
HOSEA 11: 1 "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

This chapter gives a very pathetic representation of God's tender and affectionate regard for Israel, by metaphors chiefly borrowed from the conduct of mothers toward their tender offspring. From this, occasion is taken to reflect on their ungrateful return to the Divine goodness, and to denounce against them the judgments of the Almighty, Hos 11:1-7. But suddenly and unexpectedly the prospect changes. Beams of mercy break from the clouds just now fraught with vengeance. God, to speak in the language of men, feels the relentings of a tender parent; his bowels yearn; his mercy triumphs; his rebellious child shall yet be pardoned. As the lion of the tribe of Judah, he will employ his power to save his people, he will call his children from the land of their captivity; and, as doves, they will fly to him, a faithful and a holy people, Hos 11:8-12.

Verse 1

When Israel was a child - In the infancy of his political existence.

I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt - Where he was greatly oppressed; and in this I gave the proof of my love. I preserved my people in their affliction there, and brought them safely out of it.

HOSEA 11: 2 They called to them, so they went from them. They sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to engraved images.

HOSEA 11: 3 Yet I taught Ephraim to walk. I took them by his arms; but they didn't know that I healed them.

Verse 3

I taught Ephraim also to go - An allusion to a mother or nurse teaching a child to walk, directing it how to lift and lay its feet, and supporting it in the meantime by the arms, that it may use its feet with the greater ease. This is a passage truly pathetic.

HOSEA 11: 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with ties of love; and I was to them like those who lift up the yoke on their necks; and I bent down to him and I fed him.

Verse 4

I drew them with cords of a man - This is a reference to leading strings, one end of which is held by the child, the other by the nurse, by which the little one, feeling some support, and gaining confidence, endeavors to walk. God, their heavenly Father, made use of every means and method to teach them to walk in the right and only safe path; for, as the Targum says, "As beloved children are drawn I drew them by the strength of love."

That take of the yoke on their jaws - I did every thing that mercy could suggest, and justice permit, to make their duty their delight and profit. There appears to be here an allusion to the moving and

pulling forward the collar or yoke of beasts which have been hard at work, to let in the cool air between it and their neck, so as to refresh them, and prevent that heat, which with the sweat would scald their necks, and take off not only the hair, but the skin. I have often done this at the land ends, in ploughing, when at the turnings the cattle were permitted a few moments to draw their breath after the hard pull that terminated the furrow at either end of the field: -

And I laid meat unto them - Giving them at the same time a bite of grass or hay, to encourage them to go on afresh. The metaphor is strong and expressive; and he who ever had or saw the management of cattle in the plough or cart must admire it. Thus God acted with the people on whose necks was the yoke of his law. How many privileges, advantages, and comforts did he mingle with his precepts, to make them at once a righteous and happy people!

HOSEA 11: 5 "They won't return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian will be their king, because they refused to repent.

Verse 5

He shall not return into - Egypt - I have brought them thence already, with the design that the nation should never return thither again; but as they have sinned, and forfeited my favor and protection, they shall go to Assyria; and this because they refused to return to me. This view of the verse removes every difficulty.

HOSEA 11: 6 The sword will fall on their cities, and will destroy the bars of their gates, and will put an end to their plans.

Verse 6

The sword shall abide on his cities - Israel was agitated with external and intestine wars from the time of Jeroboam the Second. Although Zechariah his son reigned twelve years, yet it was in continual troubles; and he was at last slain by the rebel Shallum, who, having reigned one month, was slain by Menahem. Pekahiah succeeded his father Menahem, and reigned two years, and was killed by Pekah, son of Remaliah. He joined Rezin, king of Syria, and made an irruption into the land of Judah; but Ahaz having obtained succor from Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, Pekah was defeated, and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Naphtali, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, were carried away captives by the Assyrian king; and in a short time after, Hosea, son of Elah, slew Pekah and usurped the kingdom, which he could not possess without the assistance of Shalmaneser, who for his services imposed a tribute on the Israelitish king. Wishing to rid himself of this yoke, he applied to the king of Egypt; but this being known to Shalmaneser, he came against Samaria, and after a three years' siege took and destroyed it. Thus the sword rested on their cities; it continued in the land till all was ruined. See Calmet.

HOSEA 11: 7 My people are determined to turn from me. Though they call to the Most High, he certainly won't exalt them.

Verse 7

Though they called them to the Most High - Newcome is better: "And though they call on him together because of the yoke, he will not raise it. He shall receive no refreshment." See the metaphor, Hos 11:4 (note).

HOSEA 11: 8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned within me, my compassion is aroused.

Verse 8

How shall I give thee up - See the notes on Hos 6:4, where we have similar words from similar feeling.

Mine heart is turned within me - Justice demands thy punishment; Mercy pleads for thy life. As thou changest, Justice resolves to destroy, or Mercy to save. My heart is oppressed, and I am weary with repenting - with so frequently changing my purpose. All this, though spoken after the manner of men, shows how merciful, compassionate, and loath to punish the God of heaven is. What sinner or saint upon earth has not been a subject of these gracious operations?

HOSEA 11: 9 I will not execute the fierceness of my anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come in wrath.

Verse 9

I will not execute - Here is the issue of this conflict in the Divine mind. Mercy triumphs over Judgment; Ephraim shall be spared. He is God, and not man. He cannot be affected by human caprices. They are now penitent, and implore mercy; he will not, as man would do, punish them for former offenses, when they have fallen into his hand. The holy place is in Ephraim, and God is in this holy place; and he will not go into the cities, as he did into Sodom and Gomorrah, to destroy them. Judgment is his strange work. How exceedingly affecting are these two verses!

HOSEA 11: 10 They will walk after the LORD, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children will come trembling from the west.

Verse 10

They shall walk after the Lord - They shall discern the operations of his providence, when,

He shall roar like a lion - When he shall utter his majestic voice, Cyrus shall make his decree. The people shall tremble - be in a state of commotion; every one hurrying to avail himself of the opportunity to return to his own land.

HOSEA 11: 11 They will come trembling like a bird out of Egypt, and like a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will settle them in their houses," says the LORD.

Verse 11

They shall tremble as a bird - Those of them that are in Egypt shall also be called thence, and shall speed hither as a bird. Those in Assyria shall also be called to return, and they shall flee as doves to their windows. All shall, in the fullness of time, return to their own land. And,

I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord - They shall have their temple once more, and all their holy ordinances.

HOSEA 11: 12 Ephraim surrounds me with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit. Judah still strays from God, and is unfaithful to the Holy One.

Verse 12

Ephraim compasseth me about with lies - I think this verse does not well unite with the above; it belongs to another subject, and should begin the following chapter, as in the Hebrew.

Judah yet ruleth with God - There is an allusion here to Gen 32:24, where Jacob having "wrestled with the Angel," had his name changed to Israel, one that rules with God. That glory the Israelites had lost by their idolatry; but Judah still retained the true worship, and alone deserved the name of Israel.

Bp. Newcome translates this clause thus: - "But hereafter they shall come down a people of God, even a faithful people of saints."

Even allowing this to be the most correct view of the original, I do not see what we gain by this change.