
Isaiah 17

Syria and Ephraim—to their hurt—had banded together to fight against Judah (see ISAIAH 7). Judah was saved, but not because of the righteousness of King Ahaz. The Lord would leave a remnant of Judah and Israel who in the latter days would stay on the LORD—not on idols or on man. The most beautiful part of this verse is the center of the chiasmus focusing on the turnabout of the children of Jacob (both portions of divided Israel) in the last days: “At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images” (ISAIAH 17:8). Most of this chapter is about Judah and Israel, rather than about Damascus (the capital of Syria). If we recall from ISAIAH 7, Ahaz, king of Israel, had preferred to form an alliance with Assyria when threatened by the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. The end of the chapter (ISAIAH 17:12–14) seems to reference the defeat of Assyria, as well as a latter-day allusion the nations gathering against Jerusalem for no avail, as the Holy One of Israel would step in to save her.

vv. 1–5. Syria is to be destroyed. Only flocks shall be left in her land and graze undisturbed. Syria had been a fortress for Ephraim (Northern Kingdom) but this would no longer be the case. Like Syria, the glory of Israel would cease.

1 ¶ THE burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from [being] a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

THE burden of Damascus. The Targum (Ⓢ) paraphrase has a bolder figure here, “The burden of the cup of cursing to give Damascus¹ to drink.” From the ISBE narrative, we note that “In 773 Assyria again invaded the territory of Damascus. Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC) pushed vigorously westward, and in 738 Rezin of Damascus paid tribute. A year or two later he revolted, and attempted in concert with Pekah of Israel, to coerce Judah into joining an anti-Assyrian league (2 Kings 15:37; 16:5; ISAIAH 7). His punishment was swift and decisive. In 734 the Assyrians advanced and laid siege to Damascus, which fell in 732. Rezin was executed, his kingdom was overthrown.” In 2 Kings 16 we read how **Ahaz**, king of Judah, sought the help of Assyria when threatened by a coalition of Syria and Ephraim: “So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it,

and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin” (2 Kings 16:7–9, see ISAIAH 7). In Jeremiah we read, “Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy! Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad” (Jeremiah 49:23–27). ¶ *Behold, Damascus is taken away from [being] a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.* The Douay translation from the Vulgate (Ⓜ) has, “Behold, Damascus shall cease to be a city, and shall be as a ruinous heap of stones.” Rawlinson has, “According to Vitranga, Damascus has been destroyed oftener than any other town; but it has a wonderful power of rising again from the ashes. Probably a destruction by Sargon is here intended.” Luther speaks about Damascus standing in for the whole nation: “It was customary with the prophets to take a part for the whole, so as to include under the destruction of the metropolis the fate of the whole nation; for what must ordinary towns expect when the citadel of the kingdom has been stormed?” Furthermore, the metropolis of the nations are often their pride. So it was, for instance, in the hideous attacks against the USA that took place on 11 September 2001, that the pride of the USA was wounded.

2 The cities of Aroer [are] forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make [them] afraid.

¹ In Chile, *damascos* is the word used for *apricots*.

The cities of Aroer [are] forsaken. The LXX (6) does away with the reference to either a city or Aroer here, “Abandoned forever.” Delitzsch explains: “There were two *Aroers*: an old Amoritish city allotted to the tribe of Reuben, viz., ‘Aroer on the Arnon’ (Deuteronomy 2:36; 3:12, etc.); and an old Ammonitish one, allotted to the tribe of Gad, viz., ‘Aroer before Rabbah’ (Rabbath, Ammon, Joshua 13:25). The ruins of the former are *Arair*, on the lofty northern bank of the *Mugib*; but the situation of the latter has not yet been determined with certainty ... The name of Aroer was ominous, and what its name indicated would happen to the cities in its circuit. ערער means ‘to lay bare,’ to pull down

