

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

This book in some Hebrew copies is called “Sepher Zephaniah”, the Book of Zephaniah. Its title, in the Vulgate Latin version, is, the Prophecy of Zephaniah; and, in the Syriac version, the Prophecy of the Prophet Zephaniah; and so the Arabic version calls him a prophet; and he is the last of the minor prophets that prophesied before the Babylonish captivity. The time of his prophesying, as well as his, parentage, are expressed (^{<300>}Zephaniah 1:1), and therefore need not be inquired into; only the sad mistake of Hobbes^{f1} may be observed, who makes him to be the most ancient of the prophets, and to be contemporary with Amaziah and Uzziah, kings of Judah, when he is expressly said to prophesy in the days of Josiah. Pseudo-Epiphanius^{f2} calls him a prophet of Sarabatha, of a mountain of that name, and says he was of the tribe of Simeon; and in this Isidore^{f3} agrees with him; and both affirm that he died and was buried in his own native place; but the author of the Cippi Hebraici^{f4} says he was buried at Geba, in Mount Lebanon, in the midst of a cave shut up, where his school continues; and from which place the clouds never depart, and where also are flowing fountains. His name, according to Jerom, signifies either “the Lord’s watch tower”, or “watchman”; or else “the secret of the Lord”; or, “his hidden one”; deriving his name, either from **hpx**, which signifies to “look out”, as a watchman from his tower; or from **ִּפּח**, “to hide”; which latter derivation is best; and some interpret it “a revealer of the secrets”, or “hidden things, of the Lord”; and take it to be much the same with Zaphnathpaaneah, the name given to Joseph by Pharaoh, (^{<044>}Genesis 41:45), and is of the same signification: but Hillerus^{f5} interprets the name of Zephaniah, “the Lord hid himself”; which agrees with the times in which he lived. That this prophecy was wrote by himself, there need be no doubt of; nor of the authenticity of it, being always received by the Jewish synagogue as authentic; and as it appears to be from its style and manner of composition; from the subject matter of it agreeing with other parts of Scripture, especially with Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and from the accomplishment of various prophecies in it. There are indeed some spurious things which have been ascribed to him, as the “analepsis” or assumption of Zephaniah the prophet, and the prophecy of Zephaniah, consisting of six hundred verses; but these are apocryphal, and have no likeness to this prophecy; in which he foretells the destruction of the Jews

by the Chaldeans for their sins, which he inveighs against, and calls them to repentance for them, as also the ruin of many other nations, all which came to pass; as well as he prophesies of the calling of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Jews, and of the comfortable state of the church in Gospel times, and especially in the latter day.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH 1

After the title of the book, (^{<3000>}Zephaniah 1:1), follows the Lord's threatening of the land of Judea with an utter consumption of it, and of all creatures in it, for the sins of its inhabitants, especially their idolatry and apostasy, (^{<3000>}Zephaniah 1:2-6), and this is represented under the notion of a sacrifice, to which guests are bid; and which even princes, and those of the blood royal, should not escape, nor ministers of state, or such who filled their masters' houses with violence, (^{<3000>}Zephaniah 1:7-9). Some particular places are mentioned, where there should be a great noise of crying and howling, and especially Jerusalem, which should be diligently searched, and its goods become a booty, and its houses desolate, (^{<3000>}Zephaniah 1:10-13). This destruction is spoken of as near at hand, and is described as very terrible and distressing, (^{<3004>}Zephaniah 1:14-17) and as inevitable; nothing would be able to deliver from it, (^{<3008>}Zephaniah 1:18).

