

HOSEA

THE ARGUMENT

Without dispute our prophet is one of the obscurest and most difficult to unfold clearly and fully. Though he come not, as Isaiah and Amos do sometimes, nor as Ezekiel and Zechariah do frequently, with visions; yet his sententious and concise style, peculiar to himself, renders it many times difficult to find out first, and to declare next the genuine and undoubted sense of his words. In expounding this prophet, the expositor needs the candour of his reader, and the reader owes his expositor thanks if he make some darker passages fairly intelligible, though he do not demonstrate his exposition to be the only sense of the place. This latter is not pretended to; the former it is hoped the reader will find in the most, if not in every obscure passage. It was a very debauched age our prophet did live in, and you will find him very sharp against the vices of the ten tribes, and very plain and open in his threats for their sins, which he saw punished; for he lived to see Samaria taken, and Hoshea made a prisoner, and the people carried captives. As it is not agreed when he began, so nor is it agreed how long he continued to prophesy.

The kings of Judah and of Israel, in whose time he first appeared a prophet, were of long reigns; the one forty-one, the other fifty-two; in which long space of time very different beginnings may be conjectured. All agree that he continued a prophet very long, seventy years at least, and some add more years, and make them up ninety. The sum of what he prophesied is here given us in short heads, rather than in a continued discourse. And as it was preached in Israel. (though we read not of the places where Hosea either lived, or died, or did preach, it is most likely within the hearing of the court,) so it doth more particularly refer to Israel or the ten tribes: declaring to them what were their sins; advising them to repent; promising them mercy upon sincere repentance; threatening grievous judgments on their impenitence; foretelling their rejection if they did not amend; and, for the comfort of the godly, predicting mercy to them; intermixing many promises of the future kingdom and coming of the Messiah, to whom many should be converted, and by him be saved, and especially many of

the two tribes, who hear from our prophet a more comfortable message (viz. of returning to their own land) than Israel, which must not expect any such return, i.e. for the whole body of the people. And he closeth his whole prophecy either with a form of confession and supplication for the remnant returned, or a prediction in what manner they would return, confess, supplicate, and rely upon God alone; to which duty performed, he adjoineth sweet and excellent promises, containing both temporal and spiritual blessings, **#Ho 14**.

HOSEA CHAPTER 1

The times in which Hosea prophesied, **#Ho 1:1**. To show the idolatrous whoredoms of the land, he marrieth a wife of whoredom, and hath by her Jezreel, **#Ho 1:2-5**, Lo-ruhamah, **#Ho 1:6,7**, and Lo-ammi, **#Ho 1:8,9**. The restoration of Judah and Israel under one head, **#Ho 1:10,11**.

Ver. 1.

The word, or the command, and the thing commanded; or the prediction expressed in the very words God suggested by his Spirit to the prophet, and the things too which are now foretold; for holy men of God spake as they were moved, &c., **#2Pe 1:21**, and the things that were shortly to come to pass were revealed also, in the words of **#Re 1:1**. Hosea shows the things, and speaks them in words which God hath suggested to him.

The Lord; *the Eternal*, as the French, Jehovah, Heb., which expreseth the eternity and infinite being of our God, together with his sovereignty and absolute authority over all. This is expressly added, to give warning to the prophet, to command audience, attention, reverence, and submission in the hearers, and to intimate to them the certainty of execution if they repent not, and the certainty of performance of promise if they believe; for it is Jehovah who changeth not that speakest both.

Came to Hosea; or was with him; as it came to him, so it did abide with him, made a deep impression upon his mind. Prophets were too backward, rather than overforward, to publish sad tidings to sinning people. Moses was unwilling to go to Pharaoh; Jeremiah pent up the word till it grew like fire in his bowels, too

hot, and he could have no ease till he gave it vent. It is not unlikely the prophet Hosea intimates by this expression some such effect the word of God had on him; he was full of the prophetic Spirit, its motions were ever with him, and stirring within him.

Hosea; a name that carrieth most comfortable news in the letter and signification of it, being the same with Joshua or Jesus; and his word or message from God to the good was comfortable, it was assurance both of preservation and salvation, as will appear in process of his prophecy.

The son of Beeri: though some would have this Beeri to be the same with Beerah, #1Ch 5:6, it hath no probability, the names being different; beside that Beerah was carried captive by Tilgath-pilneser, and it is probable his family was carried away with him; or if Hosea had escaped his father's mishap, he would have given us at least some ground to believe by his words that he resented the unhappiness of his family in that respect; but we know the name of the prophet's father, we know not his tribe or country, or of what quality he was, where he lived, or when he died.

In the days, i.e. during the reign, in the times; it is a Scripture expression of times.

Of Uzziah, called Azariah, #2Ki 14:21, and

Ozias, #Mt 1:8; the beginning of whose reign is very variously guessed at, and after all is left uncertain; but this is clear, that Jeroboam was contemporary with Uzziah, who began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam: reckoning thence to the forty-first year of his reign, which was the last of Jeroboam, there will be fourteen years of Uzziah's reign in which Hosea prophesied; but if there was (as for aught I find there might be) some years of viceroyship in which Amaziah reigned with his father Joash, and the like between Jeroboam and his father, then a longer synchronism ariseth between Uzziah and Jeroboam, and a larger space of time for Hosea to prophesy in their days, which I search not into. Jotham; who succeeded Uzziah as governor, and judged the people while Uzziah, being a leper, was, according to the law, retired from conversing with men, and dwelt in a separate house, but retained the royal title and authority; but it is uncertain how many years this was. Some say fifteen years, others say four

years (for we read, **#2Ki 15:33**, that he reigned sixteen years; and in **#2Ki 15:30** we have his twentieth year. Now the four here mentioned seem to be those years of his viceroyship, or government for Uzziah); yet others say his governor's power was of shorter date, and that Uzziah was struck with the plague of leprosy in the last year of his age and reign. This seems scarce consistent with the report of Jotham's being over the house of the king, judging the people; and the leper king dwelling in a separate house till the day of his death, **#2Ki 15:5 2Ch 26:21**. They mistake, I think, who place this stroke of leprosy so late; and they do as much mistake who place it at the twenty-fifth of Uzziah, and make him a leper and seclude him twenty-seven years. Jotham hath the character of a good king, **#1Ch 27:2,6**; but he could not make his subjects good, **#2Ch 27:2**. Ahaz; the worst son of a good father, yet the father of one of the best of kings. He sinned more in his distress, **#2Ch 28:22**, and hastened God's judgments on him and his. Hezekiah; who reformed Judah, and walked so with God, that above any of the kings of Judah he was protected and rescued by the immediate hand of Heaven. How long Hosea prophesied in this king's reign appears not; but that he did prophesy a great while is most apparent, whether fifty, or sixty-five, or seventy, or seventy-five, or ninety years, which different computations have some to assert them, I determine not. Jeroboam; the great-grandson of Jehu, of whose greatness and sins you read **#2Ki 14:24,25**; he was of the religion of Jeroboam son of Nebat.

Joash; whose story you meet with **#2Ki 13:10**: though a great idolater, and reprov'd for it no doubt by Elisha, yet he gave a visit to the dying prophet, and with tears bewail'd the public loss by Elisha's death, and by the prophet had a legacy given him, three victories over the Syrians; and more they should have been, had not Joash been sparing too much to his own great loss. I remember not any single visit so nobly and magnificently repaid.

Israel; kingdom of the ten tribes, contradistinguished to Judah. By this then it appears Hosea was sent to prophesy against the sins of Israel, or the ten tribes, as well as against the sins of Judah; against Israel he prophesied during Jeroboam's times, (and afterward left them to their obstinacy,) but he continued to prophesy to Judah until his death.

Ver. 2.

The beginning of the word of the Lord: this, say some, gives Hosea the precedence of all the prophets, which perhaps may be allowed to him among all the prophets that have written distinct books of their prophecies, but simply first of all the prophets he was not; in David's and Solomon's times we meet with Nathan and Ahijah the Shilonite. Or this

beginning may be, as our ordinary phrase, so soon as God spake, or at the very first of God's speaking, to Hosea, he commanded him to take such a wife, &c.

The Lord: see #Ho 2:1.

By Hosea; in Hosea; denoting the impulse of the Spirit of prophecy, the internal motions and influence of the Spirit in the prophet: see #Ho 1:1.

The Lord said; directed and commanded him: this was warrant to him, doing which otherwise was unseemly for a prophet to have done. Go,

take unto thee: this was, say some, done in vision, and was to be told to the people as other visions were: it was parabolically proposed to them, and this might be sufficient to convince the Jews, would they have considered it well, as David considered Nathan's parable. Others say it was really acted, and that the prophet did, as commanded, marry one who had been a strumpet, or that proved to be so after she was married. And though this would have been unseemly in the prophet, had he done it without this particular direction, now the scandal ceaseth, and it is very fit God be obeyed, and the prophet may with credit enough do what God had by his command made a necessary duty to him, and marry one known to be a lewd whore.

A wife of whoredoms; an openly noted whore, a notorious one, so the Hebrew phrase,

wife of whoredoms, as, a man of bloods, or man of sorrows; a woman of many whoredoms, and very lively emblem of idolatrous Israel.

Children of whoredoms; either that, born of such a mother, are, as she, addicted to lewdness; or else, with the mother made his

wife, he is to receive and maintain the children she had by her adulterers. And thus understood, it may lead our thoughts to God's rich mercy towards their ancestors, who were (Abraham himself not excepted) idolaters, when they dwelt on the other side the river, #Jos 24:2,3: yet God took them, and married them to himself, and did show wonderful kindness to them and theirs; all which is slighted and forgotten by their posterity, by you, O idolatrous Israelites! Or it may refer more expressly to what God did for Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, and made covenant with them in Horeb, which was as a solemn espousing them to God. The Lord found them tainted with Egyptian idolatries, yet, as the prophet here, married them to himself, and covenanted with them to be faithful to him, but they broke the covenant.

The land, i.e. the people of the land, intimating the universal spreading of this sin, all, or most of all, so infected.

Hath committed great whoredom: the phrase, Heb. *playing the harlot hath played the harlot*, speaks the continuance of this idolatry among them, as well as the greatness of the whoredom. From their forefathers they had been idolaters; while God was giving them his law (from the nuptial day to Hosea's time) they committed spiritual whoredom, and first made, next worshipped, the golden calf.

Departing from the Lord; so they left their first Husband, and doted on adulterers, on idols, as #Ho 2:5.

Ver. 3.

So he went and took Gomer; as commanded, so he did, whether you take it parabolically or literally. If you take it literally, this Gomer will be some known harlot, and perhaps she was famous for her beauty, and skill in the courtesan's art, as her name may import. If you take it as a parable, we must take this name for a made name, assumed for its signification; both in the best sense Israel was perfect with the perfection which God did put upon her, #Eze 16:14, he made her

Gomer; and in the worst sense she made herself *Gomer*, one who was drawing to her end, who had undone and consumed herself; thus the word, #Ps 12:1; and so, in one word, God's bounty and

mercy, and Israel's ingratitude and sin, is set forth, together with her punishment hastening upon her.

The daughter of Diblaim: literally understood, this Diblaim must be either father or mother of this Gomer, or else the name of the place where she was born. Parabolically understood, Diblaim, *bunches of dried figs*, may imply the deliciousness of her provision made of God, such as was made for great feasts, #1Sa 25:18; so #1Ch 12:40: thus it will suit #Ho 2:5,9, and the places where the fig is mentioned as fruit with which God had blessed Israel. All which abused to luxury and sin, will now make her a daughter of Diblaim, of wilderness, desolate.

Bare him a son: this seems to favour the literal acceptance of all this as really done, and not only as represented in vision, parable, or hieroglyphic. But while either way it will be well applied to the purpose in hand, I shall leave it to the choice of every judicious reader to interpret and apply as best likes him.

Ver. 4.

And the Lord said unto him, Hosea the prophet, who as in taking to wife an adulteress, so in giving name' to his son by her, was to presignify Israel's future calamities. Call his name, thy son now born,

Jezreel: the word is, *The seed of the Lord*, or, *The arm of the Lord*, or, *The Lord will scatter*; so it may insinuate that God by his own arm will scatter among the people, i.e. the Assyrians, those who were his people or seed. But we have a surer guide to lead us through this, i.e. the history of what was by Jehu done in Jezreel; of which more presently.

For; this is the reason why the prophet's son is so called.

Yet a little while: it was four generations of Jehu God promised the throne to, and now the third that is now running, how near to an end we know not, but are sure it was within twenty-eight years; for Jeroboam began his reign in the fifteenth of Amaziah, and so thirteen years of his forty-one are spent ere Uzziah comes to the throne, #2Ki 14:23; this according to one account: but #2Ki 15:1 accounteth Jeroboam's twenty-seventh to be the first of Uzziah, and then there are not above fourteen years to come; so little a while was this here spoken of, for in six months after Jeroboam's

death Shallum conspired against Zachariah, and slew him, and reigned a month; so Jehu's seed was cast out of the throne.

Will avenge; inquire after and punish these crimes, which were committed in Jezreel. Heb. *I will visit*, i.e. as a just and impartial judge I will require an account, and execute punishments.

The blood: murders committed are in Scripture expressed thus by blood: here are particularly meant the slaughters made by Jehu's hand or by his order, #2Ki 9:10,11 10:1-7, in Jezreel, where he did with a treacherous mind, and aiming at his own greatness, destroy Ahab's house, and slew Ahaziah king of Judah also. This was the just judgment of God upon that wicked house by Jehu executed, but he did it not with that mind God required.

Of Jezreel; the town which Ahab chose above others to dwell in, where the dogs licked up Ahab's blood, when his chariot was washed and cleansed of the blood of that slain king, and where dogs did eat Jezebel, as the prophet threatened, #1Ki 21:23.

Upon the house of Jehu; which had now possessed the throne (Jehu usurped) through the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam; but the usurper and his successors adhering to the idolatry of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and adding other sins to it, had now provoked God to declare a sudden extirpation of the family, which God will in his just revenge make as like to Jeroboam's family as Ahab's, and they had made themselves like them in sin; all which came to pass when Shallum, conspiring against Zachariah, slew him, #2Ki 15:10. *And will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel;* not immediately, but soon after the death of Zachariah, the kingdom of Israel did cease first to be free, for Menahem made it tributary to strengthen himself; so it is likely it continued for ten years during his life, and two years during his son Pekahiah's reign; after him Pekah the conspirator and murderer usurped the throne for twenty years, and probably was feudatory to Tiglath-pileser; to be sure Hoses was so, and in his ninth year this word was fulfilled in the letter of it, the kingdom of Israel, after one and forty years' tottering, fell to utter ruin, and hath so continued to this day. Israel, or the ten tribes divided from the house of David.

Ver. 5.

It shall come to pass; most certainly this shall be effected.

At that day; when my vengeance hath overtaken the house of Jehu, when his great-great-grandson shall be slain. I will break; weaken, and by degrees quite break, i.e. by the conspiracies, seditions, and civil wars which will arise among themselves.

The bow: this was a warlike weapon they much used and were skilful in; this one weapon put for all their warlike provision, power, and skill; possibly it may allude to the bow of Jehu, who slew Joram with an arrow, and usurped his throne, but now the bow of the house of Jehu and of Israel shall be broken.

Of Israel: see #Ho 1:4.

In the valley of Jezreel: next to Samaria, Jezreel was chief city of the ten tribes, a very strong and fortified town, and both situated in the large and pleasant valley that hath from Joshua's time been known by this name, valley of Jezreel, #Jos 17:16. In this valley it is probable the bloodiest battles in the civil wars were fought, between Zachariah and Shallum, #2Ki 15:10, and between Shallum and Menahem, #2Ki 15:14; between Pekahiah and Pekah, #2Ki 15:25, and Pekah and Hoshea; the reason whereof probably might be this, because whoever carried the victory in this place were soon masters of Samaria and Jezreel, and consequently carried the kingdom too.

Ver. 6.

And she, Gomer, the hieroglyphic wife, who was to be a sign to Israel,

conceived again, whether visionary or really it comes to one, and bare a daughter; which is to be a sign too, as was her mother. It is too nice which Ribera observes, that the state grew weaker, as appeared by the bringing forth of one of the weaker sex. This daughter was fit to be an emblem, and therefore it is a daughter rather than a son, though it will be next a son and no daughter. But

Lo-ruhamah is feminine, and in congruity of speech it must be a female who bears this name. God said unto him: as before God imposed, so now again he imposeth a name, signifying what he would do with Israel. Though God direct what it shall be, the

prophet is to give the name. *Lo-ruhamah, Not pitied*. Israel's name had been through many ages *Ruhamah*, i.e. *Pitied*. God had with marvellous patience forborne them, and with tender bowels pitied them, and saved them from enemies, but now Israel should be no more pitied as formerly, God would throw them up to the rage of usurpers, and to the merciless hands of prosperous conspirators; so Menahem mercilessly ripped up women with child in Tiphshah, #2Ki 15:16, and God gave up this bloody tyrant into the hand of Tiglath-pileser.

I will no more have mercy; I was wont to add mercy unto mercy for Israel, I was never weary of showing them mercy, but I will do no more so for them; my pity saved them in Jeroboam's time, and raised them to a great height and glory, but now they shall, unpitied by me, sink lower and lower. Restraints of Divine pity are sure forerunners of destruction, #Jer 13:14.

Upon the house of Israel: this to me seems a qualifying of the former threat; though the house of Israel as a body politic, as a kingdom, under this character, shall no more be as it hath been, pitied, yet many among them may obtain mercy in the days of gospel grace, and many of them had mercy showed to them by the Lord, when they joined with Judah in the return from Babylon's captivity; but the whole house, the families of the ten tribes, united in a kingdom, shall no more be to God *Ruhamah*, but ever *Lo-ruhamah*. Thus it hath been through the long series of two thousand four hundred years and more.

I will utterly take them away; taking away I will take away, till the whole kingdom is utterly overthrown, and removed out of the land wherein it once had flourished. Thus some were taken away by the sword of civil wars, some ruined by oppression of the prevailing faction in those divided times, whole cities and all the land of Naphtali was taken away by Tiglath-pileser, #2Ki 15:29, and at last all swept away by Shalmaneser, #2Ki 17:3-5.

Ver. 7.

But, or *And*, or *Yet*.

I; the Lord, who threateneth Israel, proud, flourishing, secure, and sinful Israel: he promiseth mercy to poor, oppressed, and impoverished Judah.

Will have mercy on the house of Judah; prolonging that kingdom one hundred and thirty-two years after Israel ceased to be a kingdom; preserving them from the combined powers of the king of Syria and the king of Israel, who combine to destroy them; raising them up to greatness and glory in the reign of Hezekiah, in whose days the house of Judah was saved by a miracle: beside all these, Judah's captivity was for seventy years, Israel's for ever; Judah returned to their own land, Israel never did. By this, as the prophet would abate the pride of Israel, so possibly he would secretly direct the best among Israel whither to go to find mercy. Judah; including Benjamin, and such of the Levites as adhered constant to God's law and worship, and as many of the other tribes as renounced the calves, Baal, and all idolatrous worship, and worship God alone as he required, all these, in this case, are included in Judah, and so we find many such returning with Judah.

And will save them; preserve, that violence do not swallow them up, nor length of captivity wear them out; and this preserved remnant shall return and be planted in their own land, and there kept in safety. This promise does seem to point out such temporal salvation, but as a type of a far better and more glorious salvation.

By the Lord their God; either by Messiah, who is the Lord and their God, or by God himself, as their God, whom they did not, as Israel, forsake utterly. This passage bids us look to that extraordinary miraculous deliverance of Hezekiah and Jerusalem: see **#Isa 37:36 2Ki 18:13 2Ch 32:1**.

Will not save them by bow, &c.: here God removeth all force and might, whether their own or their allies', all that might eclipse the glory of God in this salvation. Now this was very fully performed in Hezekiah's time, when Sennacherib's army was cut off in one night by an angel, **#Isa 37:35,36**: and in Cyrus's time and Darius's the captive Jews saw it was not by power nor by might, but the Lord saved them; so should it be here, as **#Ps 44:5,6 Isa 43:7,15 Zec 4:6**.

Ver. 8.

Though some wrest the words to an allegorical sense, I think the prophet keeps the decorum in the similitude, and therefore, as

women ordinarily conceive not whilst they give suck, so this Gomer weaned her daughter ere she conceived the son which is to be an emblem of the final rejection of the ten tribes.

Bare a son, to be a third sign to this incorrigible and self-undoing kingdom.

Ver. 9.

Then said God to the prophet, as before, #Ho 1:4,6.

Call his name; the name of his new-born son, the sign or type of the ten tribes, who had rejected God, and would not be reclaimed.

Lo-ammi, Not my people; though once you were a peculiar people, you are so no more in my account, you are cast off as you deserved.

For ye; the whole house of apostate Israel, who first cast off the house of David and my temple, and at last rejected me, that I should not be your God.

Are not my people; though circumcised,. yet have you cast off my covenant, you neither worship me, nor come up to my temple, nor keep my law; Baal, the calves, and the idols of your neighbours are your gods; ye are their people: ye are neither mine as to the civil constitution, you made you kings, and I knew it not, #Ho 8:4, without my leave or liking; nor as to church constitution are ye mine, for your whole worship is the politic contrivance of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. You have forgotten your Maker, and build temples, #Ho 8:14: ye count the great things of my law strange things to you; I must count you strangers to me.

I will not be your God, to protect you against dangers and enemies, or to replenish you with blessings, the fruits of my wonted goodness, or to pity you when you do either want or smart, or to counsel you in difficulties, or to hear your cries, or pardon your sins, or accept an offering at your hand; as you have long and lang refused me, and I have tried all ways to prevent your final self-undoing obstinacy, so now I do for ever reject you, O house of Israel, and will be a God to you no more than to any of the heathen nations. This God executed when he gave them up into the hands of Shalmaneser, who sent them where none now can find them; they are lost to men, they know not where they are; they are lost to God, he loves not nor careth for them.

Ver. 10.

Yet: this may anticipate the carnal Israel's objection, that thus God would fail of his word to Abraham, or he would lose his people. Nothing so, yet, though ten tribes be for ever captivated, God will have his Israel.

The number of the children of Israel; not Israel after the flesh, not those very persons, families that are carried captive, (though for aught I know, or any can tell to the contrary, these may be so increased for Abraham's sake,) but the Israel of God according to the faith, the spiritual seed of Abraham, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles.

Shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; innumerable, expressed by an elegant proverbial speech, alluding to the immenseness of the sands, **#Isa 10:22,23**
Ro 9:27.

It shall come to pass; the time is fixed, and the thing shall certainly be, God will bring it about in his time. In the place: as we read it, it is plain that in those places or countries where a people dwelt who knew not God, were not his people, there should be a people that should both be called and be his people; the heathen should be called into the church, and in every place God should have his people. Or else thus: Instead of being called the people of God, you shall be called the children; so blessed a change, that who were once far off, and not a people, shall now be more than people, they shall be children. *Where it was said unto them,* the Gentiles and Jews unconverted.

Ye are not my people; in the state of unconverted ones, are far from God, without his covenant, and no people.

There it shall be said; known, declared, men shall confess it, God will own it himself, and make it known to others.

Ye are the sons; grace shall be enlarged, your relation nearer and sweeter, you shall be sons, not servants, have communion with God as with your father; and this shall be the common or equal privilege of this whole Israel of God. This is fulfilled in the kingdom of the Messiah under the gospel, as the apostle argueth it, **#Ro 9:25,26.**

Of the living God, who is the fountain of life to all his children, and who giveth them lively affections to serve him, to offer living sacrifices to the living God. So are we called, **#Ro 12:1,2 1Th 1:9**.

Ver. 11.

This verse without doubt hath in it both an historical sense and a mystical or spiritual sense; it looketh somewhat to the return out of the Babylonish captivity, and to their settling in Canaan; but it looketh further to a more glorious deliverance from a more miserable captivity.

Then; in the type and history, when the Babylonish captivity is dissolved, and the captives are loosed.

The children of Judah; the children of the two tribes, who adhered to the house of David, who were carried captives, but under promise of a redemption from it.

The children of Israel; some of the ten tribes who either went over to and did incorporate with the kingdom of Judah, and so were carried captives with them; or some of the ten tribes which the children of Judah found in the kingdom of Babylon, which having swallowed up the Assyrian monarchy, now the ten tribes were captives to their conquering sword. Thus in type, but it is spiritually and mystically to be understood of the whole Israel of God, Jew and Gentile, redeemed by and converted to Christ, in the day of his power.

Be gathered together, by the power of God, by the decree Of Cyrus, by each other, heartening one another to return; so the type: in the antitype, shall be gathered together by the Spirit of God, the preaching of the gospel, and mutual instruction, exhortation, and encouragements of each other

Appoint themselves one head; Zerubbabel in type, who was appointed by Cyrus, yet with full approbation of the people, putting themselves under his conduct, to carry them up to Jerusalem. But in the antitype Christ, appointed by the Father Head of his church, whom believers, heartily accepting, may in large sense be said to appoint to themselves.

Out of the land; literally, out of Babylon; spiritually, out of captivity of sill and Satan.

For great, good, joyous, and comfortable,

shall be the day of Jezreel; of the seed or people of God, the sons of God once dispersed, but now gathered by the gospel.

HOSEA CHAPTER 2

The people are exhorted to forsake idolatry, which is threatened with severe judgments, **#Ho 2:1-13**. God allureth them with promises of reconciliation, **#Ho 2:14-23**.

Ver. 1.

In the two last verses of the former chapter, the prophet did from God promise marvellous mercy to Judah and Israel, to that remnant of the seed of Abraham who returned out of captivity, and to the converted Gentiles; now in this verse he calls upon them to acknowledge the mercy, and to excite one another to mutual love and esteem.

Say; declare, own, or publish.

Ye; who of no people are made a people, who were once unpitied and unregarded, but now have obtained mercy; you that are the sons of the living God, whether Jews or Gentiles. You Christians, as the apostle applies the words, **#Ro 9:24,25**; and so in the ant, type no doubt they are to be understood; but in the letter and type, the persons here mentioned are those who among this people were pious, feared God, and kept his law; some such there were among them.

Unto your brethren; to those of the ten tribes who are, and will be these forty years, your brethren.

Ammi; let them know that yet they are the people of God, and repentance may remedy all; they are still within the covenant of their father Abraham; if they will, as their father. walk with God, all shall be well.

And to your sisters, Ruhamah: in a decorum, to (what before was made an emblem of Israel) the prophet's daughter, *Lo-ruhamah*, some are here directed to reason (as it is **#Ho 2:2**) with her, i.e. with Israel, whose name is yet Ruhamah, and it may be so still, if Israel will retain it by returning to God.

Ver. 2.

Plead; argue the case, state it aright between me and your mother, then debate it fully; lay open either my displeasure, how great it is, or the effects of it already upon the house of Israel, or my menaces against them for the future, by my prophet Hosea: and next recollect the carriage of your mother of Israel; consider her sins, her lewdness, her adulteries, her unthankfulness, how notorious, how long, how multiplied and aggravated.

With your mother; the synagogues, the whole body of the people Israel, which were emblemized in Gomer, the wife of whoredoms.

Plead; ye that are sons or daughters of God amidst this degenerate, idolatrous nation, you that have any resentments for your Father, debate, or at least deal plainly with her, who is called your mother, and say how little right she hath to be called my wife, and how little reason I have to own myself her Husband.

She is not my wife; in point of right she is not, for by her adulteries she hath dissolved the marriage covenant, and so abolished the relation, though in point of fact she is not cast off utterly; I have not sued out the divorce, nor turned her out of doors. but yet for all that she is no wife, nor hath any right to the honour, maintenance, or love of a wife.

Neither am I her husband; I do not account myself bound by any covenant of marriage to love, maintain, comfort, or protect her; nor will I long do it, if by her continued lewdness she still violate her faith, and abuse my patience. Tell idolatrous Israel, that her God will deal with her as an abused husband will deal with an unreclaimed adulterous wife.

Let her therefore put away her whoredoms; when you have pleaded, then make an offer to her yet once more, counsel, persuade, entreat, and encourage her to do what becomes a wife that would not be divorced; try if you can prevail with her to cast aside and to remove from her all evil practices and inclinations, to cast off spiritual whoredoms, which all her idolatrous practices are accounted to be.

