

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The whole of this chapter, with the first verse of the next, is a prophecy of those calamities that should be occasioned by the Babylonish invasion and captivity. These calamities are represented as so great and so general, that even royal honors, in such a state, are so far from being desirable, that hardly any can be got to accept them, Isaiah 3:1-7. This visitation is declared to be the consequence of their profanity and guilt; for which the prophet farther reproveth and threatens them, Isaiah 3:8-15. Particular amplification of the distress of the delicate and luxurious daughters of Zion; whose deplorable situation is finely contrasted with their former prosperity and ease, Isaiah 3:16-26.

Verse 1

The stay and the staff – Every stay and support – Hebrew, – the support masculine, and the support feminine: – that is, every kind of support, whether great or small, strong or weak. – Al Kanitz, wal-kanitzah; the wild beasts, male and female. Proverbially applied both to fishing and hunting: i.e., I seized the prey, great or little, good or bad. From hence, as Schultens observes, is explained Isaiah 3:1, literally, the male and female stay: i.e., the strong and weak, the great and small. – Chappelow, note on Hariri, Assembly 1. Compare Ecclesiastes 2:8.

The Hebrew words מַשֵּׁן וּמַשְׁנָה (mashen umashenah) come from the same root שָׁן (shaan), to lean against, to incline, to support; and here, being masculine and feminine, they may signify all things necessary for the support both of man and woman. My old MS. understands the staff and stay as meaning particular persons, and translates the verse thus: - Lo forsoth, the Lordschip Lord of Hoostis schal don away fro Jerusalem and fro Juda the stalworth and the stronge.

The two following verses, Isaiah 3:2, Isaiah 3:3, are very clearly explained by the sacred historian's account of the event, the captivity of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: "And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths; none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land," 2 Kings 24:14. Which is supplied by our version.

Verse 4

I will give children to be their princes and will make boys their princes" - This also was fully accomplished in the succession of weak and wicked princes, from the death of Josiah to the destruction of the city and temple, and the taking of Zedekiah, the last of them, by Nebuchadnezzar.

Babes shall rule over them - Dymennysche men schul lordschopen to hem. - Old MS. Bible.

Verse 6

[illegible]

Saying - Before x©xžxœx” (simlah), garment, two MSS., one ancient, and the Babylonish Talmud have the word xœx•xžx” (lemor), saying; and so the Steptuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and Chaldee. I place it with Houbigant, after x©xžxœx” (simlah).

Thou hast clothing – Take by the garment – That is, shall entreat him in an humble and supplicating manner. – Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, Let us go with you; for we have heard that God is with you, – Zechariah 8:23. And so in Isaiah 4:1, the same gesture is used to express earnest and humble entreaty. The behavior of Saul towards Samuel was of the same kind, when he laid hold on the skirt of his raiment, 1 Samuel 15:27. The preceding and following verses show, that his whole deportment, in regard to the prophet, was full of submission and humility.

And let this ruin be under thy hand &œAnd let thy hand support&œ - Before x^ax—x^a xTMx“xš (tachath yadecha), a MS. adds x^ax“xTMx“ (tiyeh), &œlet it be;&œ another MS. adds in the same place, x^axšx—x“xTMx“xš (takach beyadecha), which latter seems to be a various reading of the two preceding words, making a very good sense:

Take into thy hand our ruinous state. Twenty-one MSS. of Kennicott's, thirteen of De Rossi's, one of my own, ancient, and three editions of the Babylonish Talmud have $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (yadeycha), plural $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (veyissa), adding the conjunction, which seems necessary in this place.

Verse 7

In that day shall he swear Then shall he openly declare - The Septuagint, Syriac, and Jerome, read $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (veyissa), adding the conjunction, which seems necessary in this place.

I will not be a healer - I am noy a leche. - Old MS. Bible. Leech was the ancient English word for a physician.

