

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH 2

In this chapter the prophet exhorts the Jews to repentance; and foretells the destruction of several neighbouring nations. The body of the people of the Jews in general are first called upon to gather together and humble themselves, who were a people neither desirable, nor deserving of the favours of God, nor desirous of them, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:1) and to this they are pressed, from the consideration of God's decree of vengeance being ready to bring forth and break forth upon them, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:2) and then the few godly among them are exhorted to seek the Lord, and what is agreeable to him; since there was at least a probability of their being protected by him in a time of general calamity, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:3) and that the destruction of this people might appear the more certain, and that they might have no dependence on their neighbours, the prophet proceeds to predict the ruin of several of them, particularly the Philistines; several places belonging to them are by name mentioned, and the whole land threatened with desolation; the maritime part of it to be only inhabited by shepherds and their flocks; and afterwards the coast possessed by the Jews, on their return from their captivity, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:4-7). Next the Moabites and Ammonites are prophesied of; whose destruction should come upon them for their pride, and for their contempt and reviling of the people of God; and which should be like that of Sodom and Gomorrah; and would issue in the abolition of idolatry, and the setting up of the worship of God in their country, and elsewhere, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:8-11). As for the Ethiopians, they should be slain with the sword, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:12) and the whole monarchy of Assyria, with Nineveh the metropolis of it, should be utterly laid waste, and become a desolation, and a wilderness; and the habitation, not only of flocks, but of beasts and birds of prey, (~~300B~~Zephaniah 2:13-15).

Ver. 1. *Gather yourselves together*, etc.] This is said to the people of the Jews in general; that whereas the judgments of God were coming upon them, as predicted in the preceding chapter (~~300B~~Zephaniah 1:1-18), it was high time for them to get together, and consider what was to be done at

such a juncture; it was right to call a solemn assembly, to gather the people, priests, and elders, together, to some one place, as Joel directs, (^{<3014>}Joel 1:14 2:15,16) the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the temple, and the people of the land to their respective synagogues, and there humble themselves before the Lord; confess their sins, and declare their repentance for them; and pray that God would show favour to them, and avert his wrath and judgments from them: or, “gather the straw”^{f23}; from yourselves, and then gather it from others, as follows: or, “first adorn yourselves”, and “then others”, as in the Talmud^{f24}; and the sense is the same with the words of Christ, “first cast out the beam out of thine own eye”, etc. (^{<1018>}Matthew 7:3-5) and the meaning of both is, first correct and amend yourselves, and then reprove others: this sense is given by the Jewish commentators, and is approved by Gussetius^{f25}: or “search yourselves”^{f26}; as some render the word; and that very diligently, as stubble is searched into, or any thing searched for in it; let the body of the people inquire among themselves what should be the cause of these things; what public sins prevailed among them, for which they were threatened with an utter destruction; and let everyone search into his own heart and ways, and consider how much he has contributed to the bringing down such sad calamities upon the nation: thus it became them to search and inquire into their state and circumstances of affairs, in a way of self-examination; or otherwise the Lord would search them in a way of judgment, as threatened (^{<3012>}Zephaniah 1:12) or “shake out”^{f27}, or “fan yourselves”, as others; remove your chaff by repentance and reformation, that you be not blown away like chaff in the day of God’s wrath, as afterwards suggested:

yea, gather together; or “search”, or “shake out”, or “fan”, as before: this is repeated, to show the necessity and importance of it, and the vehemency of the prophet in urging it:

O nation not desired; by other nations, but hated by them, as Abarbinel observes; not desirable to God or good men; not amiable or lovely for any excellencies and goodness in them, but the reverse; being a disobedient and rebellious people; a seed of evildoers, laden with iniquity, who, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet, were full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores; or of disorders and irregularities, sins and transgressions, comparable to them; and therefore, instead of being desirable, were loathsome and abominable: or, as some render the word, “O nation void of desire”^{f28}; or “not affected” with it; who had no desire after God, and the knowledge of his will; after his word and worship; after a return unto him,

and reconciliation with him; after his favour, grace, and mercy; not desirous of good things, nor of doing any. So the Targum,

“gather together, and come, and draw near, this people who desire not to return to the law.”

Joseph Kimchi, from the use of the word in the Misnic language, renders it, “O nation not ashamed”: of their evil works, being bold and impudent; and yet, such was the goodness and grace of God to them, that he calls them to repentance, and gives them warning before he strikes the blow.

Ver. 2. *Before the decree bring forth, [before] the day pass as the chaff,* etc.] Which was like a woman big with child, ready to be delivered. The decree of God concerning the people of the Jews was pregnant with wrath and ruin for their sins, and just ripe for execution; and therefore, before it was actually executed, they are exhorted as above; not that the decree of God which was gone forth could be frustrated and made void by anything done by them; only that, when it was put into execution, such as repented of their sins might be saved from the general calamity; which they are called upon to do before the day come appointed by the Lord for the execution of this decree; which lingered not, and was not delayed, but slid on as swiftly as chaff before the driving wind. There is some difficulty in the rendering and sense of these words; some thus, “before the day, which passes as chaff, brings forth the decree”^{f29}; that is, before the time, which moves swiftly, brings on the execution of the decree, or of the thing decreed in it, it is big with: others, “before the decree brings forth the day that passeth as chaff”^{f30}; or in which the chaff shall be separated from the wheat, pass away, be dispersed here and there; that is, before they were scattered about by it as chaff: and to this sense the Septuagint and Arabic versions, “before ye are as a flower”; or, as the Syriac, “as chaff that passeth away”; and so the Targum more fully,

“before the decree of the house of judgment come out upon you, and ye be like chaff which the wind blows away, and like a shadow which passes from before the day.” (see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 1:4).

