

AMONGST all the places in the Old Testament which mention this great Shepherd, there is no one doth so exactly describe him and his pastoral work, as chap. 11 of the prophet Zechariah. We will fetch a few things from thence, that may serve to explain the passage now in hand:

I. He describes this great Shepherd manifesting himself, and applying himself to his great pastoral office, when the nation was now upon the brink of destruction: the prophet had foretold their ruin, and brings in this Shepherd undertaking the care of his sheep, lest they should perish too.

As to the first verse, “Open thy doors, O Lebanon;” take the Jews’ own comment upon it, who yet do, by all the skill they can, endeavour to take off the whole prophecy from those proper hinges upon which it turns.

“Forty¹ years before the destruction [*of Jerusalem*], the gates of the Temple opened themselves of their own accord. Rabban Jochanan Ben Zacchai declaimed upon it [*objurgavit portas*], saying, ‘O Temple, Temple, why dost thou terrify thyself? I know thy end will be destruction; for so Zechariah, the son of Iddo, hath prophesied concerning thee; Open thy doors, O Lebanon,’ ” &c.

The rest that follows doth plainly enough speak out desolation and ruin, ver. 2, 3: but particularly that is remarkable, ver. 6, “I will deliver the men every one into his

1 Joma, fol. 39. 2.

neighbour's hand:" how manifestly doth it agree with those intestine broils and discords, those horrid seditions, stirred up amongst them! "And into the hand of his king;" i.e. of Cæsar, concerning whom they may remember they once said, "We have no king but Cæsar."

II. He describes the evil shepherds of the people under a triumvirate, ver. 8: "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month," &c.; i.e. the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes; which interpretation though it cannot but sound very unpleasingly in Jewish years, yet is it what seems abundantly confirmed, both from the context and the history of things. They therefore would turn the edge of the prophecy another way, the Gemarists understanding the *three shepherds* of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam²: Jarchi would have it the house of Ahab, the house of Ahaziah, and his brethren: Kimchi, the sons of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. Aben Ezra saith, "Perhaps they are the high priest Joshua, the person anointed to the wars³, and the sagan; or perhaps Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," &c.

But what can be more clear than that the prophet speaks of those *shepherds* that had wasted and corrupted the flock, and who, when the true Shepherd of the sheep should reveal himself, would do the like again? and who should these be but the principals and chief heads of sects, and the leaders of the people, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes?

² Taanith, fol. 9. 1.

³ Leusden's edit., vol. ii. p. 642.

Object. But how can these properly be said to be cut off by the great Shepherd when he should come, whereas it is well enough known that these sects lived even after the death of Christ, nay, after the ruins of Jerusalem; not to say that Pharisaism hath its being amongst the Jews to this very day?

Ans. So indeed it is said, that under the gospel, the nations should not learn war any more, Isa. 2:4; and that there should not be an infant in age, or one under age, in the new Jerusalem, Isa. 65:20: whereas we find enough of war in every generation, and that infancy or ignorance in divine things abounds still. But nevertheless God had done his part towards the accomplishment of such prophecies; namely, he had brought in the gospel of peace and the gospel of light, that nothing should be wanting on his side that peace might reign on the earth, and infancy in divine things should be no more. So did this great Shepherd bring in the evangelical doctrine, the oracle of truth and religion, which did so beat down and confound all the vain doctrines and institutions of those sects, that, as to what related to the doctrine of Christ, there was nothing wanting to have cut off those heresies and vanities.

III. This great Shepherd broke that covenant that had been made and confirmed with that people, ver. 10: “I took my staff, even *Beauty*, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.” *With all the people*; i. e. with all Israel, the ten and the two tribes too. And in ver. 14, the affinity and kin which was betwixt Judah and Israel is dissolved; which it

would not be amiss for those to take serious notice of, who as yet expect a universal conversion of the whole nation of the Jews. Let them say by virtue of what covenant; if the covenant of grace, that makes no difference betwixt the Jew and the Greek, nor knows any one after the flesh. If by virtue of the covenant peculiarly made with that people, that was broken and dissolved, when God had gathered his flock out of that people. For,