For in my house is neither bread nor clothing For in my house is neither bread nor raiment - It is customary through all the East, says Sir J. Chardin, to gather together an immense quantity of furniture and clothes; for their fashions never alter. Princes and great men are obliged to have a great stock of such things in readiness for presents upon all occasions. The kings of Persia, says the same author, have great wardrobes, where there are always many hundreds of habits ready, designed for presents, and sorted, Harmer, Observ., 2:11 and 88. A great quantity of provision for the table was equally necessary. The daily provision for Solomon's household, whose attendants were exceedingly numerous, was proportionately great, 1 Kings 4:22, 1 Kings 4:23. Even Nehemiah, in his strait circumstances, had a large supply daily for his table; at which he received a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came from among the neighboring heathen, Nehemiah 5:17, Nehemiah 5:18.

This explains the meaning of the excuse made by him that is desired to undertake the government. He alleges that he has not wherewithal to support the dignity of the station, by such acts of liberality and hospitality as the law of custom required of persons of superior rank. See Harmer's Observations, 1:340, 2:88.

Verse 8

The eyes The cloud - This word appears to be of very doubtful form, from the printed editions, the MSS., and the ancient versions. The first (yod) in $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (eyney), which is necessary according to the common interpretation, is in many of them omitted; the two last letters are upon a rasure in two MSS. I think it should be $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (anan), a cloud, as the Syriac reads; and the allusion is to the cloud in which the glory of the Lord appeared above the tabernacle; see Exodus 16:9, Exodus 16:10; Exodus 40:34-38; Numbers 16:41, Numbers 16:42.

Either of the readings gives a very good sense. The allusion may be to the cloud of the Divine presence in the wilderness: or the eyes of the Lord may be meant, as they are in every place beholding the evil and the good. And he cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence; therefore, the eyes of his glory might be well provoked by their crimes.

Verse 9

The show of their countenance - Bishop Lowth has it the steadfastness of their countenance - they appear to be bent on iniquity, their eyes tell the wickedness of their hearts. The eye is the index of the mind. Envy, hatred, malice, malevolence, concupiscence, and murder, when in the heart, look most intelligently out at the eye. They tell the innocent to be on their guard; and serve the same purpose as the sonorous rings in the tail of the rattlesnake - they announce the presence of the destroyer.

They declare their sin as Sodom - Impure propensities are particularly legible in the eyes: whoever has beheld the face of a debauchee or a prostitute knows this; of these it may be said, they wish to appear what they really are. They glory in their iniquity. This is the highest pitch of ungodliness.

They have rewarded evil unto themselves - Every man's sin is against his own soul. Evil awaiteth sinners - and he that offends his God injures himself.

Verse 10

Say ye to the righteous - $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (letsaddik), the x^{TM} (lamed) is added here by one MS. and the Chaldee. The righteous is the person,

1. Who fears God.

2. Departs from evil.

3. Walks according to the testimony of God.

4. And expects and prepares for a glorious immortality.

â€œPronounce ye.â€ - The reading of this verse is very dubious. The Septuagint for x*xz"x* (imru) read x*x|x"x* (neasor), or both, x*xz"x* x*x|x"x* (imru neasor), and x|xTM xœx* x~x*x' xœx*x* (ki lo tob lanu). Î'Î·îfî%¼Îµî½ Î·,Î¿î½ Î'Î·|±Î·Î¿î½, á½·,Î· Î'Î·...îfî|±î·îfî,Î¿î, á¼î¼Î·î½ Îµîfî,Î'. Perhaps, for x*xz"x* (imru), the true reading may be x*x©x"* (ashsheru), â€œbless you;â€ or x*xz"x* x*x©x"TM (imru ashrey), â€œsay ye, blessed is.â€ The Vulgate and an ancient MS. read in the singular number, xTMx*x|xœ (yochel), comedat, â€œhe shall eat.â€

It shall be well with him: $\hat{\alpha} \in \bullet - x \cdot x^{\text{TM}} \cdot x^{\sim} \bullet x^{\cdot}$ (ki tob), $\hat{\alpha} \in \bullet$ that good. $\hat{\alpha} \in \bullet$ Say nothing to such but good. He is a good man, he does nothing but good, and has a good God to deal with, from whom he expects nothing but goodness. It shall be well with such in all circumstances of life.

