

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The difference between the preceding and the subsequent prophecies in point of composition is very remarkable; the last excelling much in majesty and elegance. This chapter (of which the first verse forms a general title to this and the five chapters following) contains two distinct prophecies relating to Egypt. The first was delivered previous to an engagement between Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; in which the Egyptians were routed in Carchemish with great slaughter, as here predicted. The prophet sees the mighty preparations; but they are all declared to be of no avail, as God had decreed their fall, Jeremiah 46:1-6. The King of Egypt, however, is represented as marching with all the confidence of victory, like a river overflowing its banks, and threatening all around with its inundation, Jeremiah 46:7, Jeremiah 46:8. But this immense armament of Pharaoh-necho, consisting of various nations, shall, by a righteous judgment of God, receive such a signal overthrow near the river Euphrates, that the political consequence of Egypt shall be thereby irretrievably ruined, and its remaining power become contemptible in the sight of the nations, Jeremiah 46:9-12. The other prophecy, beginning at the thirteenth verse, relates to the memorable overthrow of the Egyptians by Nebuchadnezzar, subsequent to his siege of Tyre, in the sixteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah 46:13-26. The promise, in the conclusion of the chapter, of preservation to the Jews, (who have for many ages continued a distinct people, when the various nations of antiquity who oppressed them, or with whom they had any intercourse, have long ago ceased to have any separate and visible existence), has been most remarkably fulfilled; and is a very signal act of providence, and a pledge of the restoration of Israel to the Divine favor, when the time of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, Jeremiah 46:27, Jeremiah 46:28.

Verse 1

The word of the Lord - against the Gentiles - This is a general title to the following collection of prophecies, written concerning different nations, which had less or more connection with the Jews, either as enemies, neighbors, or allies.

They were not written at the same time; and though some of them bear dates, yet it would be difficult to give them any chronological arrangement. Dahler's mode of ascertaining the times of their delivery may be seen in the table in the introduction.

Verse 2

Pharaoh-necho - This was the person who defeated the army of Josiah, in which engagement Josiah received a mortal wound, of which he died, greatly regretted, soon after at Megiddo. After this victory, he defeated the Babylonians, and took Carchemish; and, having fortified it, returned to his own country. Nabopolassar sent his son Nebuchadnezzar with an army against him, defeated him with immense slaughter near the river Euphrates, retook Carchemish, and subdued all the revolted provinces, according to the following prophecies.

Verse 3

Order ye the buckler - This is the call to the general armament of the people against the Chaldeans.

Verse 4

Furbish the spears - Cleanse, brighten, and sharpen them; from the Franco-Gallic fourbir, to polish, brighten.

Brigandines - A coat of mail, especially that which was made scale fashion; one plate overlapping the other, like the scales of fish.

Verse 5

Wherefore have I seen them dismayed - What! such a numerous, formidable, and well-appointed army panic-struck? So that they have turned back - fled apace, and looked not round; while their mighty ones - their generals and commanders, striving to rally them, are beaten down.

Verse 6

Let not the swift flee away - Even the swiftest shall not be able to escape.

They shall - fall toward the north - By the Euphrates, which was northward of Judea. Here the Egyptian army was routed with great slaughter.

Verse 7

Who is this that cometh up as a flood - The vast concourse of people is here represented as a river: for

instance, the Jordan, suddenly swollen with the rains in harvest, rolling its waters along, and overflowing the whole country. A fine image to represent the incursions of vast armies carrying all before them. Such was the army of Pharaoh-necho in its march to Carchemish.

Verse 9

The Ethiopians - Hebrews Cush, Phut, and the Ludim. This army was composed of many nations. Cush. which we translate Ethiopians, almost invariably means the Arabians; and here, those Arabs that bordered on Egypt near the Red Sea. Phut probably means the Libyans; for Phut settled in Libya, according to Josephus. Phut and Cush were two of the sons of Ham, and brothers to Mitsraim, the father of the Egyptians, Genesis 10:6; and the Ludim were descended from Mitsraim; see Genesis 10:13. Bochart contends that the Ludim were Ethiopians, and that they were famous for the use of the bow. Phaleg, lib. 4:26.