Out of her sight; either remove the idols, their temples, priests, and gaudy rites, for ever out of her sight, as they did, #**Isa 2:20**; or

else cease from her whorish looks, her unchaste and immodest framing her face and gestures.

And her adulteries, idolatries, which are spiritual adulteries,

from between her breasts: by an immodest and lascivious manner of framing the breasts, and laying them open, these kinds of women here alluded to did entice adulterers; and so were idolatrous Israelites grown impudent in their idolatries, and courted others in shameless manner to turn idolaters also.

Ver. 3.

Lest: this little word suggests great hopes; if this treacherous wife will cease her lewdness, and become chaste, she may be forgiven; it reserves room for repentance and reconciliation, without these it threatens.

Strip her naked; as was usually done by incensed husbands, divorcing impudent adulteresses: see **#Eze 16:38,39 23:26**. So God will strip her of all her ornaments which he gave; so he did gradually by Israel's enemies the Assyrians, till at last by Shalmaneser she was stripped to the skin, and led away captive; God east her out thus by him.

And set her as in the day that she was born: it is not much material to fix the period of this birth, viz. between their going out of Egypt and the giving of the law, or their entering upon their travels in the wilderness. Their state was poor enough then, now it shall be as bad, or worse; they shall be as the wilderness, barren and desolate, affording nothing for life or delight, much less for profit: whereas adulteresses ordinarily hunt after profit and delights, God will punish adulterous Israel with denying both to her, she shall be like the wilderness, horrid and starving.

And make her as a wilderness: this phrase may somewhat intimate the time of Israel's birth, viz. between their going out of Egypt and the giving of the law, or their entering upon their travels in the wilderness. Their state was poor enough then, now it shall be as bad, or worse; they shall be as the wilderness, barren and desolate, affording nothing for life or delight, much less for profit: whereas adulteresses ordinarily hunt after profit and delights, God will punish adulterous Israel with denying both to her, she shall be like the wilderness, horrid and starving.

And set her like a dry land: this is much the same with the former, and added to confirm and illustrate it.

And slay her: all this shall be done to the end she may be destroyed: of old God led his people through the wilderness to a city of habitation, now he will make them as the wilderness that they may perish in it.

With thirst: a miserable end, surely, thus to be scorched up with parching heat! so will God's wrath burn up these wicked, idolatrous Israelites.

Ver. 4.

I will not have mercy: see #Ho 1:6.

Upon her children: by this expression particular persons are severally, as by mother the whole nation was, threatened, that none might flatter themselves with hope of better: it is observable they are called her children, not God's.

For they be the children of whoredoms; born in whoredom, and, like the mother, addicted to whoredom; as if God had said, They are none of mine by birth, nor any whit like me in disposition, but a spurious and hateful brood, and as such I will use them.

Ver. 5.

For: this demonstrates the truth of the charge, and justifieth the severity of the punishment.

Their mother: see #Ho 2:2.

Played the harlot; doted on idols, worshipped them, and brought forth and educated children for diem.

She hath done shamefully: this practice, in the best circumstances it can be put, was dishonourable as well as dishonest; but here is an aggravation of it, it was done with shameless impudence, and openly avowed, with *a whore's forehead*, #Jer 3:3.

She said; she took lip resolutions, declared them, stood to them, none could alter her course.

I will go after: when they came not to her, she will go to them. Impudent adulteress! forsaken, thou courtest and woost.

My lovers: this spoken as if they loved her better than her Husband loved her; a high degree of impudence. These are the idols she worshipped, and the idolaters she associated and traded with.

That give me my bread, &c.: whereas every mercy she enjoyed was God's gift to her, and a fruit of his covenant love and faithfulness towards her; yet she denies (like an impudent strumpet) all his kindness, and in a manner chargeth him with such hardness and ill usage, that she had starved if her idols and idolatrous friends had not maintained her, and gives out, the bread she ate, and water she drank, and the clothes she wore, all was of their kindness. This is shameful indeed, and the prophet hath set it forth to the life: and now is there not good reason why a Husband so abused should without pity cast off such a mother, such children, and leave them to live on their chosen lovers, or to perish under the hatred of their despised God?

Ver. 6.

Therefore; because she is so impetuous and shameless in her idolatrous courses, nothing hath, and she resolves nothing shall, hinder her, but she will follow them.

Behold; take notice of it, thou lewd woman, and all that stand by.

I will hedge up thy way with thorns: thou wilt set no bounds to thy lusts, and thy wanderings to satisfy them; I will deal with thee as men do with unruly and rambling beasts, set a hedge of thorns about thee, i.e. compass thee in with wars and other calamities, which shall wound and pierce thee, that though thou love thy sinful courses, and wilt follow them, thou shalt have little pleasure in them.

And make a wall; another allusion to the method men take to keep in the wildest cattle, which would break through hedges, but cannot break through walls. God will make the calamities of this people as a strong and high wall, over which they cannot leap, nor through which they cannot break. So was the Assyrian army under Shalmaneser, which cooped them up in a long siege of Samaria, and at last took them, and carried them into a long captivity, which now lasteth.

That she shall not find her paths; wherein then didst go when thou wentest to Egypt or Syria for help; but by my judgments, and thine enemies' power and watchfulness, always shall be watched and guarded, thou shalt not find how to send to them for relief. These were her paths, whereas a chaste wife would have gone to her husband for relief.

Ver. 7.

And she, hedged in with many and great distresses, when under the judgments of God, *shall follow after her lovers*; with earnest travel, and with wearisome toil, she shall attempt every way to get to them, but to no purpose: afflictions and sorrows surround Israel; these Israel can by no means break out of to these lovers, and they, like false lovers, hasten as fast and as far from this adulteress as they can.

Her lovers, idols and idolaters, her false friends, and falser gods.

She shall not overtake them; they which hasten after such strange gods and helps, as this shameless harlot, shall meet with sorrow, but never overtake their desired help.

She shall seek them; as is the manner of immodest strumpets; it speaks also her obstinate resolution in her way: so Israel forsook a God that would have sought him to do him good, and by no disappointments would be (for a long time) taken off from this frantic wildness, of seeking to idols that could do him no good.

But shall not find them; the final issue of all is at last, she is wearied in her folly, tired with fruitless labour, and sits down hopeless of ever finding help from idols and idolaters.

Then shall she say; as the prodigal, first think well on it, next resolve with herself.

I will go and return; restless, she will try one way more; happy she if she had tried this sooner, this would have been successful; she will return, come back, and seek to her Husband.

To my first Husband, i.e. God, who had married Israel to himself, who was her Husband indeed: all others were as adulterers, as deceivers and seducers, who abuse the credulity of wanton women first, and next abuse their husbands' beds.

For then was it better with me than now: how much the tune is changed! In #Ho 2:5, all her gallantry, her feasts, her rich apparel, these are gifts of her lovers; not a word of her Husband's greatest kindnesses. But now she sees and confesseth the least of her Husband's kindnesses was better than the greatest kindness of these her paramours, and at worst with her Husband she was better than at best with adulterers.

Ver. 8.

For; this unexampled ignorance, or inconsiderateness, was the cause of all this lost labour, and unthankfulness to God.

She, in her rayons and prosperity, as were the days of Jeroboam, in which much of this lewdness was committed, and in which the prophet calls them to repentance,

did not know; considered not, but carried it toward God as if indeed she did not know; nor did she own it or acknowledge it by any suitable obedience and thankfulness to the God of her mercies.

That I gave, without desert or worthiness; it was mercy, and this free, from whence all she had came.

Corn; which is the stay and strength of our life; one necessary corn fort put for all the rest.

Wine and oil: these cheer the heart, and include all provision for delight and sweetness.

And multiplied her silver and gold: the treasures of gold and silver, and all precious things brought in by trade, and increased among them, were the effect of mine undiscerned and unacknowledged bounty and goodness.

Which they, the generality or body of the Jews, these idolatrous Jews,

prepared for Baal; first made the idol with the gold and silver, and next dedicated it to the service of the idol. Sottish ignorance, that with one part of the gold and silver make a god, with the other part provide for sacrifices to be offered to it. Thus one part is advanced to be a deity, the other part of the same mass

consecrated to the service of its fellow lump. What absurdities will not down with such fools and sots?

Ver. 9.

Therefore, because I was not acknowledged nor served as the giver,

will I return: much after the manner of man doth God speak; he had left large blessings behind him among this people, but their sottish ingratitude provokes him to resolutions of returning and seizing of all.

Take away; take into my hands, or resume all I give, for all given was mine still; God never gives away his right.

My corn; it was hers while thankfully received and rightly used, but want of these forfeit that right, and the propriety reverts to God. See #Ho 2:8.

In the time thereof; either when they should gather it in, as being ripe, or when they need it, and should use it. All they enjoy is mine, but since they so use me as to serve Baal by it, I will either take all away from them, or make all useless to them. When I take away my wool and my flax, she shall appear shamefully naked, not having one rag of her own.

Ver. 10.

And now, when I make a seizure, and strip her of all that is mine, I will expose her, or else I shortly will do so, ere long.

Her lewdness; the folly and wickedness of her idolatrous worship; and perhaps the corporal lewdnesses which idolaters seldom were free from may be here intended.

In the sight of her lovers; among whom most will loathe her and hoot at her, some secretly despise her; if any shall attempt to help at this dead lift, it shall be to no purpose.

None shall deliver her out of mine hand; they who would deliver her are few and weak, unable to rescue her from the infamy I adjudge her to. In short, as she hath like a strumpet shamelessly sinned, so like a strumpet she shall be shamefully, with greatest infamy, punished; and I, saith the Lord, will see it done.

Ver. 11.

I will also cause all her mirth to cease; the jollity of Israel was certainly damped when Tiglath-pileser took Ijon, and other cities, and captivated Naphtali, #2Ki 15:29, which was some, yet but few, years after this prophecy: but sure all their joy ceased about ten or twelve years after, when Samaria was taken, and Hoshea and all Israel made captives: so the threat was executed in this sense. But the prophet speaks (as by what follows appeareth) of their sacred or religious joys, which God will abolish. He did not set them up, but he will pull them down.

Her feast days: though apostate Israel was fallen to idolatry, and renounced the true worship of God, yet by this text it appears they retained many of the rites and ceremonies that were used by the Jews, or else set up others like them, as their solemn feast at setting up the calves at Dan and Beth-el, in Jeroboam's time.

New moons: these were days of greater sacrifices, #Nu 28:11, and greater feasting, #1Sa 20:5.

Sabbaths; their weekly sabbaths. All her solemn feasts; the three annual feasts of tabernacles, weeks, and passover, or others with them, all which should cease when these people were carried captive, as they were by Shalmaneser.

Ver. 12.

God will do it either by blasting, or by the Assyrians, who, as other invaders, shall spoil all.

Destroy; make very desolate, or lay waste.

Her vines and her fig trees: these two were mentioned, but all other fruit trees are meant.

Whereof she hath said, These are my rewards: this was in peculiar manner the sin for which Israel was punished thus, they gave the praise of the fruitfulness of these trees, and the abundance of them, to idols, robbed God of the praise due for them, therefore God will take them away.

That my lovers have given me: their false gods are here made the givers of all outward blessings to Israel: see #Ho 2:5.

I will make them; their vineyards and oliveyards, and places where they planted and fenced in their fig trees, and other fruitful trees.

A forest; wild and uncultivated, the hedges and fences shall be thrown up, and all run into the wildness of a forest, as it came to pass in the Assyrian invasion.

The beasts of the field; savage men, such as the Assyrians were; or rather in the letter, the beasts of the field should break down their branches, and devour them, and pull off the fruit, as foxes pull the grapes, or wild boars of the wood root up and eat the tender and sappy branches and springles.

Shall eat them; the trees and their fruits.

Ver. 13.

I will visit; punish, for the prophet threatens them with this visitation, by which it evidently appears to be a visiting in wrath.

Upon her; the kingdom of Israel.

The days; the sins of those days past.

Of Baalim: Baal was the great idol of the ten tribes, the chief of their idols, their lord (as the word signifieth) and patron; here it is plural, Baalim, either to denote the multitude of idols which they worshipped, all called by this one name, or perhaps because of the multitude of his statues or images, and of his altars and temples, erected to Baal in all places of the land.

Burnt incense to them; sacrificed and worshipped, for this one kind of religious observance is put for all the rest.

She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels; to put the greater honour upon the idol, they put on their richest and best attire, or it may be they blindly thought this rich habit would make them the more acceptable to their senseless idol.

And she went after her lovers; decked thus, strumpet like, she went on by her spiritual adultery to provoke me.

And forgot me; and slighted me, if she did at all think of me, adulteress like.

Ver. 14.

Therefore: this particle seems to connect these following passages with those that went before, as causal, or giving a reason why God will do thus, and so are difficulter than if read as *zkl* might be, either as a particle that speaks order or time of things, and is as much as *afterwards*; so it will be easy, *I will visit, &c., afterwards I will allure*; first punish, next comfort: or else it may be adversative, as much as yet, or but; so it is plain, thus, She like an adulteress hath sinned, and I have punished; *but, or yet, or notwithstanding,*

I will allure: or else it is a particle that doth more strongly affirm; so rendered the place would be less obscure, thus,

I will destroy her vines, &c.; *surely I will allure, &c.:* thus *zkl* is used #**Jer 5:2 Zec 11:7.** *Behold* with attention, and wonder at the methods of Divine grace.

I will allure her; with kind words and kinder usage I will incline her mind to hear and consider what I propose; I will persuade by sweetest dealings, like a kind husband that makes use of the distresses of his disloyal wife to commend his love to her, to win her to himself, and to ways that are the honour and happiness of a wife.

And bring her into the wilderness; after that I have brought her into the wilderness; so the French, and some other versions, and so it is plainer than as we read it.

The wilderness; deep distress or captivity, with all the sorrows that attend captivity; then it is likely she will hearken: or by *wilderness* may be understood a retired place, and solitary, where shall be no diversions of her mind, no such temptations as formerly, where with best leisure she may consider and bethink herself: so understood, our version is easily intelligible.

And speak comfortably; things that are full of comfort, and in such manner too as is comfortable to the hearer. Here are glad tidings, gracious promises, and wonderful mercy to the true Israel after afflictions have brought them to God, after they are converted from sin by these means.

Ver. 15.

And I, reconciled to her, will give her her vineyards; will both settle her, and abundantly enrich her with blessings, as the phrase implieth.

From thence; either from the place of their exile and sufferings, or from the time of their hearkening to the Lord speaking to them in their distresses and sorrows; or if it refer to **#Ho 2:12**, it is a promise to comfort them under that threat which swept away the blessings of vines mid fig trees in their own land, and here is a promise of vineyards to them from the time of their repentance, and from the place where they are captives.

The valley of Achor; which was a large, fruitful, and pleasant valley near Jericho, and on the very entrance into the land of Canaan, where after forty years' travels and sorrows Israel first set foot on a country such as they expected.

For a door of hope: as that valley was a door of hope to Israel then, by that Israel saw that he should enjoy the Promised Land; so would God deal with repenting Israel in the times here pointed at.

She shall sing praises to their God for his mercies, and sing forth their own joys too, and answer each other, sing in responses, as the word signifieth.

As in the days of her youth: as that age is most jocund, and expresseth it by singing, so shall it be as renewed youth to Israel, full of blessings from God, and full of praises to God.

When she came up out of the land of Egypt: this passage explains the former; their youth is a time somewhat like the time of their coming out of Egypt, their mercies now like the mercies of that time, and their joys and songs shall be like too. However these things were fulfilled to the type, whose repentance and return to God is not very eminent, they are all fully made good to antitype Israel, the church of Christ, in spiritual blessings, chiefly here intended.

Ver. 16.

At that day; when through deep distresses I have prepared her to return, and she who was an adulteress repents, and renews her

covenant of love and obedience, and in the day of my blessings on her.

Saith the Lord: this confirmeth and insureth the thing.

Thou, my repenting Israel,

shalt call me Ishi; both by words, affections, and obedience shall own me as thy loving, tender Husband, and delight to call me so.

And shalt call me no more Baali; though the word hath no ill in itself, yet it is so near to the name of the abominable idols, that I will no more be called Baali.

Ver. 17.

For I will take away the names of Baalim; it is my purpose to abolish the memory of Baalim. This great idol for all others; God will cut off all the remains of idolatry from his church.

Out of her mouth; so God required, of old, #Ex 23:13.

They shall no more be remembered by their name; these false gods and provoking idols shall be quite forgotten, their names perishing with them. When God shall so cut off all idolatry from his church in gospel days, it will be the final and fullest accomplishment of this prediction.

Ver. 18.

In that day: see #Ho 2:16.

Make a covenant; command or enjoin, and these creatures shall as duly observe the command as just ones keep a covenant.

For them; true converts, the Israel of God.

With the beasts of the field, &c.; with all the creatures that might either serve or hurt them; it is a full and gracious promise of abundance of peace, safety, and love among all, through the creation, for the comfort of God's people.

And I will break the bow, &c: but if brute beasts do not hurt, yet unless more brutish creatures, bloody men, be tamed, there will be little safety to the church; therefore God will put an end to wars, and make men peaceable in their disposition, far more peaceable than heretofore they have been.

And will make them to lie down safely; by a special care of, love for, and presence with them, God will provide for their safety. Now I doubt not but all this in some measure was made good to the Jews returning out of captivity, among whom were also some thousands of the house of Israel, who had their share in this promised peace, safety, and prosperity; but the full accomplishment is to be to the church of Christ, and in spiritual blessings shadowed out by these temporal blessings.

Ver. 19.

And I, thy God, who was offended, but now am reconciled, though I was divorcing thee, will now

betroth, on new terms enter marriage covenant with

thee, O Israel, who art my people, and leavest thine idolatries and rebellions.

Unto me, God of mercy and truth, who hath forgiven and changed thee, and made thee suitable to myself, and who will be as kind and gracious as thou canst desire or need.

For ever: the former covenant was broken, and the marriage nulled, but now it shall be an everlasting contract and marriage between my Israel and their God.

I will betroth thee unto me: this promise is repeated to confirm it, and to remove scruples and jealousies.

In righteousness; on equal terms on both sides.

In judgment; with mature advice, or well-informed and settled judgment and resolution; this covenant shall be, as a well-taken oath, finished with integrity of heart and judgment. In loving-kindness; without desert in her that is betrothed, of mere love, and freest kindness.

And in mercies: this, though the same with the former, is added to insure all to this new-espoused wife; or

loving-kindness is the never-exhausted fountain, mercies are the never-failing streams, the abundant fruits of that love toward the poor and undeserving objects of it.

Ver. 20.

This verse is a third promise in the same words to comfort and encourage the true Israel, only faithfulness is here added a qualification of this new marriage, which shall continue firm on a mutual, faithful promise, love, and contract.

Thou shalt know the Lord; his just anger which hath punished, his rich grace which hath now pardoned and taken into covenant again, his faithfulness and tender compassions, his all-sufficiency and sovereignty, that we may obey him, and rest satisfied in his love, as it is our reward and happiness.

Ver. 21.

No text from Poole on this verse.

Ver. 22.

In that day, when this new alliance is made, or in the day of gospel grace, *I will hear*: this general promise God gives us to encourage us to cry to him; he will so hear as to answer. *Saith the Lord*: this is the seal to the truth and certainty of the things promised.

There is a subordination of causes, all second causes do in their ranks (like wheels in a curious engine) move as moved by the first great spring, and so contribute to the good of such as any way depend on them. Thus here, God, the first and universal cause, will influence the heavens, he will command their dew and showers; they would be as iron over us, if God did not command them to distil their drops on the earth; when this is dry, parched, and barren, it does as it were cry to the heavens for refreshing showers, for fruitful rains; when the seed sown, the vines and olives planted, are at a stand, take no rooting, they do as it were cry to the earth for its kindly influences and fatness, that they may spring up and yield fruit for Jezreel: which may call, and cry, and wait, but never be satisfied, if God do not hear them, and command his blessing of fructifying influences, which God here doth promise to his people on renewing covenant with them. God's seed, his gathered ones, his espoused church, shall be served to hey comfort by all the creatures. When disobedience, backslidings, idolatries, and such-like sins did provoke God to punish them with famine and scarcity; now their repentance and obedience shall be blessed with plenty, and God will set the frame

of heaven and earth in due order to effect this, there shall be a harmony and correspondence between all subordinate causes moved by God the first great cause, whence expected events and fruits shall certainly be produced for their good and comfort.

Ver. 23.

Their sins, the enemies' sword, and God's just displeasure, had wasted and lessened their numbers; but now the Lord will bless them with wonderful increase of people, expressed with allusion to a seed sown in the earth, which multiplieth exceedingly: so the Jews multiplied after the Babylonish captivity, but much more are the numbers increased since the preaching of the gospel, and the gathering in the dispersed elect of God.

The earth; either the land of Canaan, if you refer this to the Jews after the captivity; or the whole earth, all places and nations, if you do, as you should, refer it to gospel days; and so we have seen this promise fulfilled.

I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy: see #Ho 1:6,10.

I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; so great is the change grace hath made, that a rejected people are once more taken to be a peculiar people; a remnant among them is saved. Not in word only, but with hearty consent, joy, affection. and thankfulness they shall be my people, as well as call themselves so.

They shall say, Thou art my God: this people of whom the prophet here speaketh shall openly confess the Lord is their God, Sovereign to command and rule, and Saviour to deliver and save them. Their God to give them law and life, to direct their obedience, and to be their exceeding great reward for it; their God to sanctify, justify, and glorify.

HOSEA CHAPTER 3

By the prophet taking unto him an adulteress is showed the desolation of Israel, and their restoration.

Ver. 1.

Then, or *And*, Heb. or Furthermore.

Said the Lord; commanded. *Unto me*; Hosea. *Go yet*; again, or once more; so it implieth he had once already been commanded and done some such-like thing.

Love a woman: in the former he was commanded to marry, in this he is commanded to love, (the reason of which will appear in the application of the parable,) a woman, though described by her character, yet not named; and though her character would suit well enough to Gomer, yet it was not she, for this woman was to abide for him, #**Ho 3:3**, but Gomer was presently married to him, or at least so represented; this was brought, Gomer was not.

Beloved of her friend; her husband, though some think it may be some other person or lover.

An adulteress; either already tainted, or that certainly will be tainted with that vice; a divorced woman, separate from her husband because of her falseness to him.

According to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel; let this be the emblem of my love to the children of Israel: by this I intend, saith God, to let Israel know how I have loved, and how she hath loved: how greatly, dearly, constantly on my part; how slightly, inconstantly, falsely on her part.

Who look to other gods: when I adopted them to be a peculiar people to me, to take me for their God, and required they shall have none other, (which relation is well expressed by that of husband and wife,) they have looked, liked, loved other gods, and depended on them, and their hearts have been estranged from me, they have turned downright idolaters. *Love flagons of wine*; loved the feasts of their idols, where they drank wine to excess, by too great measures, which, without dispute, was usual in the idol feasts, #**Am 2:8 1Co 10:21**; or else these flagons of wine speak their loose, drunken, and riotous living.

Ver. 2.

So I bought her; as I was commanded, I procured, or, as we read it, bought her: which exactly answers to the state of the Jews when in Egypt, tainted with Egyptian idolatry, and poor, without a portion; bought or redeemed to be affianced to God.

Fifteen pieces of silver; whatever was the exact quantity and value of these pieces we need not here curiously inquire; but note, it was half the value of a slave, #Ex 21:32, and was some 37s. 6d.

An homer: this measure might be about fourteen bushels; so the whole will, for her diet, amount to twenty-one bushels, no great provision for her diet; and it is

barley in both places, the meanest kind of provision, and suited to a low condition, #Jud 7:13 Eze 4:9,12: all this the fuller to set forth Israel's indigence and ingratitude to God, and God's bounty to Israel.

Ver. 3.

This verse is the form of contract, or the articles of agreement, between the prophet and this woman.

Abide for me; dwell with me, and expect and wait in an unmarried condition, until I see it fit to espouse thee.

Many days; it is not said how long, but a slave, as she is represented here, may not think this severe; the preferment will compensate her waiting.

Thou shalt not play the harlot: this is the third condition, she is to live chaste and modest, not to do as she had done. This was to settle her in a virtuous life, and to prove whether she would betake herself to a life praiseworthy.

Thou shalt not be for another man; she is bound to marry, none other, nor to commit adultery with any other.

So will I also be for thee; in due time I will accomplish the contract, and, as I wait, so I will be for thee. So the deed is mutually sealed and signed.

Ver. 4.

Now the parable is unfolded and made plain; it shall be with Israel much like as with such a woman, they and she guilty of adultery, both punished with a divorce, both punished long with such afflicted state, both made slaves, kept hardly, and valued meanly, yet in mercy at last pardoned, reaccepted, and preferred, but this after long time of probation: how long we cannot tell, nor list to dispute whether seventy years of Babylon's captivity, or whether these seventy and the one hundred and thirty years of the ten

tribes' captivity before the two tribes went captives, i.e. two hundred years; or whether till Messiah's coming, or the general and last conversion of the Jews; long it was to be no doubt.

Without a king; none of their own royal line shall sit on the throne, and rule them, but foreigners, enemies, and they that had conquered them, should be kings over them. So the kingdom ceased, as #Ho 1:4.

Without a prince; the conquering kings will not out of the Jews make their chief officers to rule the Jews, but strangers shall be princes and governors over them.

Without a sacrifice; either right, and according to law, (these sacrifices they had long since cast off,) or idolatrous ones, which they would choose.

Without an image; they could carry none of their images with them, and the Assyrians would not let them make new ones.

Without an ephod; no priest as well as no ephod.

Without teraphim; idolatrous images kept in their private houses to worship and consult with, like the Roman *lares* and *penates*, household gods. In one word, such should be the state of these captives, they should have nothing of their own, either in kingdom and civil affairs, or in church and religion, but be wholly under the power and arbitrary wills of their conquering enemies.

Ver. 5.

Afterward; after these long and sore troubles have broken their hearts and opened their eyes.

Return; repent; it is not a promise of return into their own country.

Seek the Lord their God, to know his way, and to live under his protection and blessing, to worship him, and they shall pray to him, depend on him, consult with him, with ardency and earnestness of desire.

David their king; not son of Jesse, who was long since dead; nor Zerubbabel; but Messiah, who is elsewhere called David, #Ps 132:10 Jer 30:9 Eze 34:24 37:24,25, which see; and #Am 9:11. *Shall fear the Lord;* with reverence shall pray, depend on, and

consult their God, and worship his Son the Messiah, whom the Father sent out of his infinite goodness and kindness towards us.

And his goodness; God and his goodness, i.e. the good and gracious God, such to us in Christ; God in Christ and with Christ shall be worshipped. In the latter days; in the days of the Messiah, in gospel times, and perhaps the last of these latter days.

HOSEA CHAPTER 4

God's judgments against the sins of the people, **#Ho 4:1-5**, and of the priests, **#Ho 4:6-11**, and against their idolatry, **#Ho 4:12-14**. Judah is exhorted to take warning by Israel's calamity, **#Ho 4:15-19**.

Ver. 1.

Hear; attend, consider, and duly weigh: it is the hearing of the mind, as well as of the ear, is here required.

The word of the Lord; he that speaks is the great God, though the messenger be a man; the message is not man's, but it is the word, the message of the sovereign, holy; just, and mighty Jehovah, who ever speaks most important things, things that respect our duty and safety.

Ye children of Israel; you of the ten tribes, with whose ancestors my covenant was made, who received the law by the disposition of angels, but have not kept it, you that have turned aside from your God to idols.

The Lord; who knoweth your sins, who hateth, threateneth, and will judge, and punish unless you repent, it is he that speaketh, and summoneth you to plead with him.

Hath a controversy; just matter of debate or arguing against you; you have wronged him, and he will right himself, yet so that he will be clear in his judgment, all shall see that the just Lord doth justly, and that this people's sins are the cause of all their sufferings, that God doth not delight to afflict the children of men.

With the inhabitants of the land; who dwell in the cities and towns of Israel, divided from the house of David, and from the house of God; ye that dwell with idolatrous neighbours: it is not a

few, but the generality of the inhabitants; it is the whole land I have an action against.

There is no truth, no faithfulness, in their minds, words, or works; they cover falsehood with fair words, till they may fitly execute their designed frauds. There is neither plain-heartedness nor constancy in their purposes and words.

