so universally depraved, that there were none that would hear him; that speaking to them was only beating the air, and that all expostulations, warnings, remonstrances, and testimonies, would signify nothing:

behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken; their ears were stopped with the filth of sin naturally, and they wilfully stopped their ears like the adder; and so being unsanctified, they neither could hear nor desired to hear the word of the Lord, as to understand it; (see ^{<4175>}Acts 7:51):

behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they reproached it, and blasphemed it, as a novel and false doctrine, and thought it a dishonour to them to receive and profess it; and just so the Jews vilified the Gospel, in the times of Christ and his apostles; and as many do now, who treat it with contempt, as unworthy of God, as contrary to reason, as opening a door to licentiousness, and think it a scandal to preach or profess it:

they have no delight in it; they see no beauty nor glory in it; they taste nothing of the sweetness of it; its doctrines are insipid things to them, they having never felt the power of it in their hearts; whereas such who are the true circumcision, who are circumcised in heart and ears, who are born again, these desire the sincere milk of the word; it is to them more than their necessary food; and, with this Prophet Jeremiah, they find it, and eat it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, (^{<24516>}Jeremiah 15:16).

Ver. 11. *Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord,* etc.] Either of zeal for the Lord, for the glory of his name, and the honour of his word; or rather of the prophecy of the Lord, as the Targum interprets it, concerning the wrath of God, that should come upon this people for their sins:

I am weary with holding it; the prophecy, the message he was sent with to them, to pronounce the judgments of God upon them; which being a disagreeable task to him, he refrained from doing it as long as he could; but being highly provoked with the sins of the people, and particularly with their contempt of the word of God, and especially he being obedient to the divine will, he could forbear no longer making a full declaration of it; (see ³⁰⁰Jeremiah 20:9).

I will pour it upon the children abroad; or, “in the street”^{f140}; that are playing there:

and upon the assembly of young men together; that are met together for their pleasure and diversion; and the sense is, that the prophet would declare in a prophetic manner, and denounce, according to his office and commission, the wrath of God, which should come upon persons of every age, and of every relation in life, as follows: though the words may be rendered, “pour it upon the children”, etc.^{f141}; and so it is a prayer of the prophet’s to the Lord, that he would execute the vengeance on them which he had threatened them with by him:

for even the husband with the wife shall be taken; and carried captive:

the aged with him that is full of days; the old and the decrepit, such as are advanced in years, and also those that are just upon the brink of the grave, ready to die: the meaning is, that children should not be spared for their tender age, nor young men for their strength, nor husbands and wives on account of their relation, nor any because of their hoary hairs; seeing the corruption was so general, and prevailed in persons of every age, and of every station.

Ver. 12. *And their houses shall be turned unto others*, etc.] To strangers, to the Chaldeans; they shall be transferred unto them, come into their hands, and become their property:

with their fields and wives together: not only their houses and lands shall be taken away from them, and put to the use of others, but even their wives; than which nothing could be more distressing:

for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord; the inhabitants of the land of Judea; and so the Septuagint render it, “upon them that inhabit this land”; and so the Arabic version: wherefore,

since the Lord would exert himself in this affair, and stretch out his hand of almighty power, as the Targum paraphrases it,

“I will lift up the stroke of my power;”

it might be depended upon that all this destruction threatened would come on them.

Ver. 13. *For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them,* etc.] From the least in age to the oldest among them; or rather, from persons of the lowest class of life, and in the meanest circumstances, to those that are in the highest places of trust and honour, and are in the greatest affluence of riches and wealth; so that as men of every age and station had sinned, old and young, high and low, rich and poor, it was but just and right that they should all share in the common calamity:

everyone is given to covetousness; which is mentioned particularly, and instead of other sins, it being the root of evil, and was the prevailing sin among them:

from the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely; the false prophet, as Kimchi interprets it, and so the Septuagint and other versions; and the priest of Baal, as the same interpreter; both acted deceitfully; the one in prophesying lies to the people, the other in drawing them off from the pure worship of God. The Targum is,

“from the scribe to the priest;”

from the lowest order of teachers to the highest in ecclesiastical office. The whole shows a most general and dreadful corruption.

