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Adam Clarke Commentary Isaiah 15

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Prediction of very heavy calamities about to fall upon the Moabites, Isaiah 15:1-9.

This and the following chapter, taken together, make one entire prophecy, very improperly divided into two parts. The time of its delivery, and consequently of its accomplishment, which was to be in three years from that time, is uncertain; the former not being marked in the prophecy itself, nor the latter recorded in history. But the most probable account is, that it was delivered soon after the foregoing, in the first year of Hezekiah; and that it was accomplished in his fourth year, when Shalmaneser invaded the kingdom of Israel. He might probably march through Moab; and to secure every thing behind him, possess himself of the whole country, by taking their principal strong places Ar and Kirhares. - L. The authorized Version which we have followed in the margin, places the prophecy in this chapter fourteen years earlier than that contained in the two preceding. Jeremiah has happily introduced much of this prophecy of Isaiah into his own larger prophecy against the same people in his forty-eighth chapter, denouncing Godâ€s judgment on Moab, subsequent to the calamity here foretold, and to be executed by Nebuchadnezzar; by which means several mistakes of transcribers in the present text of both prophets may be rectified.

Verse 1

Because in the night - x'xœxTMxœ (beleil). That both these cities should be taken in the night is a circumstance somewhat unusual; but not so material as to deserve to be so strongly insisted upon. Vitringa, by his remark on this word, shows that he was dissatisfied with it in its plain and obvious meaning, and is forced to have recourse to a very hard metaphorical interpretation of it. Noctu vel nocturno impetu; vel metaphorice, repente, subito, inexpectata destructione: placet posterius. Calmet conjectures, and I think it probable, that the true reading is x>xœxTMxœ (keleil), as the night. There are many mistakes in the Hebrew text arising from the very great similitude of the letters x' (beth), and x> (caph), which in many MSS., and some printed editions, are hardly distinguishable.

Admitting this reading, the translation will be, -"Because Ar is utterly destroyed, Moab is undone! Because Kir is utterly destroyed, Moab is undone!―

Verse 2

He is gone to Bajith, and to Dibon - $x\phi \times ce^{x}$ $x''x'^{TM}x^a$ (alah habbayith), should be rendered, he is gone to the House, i.e., to their chief temple, where they practiced idolatry. Dibon was the name of a tower where also was an idolatrous temple; thither they went to weep and pray before their idols, that they might interpose and save them from their calamities. So R. D. Kimchi. Me is gone to Bajith and to Dibon: but Bishop Lowth reads Beth Dibon; this is the name of one place; and the two words are to be joined together, without the x^{\bullet} (vau) intervening. So the Chaldee and Syriac. This reading is not supported by any MS. or Version: but some MSS., instead of $x\phi x''$ (ar), have $x\phi x^{TM}x''$ (ir), a city, others have $x\phi x'''$ (ad), unto, and some editions have $x\phi x'''$ (al), upon. But all these help little, though they show that the place puzzled both the scribes and the editors.

O†er the congenial dust enjoined to shear
The graceful curl, and drop the tender tear.―

Pope.

On every head. - For $x^{"}x^{\bullet}x^{@}x^{TM}x^{\bullet}$ (roshaiv), read $x^{"}x^{\bullet}x^{@}$ (rosh). So the parallel place, Jeremiah 48:37, and so three MSS., one ancient. An ancient MS. reads $x\phi x x^{\bullet}x^{@}x^{\bullet}x^{@}$ (al col rosh). Five read $x^{`}x^{\bullet}x^{@}x^{\bullet}x^{@}$ (bechol rosh), on every head, with the Septuagint and Arabic. And every head. The x^{\bullet} (vau), and, is found in thirty MSS., in three editions, and in the Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldee.

Cut off "Shorn― - The printed editions, as well as the MSS., are divided on the reading of this word. Some have x'x"x•x¢x" (geduah), shorn, others x'x"x¢x" (geruah), diminished. The similitude of the letters x" (daleth) and x" (resh) has likewise occasioned many mistakes. In the present case, the sense is pretty much the same

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with either reading. The text of Jeremiah 48:37 has the latter, diminished. The former reading is found in twelve of Dr. Zennicottâ€s MSS., forty of De Rossiâ€s, and two of my own. A great number of editions have the same reading.