Nor mercy, kindness or gentleness of mind; all are hardened, and restrain their bowels, which should be opened toward the indigent and necessitous. There is neither compassion nor beneficence among them, they pity not, nor relieve any.

Nor knowledge of God; all generally are ignorant, know not what God hath done for them, or what God is in himself, or what candour and truth, or what tenderness and beneficence, he requires in his word; if they have a slight knowledge of those things, yet they consider them not. They have rased the knowledge of God out of their minds.

In the land: this speaks the universal ignorance, mercilessness, and unfaithfulness of that age.

Ver. 2.

By swearing; either falsely or profanely, or cursing and wishing evil to one; instead of truth here is perjury; instead of compassion here is execration and evil-speaking.

Lying of all kinds; affirming of falsehoods, denying of truths, defrauding, lessening good, and representing it what it is not, greatening what is in others ill, and so flattering in some cases, and defaming in other cases, &c.

Killing: though God hath forbidden all kinds and degrees of murder, this people, through ignorance of God, do fill the land with murders, either open or secret; by cruelty withholding relief from some, by violence and falsehood cutting off others: the temper of this people was toward killing, their designs laid for it, &c.

Stealing; injuring one another, either by taking away what was another's, or detaining what should have been his, or giving less to another than was his due: every one inclined to frauds, many addicted to secret thefts, and some openly practicing it.

Committing adultery; which was a sin grown high among them, a sin directly against the truth and mercy which should have been among them. Under this, all degrees of adultery, unchaste thoughts, words, and gestures are included.

They break out; as waters that swell above all banks, or as unruly beasts that break over all hedges, so you, O Israelites, have broken down the hedge of the law, which expressly forbids what you daily practise.

Blood toucheth blood; slaughters are multiplied: by blood the Scripture understandeth slaughter, **#Ge 4:10**, &c.; **#Ps 58:10**. Possibly the wrong done by the adulterer was (as Ammon's) revenged with the slaughter of the adulterer; or possibly it may refer to murders committed in the very court of the temple; so the blood of the murdered touched the blood of sacrifices. It is too particular to refer it to the blood of Zechariah slain between the porch and the altar, and which (some say) ran down to the altar and touched the blood of the sacrifice. Or what if this should refer to what will be ere long, when Jeroboam is dead, when Zachariah is murdered by Shallum, **#2Ki 15:10**; Menahem slew Shallum, **#2Ki 15:14**, and ripped up women with child in Tiphshah, **#2Ki 15:16**; when Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew him? These kings being thus slain, no doubt much blood was spilt; all which happened in less than forty years; for from Zechariah to Pekah's usurpation are but fourteen years, from Pekah's entrance on the throne to Hoshea's conspiracy are twenty years.

Ver. 3.

Therefore, since their sins are so many and so great, for those very sins already mentioned in the 1st and 2nd verses,

shall the land, which the ten tribes did now inhabit, mourn: it is a metaphorical expression, for properly it cannot be spoken of the senseless and inanimate creatures; but as men and women mourn under the loss of their comforts and joys, as they neglect themselves in their habits, and go less neat, so when the sins of the people shall bring an enemy upon the land, when war shall first spoil their cities, towns, vineyards, and oliveyards, and finally shall carry the people captive, all shall run into horrid and saddest

state, and into doleful plight. The same expression see in **#Isa 24:4**, and much like **#Am 1:2**.

Every one that dwelleth therein; no sort of men but had provoked God and sinned, no sort but should be punished; all that continue in the land till these threatened judgments overtake them.

Shall languish; shall with grief and vexation pine away; what they see with their eye shall make their heart ache, and faint with greatest dejectedness and despair, as the word imports, **#Isa 16:8**
Joe 1:12.

With the beasts of the field: these are elsewhere menaced, **#Zep 1:2**, which see. God punisheth man in cutting off what was made for man's benefit and comfort; and it is probable that the tamer cattle were starved for want of grass or fodder, all being eaten up and consumed by the wasting armies.

With the fowls of heaven; the tamer and innocent either killed by enemies, or, offended with stench and noxious air, die or forsake the country, or are devoured by eagles and birds of prey, which in those countries wait on armies.

Yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away; whether by drying up the waters of rivers, lakes, and ponds, or by corrupting them with blood and carcasses, or by what other way we know not, he can do it, who saith he will; and we are sure it speaks the greatness of the threatened desolation.

Ver. 4.

Yet; though judgments great and wasting are so sure, though the approaching calamities will lay all utterly waste.

Let no man; none of private capacity, no priest or prophet, any more open their mouths to reason and debate with this people; let all know they are so obstinate and hardened it is to no purpose to warn any more.

Strive; contend, as in causes pleaded before a judge; lay not the law before them, who have so often refused to hear it.

Nor reprove; no more chide, or sharply inveigh against their sins and ways. Or this whole passage may be thus read,

Yet certainly there is none that may or can strive, &c. All are so corrupted, that there is none free who may with confidence argue against others. But our version is better of the two.

Thy people; thy countrymen, Hosea, if the former words be the words of God to the prophet. Or else, if they be the words of the prophet to the people, then he speaks to them of the temper of their neighbours and people with whom they dwelt. It is much one which we take, for Hosea was now among them; and whether his people or no, they are still the same persons spoken of.

Are as they that strive with the priest; there is no ingenuity, modesty, or fear of God or man left among them, they will contend with their teachers, reprovers, and counsellors; they will justify themselves, and contemn all reproof; they will adhere to sin, and reject all better advice, just as they #Mal 1:2,7 2:14. This doth not suppose, much less assert, the priests of Baal and the calves to be true priests; but were they as true as they are false, yet such is the temper of the people, they would not hear, consider, and amend, whoever contested with them. Let them alone therefore to perish with obstinate sinners.

Ver. 5.

Therefore, because thy sins are so many and so great, and thou art incorrigible in them,

shalt thou fall; the prophet turns his speech to the people, thou, O Israel; he speaks to them as to one person, they were all of one piece in sin, and should be so one in punishment. Fall; stumble, and fall, and be broken.

In the day; or this day, i.e. very suddenly, your fall shall be presently effected by your enemies' power, vigilance, and successes; it shall be no longer delayed.

The prophet; who spake smooth things, who prophesied lies; the false prophets of Baal and the groves, #Jer 14:13-16 23:15.

Shall fall; be in as sad calamitous condition as any.

With thee; either the prophet that is with thee, that lived with and prophesied to this people; or, as we read it, when the people are ruined and captivated, with them the false prophet shall be likewise ruined and captivated.

In the night; either proverbially taken, people and prophet shall continually fall; or allusively, both shall fall as a man that falls in the night. Or else, the prophet shall fall in the darkest calamities, he shall be covered with thickest clouds, who falsely foretold and promised light unto such people.

And I, the Lord, against whom thou hast sinned, will destroy, cut off, or make to cease or be silent for ever: see **#Ho 1:4**.

Thy mother; both the state, or kingdom, and the synagogues, or mock churches: the public is as a mother to private persons: so all shall be destroyed; which also came to pass before the prophet Hosea died, he lived to see his threats fulfilled.

Ver. 6.

My people: the divorce was not yet issued out, the ten tribes yet were in some sense *Ammi. Are destroyed*; not only in the prophetic style, are, because ere long they shall most certainly be destroyed, but in the course of the history it is plain in matter of fact; many of them were cut off by Pul king of Assyria, **#2Ki 15**, and many were destroyed by the bloody and cruel tyranny of Menahem, and more were ruined in their estates by exactions and impositions. The civil wars, the seditions, the usurpations of some and the deposing of others, were things the prophet Hosea lived to see, and I believe speaks of here as things that had already destroyed many.

For lack of knowledge of God, his law, his menaces, his providences, and government of the world. Had they known his holy nature, his jealousy for his own glory, his hatred of sin and his power to punish it, had they known their God, they would either have forborne to sin, or repented of what sins they had committed, and so prevented his wrath. *Because thou:* the prophet now turns his words from the people to the priests among them. The people's ignorance was much from the ignorance and profane humour of their priests, and this the prophet doth tacitly charge on the priests, to whom he speaks as to one particular person:

Thou, who callest thyself, art accounted by the people, and goest under the name of a priest.

Hast rejected knowledge: strange perverseness! they who should direct others, who should be teachers, are and will be ignorant,

will not know, reject knowledge; detestest to know, as the Chaldee paraphrase.

I will also reject thee; with equal dislike I will reject time, I will destroy your church constitution, and with that I will destroy your priesthood; and I will do this with detestation and abhorrence too.

Thou hast forgotten the law of thy God: O Israel, and you, O priests, you have all sinned together, slighted and disrespected the law, broken all the precepts of it, set up other gods, other worship, other priests than the law directs.

I will also forget; I will pay thee in thy own coin, I will forget, i. e. slight and disregard.

Thy children; the people of Israel, the whole kingdom of the ten tribes; both those pretended priests and their ghostly children with them.

Ver. 7.

As they; kings, priests, and people of that age, that is, Jeroboam the Second, great-grandson of Jehu, who raised the kingdom to its highest pitch and glory.

Were increased; both multiplied for number, and grew great in riches, power, and honour. Such temper were they of, **#Isa 1:2**.

So they sinned against me: sin grew with their wealth and honour; God who raised them was by them provoked the more, they turned his bounty into sin: too usual a return from sinners to God.

I will change, turn by a just retaliation,

their glory into shame: they turned their glory, all that in which they might glory above others, into sin; I will turn it into shame; that shall be their dishonour which, had it been well used, might have been their honour. I will degrade their priests, impoverish the people, captivate both.

Ver. 8.

They, the priests who minister to the idols,

eat up the sin of my people; live upon with delight, maintain themselves and theirs; either by conniving at their sins, not

reproving as they deserve, lest thereby they should disoblige persons, and lessen their bounty to them; or leave them to sin first, and next look for sacrifices for those sins, like some that make gain by the sins of people with whom they dispense. Or more plainly, by

sin is meant sin-offering, in which the priest had his share.

My people: see #Ho 4:6.

And they; covetous, luxurious, idolatrous priests, the priests of Baal and the calves,

set their heart on their iniquity; watch to, and earnestly desire, hope, and expect the people will sin, and bring offerings for sin, which is the iniquity as well as gain of these priests.

Ver. 9.

The sum of these words is this, that God will certainly punish; for the sins both of priests and people are such that God will no further forbear either; and when he comes to punish, he will do it according to the ways and doings of both; where sins have been equal, punishment shall be equal too, both priest and people shall be led into captivity, and there used without any differencing respect of one or other.

Ver. 10.

For, or *And*, Heb. This is another part of their punishment, and it is better rendered as a particular part of their curse, than as a cause of that which was spoken in the former verse.

They shall eat, and not have enough: in #Ho 4:8 they are said to eat up the sin of that people, i.e. by sinful courses they project for their livelihood; now comes the curse God will punish this sin with. He will withhold his blessing, they shall not be nourished, not satisfied, with what they eat. See #Hag 1:6.

They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase; though they multiply wives to relieve them under the curse of barrenness and want of children, or by fornication seek to multiply their offspring, though they do this which they ought not to do, they shall not hereby increase the number of their children; either the women shall not bear, or the children not live.

Because they have left off to take heed to the Lord; they have apostatized and turned from the true God, from his worship and law.

Ver. 11.

Whoredom; unlawful converse with wanton women, the forbidden pleasures of an adulterous bed.

And wine and new wine; excess of drinking, and indeed all immoderate pleasures; one kind being put for all.

Take away the heart; besot men, and deprive them of the right use of their Understanding and judgment. By these courses both priests and people here have disabled themselves to discern aright between good and bad, between safe and dangerous.

Ver. 12.

My people; whom I chose, brought out of Egypt, and settled in this land, were not yet cast off, though they deserve it, who call themselves my people.

Ask counsel; inquire about future things, and what shall befall them. I threaten from heaven, they believe not me, but flatter themselves it will be better than my prophets say it will, and they inquire of their idolatrous priests concerning their fate.

At their stocks; wooden statues or idols with which their priests consult, and make them give answer suiting to the hope of these people.

Their staff declareth unto them: this was another kind of forbidden consulting with the devil; an art much in use in those times and places. You read of this **#Eze 21:2**. These were parts of their sottish idolatry. So they thought, they believed what their false prophets reported from the staff or stock. Unparalleled folly! not to believe God speaking from heaven, but at the same time believe a stock or staff, that knows not in whose hand it is, or what use it is put to.

The spirit of whoredoms; a heart addicted to and insnared with whoredoms, spiritual and corporal.

Hath caused them to err; hath blinded, misled, and deceived them. So **#Isa 40:20 44:14,18**.

And they have gone a whoring from under their God; so they have left their God, refusing to be under his guidance, endeavouring to evade his corrections, and to fortify themselves, rebel-like, against his armies raised to chastise them, trusting herein to idols.

Ver. 13.

They, both priests and people,

sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains; where their altars were sometimes to God, sometimes to idols: these were the high places, chosen out by themselves, and where their sacrifices offered to God were esteemed little else than idolatry, #**Isa 57:7**.

Burn incense upon the hills; another piece of idolatry they practised, which as it usually was joined to their sacrifices, so is it here added by the prophet. This idolatry abounded in Israel, where without control it had been in use ever since their revolt, if not before: a wood so deep-rooted, that the best kings of Judah could not quite extirpate it.

Under oaks; some say pines, or the alder.

Poplars; the white poplar.

Elms; or lime-tree, or the tree whose boughs stretched out together cast a pleasant shadow. Under all these it is certain the ancient heathen did perform their idolatrous services; so did this people choose all these great trees which, having many and great boughs, do afford the darkest and coolest recesses, #**Eze 20:28**.

Because the shadow thereof is good; convenient for the sacrificers, while the smoke and smell of the sacrifice went up through the boughs, and the coolness of the shady place kept their persons from sultry heat; it may be they thought (as the heathen did) that the *numen*, deity, delighted to dwell or be often in such places.

Therefore; for these sins of yours, though you account them no sins, for your harmonizing with heathenish superstitions; for your leaving my temple, and, against my commands, sacrificing where best liketh you.

Your daughters shall commit whoredom; shall dishonour themselves and their families by their lewdness and unlawful converse with fornicators. The sin of the fathers is thus punished, that they might see God's just hand punishing, and the sin punished. Here is spiritual whoredom punished with giving up daughters to their wandering lusts.

Your spouses shall commit adultery; or, *spouses of your sons*, as the French version; a great unhappiness to any family, to be disparaged and wronged by adulteresses, and a grievous punishment, where or whensoever executed; and this is here foretold it will be so, not countenanced.

Ver. 14.

I will not punish, or visit upon,

your daughters; God will not any more lay on them such restraints, as remarkable punishments are usually to all that observe them. They are threatened thus to be thrown up to their own hearts' and others' lusts. You have rejected my law which directed the correction and punishment of such sins, and do you think I will by extraordinary courses restrain, where you cast off the ordinary? You shall have no bitter water of jealousy to discover, convict, and torment an adulterous wife, as Judah hath, **#Nu 5:12**, &c., nor will I by unusual strokes of my hand smite them. This impunity will increase your grief and shame, and so you shall be punished.

Themselves, the husbands and fathers, are examples to wives and daughters; those are

separated with the lewd women, which either they took to them upon putting away their lawful wife, which these men did to satisfy their lusts; or else separated, i.e. withdrawn from the company or their fellow idolaters, that in privacy they might commit whoredom with the women they choose to themselves for that end.

They sacrifice with harlots; perform the rites of sacrifices, both in offering first and in feasting next, in which feasts wine and women would prove great and prevalent temptations to whoredom among those men.

Therefore the people that doth not understand: by all this it is evident this people is a sottish, ignorant people, that know not God, as #Ho 4:1,6,11.

Shall fall; be utterly ruined, broken into pieces, and scattered; broken at home first by intestine wars, next by foreign invasions, and carried away at last by conquering enemies.

Ver. 15.

This summeth up the sins, the idolatries of the ten tribes; and is a transition to what next follows; either by way of exhortation, or admonition, or prayer and wish, for the two tribes which stuck to the house of David, as to the temple.

Let not Judah offend; commit like sins as Israel hath done, imitate none of their idolatry: possibly the prophet saw Judah inclined to backslide, or this might be preached in the beginning of Ahaz's reign.

Come not ye, you of Judah, who have the temple and house of God with you, who have hitherto been preserved from Israelitish idolatry,

unto Gilgal; a place near Jordan, where the twelve stones were pitched, #Jos 4:9, the camp was pitched, circumcision revived, the passover kept, #Jos 5:2,10; there Joshua divided the land, #Jos 14:6, there the tabernacle was at first pitched after they came over Jordan, and there they sacrificed. There was in Ahab's time a college of prophets; and now, whether out of reverence to the place on these accounts, or for what other reasons, it matters not, but certain it is, this Gilgal was chosen out by Jeroboam, or by succeeding idolaters, for a place of public worship of their idols, and grew famous for it. Go not up to partake of their idolatry, or to learn it. It is a concise speech, which forbids all the sins committed at Gilgal.

Neither go ye up to Beth-aven; which is Beth-el, where Jacob lodged, had a vision of angels, and a more comfortable vision of God, who appeared to Jacob, who for this gave name to the place, and called it Beth-el, house of God; but when Jeroboam made it the place of his calf worship, it became, and is called, Beth-avert, house of vanity or iniquity. Go not thither to worship. It is as the former, a prohibition of being of that religion which was in use at

Beth-avert, and had been the established religion for two hundred years, or thereabouts, viz. ever since Jeroboam's time.

Nor swear, The Lord liveth this is in itself lawful oath, and may be used; but in the circumstances wherewith it is here attended it is forbidden, because many who went thither yet pretended there to sacrifice only to the true God, that they owned him the only living God, revered him, swore by him; though they went up to Beth-avert or Gilgal, yet they worshipped God there. This is a synecdoche, a part being put for the whole worship of God, which the prophet warns them not to blend and mix with idolatries, which yet was done before Josiah's time, **#Zep 1:5**, which see, with the annotations on it.

Ver. 16.

There is just cause why Judah should not imitate Israel, and this cause is here assigned.

Israel; the ten tribes

As a backsliding heifer, grown lusty, fed and wanton, will neither endure the yoke to work, nor be confined in her allowed pastures, breaks over all bounds, casts off all service, so as Israel, as **#Ho 4:7**, which see.

Now; ere long, or suddenly; so **#Ho 2:10**.

The Lord, offended by their sins, and provoked to displeasure,

will feed them as a lamb in a large place; in their sinning they were like an untamed heifer, boundless, strong, and stood upon their defence, but in their punishments they shall be like a lamb, solitary, full of fears, in a large place or wilderness, where is no rest, safety, or provision: such shall be the condition of the ten captivated tribes. This is a proverbial speech, setting forth the forlorn state which Israel ere long should fall under.

Ver. 17.

The children of Ephraim were numerous and potent among the ten tribes, a principal part of them, and out of which tribe the first idolater and usurper did arise, **#1Ki 11:26**; and therefore the whole body of the ten tribes, and the rulers among them, are here particularly pointed at.

Is joined to idols; associated as friends to friends, or joined as lovers are joined to lovers; married to idols, and will not be taken off.

Let him alone; he is indeed obstinately bent on his old courses, and as such throw him up; he will not return; let him wander, but let it be alone, O Judah, be not his companion, his friend, go not with him.

Ver. 18.

Though in their idol feasts they drink wine and strong drinks, yet this is either sour and unpleasant, or corrupt and hurtful, there is no good savour in it; therefore, O Judah, decline thou the intimate familiarity, and have nothing to do with the idolatries, of Israel.

They have committed whoredom, both spiritual and corporal, continually, without ceasing from Jeroboam's time to this day, two hundred years, one king after another, and one idolater after another; not one but either was an idolatrous worshipper of Baal or the calves, &c.

Her rulers with shame do love, Give ye; beside all this, there is shameful oppression and bribery among them; and what good then, O Judah, canst thou look for from society and friendship with them?

Ver. 19.

The whirlwind of wrath from God hath already seized this old adulteress, and carried some of her children away already, **#2Ki 15:19,29**. Execution of judgment is already begun, and therefore, O Judah, keep distance from Ephraim.

They shall be ashamed; greatly confounded and disappointed of their hopes: as thou, O Judah, wouldst prevent this shame, flee the society of these idolaters.

Because of their sacrifices; what they made their confidence shall be their shame, their own idols cannot help them. but their idolatry shall surely undo them. Their idols which they worshipped and depended on shall be their shame and confusion, for thy God, O Judah, hath cursed such people. *Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols, #Ps 97:7*. If Israel do, yet, O Judah, do not thou so.

HOSEA CHAPTER 5

God's judgments against the priests, the people, and the princes of Israel, for their manifold sins, **#Ho 5:1-14**, until they repent, **#Ho 5:15**.

Ver. 1.

Hear ye this, O priests: proclamation is made, and the criminals are cited to appear, and attend their charge; amongst which the priests are first summoned: not of the tribe of Levi, not God's priests, but Baal's priests, priests of the high places; such they called themselves, so accounted by the people, and priests they were as good as their constitution by Jeroboam son of Nebat could make them.

Hearken, ye house of Israel; all the people of Israel, hearken and consider duly.

Give ye ear, O house of the king; all you of Menahem's court, and all you that are of the royal family. It is very probable, if not plainly certain, that Menahem was king at this time over Israel, and that Hosea points him out with his whole family.

For judgment is toward you; for to you it appertained to execute judgment, and do right, so some; but the most read it, as we do,

judgment is toward, i.e. against you; you have sinned, and God will punish. God's controversy, **#Ho 4:1**, is with you all, but first with priests who neglected to instruct the people, next with the body of the people, and lastly with the king, court, and his family.

Ye have been a snare; you, O priests and princes, nobles and judges, have ensnared the people by your examples and practices, which have been idolatrous, and the people have imitated you: it may possibly refer to that the Jews say was done, spies set to watch who went to Jerusalem to worship and to inform, that they might be punished: or else thus. By commending the calves, and palliating the idolatry committed in worshipping them, by persuading the people they might as well worship there as at Jerusalem, you have been a snare unto them, and drawn them into idolatry.

On Mizpah; either taken comparatively, as fowlers and hunters have taken many birds and beasts, by gins and snares, on Mizpah, so you have insnared many souls in idolatry; or, by idolatries acted at Mizpah you have insnared many: so at Mizpah there was a high place, and idolatrous worship performed there; whether at Mizpah in Judah, which is not very likely, or Mizpah part of Libanus, which is the more likely, I determine not.

And a net spread upon Tabor; a very famous mount for its exact roundness, and the height thereof, and as famous for the pleasantness thereof, which easily persuades me to think this hill must needs have some high place on it, and that where high places were so much in fashion, Tabor could not be omitted. Here, as in Mizpah, idolatry caught men as birds or wild beasts are taken in a net: or briefly thus. The priests and secular power did make religion and the civil government a snare for men, both so managed the laws of each as to entrap all they could; as if men were fowls and beasts, and governors civil and ecclesiastical hunters and fowlers, and their laws nets and gins set to catch men, and make a prey of them. Thus it was in Israel at that day.

Ver. 2.

The revolters; all those that have cast off the law of God, both in matters of religion and civil government.

Are profound; dig deep to hide their counsels, or have taken deep root since their apostasy from God, and revolt from the house of David.

To make slaughter: all their religion is but a butchering of cattle, no sacrifice to God; or, which is worse, a murdering of men.

Though I, Hosea, *have been a rebuker;* a preacher, who ill the name and word of God have sharply inveighed against their brutish religion and their bloody slaughters.

Of them all: none that have been guilty have escaped the reproof; I have declaimed against idolatrous priests and bloody usurpers, such as were in those times, Shallum, Menahem, and Pekah.

Ver. 3.

These revolters neither are nor can be so deep as to conceal themselves, their designs, contrivances, and practices, from me; I thoroughly know Ephraim. The revolters are also called **Israel** in this verse, who is not hid from me. It is an elegant repetition of the same thing in different words.

Thou committest whoredom; all thy fair pretences thou canst put upon thy devised religion cannot better it, still it is downright idolatry or spiritual whoredom.

And Israel is defiled: Israel here is Ephraim; and when Israel is said to be polluted, it is to be understood both of spiritual and corporal pollution, which mostly are linked together, and draw on each other.

Ver. 4.

They, those revolters, polluted Israelites and idolatrous Ephraimites, will not frame their doings; they are so intent upon their idolatries and oppressions, they have been so long inured to these doings, that now they are become slaves to their own doings, insomuch that they neither have will or power to change them, as **#Jer 13:23**.

To turn unto their God; to repent of those wicked courses, and to leave them, and so return to their God, who was once theirs by covenant, though now they have violated the covenant, and departed from God. They are in sin hardened to a hopeless and remediless obstinacy and impenitence.

The spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them: see **#Ho 4:12**. Their mind and inclination stands bent and fixed upon spiritual whoredoms, and they are incited to it by the seducing spirit, allured by examples, and all these hurry them on. It is a universal distemper among them, all filled with this spirit, it hath seized the heart of them.

They have not known; they never did rightly know, nor would they ever know, they forgot, were wilfully ignorant of, the way of holiness and pure religion, contained in the law of God.

The Lord, who is pure, zealous for his glory, sovereign in his authority, rich in his rewards, severe in his punishments, and true

to his promises and threats; that nothing can be more prejudicial to a people than to forsake, nor any thing more conducive to the good of a people than to keep, his law.

Ver. 5.

The pride of Israel: it might have been rendered, the excellency or glory of Israel; and so, referred to God, it would be a prediction that God himself would witness against Israel. God is said to swear by the *excellency of Jacob*, #Am 8:7, i.e. by himself. Thus interpreted, it would very well accord with what follows in this and the following verse. But as it is here rendered, it is the haughtiness, carnal confidence of Israel, grown great under the long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam the Second, that they thought it impossible such calamities as foretold by the prophet should overtake them, or that God should think so ill of that worship they thought so well of; they neither confess their sins, nor fear God's judgments.

Doth testify; is so full and evident witness against Israel, that no other testimony need be produced.

To his face; to convince and silence the most impudent and shameless among them.

Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim, the nine tribes, and the head of them, Ephraim,

fall in their iniquity; be ruined for their sins of which they are guilty, but repent not.

Judah, the two tribes under Ahaz, now lapsed to idolatry, also shall fall with them; be captivated too ere long, soon after sin will undo them.

Ver. 6.

They; the people of Judah, say some, but I rather think it is spoken of the Ephraimites, and either implies by what they did support their confidence of escaping ruin, or else foretells that extremity of sufferings should force them at last to offer sacrifices to God; and the Jewish doctors tell us, that under Hoshea's reign Israel had liberty of bringing their offerings and sacrifices to Jerusalem: whether this were so or not, it is certain they did not

seek him in right manner, it was with their flocks and herds, but not with their hearts, not with sound repentance.

But they shall not find him; whilst he might have been found they would not seek him, now as a punishment, and to leave them remediless, God will not be found of them; he will not either accept a sacrifice, or pardon their sin, or return to save them.

He hath withdrawn himself from them; in displeasure hath withdrawn his favourable presence from them, and with resolution to leave them to the violences of the Assyrian powers.

Ver. 7.

They, the whole house of Israel, priests, people, and princes, and their kings with them,

have dealt treacherously; have falsified their word and promise of fidelity and constancy, of love and affection, when they entered covenant with me; have turned idolaters, and worshipped and relied on false gods.

They have begotten strange children; as if it were not enough that they were idolaters, they have trained up their children in the same idolatry, partly by their instruction, and more by their examples.

Now, or therefore, or ere long, as **#Ho 2:10.**

A month; either the new moon, one particular species of ceremonial, superstitious worship put for all the rest, as some interpret, or rather, a time not long (as an age); not as to the old world, nor as to Nineveh, forty days, but a shorter time: possibly it may refer to Shallum's short time of usurpation, which lasted but a month; a month shall devour them, the Assyrians shall make a speedy conquest over you.

With their portions; not only persons, but their goods and chattels, are exposed to speediest spoiling; and as a token of such future speedy desolation, the prophet points out a short reign of one of the usurpers, and foretells the precise time of his continuance, that when they shall see this come to pass. They might believe the rest foretold by the prophet should also come to pass. Nor is this conjecture without some ground, since we know that Shallum slew Zachariah before the people, **#2Ki 15:10,**

implying the people's concurrence herein, and their accepting of Shallum with expectation of peace and prosperity, to the increase of their portion under his government, all which was blasted at the month's end.