Ver. 14. *They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly,* etc.] That is, the false prophets and lying priests, who pretended to be physicians, and to heal the sickly and distempered state of the people; and they did do it, in their way, but not thoroughly; they did not search the wound to the bottom; they drew a skin over it, and made a scar of it, and called it a cure; they made light of the hurt or wound; they healed it,

making nothing of it; or “despising it”, as the Septuagint: or they healed it “with reproach”, as the Vulgate Latin version; in such a manner, as that it was both a reproach to them, and to the people: or, as the Targum,

“they healed the breach of the congregation of my people with their lying words;”

which are as follow:

saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace; promising them all prosperity, plenty of good things, and a continuance in their own land; when in a short time there would be none of these things, but sudden destruction would come upon them; (see ^{SMH}1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Ver. 15. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?* etc.] This seems chiefly, and in the first place, to respect the false prophets and wicked priests; who when they committed idolatry, or any other sin, and led the people into the same by their doctrine and example, yet, when reproved for it, were not ashamed, being given up to a judicial hardness of heart:

nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; they were men of impudent faces, they had a whore’s forehead; there was not the least sign or appearance of shame in them; when charged with the foulest crimes, and threatened with the severest punishment, they were not moved by either; they had neither shame nor fear:

therefore they shall fall among them that fall; meaning that the prophets and priests should perish among the common people, and with them, who should be slain, and fall by the sword of the Chaldeans; the sacredness of their office would not exempt them; they should fare no better than the rest of the people:

at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord; that is, when the city and temple should be destroyed by the Chaldeans, these would be cast down from their excellency, the high office in which they were, and fall into ruin, and perish with the rest.

Ver. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see*, etc.] These are the words of the Lord to the people, whom he would have judge for themselves, and not be blindly led by the false prophets and priests; directing them to do what men should, when they are in a place where two or more ways meet, and know not which way to take; they should make a short stop, and look to the way mark or way post, which points whither each path leads, and so accordingly proceed. Now, in religious things, the Scriptures are the way mark to direct us which way we should take: if the

inquiry is about the way of salvation, look up to these, which are able to make a man wise unto salvation; these show unto men that the way of salvation is not works of righteousness done by them, but Christ only: if the question is about any doctrine whatever, search the Scriptures, examine them, they are profitable for doctrine; they tell us what is truth, and what is error: if the doubt is about the matter or form of worship, and the ordinances of it, look into the Scriptures, they are the best directory to us what we should observe and do:

and ask for the old paths; of righteousness and holiness, which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, walked in, and follow them; and the way of salvation by Christ, which, though called a new way, (~~<S10D>~~Hebrews 10:20), yet is not newly found out, for it was contrived in eternity; nor newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall; nor newly made use of, for all the Old Testament saints were saved by the same grace of Christ, and justified by his righteousness, and their sins pardoned through his blood, and expiated by his sacrifice, as New Testament saints; only of late, or in these last days, it has been more clearly made known; otherwise there is but one way of salvation; there never was any other, nor never will be; inquire therefore for this old path, which all true believers have trodden in:

where is the good way, and walk therein; or, “the better or best way”^{f142}, and more excellent way, which is Christ, (~~<B146>~~John 14:6 ~~<A121>~~1 Corinthians 12:31), he is the way of access to God, and acceptance with him, and the way of conveyance of all the blessings of grace; he is the way to the Father, and to eternal happiness; he is the living way which always continues, and is ever the same; and is a plain, pleasant, and safe way, and therefore a good one; there is no one better, nor any so good; and therefore this must be the right way to walk in, and to which there is great encouragement, as follows:

and ye shall find rest for your souls; there is rest and peace enjoyed in the ways of God, and in the ordinances of the Gospel; wisdom’s ways are ways of peace, which are the lesser paths; and in the doctrines of the Gospel, when the heart is established with them, the mind is tranquil and serene, and at rest, which before was fluctuating and wavering, and tossed to and fro with every wind; but the principal rest is in Christ himself, in whom the true believer, that walks by faith in him, has rest from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the curse and bondage of the law, and from the

wrath of God in his conscience; and enjoys a spiritual peace, arising from the blood, sacrifice, and righteousness of Christ, (^{<4012>}Matthew 11:28 ^{<4101>}Romans 5:1,11 ^{<4124>}Hebrews 12:24):

but they said, we will not walk therein; in the old paths, and in the good way but in their own evil ways, which they chose and delighted in; and therefore, as their destruction was inevitable, it was just and righteous.