Before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you; these phrases explain the former, and show what the decree was big with, and ready to bring forth, even the judgments of God, in wrath and fierce anger; and what the day is, said to pass as the chaff; the day of God's vengeance fixed by him, which should come upon

them, and scatter them like chaff among the nations of the world: or rather the words may be rendered thus, as by Gussetius^{f31}, “whilst as yet the decree hath not brought forth, the day passeth away like chaff”; being neglected and spent in an useless and unprofitable manner; for which they are reprov'd; and therefore are exhorted to be wiser for the future, and redeem precious time; and, before the Lord's anger comes upon them, do what is before exhorted to, and particularly what follows:

Ver. 3. *Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth*, etc.] Or “of the land”, of the land of Judea. In this time of great apostasy, there was a remnant according to the election of grace, whom the Lord reserved for himself, and bestowed his grace upon; and it is for the sake of these that the general exhortations to repentance and reformation are given out, to whom alone they were to be useful, that they might be protected and preserved from the general ruin; for such as are here described are persons the Lord takes great notice of; he gives them more grace; he lifts them up when bowed down; he beautifies them with salvation; he feeds them to full satisfaction; he teaches them his ways, his mind and will; he dwells with them here, and will cause them to inherit the new heaven and new earth hereafter: they are such who have a true sense of sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it, which humbles them; and, conscious of the imperfection of their own righteousness, submit to the righteousness of Christ; acknowledge they are saved alone by the grace of God; and that all they have and expect to enjoy is owing to that; they are humble under the mighty hand of God, in every afflictive providence; patiently take all wrongs, abuses, and injuries done them by men; and not envious at the superior gifts, grace, and usefulness of others, but rejoice therein; have mean sentiments of themselves, and very high ones of others that excel in grace and holiness; these are truly gracious persons; and are like unto, and are followers of, the meek and lowly Jesus: and are here exhorted “to seek the Lord”: that is, by prayer and supplication, to know more of his mind and will, and especially their duty in their present circumstances; implore his grace and mercy, protection and safety, in a day of common danger; and attend the public ordinances of his house, in order to enjoy his presence and communion with him: for to seek the Lord is to seek his face and favour, to have the light of his countenance, and the discoveries of his love; and to seek his honour and glory in all things: particularly the Lord Christ may be meant, who was to come in the flesh, and good men sought for before he came, and now he is come; and to him should men seek for righteousness and life; for peace and

pardon; for grace, and all supplies of it: and for everlasting salvation; and all this before as well as since his coming: and such seek him aright, who seek him early, in the first place, and above all things; who seek him with their whole hearts, sincerely, diligently, and constantly; and where he is to be found, in the ministry of his word and ordinances:

which have wrought his judgment: the judgment of the Lord; acted according to his mind and will, revealed in his word, which is the rule of judgment, both as to faith and practice; observed his laws and statutes; kept his ordinances, as they were delivered; and did works of righteousness from right principles, and with right views, as fruits of faith, and as meet for repentance:

seek righteousness; not their own, and justification by that; for this would be doing what the carnal Jews did, and in vain, and is inconsistent with seeking the Lord, as before; but the righteousness of God, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ, who is God, and which only gives a right unto the kingdom of God or heaven: seeking this supposes a want of righteousness, which is in every man; a sense of that want, which only some have; a view of a righteousness without a man, in another, even in Christ; and of the glory, fulness, and excellency of his righteousness, which make it desirable, and worth seeking for; though this exhortation may also include in it a living to him soberly and righteously, as a fruit of divine grace, and to the glory of God, and according to his will, without trusting in it, and depending upon it, for life and salvation:

seek meekness; even though they were meek ones already, yet it became them to seek after more of this grace of meekness, that they might increase therein, and abound in the exercise of it, and be careful that they failed not in it; since the enemy of souls often attacks the saints in that in which they most excel, and succeeds: so Moses, the meekest man on earth, being off of his guard, and provoked, spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and it went ill with him on that account, (^{QALIB} Numbers 12:3 ¹⁹⁴⁶² Psalm 106:32,33) besides, this exhortation, as well as the preceding, may have a respect to their concern with others; that they should study, as much as in them lay, not only to do righteousness and exercise meekness themselves, but to cultivate these among others; with which agrees Kimchi's note,

“seek righteousness and meekness with others; as if it was said, study with all your might and main to return them to the right way:”

it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger; in the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when some were put to the sword, and others carried captive: now there was a possibility, yea, a probability, that such persons before described would be saved at this time from the general calamity; be hid, protected, and preserved, by the power and providence of God, Jeremiah, Baruch, and others, were: this, though it is not said as a certain thing, because a corporeal blessing, which the people of God cannot always be assured of in a time of public distress; yet not expressed in a doubting manner, much less despairing; but rather as presuming, at least hoping it would be, being possible and probable; and so encouraging to the above exercises of religion; and such that have the grace of God, and seek him, and seek to Christ alone for righteousness and life, may depend upon it that they shall be hid, and be safe and secure, when the wrath of God at the last day comes upon an ungodly world, (~~233D~~ Isaiah 32:2 ~~410D~~ Romans 5:9). The Targum of the whole is,

“seek the fear of the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, who do the judgments of his will; seek truth, seek meekness; it may be there will be a protection for you in the day of the Lord's anger.”