Ver. 8.

Blow ye the cornet; ye watchmen, or whoever have the care and custody of these fortified towns, sound the alarm, for the enemy cometh.

In Gibeah; a town of Benjamin situate on a hill, built by Asa, #1Ki 15:22; made by him a frontier, and likely always garrisoned against the incursion of the ten tribes.

And the trumpet; add to the sound of the cornet the trumpet also, which is proper for war, and will be best understood by the people; lest they mistake the meaning of the cornet, which is, say some, a pastoral instrument, proper for shepherds, sound the trumpet.

In Ramah; of which there were three, one in Naphtali, and Rama-sophim, and this of Benjamin near Gibeah, and was an inlet into Judah, of great importance, as appears #1Ki 15:17,21; a town of strength, built on a high hill, and fit to be as a watchtower. Be you upon your guard when the invader is so near.

Cry aloud at Beth-aven; as more concerned, cry out with more vehemency, awaken all to prepare for defence; or, howl and lament for the things that are come upon thee, O Beth-aven. The Assyrians' march will alarm thy neighbours, but their success against thee will ruin thee utterly. Let thine inhabitants therefore cry and howl. If that Beth-aven situate in the wilderness, this passage foretells the destruction of it by the Assyrians, probably in the beginning of their invasion; if it were Beth-el, it was the chief seat of idolatry, and first or chief in miseries.

After thee, O Benjamin:

thee referred to Beth-aven speaks thus; after thy cries, when thou hast howled, let Benjamin and Judah too begin theirs, for they shall also fall for their sin.

Ver. 9.

Ephraim; the whole kingdom of the ten tribes, all sorts and ranks of men among them.

Shall be desolate; a desolation, i. e. most desolate, utterly cut off.

In the day of rebuke; when Shalmaneser shall come up with his forces, besiege, sack, and captivate all thy cities, and Samaria with the rest; when by these Assyrians I shall rebuke, i.e. punish.

Among the tribes of Israel, to the house of Israel openly, so that all might be informed, have I made known; by my prophets I have foretold what should be, and by some judgments already executed I have further made known to them; they are sufficiently warned, and should have considered in time, and prevented their own calamities.

That which shall surely be; what is irrevocably determined and ratified, and they shall never evade, nor ever overcome.

Ver. 10.

The princes; the great men about the king and court, the rulers and governors, who by the law of God and man should have been the maintainers of equity and justice among the people.

Of Judah; of the kingdom of Judah, or the two tribes.

Were; have been, and now are in the days of Ahaz, for to this man's time the prophet now pointeth.

Like them that remove the bound; the ancient bounds which limited every one, prevented controversies and oppressions of encroaching, covetous men. The prophet, I doubt not, aims at reproving the sin of these great ones in changing the laws of religion, as well as altering the bounds of civil rights, whether by encroaching upon foreigners, and enlarging the kingdom of Judah by entrenching on the neighbouring kingdoms, or, which is more certain, by injustice and violence seizing what was another's.

Therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them: this was sin and forbidden, #De 19:14; this practice is cursed, #De 27:17, and God now will punish it.

Like water; like an overflowing flood.

Ver. 11.

Ephraim; the subjects of the kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes; the prophet resumeth his threat against them.

Is oppressed; supposing, as well we may, that this prophecy respecteth Ahaz's time, it will appear that the reigns of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah were past, which were unjust, seditious, bloody, and tyrannical times, in which oppressions abounded, and of which our prophet now speaketh. The ten tribes are by sedition, civil wars, and bloody conspiracies eaten up already almost. But to those God will add his displeasure, and the Assyrians shall be the executioners, and shall oppress Ephraim.

Broken in judgment, i.e. through fear of the partiality of the judge; though his cause be equal and just, yet money, or money's worth, is extorted, to prevent an unjust, or to procure a just sentence; a known course in such days as those the prophet lived in, or as the days of Marius and Sylla.

Because he, Ephraim, spoken of as if one person, perhaps to intimate the universal defection,

willingly walked; it was not forced upon them, they did it willingly. Though there was a law commanding, yet there was in the people a forwardness, and too great a readiness, to comply and obey that law which made idolatry the establishment in the ten tribes.

After the commandment; to forbear going to the temple, and to worship the calves at Dan and Beth-el, as Jeroboam son of Nebat required.

Ver. 12.

Therefore, or *And*, Heb. *I will be*; I am; it is concise in the Hebrew, and might be thus expressed, But, or And, as for me, I am, and will be, to the ten tribes.

As a moth: moths do leisurely eat up and mar our clothes; so God was then, and had been from Jeroboam's death to this day, weakening the ten tribes; their seditions did eat them up.

And to the house of Judah; the two tribes, who now with Ahaz did, as Ephraim, cast God off.

As rottenness; shall secretly consume and rot as wood doth by worms; so God will punish both Israel and Judah, these shall be forerunners and preparatories to the final desolation of both; of the one by Assyria, and of the other by Babylon.

Ver. 13.

When, Heb. *And*, after that. Ephraim; the king, and council, and kingdom of the ten tribes; Menahem is surely meant: see 2 Kings xv.

Saw his sickness; weakness, like a consumption, threatening death. Though Menahem had killed Shallun, and got into the throne, yet he found himself unable to hold it against the opposite faction, and therefore sent for assistance from Assyria, #2Ki 15:19, or at least purchased the friendship of Pul, who was come out as an enemy.

Judah, the other kingdom of the two tribes, saw his wound; a deep and festering wound; or a corrupting imposthume, which needs be opened, cleansed, and bound up: such was the state of the two tribes at that day, ulcerous and full of danger, for Ahaz had done very wickedly, and wounded the kingdom.

Then went, made application,

Ephraim to the Assyrian; particularly to Pul, as #2Ki 15:19,20. Not one word of their going to God, he was not in all their thoughts: he did afflict leisurely that they might seek him, but they forgot him still.

And sent ambassadors and presents to entreat and procure his help,

to king Jareb: whilst interpreters agree not who this Jareb was, while some will have it be a proper, others an appellative name, of a person or place, I think it will be a surer course' to compare times, who was king of Assyria when Ephraim was sick and Judah was wounded, and both felt it, for whoever this will prove to be, he it is that is meant by Jareb: Pul in Menahem's time, Tiglath-pileser in Ahaz's time. Or what if Jareb be the sum of what Ephraim and Judah desired of this Assyrian king; they complained of wrong received, and sent to this foreign king their complaint,

and requested that he would judge, or, in our modern terms, be arbitrator; so the word will bear.

Yet could he not heal you; Ephraim's sickness grew worse by it, Israel was sicker for it.

Nor cure you, Judah, Ahaz, and his wounded state, of your wound; the Assyrian king was either unable or unwilling to heal the wound, which he knew would as much profit him as hurt his patient.

Ver. 14.

For I, the Lord, whose power is infinite, whose wrath they have enkindled, who hath threatened to extirpate them,

will be unto Ephraim as a lion; a panther, say some, a very swift beast, wherein he excels the lion, and a very fierce and ravenous creature, wherein he equals the lion; or a lioness, say others: but to leave that, God will make the Assyrian a surgeon, such as a fierce, ravenous lion would be to a wounded man. As a young lion to the house of Judah; which is grown up to his strength for mischief, and retains his inclination to gamesomeness, or to play with his prey; so should Judah find himself when caught by this lion, first made a sport to please the tyrannous humour, and after made a feast to feed his ravenous hunger.

I, even I, will tear: the threat is doubled to ascertain it and make it more dreadful. Divine vengeance by the Assyrians shall be as a lion tearing his prey.

And go away: when satisfied, the lion goes away, fleeth not for fear.

I will take away: he leaveth not ally behind him, carrieth away what he did not cat; so should Assyria devour the land, and carry away the people.

None shall rescue him: none have courage to attempt or power to effect a rescue, the prey must hopelessly perish; so it will be with Ephraim and Judah, when God appears as a lion against them.

Ver. 15.

I will go and return to my place: after the manner of man God speaks, he will do that which shall be like a man's going away

from such as refuse though they need his help, he retires; God will withdraw his saving help.

Till they acknowledge their offence; till they confess and humble themselves for their sins.

And seek my face; me their God, my mercy, and my law; their Sovereign as well as Saviour.

In their affliction they will seek me early; in deep distresses they will, at least some will, seek me diligently, as indeed they did at the end of Judah's seventy years' captivity.

HOSEA CHAPTER 6

An exhortation to repentance, **#Ho 6:1-3**. A complaint against Israel and Judah for persisting still in their wickedness, **#Ho 6:4-11**.

Ver. 1.

The former chapter ended with a declaration of God's resolution to bring his own chosen ones, true Israelites, by deep distresses to repentance, and to seek him whom they had forsaken; this chapter begins with a declaration of the success of this project. The prophet therefore brings them in exhorting and calling upon one another, and encouraging each other; the phrase you have **#Isa 2:3 Mic 4:2**, &c.

Let us return unto the Lord; let us be wiser at last, idols have not profited us, they have been our sin, and our fall; we forsook the fountain of living water when we did forsake the Lord. Let us now, with repenting hearts, leave idols, and return to the Lord; let us cast them off, and betake ourselves to the worship, obedience, love, and fear of the Lord, the only true and eternal God.

For he hath torn; we now see his hand in all we suffer, and as it is his we own it very just: we, like froward rebels, sought our help from his enemies, and he, as he threatened, hath met us, like a lion, and hath torn us: his voice in the judgment, like the roaring of a lion, hath awakened us; and our bleeding wounds have told us, that God hath done all this against us, and all this because we were departed from him.

And he will heal us; for, beside his mercy inclining him, we know it was his design by this course to recover us to himself; and we are assured he hath withdrawn his hand. left us in perplexities, but till we would seek, till we would be willing to be healed: he will be our Physician, and by his lenitives will ease and cure us, now his severer course hath abated our phrensy. The Assyrian king could not, but Israel's God and King can and will heal.

He hath smitten; the same thing in a different simile, God hath wounded.

And he will bind us up, as a skillful and tender chirurgeon binds up with plasters, and swathes to heal.

Ver. 2.

In this verse it is most certain we are to regard both the literal and historical sense, and distinguish it from the mystical and accommodated sense; in this latter, these words foretell the death, and resurrection, and future glory of Christ and Christians, as **#1Co 15:4**, and so are generally interpreted and applied by expositors. As to the letter, his history, it is in brief thus:

After two days; after some short time of sufferings for our sins, or rather when our sufferings have brought us to repentance and return to God, our God will soon after show us his grace and favour, and revive our dead state. It is not needful we inquire how long time this two days intends, it is a certain time for an uncertain, two days for a short time. God doth not delay long when we return to him, **#Jer 31:18,19**, with **#Jer 31:20**; and **#Ho 14:3**, with **#Ho 14:4**.

He will revive us: though we were as dead men, buried in our miseries, and neither deserved from God, nor could hope from any other hand, a resurrection, and recovery to a better state; yet our merciful God will quicken us again. **#Ezr 9:8,9**, expresseth their return out of captivity in those words that might well paraphrase our prophet.

In the third day he will raise us up: mercy recovers by degrees, and therefore a third day is added, in which this people shall be raised up, increased, established, and confirmed. Possibly the prophet may allude to the third day, which is said to be a critical day to the wounded, who conceive hopes when better on that day;

or possibly it may refer to the third decree by Darius made to Nehemiah for building Jerusalem, and the two days may refer to the times of Cyrus reviving the Jews, first, by his decree of liberty, and command to build the temple. The second day or time that of Darius Hystaspes to Zerubbabel and Joshua, for building the temple, in which work his bounty revived the hopes of the Jews; however poor and unable, yet the temple should be built, and the worship of God restored. This was a great reviving, but their settlement was upon the third decree, which was given out by Darius Longimanus to Nehemiah, **#Ne 2:1**.

We shall live; flourish in peace, wealth, and joy; in pure worship of God, in righteousness among ourselves, in safety from enemies.

In his sight; the eye of our God being upon us for good, and we filled with the fruits of his favour, inheriting his promises here till we fully possess them in the light of glory.

Ver. 3.

Then; after that God hath revived and raised his repenting and inquiring captives, brought them to his temple and city, restored his worship and his law amongst them (all which are figures of more glorious things to be expected by the church of Christ after his resurrection).

Shall we know; be better instructed in the law of our God, know what worship he requires, and is best pleased with. This knowledge of God shall be to us a spring of all holy, righteous, sober, and temperate conversation. Such knowledge, if we observe the Scriptures, was promised to the Jews after their return out of captivity, and their seeking the Lord, **#Jer 24:5-7 31:34 Eze 11:17-20 36:23 Hab 2:14 Zep 3:9, &c.**

Follow on to know; it shall be an increasing knowledge, which by a diligent attendance to the word and works of God these shall attain, and improve by doing the will of God, and by worshipping him; they shall know experimentally and practically how holy, how good, how faithful God is, **#Joh 8:31,32**. Before this they knew not God, and sinned, provoked God, and undid themselves; but now they shall know, obey, and please their God and Saviour.

His going forth before his people who know him, and endeavour to increase that knowledge; his gracious, faithful, holy, just, and

wise providences, and manifestations of himself in the conduct of them for his people's good and comfort.

Is prepared as the morning; as sure, seasonable, beautiful, grateful, and as clear as the morning; which dispels the darkness, and proclaims its own approach.

As the latter and former rain unto the earth; which reviveth, maketh it fruitful, beautifieth it, and gives a new face to all. So God will abundantly bless his repenting Israel, his returning people. This blessing he promised over and over to the Jews after the captivity, #**Eze 34:25 Ho 2:18,19 14:5,6 Mal 3:10.**

Ver. 4.

The Lord now enters a debate with both Israel (here called **Ephraim**) and the two tribes, with all that were his, people anciently; much after the manner of men, who having to do with froward and ungovernable children, or servants, whom they pity, and would not cast off, after much kindness and patience showed to them, and abused by them, at last seem at a stand what more to do, or appeal to by-standers whether more might be done, or demand of the untractable ones what they can desire more to be done. So #**Isa 5:3-6 Mic 6:3,5.** What is it I may do becoming my holy, just, and wise procedures, with my reasonable creatures? What should I do more to save you from ruin, and salve my own honour, truth, add justice? Would you of the ten tribes, and you of the two tribes, have me cease to be God, and resign to your idols? or repeal my own laws, and subscribe to your idols' rites? Or would you have Satan the wicked one, who hath seduced your kings, prophets, priests, and people, whom you worship in your idols, would you that he should still retain your love and service, and I maintain you in it? I would do, as appears by what I have done, any thing that may be done to reduce, reclaim, and reform you, who are as impudent adulteresses, that will not be sincere and faithful to their reconciled husband.

Your goodness, or your kindness, your love to me, my law, worship, and honour, your promises of love and loyalty,

is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew; vanisheth without effect, it is deceitful; you are hypocrites, nothing but short and empty signs of goodness, piety, and amendment. Their hypocrisy

and unconstancy, elegantly expressed in this double allusion, renders them incapable of further gentleness.

Ver. 5.

Therefore; because I would do for you whatever might be done, because I would cure you of your obstinacy and hypocrisy, and make you upright and constant. I have hewed them; I have severely, continually, and unweariedly by the prophets reproved, warned, and threatened. Your hearts have been like knotty trees, or hardest stones: I have made my prophets like labourers, and, my words like axes or hammers to cut off the knots, and to hew off the roughness which make unfit for use; but all to no purpose, the desired effect hath not been attained.

By the prophets; some that were before Hosea. Jeroboam the First was by a prophet reproved and threatened for this idolatry, in which Israel persisted, and to which Judah did too often fall; and through the space of two hundred years, from Jeroboam the First to Hosea's time, many other prophets were sent, whose names, and some memoirs of them, we have, as Ahijah, Jehu, Hanani, Elijah, and Elisha. These and such like were the prophets that did hew crooked and knotty Israel.

I have slain them: some say the false prophets are the persons meant here, whom God did slay for their sin, seducing Israel to, and confirming them in, idolatry; indeed Elijah's sincere zeal did cut off so many, #1Ki 18:22,40, and Jehu's counterfeit zeal cut off so many, #2Ki 10:21,25, that it could never be forgotten among that people. So the thing is true, many false prophets were slain for this sin; yet the persons in our text were not these false prophets, but they were the people of Israel and Judah, the idolatrous, refractory hypocrites among them, whom God threatened with death, and that by the sword of enemies.

By the words of my mouth; as he did by his word foretell, so he did effect too in due time.

Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth, i.e. the punishments threatened, the miseries foretold, which fell upon this people, did so fully answer the prediction, that every one might see them clear as the light, and as constantly executed as the morning. So #Zep 3:5.

Ver. 6.

I so hewed and slew them, because they did not what I most of all required, approved, and could accept of; they were full of sacrifices, and spared them not, but either to idols, or else in formality and pride. These sacrificers were either abominable idolaters, as were they of Ephraim, or proud hypocrites, as were too many of Judah.

I desired mercy; compassion and charity towards men, this one principal duty of the second table put for all works of godly humanity, pleaseth me, in this I delight. I had found little of this among you, nor could I persuade you to it; though this was it that I required, #Mic 6:8.

And not sacrifice; rather than, or more than, sacrifice, for it is not an absolute, but a comparative negative. Mercy to man who needed it, without a sacrifice to me who need it not, was more pleasing than a sacrifice (though required) with cruelty to man, which I forbade.

The knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings: hearty, affectionate knowledge of God, which fills the mind with reverence of his majesty, fear of his goodness, love of his holiness, trust in his promise, and submission to his will; knowledge of God's law, the rule of our obedience, of his favour, the reward of our obedience, and knowledge of his omniscience, discerning and judging it, with those excellent effects, proper fruits hereof; are more than all sacrifice, as though they were burnt-sacrifices, which of all other were entirely given to God. But truth is, who knows God aright, and doth keep his heart for God, gives God more than he that brings whole burnt-offerings; for these are but ceremonies and signs, empty and insipid to God, without the heart. In short, these people acted all so contrary to this temper of their God, gave him so much of that he valued not, and so little of that he did most value, that he could not be too severe against them, nor is it any wonder he was so displeased with their sacrifices.

Ver. 7.

I told them by my prophets what I required of them by covenant, but I could not obtain it, they regarded not what I said.

Like men; or, like Adam: some take it for a proper name, and so refer it unto the first man, and his breaking covenant; and, for aught I see, it may well enough refer to him, who forgot or slighted the threat, who judged of what he did by what it appeared, as a small matter; and so these forget and slight my threats, and judge of the place where, and the persons by whom, and the times when, sacrifices are to be offered as no material circumstances, and therefore do choose what places they please, and appoint what priest liketh them best to offer; or else transgress the covenant, as if it were the covenant of a man like themselves.

The covenant; the law of their God, which directed and encouraged their obedience, and which threatened their disobedience, and cursed it.

There; in that very place, the good land, which by covenant I gave them, they have broken my covenant; or in the things in which they thought they kept covenant, in their sacrifices, and observing of feasts, in these things they transgress the covenant.

Dealt treacherously against me; very frowardly, and with wilful resolutions perverted my law; their transgressing was a designed perfidiousness. I told them, Obedience, not sacrifice; they reply, Sacrifice, and stop there; they give no obedience, though they offer many sacrifices.

Ver. 8.

Gilead; one of the six cities of refuge, situate in the country of that name, on a high hill, whence it is called Ramoth-gilead: now as a city of refuge it was a city pertaining to the priests and Levites, as all the cities of refuge did, in what tribe soever they were, #Nu 35:6.

Is a city of them that work iniquity; a sacerdotal city, where priests did, and religion, i.e. knowledge of God and mercy to man, should, dwell; but Gilead is a city full of most notorious transgressors, the inhabitants, though Levites and priests, are a generation of men that work all manner of wickedness.

And is polluted with blood; murders committed there have polluted it, or murderers protected there against the law of God, who provided these cities a relief for such as unawares, without malice, by chance slew his neighbour, not for wilful murderers;

yet these for money or interest got in and were secured there; and probably many were kept out or delivered up to the avenger of blood contrary to the law: thus Gilead by name, and all the rest of the cities of refuge intended too, were polluted with blood.

Ver. 9.

What is here charged upon these priests, they turned highway-men and murderers, some understand of their killing and spoiling those that were going up to Jerusalem to worship God there; but more likely it is, that in this Gilead were many murderers, who durst not go out, nor could get their livelihood within the city, but, reduced to straits, took this wicked course for a livelihood, robbed and murdered on the highway, and then divided the prey with the priests, whose consent to the thing made them deeply guilty. And thus in this manner they act most lewd things; or these things are done and encouraged by the priests, because they make it their business, it is their trade now to contrive and act wickedness, highest wickednesses. Or, if you rather like it in the brief, the priests by companies lay wait, and rob, and murder, like as do the troops which rob towards Shethem.

Ver. 10.

I have seen: it may be understood of the prophet speaking what he had seen; or of God, who seeth now, and hath seen,

an horrible thing, a very horrible thing, as some observe from the word, in the house of Israel, the ten tribes.

The whoredom, idolatry,

of Ephraim; which was brought in by an Ephraimite, by Jeroboam the First, two hundred years ago, and it is there still.

Israel is defiled; it hath overspread all Israel, none free, but all defiled greatly with it.

Ver. 11.

This verse is confessedly very dark to interpreters, who agree not whether Judah be vocative or nominative; or who it is that setteth, whether Ephraim, Judah, or God; or what captivity is here meant, whether one past or to come: the conciseness of our prophet makes him very obscure.

Also, O Judah; or also Judah, i.e. as Israel is polluted, and must expect to be chastised; or, O Judah, thou art like polluted Israel in sin, and mightest be every way like in punishment.

He hath set an harvest for thee; but thy God hath appointed a harvest for thee, thou shalt not as Israel be utterly cut off, a seed of thee shall be sowed, and thou shalt reap the harvest with joy.

When I returned; when I shall return, rather, so it looks to what is to come; or else, forasmuch as I will turn

the captivity of my people, the house of Judah.

HOSEA CHAPTER 7

Israel reproved for manifold sins, **#Ho 7:1-10**. God's wrath against them for their hypocrisy, **#Ho 7:11-16**.

Ver. 1.

When: whether this chapter be a new sermon, or a continuation of that begun **#Ho 6**, we need not inquire, nor are there any particulars by which we can guess at the time when this healing work was attempted; but, so soon as it was endeavoured; indefinitely it is spoken, and so to be interpreted.

I would have healed Israel: God doth assume the person of a physician or chirurgeon, who compassionately endeavours to cure a people sick and wounded: such was the house of Israel, the whole body of the people.

The iniquity; the hidden, old, and putrefying sores, here called iniquity, the impieties and injustice.

Of Ephraim; of Israel, called Ephraim, or of Ephraim, the chief tribe of this revolting kingdom; some would have it mean the rulers, or principal men.

Was discovered; broke out; as many times in cures of old sores it happens some deeper and more rooted distemper, unthought of by the chirurgeon, appears. The wickedness, the great and many sins

of Samaria, the royal city of the kingdom, where citizens, priests, prophets, and courtiers as much outsinned others as they exceeded them in wealth and ease.

They commit falsehood; lying and cozening each other is acted as if it were a business they were bound to attend.

The thief cometh in; secret thefts, or robbing others by subtle and undiscerned methods.

The troop of robbers spoileth without; and open violence by hands joined to hands to spoil abroad. In a word, the strength and danger of their disease appears and increaseth more and more under endeavours to heal them.

Ver. 2.

They who are thus greatly wicked, notorious sinners,

consider not in their hearts, do not remember, nor will they once seriously ponder this, that I remember all their wickedness; that I see all they do, and remember all I see; and that with more than an idle, unactive looking on, or retaining in memory; I look on, and remember to call them to account, and to punish for their sins. They would flatter themselves into an opinion that I take no notice of their wickedness, and that I will never require it.

Their own doings; the guilt and punishment, the iniquity and mischief, of the works they have done; their own doings, not their fathers', as hypocrites and the incorrigible are ready to complain.

Have beset them about: as cords wrap one taken in them, or as an enemy invests and besiegeth a town on every side, so these profligate people, courtiers, priests, prophets, and citizens, are all held enclosed with their own sins.

They are before my face; what they have done I do see, and what they suffer I do see, and it is but just they should suffer what their sins deserve: they hoped for impunity, because they thought I did not regard, but now by a just punishment, by full measures of sorrows heaped upon them, they shall find all their ways were under my eye, and that I weighed their doings.

Ver. 3.

They, either the subjects in general, or rather the courtiers in particular who were about the king,

make the king glad with their wickedness: the kings of Israel, every one of them from first to last, were addicted to vicious

practices, and their minds were vitiated, deeply tainted with all kind of sins, and they it seems took pleasure in sins, both in their own and other men's; and here are a parcel of flagitious fellows that make it their work to invent pleasing wickedness, to acquaint their king with it, who is so far from doing his duty in discountenancing it, that it is one of his delights to hear or see it.

The princes; great men about the court.

With their lies; with false accusations brought in against the more innocent, or by false reports made of their words and actions, representing them as ridiculous or foolish, drolling them into infamy.

Ver. 4.

They are all adulterers, both spiritually and carnally, and this latter adultery is that which here is charged on the courtiers and people of Israel.

As an oven heated by the baker: this vice is grown raging hot among them, as you see the fire in an oven, when the baker, having called up those that make the bread, to prepare all things ready, and the whole mass is leavened, he doth by continued supply of fuel heat the oven to the highest degree. So doth adultery among this people grow by degrees to raging flames. The whole mass of the people are leavened with this vice also, as well as the court, and every one inflamed with this unclean fire, as the oven heated by the baker.

Ver. 5.

In the day of our king: whether this day were any occasional day that the king of Israel took to feast his nobles, as Ahasuerus did his; or whether the anniversary of his birth or coronation, both which were usually celebrated among most nations, the birthday especially; so Pharaoh, #Ge 40:20, and Herod, #Mt 14:6; whether of these we inquire not curiously.

The princes, who attended on the king to witness their joy in the remembrance of that day which made the public glad so great a blessing was bestowed upon them, and to wish many such days unto their king and the kingdom.

Have made him sick with bottles of wine; in their excess of drinking healths, no doubt; instead of a pious arid thankful remembrance of God's mercies, they run into monstrous impieties of luxury and drunkenness, and with bottles of wine, drank off probably at one draught, inflame themselves and their king, and drink him almost to death while they drink and wish his life.

He stretched out his hand: in these drunken feasts it seems the king of Israel forgot himself, became too familiar a companion, and used the formalities of these drinking matches, stretched out his hand with scorers, who deride religion, and wish confusion to the professors of it.

Ver. 6.

For; surely.

They; those luxurious and drinking princes, #Ho 7:5.

Have made ready their heart like an oven; do keep close some fire of ambition, revenge, or covetousness, like as a baker keeps a hot fire within his oven.

Whiles they lie in wait, either against the life or estate of some of their fellow subjects, or it may be, as appears #Ho 7:7, against the life which they seemed in their cups to pray for.

Their baker sleepeth all the night; he who should watch and prevent mischief is swallowed up in the day with feasting and drunkenness, and sleeps in security all the night, never suspecting the projects of conspirators.

In the morning it burneth as a flaming fire; but when he awakes too late, he seeth all in flames, and past quenching. Sedition and rebellion is among these a sin as hateful to God as dangerous to the public, yet frequently acted by the usurpers of those dissolute times.

Ver. 7.

This verse is a key to the former, and helps us to understand the true sense thereof.

They: see #Ho 7:6.

All; in a larger and more vulgar sense, the most, or almost all of them, few excepted.

As an oven: see #Ho 7:6.

Have devoured; as fire destroys, so have these conspirators, when successful, destroyed.

Their judges; those that were magistrates and rulers. who having somewhat of integrity, would not join with them, nor promote the interest of usurpers.

All their kings; all that had been since Jeroboam the Second's reign to the delivery of this prophecy, viz. Zachariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah; these four fell by the conspiracy of such hot princes, only Menahem died a natural death. *Are fallen*, by treason and violence from such as would drink them sick with wishes of health.

There is none among them that calleth unto me; not one of all these either feared, trusted, or worshipped God. By profession all were idolaters, in practice debauched, and by their company they kept these latter kings of Israel appear under a suspicion of men contemning God, and deriding providence; but they are long since fallen, where they must lie for ever, under God's justice.

Ver. 8.

