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Introduction

The Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, invade Judah, 2 Chronicles 20:1, 2 Chronicles 20:2. Jehoshaphat proclaims a fast, and gathers the people together to seek the Lord, 2 Chronicles 20:3, 2 Chronicles 20:4. His prayer to God, 2 Chronicles 20:5-12. Great and small, male and female, seek the Lord, 2 Chronicles 20:13. Jahaziel predicts the downfall of their enemies, 2 Chronicles 20:14-17. The king, the Levites, and the people take courage; praise and magnify God; and go forth to meet their enemies, 2 Chronicles 20:18-21. The enemies are confounded, and destroy each other, 2 Chronicles 20:22-24. The men of Judah take the spoil, praise the Lord, and return with joy to Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 20:25-28. The fear of the Lord falls upon all their enemies round about; and the land has rest, 2 Chronicles 20:29, 2 Chronicles 20:30. Transactions and character of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:31-34. He joins with Ahaziah, king of Israel, in building a fleet of ships to go to Tarshish, but they are wrecked at Ezion-geber, 2 Chronicles 20:35-37.

Verse 1

Children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites - Here there must be a mistake; surely the Ammonites are the same as the children of Ammon. Our translators have falsified the text by inserting the words "other beside," which have nothing properly to represent them in the Hebrew. Literally translated, the words are: "And it happened after this, the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them of the Ammonites: and thus the Vulgate. The Syriac, which the Arabic follows, has felt the difficulty, and translated, Came together with warlike men to fight, etc. The Septuagint have given it another turn: Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ἰμμὴν καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ Αἰθίοπος, And with them people of the Minaïtes; which were a people of Arabia Felix near the Red Sea. The Targum has "x*xç*xžx"x*xÿ xžxÿ x*x"xžx*x™ (Ve) -(immehon min Edomaey), "And with them some of the Edomites." This is very likely to be the true reading, as we find from 2 Chronicles 20:10, 2 Chronicles 20:22, 2 Chronicles 20:23, that they procured men from Mount Seir; and these were the Idumeans or Edomites. We should, in my opinion, read the text thus: The children of Moab, and the children of common, and with them some of the Edomites.

Verse 2

On this side Syria - Instead of "xžx"x"x" (mearam), from Syria, I would read with one of Kennicott's MSS. (89) "xžx"x"x" (meedom), from Edom, which alteration brings it to truth and does not require the change of half a letter, as it consists in the almost imperceptible difference between "x" (resh) and "x" (daleth). We do not read of any Syrians in this invasion, but we know there were Edomites, or inhabitants of Mount Seir.

Hazon-tamar - "In the wood of palm trees, that is, in Engedi." - Targum. This is the meaning of the word, and it is probable that they lay hid here.

Verse 3

Jehoshaphat feared - He found that he could not possibly stand against such a numerous army, and therefore could not expect to be delivered except by the strong arm of God. To get this assistance, it was necessary to seek it; and to get such extraordinary help, they should seek it in an extraordinary way; hence he proclaimed a universal fast, and all the people came up to Jerusalem to seek the Lord.

Verse 6

Jehoshaphat stood - What an instructive sight was this! The king who proclaimed the fast was foremost to observe it, and was on this occasion the priest of the people; offering in the congregation, without form or any premeditation, one of the most sensible, pious, correct, and as to its composition one of the most elegant prayers ever offered under the Old Testament dispensation.

Verse 7

Art not thou our God - "Hast not thou, by thy Word, driven out." - Targum.

Verse 8

Therein for thy name - "For the name of thy Word." - Targum.

Verse 9

For thy name is in this house - "Thy Majesty is in this house." Several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., with the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, add "xžx"x"x" (nikra), "is invoked;" Thy name is invoked in this house - here thou dwellest, and here thou art worshipped.

Verse 11

They reward us - Six of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. add "x'x'x'" evil: "Behold, they reward us Evil." This is also the reading of the Targum.

Verse 12

Wilt thou not judge them - That is, Thou wilt inflict deserved punishment upon them.

Verse 15

For the battle is not yours, but God's - God will not employ you in the discomfiture of this great host; he himself will take the matter in hand, deliver you, and destroy them.

Verse 17

For the Lord will be with you - "The Word of the Lord shall be your Helper." - Targum.

Verse 20

Believe in the Lord your God - "Believe in the Word of the Lord your God, and believe in his law, and believe in his prophets; and ye shall prosper." Here the Word and the revelation are most pointedly distinguished; the Word being used personally.

Verse 22

The Lord set ambushments - "The Word of the Lord placed snares among the children of Ammon and Moab; and the inhabitants of the mountain of Gibla, who came to fight with Judah; and they were broken to pieces:" so the Targum.

Houbigant translates the place thus: "The Lord set against the children of Ammon and Moab ambushments of those who came from Mount Seir against Judah; and the children of Ammon and Moab were smitten: but they afterwards rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, and utterly destroyed them; who being destroyed, they rose up one against another, and mutually destroyed each other." This is probably the meaning of these verses. Calmet's version is not very different.

Verse 25

Both riches with the dead bodies - For "x'x'x'" (peparim), dead bodies, "x'x'x'" (begadim), garments, is the reading of eight MSS. in the collections of Kennicott and De Rossi, and in several ancient editions. None of the versions have dead bodies except the Chaldee. The words might be easily mistaken for each other, as the "pe", if a little faint in the under dot might easily pass for a "beth"; and we know that the "resh" and "daleth", are frequently interchanged and mistaken for each other, both in Hebrew and Syriac. I believe garments to be the true reading; and as to the clause which they stripped off for themselves, it should be understood thus: Which they seized for themselves, etc.

Verse 26

Assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah - "The valley of Benediction;" and so in the latter clause. - Targum.

Verse 27

Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them - He was their leader in all these spiritual, holy, fatiguing, and self-denying exercises. What a noble and persuasive pattern!

Verse 29

The Lord fought - "The Word of the Lord made war against the enemies of Israel." - Targum.

Verse 33

The high places were not taken away - The idolatry, as we have seen, was universally suppressed; but some of the places where that worship had been performed were not destroyed. Some of them still remained; and these, to such a fickle people, became the means of idolatry in reigns less propitious to truth and religion.

Verse 34

In the book of Jehu - This is totally lost, though it is evident that it was in being when the books of Chronicles were written.

Verse 36

To go to Tarshish - "In the great sea." - Targum. By which expression they always meant the Mediterranean Sea.

Verse 37

The Lord hath broken, etc. - "The Word of the Lord hath broken." - Targum. Concerning Tarshish, Ezion-geber, and Ophir, and the voyage thither, see the notes on 1 Kings 10:22, and at 1 Kings 10:29 (note), and on 2 Chronicles 9:26-28 (note). The Tarshish here is called by the Chaldee Torsos in the great sea, some place in the Mediterranean. On this subject the reader has, no doubt, already seen a great variety of opinions.