The Vulgate Latin version is, “seek the Lord--seek the just, seek the meek One”; as expressive of a person, even the Lord Christ, the just and Holy One, the meek and lowly Jesus.

Ver. 4. *For Gaza shall be forsaken*, etc.] Therefore seek the Lord; and not to the Philistines, since they would be destroyed, to whom Gaza, and the other cities later mentioned, belonged; so Aben Ezra connects the words, suggesting that it would be in vain to flee thither for shelter, or seek for refuge there; though others think that this and what follows is subjoined, either to assure the Jews of their certain ruin, since this would be the case of the nations about them; or to alleviate their calamity, seeing their enemies would have no occasion to insult them, and triumph over them, they being, or quickly would be, in the like circumstances. Gaza was one of the five lordships of the Philistines; a strong and fortified place, as its name signifies; but should be demolished, stripped of its fortifications, and forsaken by its inhabitants. It was smitten by Pharaoh king of Egypt; and was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar, (~~247D~~ Jeremiah 47:1,4,5) and afterwards taken by Alexander the great; and, having gone through various changes, was in the times of the apostles called Gaza the desert, (~~443B~~ Acts 8:26). There is a beautiful play on words in the words, not to be expressed in an

English translation^{f32}. According to Strabo's account^{f33}, the ancient city was about a mile from the haven, for which (he says) it was formerly very illustrious; but was demolished by Alexander, and remained a desert. And so Jerom^{f34} says, in his time, the place where the ancient city stood scarce afforded any traces of the foundations of it; for that which now is seen (adds he) was built in another place, instead of that which was destroyed: and which, he observes, accounts for the fulfilment of this prophecy: and so Monsieur Thevenot^{f35} says, the city of Gaza is about two miles from the sea; and was anciently very illustrious, as may be seen by its ruins; and yet, even this must be understood of new Gaza; so a Greek writer^{f36}, of an uncertain age, observes this distinction; and speaks of this and the following places exactly in the order in which they are here,

“after Rhinocorura lies new Gaza, which is the city itself; then “Gaza the desert” (the place here prophesied of); then the city Askelon; after that Azotus (or Ashdod); then the city Accaron” (or Ekron):

and Ashkelon a desolation; this was another lordship belonging to the Philistines, that suffered at the same time as Gaza did by Nebuchadnezzar, (~~247B~~Jeremiah 47:5,7). This place was ten miles from Gaza, as Mr. Sandys^{f37} says, and who adds, and now of no note; and Strabo^{f38} speaks of it in his time as a small city; indeed new Ashkelon is said by Benjamin of Tudela^{f39} to be a very large and beautiful city; but then he distinguishes it from old Ashkelon, here prophesied of; and which (he says) is four “parsoe”, or sixteen miles, from the former, and now lies waste and desolate:

they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, that is, the Chaldeans shall drive out the inhabitants of Ashdod, another of the principalities of the Philistines; the same with Azotus, (~~408B~~Acts 8:40) “at noon day”, openly and publicly, and with great ease; they shall have no occasion to use any secret stratagems, or to make night work of it; and which would be very incommodious and distressing to the inhabitants, to be turned out at noon day, and be obliged to travel in the heat of the sun, which in those eastern countries at noon day beats very strong. This place was distant from old Ashkelon four “parsae”, or twenty four miles, as Benjamin Tudelensis^{f40} affirms; and with which agrees Diodorus Siculus^{f41}, who says, that from Gaza to Azotus are two hundred and seventy furlongs, which make thirty four miles, ten from Gaza to Ashkelon, and twenty four from thence to Azotus or Ashdod. This place, according to the above Jewish traveller^{f42}, is

now called Palmis, which he says is the Ashdod that belonged to the Philistines, now waste and desolate; by which this prophecy is fulfilled. It was once a very large and famous city, strong and well fortified; and held out a siege of twenty nine years against Psamittichus king of Egypt, as Herodotus^{f43} relates, but now destroyed; (see ~~<2300>~~ Isaiah 20:1):

and Ekron shall be rooted up; as a tree is rooted up, and withers away, and perishes, and there is no more hope of it: this denotes the utter destruction of this place. There is here also an elegant allusion to the name of the place^{f44}, not to be imitated in a version of it: this was another of the lordships of the Philistines, famous for the idol Beelzebub, the god of this place. Jerom^{f45} observes, that some think that Accaron (or Ekron) is the same with Strato's tower, afterwards called Caesarea; and so the Talmudists say^{f46}, Ekron is Caesarea; which is not at all probable: he further observes, that there is a large village of the Jews, which in his days was called Accaron, and lay between Azotus and Jamnia to the east; but Breidenbachius^{f47} relates, that, in his time, Accaron was only a small cottage or hut, yet retaining its ancient name; so utterly rooted up is this place, which once was a considerable principality. Gath is not mentioned, which is the other of the five principalities, because it was now, as Kimchi says, in the hands of the kings of Judah.