Ver. 1. *The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi*, etc.] This is the title of the book, which expresses the subject matter of it, the word of the Lord; the word of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum; and shows the divine authority of it; that it was not of himself, nor from any man, but was of God; as well as describes the penman of it by his descent: who or what this his father was; whether a prophet, according to the rule the Jews give, that, when the name of a prophet and his father's name are mentioned, he is a prophet, the son of a prophet; or, whether a prince, a person of some great family, and even of the blood royal, as some have thought, is not certain; or who those after mentioned:

the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah; which last name, consisting of the same letters with Hezekiah, king of Judah, some have thought, as Aben Ezra, that he is intended; and that Zephaniah was a great-grandson of his; and which some think is confirmed by his style and diction, and by the freedom he used with the king's family, (^{<3008>}Zephaniah 1:8) but it is objected, that, if so it was, Hizkiah, or Hezekiah, would have been called king of Judah; that it does not appear that Hezekiah had any other son besides Manasseh; and that there was not a sufficient distance of

time from Hezekiah for four descents; and that, in fact, there were but three generations from him to Josiah, in whose days Zephaniah prophesied, as follows; though it is very probable that these progenitors of the prophet were men of note and character, and therefore mentioned, as well as to distinguish him from others of the same name, who lived

in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah: not Amos, as the Arabic version: Amon and Manasseh, who reigned between Hezekiah and Josiah, were both wicked princes, and introduced idolatrous worship among the Jews; which Josiah in the twelfth year of his reign began to purge the people from, and endeavoured a reformation; but whether it was before or after that Zephaniah delivered out this prophecy is not certain; it may seem to be before, by the corruption of the times described in it; and so it may be thought to have some influence upon the after reformation; though it is thought by many it was after; since, had he been in this office before the finding of the book of the law, he, and not Huldah the prophetess, would have been consulted, (^{<3024>}2 Kings 22:14) nor could the people so well have been taxed with a perversion of the law, had it not been as yet found, (^{<3004>}Zephaniah 3:4) and, besides, the reformation seems to be hinted at in this prophecy, since mention is made of the remnant of Baal, which supposes a removal of many of his images; and also notice is taken of some that apostatized after the renewal of the covenant, (^{<3004>}Zephaniah 1:4,6) moreover, the time of the Jews' destruction and captivity is represented as very near, (^{<3007>}Zephaniah 1:7,14) which began a little after the death of Josiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; to which Dr. Lightfoot^{f6} adds, that the prophet prophesies against the king's children, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, for their new fashions, and newfangled apparel, (^{<3008>}Zephaniah 1:8) and therefore it must be in the latter part of his reign; and, if so, it shows how a people may relapse into sin after the greatest endeavours for their good, and the best of examples set them. Mr. Whiston^{f7} and Mr. Bedford^{f8} place him in the latter part of his reign, about 611 or 612 B.C.: there were three that prophesied about this time, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Huldah the prophetess; of whom the Jewish Rabbins say, as Kimchi quotes them, Jeremiah prophesied in the streets, Zephaniah in the synagogues, and Huldah among the women.

Ver. 2. *I will utterly consume all [things] from off the land, saith the Lord.*] That is, from the land of Judah, by means of the Chaldeans or Babylonians: this is a general denunciation of the judgments of God, the particulars follow: or, "in gathering I will gather"; all good things out of

the land; all the necessities of life, and blessings of Providence; all that is for the sustenance and pleasure of man, as well as all creatures, by death or captivity; and so the land should be entirely stripped, and left naked and bare. The phrase denotes the certainty of the thing, as well as the utter, entire, and total consumption that should be made, and the vehemence and earnestness in which it is expressed.

Ver. 3. *I will consume man and beast*, etc.] Wicked men for their sins, and beasts for the sins of men; and, as a punishment for them, the creatures whom they have abused to the gratifying of their lusts:

I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea; so that there shall be none for the use of man, which are both delicate food; the latter were not consumed at the general deluge. Kimchi thinks this is said by way of hyperbole; but it is possible for these to be consumed, as men by famine, pestilence, and captivity, and beasts by murrain; so the fowls of the air by the noisomeness of it; and the fishes of the sea, that is, such as were in the sea of Tiberias, and other lakes in Judea, by the stagnation of the waters, or by some disease sent among them; unless wicked men, comparable to them, are intended; though they are expressly mentioned, both before and after:

and the stumblingblocks with the wicked: that is, idols, which are stumblingblocks to men, and cause them to offend and fall; these, together with those that made them, and the priests that sacrificed unto them, and the people that worshipped them, should be consumed from off the land: or, “the stumblingblocks of the wicked”; for **ta** is sometimes used as a sign of the genitive case, as Noldius^{f9} observes; and so the Vulgate Latin version and the Targum render it:

and I will cut off men from off the land, saith the Lord: this is repeated for the certainty of it; or else this designs another sort of men from the former; and that, as before wicked men are designed, here such as are not perfectly wicked, as Kimchi observes; yea, the righteous should be carried captive, so that the land should be left desolate, without men, good or bad; for even good men may fall in a general calamity, and be cut off from the land, though not from the Lord. The Septuagint indeed here render it wicked men. The phrase, “saith the Lord”, is twice expressed, for the certain confirmation of it; for it may be concluded it will be, since God has said it again and again that it shall be.

Ver. 4. *I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah*, etc.] Under whom the tribe of Benjamin is comprehended, which are only designed; the ten tribes having been carried captive in Hezekiah's time many years before this: not "to Judah", as beckoning to come and hearken to him, as calling to repentance and reformation; this he had done, but was rejected, and therefore determines to stretch out his hand "upon" them; nor "over Judah", to protect and defend them; but "upon Judah", exerting his power, stirring up his wrath, and executing his vengeance; and this is dreadful and intolerable to bear! and when his hand is stretched out, it cannot be turned back; and when laid on, can never be removed, till he pleases:

and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the metropolis of Judea, the royal seat of the kings of the house of David; where were the temple of the Lord; the ark, the symbol of his presence; the altar, where his priests sacrificed, and the place where his people worshipped; and yet these inhabitants should not escape the hand of the Lord, having sinned against him; nor should these things be any security to them:

and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place; either what of the idolatry of Baal, or belonging to it, remained among the Jews after the ten tribes were carried captive; which must be the sense, if this prophecy was before the reformation was begun by Josiah; or, if after, the meaning is, what was left unremoved by him, as any of the images of Baal, or altars erected for his worship, or vessels consecrated to his service, or groves that were for his use; all which would be cut off and destroyed by the Chaldeans, as well as the worshippers of him that remained:

[and] the name of the Chemarims with the priests; that is, the priests of Baal, with the priests of the tribe of Levi, who sometimes tampered and officiated with them in idolatrous service; for the word "Chemarim" is translated "idolatrous priests", (²²³⁶2 Kings 23:5) said to be put down by Josiah, in whose days Zephaniah prophesied; and must be the same with these, and it is used for such in (²³⁰⁵Hosea 10:5) so called, either from the black garments they wore, as some think; or from the colour of their faces, smutted with the smoke of the incense they frequently offered; or of the fires in which they sacrificed, or made the children to pass through to Molech. Hillerus^{f10} thinks they are the same with those heathen priests called "Phallophori"; deriving the word from one in the Arabic language, which has the signification of the "Phalli"; which were obscene images, carried about in an impudent manner by the priests of Bacchus, in the

performance of his sacred rites: the carrying of them was first instituted by Isis, as Plutarch^{f11} says; and if this was the case here, it is no wonder they should be so severely threatened. Some take them to be a sort of servants or ministers to the priests of Baal, who waited on them at the time of service; and so are distinguished from them in this clause, taking the word “priests” in it to design the priests of Baal; and the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “the name of sextons with the priests”. The word is used now by the Jews for Popish monks that live in cloisters; and Elias Levita^{f12} thinks these here are so called from their living in such like recluse places. The Targum is,

“and the name of their worshippers with their priests;”

one and the other; priests of Baal, and apostate priests of the Lord; the worshippers of Baal, and those that attend upon his priests, shall all feel the weight of Jehovah’s hand, and the lighting down of his arm with indignation.