Ver. 17. *Also I set watchmen over you*, etc.] That is, prophets, as Jarchi; true prophets, as Kimchi; such an one was Ezekiel, (^{<2417>}Jeremiah 3:17). The Targum interprets it teachers; such were the apostles and first ministers of the Gospel; and all faithful preachers of it, who teach men good doctrine and watch for their souls, give them warning of their danger, and exhort them to flee to Christ for rest and safety; and these are of the Lord's appointing, constituting, and setting in his churches; (see ^{<4128>}1 Corinthians 12:28).

Saying, hearken to the sound of the trumpet; to their voice, lifted up like a trumpet, (^{<2801>}Isaiah 58:1), to the word preached by them; to the law, which lays before them their sin and danger; and to the Gospel, which is a joyful sound, and gives a certain one, and proclaims peace, pardon, and salvation, by Christ:

but they said, we will not hearken; so the Jews, in the times of Christ and his apostles, turned a deaf ear to their ministry, contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel, and judged themselves unworthy of it, and of eternal life, brought to light by it. Perhaps here it may regard the punishments threatened the Jews by the prophets, which they would not believe were coming upon them, but put away the evil day far from them.

Ver. 18. *Therefore hear, ye nations*, etc.] Since the Jews refused to hearken to the word of the Lord, the Gentiles are called upon to hear it, as in (^{<4135>}Acts 13:45,46), this is a rebuke to the Jews, that the Gentiles would hear, when they would not:

and know, O congregation; either of Israel, as the Targum and Kimchi explain it; or of the nations of the world, the multitude of them; or the church of God in the midst of them:

what is among them; among the Jews: either what evil is among them; what sins and transgressions are committed by them; which were the cause of the Lord's threatening them with sore judgments, and bringing them

upon them; so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret the words; to which agrees the Targum,

“and let the congregation of Israel know their sins;”

or the punishments the Lord inflicted on them: so the Vulgate Latin version, “and know, O congregation, what I will do unto them”; which sense is confirmed by what follows:

Ver. 19. *Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people,* etc.]

The people of the Jews; the evil of punishment, for the evil of sin committed by them; wherefore the earth, and the inhabitants of it, are called upon to bear witness to, the righteousness of such a procedure:

even the fruit of their thoughts; which they thought of, contrived, and devised; which shows that they did not do what they did inadvertently, but with thought and design. Kimchi interprets it of sinful deeds and actions, the fruit of thoughts; but his father, of thoughts themselves. The Talmudists,^{f143} comment upon it thus,

“a thought which brings forth fruit, the holy blessed God joins it to an action; but a thought in which there is no fruit, the holy blessed God does not join to action;”

that is, in punishment; very wrongly. For the sense is, that God would bring upon them the calamities and distresses their thoughts and the evil counsels of their minds deserved. The Targum renders it,

“the retribution or reward of their works.”

Because they have not hearkened unto my words; spoken to them by the prophets:

nor to my law, but rejected it; neither hearkened to the law, nor to the prophets, but despised both. The Targum is,

“because they obeyed not the words of my servants, the prophets, and abhorred my law.”

Ver. 20. *To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba,* etc.] In

Persia or Arabia, from whence incense was brought, and perhaps the best; (see ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 60:6), and yet the offering of this was of no esteem with God, when the words of the prophet, and the law of his mouth, were despised; (see ²³¹³Isaiah 1:13):

and the sweet cane from a far country? either from the same place, Sheba, which was a country afar off, (^{238B}Joel 3:8), or from India, as Jerom interprets it; this was one of the spices in the anointing oil, (^{238C}Exodus 30:23) and though this was of divine appointment, and an omission of it is complained of, (^{238D}Isaiah 43:24) yet when this was brought with a hypocritical heart, and to atone for neglects of the moral law, and sins committed against that, it was rejected by the Lord:

your burnt, offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me: being offered up with a wicked mind, and without faith in Christ, and in order to expiate the guilt of black crimes unrepented of, and continued in; they were not grateful to God, nor could he smell a sweet savour in them, but loathed and abhorred them; (see ^{238E}Isaiah 1:11).