Ver. 5. *Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the nation of the Cherethites*, etc.] Which is a name of the Philistines in general, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; or these were a particular tribe belonging to them, that inhabited the southern part of their country; (see ~~<0304>~~ 1 Samuel 30:14,16) those on the sea coast, the coast of the Mediterranean sea, and so lay between that and Judea: out of this nation, in the times of David and Solomon, were some choice soldiers selected, called the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were their bodyguards, as Josephus^{f48} calls them; a royal band, which never departed from the king's person; (see ~~<0508>~~ 2 Samuel 15:18) (~~<0107>~~ 2 Samuel 20:7,23). The Septuagint version calls them "strangers of the Cretians"; and are thought by some to be a colony of the Cretians; a people that came originally from the island of Crete, and settled here; but, on the contrary, rather Crete was a colony of the Philistines, and had its name from them; for by the Arabians^{f49}, the country of Palestine, or the Philistines, is called Keritha; and by the Syrians Creth; and, by the Hebrews the inhabitants thereof are called Cherethites, as here, and in (~~<3256>~~ Ezekiel 25:16) and so the south of the Cherethites, in (~~<0304>~~ 1 Samuel 30:14), is, in (~~<3256>~~ Ezekiel 25:16), called the land of the Philistines. In all the

above places, where they are spoken of as the attendants of Solomon and David, they are in the Targum called “archers”; and it is a clear case the Philistines were famous for archery, whereby they had sometimes the advantage of their enemies; (see ~~1~~ Samuel 31:3) and bows and arrows were the arms the Cretians made use of, and were famous for, as Bochart^{f50} from various writers has shown; the use of which they learned very probably from the Philistines, from whom they sprung; though Solinus^{f51} says they were the first that used arrows; and, according to Diodorus Siculus, Saturn introduced the art of using bows and arrows into the island of Crete; though others ascribe it to Apollo^{f52}; and it is said that Hercules learnt this art from Rhadamanthus of Crete; which last instance seems to favour the notion of those, that these Cherethites were Cretians, or sprung from them; to which the Septuagint version inclines; and Calmet^{f53} is of opinion that Caphtor, from whence the Philistines are said to come, (~~Amos~~ Amos 9:7) and who are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor, (~~Jeremiah~~ Jeremiah 47:4) is the island of Crete; and that the Philistines came from thence into Palestine; and that the Cherethites are the ancient Cretians; the language, manners, arms, religion and gods, of the Cretians and Philistines, being much the same; though so they might be, as being a colony of the Philistines; (see Gill on “~~Amos~~ Amos 9:7”) though a learned man^{f54}, who gives into the opinion that these were royal guards, yet thinks they were not strangers and idolaters, but proselytes to the Jewish religion at least; and rather Israelites, choice selected men, men of strength and valour, of military courage and skill, picked out of the nation, to guard the king’s person; and who were called Cherethites and Pelethites, from the kind of shields and targets they wore, called “cetra” and “pelta”: and it is a notion several of the Jewish writers^{f55} have, that they were two families in Israel; but it seems plain and evident that a foreign nation is here meant, which lay on the sea coast, and belonged to the Philistines. Another learned man^{f56} thinks they are the Midianites, the same with the Cretians that Luke joins with the Arabians, (~~Acts~~ Acts 2:11) as the Midianites are with the Arabians and Amalekites by Josephus^{f57}; however, a woe is denounced against them, and they are threatened with desolation. The Vulgate Latin version is, “a nation of destroyed ones”: and the Targum,

“a people who have sinned, that they might be destroyed.”

the word of the Lord is against you; inhabitants of the sea coast, the Cherethites; the word of the Lord conceived in his own mind, his purpose to destroy them, which cannot be frustrated. So the Targum,

“the decree of the word of the Lord is against you;”

and the word pronounced by his lips, the word of prophecy concerning them, by the mouth of former prophets, as Isaiah, (^{f60}Isaiah 14:29,31) and by the mouth of the present prophet:

O Canaan, the land of the Philistines; Palestine was a part of Canaan; the five lordships of the Philistines before mentioned belonged originally to the Canaanite, (^{f61}Joshua 13:3) and these belonged to the land of Israel, though possessed by them, out of which now they should be turned, and the country wasted, as follows:

I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant; so great should be the desolation; all should be removed from it, either by death or by captivity; at least there should be no settled inhabitant.