Ver. 5. *And upon them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops*, etc.] The sun, moon, and stars, which some worshipped upon their house tops; the roofs of their houses being flat, as the roofs of the houses of the Jews generally were; from hence they had a full view of the host of heaven, and worshipped them openly; and fancied, the nearer they were to them, the more acceptable was their service; (see ²⁴⁹¹³Jeremiah 19:13):

and them that worship, [and] that swear the Lord, and that swear by Malcham; that is, that worship the true God, or at least pretend to do so, and swear by him when they take an oath: or, “that swear to the Lord”; as the words^{f13} may be rendered; that swear allegiance to him, to be true and faithful to him, to serve and obey him, and to keep his statutes and ordinances; and yet they swear by Malcham also, or Milchom, or Melchom, the same with Molech, or Moloch, the god of the Ammonites. These were such as partly worshipped God, and partly idols; they divided their religion and devotion between them, sometimes served the one, and sometimes the other; they halted between two opinions, and were a sort of occasional conformists; and such were as detestable to God as those that worshipped idols; as the Papists are, who pretend to worship God and their images, or God in them, and with them; and so all such persons that seek for justification and salvation, partly by their own works, and partly by Christ, are displeasing to the Lord, and miss of the thing; stumbling at the stumbling stone, and so fall and perish.

Ver. 6. *And them that are turned back from the Lord,* etc.] Who once were worshippers of him, but now become apostates, and had turned their backs on him and his worship. Some think this describes those who renewed their covenant with God in Josiah's time, and after that revolted from him, who must be very abominable to him; and therefore he threatens to stretch out his hand, and pour out his wrath upon them:

and [those] that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him; profane abandoned sinners, that lived without God in the world, and as if there was no God; never concerned themselves about the worship of him, having no faith in him, love to him, or fear and reverence of him; so far were they from seeking him in the first place diligently, zealously, and with their whole heart, that they never sought him at all; nor took any pains to get any knowledge of him, or of his mind and will, and manner of worship; but were altogether careless about these things, and unconcerned for them.

Ver. 7. *Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God,* etc.] When he comes forth, and appears in the way of his judgments, do not dispute the point with him, or pretend to offer reasons against his proceedings, or in order to disprove the justice of them; stand in awe and reverence of him, who is the Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, holy, just, and true; humble yourselves under his mighty hand; be still, and know that he is God; and let not one murmuring and repining word come out of your mouth. The Targum is,

“let all the wicked of the earth perish from before the Lord God:”

for the day of the Lord [is] at hand; the time of his vengeance on the Jewish nation for their sins, which he had fixed in his mind, and had given notice of by his prophets: this began to take place at Josiah's death, after which the Jews enjoyed little peace and prosperity; and his successor reigned but three months, was deposed by the king of Egypt, and carried thither captive, and there died; and Jehoiakim, that succeeded him, in the fourth year of his reign was carried captive into Babylon, or died by the way thither; so that this day might well be said to be at hand:

for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice: his people the Jews, who were to fall a victim to his vengeance, and a sacrifice to his justice, to atone in some measure for the injury done to it by their sins; thus they that had offered sacrifice to idols, and neglected the sacrifices of the Lord, and especially the great sacrifice of Christ typified by them, the only proper

atonement one, should themselves become a sacrifice to the just resentment of God; this he had prepared in his mind, determined should be done, and would bring about in his providence; (see ^{<2346>}Isaiah 34:6):

he hath bid his guests: or “called ones”^{f14}; the Chaldeans, whom he invited and called to this sacrifice and feast: or whom he “prepared”, or “sanctified”^{f15}; he prepared them in his purpose and providence; he set them apart for this service, and called them to it; to be the sacrificers of this people, and to feast upon them; to spoil them of their goods and riches, and enjoy them. These guests may also design, as Kimchi observes, the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, invited to feast upon the slain; (see ^{<3597>}Ezekiel 39:17) (^{<6897>}Revelation 19:17).