(Jeremiah 51:58); and ערעי, ערער signifies a stark-naked condition, a state of desolation and solitude. After ISAIAH 17:1 has threatened Damascus in particular, and ISAIAH 17:2 has done the same to Israel, ISAIAH 17:3 comprehends them both. Ephraim loses the fortified cities which once served it as defences, and Damascus loses its rank as a kingdom. Those that are left of Aram, who do not fall in the war, become like the proud citizens of the kingdom of Israel, i.e., they are carried away into captivity. All this was fulfilled under Tiglath-pileser.” Barnes has, “Gesenius supposes (‘Commentary *in loc.*’) that the phrase ‘the cities of Aroer’ means the cities round about Aroer, and that were connected with it, similar to the phrase ‘daughters of a city.’ This city he supposes was near the river Arnon, within the limits of Moab, and that the prediction here was fulfilled by Tiglath-pileser, when he carried away the inhabitants of Galilee, Gilead, and other places mentioned in 2 Kings 15:29. There can be no doubt that it was under the jurisdiction of Damascus.” Naegelsbach offers yet another explanation regarding Aroer: “The Prophet makes the Syrian capital his starting point, announcing to it first that it will be reduced to a place of ruin (ISAIAH 17:1). From there he turns to the territory of Israel, and traverses first east Jordan Israel to its extremest point (ISAIAH 17:2), then passes over to west Jordan, and then returns back to Damascus (ISAIAH 17:3). Thus he describes a circuit, carries the destruction over Gilead to Ephraim and thence back to Damascus, so that thus Ephraim becomes as Damascus and Damascus as Ephraim; thus both, as they are politically closely united, appear joined in a common ruin ... Three cities of Old Testament mentioned are called by the name Aroer: (1) a city of Judah (1 Samuel 30:28) which cannot by any sense be meant here; (2) a city in the tribe of Gad, which according to Joshua 13:25 (compare Judges 11:13) lay ‘before Rabbah’; (3) a city in the tribe of Reuben, situated on the north bank of the Arnon (Deuteronomy 2:36; Joshua 12:2; 13:9, 16; Judges 11:26; 2 Kings 10:33, and often). But if the Prophet meant only *one* of the two Aroers, then we miss an

element that is of importance in the connection of thought of our passage. Are both Aroers meant, then the Southern one, on the bank of Arnon, must be one of them. But in that case the words ‘cities of Arnon’ involve the sense: the *entire* east Jordan territory. But also the etymological primary sense (ערער = *nudus*, ‘bare,’ עירי inops, ‘poor’) recommended the mention of the name of these cities. So that it thus seems to have been chosen for a threefold reason. From Damascus the judgment of God moves southward like a tempest or a hail cloud though Gilead to rebound from the mountain chain of Abarim and be deflected thereby westward across the Jordan into the territory of Ephraim. Thus Gilead becomes unfit for human habitation. Only herds of animals stop there, that can repose without fear of disturbance.” ¶ *They shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make [them] afraid.* The Targum (7) has a clear explanation here, “They shall be for dwelling-places for flocks of sheep; they shall lie down, and none shall make them to move away.” Such shall be the nature of the desolation, that Gill writes, “the flocks of sheep, timorous creatures, easily frightened; but so great should be the depopulation now, there would be no man upon the spot, or any pass by, to give them any disturbance.”

3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: The sense I got from the AV, is that Damascus had been there, to the north of Ephraim, to be the first in line of attack, and in this fashion, had been a wall of protection or a fortress for Ephraim. With the destruction of Damascus, Ephraim would have no such protection in the future, and the invading forces from the north, in this case Assyria, would be able to come all the way down to Ephraim unimpaired. Barnes well writes, “Shall come to an end; shall cease to be, for so the word שבת² is often used, Genesis 8:22; ISAIAH 24:8; Lamentations 5:15.” *The remnant of Syria*, explains Barnes, is “That which is left of the kingdom of Syria after the capital Damascus shall be destroyed.” ¶ *They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.* The LXX (6) reads, “For thou art no better than the children of Israel, *even* than their glory; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.” In other words, as the

² *Sabbath*, and thus also, “to cease, to desist, leave off” (Gesenius).

children of Israel (Northern Kingdom) had lost their glory, so would the people of Damascus.

4 And in that day it shall come to pass, [that] the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

And in that day it shall come to pass, [that] the glory of Jacob shall be made thin. The Syriac (S) version has, “And in that day it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob shall wane.” There is an allusion to the punishment that would come upon all of the tribes of Israel so only a small remnant would remain. ¶ *And the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.* The Targum (T) has, “And the riches of his glory shall be carried away.” Calvin here explains, “When he next threatens them with *leanness*, his object is to reprove their indolence, as the Prophets frequently reprove them for their fatness (Jeremiah 5:28; 1:11). On account of their prosperity and of the fertility of the country, they became proud, as horses that are fat and excessively pampered grow restive. Hence also they are elsewhere called ‘fat cows’ (Amos 4:1). But however fierce and stubborn they might be, God threatens that he will take away their fatness with which they were puffed up.”