Ver. 6. *And the sea coast shall be dwellings [and] cottages for shepherds,* etc.] That tract of land which lay on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, inhabited by the Philistines, should now become so desolate, that instead of towns and cities full of merchants and sea faring persons, and houses full of inhabitants, and warehouses full of goods, there should now only be seen a few huts and cottages for shepherds to dwell in, to shelter them from the heat by day, and where they watched their flocks by night, and took their proper repose and rest. The last word is by some rendered “ditches”^{f58}, which were dug by them to receive rainwater for their use: or rather may signify “cottages dug by shepherds”^{f59}; in subterraneous places, whither they retired in the heat of the day, to shelter themselves from the scorching sun; and some of them were so large as to receive their flocks also; such was the cave of Polyphemus, as Bochart^{f60} observes, in which the cattle, namely, the sheep and goats, lay down and slept; and in Iceland such are used to secure them from the cold; where we are told^{f61} there are caverns in the mountains capable of sheltering a hundred sheep or more: and whither they very cordially retreat in bad weather. These holes are in such mountains as have formerly burned, and are of infinite service to them, both winter and summer; in the winter for shelter, and in the summer for very good pastures, which they find in plenty all around. Such sort of huts and cottages as these, in hot countries, Jerom seems to have respect unto, when, speaking of Tekoa, he says^{f62}, there is not beyond it any little village, nor indeed any field cottages like to ovens (subterraneous ones, Calmet^{f63} calls them), which the Africans call “mapalia”: these Sallust^{f64} describes as of an oblong figure, covered with tiles, and like the keels of ships, or ships

turned bottom upwards; and, according to Pliny^{f65}, they were movable, and carried from place to place in carts and waggons; and therefore cannot be such as before described; and so Dr. Shaw^{f66} says, the Bedouin Arabs now, as their great ancestors the Arabians, live in tents called “hhymas”, from the shelter which they afford the inhabitants; and adds, they are the very same which the ancients call “mapalia”:

and folds for flocks; in which they put them to lie down in at evening. The phrases express the great desolation of the land; that towns should be depopulated, and the land lie untilled, and only be occupied by shepherds, and their flocks, who lead them from place to place, the most convenient for them.

Ver. 7. *And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah*, etc.] The same tract of land become so desolate through the Chaldeans, should in future time, when those that remained of the Jews were returned from their captivity in Babylon, be inhabited by them. This was fulfilled in the times of the Maccabees, when the cities of Palestine, being rebuilt, were subdued by the Jews, and fell into their hands; and it is plain that in the times of the apostles those places were inhabited by the Jews, as Gaza, Ashdod, and others, (^{<413>}Acts 8:26,40) and perhaps will, have a further accomplishment in the latter day, when they shall be converted and return to their own land:

they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; either the shepherds shall feed their flocks here, and cause them to lie down in the evening on the very spot of ground where the houses of Ashkelon stood. This place is very properly represented as on the sea coast; for so it was; Philo^{f67} says, who some time dwelt there, that it was a city of Syria by the sea: or rather the remnant of Israel shall feed and dwell here, and lie down in safety; and this was made good in a spiritual sense, when the apostles of Christ preached the Gospel in those parts, and were the instruments of converting many; and there they fed them with the word and ordinances, and caused them to lie down in green pastures, in great ease and security:

for the Lord their God shall visit them: in a way of grace and mercy, bringing them out of Babylon into their own land, and enlarging their borders there; and especially by raising up Christ, the horn of salvation, for them; and by sending his Gospel to them, and making it effectual to their conversion and salvation:

and turn away their captivity; in a literal sense from Babylon; and in a spiritual sense from sin, Satan, and the law; and may have a further respect to their present captivity in both senses.

Ver. 8. *I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon*, etc.] Two people that descended from Lot, through incest with his daughters; and are therefore mentioned together, as being of the same cast and complexion, and bitter enemies to the people of the Jews; whom they reproached and reviled, for the sake of their religion, because they adhered to the word and worship of God: this they did when the Jews were most firmly attached to the service of the true God; and the Lord heard it, and took notice of it; and put it down in the book of his remembrance, to punish them for it in due time; even he who hears, and sees, and knows all things:

whereby they have reproached my people; whom he had chosen, and avouched to be his people; and who were called by his name, and called on his name, and worshipped him, and professed to be his people, and to serve and obey him; and as such, and because they were the people of God, they were reproached by them; and hence it was so resented by the Lord; and there being such a near relation between God and them, he looked upon the reproaches of them as reproaches of himself:

and magnified [themselves] against their border; either they spoke reproachfully of the land of Israel, and the borders of it, and especially of the inhabitants of the land, and particularly those that bordered upon them; or they invaded the borders of their land, and endeavoured to add it to theirs; or as the Jews were carried captive by the Chaldeans, as they passed by the borders of Moab and Ammon, they insulted them, and jeered them, and expressed great pleasure and joy in seeing them in such circumstances; (see ^{אֲנִי}Ezekiel 25:3,8). Jarchi represents the case thus; when the children of Israel went into captivity to the land of the Chaldeans, as they passed by the way of Ammon and Moab, they wept, and sighed, and cried; and they distressed them, and said, what do you afflict yourselves for? why do ye weep? are not you going to the house of your father, beyond the river where your fathers dwelt of old? thus jeering them on account of Abraham's being of Ur of the Chaldees.