Ver. 8. *And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice*, etc.] When the above sacrifice prepared shall be offered, and the slaughter of his people made, when his wrath shall be poured out upon them, within the time of its beginning and ending:

that I will punish the princes, and the king's children; either the children of Josiah, who, though a good prince, his children did evil in the sight of the Lord, and were punished by him: Jehoahaz, after a three months' reign was carried down to Egypt, and died there; Jehoiakim, his elder brother, that succeeded him, rebelling against the king of Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign, fell into his hands, and died, and was buried with the burial of an ass; and Jeconiah his son was carried captive into Babylon, and there remained to the day of his death; and with him were carried the whole royal family, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, (^{<1244>}2 Kings 24:14) or else the children of Zedekiah, another son of Josiah, and the last of the kings of Judah, who was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who before his eyes slew his sons, and all the princes of Judah, and then put out his eyes, and bound him in chains, (^{<3520>}Jeremiah 52:10,11) and thus this prophecy had its accomplishment:

and all such as are clothed with strange apparel; either which they put on in honour of the idols they worshipped, as Jarchi; so the heathens wore one sort of garments for one idol, and another sort for another; or these were men of a pharisaical cast, who wore garments different from others, that they might be thought to be very holy and religious, which sense is mentioned by Kimchi; or they were such, which he also observes, who, seeing some to have plenty of good clothes, stole them from them, and put them on; or such who arrayed themselves in garments that did not belong

to their sex, men put on women's garments, and women clothed themselves with men's, and both strange apparel; or rather this points at such persons, who, in their apparel, imitated the fashions and customs of foreign nations; which probably began with the king's children and courtiers, and were followed by others. The Targum is,

“and upon all those that make a noise at the worship of idols.”

Ver. 9. *In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold,* etc.] Not in a ludicrous way, who, by dancing and leaping, made sport for persons, and brought their masters much gain, as the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination did, (~~Acts~~ Acts 16:16) rather, that entered rashly and irreverently into the house of God; or else in an idolatrous way, who, when they went into an idol's temple, did not tread upon the threshold, but leaped over it, as the priests of Dagon, after the fall of that idol on the threshold, (~~1 Samuel~~ 1 Samuel 5:4,5). So the Targum,

“and I will visit all those that walk in the laws (or according to the customs) of the Philistines;”

whose idol Dagon was: but it seems better to interpret it of such, who, seeing houses full of good things, in a rude, bold, insolent manner, thrust themselves, or jumped into them, and took away what they pleased; or when they returned to their masters' houses with their spoil, who set them on, and encouraged them in these practices, leaped over the threshold for joy of what they had got, as Aben Ezra observes; which agrees with what follows:

which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit; that is, with goods got by rapine and force, and by fraudulent ways and methods: this is to be understood of the servants of great men, who, to feed the ambition and avarice of their masters, used very oppressive methods with inferior persons to get their substance from them, and gratify their masters. Cocceius interprets these “three” verses of the day of Christ's coming in the flesh being at hand, when the true sacrifice should be offered up, and God would call his people to feed by faith upon it; when all civil power and authority in the sanhedrim and family of David should be removed from the Jews; and all friendship with the nations of the world, signified by likeness of garments; and the priestly dignity, the priests, according to him, being those that leaped over the threshold; that is, of the house of the Lord, the

temple, and filled it with the spoil of widows' houses, unsupportable precepts, and false doctrines.

Ver. 10. *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord,* etc.] In the day of the Lord's sacrifice, when he shall punish the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; which, as well as what follows, shall surely come to pass, because the Lord has said it; for not one word of his shall pass away, but all be fulfilled:

[that there shall be] the noise of a cry from the fish gate; a gate of the city of Jerusalem so called, which suffered as the rest in the destruction of the city by the Babylonians, and, after the captivity, was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah, (^{<KRB>}Nehemiah 3:3) according to Jerom, it was on the west side of the city, and led to Diospolis and Joppa; and was the nearest road to the Mediterranean sea, or any of the roads to Jerusalem, from whence fish were brought, and brought in by this gate; and very probably the fish market was near it, from whence it had its name; though Cocceius places it in the north corner of the east side of the city, and so was nearer Jordan, the sea of Tiberias, and the city of Tyre, from whence fish might be brought hither, and sold, (^{<K316>}Nehemiah 13:16) however, be it where it will, the enemy it seems would attack it, and enter in by it; upon which a hideous cry would be made, either by the assailants, the Chaldeans, at their attack upon it, and entrance through it; or by the inhabitants of it, or that were nearest to it, upon their approach, or both:

and an howling from the second; either from the second gate; and if the fish gate is the same with the first gate, (^{<S140>}Zechariah 14:10) then this may be pertinently called the second. Jarchi calls it the bird gate, which was the second to the fish gate. So the Targum,