Ephraim; the kingdom of Israel.

Hath mixed himself among the people, by leagues and commerce, by imitation of their manners, and by either entertaining their gods, and sacrificing to them, or at least worshipping idols as the nations about them did, directly contrary to the express law of God, #De 7:2-4 12:2,3. This was their sin, and the greater because voluntary: the expression seems to represent it as a thing of their own seeking, they did mix themselves with the heathen, whereas had the heathen sought it, it would in likelihood have been said that the nations mixed themselves with Ephraim; but this is in other words the same with #Ho 2:5,7. Or this passage may be (as some conceive) a threat that the Ephraimites should be scattered among the nations, be captives to them, and dispersed amongst them, with whom, to ease their condition a little, they should endeavour to mix by friendship and alliances: if so, this is the punishment of their former sinful confederacies.

Ephraim is a cake not turned: some interpret this of the particoloured temper of Ephraim, by such a proverb as ours, Is neither fish nor flesh; neither Israelite nor heathen, but a mongrel; neither a heathen idolater nor yet a worshipper of God, a hotch-potch of different religions and policies, like them, **#1Ki 18:21 Zep 1:5**; neither bread nor yet dough, but partly both, as the unturned cake on the coals is: but it better expresseth their danger and sudden ruin, whose hungry enemies will eat them up quickly, as men do who for haste will not stay the full baking of their cake.

Ver. 9.

Strangers; foreigners, whose aid Ephraim sought, as **#2Ki 15:19,20**, when Menahem bought the friendship of Pul king of Assyria for one thousand talents of silver, and impoverished the land thereby.

Have devoured; eat up, lived upon, as men live on bread they eat.

His strength; the riches and goods of the kingdom of Israel; the fruit of the olive and vine; the fruit of the earth, corn; the increase of their flocks and of their herds; the most or best of all eaten up by strangers, either soldiers in garrison among them, or else courted by presents and rich gifts sent to them.

Knoweth it not; is not sensible either of the cause why, or the tendency of this hasty consumption of all; still they are secure, and sin as much as ever.

Grey hairs are here and there upon him; the manifest symptoms of approaching death, undeniable tokens of old age, and declining strength never recoverable, are upon their kingdom, like grey hairs that are here and there intermixed on the head of a man: what with domestic seditions and foreign invasions, and the fears, cares, and griefs from both, Ephraim is turned grey-headed, his vital vigour and strength decayeth, and this is a forerunner of his death.

Yet he knoweth it not; so secure and stupid, that no notice is taken of this, nor any course thought of for preventing the dismal effects of this declining consumptive state; none turn from sin, none seek to God, the only Physician that can heal.

Ver. 10.

The pride of Israel testifieth to his face: see #Ho 5:5. Their proud contempt of God and his threats, of the prophets and their warnings, is notorious.

They do not return to the Lord; they persist in sin without repentance, run away from God rather than return to him. Of this phrase,

return, see #Ho 6:1.

Their God; who was theirs of old, who still would be theirs on fair terms, of whom they talk and boast.

Nor seek him; see this phrase #Ho 5:15; they pray not, repent not, nor rely on God.

For all this; though so greatly, continually, and severely punished, though almost eaten up.

Ver. 11.

Ephraim: see #Ho 7:1,8.

Is like a silly dove; a deceived dove, seduced by false prophets and idolatrous priests, whose weak arguments are soon believed, and whose unseasonable advice is too soon followed: Ephraim is now become like the dove in weakness and fear, as well as in imprudence and liableness to be deceived.

Without heart: this explains the former, whether heart here be judgment and discretion, as sometimes it is, or be resolution and courage, as other while it is; this dove, this Ephraim, wants both.

They call; they should in their perplexity call on God, who can help, but they do not; they call indeed, but not to their God, or to a friend.

To Egypt: this Hoshea did, #2Ki 17:4; and I remember not any mention of other application to Egypt since Jehu's time. It is probable Hosea aims at this embassy, and private confederacy, of which, as of a thing in hand, he speaketh. They do call to Egypt, whose king is called So, and judged to be Sabacon the Ethiopian, who had lately conquered Egypt: by this also may we guess at the time of this prophecy, about some four years before Samaria was taken.

They go to Assyria; so did Menahem when on the throne, so did Hoshea, as is evident, #2Ki 15:19,20, with #2Ki 17:3. Thus both betrayed the greatest imprudence, depending for help on professed, old inveterate enemies. So silly were they! See #Ho 5:13 14:3.

Ver. 12.

When they shall go, whensoever they shall send their ambassadors to seek aid of Egypt or Assyria,

I will spread my net upon them; as fowlers spread the net, watch the birds, and cast it over them to catch them, so will God do to Ephraim. So he did with Israel when he accepted the alliance of Shalmaneser, and turned tributary; and again, when Israel sought by Egypt's help to get out of the snares of their vassalage to Shalmaneser, who revenged the conspiracy with a total captivity; nor can there be likelihood or possibility these fugitives should escape when it is God's net, and he spreads it, his almighty power, his allsearching wisdom, his just vengeance, that follows them.

I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; though they attempt to fly, yet as fowls in the net they shall certainly fall, I will bring them down; as he did when they were gathered into Samaria as a net, and there made prisoners, and thence carried captives.

I will chastise them, thus they shall be punished,

as their congregation hath heard, both from the law of Moses which they had with them, and as they had heard from my prophets which I have sent unto them. I will, saith God, make good my word.

Ver. 13.

Woe unto them! it is the voice both of menace and lamentation, the prophet doth at once foretell and bewail their miseries.

They have fled from me; as if it were not enough that they did at first leave my government, temple, and worship, they have gone further from me, they have hastened herein, they flew from me as birds on wing: their sin is apostacy.

Destruction unto them! this explains the woe already mentioned, such woe it will be as ends in destruction.

Because they have transgressed against me; rebelliously cast off my law and government, much in state, more in church matters, oppressors in one, idolaters in the other, and incorrigible in both.

Though I have redeemed them; out of Egypt; but that is long since, and the prophet speaks of deliverance nearer to the times he lived in: God redeemed them partly by Joash, #2Ki 18, but more fully by Jeroboam the Second, #2Ki 14, and would have completed this deliverance, but they by sins hinder it.

Yet they have spoken lies against me; practically they belie me, fleeing to idols, worshipping them, praying to them, as if I were not able or willing to help them; and ascribing praise of the good they enjoy to their idols, #Ho 2:5-7: they belied his corrections, as if not deserved, or severer than need; they belied the good done, as if too little, or not done by God, but by their idol.

Ver. 14.

And they, immersed in these troubles. taken in the net, have not cried unto me; either they cried to their idols, not to God, see #Ho 7:7; or else their tongues made noise, their hearts were silent, and that is, in God's account, no cry at all.

With their heart; with affection, hope, humility, and sincerity; but out of some trouble, and more fear, they cried out to be delivered out of their pain and fear; it is therefore elegantly and properly called howling; though they did thus howl, yet they prayed not, they did not pour out a supplication to their God.

Upon their beds; on their couches, or in their chambers.

They assemble, in the houses of their idols, for corn and wine; that they may have plenty of these to satisfy their appetite, to live luxuriously, and in jollity.

They rebel against me; as in the use of these to excess, so in this manner of seeking these, they rebel against God, and give that honour to the idol which is due only to God.

Ver. 15.

Though I; but as for me, or, And I.

Bound; or chastised, as the word will bear; or instructed; either notion will well suit the place. When I had chastised them for their sins, as in Jehoahaz's time, I strengthened them in Jehoash's time, and in Jeroboam's time, and made them stronger than their enemies. Or, I taught them, gave them wisdom and skill to handle their weapons; so David speaks, **#Ps 18:34**, *He teacheth my hands to war*, and **#Ps 144:1**. But the sense best suits with what he took upon him before, if we retain it as our version hath it, *bound* as a chirurgeon binds up a weakened member, or, having set a broken one, doth with swathes and bands bind it up; so did God for Ephraim, when the Syrians and other enemies had broken their arms.

And strengthened their arms; as I took care to bind, so I did, what none else could, give strength to them, both courage of mind, and strength of body, and success added to both; so they subdued them that had formerly wasted and spoiled them. What successes Jehoash had, or Jeroboam had, I gave, and they should have owned it, and been thankful; but they imagine mischief against me; they contrived, laid their heads together, and designed what evil they could against me: they imputed their successes to their idols, to their way of worship, and hardened themselves against all thoughts of repentance, and returning to me; and devised mischief against my prophets, and let loose the reins to all impieties. This is their requital for all my love!

Ver. 16.

They return; they sometimes have given some signs of returning, as when Jehu destroyed Baal, or Hoshea gave liberty to Israel to go up to Jerusalem (if it be true which some affirm of him); and if I were sure Hoshea did this, I should think the prophet aimed at it; in this they return,

but not to the Most High; Jehu fell off to the calves, and Hoshea's reign was wicked too much, though the reigns of other kings were more wicked; what show soever of repentance among them, yet they never thoroughly repented, never fully embraced the law of God.

They are like a deceitful bow; all was done (as the similitude elegantly sets it forth) in mere hypocrisy; though they seemed bent for and aiming at the mark, yet, like a weak bow, they carried not the arrow home, and, like a false bow, they never carried it straight toward the mark. Their princes; the royal family, principal nobles and magistrates, their brave commanders and leaders.

Shall fall by the sword; be slain by either sword of base, false, and bloody traitors at home, or by sword of foreigners, as the Assyrian.

The rage of their tongue, against God, his prophets and providence, which to decry with scorners was their usual diversion, #Ho 7:5. This, this sad end,

shall be their derision, shall be upbraided to them, in the land of Egypt; among their allies and seeming friends.

HOSEA CHAPTER 8

Destruction is threatened both to Israel and Judah for their impiety and idolatry.

Ver. 1.

The Lord here commands the prophet to publish, as by sound of trumpet, that which God will bring upon apostate Israel, awaken them with the alarm of war.

He; the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, who carried Israel captive.

As an eagle; swift, hungry, surmounting all difficulties, and which from above seizeth his prey; so shall the Assyrian army come.

Against; or up to, as far as, so some, but it is better as here,

against. The house of the Lord; either so called because the Israelites pretended their temples were not idols' houses, but houses of Jehovah, and so the prophet for once calls them so, perhaps to intimate to that their sins would bring an enemy against those though they were indeed what they pretend them to be, the house of the Lord; or else by

house of the Lord is meant the family of Israel, or the Israelitish church, which till unchurched might be called the house of the

Lord: or it may be a sarcasm or irony against their wilful, brutish ignorance, who would not understand what was most plain, that his house was only at Jerusalem; or a softer derision of them, one of whose principal places of worship was Beth-el, which in signification is near the same with this in the text, house of God.

They have transgressed my covenant; taken other gods instead of me, turned idolaters.

Trespassed against my law: this explains and confirms the former; covenant and law are synonymous, and so are transgressing and trespassing. They have violated the whole law and covenant, and are apostates from their God, rebels against him their King.

Ver. 2.

Israel, the ten tribes,

shall cry in deep distress; when the Assyrian rangeth over their country, when Samaria is besieged, they will cry out aloud, but hypocritically; they will roar, but not pray.

My God; then they will look to the ancient alliance and league between their fathers and me.

We know thee, an only Saviour; be ours, for we are thine. Thus in hypocrisy will they carry it.

Ver. 3.

This seems to be the answer God by his prophet gives to Israel; in the first part of the verse he doth refute their pretence of a peculiar relation and interest in God, in the latter he tells them what they must expect.

Israel, the whole house of Israel, hath cast off, with an abhorrence, as an adulterous wife puts away her husband.

Good; moral good to be done, all virtue and goodness; and the supreme good to be enjoyed, God, true religion and virtue; all cast off for idols, false religion, and debaucheries. Such a nation cannot be my people, nor do they know me.

The enemy shall pursue him; that enemy he would be delivered from, the Assyrian army, shall overthrow, and then pursue, till he have cooped him up in Samaria, and till he have brought them

captives out of their own land into Chalah, Chabor, and Gozan, &c. By this they shall know that I know them, their transgressions and hypocrisy.

Ver. 4.

They; Israel, the prevailing faction among them in Hosea's time.

Have set up kings; Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea, who usurped the throne.

But not by me; not by my direction, or with my approbation; they neither prayed his blessing nor asked his leave. And this may be applied to the very first founding of the kingdom of Israel, divided from the house of David. They have made princes; rulers and magistrates, or nobles.

And I knew it not: he that will not approve any one evil, when his omniscience discerns all, is pleased to say he knew not what he did not approve.

They made them idols; heathen like, they have made them gods, and set up idolatry, so have perverted all in church and state settled by me.

That they may be cut off; as if they were resolved to cut themselves off from being a people. By this they thought to establish themselves, but it will be quite contrary, these sins will be their ruin.

Ver. 5.

Thy calf; Jeroboam at first set up two calves, at Dan and Beth-el, but it is probable that in process of time there were more set up in other places, for when Israel forgot his God he built temples, **#Ho 8:14.** The calf then here is the chief idol set up in Samaria, and worshipped there. The prophet, in contempt of the idol, and in derision of their folly, gives it its right name, it is no god, but a calf; nor yet so much, for that it is senseless and without life.

Hath cast thee off; been the occasion of casting thee far off, in that by this thou hast provoked God to anger, and he hath cast thee off. Or else thus, if thy God, thy idol, thy calf, have done aught, it is mischief; thy calf could not keep itself in Samaria, but it is either carried a captive god, or, broken into pieces, is carried

piecemeal into Assyria, and so hath cast time off: it carrieth somewhat of irony in it.

Mine anger is kindled against them; now it is evident that my anger, as fire, burneth against the idols, idol-makers, and idol-worshippers, and shall so burn till they are purified or consumed.

How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? the prophet is very concise, and perhaps here must be supposed some or other (some one of the people, or the prophet himself) sighing out to God, How long shall thine anger burn? and answer returned by God, How long will it be ere they be cleansed?

Ver. 6.

For, or because,

from Israel, by their invention and authority, was it also, both the idol and the worship of it.

The workman, the founder, silversmith, or goldsmith,

made it; fashioned the calf.

Therefore it is not God; you are sottish fools to think it is a god: if the making it will not convince you it is no god, yet I hope the destroying it will prove, whatever it was made for, or whatever thought to be, yet it was not, nor could it ever be, a god.

But the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces; but when the idol is broken into pieces, Samaria shall see it was but a calf, and confess their folly in worshipping it; however, the destruction of it will be a perpetual witness of Samaria's sin, and God's just displeasure in its ruin.

Ver. 7.

For; since that; or, for so much as; or, verily; so the Hebrew particle is sometimes used, **#Isa 7:9.**

They have sown the wind; a proverbial speech, to denote either lost labour, or, which is much worse, labour that will undo and tear to pieces him that laboureth: both these are in the verse. Man's life and labour is a seed that will bring forth fruit; but when this life and labour is laid out on sin, as here Israel's was, it will bring forth that fruit the sinner is unwilling to reap.

They shall reap the whirlwind; a violent, tearing, and dissipating tempest, which beareth down and destroyeth all that is in its way; an emblem of the wrath of God breaking out against these vain and sinful men: so Ephraim reaped in his civil wars, and much more in the Assyrian war, which ended in a whirlwind, that hath scattered them into unknown countries, and where they have lain buried in forgetfulness above two thousand four hundred years.

It hath no stalk; suppose this seed should have its harvest in no whirlwind, it will end in loss and disappointment, as seed that never springs up into a stalk, nor hath bud or ear: all your worship of and dependence on idols, and foreign assistance, will at best be as seed that yields neither stalk nor bud.

The bud shall yield no meal; or suppose it produced stalk and bud, yet it will be no profit, but all lost labour, for the bud shall be lank, shrivelled, and blasted, and never yield meal: so was the fruit Israel reaped, from Pul to Menahem, and from Egypt's assistance to Hoshea against Shalmaneser.

If so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up; or, if yet meal be found in the bud, Israel shall be never the better, foreigners devour it: so did Pul and his, and Shalmaneser and his Assyrians, eat up all.

Ver. 8.

In the former verse the prophet foretells the lost labour of such pains and seed as Ephraim bestowed; now he addeth somewhat more dreadful, the harvest is ruin and destruction to the seedsman, he is swallowed up; and this is the effect of the whirlwind, **#Ho 8:7**: ordinarily whirlwinds scatter the fruit, but here is one swallows up both labour and labourer.

Swallowed up, very soon and irreparably, as a man that is swallowed alive by a mighty, overgrown shark.

Now; ere long, within three or four years at most, as I noted on **#Ho 7:11**.

Shall they be among the Gentiles; carried out of their own country by Shalmaneser, and dispersed at the pleasure of the conqueror into Chalah, Habor, &c.

As a vessel wherein is no pleasure; as worthless and useless, cast out of doors; or if of any use, yet in basest and most contemptible: so shall these captives be among the nations whom they must serve; or Israel, impoverished by chargeable confederates, is now looked upon with contempt by them all, and cast off.

Ver. 9.

The prophet gives now an account why Israel was so impoverished, and why they should be so severely punished, why so punished of God, and why so slighted by man.

They are gone up to Assyria; either gone, i.e. have sent ambassadors with rich presents to purchase assistance from Assyria, or gone with their tribute to procure the continuance of the Assyrian confederacy and aids. This confidence and trust in Assyria was accompanied with a casting off their dependence on and subjection to God: this their sin was very great, and their punishment shall, as their sin, be very great. Others refer this going up to their going into captivity into Assyria, and it surely may be a prediction of what shall be (if it be not a narrative of what is) done.

Assyria was at that time a mighty nation, whose kings were very great, and yet more proud than great, as appears in Sennacherib's deportment toward God and man. This kingdom had now grown on through Pul, Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib's reigns, was a terror to enemies, and the vain confidence of this foolish and sinful people, for which they are particularly threatened and severely punished.

A wild ass: this is differently applied by interpreters; some refer it to the king of Assyria, who is fierce, swift, and haughty as the wild ass, and all for himself; thus the French interpret it: so it suits well; Israel, thou wilt be disappointed in thy expectation from Asshur, a wild ass, who seeks himself only. Others refer

wild ass to Israel, who, wild, untamed, and burning in lust, (as is reported of the wild ass,) rangeth far and wide for lovers, seeks every where for aids and succours.

Alone by himself; solitary, or in a wilderness, where is no path or track: this will well suit them in their captivity, when they shall

be left as in a wilderness, and may, as perhaps many did, flee into more remote and desolate places, and ramble into uninhabited places, and there take rooting, and give being to nations which are now known to us, though we know not whence they descended. Or,

alone by himself, in a posture fit to become a prey to the lion of Assyria; so it is reported the lions make a prey of the wild asses in the wilderness; so will Assyria make Israel a prey.

Ephraim hath hired lovers; hath dearly bought the friendship of Assyria in Pul and Shalmaneser's time, and more dearly bought friendship of Egypt in the time of So, or Sabacon, or Sevechus; for beside all the treasure they laid out on this, they parted with their God for it, and set him against Israel.

Ver. 10.

Yea, though; or, Yea, because; they think this the way to prevent their calamities, but it shall appear this was the ready way to bring their calamities upon them; and forasmuch as they have hired the aid of the nations to secure them against their God and his judgments, therefore, &c.

Gather them; bring Israel together by a secret and unfailing train. I will, saith God, assemble and herd them together, that they may be taken and destroyed together. Others say, God will gather the nations together against Israel.

They shall sorrow a little, for a while before their final captivity they shall complain and be grieved,

for the burden of the king of princes; the tribute laid on them by the king and princes, i.e. of Israel; but better as we read it, the king of Assyria, the great king who boasted of his princes.

Ver. 11.

Because: this refers to what follows.

Ephraim hath made many altars; multiplied either to many idols, every one having his altar, or multiplied altars in several places to the same idol. They had many high places, and altars in all of them.

To sin; both as acting against the law of God, which required but one altar, and also these altars were to sin, in that they were for sacrifices to be offered on them to idols. These persons did not intend them for sin, but their good intention did not, could not change the thing, it was sin, however they intended.

Altars, either those here erected, or those they shall find in Assyria when they come captives thither,

shall be unto him to sin; either because forced in captivity to worship Assyrian idols, and to attend their altars and sacrifices, or else by a just and dreadful judgment from God delivering them over to their wilful blindness and idolatrous heart: since they would never be reclaimed, nor taken off from sinful multiplying altars, let them follow their own hearts, and set up what they will; much like that **#Re 22:11**. Or else thus, Altars shall be the occasion of his greater guilt and punishment, his altars, i.e. his idolatrous worship, shall be that sin that ruins him.

Ver. 12.

I have written: some read it in the future, and by way of question, Shall I write? but most read as we, in the perfect or past tense, I have written, by Moses first, by other prophets afterwards; the law was given to them, as well as to the two tribes.

Great things; for their importance, weighty; for their excellency, precious; and for multitude of precepts, counsels, and directions, sufficient; my law had all this in it for their conduct in all righteousness towards God and man.

But they, all these things which I have written,

were counted as a strange thing; Israel looks on them as nothing to them; they are a distinct kingdom, and have a distinct establishment, their laws are now become unpracticable to us, and we have, by the wisdom of our governors, other laws established for our worship; let Judah keep to theirs, we will keep to our laws; after two hundred years' desuetude, would it not be madness to introduce Judah's laws, and innovate all in Israel? Thus they contemned the excellent things of God's law, as if they were nothing concerned in them. And thus all their sins at last become incurable diseases, which nothing but utter destruction of the sinners can put an end unto.

Ver. 13.

They sacrifice; or, As for sacrifices, my gifts, so some, taking the words absolute and in apposition, read them, and perhaps they are plainer and closer connected with the former when so taken. I have written to them, and they count it a strange thing; and the sacrifices and gifts which they call mine, I tell you what I account them to be; as for sacrifices, which now they pretend to give me, it is flesh they sacrifice, and eat it when they have done, and I account no more of it: they sacrifice that they may feast and fill themselves with wine and mirth, and what is that to me?

The Lord accepteth them not; neither owneth them as his, nor taketh any pleasure at all in them. These sacrifices shall never expiate their sins, nor reconcile me to them, saith God. I think here is a meiosis in these words, they may be a softer expression of hatred and detestation, which God bears towards such.

Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; in his just and hot displeasure, he will reckon with them, and, by punishing them for all, make them know he remembers all their sins. Here remembering and visiting are the same, and include punishment.

They shall return to Egypt; either alluding to their bondage in Egypt; so Assyria shall use them. Or else it is an upbraiding them for and minding them of their perfidiousness to Shalmaneser. They had been ever covenant-breakers with God and man; this last part of treachery God will punish. Or else, they shall return to Egypt, i.e. many shall to save their lives flee from the Assyrian into Egypt, and there seek their safety; and if they preserve their life there, the punishment of their sins shall follow them; exile, with misery as bad as captivity, shall be their lot there. So **#Ho 9:6.**

Ver. 14.

Israel; the ten revolted idolatrous tribes.

Hath forgotten; the same with **#Ho 2:5**, which see; or **#Ho 4:1,6.** Either remembers not at all, or it is without love, thankfulness, and consideration what becomes him towards God. *His Maker*; who made, who preserved, who advanced them, and

gave them all those privileges wherein they excel other nations; who brought them out of Egypt, &c.

Buildeth temples; the word will bear palaces, or towers. It is like their idol temples were magnificent, that they might boast of them, and strong like towers, that they might for need garrison and fortify them, and trust in their strength in a day of war and trouble.

Judah hath multiplied fenced cities; on like designs and motives doth Judah multiply strong holds, fortifying against threatened judgments, making flesh their arm, whilst their heart (as at this time of Ahaz's reign and apostacy) did depart from the living God.

Send a fire upon his cities; bring an enemy upon them that shall besiege them in their cities, and burn them, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar and his armies about one hundred and thirty years after.

It shall devour the palaces; the stately palaces of their princes and nobles in their cities, these shall be burnt too. Judah hath imitated Israel, and made himself like to Israel in sin, and God will make them like in sufferings; the fire which their sin hath kindled shall consume both.

HOSEA CHAPTER 9

The distress and captivity of Israel for their sins, especially their idolatry.

Ver. 1.

Rejoice not: this might seem a morose humour of a discontented, sullen preacher: what! forbid a people to rejoice when things prosper with them? when should a people rejoice if not then? The prophet, who had a deeper reach, and took a larger prospect of things. had good cause to advise, or warn, or forbid as he doth, for he saw more cause to grieve than to rejoice, and to mourn than to be merry; the reason you will have presently.

O Israel; you of the ten tribes.

For joy; for any thing that is counted just matter of joy; though at present you prosper either under Jeroboam the Second's

victorious arms, or under Menahem, and the safety he hath procured by a confederacy with Assyria, though at other times these might be matter of rejoicing, now in thy circumstances, O Israel, it is not meet thou shouldst show any gladness.

As other people; with feasting, public games, and triumphs, or with solemn sacrifices of thanksgiving, or with erecting statues to the memory of your great and brave commanders, or for continuing the remembrance of their achievements.

For thou hast gone a whoring from thy God; with thee, O Israel, it is as unseemly as it is for an adulterous wife to rejoice and be jovial, whilst the guilt of her adulteries, and the shame of her lewdnesses, and the displeasure of her husband, fly in her face and whisper reproofs in her ear.

Thou hast loved a reward, such as is given by adulterers to lewd women,

on every corn-floor; thou hast loved to see thy floor full, and hast thought, and said thy idols had so furnished thee, and therefore thou didst love them. Though mirth might become an honest woman, it doth not so well suit with a dishonest adulteress; the very place, the Company and occasion, do upbraid such a one rejoicing with her lewd adulterers: besides, this adulteress's joys will be short, and end in sorrows and shame; so will thine, O Israel.

Ver. 2.

The floor; the corn which is gathered into the floor and that is threshed there, that plenty which these sottish idolaters have, and think they have it from their idols, the bread they eat. For here *the floor* is put for the corn, and the bread made of it.

The wine-press, by the same figure, put for the wine that is pressed out in it; though there is great plenty, and the vats overflow as well as the press full.

Shall not feed them; all this plenty shall not nourish and strengthen them. Since they think their idols give them their corn and wine, let them give also, what I will not give, a blessing on these that they may support and refresh them; they shall be lean

and half-starved in their plenty unless their idols can do this for them, i.e. bless their food.

Them, who seek to idols for corn and wine, and praise their idols as givers of it. These I will blast, their provision shall be as theirs, **#Hag 1:6**.

The new wine shall fail in her; or lie unto her, or fail her expectation. Samaria and all Israel expect a fair and full vintage, but they expect it from their idols, which are a doctrine of lies, and in this, as in all other, will lie.

Ver. 3.

They, who worship idols, and give my glory to them, depending on them, and ascribing to them what I alone give them,

shall not dwell in the Lord's land; though they have been in possession many years, and though now they seem out of fear of losing it, being great at home and in peace with neighbours abroad, yet in midst of this prosperity and security, let them note it, they shall not much longer dwell in the Lord's land, which God gave them according to promise, with express condition that they should obey him and fear him, and him only, **#De 6:2,3**, and with express menace of exile and ruin if they forgot God, **#De 8:19,20**. This land, which is the Lord's propriety, and theirs only on condition, and this condition broken, shall be their possession no longer.

Ephraim shall return to Egypt; many of Ephraim, for it is not meant of all or the most part; but of the more timorous, wary, and who consult their safety beforehand, many shall flee into Egypt, and shift out of the enemies' reach. So again **#Ho 9:6**.

They shall eat unclean things in Assyria; the residue who flee not into Egypt shall be carried captives, and in Assyria be forced to eat forbidden meats, called here unclean, such as polluted the eater.

Ver. 4.

They, captured for their idolatry and other sins,

shall not offer wine-offerings: these were by the law appointed to be offered with the morning and evening sacrifice; the sacrifice representing Christ, and pardon by him, the wine-offering

represented the Spirit of grace. The sacrifice repeated daily continued their peace and pardon; the Spirit of grace supported, guided, comforted, and refreshed; all which shall be withheld from these captives, the law of God forbidding on one account, the law of their conquerors forbidding on another account.

Neither shall they be pleasing unto him; or if any should venture to do it, and think thereby to appease God's anger, they shall miss their aim, it will not please God.

Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; their eucharistical sacrifices, in which they were used to feast with joy, shall be to them as the bread of mourners, as if they had buried a father or mother, and to comfort or support their saddened spirits did force themselves to some larger allowance and choicer meats; so great should be their grief in midst of their joys. Or else thus, their sacrifices should as much pollute them and displease God as if one mourning for the dead, and forbidden to sacrifice in tears and mourning, should yet venture to do it, and, against the law, sacrifice to his God when polluted by the dead, **#Nu 19:11-14 De 26:14.**

All that eat thereof shall be polluted; so far shall these men's sacrifices be from expiating and purifying, that they should increase their guilt and danger, and incur the penalty threatened against the polluted, **#Nu 19:13.**

For; or, surely; the particle is not here causal, but assertive, as in many other places it is.

Their bread for their soul; their mincha or bread, which they always offered and were bound to offer with their sacrifices. Or else the first-fruits of their corn, which were to be brought to the Lord, and which being rightly offered did sanctify and insure the rest to them, with a blessing. This should not be done, they should be at that distance from the temple, and under the confinement of captives, so that they should not be able to do it if they were willing.

Shall not come; be brought in to the priest in the temple, **#De 26:2,3, &c.**

Ver. 5.

Think with yourselves what you are likely to do then: on those days you were wont to cease from your labours, to offer sacrifices to God, (as you thought and said,) to feast with one another, all was full of seeming religion and real feasting and jollity on those days in your own country; but will your hard masters, that love their own profit, that hate your persons, and despise your religion, will they lose your labour, indulge your ease, encourage your religion, and suffer you to exercise it? Is this imaginable?

Ver. 6.

For, lo; mark it well, and observe the event.

They are gone because of destruction; some of the wary and timorous are already withdrawn from the desolation that cometh on their country, and more will flee from the Assyrian invader; and it is very near, and very uncertain, expressed therefore in the perfect tense.

Egypt shall gather them up; in Egypt they hope to be quiet, and survive these desolations, and to return into their own land; but they shall die in Egypt, and Egyptians shall lay them out, and prepare them to their grave. So this phrase, **#Jer 8:2 Eze 29:5.**

Memphis, which elsewhere is called *Noph*, **#Isa 19:13**, a very greatly traded city in those days, and at this day also known by the name which speaks its greatness, Grand Cairo.

Shall bury them: many of the ten tribes, fleeing their own wasted country, did no doubt remove so far as Memphis, partly for safety, that they might be out of the Assyrian's reach, but more principally for convenience of a trade, that they might at least get a livelihood, if not grow rich on their trade; there many of these fugitives died; and perhaps by the pestilence (which is a disease that frequently sweeps that city) multitudes of them might be swept away into their graves in and about that city.

The pleasant places for their silver; their beautiful and strong houses built for keeping their wealth in.

Nettles shall possess them; they shall be ruined, and lie long in rubbish, till nettles grow up in them.

Thorns, or briars, or whatever (one kind for all) worthless and hurtful shrubs used to grow in perpetuated desolations, shall be in their tabernacles, in their dwellingplaces, their houses, which here retain the name of their ancient habitations when they dwelt in tents.

Ver. 7.

The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come: the prophet doubleth the same thing, both to confirm the certainty of it, and to awaken the stupid Israelites: the days of God's just displeasure, in which he will punish, and render to these incorrigible idolaters and abominable debauchees as their wickedness deserveth, are come, they are very near, within four years at most.

Israel shall know it; Israel will not believe it, though God hath often told them of it, but when it is come, and they feel it, they shall then know indeed, as fools know when they smart for their folly.

The prophet is a fool; their false prophets were all, to a man of them, fools and rash, judging by present greatness or alliances of Israel, not observing what were their sins and God's wrath. Now when Hosea preached what was contained in this 9th chapter, Israel had made a league with So king of Egypt, cast off the Assyrian, and not sought to God, but vainly trusted to the Egyptian succours; now any wise man might imagine that likely which the prophet Hosea did foretell as certain, that the Assyrian with all his power would fall upon the revolvers; none but fools would promise such a people a time of safety when the war was falling upon their heads.

The spiritual man, that pretends to be full of the Spirit of prophecy, and foretells good to them, whom we thought a true prophet; but. now find by sad experience that we believed a madman, one much out of his wits; yet were we more, to believe what he promised.

For the multitude of thine iniquity: God was highly displeased with the multitude of their iniquities, and began his punishments in giving them over to believe the lies of their false prophets, and to expect what peace these prophets did promise.

And the great hatred which God had against your sins and ways: you would walk in ways which God hated, yet would have prophets to foretell peace and plenty; such you have had as described #Mic 2:11, and you believed them; and God, out of his just dislike, suffered this to be, left you to your choice.

Ver. 8.

The watchman of Ephraim was with my God; the old true prophets indeed were with God, heard what he spake, and told it to the people; they were for God, for his honour, law, worship, and temple; and so should prophets now be. Ephraim once had such prophets, such were Elijah and Elisha, but none such now, or Ephraim cares not for them. The prophet speaks of God, the true God, as his God, in opposition to idols, on which Ephraim doted now, whose pretended oracles they believed.

But the prophet; the prophets now-a-days, who call themselves prophets, and are so accounted by the people, have, as the people, left God, and do no more consult with God.

Is a snare of a fowler; their pretended predictions and promises are but a snare, such as fowlers lay to take fowl in; and these impostors are conscious to themselves that they are deceivers; at least they cannot but know that the true God never gave them answer at any of their images, yet they pretend he hath done it, and that he will prosper them; so they insnare the people first in sin, next in punishment.

In all his ways; and all they design and endeavour by all means is to keep the people in this opinion and hope.

And hatred in the house of his God; so is hatred in the sight of God, he doth hate such deceivers; and he is hated, i.e. ere long will he be hated, in the sight of the people he deceived; they shall hate their false prophets, who from the house of their God, by answers from the idols in their temples, confirmed the people in their rebellion, and hardened them against returning to God, which ends in their ruin: or else hatred, &c., i.e. cause of the people's hatred, against God and one another.

Ver. 9.

They, the people of the ten tribes, prophets, priests, princes, and people, have deeply corrupted themselves, have strangely and

horribly debauched one another; beside all their idolatry, there is more than brutish filthiness among them.

As in the days of Gibeah; the story whereof you have #Jud 19.

Therefore he, God, who hateth such workers of iniquity, **will remember their iniquity**; he will not pardon their iniquity, but charge it upon them: when God saith he will not remember, it is a promise of pardon; When he threatens he will remember, it is a threat of not pardoning.

He will visit their sins; he will punish: see #Ho 9:7.

Ver. 10.

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness: the Lord speaks of himself in the person of a traveller, who unexpectedly in the wilderness findeth a vine loaded with grapes, which are most delightful and welcome to him; such love did God bear to Israel, i.e. a very strong and hearty love: the simile expresseth the greatness, not the cause, of the Divine love.

I saw your fathers; not Abraham, or Isaac, and Jacob, but your fathers whom I brought out of Egypt.

As the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first time; as the earliest ripe fruit, either of the fig tree as our version, or the first-ripe of any sweet and delicious fruit tree, as the word will bear, which are most valued and desired; so was Israel dear and valued.

They went to Baalpeor: this evinceth that the prophet speaketh not of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but of those who were brought out of Egypt, as appears in the story of their department in Shittim, #Nu 25:1-3, where they committed idolatry with Baalpeor, of whose rites authors do variously discourse, some reporting them to have been practised with shameless looseness, as the rites of Bacchus, Venus, or Priapus among the Romans; others say, this idol of Moab had his name from a mountain in Moab where he was worshipped, and had a stately and famous temple; this mountain is mentioned #Nu 22:41, with #Nu 23:28; and this is the more likely opinion.

Separated themselves; they did consecrate and dedicate themselves; possibly some turned priests to the idol; however,

they addicted themselves to and worshipped the idol, and brought their sacrifices.

To that shame: by way of contempt and detestation the prophet speaks of this idol, and gives it the name of shame in the abstract, to express the greatest degree of detestation of it, and of that they did.

Their abominations, their idols, and way of worshipping them,

were according as they loved; either as they fancied, or as the idolatrous women whom they loved were multiplied, so their idols were, for they took the idols with them.

Ver. 11.

Their glory; their children or posterity, which was as much the glory of Israel, as their multiplying was above the common rate of other nations' multiplying; it was to them a singular blessing, and performing of promise, and they did greatly rejoice and glory in this blessing, **#Ps 128 Pr 17:6.**

Shall fly away like a bird: it is proverbial, and speaks a sudden and unexpected loss of children. which vanish and are gone as a bird: see **#Pr 23:5**, where sudden loss of riches is expressed in the same proverb.

From the birth; shall die as soon as born.

From the womb; prove abortive, their mothers shall not bring the fruit of the womb to perfection, or alive into the world.

From the conception; through barrenness their wives shall not conceive.

Ver. 12.

Or suppose neither of these, but that their children live, grow up and come to some maturity, yet God, provoked by their sins, will deprive them of their children by famine; or by civil wars, which were long and bloody on each other; or by pestilence; or by captivity, and dispersing them among enemies, to whom they shall be slaves, and, as slaves, beget children not to themselves, but to their masters.

There shall not be a man left; there shall be a total extirpation of them and their memory; or else, I will cut them off from among men, as the phrase will bear.

Woe also to them when I depart from them! to complete their misery, I will leave them, I will depart from them. It is sad to lose children, it is sadder to lose their God.

Ver. 13.

Ephraim; the kingdom of Israel.

Tyrus; of which see #Eze 26\$ Eze 27\$ #Eze 28\$; a very rich, well-fortified, and pleasant city, and secure too, that afterward held out thirteen years' siege against all the power of the Babylonian empire in Nebuchadnezzar's time.

Is planted in a pleasant place; is now well provided, seems invincible, is as secure as Tyrus was in her prosperity; perhaps reckons either strength shall break the enemies, or money buy friends, or the magnificence and beauty of their places and dwellings shall be some safety to them; but all this shall avail nothing.

Shall bring forth his children to the murderer; though a multitude of children to send forth in mighty armies against the enemy, yet it will be but a sending them out to the slaughter: God is departed from them, and will not go out with their armies, so they shall fall by the sword of the enemy, as they needs must whom God doth not befriend in a war.

Ver. 14.

Give them, O Lord; it is an abrupt but very pathetic speech of one that shows his trouble for the state of a sinking, undone nation, it is an intercession for them.

What wilt thou give? as if he should say he knew not what to ask, or how to pray for them; he knew God had peremptorily determined to punish them with a total extermination, and in a most dreadful manner, as described #Ho 9:11-13. Now give some mercy.

Give them a miscarrying womb; the days are coming when the barren womb will be a blessing; give this, O Lord; it is less misery

to have none, than to have all our children murdered by a barbarous enemy, #Lu 23:29.

Dry breasts; not to starve the children born, but it is a further explication of the former; dry breasts are symptoms of a barren womb, whether by abortion or non-conception, by one or other. Prevent these woeful effects of our enemies' unjust rage, and of thy most righteous displeasure against us, O Lord.

Ver. 15.

All; the chief, or sum, or beginning:

Gilgal is not to be understood exclusive to other places, for every city was full, there was all kind of sin elsewhere.

Their wickedness, in rejecting God and his government. Here Saul was made king, and Samuel was rejected. Here they begun to turn the remarkable blessings God gave them in this place into a superstitious and hypocritical veneration of the place, and began their will-worship and idolatries. If all the impiety of Ephraim may be reduced to their horrible degeneracy and corruption in state and church, here it began, and so all was here.

Gilgal; where Israel first pitched their tents after they passed over Jordan: see #Ho 4:15.

There I hated them; as there they began to sin so notoriously, there also I began to show that I hated them for the wickedness of their doings; for the continued wickedness which from their first beginning there they have propagated to other places, and increased daily, and with obstinacy.

I will drive them out; as men thrust out of their houses one that is altogether unworthy to dwell longer with them.

Of mine house; by a synecdoche, the house for land; or, out of their house, which though theirs for use, was yet God's propriety; and when God casts Ephraim out of his house, he sends him into captivity.

I will love them no more; I will cease to express any more love to thee; it is a meiosis, I will add no more love to them, i.e. I will add to hate them and punish them, I will leave them in the hand and under the fury of their enemies in a strange land.

All their princes, their kings and rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical,

are revolters; are and have been idolaters ever since the division in Jeroboam son of Nebat, not one of their kings but were idolaters, and obstinate and perverse in it also.

Ver. 16.

Ephraim is smitten: this gives us some guess at the time of this prophecy, which was after Jeroboam's death, in whose life and reign Ephraim was as a very flourishing tree, whose roots were full of sap and life; but after the death of this king they were, as here it is expressed, a tree smitten, as if scorched with lightning, or burnt up with a vehement and continued heat and drought by day; blasted they were, whatever was the means: or possibly it may refer to those seditions, civil wars, and rebellious conspiracies which (say some) did for some years afflict the kingdom of the ten tribes, which unnatural wars were as an axe to the root of this tree, and gave Pul king of Assyria opportunity and courage to set upon them, of whom they were forced to buy their peace at a dear rate, viz. a thousand talents of silver; or to the captivating of Naphtali, and taking many fortified towns out of Pekah's hand by Tiglath-pileser, who came up to the rescue of Ahaz, #2Ki 15.

Their root is dried up; this hath dried up the very roots of this tree; this blast from heaven hath not only scorched the top boughs, but rent the very body of this Israelitish tree, and hath spoiled its roots; or civil wars first, and foreign wars next, have cut up the roots of this tree, the strong and valiant young men, who were to perpetuate the life and beauty of this people.

They shall bear no fruit: as such a dead root cannot spring out; so these Ephraimites never shall spring forth, they shall ever be barren. *Though they bring forth;* suppose they should yet bring forth, (such a supposition you meet with #Ho 9:12, which see,) they shall not grow to maturity and greatness.

Yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb; either by diseases, which are legibly from God's hand, or by the sword of one another, or of a foreign invader: if you do not enumerate all the ways God will take, we are sure he will take ways enough to

make good his own word, and slay their beloved children, those children that were the more beloved for that their parents had either few, or else had lost some they had before.

Ver. 17.

My God; no more thy God, O Ephraim, thou canst no more have hope on that account, but my God, saith the prophet, my God who hath revealed his purpose to me, and who will accomplish it, who will make good the word I have spoken against you.

Will cast them away: your sins have been a weariness, a loathing to my God, and now as a vile, loathed, and wearisome thing is cast off by a man, so shall you be cast off from your God.

They did not hearken unto him; neither did hearken to God to prevent apostacy, nor would ever after hearken to God at first to repent and turn to him; like a wilful adulteress, they would not keep faithful to their Husband, nor return to him when once departed from him.

They shall be wanderers; have no city of their own, no settled dwelling-place; as much suspected, hated, ill used, and punished as vagabonds are in well-ordered commonwealths; all which is fully come upon them.

Among the nations: Gentiles were such the proud circumcision did despise and hate, but now the sins of the circumcised shall bring them under as much contempt with the nations; nay, these proud apostates from God, when cast off and wanderers, shall account it a favour to be admitted to incorporate with, and so to grow up heathens among heathens, as after long time they did.

HOSEA CHAPTER 10

Israel is reproved and threatened for their impiety and idolatry, and exhorted to repentance.

Ver. 1.

Israel and Ephraim are terms our prophet doth ordinarily use, and they signify the same people, the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, and from the true worship of God.

Is an empty vine; a vine wasted and spoiled, that hath lost its strength to bring forth any fruit, or that is robbed and pilled of the

fruit it doth bring forth; this partly for want of the Divine protection and benediction, which they were wont to have, and partly from an inherent barrenness and weakness in this vine.

He bringeth forth fruit unto himself; whatever fruit was brought forth by its remaining strength was not brought forth to God, for his service and honour; but for themselves, for their own use, for service of a state interest, to make presents, and to pay tribute; or, which is yet worse, to maintain the worship of idols.

According to the multitude of his fruit: when the land yielded more plentiful increase, this plenty was impiously employed on multiplied idols, or on multiplied altars, built to the same idols.

He hath increased the altars of their idols, either by adding to the number of altars, or else adding to the numbers of sacrifices offered to the idols on their altars.

According to the goodness of his land: idolaters sottishly imagined that the goodness of their land was a blessing on them from their idols; thus sacrilegiously they robbed God, and on this mistake they proceed to further impiety.

He hath made goodly images; more stately, more curiously wrought, more richly adorned, and it is most likely more for number too, accounting it a great devotion to have many and rich statues of their idols.

Ver. 2.

Their heart is divided from God and his worship, or between God and Baal, such as **#Zep 1:5** speaks of, or else divided one from another by parties, and factions, and civil wars, which tended to their ruin.

Now shall they be found faulty; as this was their sin, so the effects hereof should manifestly prove them faulty.

He, either God, or the king of Assyria stirred up by God to invade and destroy Ephraim,

shall break down their altars; utterly pull down those altars which they had multiplied to their idols: the Assyrians shall, as other conquering heathen idolaters, rage against the gods of the

people they conquer, as well as against the people; such was the pride and atheism of these men.

He shall spoil their images; waste or destroy them; how goodly soever they had seemed to be, yet they should be broken to pieces; and where made of rich materials, as silver and gold, or if adorned with it, the enemy should the sooner spoil them; and then it will appear how sottish this people were to trust in them, or ascribe any praise to them, when Baal cannot defend his own images or people.

Ver. 3.

For; surely. *Now*; ere long.

They shall say; see, and feel, and be convinced too of this truth. We have no king; either no king at all, as in an interregnum, or no such king as we expected and hoped: our dependence was much upon the wise, valiant, and successful conduct of our king; but he is either less wise and valiant, or less successful in his enterprises.

Because we feared not the Lord; worshipped not, kept not his law, depended not on God, therefore we have no king, or one next to none, not able to help us.

What then should a king do to us? and now if we had our king, were he as powerful, wise, and successful as Jeroboam the Second, yet it would be too late, the Assyrian power hath so far prevailed, and God is so far departed from us: kings are not able to save without the God of kings.

Ver. 4.

They, the nobles and great men in Israel, the heads of the parties, or the counsellors of the kingdom,

have spoken words; have in long and repeated consultations and debates contrived and laid forth the designs most like to help us; but all in vain, all is but words; or thus they have deceived one another, and ruined all; and this latter seems exactly to suit with what follows.

Swearing falsely, by perjury deceiving those they treated with, in making a covenant; either among themselves, accepting a usurper, promising and swearing fealty to him; or with their allies, as with the Assyrian king, whose covenant they perjuringly broke, and,

contrary to oath, sent to and confederated with Sun, or So, king of Egypt.

Judgment, i.e. Divine revenges, do so abound every where; or else unequal and sinful projects, counsels, and resolutions of their rulers are, instead of just, wholesome, and saving, turned into bitter, poisonous, and pernicious as hemlock.

As hemlock in the furrows of the field; a proverbial speech, expressing the greatness of this pernicious evil. So this will be explained by #Am 6:12, oppression, injustice, and all sins spread (as hemlock quickly overruns a field) over all the kingdom.

Ver. 5.

The citizens who dwelt yet safe in Samaria, but knew that the Assyrian invaded the kingdom, beat Israel's army, and took his city; these idolatrous citizens were in bodily fear for their gods, lest the Assyrians should rudely spoil their godships.

Because of the calves of Beth-aven: some give the reason of their fear, because they had sinned by these calves, and provoked God, therefore should this fear seize them; but it is more likely this doth speak the object of the Samaritans' fears, their cow-calves (as by way of contempt in the Hebrew) were the goodly deities they were afraid for; yet they trusted in these for aid against enemies, and now fear they have not power enough to defend themselves: what brutes are idolaters! Of this

Beth-aven, principal seat of the calf god, see #Ho 4:15.

The people thereof; they who dwelt at Beth-aven, who had gain and profit by the idol, to which many resorted; or else they that were addicted to this idol, worshipped it, and trusted in it.

Shall mourn over it; howl and cry over the endangered god: so let all their sorrows be multiplied that hasten after any strange god.

The priests thereof, that were to attend and offer sacrifices to these calves; the priests were like to lose their livings with their idol.

That rejoiced on it: these priests formerly were fed, clothed, enriched, and got into credit by these their idols, this made them right glad.

The glory thereof, all its credit and veneration, is departed from it; is vanished: it was once taken for a god, but now the case is altered, it is turned into a captive, and with loss of liberty hath lost its deity also; the Assyrians have either broken it, or carried it in derision into Assyria.

Ver. 6.

It; the golden calf made by Jeroboam the First, #1Ki 12:28.

Shall be carried; though it hath feet, it cannot go, it must be borne; as Isaiah derides the idols of Babylon, #Isa 46:2,7 Jer 10:5; and it is carried in triumph. For a present; according to the custom of conquering generals, the rich and rare things of the conquered people were reserved for gifts to their kings; and here is a rarity indeed, a captive god, and it is rich, for it is made of gold.

King Jareb: see #Ho 5:13.

Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed: the great confusion of this people is here foretold, and the certainty of it by the ingemination of the phrase: the Assyrians shall upbraid them with their brutish folly, to think that a god which could not keep itself from becoming a prey to insolent soldiers; and when thus taunted, Israel shall have nothing to answer, but must be silent with shame.

Of his own counsel; which is expressly mentioned #1Ki 12:28; it was against the counsel of God; and as they began, so they persisted in it by the same counsel.

Ver. 7.

As for Samaria, after three years' siege she shall be cut off. Her king is cut off; for all the rest of the kingdom was lost, and now he is pent up there also; he that was once the confidence of the ten tribes, and king of a mighty people, is now spoiled of all but one only city, where he is rather a prisoner than a king, kept close till made a captive.

Is cut off; shortly will be cut off; it is not unlikely this prophecy should be delivered when Samaria was besieged.

As the foam upon the water; as a contemptible, weak, and light thing: it is a proverb, and foretells how contemptibly the Assyrians should use them.

Ver. 8.

The high places; the temples and altars of Baal and other idols.

Aven, for Beth-aven, say most interpreters: what if. Aven, vanity, folly, be here put for all idol worship and rites, which was notoriously

the sin of Israel?

Shall be destroyed; utterly overthrown; and lie so long waste and desolate, that thorns and thistles shall spring up out of the places where their altars once stood within their stately temples. When this shall be brought to pass, the idolatrous Israelites shall be in such perplexity, that they shall wish the mountains and hills might fall on them, and bury them alive, that they might escape the troubles that they did foresee were coming upon them; or it may be an upbraiding them for praying to lifeless stocks or statues, and telling them in their distress, and when their gods are gone, and cannot help, they should cry to deaf mountains to cover them.

Ver. 9.

O Israel, thou hast sinned; you of the ten tribes with such consent have sinned, that you seem to do it as one man.

From the days of Gibeah; ever since the days, so we; but, as Rivet observes, it will bear a comparative thus, *thou hast sinned above*, or more than. The ten tribes were greater sinners than those Gibeonites; so the prophet compareth the sins of the present age and that past. See **#Jud 19**, where the story is set down at large. See also **#Ho 5:8**, the place described.

There they stood; in that day and war some stood, who were a seed for raising up the tribe; so I refer this passage to the six hundred men who fled to the rock Rimmon.

The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them; that fatal battle did not reach them; but now Israel shall be more severely punished; for who escape the sword shall be carried captives, and they shall be no more a people or

kingdom: or else thus; Israel hath sinned more than the Gibeonites, I will therefore punish them more than the Gibeonites; they stood once or twice, but Israel now shall be ever beaten and put to flight; in that war Israel had heart to rally, and after two defeats were victors in the third encounter, but it shall not be so now, a war shall overtake them now, not such to Israel as was that against the Gibeonites, for in that they had at last the better, but in this they shall be totally ruined.

Ver. 10.

Our version leaves this verse somewhat obscure, but our reading in the margin doth much clear the words, and maketh them much more easily intelligible.

It is in my desire that I should chastise them; I am resolved to punish them as I see good; they have deserved the utmost that I shall lay upon them, and therefore I will punish as I see meet.

The people shall be gathered; the forces of the Assyrian empire shall be gathered in arms against them, I will bring Shalmaneser upon this sinful, idolatrous nation.

Against them; Israel, or Ephraim.

When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows; when I shall bind them, or when they shall be bound, for their two transgressions; so the marginal reading: and then it is plain, if once it appear what were their two transgressions; either corporal and spiritual adultery; and what if it were their revolt from David's house, their ancient rebellion and idolatry? or revolt from God: these were the two main spring-heads of their other particular sins, and for these they shall be bound as prisoners and captives, and carried away into Assyria.

Ver. 11.

As an heifer; a young and wanton heifer, unaccustomed to the yoke, not used to hard labour.

Taught; used to, and so skilled in or acquainted with.

Loveth to tread out the corn: what we do by thrashing, the Jews did by these heifers or oxen, tread out the corn, and in doing this the law provided that the ox should not be muzzled, but should eat what it would: so it was with Ephraim, he loved that work that

was so pleasant, which so well fed him. And God doth let Ephraim know that he had been very much indulged herein: God had given them all abundance and prosperity, and with little labour or care; and he expected thankfulness for it; but no such thing was done by Ephraim, he grew more insolent, untractable, and perfidious. When I found it so,

I passed over upon her fair neck, laid some lighter yoke upon her, brought some gentler afflictions upon that people, to tame them, and make them serviceable; but this hath not prevailed.

I will make Ephraim to ride; I will now deal more rigorously, I will try another course, and as horses are brought to work by one that can bring them to bear and carry the rider, so I will deal with Ephraim; I will ride on Ephraim, and tame him, i.e. by the Assyrians, who should subdue and enslave them.

Judah shall plough; Judah, though less sinful, hath been used to harder labour, and more rugged treatment, hath ploughed when Ephraim hath reaped, yet I have spared Ephraim more.

Jacob shall break his clods; the same in other proverbial speech repeated; their work is at present harder, but there is a harvest follows; though Judah plough, and Jacob break his clods, labour hard, and for their sins suffer, yet they sow in tears when harassed by Ephraim or going into Babylon, and shall reap in joy at the return. But Ephraim, who abused all my bounty and kindness, who worked only for his own profit, shall be more severely punished, and when he goeth forth shall return no more.

Ver. 12.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness: the prophet continueth his care of their welfare, by exhorting them yet at last to repent, which, as learned interpreters observe, the prophet doth here in the same elliptic speech which is used before these imperatives, and is to be made up thus, The Lord hath said by his prophets, Sow, &c.; this same duty hath been pressed on them formerly, and is again commended to them; sow in righteousness, in universal righteousness, towards God in piety, towards man in equity, and herein see that ye sow plentifully, that is, exercise yourselves in these works.

Reap in mercy: this is referred both to the Divine mercy, and so amounteth to a promise, and to the mercy we should show to man, and so is direction for another part of duty; both may well have place here.

Break up your fallow ground; your hearts, O ye Ephraimites, have been and still are, as ground overrun with weeds, which need be ploughed and broken up, that good seed may be sowed in them, that you may bring forth fruit in holy life, from a holy heart, and obtain mercy of God.

It is time to seek the Lord; it is full time, if you consider it aright; or, it is yet time, you may seek and find he is not quite gone, still he calls you, therefore hearken, and follow seasonable advice, seek ye the Lord whilst he may be found.

Till he come; seek with patience and faith until he doth, as certainly he will, come; for this passage is a virtual or implicit promise that God will come to them if they seek him, i.e. he will bless, favour, and love them; in these he will appear to them, which is his coming to them.

Rain righteousness; plentifully pour out the fruits of his own goodness and mercy which he hath promised, and, having promised, it is a righteous thing they should be given according to promise; thus the mercies of God to us are his righteousness to us.

Upon you, who repent and obey his counsel by his prophets.

Ver. 13.

You, O Israelites, subjects of the kingdom of the ten tribes, **have ploughed wickedness;** instead of repentance, and a life of righteousness, you have lived in wickedness, and propagated it, you have increased all manner of impieties; thus you have abused and perverted the fruits of God's goodness.

Ye have reaped iniquity; the wickedness you have sown hath sprung up and ripened into iniquity; or, you have met with a recompence worthy of this your labour, God hath punished you for your wickedness; the first seems most agreeable to the text.

Ye have eaten the fruit of lies; fed yourselves with vain hopes, maintained yourselves upon a carnal, sinful confidence, forsaking

the fountain of living waters; and these lies the prophet doth in the following words reduce to two heads.

