

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Destruction of the enemies of the Church, Isaiah 27:1. God's care of his vineyard, Isaiah 27:2-11. Prosperity of the descendants of Abraham in the latter days, Isaiah 27:12, Isaiah 27:13.

The subject of this chapter seems to be the nature, the measure, and the design of God's dealings with his people.

1. His judgments inflicted on their great and powerful enemies, Isaiah 27:1.
2. His constant care and protection of his favorite vineyard, in the form of a dialogue, Isaiah 27:2.
3. The moderation and lenity with which the severity of his judgments have been tempered, Isaiah 27:7.
4. The end and design of them, to recover them from idolatry, Isaiah 27:9. And,
5. The recalling of them, on their repentance, from their several dispersions, Isaiah 27:12.

The first verse seems connected with the two last verses of the preceding chapter. - L.

Verse 1

Leviathan - The animals here mentioned seem to be the crocodile, rigid by the stiffness of the backbone, so that he cannot readily turn himself when he pursues his prey; hence the easiest way of escaping from him is by making frequent and short turnings: the serpent or dragon, flexible and winding, which coils himself up in a circular form: and the sea monster, or whale. These are used allegorically, without doubt for great potentates, enemies and persecutors of the people of God: but to specify the particular persons or states designed by the prophet under these images, is a matter of great difficulty, and comes not necessarily within the design of these notes. R. D. Kimchi says, leviathan is a parable concerning the kings of the Gentiles: it is the largest fish in the sea, called also *x^ax xTMx^Y* (tannin), the dragon, or rather the whale. By these names the Grecian, Turkish, and Roman empires are intended. The dragon of the sea seems to mean some nation having a strong naval force and extensive commerce. See Kimchi on the place.

Verse 2

Sing ye unto her - *x*x x* xœx*" (anu lah). Bishop Lowth translates this, Sing ye a responsive song; and says that *xçx x*" (anah), to answer, signifies occasionally to sing responsively; and that this mode of singing was frequently practiced among the ancient Hebrews. See De Poes. Sac. Hebrews Prael. xix., at the beginning.

This, indeed, was the ancient method of singing in various nations. The song was divided into distinct portions, and the singers sang alternately. There is a fine specimen of this in the song of Deborah and Barak; and also in the Idyls of Theocritus, and the Eclogues of Virgil.

This kind of singing was properly a dialogue in verse, sung to a particular tune, or in the mode which is now termed recitativo. I have seen it often practiced on funeral occasions among the descendants of the aboriginal Irish. The poems of Ossian are of this kind.

The learned Bishop distinguishes the parts of this dialogue thus: -

3. Jehovah. It is I, Jehovah, that preserve her; I will water her every moment: I will take care of her by night; And by day I will keep guard over her.

4. Vineyard. I have no wall for my defense: O that I had a fence of the thorn and brier! Jehovah. Against them should I march in battle, I should burn them up together.

5. Ah! let her rather take hold of my protection. Vineyard. Let him make peace with me! Peace let him make with me!

6. Jehovah. They that come from the root of Jacob shall flourish, Israel shall bud forth; And they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.

A vineyard of red wine - The redder the wine, the more it was valued, says Kimchi.

Bishop Lowth translates, To the beloved vineyard. For *x—xžx*" (chemer), red, a multitude of MSS. and editions have *x—xžx*" (chemed), desirable. This is supported by the Septuagint and Chaldee.

Verse 3

Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day - *âœl* will take care of her by night; and by day I will keep guard over her *âœ* - For *xax^Y xTMxax^Sx*" (pen yiphkod), lest any visit it, the Syriac read *x*x*xax^Sx*" (veephkod), and I will visit it. Twenty MSS. of Kennicott's, fourteen of De Rossi's, and two of my own, and six editions read

חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (ephkod), I will visit, in the first person.

Verse 4

Fury is not in me - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - For חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (chemah), anger, the Septuagint and Syriac read חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (chomah), wall. An ancient MS. has חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (cheimah). For חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (bad), in her, two MSS. read חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (bam), in them, plural. The vineyard wishes for a wall and a fence of thorns - human strength and protection, (as the Jews were too apt to apply to their powerful neighbors for assistance, and to trust to the shadow of Egypt): Jehovah replies, that this would not avail her, nor defend her against his wrath. He counsels her, therefore, to betake herself to his protection. On which she entreats him to make peace with her.

From the above note it appears that the bishop reads, חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (chomah), wall, for חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (chemah), anger or fury, in accordance with the Syriac and Septuagint. The letter ח (vau) makes the only difference, which letter is frequently absent from many words where its place is supplied by the point. (cholem): it might have been so here formerly; and in process of time both (vau) and (cholem) might have been lost. The Syriac supports the learned bishop's criticism, as the word (shora) is there used; which word in the plural is found, Hebrews 11:30: - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד By faith the walls of Jericho. - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד The bishop thinks the Septuagint is on his side: to me, it seems neither for nor against the criticism. The words in the Vatican copy are חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד... חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד, I am a fortified city; which the Arabic follows: but instead of חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד... חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד, the Codex Alexandrinus has חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד... חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד, I am a Strong city.