“from the bird, or the bird gate;”

though some copies of it read, from the tower or high fortress: or else this designs the second wall, and the gate in that which answered to the fish gate; for Jerusalem was encompassed with three walls; the fish gate was in the outermost, and this was in the second, to which the Chaldeans came next, and occasioned a dreadful howling and lamentation in the people that dwelt near it. Kimchi interprets it of the school or university that was in Jerusalem; the same word is rendered the cottage in which Huldah the prophetess lived, (^{<2214>}2 Kings 22:14) and there, by the Targum,

“the house of doctrine or instruction;”

so then the sense is, a grievous outcry would be heard from the university or school of the prophets; the enemy having entered it, and were slaying the students, or seizing them in order to carry them captive:

and a great crashing from the hills; either that were in Jerusalem, as Mount Zion and Moriah, on which the temple stood; or those that were round about it, as Gareb, and Goath, and others; though some interpret this of the houses of nobles that stood in the higher parts of the city, where there would be a shivering, a breaking to pieces, as the word signifies, of doors and windows without, and of furniture within.

Ver. 11. *Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh*, etc.] The name of a street in Jerusalem, as Aben Ezra; perhaps it lay low in the hollow of the city, and in the form of a mortar, from whence it might have its name, as the word^{f16} signifies; which is used both for a hollow place and for a mortar, (^{<0758>}Judges 15:19 ^{<0722>}Proverbs 27:22) unless it might be so called from such persons dwelling in it, that used mortars for spice, and other things. The Targum is,

“howl, all ye that dwell in the valley of Kidron;”

and Jerom thinks the valley of Siloah is intended, which is the same; which, Adrichomius^{f17} says, was broad, deep, and dark, and surrounded the temple in manner of a foss, or ditch; and was disposed in the form of a mortar, called in Hebrew “maches”; in Latin, “pila”; in which merchants and tradesmen of all kinds dwelt. It is thought by others to be the same which Josephus^{f18} calls “the valley of the cheese mongers”, which lay between the two hills Zion and Acra. The reason of their howling is,

for all the merchant people are cut down; either cut to pieces by the sword of the enemy, and become silent, as the word^{f19} sometimes signifies, and the Vulgate Latin version here renders it; become so by death, and laid in the silent grave, and no more concerned in merchandise; or else stripped of all their wealth and goods by the enemy, and so cut down, broke, and become bankrupt, and could trade no more. The word for merchant signifies a Canaanite; and the Targum paraphrases it thus,

“for all the people are broken, whose works are like the works of the people of the land of Canaan:”

all they that bear silver are cut off; that have large quantities of it, and carry it to market to buy goods with it as merchants; these shall be cut off,

and so a great loss to trade, and a cause of howling and lamentation; or such that wear it in their garments, embroidered with it; or rather in their purses, who are loaded with this thick clay, abound with it. The Targum is,

“all that are rich in substance shall be destroyed.”

Ver. 12. *And it shall come to pass at that time, [that] I will search Jerusalem with candles,* etc.] To find out the sins of the inhabitants of it, and the authors of them, and punish them for them, however hid and concealed from the eyes of others, or thought to be: this must be understood consistent with the omniscience of God, who knows all persons and things; nothing is hid from him; men may fancy their sins are hid, being privately and secretly committed; but all will be manifest, sooner or later; if not now, yet at the day of judgment; and sometimes they are made manifest by God in this life, as here; for what the Lord here says he would do, he did it by instruments, by the Chaldeans, whom he sent to Jerusalem; and to whom the gates of the city, the doors of houses, and the innermost recesses of them, were opened and plundered by them; and all for the sins of the people, which were hereby exposed. So the Targum,