Ver. 21. *Therefore thus saith the Lord,* etc.] Because of their immorality and hypocrisy, their contempt of his word, and confidence in legal rites and ceremonies:

behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people; by which may be meant the judgments of God upon them, raising up enemies against them, and suffering them to invade their land; particularly the Assyrians, as the following words show. Moreover, the prophecies of the false prophets, and the doctrines which they were permitted to spread among the people, were snares and stumblingblocks unto them, they being given up to believe their lies, and to be hardened by them; nay, even true doctrines, the doctrines of justification and salvation by Christ, yea, Christ himself, were a rock of offence, and a stumbling stone to these people, (^{238F}Isaiah 8:14 ^{238G}Romans 9:32,33 ^{238H}1 Peter 2:7,8)

and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; or, “by them”^{f144}; the latter following the examples of the forager; and so it denotes, that as the corruption was general, the punishment would be:

and the neighbour and his friend shall perish; in the same calamity, being involved in the guilt of the same iniquity, in which they encouraged and hardened one another. The Septuagint and Arabic versions by “stumblingblocks” understand an “infirmity” or “disease”, which should come upon the people, and make a general desolation among them. Kimchi interprets the whole of the wickedness of fathers and children, neighbours and friends, and such as were in trade and partnership, and of their delight in mischief; that though they were aware of the stumblingblocks, yet would

not give each other warning of them. The whole, according to the accents, should be rendered thus, “and they shall fall upon them, the fathers and the sons together, the neighbour and his friend, and they shall perish”; falling and perishing are said of them all.

Ver. 22. *Thus saith the Lord, behold, a people cometh from the north country*, etc.] The Assyrians from Babylon, which lay north of Judea, as in (^{<2014>}Jeremiah 1:14,15 4:6):

and a great nation shall be raised; that is, by the Lord, who would stir them up to this undertaking. The Targum is,

“many people shall come openly:”

from the sides of the earth; afar off, as Babylon was, (^{<2015>}Jeremiah 5:15).

Ver. 23. *They shall lay hold on bow and spear*, etc.] That is, everyone of them should be furnished with both these pieces of armour, that they might be able to fight near and afar off; they had bows to shoot arrows at a distance, and spears to strike with when near. The Targum renders it bows and shields. “They are cruel, and have no mercy”; this is said, to strike terror into the hearts of the hardened Jews:

their voice roareth like the sea; the waves of it, which is terrible, (^{<2016>}Luke 21:25,26):

and they ride upon horses; which still made them more formidable, as well as suggests that their march would be quick and speedy, and they would soon be with them:

set in array as men for war; prepared with all sorts of armour for battle: or, “as a man”^{f145}; as one man, denoting their conjunction, ardour, and unanimity; being not only well armed without, but inwardly, resolutely bent, as one man, to engage in battle, and conquer or die; (see ^{<2018>}Judges 20:8),

against thee, O daughter of Zion; the design being against her, and all the preparation made on her account; which had a very dreadful appearance, and threatened with ruin, and therefore filled her with terror and distress, as follows.

Ver. 24. *We have heard the fame thereof*, etc.] Meaning not the prophet’s report then, but the rumour of the enemy’s coming from another quarter, at

the time he was actually coming. These are the words of the people, upon such a rumour spread; or the words of the prophet, joining himself with them, describing their case, when it would be strongly reported, and they had reason to believe it, that the enemy was just coming, and very near:

our hands wax feeble; have no strength in them, shake and tremble like men that have a palsy, through fear and dread:

anguish hath taken hold of us; tribulation or affliction; or rather anguish of spirit, on hearing the news of the near approach of the enemy:

and pain, as of a woman in travail; which comes suddenly, and is very sharp; and this denotes that their destruction would come suddenly upon them, before they were aware, and be very severe.

Ver. 25. *Go not forth into the field*, etc.] Either for pleasure, or for business; to take a walk in it for the air, or to till it, plough, sow, or reap; but keep within the city and its walls, there being danger:

nor walk by the way; in the high road from Jerusalem, to any town or village near it:

for the sword of the enemy: or, “because there is a sword for the enemy”^{f146}; or, “the enemy has a sword”; and that drawn; the enemy is in the field, and in the ways, and there is no escaping him:

and fear is on every side; all round the city, being encompassed by the Assyrian army: or, the enemy’s sword “is fear on every side”^{f147}; causes fear in all parts round the city. The Targum is,

“because the sword of the enemy kills those who are gathered round about;”

or on every side.

Ver. 26. *O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth*, etc.] Either as a token of repentance for sin; so the king of Nineveh and his subjects did, to show their repentance, (Jon 3:6,8) or as a sign of mourning, for the calamities coming on them, (^{OL3734}Genesis 37:34)

and wallow thyself in ashes; or roll thyself in them, as a token of the same. The Targum is,

“cover your heads with ashes.”

Make thee mourning as for an only son; which of all is the most bitter: and therefore it is added,

most bitter lamentation; (see ^{<3820>}Zechariah 12:10).