5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn,³ and reapeth the ears with his arm. Most exegetes suggest that with the ease that those who harvest twist and remove the ears of standing grains and gather them for the harvest, with that same ease would the children of Jacob be harvested and removed, despite their great numbers. Gill gives life to the metaphor: “That is, with one hand he gathers the standing corn into his fist, and then reaps it with his other arm . . . just as a harvestman cuts down the corn, and with as much ease and quick dispatch; they being no more able to stand before him than a field of corn before the reaper!” Alexander

³ Not maize, but rather *grains* such as wheat, oats, etc. In the AV the word corn always means grains. This is something that I learned from Rabbi Shaye J.D. Cohen. For instance, to note two examples, where in Wycliffe the term wheat is used in Genesis 27:28 and 27:32, in the KJV we have the word corn, instead. Geneva also uses wheat. The AV followed after the Bishops’ Bible in using the word corn instead of wheat. Most Bibles today use the word wheat or grain (e.g., ABP {LXX (G)}, AMP, ASV, BBE, CEV, ESV, GNB, GW, HCSB, ISV, JUB, LEB, LITV, MKJV, NASB, as well as most Spanish editions).

prefers to think of עָרַב to “the whole act of reaping.”

קִמְצָה stands for any *standing grain* (Gesenius, HAL).

¶ *And it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.* Perhaps this is equivalent to saying the San Joaquín Valley in California in the twentieth century, with all its vineyards, fruit trees, agronomic and vegetable crops, as well as grains. Rephaim has also been called the valley of the giants by some. It was supposed to be close to Jerusalem (DBL). Gill says that “[Rephaim] was a valley not far from Jerusalem, as Josephus says; who also calls it the valley of the giants: it is thought to have been a very fruitful place, where the ears of corn were very large and heavy, and so great care was taken in gathering and gleaning that none be lost . . .” Henry writes, “The corn is the glory of the fields (Psalms 65:13); but, when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? . . . And the victorious army, like the careful husbandmen in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.” Young has, “Through the field of standing corn the reapers go to pluck the harvest grain, and with their arms reach out to take the ears. Once the ears are taken, only the stalks remain. So will the glory of Jacob be at the time when the Lord visits it in judgment.” One may then wonder if Isaiah meant that it would go from producing rich abundance to giving a shadow of what it used to in former days.

vv. 6–9. A remnant would remain, which represents a remnant of Ephraim as well as of Judah. In the last days the children of Jacob would look to God and have faith in Him, and not in the idols they had built.

6 ¶ Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two [or] three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four [or] five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, The Targum (T) has: “Yet a gleaning shall be left in it.” As Rawlinson and several versions of the Bible point out, the Hebrew (אֵי) simply has, “Yet gleanings shall be left in it” and there is no mention of grapes. The ellipsis could be filled with the word *fruit*, rather than grapes: “Yet gleaning *fruit* shall be left in it.” A small remnant would remain of both Ephraim and Judah. ¶ *As the shaking of an olive tree, two [or] three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four [or] five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.* The

Targum (Ⲛ)⁴ has an interpretative paraphrase here, “Two or three berries at the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the straggling (literally, *rebellious*) branch; so shall the righteous be left solitary in the midst of the world among the kingdoms, saith the Lord God of Israel.” ¶ The Talmud tradition (Seder Zerai’im, Mishna, Hallah Chapter 3) suggests that there is a regular harvest after which a few (probably hard to reach) olive berries are left to be gleaned by the poor by striking off (probably with a rod). Thus the remnant shall be few, and interestingly, the remnant will be positioned in a place difficult for man to get to. Because of the chiasm, it seems as if ISAIAH 17:6 is tied to ISAIAH 17:9, and the allusion is to the remnant of Ephraim and Judah, rather than that of Damascus. In this case, the idea of the LORD preserving some of Ephraim in a difficult place to get, could well represent the children of Lehi, as well as the Lost Tribes: one of them in the far branches, and the latter on the topmost boughs. ¶ Gills, following Kimhi, rather explains that Jerusalem is out of reach for Assyria, “Kimhi applies this to Jerusalem, which was the highest part of the land of Israel; and what was in it the hand of the king of Assyria could not reach.”

7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

At that day shall a man look to his Maker. Some exegetes have not understood this verse, because they have failed to see that it stands as the center of a chiasm, along with verse ISAIAH 17:8, as an allusion to latter-day hope. In the latter days the children of Israel would turn to their Maker, and acknowledge that He, even He, Jesus is the promised Messiah. The expression to *look to his Maker* has reference to man’s turning toward the Lord and putting his trust in Him. ¶ *And his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.* And man will love Christ, and know that He is the Holy One of Israel. The testimony of Jesus will be in their bosoms and will rejoice in the Savoir of mankind, to follow Him and do His will. This is in contrast to what follows.