Verse 10

For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts - The prophet represents this as a mighty sacrifice, where innumerable victims were slain.

Verse 11

Go up into Gilead, and take balm - An irony. Egypt is so completely enfeebled by this overthrow, that her political wound is utterly incurable. This figure is used with the more propriety here, as the Egyptians have been celebrated from the remotest antiquity for their knowledge of medicine.

Verse 12

The nations have heard of thy shame - Of thy disgrace, by this prodigious slaughter of thy troops.

Verse 13

How Nebuchadrezzar - should come and smite the land of Egypt - See on Jeremiah 44 (note). This was after Amasis had driven Pharaoh-necho into Upper Egypt. See Jeremiah 44:30.

Verse 14

Migdol - Magdolum, a city of Lower Egypt. Noph, Memphis. Tahpanhes, Daphne. See before, Jeremiah 44:1 (note).

Round about thee - The Phoenicians, Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, all prostrated by the arms of the Chaldeans.

Verse 15

They stood not, because the Lord did drive them - The Lord panic-struck them, and drove them back.

Verse 16

One fell upon another - In their terror and confusion ranks fell on ranks, and overturned each other.

Let us go again to our own people - Let us flee to our own country with all possible speed. These were the auxiliaries.

Verse 17

They did cry there - Dr. Blayney translates this cry thus: -

- "O Pharaoh, king of Egypt, A tumult hath frustrated the appointed meeting."

These allies sent their excuse to Pharaoh, that the disasters they had met with had prevented them from joining him as they had intended.

Verse 18

As Tabor is among the mountains - This mountain is situated in the plain of Esdraelon in Galilee, on the confines of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, Joshua 19:22. It stood by itself, separated from all the other mountains by deep valleys, and is the highest of the whole.

And as Carmel by the sea - Carmel is a mountain on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, on the southern frontier of the tribe of Asher. Were the Egyptians as distinguished for valor and strength as the mountains Tabor and Carmel are for height among the other mountains in their vicinity, they should not be able to stand the shock of the Chaldean army.

Verse 19

Furnish thyself to go into captivity - The thing is unavoidable; prepare for this calamity.

Verse 20

Egypt is like a very fair heifer - Fruitful and useful; but destruction cometh out of the north, from Chaldea. It may be that there is an allusion here to Isis, worshipped in Egypt under the form of a beautiful cow.

Verse 21

Are fled away together - Perhaps there is a reference here to the case of a cow stung with gnats. She runs hither and thither not knowing where to go; so shall it be with this scattered people.

Verse 22

The voice - shall go like a serpent - See Isaiah 29:4 (note), and the note there.

Verse 23

They shall cut down her forest - Supposed to mean her cities, of which Egypt had no fewer than one thousand and twenty.

Verse 24

The hand or the people of the north - The Chaldeans.

Verse 25

The multitude of No - חֲזָקֹתֶיךָ (Amon minno), the Amon of No, called by the Greeks Ἰϋπὴρ Ἰϋπὴρ, or Jupiter's city. It was the famous Thebes, celebrated anciently for its hundred gates. Amon was the name by which the Egyptians called Jupiter, who had a famous temple at Thebes.

The word Pharaoh is twice repeated here; and Dr. Dahler thinks that one may design Pharaoh Hophrah, and the other Amasis, the new king.

Verse 26

Afterward it shall be inhabited - That is, within forty years, as Ezekiel had predicted, Ezekiel 29:13.

Verse 27

Fear not - my servant Jacob - In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. Though Judah shall be destroyed, Jerusalem taken, the temple burnt to the ground, and the people carried into captivity, yet the nation shall not be destroyed. A seed shall be preserved, out of which the nation shall revive.

Verse 28

I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee - The Jews still remain as a distinct people, while the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, etc., are no more!

On this subject, I cannot withhold from my readers the following very judicious remarks of Bp. Newton, in his Dissertations on the Prophecies.