Ver. 9. *Therefore [as] I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] The Lord here swears by himself, by his life; partly to show how provoked he was at, and how grievously he resented, the injuries done to

his people; and partly to observe the certain fulfilment of what is after declared; and it might be depended upon it would surely be done, not only because of his word and oath, which are immutable; but because of his ability to do it, as “the Lord of hosts”, of armies above and below; and because of the covenant relation that subsisted between him and Israel, being their God; and therefore would avenge the insults and injuries done them:

surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah; that is, should be utterly destroyed, as these cities were; whose destruction is often made use of to express the utter ruin and destruction of any other people; otherwise it is not to be supposed that these countries were to be destroyed, or were destroyed, in like manner, by fire from heaven; the similitude lies in other things after expressed:

[even] the breeding of nettles; or “left to nettles”^{f68}; or rather to “thorns”, as the Targum: and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it “the dryness of thorns”, though to a very poor sense. In general the meaning of the phrase is, that those countries should be very barren and desolate, like such places as are overrun with nettles, thorns, briars, and brambles; and these so thick, that there is no passing through them without a man’s tearing his garments and his flesh: for Schultens^{f69}, from the use of the word^{f70} in the Arabic language, shows that the words are to be rendered a “thicket of thorns which tear”; and cut the feet of those that pass through them; and even their whole body, as well as their clothes; and, wherever these grow in such plenty, it is a plain sign of a barren land, as well as what follow:

and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation; signifying that the countries of Moab and Ammon should be waste, barren, and uncultivated, as the above places were, where nothing but nettles grew, as do in great abundance in desolate places; and where saltpits should be, or heaps of salt, as Kimchi interprets it; and wherever salt is found, as Pliny^{f71} says, it is a barren place, and produces nothing; though Herodotus^{f72} speaks of places where were hillocks of salt, and very fruitful; and where the people used salt in manuring and improving their ground; which must be accounted for by the difference of climate and soil: this passage is produced by Reland^{f73} to prove that the lake Asphaltites is not the place, as is commonly believed, where Sodom and Gomorrah stood; since those cities were not overflown, or immersed in and covered with water, but were destroyed by fire and brimstone, and so became desolate; and had no herbs and plants, but

nettles, and such like things; and such these countries of Moab and Ammon should be, and ever remain so, at least for a long time; and especially should be desolate and uninhabited by the former possessors of it; (see ^{f73}Deuteronomy 29:23) this was fulfilled about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar, as Josephus^{f74} relates, led his army into Coelesyria, and made war upon the Ammonites and Moabites, and subjected them to him, who were the inhabitant of it, as the same writer says^{f75}:

the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them; that is, the Jews, the remnant of them that returned from Babylon: now these, in the times of the Maccabees, and those that descended from them, seized on several places in these countries, and possessed them; for, after these countries had been subdued and made desolate by Nebuchadnezzar, they became considerable nations again. Josephus^{f76} says the Moabites in his time were a great nation; though in the third century, as Origen^{f77} relates, they went under the common name of Arabians; and, even long before the times of Josephus, they were called Arabian Moabites, as he himself observes; when he tells us that Alexander Jannaeus subdued them, and imposed a tribute on them; and who also gives us an account of the cities of the Moabites, which were taken and demolished by them, as Essebon, Medaba, Lemba, Oronas, Telithon, Zara, the valley of the Cilicians, and Pella; these he destroyed, because the inhabitants would not promise to conform to the rites and customs of the Jews^{f78}; though Josephus ben Gorion, who also makes mention of these cities as taken by the same prince, says^{f79} he did not demolish them, because they entered into a covenant and were circumcised; and he speaks of ten fortified cities of the king of Syria, added at the same time to the kingdom of Israel, not destroyed: likewise the children of Ammon, after their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, became a powerful people: we read of the country of the Ammonites in

“Then Jason, who had undermined his own brother, being undermined by another, was compelled to flee into the country of the Ammonites.” (2 Maccabees 4:26)

and, in the times of Judas Maccabeus, Timotheus, their general, got together a strong and numerous army, which being worsted by Judas, he took their city Jasoron, or Jaser,

“Afterward he passed over to the children of Ammon, where he found a mighty power, and much people, with Timotheus their captain.” (1 Maccabees 5:6)

carried their wives and children captive, and burnt their city^{f80}; and this people, as well as the Moabites in the third century, as before observed, were swallowed up under the general name of Arabians; and neither of them are any more; all which has fulfilled this prophecy, and those of Jeremiah and Amos concerning them: this, likewise, in a spiritual sense, might have a further accomplishment in the first times of the Gospel, when it was preached in these countries by the apostles, and churches were formed in them; and may be still further accomplished in the latter day, when those parts of the world shall be possessed by converted Jews and by Gentile Christians. Kimchi owns it may be interpreted as future, of what shall be in the times of the Messiah.

Ver. 10. *This shall they have for their pride*, etc.] This calamity shall come upon their land, the land of the Moabites and Ammonites, for their pride, which often goes before a fall; and has frequently been the cause of the ruin of kingdoms and states, and of particular persons; and indeed seems to have been the first sin of the apostate angels, and of fallen man. Of the pride of Moab (see ^{<2346>}Isaiah 16:6):

because they have reproached and magnified [themselves] against the people of the Lord of hosts; they looked with disdain upon them, as greatly below them; and spoke contemptibly of them, of their nation, and religion; and “made” themselves “great”, and set up themselves “above” them, opened their mouths wide, and gave their tongues great liberties in blaspheming and reviling them: what was done to them is taken by the Lord as done to himself; (see ^{<2480>}Jeremiah 48:42).