8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect [that] which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images. ✓

✓ or, sun images

And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands. This refers to altars built up to idols, rather than to the Holy One of Israel. ¶ *Neither shall respect [that] which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.* The Targum (Ⲛ) has, “Or stay himself upon that which his fingers have prepared, neither upon the groves⁵ nor upon the sun-images.” In terms of groves, most think of these as trees planted in hills, but Faussett has, “A symbolical tree is often found in Assyrian inscriptions, representing the hosts of heaven (‘Saba’), answering to Ashteroth or Astarte, the queen of heaven, as Baal or Bel is the king. Hence the expression, ‘image of the grove,’ is explained (2 Kings 21:7).” Whether they be sun-images or any other type of idol, there is false security when we look to—or putting out faith in—anything other than God, whether the strength of man, nature, idols or intellectual idolatry is meant.

vv. 9–11. The strong cities would be devastated as the people had not trusted in God. There would prepare for a great harvest but would be disappointed. The focus is on the children of Jacob in general. In ISAIAH 17:11 the Targum Ⲛ has, “After that ye were sanctified to be a people, there ye made your works despicable.” It was the children of Jacob who were sanctified to be a people.

9 ¶ In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough. While keeping an allusion to the previous figure, the scene changes here. As the olive fruit that is left in the tree might feel forsaken, so will the desolation of the strong cities be in that day. Just as those who inhabited Canaan melted in fear and were conquered by the children of Jacob as they returned from Egypt, so now Ephraim and Judah would be overcome by Assyria and Babylonia, except for a remnant. Lowth is a strong proponent of the LXX (Ⲙ)⁶ version, “The translation of the LXX has happily preserved what seems to be the true reading of the text, as it stood in the copies of their time; though the words are now transposed, either in the text, or in their version.” The Tanakh has, “In that day, their fortress cities shall be like the deserted sites which

⁵ אֲשֵׁרָה, “neither upon the Asherah,” or tree for idolatrous worship.

⁶ The LXX (Ⲙ) has Ἀπορραῖοι καὶ οἱ Εὐαῖοι: “In that day thy cities shall be deserted, as the Amorites and the Evaeans (Hivites) deserted theirs.”

⁴ Stenning.

the Horesh and the Amir [note: Septuagint reads ‘the Amorites and the Hivites’] abandoned because of the Israelites; and there shall be desolation.” ¶ *And an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.* In a footnote, the Douay (D) suggests, that this would be equivalent to the desolation left by the children of Israel, when they came into the land of Canaan. The Syriac (S) has, “Which was left destitute before the children of Israel; so you will become a desolation.” Calvin insightfully comments as follows, referring to the contrast between Leviticus 26:8 (Israel obedient, *Rain in Due Season*) and Deuteronomy 32:30 (Israel disobedient), “Here the particle אֲשֶׁר, I have no doubt, denotes comparison; and therefore I have rendered it *in like manner as*, which makes the statement of the Prophet to be, in connection with what had been already said, that the people would tremble and flee and be scattered, in the same manner as God had formerly driven out the ancient inhabitants.”

10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:

Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength. Israel had often turned to idolatry and the Lord reminds her that He is the only God capable of saving, as the dumb idols would not be able to do so. Apostasy is the act of forgetting God, the very Rock of our Strength; the God of our Salvation. ¶ *Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips.* When the Lord brought Israel into the land of Canaan, He warned His people not to marry outside of the covenant, nor to take upon themselves strange or foreign wives (e.g., Exodus 34:11–16). Israel was unable to keep this commandment (e.g., Judges 3:5–6). Grapevines and many fruit trees are grafted. Roots have a number of functions, such as reduce or increase plant vigor, or fight soil borne diseases. These root materials, however, often do not produce the best fruit, so they are grafted with a fruit producing material. The expression *strange slips* means plants grafted with exotic materials that are not necessarily good for fruit production: the marriage of Israel with alien peoples not of the covenant as well as unholy alliances with other nations. Several expositors focus on the expense of bringing in these special grafts from far away. Barnes opines: “Though they should be at great pains and expense in cultivating their land, yet the enemy would come in and make it

desolate.” No expenses were spared in the cultivation of these, but the growth would be for naught.