Thou didst trust in thy way; dependence on idols, worshipping them, and seeking to them; their way was their idolatry committed with the calves.

In the multitude of thy mighty men; the next lie on which they lived was the wisdom and valour of their great men, their king, nobles, captains, and counsellors; in confidence of sufficient help by them, they held on in a way of sin and wickedness.

Ver. 14.

Therefore, since such are their sins, and such will be their disappointments, since their refuges will be so vain, and their enemies so many and strong,

shall a tumult arise; a discontent, murmur, and outcry, as of men affrighted, not knowing what course to take when the alarm is given, and certain news cometh, that Shalmaneser comes with his army against the kingdom of Israel.

Among thy people; the Israelites, among all sorts of people, among all the tribes of the kingdom.

All thy fortresses shall be spoiled; every one of thy strong holds, those impregnable fortifications on which thou hast laid out all that art and diligence could, to make them able to break the power of the enemy that dares besiege them, these, every one of them, (as the Hebrew construction bears it,) shall be wasted.

Shalman; it is most probably spoken of Shalmaneser, though abbreviated, which is usual in all writings of history; so Alexander or Pompey, without the addition of Great, and so here *Shalman* without *eser*, or surnamed prince.

Betharbel, possibly Arbel here may be the name of a man whose house and family Shalman destroyed, and so this passage might be read, the house of Arbel; but the more likely reading is as we read it, so it is the name of some country or city, or both. We meet with a city of this name, famous for the overthrow which Alexander gave to Darius, and probable it is that this might be that Arbel or Beth-arbel here spoken of, rebuilt and grown great again since the sack of it by Shalman, which was at least four hundred years

before the overthrow of Darius. It was a city of Assyria, and gave name, Arbelis, to a country or region, part of Assyria, and lay somewhat below Arpad.

In the day of battle: of this war we nowhere else read; it is likely it was not long before the war with Samaria and the ten tribes, that the memory of that severity was fresh, and the particulars then well known.

The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children; all were put to the sword, and the city utterly destroyed.

Ver. 15.

So; mercilessly and universally sin.

Beth-el; one place put for every one, and the place put for the idolatry committed there.

Do; procure, bring your idolatry and sins, do all this evil against you.

Unto you, O Samaritans, and the rest of the ten tribes.

Because of your great wickedness: this idolatry, and the concomitant sins, are here summed up in their total sum,

great wickedness, exceeding great.

In a morning; suddenly, or so soon as it is day; possibly the Assyrians might assault the city towards morning, and master it.

Shall the king of Israel, Hoshea,

utterly be cut off; his power broken, for his life was spared, and he made a prisoner, **#2Ki 17:4.**

HOSEA CHAPTER 11.

Israel's ingratitude to God for his benefits, **#Ho 11:1-4.** God's judgment upon them, **#Ho 11:5-7.** His mercy toward them, **#Ho 11:8-11.** Ephraim's falsehood, and Judah's fidelity, **#Ho 11:12.**

Ver. 1.

When Israel was a child; in the infancy of Israel, which is here dated equal with his being in Egypt.

Then I loved him; manifested that tender and paternal affection which I did bear to him, increasing him in numbers, wealth, and honour.

Called my son; adopted him to be my son, and as my son provided for him, and brought him out of servitude; I so loved him as to give Egypt for his ransom, **#Isa 43:3.**

Out of Egypt; where they had sojourned two hundred and fifteen years, and in them suffered many outrages from the Egyptians, who were their enemies, and aimed at extirpating Israel. Now, amidst such enemies, God owned them to be his sons, his eldest son, and redeemed him out of bondage, a fruit of wonderful love never to be forgotten. This in the letter and history is exceeding plain, but there is difficulty in the application of this unto Christ, and his call out of Egypt, of which many interpreters treat at large, which may not now be so much as summarily touched. It is too little to say that the evangelist doth allude to this place, **#Mt 2:15,** and I think it is too much to say this place is cited by Matthew, as in the history of the thing, referring only to Christ being called out of Egypt; but if you will make Israel the first adopted son, type of Christ, the first-born, and the history of Israel's coming out to be a type of Christ's future coming out, you then give to both their proper share in these words, and the letter and history is verified in both, and the principal import of the words will refer to Christ, as principally intended in them, yet not excluding the type.

Ver. 2.

As they; Moses and Aaron, and other prophets, and holy, zealous judges and priests, as Samuel, &c.

Called; advised, persuaded, entreated, and urged by exhortations.

Them; the whole house of Israel, and among these the ten tribes, or Ephraim.

So they Israelites, called and entreated, especially they of that age when the division was made, and ever since.

Went from; frowardly and most disingenuously apostatized more and more, as the prophet, **#Isa 1:5.** Horrible ingratitude so to requite God!

From them; from the prophets' counsel and commands, delivered as they came from God.

They sacrificed unto Baalim; in the desert they began this apostacy, joined themselves to Baal-peor, #Nu 25:3, and worshipped the calf, #Ex 32:4-6, and held on with obstinacy in it.

Graven images; images of their gods, before which they performed another part of religious worship, burning incense before them.

Ver. 3.

I taught Ephraim also to go; as a mother or nurse doth help the child, and with tenderest care doth guide and form its steps, and by long-continued patience waits on it; such like was the tenderness of God toward Israel in his childhood.

Taking them by their arms; supporting and bearing them up, as nurses bear up the child in their hands, taking them up by the arms, giving strength for motion, till the child should grow to strength.

But they knew not that I healed them; unthankful, sottish, and heedless ones, neither would see nor acknowledge me in it, but within few months' time ascribe their deliverance to a golden calf, #Ex 32:4; thus foolishly they requite the love of their God.

Ver. 4.

I drew them; I found them backward and unapt to lead, I therefore in my pity laid my hand on them, and, as a father or friend, drew them gently to me.

With cords of a man, i.e. with such obliging kindness as best fits and most prevails with a man, with reason.

With bands of love; those arguments of love, which might, as strong bands, hold them fast to my law and worship for their good. I used all manner of kindnesses towards them to fix them in good.

I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws; as a careful husbandman doth in due season take the yoke from his labouring oxen, and takes off the muzzle with which they were

kept from eating when at work, gives them time of rest and feeding: so did God with Israel.

I laid meat unto them; brought them provision in their wants, as the careful husbandman brings fodder and provender for his wearied labouring oxen, by which plain simile God doth inform Israel in Hosea's time what ancient, tender, constant, and vigilant love he had showed to Israel, to their predecessors, and to them also, and hereby discovers their unheard-of ingratitude and wickedness, which began in their fathers, and hath continued with increase to the days of their final ruin.

Ver. 5.

He; Ephraim thus provided for by me, thus indulged, or else Ephraim punished.

Shall not return into the land of Egypt; either needed not have courted Egypt's friendship, or desired that assistance; I would have kept them safe enough, and sufficiently provided for them; so if you refer this to Ephraim not threatened or punished: but if Ephraim be here threatened, then you have it foretold, that though Ephraim flatters himself with false hopes of a refuge in Egypt, it should not be.

But the Assyrian shall be his king; conquering and captivating them, should make himself their king, and rule them with rigour and cruelty. Because they refused to return; the reason of all is, their obstinacy in idolatry, and their impenitence, refusing to return to God; which two latter passages are also explicable as the former, thus, if they would have returned unto me, Assyria should not have been their king.

Ver. 6.

The sword; either intestine or foreign wars, or both. Shall abide; shall be long, not be as a sudden incursion which doth much mischief to surprised and unfortified places, but it shall be a lasting war; three years Samaria was besieged, so the sword did abide.

On his cities; all the cities of Ephraim, the enemy should have courage and leisure to attend the siege of every one of them.

Shall consume; shall prevail to take, sack, burn, and ruin the branches.

His branches; lesser towns and villages.

Devour them; swallow them up with speed and ease, without remedy. Because of their own counsels; which they first took, **#1Ki 12:28**, and ever since irreclaimably have followed, in opposition to all the good counsels the prophets gave them from time to time, to all which they have turned a deaf ear; they have sued for Egypt and Asshur's favour, and slighted mine.

Ver. 7.

My people; yet God owneth them for his, he had not cast them quite off; or since they call themselves his, he is willing to encourage them by owning all in them that looks toward him.

Are bent to backsliding from me; or continue in suspense, doubtful and unresolved what to do, or rather inclined most to an aversion from me: though the Lord's prophets have persuaded them earnestly to return by repentance, yet they continue unresolved what is best to be done, whether to adhere to their idol gods, to make sure of Egyptian aids, or-to turn to God, and east off the other; this they most dislike, and continue as it were tacked and fastened to their rebellion, as the French version.

Though they, the prophets, called them to the Most High; invited, exhorted, and encouraged them with many fair promises to give glory to God by returning.

None at all; not one of many, scarce any one in those great numbers in Israel, would hearken and obey. Would exalt him; God in his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, all which a repenting people do magnify, but these will not. They retain their idols, depend on Egypt, and put all on that cast, and will neither believe nor try God's goodness.

Ver. 8.

After such unparalleled abuse of infinite mercy and patience, what could be expected, but unrelenting wrath and fiercest indignation? but here is a wonder above all the rest; bowels troubled, and struggling with anger, and contesting on behalf of most inexcusable sinners. O Ephraim, thou hast deserved to be

destroyed for ever, thy sins call for this, and my justice threatens it, I may do it; but my mercy interposeth, and I would rather spare in mercy than destroy injustice, there is still a debate between these two: How shall I give up to justice? saith mercy; and, How shall I not give up (saith justice) into the hands of enemies? Justice must be executed, that I must do, saith God; and mercy shall be magnified, that I will do; but how shall this be done? If I deliver thee, O Israel, to thine enemies, they will utterly destroy, and where then is mercy? If I deliver thee not, thy sins will not be chastised, and where then is justice? If I punish thee, as I punished Admah and Zeboim, with fire from heaven, I do what is just, but then I show no mercy; for these are two of the four cities which suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, of which **#Ge 19:24**.

Mine heart is turned within me: after the manner of man God speaks; we know what it is to have a heart turned from wrath into kindness and compassions, so God speaks of himself here, and **#Isa 63:15 Jer 31:20**.

My repentings are kindled together; still, like a compassionate man, he could wish his threats in again, his bowels are now as in a flame for them.

Ver. 9.

Here mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and God declareth his purpose to spare, he promiseth that he will not execute according to utmost severity. This promise he confirmeth by doubling it, though in somewhat different words: I will not do as men, who having beat down an enemy, and wounded him, do return again to see whether he breathe, and to make an end of him; or conquerors, that plunder the conquered city, carry away the wealth of it, and after some time return to burn it; God will not do so.

I am God, and not man; his compassions are infinite, his goodness unchangeable; he remembers all his promises to every one, and now seeth who among Israel believe, and hope for his grace and mercy; these he must spare, as he is just Judge of the whole earth, and for their sakes he will spare many others.

The Holy One in the midst of thee; a holy God, and in covenant, though not with all, yet with many among you, and those that are in covenant with God are holy ones too: I will not

make them as Admah or Zeboim, for the case is different, in the cities of the plain there were no righteous ones, but here are some, though not many: and so Rivet renders the words, there is a holy one in the midst of thee, where the singular is used for plural, as in that passage,

there is none righteous. I will not enter into the city; I will not come amongst you, as I came into Sodom, &c. Here is comfort for God's remnant.

Ver. 10.

They, whom infinite mercy spareth, the choice remnant,

shall walk after the Lord; shall hear and obey, worship and depend on the Lord, on the Messiah, of whom these and the words of the next verse do certainly speak. They refer also to the return out of captivity, in both history and type, of our deliverance out of spiritual and eternal captivity.

He shall roar like a lion; Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall send out his gospel: this is meant by the lion's roaring, **#Joe 3:16**, of whom it is observed, that he doth by roaring gather his whelps and others of his kind to the prey: by the mighty voice of the Lord in the gospel, the elect shall be gathered to partake of eternal life.

Then the children shall tremble; the Spirit by its power awakening them to the sight of sin, shall make them fear and tremble,

from the west, to the ends of the earth. This is the mystical sense; yet the literal, I think, refers to the return of the Jews out of captivity, when many out of Assyria and Egypt returned, and some report one hundred thousand from Ethiopia Cusses, and the parts toward Arabia; and possibly this hath particular respect to Darius's decree, on the behalf of those that followed Haggai and Zechariah's counsel, finished the temple, restored the worship of God, reformed strange and unlawful marriages, paid their tithes, &c.; in these they followed the Lord; and Darius made a decree for them, terrible to the children of the west, as the roaring of a lion: Let this work go forward, **#Ezr 6:7**, &c.; who dares to hinder, let timber be taken out of his house, and a gallows made thereof, and such be hanged thereon, **#Ho 11:11,12**. All this filled

the inhabitants of those parts with great fear, when God thus gathered his dispersed ones: but what I conjecture at I do submit to better judgments.

Ver. 11.

The summary of the first part of this verse seems to be, that some should hasten, yet with solicitude, out of Egypt, whither they fled for shelter, like as a bird that hath been cast out of her nest hasteth to it; others like doves shall hasten out of Assyria unto Judea, but with fear and solicitude, which cannot but attend them in a land, though their own, yet now desolate and horrid under one hundred and eighty years' devastation since Shalmaneser transported them, i.e. one hundred and ten years before and seventy years concurrent with the Jews' captivity in Babylon.

I will place them in their houses; they will find none, but I will place them in houses, and they shall be theirs too. It is a very seasonable and comfortable promise, and suited to the state and wants of those returning exiles, and in the letter of it refers to them; and they as types of what is more mysteriously and more darkly contained in them, viz. the gathering of believers from all quarters to Christ with the alacrity and speed which birds make in flying to their nests, and God's providing mansions of rest for them: well resembled here in these similes.

Ver. 12.

This verse might better begin the next chapter, and by most interpreters I have seen, it is the first verse of the next chapter; but since we find it here we will here consider it.

Ephraim; many or the most of Ephraim.

Compasseth me about with lies; play the hypocrites with me still; yet give me good words, call themselves my people, and say I am their God, and that they worship me and seek me; but they flatter me with their mouths, and lie unto me with their tongues, as **#Ps 78:36**. So God upbraids them with this their sin.

And the house of Israel with deceit; the same thing in an ingeminated phrase, to affect and ascertain the more.

Judah; the people of the two tribes, under the government of the house of David.

Ruleth with God; while idolaters are vassals and slaves to the devil and to their own superstitious fears, the true worshippers of God, like princes, rule with God. Or rather, keeping to the house of David, retained the government in state affairs, which was

Theopolitia, a government set up of God: when Ephraim made kings and princes, but God did not know it, i.e. did not advise nor approve it.

And is faithful with the saints; retains also purity, at least truth, of worship, and in the holy things of God keepeth to his word, and comparatively is faithful: whereas Ephraim is hypocritical and false, Judah adheres to God's holy prophets, priests, and other saints of God.

HOSEA CHAPTER 12

Ephraim and Judah are both reprov'd, **#Ho 12:1,2.** In consideration of God's former favours to Jacob they are exhorted to repent, **#Ho 12:3-6.** Ephraim's sins and ingratitude provoke God, **#Ho 12:7-14.**

Ver. 1.

Ephraim feedeth on wind: it is a proverbial speech, denoting; the self-flattery of Ephraim, his supporting himself with hopes as unfit to sustain him, as the wind is to feed the body and nourish it; in his religious pretensions he did, hypocrite like, compass God with lies, and now in his civil concerns he compasseth himself with lies.

Followeth after the east wind: in those countries the east winds were most vehement, dangerous, and blasting, **#Ps 48:7 Jon 4:8;** a very apt emblem to represent the self-destroying course which Ephraim took, which, though yet he will not believe, shall ere long scorch, blast, rend, and tear him as the tempestuous east winds do the weaker and unfenced plants.

He daily increaseth lies; by making new leagues, and fortifying himself with them against the menaces of God by his prophets, he increaseth friendships; but all of them will prove lies to him at last, like the wind he feeds on. The like you have **#Ho 10:13 Isa 57:9,13.**

And desolation: this is worse than merely to be disappointed by a lie; as before the east wind was hurtful and did him mischief, so here his purchased friendships shall hasten and increase his desolation. The league made with Sua, or So, king of Egypt, was accounted a conspiracy in Hoshea, and this brought Shalmaneser upon Israel, which war ended in Israel's ruin and final desolation.

They do make a covenant with the Assyrians; with purpose to defeat the threats of God, and to secure themselves in their courses. Thus they sinfully confederate as before, **#Ho 5:13 7:11 8:9;** they forsake God's covenant, and trust not him, but make a covenant with enemies, and trust them.

Oil is carried into Egypt; not common oil for trade, but rich and precious oils, presents and price to procure friendship there too, though forbidden, **#Isa 30:2,6 31:1.**

Ver. 2.

The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah; though Judah, compared with Ephraim, be faithful, yet when considered in his ways and doings he is found faulty in many things, and God hath just matter of complaint against Judah in point of manners; in public worship Judah was faithful, kept to God and the temple, though not without some defects, but in their lives there were many more and greater faults, about which God will contend that Judah may be reformed.

Judah; the two tribes.

Will punish; or visit with chastising to amend, else to destroy: there is hope of Judah that he will be reclaimed, therefore I will try by gentler visitations, by fatherly corrections, yet I will not leave him as hopeless, nor as faultless.

Jacob; not the patriarch, but those who are of him; his children, but that have degenerated from his ways of love, fear, trust, and obedience. Both Ephraim and Judah are of Jacob, but both have corrupted themselves, and therefore will I proceed against both; and if Judah, the less faulty, escape not, Ephraim can have no hope to escape; if Judah be whipped with rods because a disobedient son, Ephraim may fear a sword because he hath been and still is an obstinate rebel.

According to his ways; neither can justly complain then, since their different ways are made the standard of the different proceedings of God against them, he will not lay upon either more than is equal; who suffers most hath deserved more, and who suffers least needed so much to amend him.

According to his doings will he recompense him: this is an elegant and very usual ingemination of the same thing, which doth assure it will be done, and should affect us the more.

Ver. 3.

He, Jacob,

took his brother, Esau, by the heel in the womb: the matter of fact you have **#Ge 25:26**; the design of mentioning it in this place is to mind them of that goodness which God showed to them in their father Jacob, who was by a miracle foretold to be superior to Esau, that he and his should have the birth-right: this should never be forgotten. The true worship of God they should have preserved, since in the priesthood, part of the primogeniture, it was included both as privilege and duty; justice and equity they should have maintained as a flower of the crown and kingly authority included in the birth-right, and a double portion or share in God's blessings was theirs too. But all these blessings are forfeited by their apostacy, for which at once they should blush, repent, and humble themselves, and at last remember their primogeniture, and labour to recover to a temper worthy this their original. Jacob strove for the blessing in the womb, but you profanely neglect it in full age.

By his strength; this strength was not of nature, But of grace, a fruit of the Divine love and election, strength from God.

He had power with God; strength received of God was well employed betimes, in it he wrestled for and obtained the blessing; but you let it slip out of your hands, and sin it away. There was somewhat of heroic, a conqueror from his birth, but you are revolvers from the womb.

Ver. 4.

He; your famous progenitor of whom you boast.

Had power; behaved himself as a prince with God, **#Ge 32:28**.

Over; with: the angel was willing to be conquered, or Jacob could not have gotten the victory.

The angel; called God, **#Ho 12:3**, and, **#Ho 12:5**, is Jehovah, *Lord of hosts*. He was no created angel, but the uncreated Angel Christ, the Messiah, eternal God by nature and essence, angel by office and voluntary undertaking.

And prevailed; got the victory, went out of the field a conqueror, but not by such arms and methods as you use. You are conquered by man because of your sins, he conquered with God by faith and prayer.

He, not the angel, as some through mistake, but your father Jacob, **wept:** by this we know he prayed with tears, though the story say not so, with sense of his own unworthiness, with earnestness for the mercy he desired, and apprehensive of the majesty of him with whom he wrestled. But you, quite contrary, proud as if worthy, regardless of the best part of the blessing, and earnest only for the meaner part, seek it not of God, but idols.

And made supplication unto him: it is Christ who is here intended; it was no mere creature, Jacob might not have prayed to such, but it was the Creator of angels and the Redeemer of man, the blessed Jesus, to whom every knee ought to bow, **#Php 2:10**.

He, God,

found him, Jacob, full of weariness, fears, and solicitude on his journey to Laban, **#Ge 28:12,20**, when prayers obtained a blessing; but with this, and more directly, when on his return after this wrestling bout, **#Ge 35:1**, &c., God appeared to him, **#Ge 35:7-15**, and blessed him. *Beth-el*; formerly called Luz, but by Jacob new named and called Beth-el, **#Ge 28:19**.

There he, God,

spake, renewed his promise and confirmed the blessing, with us: by the current of the words in their grammatical order it should be,

he spake to him; but it is, not without good reason, changed to the plural first person, us, as posterity were in Jacob's loins, and blessed with him. Yet more, where God appeared to Jacob he commanded him to build an altar there to God, to restore religion

and reform his family from idolatry, which he did, **#Ge 35:4**. But you, children of this Jacob by natural descent, are of another and far different humour; though you have been called and exhorted to leave your idols, yet these two hundred years you have kept them, and will, I see, keep them: this is your sin, and in it you are obstinate, and I will punish such a Jacob as you.

Ver. 5.

Even, or and, he that appeared and spake, who promised the blessing, and commanded the reformation at Beth-el, was

the Lord, Jehovah, the eternal and unchangeable God, who still promiseth with like commands.

God of hosts; who can both perform his promise and execute his threat, who is a most terrible enemy and most desirable friend, all being to us as he is.

The Lord, Jehovah, repeated for confirmation, is his memorial; by this he will be known, by this name, by such methods of his sovereignty and grace, **#Ex 3:15**.

Ver. 6.

Therefore; no more vainly boast of Jacob; but, as he, do you approve yourselves to God.

Turn thou to thy God; repent, leave idols, and all sins. He worshipped God alone, do you so; he cast idols out of his family, do you so too, be Jacob's children herein.

Keep mercy; show kindness to all who need it, cast off cruelty and inhumanity, and be merciful to the afflicted: this contains all the duties we owe to any that are in straits.

And judgment; wrong none, but with justice in dealings, in judicatures, and public offices, render to every one their due. Acquit the innocent, and condemn the guilty, and let none have just cause to complain of injuries.

Wait on thy God; in public worship, and private duties of prayer, and seeking God, him only serve and, trust, let not idols have either sacrifice, prayer, praise, or trust from you.

Continually: and let your hope and worship be perpetuated, for ever continued towards God, till he save and rescue; trust, pray,

and resign yourselves to him, who will be yours as he was Jacob's God, on these terms and no other. This short phrase, wait on they God, includes all duties of the first table of the law, all religions worship of the true God; do this, and the Lord will be to you. as to Jacob, defence against danger and fullness in your wants.

Ver. 7.

He is a merchant; Ephraim, of whom here, is so far from being Jacob, or as Jacob, that you may call and account him a Canaanite, a subtle merchant.

The balances of deceit are in his hand; what he cannot gain by fair trading, he will by downright cheating; he is covetous, and very unjust.

He loveth to oppress; where violence, calumnies, and false accusations are needful to compass his covetous and cozening designs, he will not stick at them; this way of gain he loveth, his heart is upon it; though God hate the false balance, and false witness, and the violent man, yet Ephraim loves them all for his gain.

Ver. 8.

Ephraim said; this covetous, oppressive merchant reckoned with himself, or discoursed with himself, upon the whole of his trading.

Yet I am become rich; whatever is said by some, or thought by others, yet I get what I aim at: either it is good and lawful, and prospered to me by the blessing of God on it because it is just and righteous, or it is not so bad as morose prophets and preachers make it, or at worst (which I will venture, saith Ephraim) it lessens my innocency, but improves my stock, and this is more to such merchants than all the poor innocence in the world.

I have found me out substance; the same thing, with a vain boast of what is not in his wealth and substance. If in his gain he assumed his own only to himself, it were praiseworthy; that is, if he took to himself with shame the sinful manner of acquiring it; but he takes the praise to himself, and forgets God; boasts of his wit, though he cannot of his honesty.

In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin; finally, he hugs himself in the apprehension of close and

crafty carriage of all his affairs, that no great fault, no crime, can be found in it to deserve a reproach or punishment, that he hath more reason to believe all is well since it doth prosper, than to suspect any great miscarriage which should deserve punishment. So this people do at once flatter themselves into security, fearless of punishment, and into hardened obstinacy in sin incapable of amendment.

Ver. 9.

And, or but, I the Lord thy God, who forbade thy frauds and gave thee wealth, and am forgotten in both, thou fearest not mine anger and sinnest; thou forgettest that I give thee power to get wealth, and takest glory to thyself; but wouldst thou, as thou shouldst, remember, thou wouldst know

that I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, that all thy blessings from thy coming out of Egypt to this day are from me; I give more than thou gettest; thou boastest of what is not thine, and if thou wilt glory, remember it should be in my goodness and bounty.

Will yet make, &c.; hitherto have made, &c.; thy peace, safety, plenty, and joy, (here expressed proverbially, in allusion to the joy and security which they enjoyed in the days of the feast of tabernacles,) were all through my goodness, presence, and faithfulness. And darest thou, O Ephraim, thus sacrilegiously rob me of the praise and glory? darest thou be thus unthankful? Or else thus, I would still make thee to dwell, &c., I take what course is fittest to prevent thy dangers, sorrows, and ruin, but all will not do, thou wilt undo thyself. I am Jehovah, I change not, I am thy God still, and have been so ever since thou camest out of Egypt, I gave thee plenty, peace, safety, joy, and would willingly continue it all, as will appear by what I have done to prevent thy sin, and continue thy obedience. Some tell us it is a threat that God will bring them into the condition of wanderers again, others make it a promise of future mercy; and in various conjectures we have ventured on what will suit the contexture of the words, at least tolerably well; if it be not the best, it best pleaseth at present.

Ver. 10.

I have also spoken by the prophets; Heb. *and*, i.e. since I would have continued Ephraim's peaceful state, I have spoken to them by my prophets, who have warned them of their danger, reproved them for their sins, entreated them to repent and do their duty; so I would have established them, my prophets spake plainly to them.

I have multiplied visions; by many visions and representations of my mind, the duty of the people, what would be safe, what dangerous, by lively emblems set before the prophets, and by them told to Israel, I have advised and warned that I might yet settle them. I would have had them dwell still in the peace, safety, and joy of festivals, therefore I have sent such as Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, &c.

Used similitudes; parables, examples, actions: Isaiah goes barefoot, names his son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, to warn Israel. Betharbel's desolation is mentioned to prevent Samaria's. Hosea takes an adulteress to wife to bring Israel to sight and sense of their sin. All this and much more by my prophets, because I had compassion and would have made them dwell in peace and safety under my government. And yet uncounselable and unthankful Israel will not understand and comply, will not own their sins and repent.

Ver. 11.

Is there iniquity in Gilead? in this concise interrogatory the prophet warns the refractory, ungodly Israelites by an example of God's wrath on them. About A.M. 326.1, at Ahaz's request and charges, Tiglath-pileser came up against Israel, and took Gilead among other towns, leading the inhabitants captives, **#2Ki 15:29**; now some sixteen or seventeen years after doth our prophet mind the sinful and secure Ephraimites what they must expect, and doth it in this pungent question,

Is there iniquity in Gilead? i.e. is there only? or is there more? much like that of Christ's, **#Lu 13:2**,

Suppose ye them greater sinners? Be it so, captive Gilead was all iniquity, and Gilgal is no better. They that come up to Gilgal to sacrifice are idolaters, they sin against God in offering to them, and against their own welfare in trusting to them, both ways they

appear to be vanity; whilst they multiply these altars and sacrifices, they multiply their sins, God's displeasure is increased, and the danger more near and dreadful.

Their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields: idolatrous Israel, thou aboundest in altars; but if they are for number like heaps of stones, gathered out of ploughed land and laid in furrows, they are as common too, i.e. as far from sacred, as far from commending any offering to God, or stoning his displeasure. And canst thou, Ephraim, hope to escape, whose sins exceed the sins of captive Gilead? wilt thou never be wise, never warned, never repent?

Ver. 12.

Jacob, the patriarch,

fled into the country of Syria, for fear of Esau.

And Israel, though honoured with that great name, served, stooped to the condition which is next door to slave,

for a wife; a wife was his wages.