Ver. 11. *The Lord [will be] terrible unto them*, etc.] To the Moabites and Ammonites in the execution of his judgments upon them, and make their proud hearts tremble; for with him is terrible majesty; he is terrible to the kings of the earth, and cuts off the spirit of princes, (^{<1852>}Job 37:22) (^{<1962>}Psalms 76:12) or, as Kimchi observes, this may be understood of the people of God reproached by the Moabites and Ammonites, by whom the Lord is to be feared and revered with a godly and filial fear: so it may be rendered, “the Lord is to be feared by them”^{f81}; and to this inclines the Targum,

“the fear of the Lord is to redeem them;”

for he will famish all the gods of the earth; particularly of those countries mentioned in the context, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Ethiopians, and Assyrians; as Dagon, Chemosh, Molech, Bel, and others; called “gods of the earth”, in distinction from the God of heaven, to whom they are opposed; and because made of earthly matter, and worshipped by earthly and carnal men; these the Lord, who is above them, and can destroy them at pleasure, threatens to “famish”; or to bring “leanness”^{f82} upon them, as the word signifies; to bring them into a consumption, and cause them to pine away gradually, by little and little, till they are no more; and that by reducing the number of their worshippers, so that they shall not have the worship and honour paid them, nor the sacrifices offered to them, supposed by the heathens to be the food of their gods; and, this being the case, their priests would be starved and become lean, who used to be fat and plump. The Septuagint version renders it, “he will destroy all the gods of the nations of the earth”; which is approved of by Noldius, and preferred by him to other versions. This had its accomplishment in part, when these nations were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar; for idols were usually demolished when a kingdom was taken; and more fully when the Gospel was spread in the Gentile world by the apostles of Christ, and first ministers of the word; whereby the oracles of the heathens were struck dumb, and men were turned everywhere from the worship of idols; the idols themselves were destroyed, and their temples demolished, or converted to better uses; and will have a still greater accomplishment in the latter day, at the conversion of the Jews, and the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, when the worship of idols will cease everywhere. The Syriac version renders it, “all the kings of the earth”; very wrongly:

and [men] shall worship him, everyone from his place; or, “in his place”^{f83}; that is, every man shall worship the true God in the place where he is; he shall not go up to Jerusalem to worship, but in every place lift up holy bands to God, pray unto him, praise and serve him; the worship of God will be universal; he will be King over all the earth, and his name and service one, and shall not be limited and confined to any particular place, (^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11):

[even] all the isles of the heathen; or “Gentiles”; not only those places which are properly isles, as ours of Great Britain and Ireland; though there may be a particular respect had to such, and especially to ours, who have

been very early and long favoured with the Gospel, and yet will be; but all places beyond the seas, or which the Jews went to by sea, they called isles.

Ver. 12. *Ye Ethiopians also*, etc.] Or, “as for ye Ethiopians also”^{f84}; not the Ethiopians in Africa beyond Egypt, at a distance from the land of Israel, and the countries before mentioned; but the inhabitants of Arabia Chusea, or Ethiopia, which lay near to Moab and Ammon; these should not escape, but suffer with their neighbours, who sometimes distressed the people of the Jews, and made war with them, being nigh them; (see ⁴⁴⁹2 Chronicles 14:9 21:16):

ye [shall be] slain by my sword; or, “the slain of my sword are they”^{f85}; R. Japhet thinks here is a defect of the note of similitude “as”, which should be supplied thus, “ye” are, or shall be, “the slain of my sword”, as they; as the Moabites and Ammonites; that is, these Ethiopians should be slain as well as they by the sword of Nebuchadnezzar; which is called the sword of God, because he was an instrument in the hand of God for punishing the nations of the earth. This was fulfilled very probably when Egypt was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, with whom Ethiopia was confederate, as well as near unto it, (²⁴⁰Jeremiah 46:1,2). The destruction of these by the Assyrians is predicted, (²³⁰Isaiah 20:4).

Ver. 13. *And he will stretch out his hand against the north*, etc.] Either the Lord, or Nebuchadnezzar his sword; who, as he would subdue the nations that lay southward, he would lead his army northward against the land of Assyria, which lay to the north of Judea, as next explained:

and destroy Assyria; that famous monarchy, which had ruled over the kingdoms of the earth, now should come to an end, and be reduced to subjection to the king of Babylon:

and will make Nineveh a desolation; which was the capital city, the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy: Nahum prophesies at large of the destruction of this city:

[and] dry like a wilderness; which before was a very watery place, situated by rivers, particularly the river Tigris; so that it was formerly like a pool of water, (Na 2:6,8) but now should be dry like a heath or desert, Dr. Prideaux places the destruction of Nineveh in the twenty ninth year of Josiah’s reign; but Bishop Usher earlier, in the sixteenth year of his reign; and, if so, then Zephaniah, who here prophesies of it, must begin to prophesy in the former part of Josiah’s reign.