“The preservation of the Jews through so many ages, and the total destruction of their enemies, are wonderful events; and are made still more wonderful by being signified beforehand by the spirit of prophecy, as particularly in the passage before us. Their preservation is really one of the most illustrious acts of Divine Providence. They are dispersed among all nations, yet not confounded with any. The drops of rain which fall, nay the great rivers which flow into the ocean, are soon mingled with and lost in that immense body of waters. And the same, in all human probability, would have been the fate of the Jews; they would have been mingled and lost in the common mass of mankind: but, on the contrary, they flow into all parts of the world, mix with all nations, and yet keep separate from all. They still live as a distinct people; and yet they nowhere live according to their own laws, nowhere elect their own magistrates, nowhere enjoy the full exercise of their religion. Their solemn feasts and sacrifices are limited to one certain place; and that hath been now for many ages in the hands of strangers and aliens, who will not suffer them to come thither. No people have continued unmixed so long as they have done; not only of those who have sent colonies into foreign countries, but even of those who have remained in their own country. The northern nations have come in swarms into the more southern parts of Europe: but where are they now to be discerned and distinguished? The Gauls went forth in great bodies to seek their fortune in foreign parts; but what traces or footsteps of them are now remaining any where? In France, who can separate the race of the ancient Gauls from the various other people who from time to time have settled there? In Spain, who can distinguish between the first possessors, the Spaniards, and the Goths and Moors, who conquered and kept possession of the country for some ages? In England, who can pretend to say certainly which families are derived from the ancient Britons, and which from the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans? The most ancient and honorable pedigrees can be traced up only to a certain period; and

beyond that there is nothing but conjecture and uncertainty, obscurity and ignorance. But the Jews can go up higher than any nation; they can even deduce their pedigree from the beginning of the world. They may not know from what particular tribe or family they are descended; but they know certainly that they all sprang from the stock of Abraham. And yet the contempt with which they have been treated, and the hardships they have undergone in almost all countries, should, one would think, have made them desirous to forget or renounce their original: but they profess it; they glory in it; and after so many wars, massacres, and persecutions, they still subsist; they are still very numerous. And what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as no other nation upon earth has been preserved? Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their own preservation. For, from the beginning, who have been the great enemies and oppressors of the Jewish nation, removed them from their own land, and compelled them into captivity and slavery? The Egyptians afflicted them much, and detained them in bondage several years. The Assyrians carried away captive the ten tribes of Israel; and the Babylonians, afterwards, the two remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Syro-Macedonians, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, cruelly persecuted them; and the Romans utterly dissolved the Jewish state, and dispersed the people so as that they have never been able to recover their city and country again. And where are now those great and famous monarchies, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God? Are they not vanished as a dream; and not only their power, but their very names, lost in the earth? The Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians were overthrown and entirely subjugated by the Persians; and the Persians, it is remarkable, were the restorers of the Jews as well as the destroyers of their enemies. The Syro-Macedonians were swallowed up by the Romans; and the Roman empire, great and powerful as it was, was broken into pieces by the incursions of the northern nations; while the Jews are subsisting as a distinct people at this day. And what a wonder of providence is it, that the vanquished should so many ages survive the victors; and the former be spread all over the world, while the latter are no more! Nay, not only nations have been punished for their cruelties to the Jews, but Divine vengeance has pursued even single persons who have been their persecutors and oppressors. The first-born of Pharaoh was destroyed; and he himself with his host, drowned in the sea. Nebuchadnezzar was stricken with madness, and the crown was transferred from his family to strangers. Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod died in great agonies, with ulcers and vermin issuing from them. Flaccus, governor of Egypt, who barbarously plundered and oppressed the Jews of Alexandria, was afterwards banished and slain; and Caligula, who persecuted the Jews for refusing to do Divine honors to his statue, was murdered in the flower of his age, after a short and wicked reign. But where are now, - since they have absolutely rejected the Gospel. and been no longer the peculiar people of God, - where are now such visible manifestations of a Divine interposition in their favor? The Jews would do well to consider this point; for, rightly considered, it may be an effectual means of opening their eyes, and of turning them to Christ our Savior. See Bp. Newton on the prophecies, dissert. 8 sect. 2. And see the notes on Ezekiel, where the calamities of these miserable people are largely detailed.