And for a wife he kept sheep of Laban. All which in the history is related at large, **#Ge 29**.

Ver. 13.

By a prophet, by Moses,

the Lord brought Israel, your forefathers, out of Egypt; where they had been bondmen two hundred and fifteen years, or near upon it, old slaves, or vassals for some descents.

By a prophet was he preserved in the wilderness: see **#Ex 2 Ex 3**, &c. Now the drift of the prophet herein to me appears to be this, to prevent their vain pride and boasting of their ancestors, their raiser sheltering themselves under ancestors' merits against God's just displeasure on them for their sins, and the sottish plea of what their fathers did at Beth-el and Gilgal. There are many things which arise on consideration of what their fathers were, suffered, enjoyed, and did, to aggravate their sins and insure them of punishment; but nothing to secure them against judgment to come, or to lessen judgments when they come.

Ver. 14.

Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: after all the means used from time to time to reclaim idolatrous sinning Israel, yet still they provoked God to indignation by their idolatries, perjuries, oppressions, murders, and all manner of sins which use to be rife among idolaters; these things were bitterness unto God.

Therefore, seeing he will incorrigibly persist as he hath begun, and end in sin and misery,

shall he leave his blood upon him; he shall bear the guilt and punishment of all his blood, his murders of the innocent, of those that testified against him, and, as one who hath murdered himself, shall bear his own guilt too.

His reproach, which Ephraim hath east upon the prophets and pious worshippers of God, all the reproach Ephraim hath cast on God, preferring idols before him,

shall his Lord return unto him; either God, who is Lord of all, or the Assyrian king and his princes, lording it over captive Ephraim; God shall by these return the shame on Ephraim which he cast on God, his worship, temple, and prophets.

HOSEA CHAPTER 13

Ephraim's glory vanisheth by reason of idolatry, **#Ho 13:1-3**. God's former care of his people: for their abuse of his benefits he will destroy them, **#Ho 13:4-8**. A promise of mercy and redemption from the grave, **#Ho 13:9-14**. The judgment of Samaria for rebellion, **#Ho 13:15,16**.

Ver. 1.

When; so soon as, or according as, as the Hebrew phrase bears it, and implieth there was a time when according to the word of Ephraim there was deep impression on the hearers. Ephraim; Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite, say some; but this is wide of truth, nor suits the text, which refers to their worshipping of Baal, and this came into use in Israel in Ahab's time, **#1Ki 16:31**; his wife Jezebel, daughter to Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, prevailed with him to take her country idol and add to Jeroboam's calves.

Ephraim here is either the tribe of Ephraim, which was of all the ten tribes most powerful, and when angry and discontented made the other tribes afraid; or rather the whole kingdom of Israel, called frequently in Hosea Ephraim.

Spake; when he consulted, commanded, threatened, or sent out his proclamation; it is a speaking like a king's or kingdom's speaking, which is backed with power sufficient to act as they speak;

trembling; the tribes and the neighbouring kingdoms apprehended danger, were put into a fear of the consequence too, all men felt a commotion within them. Such once was the authority, power, and glory of Ephraim.

He exalted himself in Israel; was magnified, advanced, and made glorious, the kingdom flourished in multitudes of people, in abundance of wealth, in the successes of their counsels, and in their credit abroad. In this flourishing state Ephraim, a principal tribe, and which first set up for the royal dignity and carried it, had-principal share, and is mid to exalt himself in or with Israel.

But when, so soon as he sinned,

he offended in Baal, by taking Baal to be their god added this idolatry to their former sins,

he died; undid himself, lost his power, glory, and bravery, as a dead man.

Ver. 2.

And now, though they are admonished, threatened, and in part punished, yet now that Baal is taken in for a god and worshipped,

they sin more and more; they go on to sin, and add new idolatries to the old, they increase the number of their sins; in some respect their new sins are greater than those committed formerly, but the prophet here speaks not of greatness of sins, but the number.

And have made them molten images of their silver: these were the figures and representations of the gods they worshipped, and were multiplied as families, able to go to the cost, did multiply; every one got their household gods. heathen like, and most of

these puppets were made of silver. Or the phrase may imply, that at their own charge these people made them gods; so though it was a straight ash, or wood that would not soon putrefy, which was formed into the idol, yet because bought with their silver it may by a metonymy be called their silver.

Idols according to their own understanding; every one as he fancied, as he thought most comely, and proper to represent a deity; perhaps these idolaters vied with each other who should have the handsomest god, as Ahaz would vie altars, and therefore made new ones. Perhaps some of these idolaters melted down their old less handsome gods to run them into more pleasing features.

All of it the work of the craftsmen; whatever is of the image is of the workman, who gave it shape, but could not give it breath, still it is a lifeless lump or image.

They, either the kings of Israel, or the priests of these idols, or the people, say of them, of the idols,

Let the men that sacrifice, let every one that sacrificeth, all that bring their offerings to these idols,

kiss; reverence, worship, or adore, and show they do so by kissing the calves. They will make them give full worship to their idols.

Ver. 3.

Therefore; for these sins in multiplied idolatries and trusting to idols.

They, Ephraim, his king, his captains, his fortresses, and aids, shall be, in the day of the Assyrian invasion, suddenly, easily, totally, and finally dispersed, expressed here by four similes, every one very apt and full, clear and easy to be understood.

Ver. 4.

Yet, though thou hast so revolted, and chosen other gods, it is not occasioned by any change in me,

I am what I was,

the Lord, the mighty God, the everlasting God, Jehovah. *Thy God from the land of Egypt;* thy God who alone brought thee out of

Egypt, and who hath maintained thy lot; the calves and Baal were not known amongst you then. And since I alone brought thee out of Egypt, and saved thee with wonderful salvations many times since, why dost thou seek gods thou needest not, gods that cannot help?

Thou shalt know no god but me; I forbade thee to know any other god but me, in gratitude thou shouldst know no other; if there were any other, in point of interest thou shouldst have known, i.e. worshipped, trusted, and obeyed, none but me. And finally, by woeful experience thou shalt know that calves and Baal are no gods, they cannot save thee nor themselves; thou shalt know I am God alone, who can destroy those who would not obey me.

For there no saviour beside me; when thy idols cannot save thee out of the hands of those I deliver thee up to, then thou shalt see, what now thou wilt not, that there is no saviour but me; none who can deliver from all evil, and who can enrich with all blessings, who can pardon sin and save the sinner.

Ver. 5.

I did know, owned, took care of, guided, and supplied, thee, O Israel, in thy fathers,

in the wilderness; through which for forty years together thou wast moving, and foundest nothing for thy sustenance but what my miraculous goodness and power gave thee; through those many deserts thou never didst want.

In the land of great drought; in the parched sands, where were no refreshing showers, no rivers or springs of water, to suffice so many cattle and men; where thou wentest as it were through flames and on sands, scorching as embers of a fire, a place fit for none but fiery serpents, or salamanders (if any such).

Ver. 6.

According to their pasture, so were they filled; when they were come into Canaan, that land of springs, brooks, and rivers, that land of wheat, barley, vines, olives, and figs, as **#De 8:7-9**; when they had abundance of all things for delight, as well as for necessary sustenance; when I had, like a good, careful, and wise shepherd, brought them into this rich pasture; they, like hungry

beasts, ate to excess, ran into luxury and riot; epicure like, gorged themselves with sweet wines and delicious fare.

They were filled: either this is a reduplication of the charge to confirm it, I say, they thus luxuriously lived; or else it is elliptical, and to be made out thus,

And so soon as they were filled; and thus it will be parallel to that,

Jeshurun waxed fat, #De 32:13-15.

Their heart was exalted; grew proud, entertained high thoughts of their progenitors' worth, their nobleness by descent, their worthiness and righteousness above other people; they thought of God as of man, that he proportioned his blessings to what excellency was found in those he did good to.

Therefore have they forgotten me; so they have forgotten me, who found them in slavery, poverty, reproach, and tears in Egypt, out of which I saved them; and they have most scandalously made them gods, Worshipped them, and with sacrilegious unthankfulness given the praise of all I did for them to dumb idols, though I warned them of it beforehand, #De 6:11,12 8:13,14.

Ver. 7.

Therefore; since they have so abused my gifts by luxury, pride, and atheistical forgetfulness of me, of what I had done for them, what I deserved and expected from them, I will use them as is meet, and take my revenge upon them.

I will be unto them; unthankful, apostates, idolaters, sottish drunkards, belly-gods, who live to eat and drink, and forget me.

As a lion: see #Ho 5:14; that is, in his fullest strength, of a middle age, swift in pursuing, and that can continue the chase till he overtake his prey; and which is strong, courageous, and proud of his strength and success; that will dreadfully roar over his prey, as if he challenged any one to attempt its rescue.

As a leopard; a very fierce, swift, sly, and watchful creature, #Jer 5:6 Hab 1:8. Observe them; watch for them, that I may be sure to take them.

Ver. 8.

I will meet them; I know their haunts, their walks, I will not fail to meet them there.

As a bear bereaved of her whelps; robbed of her whelps, newly taken away, which makes her mad with rage; so great rage is proverbially expressed. #Pr 17:12.

Will rend the caul of their heart; first kill, next tear in pieces, pull out the very heart: it is probable this fierce creature may by instinct hasten to tear up the prey, that it may drink the blood before it run to waste.

There will I devour them, where I find them and seize them, like the hungry and fearless lion, which feasts on his prey where he caught it, draws it not into his den, but devoureth it immediately.

Like a lion; an old lion, that hath his great teeth, his grinders, and hath still whelps, #Ge 49:9; fierce and terrible, that will either call in his whelps to divide the prey, or drag the prey to his den for them: and what hope of any thing to be spared, when you fall into such hands?

The wild beast shall tear them: it is said of the lion, that he calls by his roaring the wild beasts together to the prey when he hath taken it; so you shall be devoured by the whole troop of wild beasts. Or it may be a general threat added to those particular ones before, every wild beast shall prey upon them. All this God executed on them by the Assyrians, who in their fierceness, cruelty, greediness, and courage answered the character here given to them: the particular resemblances I leave to any, who may easily suit them.

Ver. 9.

Thou hast destroyed thyself; after these menaces it might seem I had destroyed thee, but thou thyself hast done it by thy sins. It is the rebel that destroys himself, though he fall by the sword of his provoked sovereign: thou art the cause and author of thine own ruin.

But in me is thy help; or,

for I was always ready and able to help thee, and would certainly have saved thee; but thy sins, thy wickedness carried thee toward

other helps, which were lies, and have disappointed thee; and now thou dost perish under thine own choice, whereas hadst thou chosen me I would have helped and saved thee. Or else thus the whole verse: This hath destroyed thee, O Israel, for thou hast rebelled against me, against thy help: and so Sol. Jarchy.

Ver. 10.

I will be thy King; I would have been thy King to govern and save thee, but thou refusedst me in both; yet I will be thy King to punish thee. I will not lose my right and honour by thy rebellious carriages against me, I will be a King and subdue such: or else it is a taunting question, Where is thy king, on whose counsel, wisdom, power, and conduct thou hast relied? let him now save thee if he can: so it runs smooth with the next words.

Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? or, who is there, what wise, valiant, and successful commander, in any of thy cities, that can deliver thee first out of my hand, and next out of the Assyrians' hand?

Thy judges, where are they? thy magistrates have sinned with thee, and shall be destroyed with thee. Thy rulers or inferior governors,

of whom thou saidst, Give me a king; whom thou didst importune and solicit, in a manner forcedst to meet, consult, and resolve in seditious times who should be king next, when treasons had taken away him that was? Some refer this to their first asking a king, but it is better referred to the times either after Jeroboam the First, or to the times after Jeroboam the Second, between whose death and Hoshea's time, some say, there was an interregnum of twenty or near twenty years, during which a turbulent people, as the Israelites were, would be frequent and earnest in all likelihood in moving for a king.

And princes, necessary to assist the king.

Ver. 11.

I gave thee a king in mine anger; such as Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, &c.; but in displeasure against you.

I took him away; the Hebrew says not what; I think, their kings mentioned.

In my wrath: God was angry when he gave such kings to Israel, and he was no better pleased when he took them away; they were punishments when given, and it was punishment to Israel when they were taken away. If you read this verse in the future tense, as you may, I will give them a king in my anger, it may refer to God's giving the king of Assyria the rule over them, making them his vassals; and I will take away, i.e. you, O Israelites, in my wrath, I will destroy some, and send others into captivity, take all away out of your land, and send you in wrath to the grave, or captives into Assyria.

Ver. 12.

The iniquity, in the singular, instead of the plural, all the iniquities and sins,

of Ephraim, the kingdom of the ten tribes,

is bound up; as indictments drawn up and tied together against the day of trial; or as bills and bonds tied up that they may be ready against the day of account, when all must be paid. Or, as sins unpardoned; for to loose sins is to forgive, and to bind sins is to charge them upon the sinner, #Mt 16:19. O Ephraim, thine unpardoned sins lie in account against thee, thou shalt hear of them and smart for them.

His sin is hid; not from God, but laid up with God against the day of recompence, as #Job 21:19: so #Ro 2:5 De 32:34.

Ver. 13.

The sorrows of a travailing woman: by this simile, well known in Scripture, the prophet assures Ephraim that the punishment of his sins will overtake him suddenly, with very great anguish, and with as great certainty, #Mic 5:3.

Shall come upon him; as suddenly, inevitably, and with as much danger too, if he be not the wiser, and return to his God.

He, i.e. Ephraim,

is an unwise son; a very foolish son, an inconsiderate child, who endangers himself and his mother.

For he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children: as a child that sticks in the birth, so Ephraim, just at

the birth, hesitateth, one while will, another while will not, return to God; thus dieth under the delay.

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Ver. 14.

Some interpreters render this text not in the future absolute, but in the subjunctive and conditionally, I would have ransomed, I would have redeemed, &c., if Israel had been wise; so it will well cohere with the 13th and 15th verses. And if the words be considered as spoken of the whole body of Israel, they will be most intelligible, as they include a condition and are subjunctive. But the apostle doth, and most Christian interpreters with the apostle, interpret them as an absolute promise made for the comfort of the pious and elect among these Israelites, and labour not to connect them with the foregoing or following words, but suppose them to be in a parenthesis between them. And so we take them.

I, Jehovah or Messiah, the Father promiseth the Messiah.

Will ransom, by power and purchase, by the price of the blood of the Lamb of God, and by the power of his Godhead.

Them that repent and believe, and wait for redemption through Christ the Messiah.

From the power of the grave; he conquered the grave, and rose out of it as our Captain and Head, and he will at the great day of the resurrection, by his almighty power, open those prison doors, and bring them out in glory, immortality, and incorruption, whom he redeemed by an inestimable and invaluable price.

I will redeem them from death; from the curse of the first death, henceforth they that die in the Lord shall be blessed; and from the second death, which shall have no power over them; I will take away the sting of death, which is sin, i.e. in the dominion and guilt of it: now Christ redeems from the one by sanctifying grace, and from the other by justifying grace.

O death, I will be thy plagues; thus I will destroy death, and defeat him that had the power of death: it is a metaphor, as the next.

O grave, I will be thy destruction; I will recover the prey out of the mouth of the grave, I will pull down those prison walls, and bring out all that are confined there, of which the bad I will remove into other kind of prisons, the good I will restore to glorious liberty. The wicked shall have a worse prison, the godly shall for ever be freed from prison and so I will raze this prison, the grave, to the very foundation.

Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes: this grace toward the godly, toward believers among Israel and in the church, through all ages, is unchangeable; I will never, as man that repenteth, change my word and purpose, saith the Lord. In either sense they speak the grace of God toward us; he is ready to pardon and save all that will repent, and he will most certainly and eternally save from death. The grave, sin, and hell all that do repent and obey the Messiah; an abundant comfort to pious ones who should yet die captives in Assyria, but rise by the power of the Messiah to eternal glory in the day of the general resurrection.

Ver. 15.

Though he, Ephraim,

be fruitful, at present, as a flourishing tree seems to be fruitful; things in the state seem to be well settled; peace at home, under Hoshea, and peace abroad with Assyria and Egypt.

Among his brethren; and all his brethren surround him, either the rest of the tribes, or the nations who by league are become as his brethren.

An east wind shall come; an enemy as pernicious to his estate as the east wind is to fruits shall certainly come; a mighty and violent enemy, called here,

the wind of the Lord, the usual superlative among the Hebrews.

From the wilderness, which lay south-east from Canaan; and so it speaks a more pernicious quality in these enemies as the southeast winds in that country were of all most hot and blasting, coming over those hot, dry, sandy deserts.

His spring, springs of water, which were most needful, and highly valued, shall become dry; shall fail and be cut off, dry up, that there shall be no waters in them.

His fountain shall be dried up; the same thing in different words, confirming the certainty hereof. This the resemblance of the Assyrian, and the mischief he shall do to Israel lie shall lay Ephraim desolate, and dry up all his fountains, which were the comfort of that land.

He, the Assyrian army, Shalmaneser,

shall spoil the treasure, shall rob their treasuries,

of all pleasant vessels, and carry away all desirable vessels and furniture, out of all their houses and wardrobes: thus all the glory of Ephraim shall wither whilst it is seemingly flourishing and well-rooted too.

Ver. 16.

Samaria, the chief or royal city of the kingdom of Israel,

shall become desolate; besieged, taken, plundered, and sacked, probably it was razed to the foundation, by the Assyrians, provoked by the treachery first, and by the obstinacy next, of Hoshea, maintaining the siege against Shalmaneser three years,
#2Ki 17:5.

Rebelled against her God; both cast off his worship and set up idolatry, and also shook off the yoke of David's house and set up new kings, and maintained both long against God.

They, the inhabitants of Samaria, and also the subjects of the kingdom of Israel, shall fall by the sword; be cut off in war by the prevailing arms of the king of Assyria.

Their infants shall be dashed in pieces; a most barbarous piece of cruelty, yet usually practised in those countries when they were enraged against a people.

Their women with child shall be ripped up; another kind of like or greater inhumanity. Thus Shalman raged against Arbel in the day of battle, and this confirms what the prophet saith **#Ho 10:14**. And this was no doubt executed upon Samaria when it was taken, so their springs (women and children, which are as fountains) were all dried up.

HOSEA CHAPTER 14

An exhortation to repentance, **#Ho 14:1-3**. A promise of God's blessing, **#Ho 14:4-9**.

Ver. 1.

O Israel, you that are the true Israel of God, you that are the remnant amidst so great a body of incurable rebels, return; repent ye thoroughly, not hypocritically, turn ye from all your sins in which with others you have been defiled, and turn to

the Lord, the everlasting, living God, who is worthy to be worshipped and obeyed; your idols were never worth your love, but the Lord, the Fountain of being and life, is worthy of it. Turn to him as

thy God, in covenant with thee, to get pardon for past sins according to covenant promise, to renew covenant for time to come, and to engage thyself sincerely and heartily to be his people.

For thou hast fallen; thy sins against the Lord thy God have enkindled his wrath against thee, have involved thee in endless troubles, have turned thy prosperity into extreme adversity; sin

hath cast thee from the height of glory to the depth of reproach and contempt, thus thou art fallen.

By thine iniquity: it is the singular number, either because all their sins were so linked together they were as one huge mass of sin, or it refers particularly to their idolatry, which is by way of eminency, and above any one other sin a falling from God, and here punished with a fall into calamities.

Ver. 2.

Take with you words; bethink yourselves what words will best set out your sins, God's patience towards you, and your present sorrow and repentance for sin; prepare yourselves to make confessions, petitions, vows, and praises to God; and turn; with words join deeds, let your hearts be in your words, turn, do not as the incorrigible hypocrite.

To the Lord: see #Ho 14:1.

Say unto him; pray, present your petitions to him who heareth prayer: here is no mention of sheep or oxen, or any legal sacrifices; true repentance is required, which is much better, faith and hope through the great Sacrifice, in virtue of which these converts expect the grace they need and seek.

Take away all iniquity: this petition for pardon of sin includes confession of it, sorrow for it, hope that God will of mere grace forgive it, and take away the guilt, prevent the punishment, and abolish the power of sin, not of some, but of all: sincere converts seek full justification, and full sanctification. Receive us into thy protection, guidance, and benediction, graciously; and this of thy mere grace and goodness; having taken away sin, take also graciously our persons, as reconciled and well-pleasing to thee.

So will we render the calves of our lips: this will qualify and encourage us to give the sacrifices which are to God much more pleasing than an ox that hath horns and hoofs, #Ps 69:31; with these calves of our lips we will give our hearts also, for those praises of the lips are fruits of what praise the heart of the convert first gives, and these here are signs of their heart given to God, that so they may be spiritual sacrifices, such as #Ps 50:23, or #Heb 13:15.

Ver. 3.

Asshur shall not save us: it had been one great sin of Israel that they did trust to an arm of flesh; Asshur is particularly named, for that he was the last with whom they made a covenant fairly, or above-board, but any other foreign aids and friendships may be here understood. God promised his peculiar protection, and would have continued it if they had not cast him off, and trusted to man. We will not ride upon horses: another fault of theirs was, they multiplied horses, and trusted to their strength, which God forbade; this includes their home strength, and provision of all sorts.

Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: they had most brutishly thought their idols would be gods to help them; this is the particular confession of their great comprehensive sins, which brought on many others with them; now they renounce as well as confess them, and such renouncing is necessary, and grounded on hope of finding mercy, as appears by the reason they give of their renouncing these sins, and vain confidences in God, to whom they return, in him only there is help to be had.

The fatherless; all that are destitute of strength in themselves, and destitute of help from others; all that, being sensible of their own helpless condition, look for it from God, who hath power, mercy, and wisdom to help and relieve.

Findeth, obtaineth as often as he does rightly sue for,

mercy; both fountain and streams of goodness too, free grace and rich bounty.

Ver. 4.

I will heal: it is a usual metaphor in Scripture; sin is our disease. God is the Physician who healeth us, #Ps 103:3 Jer 3:22; and he doth it through Christ, in whom this promise is made to returning backsliders. This promise God maketh by his prophet, to encourage them to hearken to his advice of repenting.

Backslidings; aversions, voluntary and wilful turning away from God; well expressed here, and called rebellions by some other interpreters. These voluntary, continued, and obstinate aversions, or backslidings, are instances of greatest sins and sinners; yet God

promiseth to heal these old putrefying sores, that we might be assured that he will heal all other lesser wounds: he will fully heal by pardoning and purifying.

I will love them; though before he hated, could take no pleasure in them, now he will show that his mind and heart are towards them to accept them, and do them good.

Freely; without their desert, and without bounds of time, or measure, or kind. All kinds of mercies the fruit of his love, infinite mercy in grace and glory, eternal mercies, his love will afford to them. This is liberal love indeed, this promised here.

For mine anger is turned away from him; I am reconciled to them, my displeasure is turned away.

Ver. 5.

I, the Lord, who have pardoned, and am appeased,

will be as the dew, refresh and water, that they may grow, and that they may be fruitful and flourish, as the dew in those countries, where it was more abundant than with us, and for some months together supplied the want of rain; God will refresh and comfort, and make fruitful in good works, through his grace, such as return to him.

Israel; those that do unfeignedly, not hypocritically, confess, pray, and repent.

As the lily; which grows apace, is fragrant, beautiful, and delights in valleys, often grows among thorns; so the Israel of God among troubles in low state, yet comely, and fragrant to the Lord, and grows up in him speedily.

Lebanon, put for the trees of Lebanon; as those trees spread forth their roots, grow up to strength, are most beautiful, odoriferous, and durable, cedars in Lebanon are these trees; so shall the true Israel, converted backsliders, be blessed of God. So flourishing and happy shall the church be under Christ.

Ver. 6.

His branches, his tenderest branches which are new sprung out, shall gather strength, not be broken off, but by these shall they multiply in number of boughs.

Shall spread; grow great and beautiful, and excellent for shade.

As the olive tree; which retains its verdure all the winter, and is rich in fruit; so the true Israel of God shall flourish, not in fruitless beauty and stateliness, but in desirable and lovely fruit, even in winters of affliction and troubles.

As Lebanon; the mountain famous for cedars, where also were the trees that afford the frankincense, which sweat out that excellent aromatic, and where many more sweetest flowers grow and perfume the air; such shall the spiritual fragrance of the church be to God and man.

Ver. 7.

They that dwell under his shadow; as many as unite to the church, are members of it, shall dwell under these spreading trees: the churches planted and spreading shall be to new converts as such trees to fainting travellers, almost spent with toil and heat; they shall find rest in this shadow, which may refer to Christ and the church.

Shall return; revive and recover new strength and life; so do souls weary and heavy laden with sin and fears find comfort and life coming to Christ, conversing with such as have been eased and comforted by Christ in like manner formerly.

They shall revive as the corn, which dieth ere it liveth to bring forth fruit; so converts die indeed to sin that they may live to God, die to all legal righteousness that they may live on rich grace: or else it may refer to the increase of the church, which shall be as many stalks from one ear of wheat.

And grow as the vine; which in winter seems dead, is pruned, and promiseth little to the eye, but yet life, sap, and a fructifying virtue is in it, and it will spring and bring forth fruit; so the church of Christ is used, that it may bring forth fruit more abundantly,
#Joh 15:2.

The scent thereof, the savour of it to God and good men, shall be pleasing as the scent of the delicious wines of Lebanon, which are mentioned by profane authors with a great praise for their sweetness and deliciousness.

Ver. 8.

Ephraim; not the whole body of Ephraim, but converted Ephraim, those who, #Ho 14:1,2, were sensible of sin, confessed it, and sued for pardon.

What have I to do any more with idols? i.e. I have no more to do with them, nor ever will; they have been, first my sin, and next my sorrows, and my sorrows have been multiplied by hasting after other gods; I will no more do so: and with detestation against idols doth Ephraim speak, as the question implieth.

I have heard him, and observed him: some refer these words to Ephraim, owning what he had found and observed in God; what grace and mercy in pardon, deliverance from miseries, and comfortable revival of his state. Others refer it to God, and make it a gracious promise from God of hearing prayers, and taking especial care of converted Ephraim; either way suits the words and matter, and I leave it to your choice.

I am like a green fir tree: these words also, as the former, are either Israel's giving praise to God, who had on Israel's return changed his dead, withered state into a flourishing, lovely, and beautiful state: others say it is God's promise to be to Ephraim as such a tree is to a weary traveller, who may with delight and safety sit under the shadow of it; a tree, say some, that grows with very thick boughs, that rain or heat pierceth not, and whose smell drives away wild beasts; so there is safety and refreshment under the protection of the Lord, under his shadow.

From me is thy fruit found: this also is differently interpreted: Israel confesseth that the fruit of God's grace is seen from what Israel now is and doth: others say, God promiseth the fruits of comfort Israel enjoys, and still shall enjoy, from God, and his grace toward Israel. I determine neither, but sure I am such is the correspondence of God's grace to the converted, that they cannot more readily acknowledge what God hath done for them, nor more readily engage to do what God adviseth and requireth, than God is ready to encourage them by gracious, and rich, and suitable promises.

Ver. 9.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? though not many wise, yet some methinks; now of those few, who is there that will consider what sins God complains of and threatens to punish in his people, what sins God forbade them so much as once to commit, and peremptorily commanded them to turn from when once committed; what duties he required, what promises he proposed, what patience he used toward them while any hope of their amendment, what severity upon their incorrigible sins? Whoso with any tolerable degree of wisdom will view these things, and seriously consider of them, they will understand, and know that the prophet hath given best advice, and that it is the safest course to follow it.

Prudent, and he shall know them? the same thing doubled with elegancy, and to confirm the word, as is usual in Scripture.

For the ways of the Lord are right; the ways which he would have us walk in towards him, his law, his ordinances of worship, his whole doctrine which directeth our walk, are all righteous and equal. And the ways wherein God walketh toward us, in corrections for sins committed, in suspending his. promises of grace, on conditions of duty, in afflicting or comforting, are all righteous and very equal.

The just shall walk in them; will approve them, all justifying the righteousness of God's displeasure, and confessing he remembereth mercy in the midst of judgment; and justifying the righteousness of his precepts by endeavouring to observe them.

But the transgressors, wilful, obstinate, and inconsiderate sinners,

shall fall therein; eventually it proves so, they stumble and are offended somewhat at his precepts and commands, but more at his severe judgments; they cast off the one, and vainly hope to shift off the other, till at last they fall under the weight of their own sins and God's wrath.