

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Thy chapter contains a more general reproof of the wickedness of the Jews, Isaiah 59:1-8. After this they are represented confessing their sins, and deploring the unhappy consequences of them, Isaiah 59:9-15. On this act of humiliation God, ever ready to pardon the penitent, promises that he will have mercy on them; that the Redeemer will come, mighty to save; and that he will deliver his people, subdue his enemies and establish a new and everlasting covenant, Isaiah 59:16-21.

The foregoing elegant chapter contained a severe reproof of the Jews, in particular for their hypocrisy in pretending to make themselves accepted with God by fasting and outward humiliation without true repentance; while they still continued to oppress the poor, and indulge their own passions and vices; with great promises however of God's favor on condition of their reformation. This chapter contains a more general reproof of their wickedness, bloodshed, violence, falsehood, injustice. At Isaiah 59:9 they are introduced as making, themselves, an ample confession of their sins, and deploring their wretched state in consequence of them. On this act of humiliation a promise is given that God, in his mercy and zeal for his people, will rescue them from this miserable condition, that the Redeemer will come like a mighty hero to deliver them; he will destroy his enemies, convert both Jews and Gentiles to himself, and give them a new covenant, and a law which shall never be abolished.

As this chapter is remarkable for the beauty, strength, and variety of the images with which it abounds; so is it peculiarly distinguished by the elegance of the composition, and the exact construction of the sentences. From the first verse to the two last it falls regularly into stanzas of four lines, (see Prelim. Dissert. p. xxi.), which I have endeavored to express as nearly as possible in the form of the original. - L.

Verse 2

His face - For פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (panim), faces, I read (panaiv), his face. So the Syriac, Septuagint, Alexandrian, Arabic, and Vulgate. פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (panai), MS. Forte legendum פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (panai), nam פָּנָיו (mem), sequitur, et loquitur Deus; confer cap. Isaiah 58:14. "We should perhaps read פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (panai); for פָּנָיו (mem) follows, and God is the speaker." - Secker. I rather think that the speech of God was closed with the last chapter, and that this chapter is delivered in the person of the prophet. - L.

Verse 3

Your tongue "And your tongue" - An ancient MS., and the Septuagint and Vulgate, add the conjunction.

Verse 4

They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity - There is a curious propriety in this mode of expression; a thought or purpose is compared to conception; a word or act, which is the consequence of it, to the birth of a child. From the third to the fifteenth verse inclusive may be considered a true statement of the then moral state of the Jewish people; and that they were, in the most proper sense of the word, guilty of the iniquities with which they are charged.

Verse 8

Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace "Whoever goeth in them knoweth not peace" - For פָּנָיו (bah), singular, read פָּנָיו (bam), plural, with the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldee. The פָּנָיו (he) is upon a rasure in one MS. Or, for פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (nethibotheyhem), plural, we must read פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (nethibatham), singular, as it is in an ancient MS., to preserve the grammatical concord. - L.

Verse 10

We stumble at noon day as in the night "We stumble at mid-day, as in the twilight" - I adopt here an emendation of Houbigant, פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (nishgegah), instead of the second, פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (negasheshah), the repetition of which has a poverty and inelegance extremely unworthy of the prophet, and unlike his manner. The mistake is of long standing, being prior to all the ancient versions. It was a very easy and obvious mistake, and I have little doubt of our having recovered the true reading in this ingenious correction.

Verse 11

But it is far off from us "And it is far distant from us" - The conjunction פָּנָיו (vau) must necessarily be prefixed to the verb, as the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate found it in their copies; פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (verachakah), "and far off." - L.

Verse 14

Justice standeth afar off - פָּנָיו פָּנָיו (tsedakah), righteousness, put here, says Kimchi, for alms to the poor. This

casts some light on Matthew 6:1: "Take heed that you do not your alms," But the best copies have "righteousness; the former having been inserted in the text at first merely as the explanation of the genuine and original word."