1. In prosperity.
2. In adversity.
3. In sickness.
4. In health.
5. In death.
6. In judgment. And,
7. Through eternity

In every case, occurrence, and circumstance, he shall eat the fruit of his doings - he shall derive benefit from being a righteous man, and walking in a righteous way.

Verse 11

Wo unto the wicked - xœx"x©xç (Ierasha), the man who is,

1. Evil in his heart.
2. Evil in his purposes.
3. Evil in his life.

As he is wicked, he does that which is wicked; and is influenced by the wicked one, of whom he is the servant and the son. It shall be ill with him, x'x¢ (ra); in a single word say to him - evil! Of him you can speak no good; and to him you can speak no good - all is evil, in him - before him - after him - round about him - above him - below him. Evil in time - evil through eternity!

The reward of his hands - What he has deserved he shall get. He shall be paid that for which he has labored, and his reward shall be in proportion to his work. O, what a lot is that of the wicked! Cursed in time, and accursed through eternity!

Verse 12

Err œPervertœ - x'xœxœxœ (billeu), œswallow.œ Among many unsatisfactory methods of accounting for the unusual meaning of this word in this place, I choose Jarchiœ's explication, as making the best sense. œRead x'xœxœxœ (billalu), œ'confound.œ Syriac.œ - Dr. Judd. œRead x'x'xœxœ (beholu), œ'disturb or trouble.œ - Secker. So Septuagint. This verse might be read, œThe collectors of grapes shall be their oppressors; and usurers ((noshim), instead of (nashim), women) shall rule over them.œ

Verse 13

The people "His people" - **xçxžx** (ammo), Septuagint.

Verse 14

The vineyard. • My vineyard • - x)x"xžx™ - •dr (carmi), Septuagint, Chaldee, Jerome.

Verse 15

And grind the faces - The expression and the image is strong, to denote grievous oppression but is exceeded by the prophet Micah, Micah 3:1-3: -

âœœHear, I pray you, ye chiefs of Jacob,

And ye princes of the house of Israel:

Is it not yours to know what is right?

Ye that hate good and love evil:

one might have reasonably expected. Clemens Alexandrinus, Paedag. lib. ii., c. 12, and Julius Pollux, lib. vii., c. 22, have each of them preserved from a comedy of Aristophanes, now lost, a similar catalogue of the several parts of the dress and ornaments of a Grecian lady; which, though much more capable of illustration from other writers, though of later date, and quoted and transmitted down to us by two different authors, yet seems to be much less intelligible, and considerably more corrupted, than this passage of Isaiah. Salmasius has endeavored, by comparing the two quotations, and by much critical conjecture and learned disquisition, to restore the true reading, and to explain the particulars; with what success, I leave to the determination of the learned reader, whose curiosity shall lead him to compare the passage of the comedian with this of the prophet, and to examine the critic's learned labors upon it. Exercit. Plinian, p. 1148; or see Clem. Ales. as cited above, edit. Potter, where the passage, as corrected by Salmasius, is given.

Nich. Guel. Schroederus, professor of oriental languages in the University of Marburg, has published a very learned and judicious treatise upon this passage of Isaiah. The title of it is, *Commentarius Philologico-Criticus de Vestitu Mulierum Hebraearum ad Isai 3 ver. 16-24*. Lugd. Bat. 1745. As I think no one has handled this subject with so much judgment and ability as this author, I have for the most part followed him, in giving the explanation of the several terms denoting the different parts of dress, of which this passage consists; signifying the reasons of my dissent, where he does not give me full satisfaction.

Bishop Lowth's translation of these verses is the following: -

18. In that day will the Lord take from them the ornaments,
Of the feet-rings, and the net-works, and the crescents;

19. The pendants, and the bracelets, and the veils;

20. The tires, and the fetters, and the zones, And the perfume-boxes, and the amulets;

21. The rings, and the jewels of the nostrils;

22. The embroidered robes, and the tunics, And the cloaks, and the little purses,

23. The transparent garments, and the fine linen vests, And the turbans, and the mantles.

24. And there shall be instead of perfume, a putrid ulcer;

And instead of well-girt raiment, rags;

And instead of high-dressed hair, baldness;

And instead of a zone, a girdle of sackcloth;

And sun-burnt skin, instead of beauty.