IV. The⁴ great Shepherd, when he came, found that there must be a flock gathered in that nation, Λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος· as Rom. 11:5, *A remnant according to the election of grace*; and these he took care to call and gather before Jerusalem should be destroyed. Zechariah himself calls it הַצֹּאֵן הַהֵרֶגֶת *the flock of slaughter*; and הַצֹּאֵן הַפֶּנִּי *the poor of the flock*, ver. 7. Where, by the way, whoever compares the Greek version in this place must needs observe, that הַפֶּנִּי הֵן *so the poor* is, by those interpreters, jumbled and confounded into one word. For, instead of הַצֹּאֵן הַפֶּנִּי הֵן [v. 11.] *and so the poor of the flock knew*, they read it, γνώσονται οἱ Χαναανῖται τὰ πρόβατα, &c. *the Canaanites shall know the sheep*, &c. So instead of הַצֹּאֵן הַפֶּנִּי לְכֵן *for this, or for you, O poor of the flock*, ver. 7, they read, εἰς τὴν Χαναανίτιν, *unto the land of Canaan*. Whence, after that we have taken notice that they read Nun final in הֵן as not final, I have some suspicion that these interpreters might have had an eye upon the reduction of the dispersed captivity into the land of Canaan, according to the common expectation of that nation. But this only by the by.

4 English folio edition, vol. ii. p. 574.

That of the apostle ought to be strictly heeded; Οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν, *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* Which indeed is, as it were, the gnomon to that chapter, and, above all other things, does interpret best the apostle's mind. For he propounds to discourse not concerning the universal call of the Jews, but of their not being universally rejected: which may very easily be collected from the very first verse of this chapter, "Hath God cast away his people?" that is, so cast them away that they are universally rejected. "God forbid!" for I myself am an Israelite, and am not cast away. This argument he pursues, and illustrates from the example of those most corrupted times, the age wherein Elijah lived, when they threw down the altars of God, slew his prophets, and not a few worshipped τὸν Βάαλ, *Baal of the Sidonians*, whom Ahab had introduced; and almost the whole nation worshipped τὴν Βάαλ, *that golden calf* or cow which Jeroboam had set up. And yet, even in that worst state of affairs, saith God, "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee τῇ Βάαλ," *to that golden calf*, the common and universal error of that nation, much less τῷ Βάαλ, *to Baal of the Sidonians*. "Even so" (saith the apostle), "at this present time also there is a remnant;" plainly intimating, that he does not assert or argue for the calling of the whole nation, but of that *remnant* only; and that he discourses concerning the present calling of that remnant, and not about any future call of the whole nation.

V. That is a vast mystery the apostle is upon, ver. 25 of that chapter; Ὅτι πώρωςις ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν, ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ· *Blindness hath severally happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*” I render ἀπὸ μέρους, *severally*, or *by parts*, not without warrant from grammar, and according to the meaning and intention of St. Paul. For the mystery mentioned by him is, that blindness *severally*, and at *several times*, happened to the Israelites: first, the ten tribes were blinded through idolatry, and, after many ages, the two tribes, through traditions; and yet both those and these reserved together to that time, wherein the Gentiles, who had been blinded for a longer space, are called, and then both Israelites and Jews and Gentiles, being all called together, do close into one body. It is observable that the apostle, throughout this whole chapter, doth not so much as once make mention of the Jews, but of Israel⁵, that he might include the ten tribes with the two within his discourse.

And, indeed, this great Shepherd had his flock, or his sheep, within the ten tribes, as well as within the two: and to me it is without all controversy that the gospel, in the times of the apostles, was brought and preached as well to the one as the other. Doubtless St. Peter, whilst he was in Babylon, preached to the Israelites dispersed in those countries as well as to the Jews.

⁵ Leusden's edition, vol. ii. p. 643.

VI. Some of the Gemarists do vehemently deny any conversion of the ten tribes under the Messiah: let them beware lest there be not a conversion of their own.

“The⁶ ten tribes shall never return, as it is written, ‘And he cast them into another land, as it is this day,’ Deut. 29:28. ‘As this day passeth and shall never return, so they are gone and shall not return again.’ They are the words of R. Akibah.”

“It is a tradition of the Rabbins, that the ten tribes shall not have a part in the world to come; as it is written, ‘The Lord rooted them out of their land in anger and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them out into another land. He rooted them out of their own land in this world, and cast them out into another land in the world to come.’ They are the words of Rabbi.”

But, in truth, when the true Messiah did appear, the ten tribes were more happily called (if I may so speak), that is, with more happy success than the Jews; because amongst those Jews that had embraced the gospel, there happened a sad and foul apostasy, the like to which we read not of concerning the ten tribes that were converted.⁷

⁶ Sanhedr. fol. 110. 2.

⁷ John Lightfoot, [*A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew-1 Corinthians: , Luke-John*](#), vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 346–350.