Ver. 14. *And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her*, etc.] In the midst of the city of Nineveh; in the streets of it, where houses stood, and people in great numbers walked; but now only should be seen the cottages of shepherds, and flocks of sheep feeding or lying down, as is before observed of the sea coast of the Philistines, (³³¹⁶Zephaniah 2:6):

all the beasts of the nations; that is, all sorts of beasts, especially wild beasts, in the several parts of the world, should come and dwell here; instead of kings and princes, nobles, merchants, and the great men thereof, who once here inhabited, now there should be beasts of prey, terrible to come nigh unto; for these are to be understood properly and literally, and not figuratively, of men, for their savageness and cruelty, comparable to beasts:

both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; of the doors of the houses in Nineveh: or, “on its pomegranates”^{f86}; the figures of these being often put on chapters, turrets, pinnacles, pillars, and posts in buildings, and over porches of doors; and on these those melancholy and doleful creatures here mentioned, which delight in solitary places, should take up their abode. The “cormorant” is the same with the “corvus aquaticus”, or “sea raven”, about the size of a goose; it builds not only among rocks, but often on trees: what is called the “shagge” is a species of it, or the lesser cormorant, a water fowl common on our northern coasts; is somewhat larger than a common duck, and builds on trees as the common cormorant^{f87}. Bochart^{f88} takes it to be the “pelican” which is here meant; and indeed, whatever bird it is, it seems to have its name from vomiting; and this is what naturalists^{f89} observe of the pelican, that it swallows down shell fish, which, being kept awhile in its stomach, are heated, and then it casts them up, which then open easily, and it picks out the flesh of them: and it seems to delight in desolate places, since it is called the pelican of the wilderness, (³⁴²⁶Psalm 102:6). Isidore says^{f90} it is an Egyptian bird, dwelling in the desert by the river Nile, from whence it has its name; for it is called “canopus Aegyptus”; and the Vulgate Latin version renders the word here “onocrotalus”, the same with the pelican; and Montanus translates it the “pelican”; and so do others. The “bittern” is a bird of the heron kind; it is much the size of a common heron; it is usually found in sedgy and reedy places near water, and sometimes in hedges; it makes a very remarkable noise, and, from the singularity of it, the common people imagine it sticks its beak in a reed or in the mud, in order to make it; hence it is sometimes called the “mire drum”^{f91}. It is said it will

sometimes make a noise like a bull, or the blowing of a horn, so as to be heard half a German mile, or one hour's journey; hence it is by some called "botaurus", as if "bootaurus", because it imitates the bellowing of a bull^{f92}. The Tigurine version renders it the "castor" or "beaver"^{f93}; but Bochart^{f94} takes it to be the "hedgehog"; and so the word is rendered in the Vulgate Latin, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, and by others: which is a solitary creature, and drives away all other animals from society with it by its prickles:

[their] voice shall sing in the windows: of desolate houses, the inhabitants being gone who used to be seen looking out of them; but now these creatures before named should dwell here, and utter their doleful sounds, who otherwise would not have come near them:

desolation [shall be] in the thresholds; there being none to go in and out over them. The Septuagint version, and which is followed by the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions, render it, "the ravens shall be in its gates": mistaking **bdh**, "desolation", for **br** [, "a raven":

for he shall uncover the cedar work; the enemy Nebuchadnezzar, or Nabopolassar, when he should take the city, would unroof the houses panelled with cedar, and expose all the fine cedar work within to the inclemencies of the air, which would soon come to ruin. All these expressions are designed to set forth the utter ruin and destruction of this vast and populous city; and which was so utterly destroyed, as Lucian says, that there is no trace of it to be found; and, according to modern travellers, there are only heaps of rubbish to be seen, which are conjectured to be the ruins of this city; (see Gill on "Na 1:8").

Ver. 15. *This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly,* etc.] Once exceeding populous, and the inhabitants full of mirth and gaiety, abounding with wealth and riches, and indulging themselves in all carnal delights and pleasures; and, being well fortified, thought themselves out of all danger, and were careless and unconcerned, not fearing any enemy that should attack them; imagining their city was impregnable and invincible: these are the words of the prophet, concluding his prophecy concerning the destruction of this city, and having, by a spirit of prophecy, a foresight of its ruin and desolation; or of passengers, and what they should say when they saw it lie in its ruins:

that said in her heart, I [am], and [there is] none besides me; or, “is there any besides me?”^{f95} there is none, no city in the world to be compared to it for the largeness of the place, the strength of its walls, the number of its inhabitants, its wealth and riches: at least so she thought within herself, and was elated with these things; and concluded it would never be otherwise with her; “I am”, and shall always continue so:

how is she become a desolation! what a desolate place is this! its walls broken down, its houses demolished, its wealth and riches plundered, its inhabitants destroyed; and now the hold and habitation of beasts of prey, and hateful birds:

a place for beasts to lie down in! and not for men to dwell in: this is said, either as wondering, or as rejoicing at it, as follows:

everyone that passeth by her; and sees her in this ruinous condition:

shall hiss, [and] wag his hand; in scorn and derision, as pleased with the sight, and having no pity and compassion for her, remembering her cruelty to and oppression of others, when in her prosperity; (see Na 3:19).