The daughters of Zion - walk - What is meant by these several kinds of action and articles of dress cannot be well conjectured. How our ancestors understood them will appear from the following, which is the translation of these verses in my old MS. Bible: -

16. The daughteris of Syon wenteh with strught out necks, and ib beckes (winking) of eegen, geeden and flappeden with hondis for joye, and geeden: and with there feet in curyous goying geeden; - 17. the Lord schall fully make ballid the top of the boughtris of Syon: and the Lord the her of hem schal naken. And for ournemente schal be schenschip.

18. In that day, the Lord schal don away the ournement of Schoon and hoosis: 19. and beegis, and brochis, and armeerclis, and mytris; 20. and coombis, and rybanys and reversis at the hemmys, and oynment boris and ereringis; 21. and ryngis and jemmys in the frount hongynge; 22. and chaunginge clothis, and litil pallis, and scheetis, and prynys; 23. and scheweris, and neche hercheuys, and flyetis, and roketis; 24. and ther schal be for swot smel, stynke, and for gyrdil, a litl coord; and for crisp her, ballidnesse; and for brest boond and heyr.

Some of these things are hard to be understood, though I think this version as good as that of the very learned bishop: but there is little doubt that articles of clothing and dress bore these names in the fourteenth century.

Verse 17

The Lord will smite *Will the Lord humble* - *יְהוָה יִפְּחֵם*, Septuagint; and so Syriac and Chaldee. For *שִׁפְּחָה* (sippach) they read *שָׁפַח* (shaphal). Instead of *יְהוָה* (Yehovah), many MSS. have *אֲדֹנָי* (Adonai).

Will discover their secret parts *Expose their nakedness* - It was the barbarous custom of the conquerors of those times to strip their captives naked, and to make them travel in that condition, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; and the worst of all, to the intolerable heat of the sun. But this to the women was the height of cruelty and indignity; and especially to such as those here described, who had indulged themselves in all manner of delicacies of living, and all the superfluities of ornamental dress; and even whose faces had hardly ever been exposed to the sight of man. This is always mentioned as the hardest part of the lot of captives. Nahum, Nahum 3:5, Nahum 3:6, denouncing the fate of Nineveh, paints it in very strong colors: -

Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah, God of hosts:

And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face;
And I will expose thy nakedness to the nations;
And to the kingdoms thy shame.
And I will throw ordures upon thee;
And I will make thee vile, and set thee as a gazing-stock.â€

Verse 18

Ornaments about their feet – The ornaments of the feet rings – The late learned Dr. Hunt, professor of Hebrew and Arabic in the University of Oxford, has very well explained the word *ḥḥḥ* both verb and noun, in his very ingenious Dissertation on Prov, Isaiah 7:22, Isaiah 7:23. The verb means to skip, to bound, to dance along, and the noun, those ornaments of the feet which the Eastern ladies wore; chains or rings, which made a tinkling sound as they moved nimbly in walking. Eugene Roger, Description de la Terre Sainte, 54:2 ch. 2, speaking of the Arabian women, of the first rank in Palestine, says, “Au lieu de brasselets elles ont de menottes d’argent, qu’elles portent aux poignets et aux pieds; ou sont attachez quantite de petits annelets d’argent, qui font un cliquetis comme d’une cymbale, lorsqu’elles cheminent ou se mouvent quelque peu.” See Dr. Hunt’s Dissertation; where he produces other testimonies to the same purpose from authors of travels. Hindoo women of ill fame wear loose ornaments one above another on their ankles, which at every motion make a tinkling noise. See Ward.