“and it shall be at that time that I will appoint searchers, and they shall search Jerusalem, as they that search with candles;”

and no doubt but this was literally true of the Chaldeans, who with candles might search vaults and cellars, and such like dark places, where they supposed goods and riches were concealed. The allusion may be to the searching with lamps for leaven on the fourteenth of Nisan, when the passover began, in every corner of a house, and, when they found it, burnt it^{f20}; or in general to searching for anything which lies concealed in dark places, where the light of the sun comes not, and can only be discovered by the light of candles; and denotes that nothing should escape the sight and knowledge of God, by whom a full discovery would be made of their persons and sins, and cognizance taken of them in a vindictive way, as follows:

and punish the men that are settled on their lees; like wine on the lees, quiet and undisturbed; in a good outward estate and condition, abounding in wealth and riches, and trusting therein; and which, as the Targum paraphrases it, they enjoy in great tranquillity; Moab like, having never been emptied from vessel to vessel, (²⁴⁸¹Jeremiah 48:11) and so concluded they should ever remain in the same state, and became hardened in sin, or

“curdled”, and thickened, as the word^{f21} signifies; and were unconcerned about the state of religion, or the state of their own souls; and fearless and thoughtless of the judgments of God; but should now be visited, disturbed in their tranquil state, and be troubled and punished:

that say in their heart; not daring to express with their lips the following atheism and blasphemy; but God, who searched and tried their hearts, knew it:

The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; which is a flat denial of his providence; saying that he takes no notice of what is done by men on earth, whether good or bad; and neither rewards the one, nor punishes the other. So the Targum, as Kimchi quotes it,

“it is not the good pleasure of God to do good to the righteous, or to do evil to the wicked;”

than which nothing is more false! the Lord does good to all in a providential way, and to many in a way of special grace; and rewards with a reward of grace all good men, both here and hereafter; and though he does not do any moral evil, yet he executes the evil of punishment in this world, and in that to come, on evildoers.

Ver. 13. *Therefore their goods shall become a booty*, etc.] To the enemy; the riches they trusted in, and thought themselves so secure of; and therefore denied divine Providence, which ought to be depended upon amidst the greatest affluence; or otherwise the Lord has various ways by which he can soon strip men of all their enjoyments, and dispose of them to others:

and their houses a desolation; be pulled down by the enemy; or left uninhabited, they being killed or carried captive, even their whole families:

they shall also build houses, but not inhabit [them]; not long, at least; not always, as they expected, and promised themselves when they built them:

and they shall plant vineyards, and not drink the wine thereof: but before the vines planted by them bring forth grapes, and these are pressed, and wine made of them, they should fall into the hands of the enemy, who would drink it, and not they; and all this agreeably to what was threatened them in the law of Moses, which they ought to have regarded,

(⁽¹³³⁰⁾Deuteronomy 28:30).

Ver. 14. *The great day of the Lord [is] near, [it is] near, and hasteth greatly,* etc.] Not the day of judgment, but the day of God's vengeance upon the Jews, which yet bore some resemblance to that day of the Lord, and it may be therefore so called; as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans had some likeness to it, and therefore the signs of the one and of the other are given together by our Lord in (~~400~~ Matthew 24:1-51) and this was a day in which he would do great things, by the Chaldeans, and against the Jews; and this is represented as very "near"; and repeated again for the confirmation of it, and to arouse the thoughtless and careless about it, and who put away this evil day far from them; yea, it is said to make great haste, and to fly away swiftly, even faster than time usually does; though in common it has wings ascribed unto it:

[even] the voice of the day of the Lord; in which the Lord's voice will be heard; not his voice of grace and mercy, as in the day of salvation; but of wrath and vengeance, which will be terrible; hence it follows:

the mighty men shall cry there bitterly; not the voice of the mighty men besieging the city, making a hideous noise to animate the soldiers in making the assault, as some; but the mighty men within the city of Jerusalem besieged, who, when they see the city broken up, would be in the utmost terror, and cry bitterly, like women and children, being quite dismayed and dispirited; even the men of war upon the walls, and in the garrisons, with their officers and generals; and if this would be the case with them, how must it be thought to be with others, the weak and timorous?