11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: [but] the harvest [shall be] a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. ✓

✓ or, removed in the day of inheritance, and there shall be deadly sorrow

In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: The Syriac (S) renders it, “On the day that you plant them, they shall put forth blossoms, and in the morning your seed shall flourish.” Despite how vigorously the plant would grow thanks to her unholy alliances, little good would come out of it. ¶ *[But] the harvest [shall be] a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.* Despite what appears to be a promising harvest, it will instead be a time of grief and sorrow. Deuteronomy 28:39 warns disobedient Israel: “Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, and shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them” (see also Deuteronomy 28:30, *Rain in Due Season*). Calvin has, “A similar punishment is also threatened against the wicked in general terms, that ‘in vain do they rise early, and vex themselves with unremitted toil;’ for they gain nothing from it (Psalm 127:2).”

vv. 12–14. Although Assyria, perhaps representative of the nations, would rush against Jerusalem in violence, they would not prevail against her, but should be blown away by the wind as tumbleweed. Likewise, in the latter days, when all the nations come upon Jerusalem, the LORD will come to her protection once again. Many exegetes feel that these verses have come out of nowhere. However, if one understands the chiastic pattern of this chapter, it becomes clear that these three verses bring us back to the first three or four verses of the chapter, and have to do with the punishment Assyria would receive, the same Assyria that had attacked the Syro-Ephraimite coalition.

12 ¶ Woe to the multitude ✓ of many people, [which] make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, [that] make a rushing like the rushing of mighty ✓ waters!

✓ or, noise

✓ ✓ or, many

Woe to the multitude of many people, [which] make a noise like the noise of the seas. The Targum (Ⓒ) has, along with the margin ||, “Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the sea.” Luther explains that the multitudes are the Assyrians, “This is the comfort for the king and the people of the Jews, that Assyria, about to lay waste the plantings and about to attempt to destroy the kingdom of Judah, will not achieve it but will itself perish. Yet it will come with an incalculable number of people, just like the sea, which cannot be contained at all when it breaks through, and will come with great turbulence and noise, as of rampaging waters.” In ISAIAH 7 we hear that the waters would come to the neck of Jerusalem. ¶ *And to the rushing of nations, [that] make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!* The Douay (Ⓓ) has, “And the tumult of crowds, like the noise of many waters.” Henry writes, “The Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations: it was the *multitude of many people*, by which weight they hoped to carry the cause. They were very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talked big, hectoring, and threatened, to frighten God’s people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them *made a rushing like the rushing of many waters*, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them and carry away everything that stands in their way.” In the last days it will be many nations who will pour into Israel, but the LORD of lords and King of kings will step in to rescue His people Israel.

13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but [God] shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing ✓ before the whirlwind.

✓ or, thistledown⁷

The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but [God] shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off. The word *God* is supplied to fill the ellipsis. The Syriac (Ⓔ) version deletes the repeated allusion to the rushing waters: “He shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off.” Henderson would translate as: “As for the nations, like the roaring of many waters they may roar, But he shall rebuke them, and they shall flee away.” ¶ *And shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind.* The Douay (Ⓓ) has, “And he shall be carried away as the dust of the mountains before the wind.”

⁷ Tumbleweed (Tanakh)

¶ *And like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.*

וּכְגִלְגֵּיל, *and as a rolling thing*, refers to the tumbleweed גִּלְגֵּיל. For the LORD will expel the invading forces as easily as the wind will blow the tumbleweed.

14 And behold at eveningtide trouble; [and] before the morning he [is] not. This [is] the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

And behold at eveningtide trouble; [and] before the morning he [is] not. The LXX (Ⓖ) reads, “Towards evening, and there shall be grief; before the morning, and he shall not be.” The Dead Sea Scrolls (Ⓚ) has an *and* before *he is not*: “... before the morning and he is not.” ¶ This is an allusion to the approaching Assyrian armies that encamped round about Jerusalem and were a terror to the inhabitants of the citadel; yet by dawn, they were destroyed by the angel of the LORD. Thus, at eventide trouble and fear, and by morning the armies are not: “Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (ISAIAH 37:36). ¶ *This [is] the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.* Henry writes, “And this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies; for *this is the portion of those that spoil us*, they shall themselves be spoiled.” Delitzsch argues against ISAIAH 17:12–14 from this prophecy: “If the substance of the *massā Dammesek* (the oracle concerning Damascus) had been restricted to the prophecy contained in the name Mahershalal, the element of promise so characteristic of the prophecies against the nations of the world would be entirely wanting. But the shout of triumph, ‘This is the portion,’ etc., supplied a terminal point, beyond which the *massa* could not go without the sacrifice of its unity. We are therefore warranted in regarding ISAIAH 18:1–7 as an independent prophecy, notwithstanding its commencement, which apparently forms a continuation of the fourth strophe of ISAIAH 17:1–14.” Cheyne LAO has, “Though most recent critics connect these three verses (vv. 12–14) with chapter 18 the concluding words of ISAIAH 17:14 are decidedly against this; besides which there are no phraseological affinities in vv. 12–14 to chapter 18, and the former passage describes the ruin of the enemy under an image which is clearly inconsistent with those in chapter 18.”

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