For the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us; namely, Nebuchadnezzar, that would spoil their cities, towns, villages, and houses, and them of all their wealth and substance, and carry it away.

Ver. 27. *I have set thee for a tower*, etc.] Or “in” one ^{f148}; in a watch tower, to look about and observe the actions of the people, their sins and transgressions, and reprove them for them; as well as to descry the enemy, and give notice of danger; (see ^{<3011>}Habakkuk 2:1) or, “for a trier”; since the word used comes from one which signifies to “try” metals, as gold and silver; and the rather this may be thought to be the meaning here, since the verb is made use of in this sense in the text; and the metaphor is carried on in the following words; though the word is used for towers in (^{<2313>}Isaiah 23:13 32:14) and may well enough be understood of a watchtower, agreeably with the office of the prophet; who is here addressed as a watchman, and was one to the house of Israel: and as the faithful discharge of his work required courage, as well as diligence and faithfulness, it follows, and

for a fortress among my people; not to defend them, but himself against them; or he was to consider himself as so under the divine protection, that he was as a fortress or strong tower, impregnable, and not to be dismayed and terrified with their calumnies and threatenings; (see ^{<3018>}Jeremiah 1:18):

that thou mayest know and try their way; their course and manner of life, whether good or bad; which he would be able to do, being in his watch tower, and in the discharge of his duty; for the ministry of a good man is as a touchstone, by which the principles and practices of men are tried and known; for if it is heard and attended to with pleasure, it shows that the principles and practices of men are good; but if despised and rejected, the contrary is evident, (see ^{<6145>}1 John 4:5,6).

Ver. 28. *They are all grievous revolters*, etc.] From the right way of God and his worship: or,

they are all revolters of revolters ^{f149}; of all, the greatest revolters, the greatest sinners and transgressors, the most stubborn and disobedient; or sons of revolters; fathers and children are alike. The Targum, is,

“all their princes rebel;”

and so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions: “walking with slanders”: of one another; or with deceit, as the Targum; in a hypocritical and fraudulent manner; playing the hypocrite with God, or tricking and deceiving their neighbours. They are “brass and iron”; as vile and mean as those metals, and not as gold and silver; or as hard and inflexible as they are; or they deal as insincerely

“as he that mixes brass with iron;”

so the Targum:

they are all corrupters; as such that mix metals are; they are corrupters of themselves and of others, of the doctrines and manners of men, and of the ways and worship of God.

Ver. 29. *The bellows are burnt*, etc.] Which Kimchi interprets of the mouth and throat of the prophet, which, through reprovng the people, were dried up, and become raucous and hoarse, and without any profit to them; and so the Targum,

“lo, as the refiner’s blower, that is burnt in the midst of the fire, so the voice of the prophets is silent, who prophesied to them, turn to the law, and they turned not;”

or the judgments and chastisements of God upon the Jews may be meant, which were inflicted upon them to no purpose:

the lead is consumed of the fire; lead being used formerly, as is said^{f150}, instead of quicksilver, in purifying of silver; which being consumed, the refining is in vain: or it may be rendered,

out of the fire it is perfect lead^{f151}; or wholly lead, a base metal, no gold and silver in it, to which the Jews are compared:

the founder melteth in vain; to whom either the prophet is likened, whose reproofs, threatenings, and exhortations, answered no end; or the Lord himself, whose corrections and punishments were of no use to reform this people:

for the wicked are not plucked away; from their evil way, as Jarchi; or from good men, they are not separated the one from the other; or, “evils (sins) are not plucked away”^{f152}; from sinners: their dross is not purged away

from them; neither the words of the prophet, nor the judgments of God, had any effect upon them. The Targum of the latter part of the verse is,

“and as lead which is melted in the midst of the furnace, so the words of the prophets which prophesied to them were nothing in their eyes; and without profit their teachers taught them and they did not leave their evil works.”

Ver. 30. *Reprobate silver shall men call them*, etc.] Or, “call ye them”^{f153}, as the Targum; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions; by whom are meant the Jews, who thought themselves of some account, as silver; being the seed of Abraham, and having the law, the covenant and promises, and service of God; when those that tried them, as the prophets, found them to be nothing but dross; and therefore, if they must be called silver, they could call them no other than reprobate silver; or what is of no account and value; and which is confirmed by the following reason, which contains the judgment and conduct of him that cannot err:

for the Lord hath rejected them; from being his people; and therefore cast them out of their own land, and caused them to go into captivity.