

Queis ante ora patrum Trojae sub moenibus altis
Contigit oppetere.

Struck with unusual fright, the Trojan chief
With lifted hands and eyes invokes relief.
And thrice, and four times happy those, he cried,
That under Ilion's walls before their parents died.
Dryden.

On the words, O terque quaterque, Servius makes this remark, Hoc est saepias; finitus numerus pro infinito. O thrice and four times, that is, very often, a finite number for an infinite. Other poets use the same form of expression. So Seneca in Hippolyt., Acts 2:694.

O ter quaterque prospero fato dati,
Quos hausit, et peremit, et leto dedit
Odium dolusque!
O thrice and four times happy were the men
Whom hate devoured, and fraud, hard pressing on,
Gave as a prey to death.

And so the ancient oracle quoted by Pausanias Achaic., lib. vii., c. 6: ἰσχυροὶ, ἑξήκονταίημι, ἑξήκονταίημι ἑξήκονταίημι ἑξήκονταίημι ἑξήκονταίημι; Those men shall be thrice and four times happy.

These quotations are sufficient to show that this form of speech is neither unfrequent nor inelegant, being employed by the most correct writers of antiquity.

Damascus was the capital of Syria.

Verse 4

Ben-hadad - He was son and successor of Hazael. See the cruelties which they exercised upon the Israelites, 2 Kings 10:32; 2 Kings 13:7, etc., and see especially 2 Kings 8:12, where these cruelties are predicted. The fire threatened here is the war so successfully carried on against the Syrians by Jeroboam II., in which he took Damascus and Hamath, and reconquered all the ancient possessions of Israel. See 2 Kings 14:25, 2 Kings 14:26, 2 Kings 14:28.

Verse 5

The bar of Damascus - The gates, whose long traverse bars, running from wall to wall, were their strength. I will throw it open; and the gates were forced, and the city taken, as above.

The plain of Aven - the house of Eden - These are names, says Bochart, of the valley of Damascus. The plain of Aven, or Birkath-Aven, Calmet says, is a city of Syria, at present called Baal-Bek, and by the Greeks Heliopolis; and is situated at the end of that long valley which extends from south to north, between Libanus and Anti-Libanus.

The people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir - Kir is supposed to be the country of Cyrene in Albania, on the river Cyrus, which empties itself into the Caspian Sea. The fulfilment of this prophecy may be seen in 2 Kings 16:1-9.

Verse 6

They carried away captive - Gaza is well known to have been one of the five lordships of the Philistines; it lay on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, near to Egypt. Erkon, Ashdod, and Askelon, were other signories of the same people, which are here equally threatened with Gaza. The captivity mentioned here may refer to inroads and incursions made by the Philistines in times of peace. See 2 Chronicles 21:16. The margin reads, an entire captivity. They took all away; none of them afterwards returned.

Verse 9

Tyrus - See an ample description of this place, and of its desolation and final ruin, in the notes on Ezekiel 26-28 (note).

The brotherly covenant - This possibly refers to the very friendly league made between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, 1 Kings 5:12; but some contend that the brotherly covenant refers to the consanguinity between the Jews and Edomites. The Tyrians, in exercising cruelties upon these, did it, in effect, on the Jews, with whom they were connected by the most intimate ties of kindred; the two people having descended from the two brothers, Jacob and Esau. See Calmet.

Verse 10

I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus - The destructive fire or siege by Nebuchadnezzar, which lasted thirteen years, and ended in the destruction of this ancient city; see on Ezekiel 26:7-14 (note), as above. It was finally ruined by Alexander, and is now only a place for a few poor fishermen to spread their nets upon.

Verse 11

For three transgressions of Edom - That the Edomites (notwithstanding what Calmet observes above of the brotherly covenant) were always implacable enemies of the Jews, is well known; but most probably that which the prophet has in view was the part they took in distressing the Jews when Jerusalem was besieged, and finally taken, by the Chaldeans. See Obadiah 1:11-14; Ezekiel 25:12; Ezekiel 35:5; Psalm 137:7.

Verse 12

Temam - Bozrah - Principal cities of Idumea.

Verse 13

The children of Ammon - The country of the Ammonites lay to the east of Jordan, in the neighborhood of Gilead. Rabbah was its capital.

Because they have ripped up - This refers to some barbarous transaction well known in the time of this prophet, but of which we have no distinct mention in the sacred historians.

Verse 14

With shouting in the day of battle - They shall be totally subdued. This was done by Nebuchadnezzar. See Jeremiah 27:3, Jeremiah 27:6.

Verse 15

Their king shall go into captivity - Probably מלכאם (malcham) should be Milcom, who was a chief god of the Ammonites; and the following words, he and his princes, may refer to the body of his priesthood. See 1 Kings 11:33 (note). All these countries were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar.