

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The prophet earnestly exhorts all nations to attend to the communication which he has received from Jehovah, as the matter is of the highest importance, and of universal concern, Isaiah 34:1. The wrath of God is denounced against all the nations that had provoked to anger the Defender of the cause of Zion, Isaiah 34:2, Isaiah 34:3. Great crowd of images, by which the final overthrow and utter extermination of every thing that opposes the spread of true religion in the earth are forcibly and majestically set forth; images so very bold and expressive as to render it impossible, without doing great violence to symbolical language, to restrain their import to the calamities which befell the Edomites in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, or in that of any other potentate, or even to the calamities which the enemies of the Church have yet suffered since the delivery of the prophecy. Edom must therefore be a type of Antichrist, the last grand adversary of the people of God; and consequently this most awful prophecy, in its ultimate signification, remains to be accomplished, Isaiah 34:4-15. The Churches of God, at the period of the consummation, commanded to consult the book of Jehovah, and note the exact fulfillment of these terrible predictions in their minutest details. Not one jot or little relative even to the circumstances shadowed forth by the impure animals shall be found to fail; for what the mouth of the Lord has declared necessary to satisfy the Divine justice, his Spirit will accomplish, Isaiah 34:16, Isaiah 34:17.

This and the following chapter make one distinct prophecy; an entire, regular, and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts: the first containing a denunciation of Divine vengeance against the enemies of the people or Church of God; the second describing the flourishing state of the Church of God consequent upon the execution of those judgments. The event foretold is represented as of the highest importance, and of universal concern: All nations are called upon to attend to the declaration of it; and the wrath of God is denounced against all the nations, that is, all those that had provoked to anger the Defender of the cause of Zion. Among those, Edom is particularly specified. The principal provocation of Edom was their insulting the Jews in their distress, and joining against them with their enemies, the Chaldeans; see Amos 1:11; Ezekiel 25:12; Ezekiel 35:15; Psalm 137:7. Accordingly the Edomites were, together with the rest of the neighboring nations, ravaged and laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar; see Jeremiah 25:15-26; Malachi 1:3, Malachi 1:4, and see Marsham, Can. Chron. Saec. xviii., who calls this the age of the destruction of cities. The general devastation spread through all these countries by Nebuchadnezzar may be the event which the prophet has primarily in view in the thirty-fourth chapter: but this event, as far as we have any account of it in history, seems by no means to come up to the terms of the prophecy, or to justify so highly wrought and terrible a description; and it is not easy to discover what connection the extremely flourishing state of the Church or people of God, described in the next chapter, could have with those events, and how the former could be the consequence of the latter, as it is there represented to be. By a figure, very common in the prophetic writings, any city or people, remarkably distinguished as enemies of the people and kingdom of God, is put for those enemies in general. This seems here to be the case with Edom and Botsra. It seems, therefore, reasonable to suppose, with many learned expositors, that this prophecy has a farther view to events still future; to some great revolutions to be effected in later times, antecedent to that more perfect state of the kingdom of God upon earth, and serving to introduce it, which the Holy Scriptures warrant us to expect.

That the thirty-fifth chapter has a view beyond any thing that could be the immediate consequence of those events, is plain from every part, especially from the middle of it, Isaiah 35:5, Isaiah 35:6; where the miraculous works wrought by our blessed Savior are so clearly specified, that we cannot avoid making the application: and our Savior himself has moreover plainly referred to this very passage, as speaking of him and his works, Matthew 11:4, Matthew 11:5. He bids the disciples of John to go and report to their master the things which they heard and saw; that the blind received their sight, the lame walked, and the deaf heard; and leaves it to him to draw the conclusion in answer to his inquiry, whether he who performed the very works which the prophets foretold should be performed by the Messiah, was not indeed the Messiah himself. And where are these works so distinctly marked by any of the prophets as in this place? and how could they be marked more distinctly? To these the strictly literal interpretation of the prophet's words directs us. According to the allegorical interpretation they may have a farther view: this part of the prophecy may run parallel with the former and relate to the future advent of Christ; to the conversion of the Jews, and their restitution to their land; to the extension and purification of the Christian faith; events predicted in the Holy Scriptures as preparatory to it. Kimchi says, "This chapter points out the future destruction of Rome, which is here called Bosra; for Bosra was a great city of the Edomites. Now the major part of the Romans are Edomites, who profess the law of Jesus. The Emperor Caesar (qy. Constantine) was an Edomite, and so were all the emperors after him. The destruction of the Turkish empire is also comprehended in this prophecy." - L. As to the last, I say, Amen!

Verse 1

Hearken "Attend unto me" - A MS. adds in this line the word "ali", unto me, after "xœxžx™xœ"

(leummim); which seems to be genuine.

#### Verse 4

And all the host of heaven See note on Isaiah 24:21, and De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum, Prael. ix.

#### Verse 5

For my sword shall be bathed in heaven - For my sword is made bare in the heavens - There seems to be some impropriety in this, according to the present reading: My sword is made drunken, or is bathed in the heavens; which forestalls, and expresses not in its proper place, what belongs to the next verse: for the sword of Jehovah was not to be bathed or glutted with blood in the heavens, but in Botsra and the land of Edom. In the heavens it was only prepared for slaughter. To remedy this, Archbishop Secker proposes to read, for x'x©xžx™x• (bashshamayim), x'x"xžx• (bedamim); referring to Jeremiah 46:10. But even this is premature, and not in its proper place. The Chaldee, for x'x•xªx" (rivvethah), has xªxªx'xœx™ (tithgalli), shall be revealed or disclosed: perhaps he read xªx"x•x" (teraeh) or x x"x•xªx" (nirathah). Whatever reading, different I presume from the present, he might find in his copy, I follow the sense which he has given of it.

#### Verse 6

The Lord hath a sacrifice - For Jehovah celebrateth a sacrifice - Ezekiel, Ezekiel 39:16, Ezekiel 39:17, has manifestly imitated this place of Isaiah. He hath set forth the great leaders and princes of the adverse powers under the same emblems of goats, bulls, rams, fatlings, etc., and has added to the boldness of the imagery, by introducing God as summoning all the fowls of the air, and all the beasts of the field, and bidding them to the feast which he has prepared for them by the slaughter of the enemies of his people: -

And thou, son of man,  
Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,  
Say to the bird of every wing,  
And to every beast of the field:  
Assemble yourselves, and come;  
Gather together from every side,  
To the sacrifice which I make for you,  
A great slaughter on the mountains of Israel.  
And ye shall eat flesh and drink blood:  
The flesh of the mighty shall ye eat,  
And the blood of the lofty of the earth shall ye drink;  
Of rams, of lambs, and of goats,  
Of bullocks, all of them the fat ones of Bashan;  
And ye shall eat fat, till ye are cloyed,  
And drink blood, till ye are drunken;  
Of my slaughter, which I have slain for you.

The sublime author of the Revelation 19:17, Revelation 19:18, has taken this image from Ezekiel, rather than from Isaiah.

#### Verse 7

The unicorns shall come down - x"x•xžx™x• (reemim), translated wild goats by Bishop Lowth. The x"x•x• (reem) Bochart thinks to be a species of wild goat in the deserts of Arabia. It seems generally to mean the rhinoceros.

With blood - With their blood - xžx"xžx• (middamam); so two ancient MSS. of Kennicott's the Syriac, and Chaldee.

#### Verse 8

The year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion - The year of recompense to the defender of the cause of Zion - As from x"x•xŸ (dun), x"x™xŸ (din), a judge; so from x"x•x' (rub), x"x™x' (rib), an advocate, or defender; Judici Sionis: Syriac.

#### Verse 11

The cormorant - xšx•xª (kaath), the pelican, from the root xšx™x• (ki), to vomit, because it is said she swallows shell-fish, and when the heat of her stomach has killed the fish, she vomits the shells, takes out the dead fish, and eats them.

The bittern - xšxªx" (kippod), the hedge-hog, or porcupine.

The owl - x™x x©x•£ (yanshoph), the bittern, from x x©x£ (nashaph), to blow, because of the blowing noise it makes, almost like the lowing of an ox. My old MS. Bible renders the words thus: - The foule in face like an asse, and the yrchoun, and the snyte (snipe.)

The line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness – The plummet of emptiness over her scorched plains – The word x—x<sup>TM</sup>x” (choreyha), joined to the 12th verse, embarrasses it, and makes it inexplicable. At least I do not know that any one has yet made out the construction, or given any tolerable explication of it. I join it to the 11th verse, and supply a letter or two, which seem to have been lost. Fifteen MSS. five ancient, and two editions, read x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x” (choreyha); the first printed edition of 1486, I think nearer to the truth, x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x” (chor choreyha). I read x<sup>x</sup>x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x” (becharereyha), or x<sup>x</sup>xœ x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x” (al chorereyha); see Jeremiah 17:6. A MS. has x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x” (chodiah), and the Syriac reads x—x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>” (chaduah), gaudium, joining it to the two preceding words; which he likewise reads differently, but without improving the sense. However, his authority is clear for dividing the verses as they are here divided. I read x©x<sup>x</sup> (shem), as a noun. They shall boast. x<sup>TM</sup>x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>x<sup>x</sup>” (vikreu); see Proverbs 20:6.

### Verse 13

And thorns shall come up in her palaces - x•xϕxœx• x'x•x'xžx x•x<sup>a</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x" (vealu bearmenotheyha); so read all the ancient versions.

**A court for owls - x™x x" (yaanah), the ostrich, from x x x" (anah), to cry, because of the noise it makes. They roar, says Dr. Shaw, sometimes like a lion - sometimes like a bull. I have often heard them groan as if in the utmost distress.**

### Verse 14

The weld beasts of the desert - x|x<sup>TM</sup>x<sup>TM</sup>x• (tsiyim), the mountain cats. - Bochart.

**Wild beasts of the island - x•x™x™x• (aiyim), the jackals.**

**The satyr - x©x©x™x" (seir), the hairy one, probably the he-goat.**

The screech owl -  $\text{xœx}^{\text{TM}}\text{xœx}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{a}}$  (lilith), the night-bird, the night-raven, nyctycorax, from  $\text{xœx}^{\text{TM}}\text{xœ}$  (layil), or  $\text{xœx}^{\text{TM}}\text{xœx}^{\text{TM}}$  (lailah), the night.

### Verse 15

The great owl - ⲭⲟⲩⲁⲛⲓⲥⲱⲧⲉ (kippoz), the ⲙⲁⲣⲏⲗⲓⲃⲓⲡⲓⲥⲱⲧⲉ, ⲙⲁⲣⲏⲗⲓⲃⲓⲡⲓⲥⲱⲧⲉ, or darter, a serpent so called because of its suddenly leaping up or darting on its prey. Probably the mongoose or ichneumon may be intended.

The vultures - x“x™x•x<sup>a</sup> (daiyoth), the black vultures. My old MS. Bible renders these names curiously: And ageyn cumen schul devylis: the beste, party of an asse, and party of a mam: and the wodwose, the tother schal crien to the tother. There schal byn lamyas, that is, thrisses, or a beste, havynge the body liic a woman, and hors feet. Ther hadde dichis, the yrchoun, and nurshide out littil chittis. There ben gadred kiitis, the top to the top. What language!

Every one with her mate - A MS. adds x•xœ (el) after x•x©x” (ishshah), which seems necessary to the construction; and so the Syriac and Vulgate. Another MS. adds in the same place x•xª (eth), which is equivalent.

### Verse 16

My mouth **âœœ**For the mouth of Jehovah**âœœ** - For **x"x"x** (hu), five MSS., (three ancient), read **x<sup>TM</sup>x"x"x**" (Jehovah), and another is so corrected; so likewise the Septuagint. Two editions have **xix"x** (tsivam); and so the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic, with the edition of 1486, and a MS. has **xšx'ix** (kebatsam), with the masculine pronoun instead of the feminine: and so in the next verses it is **xœx"x** (lahem), instead of **xœx"xÿ** (lahen), in fourteen MSS., six of them ancient. - L. To see the importance of these various readings, the Hebrew Bible must be consulted.