And their cauls "the net-works" - I am obliged to differ from the learned Schroederus almost at first setting out. He renders the word שֶׁבִּיסִים (shebisim) by soliculi, little ornaments, bullae, or studs, in shape representing the sun, and so answering to the following word שָׁהָרִים (saharonim), lunulae, crescents. He supposes the word to be the same with שְׁמִשִּׁים (shemishim), the יֻד (yod) in the second syllable making the word diminutive, and the letter מֶם (mem) being changed for בֶּת (beth), a letter of the same organ. How just and well founded his authorities for the transmutation of these letters in the Arabic language are, I cannot pretend to judge; but as I know of no such instance in Hebrew, it seems to me a very forced etymology. Being dissatisfied with this account of the matter, I applied to my good friend above mentioned, the late Dr. Hunt, who very kindly returned the following answer to my inquiries: -

I have consulted the Arabic Lexicons, as well MS. as printed, but cannot find שְׁבִיסִים (shebisim) in any of them, nor any thing belonging to it; so that no help is to be had from that language clearing up the meaning of this difficult word. But what the Arabic denies, the Syriac perhaps may afford; in which I find the verb שָׁבַס (shabas), to entangle or interweave, an etymology which is equally favorable to our marginal translation, net-works, with שָׂבַט (shabats), to make chequer work, or embroider, (the word by which Kimchi and others have explained שְׁבִיסִים (shabis)); and has moreover this advantage over it, that the letters ש (sin) and י (samech) are very frequently put for each other, but ת (tsaddi) and י (samech) scarcely ever. Aben Ezra joins שְׁבִיסִים (shebisim) and אַחַשִּׁים (achasim), which immediately precedes it, together; and says that שְׁבִיסִים (shabis) was the ornament of the leprosy, as אַחַשִּׁים (eches) was of the feet. His words are, שְׁבִיסִים וְאַחַשִּׁים - לְמַעַן

Verse 20

The tablets - The words x'xTM x"x xax© (bottey hannephesh), which we translate tablets, and Bishop Lowth, perfume boxes, literally signify houses of the soul; and may refer to strong scented bottles used for pleasure and against fainting; similar to bottles with otto of roses, worn by the ladies of the East to the present time.

Verse 21

Nose-jewels • The jewels of the nostril • - x x-xžx™ x”x•x£ (nizmey haaph). Schroederus explains this, as many others do, of jewels, or strings of pearl hanging from the forehead, and reaching to the upper part of the nose; than which nothing can be more ridiculous, as such are seldom seen on an Asiatic face. But it appears from many passages of Holy Scripture that the phrase is to be literally and properly understood of nose-jewels, rings set with jewels hanging from the nostrils, as ear-rings from the ears, by holes bored to receive them.

Ezekiel, enumerating the common ornaments of women of the first rank, has not omitted this particular, and is to be understood in the same manner. Ezekiel 16:11. Ezekiel 16:12. See also Genesis 24:47: -

And I decked thee with ornaments;
And I put bracelets upon thine hands,
And a chain on thy neck:
And I put a jewel on thy nose,
And ear-rings on thine ears,
And a splendid crown upon thine head.

And in an elegant proverb of Solomon, Proverbs 11:22, there is a manifest allusion to this kind of ornament, which shows it to have been used in his time: -

already spoken of the aptness of such a posture to represent an extreme affliction. I fancy the Romans might have an eye on the customs of the Jewish nation, as well as those of their country, in the several marks of sorrow they have set on this figure. The psalmist describes the Jews lamenting their captivity in the same pensive posture: “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion.” But what is more remarkable, we find Judea represented as a woman in sorrow sitting on the ground, in a passage of the prophet, that foretells the very captivity recorded on this medal. Mr. Addison, I presume, refers to this place of Isaiah; and therefore must have understood it as foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans: whereas it seems plainly to relate, in its first and more immediate view at least, to the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and the dissolution of the Jewish state under the captivity at Babylon. - L.

Several of the coins mentioned here by Mr. Addison are in my own collection: and to such I have already referred in this work. I shall describe one here. On the obverse a fine head of the emperor Vespasian with this legend, Imperator Julius Caesar Vespasianus Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Tribunitia Potestate Pater Patriae, Consul VIII.

On the reverse a tall palm tree, emblem of the land of Palestine, the emperor standing on the left, close to the tree, with a trophy behind him; on the right, Judea under the figure of a female captive sitting on the ground, with her head resting on her hand, the elbow on her knee, weeping. Around is this legend, Judea Capta. Senates Consulto. However this prediction may refer proximately to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, I am fully of opinion that it ultimately refers to the final ruin of the Jewish state by the Romans. And so it has been understood by the general run of the best and most learned interpreters and critics.