Verse 3

With sackcloth - x©x§ (sak). The word is in the plural x©x§x™x• (sakkim), sacks, in one of De Rossiâ€~s MSS.

Verse 4

The armed soldiers "The very loins― - So the Septuagint, ἡ οÏfφÏ...Ï, , and the Syriac. They cry out violently, with their utmost force.

Verse 5

My heart shall cry out for Moab "The heart of Moab crieth within her― - For xœx'x™ (libbi), my heart, the Septuagint reads xœx'x• (libbo), his heart, or xœx' (leb); the Chaldee, xœx'x• (libbo). For x'x"x™x—x™x" (bericheyha), the Syriac reads x'x"x•x—x" (berocheh); and so likewise the Septuagint, rendering it l̂µl̂½ l̂±l̃...l″,á¿f, Edit. Vat: or l̂µl̂½ ᾑl̂±l̃...l″,á¿f, Edit. Alex. and MSS. I., D. II.

A heifer of three years old "A young heifer― - Hebrew, a heifer three years old, in full strength; as Horace uses equa trima, for a young mare just coming to her prime. Bochart observes, from Aristotle, Hist. Animal. lib. 4 that in this kind of animals alone the voice of the female is deeper than that of the male; therefore the lowing of the heifer, rather than of the bullock, is chosen by the prophet, as the more proper image to express the mourning of Moab. But I must add that the expression here is very short and obscure; and the opinions of interpreters are various in regard to the meaning. Compare Jeremiah 48:34.

Shall they go it up "They shall ascend― - For x™x¢xœx" (yaaleh), the Septuagint and a MS. read in the plural, x™x¢xœx• (yaalu). And from this passage the parallel place in Jeremiah 48:5 must be corrected; where, for x™x¢xœx" x'x∘x™ (yaaleh bechi), which gives no good sense, read x™x¢xœx" x'x• (yaaleh bo).

Verse 7

"Shall perish― - x•x'x"x• (abadu) or x•x'x"x" (abadeh). This word seems to have been lost out of the text: it is supplied by the parallel place, Jeremiah 48:36. The Syriac expresses it by x¢x'x" (aber), praeteriit, "he hath passed;― and the Chaldee by x™x²x'x−x−x•xŸ (yithbazezun), diripientur.

To the brook of the willows "To the valley of willows― - That is, to Babylon. Hieron. and Jarchi in loc., both referring to Psalm 137:2. So likewise Prideaux, Le Clerc, etc.

Verse 9

The waters of Dimon - Some have Dibon, others have Ribon and Rimon. St. Jerome observes that the same town was called both Dibon and Dimon. The reading is therefore indifferent.

Upon him that escapeth of Moab, etc. "Upon the escaped of Moab, and Ariel, and the remnant of Admah― The Septuagint for x¢x"x™x" (aryeh), read x•x"x™x•xœ (ariel). Ar Moab was called also Ariel or Areopolis, Hieron. and Theodoret. See Cellarius. They make x•x"xžx" (Admah), also a proper name. Michaelis thinks that the Moabites might be called the remnant of Admah, as sprung from Lot and his daughters, escaped from the destruction of that and the other cities; or, metaphorically, as the Jews are called princes of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah, Isaiah 1:10. Bibliotheque Orient. Part v., p. 195. The reading of this verse is very doubtful; and the sense, in every way in which it can be read, very obscure. - L. Calmet thinks there may be a reference to 1 Chronicles 11:22, where it is said, "Benaiah slew two lion-like men of Moab,― or the two Ariels of Moab, and would therefore translate, "I will bring down the remnant of Moab like Ariel, (which Benaiah smote), and them that are escaped like Adamah.― They shall be exterminated, as were the inhabitants of those two cities. Ariel was a double city - the river Arnon dividing it in two. This is the two Ariels of Moab - not two lion-like men, much less two lions. See Calmet on this place.