Verse 15

And the Lord saw it "And Jehovah saw it" - This third line of the stanza appears manifestly to me to be imperfect by the loss of a phrase. The reader will perhaps more perfectly conceive my idea of the matter if I endeavor to supply the supposed defect, I imagine it might have stood originally in this manner: -

d xœx° x°x™x—x° x™x°x° x°x™x°x°

d
d (lo) (veyachar) (Yehovah) (vaiyar)

d
d
d
d xžx©x°x° x°x™x°Ÿ

d x°x™
d x°xçx™x x™x° x°x™x°x°

d
d (mishpat) (ein)
d (ki)
d (beeyinaiv) (veyera)

d
d
"And Jehovah saw it, and he was wroth;
And it displeased him, that there was no judgment."

We have had already many examples of mistakes of omission; this, if it be such, is very ancient, being prior to all the versions. - L.

Verse 16

And wondered that there was no intercessor - This and the following verses some of the most eminent rabbins understand as spoken of the Messiah. Kimchi says that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi proposes this objection: "Behold, he will come in the clouds of heaven as the son of man," Daniel 7:13; and elsewhere it is written, "He cometh lowly, and riding upon an ass," Zechariah 9:9. How can these texts be reconciled? Thus: If the Jews have merit, he will come unto them in the clouds of heaven; but if they be destitute of merit, he will come unto them riding upon an ass. Now out of their own mouth they may be condemned. They were truly destitute of all merit when Jesus Christ came into Jerusalem riding upon an ass, according to the letter of the above prophecy; and they neither acknowledged nor received him. And that they were destitute of merit their destruction by the Romans, which shortly followed their rejection of him, sufficiently proves.

Verse 17

For clothing "For his clothing" - x°xœx°x©x° (tilbosheth). "cannot but think that this word, x°xœx°x©x° (tilbosheth), is an interpolation.

- 1.It is in no one ancient version.
- 2.It is redundant in the sense, as it is before expressed in x°x°x°x™ (bigdey).
- 3.It makes the hemistich just so much longer than it ought to be, if it is compared with the others adjoining.
- 4.It makes a form of construction in this clause less elegant than that in the others.
- 5.It might probably be in some margin a various reading for x°x°x°x™ (bigdey), and thence taken into the text.

This is more probable, as its form is such as it would be if it were in regimine, as it must be before x xšx° (nakam). - Dr. Jubb. Two sorts of armor are mentioned: a breast-plate and a helmet, to bring righteousness and salvation to those who fear him; and the garments of vengeance and the cloak of zeal for the destruction of all those who finally oppose him, and reject his Gospel.

Verse 18

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay "He is mighty to recompense; he that is mighty to

Unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob - And shall turn away iniquity from Jacob - So the Septuagint and St. Paul, Romans 11:26, reading instead of לֶשְׁבֵּעַ (leshabey) and בְּעֵי אַבְרָהָם (beyaacob), בְּעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (veheshib) and $\text{בְּעֵי מֵעֵי אַבְרָהָם}$ (meyaacob). The Syriac likewise reads בְּעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (veheshib); and the Chaldee, to the same sense, וּלְהַשִּׁיב (ulehashib). Our translators have expressed the sense of the present reading of the Hebrew text: - And unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.

Verse 21

This is my covenant with them - This is the covenant which I make with them - For אִתָּם (otham), them, twenty-four MSS., (four ancient), and nine editions have אִתָּם (ittam), with them.

My Spirit that is upon thee - This seems to be an address to the Messiah; Kimchi says it is to the prophet, informing him that the spirit of prophecy should be given to all Israelites in the days of the Messiah, as it was then given to him, i.e., to the prophet.

And my words which I have put in thy mouth - Whatsoever Jesus spoke was the word and mind of God himself; and must, as such, be implicitly received.

Nor out of the mouth of thy seed - The same doctrines which Jesus preached, all his faithful ministers preach; and his seed - genuine Christians, who are all born of God, believe; and they shall continue, and the doctrines remain in the seed's seed through all generations - for ever and ever. This is God's covenant, ordered in all things and sure.