The word חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (chomah), wall, is not found in any MS. in the collections of Kennicott and De Rossi, nor in any of my own MSS.

However, one of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. has חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (cheimah); but probably that which now appears to be a חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yod) was formerly a ח (vau), and now partially obliterated.

This song receives much light from being collated with that in chap. 5.; and perhaps the bishop's criticism will find its best support from such a collation. In Isaiah 5:5 of that chapter, God threatens to take away the wall of his vineyard: this was done; and here the vineyard complains, I have no wall, and wishes for any kind of defense rather than be thus naked. This is the only natural support of the above criticism.

- חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד About Tripoli there are abundance of vineyards and gardens, inclosed, for the most part, with hedges, which chiefly consist of the rhamnus, paliurus, oxyacantha, etc. Rawolf, p. 21, 22. A fence of thorns is esteemed equal to a wall for strength, being commonly represented as impenetrable. See Micah 7:4; Hosea 2:6.

Who would set the briers and thorns against me - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד O that I had a fence of the thorn and brier - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - Seven MSS., (two ancient), and one edition, with the Syriac, Vulgate, and Aquila, read חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (veshayith), with the conjunction ח (vau) prefixed: Who would set the briers and thorns. חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (mi yitteneni shamir shayith), Who shall give me the brier and thorn, i.e., for a defense: but hear Kimchi: - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד Who (the vineyard) hath given me (Jehovah) the brier and the thorn instead of good grapes. - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד

Verse 5

Or - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד Ah - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - For חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (o) I read חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (oi), as it was at first in a MS. The חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yod) was easily lost, being followed by another חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yod).

Verse 6

To take root - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד From the root - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - For חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yashresh), I read, with the Syriac, חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (mishshoresh). And for חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yatsits uparach), חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (yatsitsu parach), joining the ח (vau) to the first word, and taking that into construction with the first part of the sentence, Israel shall bud forth. I suppose the dialogue to be continued in this verse, which pursues the same image of the allegory, but in the way of metaphor.

Verse 9

The groves - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד And if the groves - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (velo). Four MSS., two ancient, of Kennicott's, and one ancient of my own, with the Septuagint; this makes a fuller sense.

Verse 10

There shall the calf feed - That is, the king of Egypt, says Kimchi.

Verse 11

The boughs thereof - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד Her boughs - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד - חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד חֲזַק־אֶפְחָד (ketsireyha), MS. and Vulg.; that is, the boughs of the vineyard, referring still to the subject of the dialogue above.

The scarcity of fuel, especially wood, in most parts of the east is so great, that they supply it with every thing capable of burning; cow-dung dried, roots, parings of fruit, withered stalks of herbs and flowers; see Matthew 6:21-30. Vine-twigs are particularly mentioned as used for fuel in dressing their food, by Dâ Arvieux; La Roque, Palestine, p. 198. Ezekiel says, in his parable of the vine, used figuratively for the people of God, as the vineyard

is here: "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel;" Ezekiel 15:3, Ezekiel 15:4. "If a man abide not in one," saith our Lord, "he is cast forth as a branch of the vine and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned;" John 15:6. They employed women and children to gather these things, and they laid them up in store for use. The dressing and pruning their vines afforded a good supply of the last sort of fuel; but the prophet says that the vines themselves of the beloved vineyard shall be blasted, withered, and broken, and the women shall come and gather them up, and carry away the whole of them to make their fires for domestic uses. See Harmer's Observations, vol. i., p. 254, etc.

Verse 12

The channel of the river - The river Sabbathon, beyond which the Israelites were carried captive. - Kimchi.

Verse 13

The great trumpet shall be blown - Does not this refer to the time spoken of by our Lord, Matthew 24:31: He shall send forth his angels - the preachers of his Gospel with a great sound of a trumpet - the earnest invitation to be saved by Jesus Christ; and shall gather his elect - the Jews, his ancient chosen people, from the four winds - from all parts of the habitable globe in which they have been dispersed.

In this prophet there are several predictions relative to the conversion of Egypt to the true faith, which have not yet been fulfilled, and which must be fulfilled, for the truth of God cannot fail. Should Egypt ever succeed in casting off the Ottoman yoke, and fully establish its independence, it is most likely that the Gospel of Christ would have a speedy entrance into it; and, according to these prophecies, a wide and permanent diffusion. At present the Mohammedan power is a genuine antichrist. This also the Lord will remove in due time.