Ver. 15. *That day [is] a day of wrath,* etc.] Both of the wrath of God against his people for their sins; these judgments being the effects of his wrath, provoked by their iniquities; and of the wrath and cruelty of the Chaldeans, exercised in a furious manner:

a day of trouble and distress; to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they being taken and led captive, their houses plundered and demolished, and the whole city and temple laid in ruins:

a day of wasteness and desolation; of the whole country of Judea, and the metropolis of it; of their houses, fields, and vineyards:

a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness: as it might be in a natural sense; the displeasure of God being shown in the very heavens, by the darkness and gloominess of them, and the thick clouds

with which they were covered; and made still more dark and gloomy by the burning of the city, and the smoke of it; and, in such circumstances, gloominess and melancholy must sit upon the minds of men: and thick clouds and darkness portend greater troubles and calamities coming on; and the whole is expressive of great adversity; for, as light frequently designs prosperity, so darkness adversity.

Ver. 16. *A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities*, etc.] The trumpet of the enemy, sounding the alarm of war against the fenced cities of Judea, which were taken before Jerusalem; calling and gathering the soldiers together, and animating them to the assault of them; and blowing them in a way of triumph; and as expressive of victory, having got possession of them:

and against the high towers; or “corners”^{f22}; towers being usually built corner-wise, and full of corners, and on the corners of walls of cities; sometimes these signify princes, magistrates, and great men, (~~300~~ Zechariah 10:4).

Ver. 17. *And I will bring distress upon men*, etc.] Not upon men in general, but particularly on the men of Judea, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; and especially those that were in the fenced cities and high towers; and who might think themselves safe and secure; but, being besieged, should be distressed with famine and pestilence, and with the enemy; and more especially when stormed, and a breach made, and the enemy just entering:

that they shall walk like blind men; not knowing which way to go, where to turn themselves, what methods to take, or course to steer, no more than a blind man. The phrase is expressive of their being at their wits’ ends, void of all thought and consultation:

because they have sinned against the Lord; and therefore he gives them up, not only into the hand of the enemy, but unto an infatuation of spirit, and a judicial blindness of mind:

and their blood shall be poured out as dust; in great quantities, like that, without any regard to it, without showing any mercy, and as if it was of no more value than the dust of the earth. The Targum is,

“their blood shall be poured out into the dust;”

or on it, and be drunk up by it:

and their flesh as the dung; or their carcasses, as the same paraphrase; that is, their dead bodies shall lie unburied, and rot, and putrefy, and shall be cast upon fields like dung, to fatten them. The word for “flesh”, in the Hebrew language, signifies bread or food; because dead bodies are food for worms; but in the Arabic language, as Aben Ezra and Jarchi observe, it signifies “flesh”.

Ver. 18. *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath*, etc.] Which they have gotten in an unjust way, and have hoarded up, and put their confidence in; these were the lees on which they were settled; but now, as they would be disregarded by the Lord, as insufficient to atone for their sins, and appease his wrath, and procure his favour; (see ^{<187618>}Job 36:18,19 ^{<21104>}Proverbs 11:4) so they would be of no avail to them, to deliver from their enemies, who would not be bribed therewith to save their lives; the same is said of the Medes at the taking of Babylon, (^{<21317>}Isaiah 13:17):

but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; his zeal against sin, and for his own glory, shall burn like fire; which shall consume the whole land, and all the inhabitants of it, and was not to be stopped by anything that could be done by them; so furious and raging would it be:

for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land; burn up at once all the briers and thorns, even all that offend, and do iniquity, and spare neither root nor branch; or, as when a field is cleared of the stubble on it, after the wheat is gathered in; or a grain floor of its chaff, after the wheat is separated from it; thus with the besom of destruction would the Lord sweep away the sinful inhabitants of Judea, and clear it of them, as he did by the sword, by famine, by pestilence, and by captivity.