

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 14

In this chapter are contained the displeasure of God at hypocritical idolaters that sought unto him, and at the false prophets; the judgments that should come upon them, and which should not be averted by the intercession of the best of men; and yet a promise that a remnant should be saved. The elders of Israel are said to sit before the prophet, (^{2644b}Ezekiel 14:1); to whom the Lord gives an account of them, (^{2644c}Ezekiel 14:2,3); and orders the prophet what he should say to them, that the Lord would answer them himself, (^{2644d}Ezekiel 14:4,5); and that he should bid the house of Israel repent and turn from their idols, or else the Lord would set his face against them, and cut them off, both them and the false prophets they sought unto; and this is threatened in order to reform them, and continue them his covenant people, (^{2644e}Ezekiel 14:6-11); and then the judgment of famine is particularly threatened; to avert which, the prayers of the best of men would be of no effect, (^{2644f}Ezekiel 14:12-14); and next the judgment of noisome beasts, with the same intimation, (^{2644g}Ezekiel 14:15,16); likewise the sword, (^{2644h}Ezekiel 14:17,18); and also the pestilence, (²⁶⁴⁴ⁱEzekiel 14:19,20); and much less when they should be all sent together, (^{2644j}Ezekiel 14:21); and the chapter is concluded with a promise that a remnant should be saved; which would be a comfort to the captives of Babylon, and accounts for what the Lord had done, or would do, in Jerusalem, (^{2644k}Ezekiel 14:22,23).

Ver. 1. *Then came certain, of the elders of Israel unto me*, &c.] The Syriac version adds, “to consult the Lord”; by the prophet. These, according to Kimchi, were the elders of the captivity, the heads of the captives that were now in Babylon with Ezekiel: but there are others that think they were some that came from Jerusalem to Babylon on some business or another; and having heard much of the prophet, came to visit him, and to hear his prophecies, and inquire of the Lord by him:

and sat before me; silent and pensive, as persons in anxiety and distress; or as hearers of him, for sitting is a hearing gesture; they sat and heard with great attention, gravity, and seriousness, with seeming affection and

reverence; and all this was not in a visionary way, but was a real fact; (see ~~Ami~~ Ezekiel 33:31,32).

Ver. 2. *And the word of the Lord came unto me, &c.]* While the elders were sitting before him, and whispered secretly and powerfully the following things in his ears:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 3. *Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, &c.]* Though they look so grave and demure, seem so devout and religious, and hear with so much attention and reverence, and express such a desire of consulting me by thee, they are no other than idolaters; and though they are at such a distance from their native place, and have not their idols with them, yet they have them in their fancy and imagination, and their hearts are after them, and are set upon them; these engross their affections, they are near and dear unto them, notwithstanding all their pretensions: or, they “have caused their idols to ascend upon their heart”^{f181}; their hearts are the altars on which they worship them, and the throne on which they have placed them; they are held in the highest esteem by them, and have the greatest honours done them, and have the ascendant over them; even their “dunghill” gods, as the word^{f182} signifies; though they are but dung, filthy and abominable, these they lay upon their hearts; and what else is man’s righteousness, when made an idol of, trusted to, and depended on? it is no other, as the apostle says, than “loss” and “dung”, (~~Ami~~ Philippians 3:8); and so every carnal lust that is gratified and indulged is no other than an idol, or a dunghill god, set up in the heart:

and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face; whenever they had an opportunity of so doing; for their hearts were not only inwardly affected to idols, but they outwardly worshipped them; set them before them, and bowed the knee to them, and prayed: and these idols are called “the stumbling block of their iniquity”, because by worshipping these they fell into sin, and so into ruin; they were the occasion of their sin, and of their punishment; they stumbled at them, and fell, even though they were before their eyes; nay, they set them themselves before their face, which shows their obstinacy and resolution to continue in idolatry, though it would be their ruin:

should I be inquired of at all by them? suffer them to come near me, and put a question to me, or be consulted by them through thee? no, I will not:

or, “am I seriously inquired of by them?” so some^{f183} render the words; no, I am not; or, “being asked, shall I answer them?” so the Targum and Vulgate Latin version: or, “answering shall I answer them”^{f184}? no, I will not, they deserve no answer from me; they shall have none other of me than such an one as follows.

Ver. 4. *Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, &c.*] That is, speak unto them as a prophet, and as from the Lord, and say what follows; so the Targum,

“prophesy unto them and say unto them;”

thus saith the Lord God, every man of the house of Israel, that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face; let him be who he will, one in public office, an elder of Israel, or a private person; no respect will be had, no distinction made, nor favour shown; being an idolater in heart and practice, secretly and openly, he shall bear the punishment of his sin:

and cometh to the prophet: the Prophet Ezekiel, as the elders of Israel now did, or any other prophet of the Lord: the Vulgate Latin version adds, “inquiring of me by him”; expecting to have an answer, and one according to their wishes:

I the Lord will answer him that cometh; that cometh to the prophet; or, as the Targum,

“that cometh to ask instruction of me:”

here is a various reading, a “Keri” and a “Cetib”; we follow the Keri, or marginal reading, **ab**, “that cometh”; and so does the Targum; but the “Cetib”, or written text, is **hb**, “in it”; thus; “I the Lord will answer him in it”^{f185}; in the question he puts to the prophet, or to the Lord by him; or in that time, immediately; but not with smooth things, as he expects, but with terrible things in righteousness; not in a way of grace and mercy, but in a way of judgment; not as he desires, but as he deserves:

according to the multitude of his idols; in proportion to the number of his gods, and his idolatrous actions, shall the answer or punishment be: or these words may be connected with the word cometh, and be read thus, “that cometh with the multitude of his idols”^{f186}; with his heart full of idols, set up there; which is an instance of his hypocrisy, seen and detected by the

Lord; and of his impudence, in daring to come unto him in such a manner; and of his folly, to expect a gracious answer from the Lord, this being his case. The Targum understands it quite otherwise, as if the answer the Lord would give would be a kind and agreeable one, paraphrasing this clause thus,

“although he is mixed (implicated or entangled) in the multitude of the worship of his idols.”

Ver. 5. *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart,* &c.] By which they are ensnared, and drawn aside to their ruin; being given up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, and worship idols; God threatening to answer them by righteous judgments, and thereby take the wickedness, the hypocrisy, and idolatry, that were in their hearts, and expose and make it manifest unto others; or, by punishing them, to draw out the corruption and sin that were in them, that it might be seen what a wicked people they were. The Targum interprets the text in another way,

“that I may bring near the house of Israel, and put repentance into their hearts;”

because they are all estranged from me through their idols; they grew shy of God and his worship, when they fell into idolatry. Alienation from God, from the life of God, from the law of God, from the worship of God, and of the affections from him, is owing to some idol or another set up in the heart, or before the eye; whatever is worshipped besides God, or gains the ascendant in the heart, alienates from him; and God will not admit of a rival, he cannot and will not bear it; and for this reason he inflicts punishment, or answers in a terrible way.

Ver. 6. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel,* &c.] Deliver out the following exhortation to repentance unto them; for God’s end, in all his threatenings and judgments, is to bring men to repentance:

thus saith the Lord God, repent, and turn [yourselves] from your idols; or, “turn, and cause to be turned from your idols”^{f187}; turn yourselves from the worship of idols, as the Targum, and do all that in you lies to turn others from the same; particularly your wives and young men, as Kimchi: and the rather they were obliged to do this, since in all probability they had been the means of drawing them into idolatry:

and turn away your faces from all your abominations; their idols, detestable to God, and ought to have been so to them; these he would have them turn their faces from, not so much as look at them, much less worship them, that they might not be ensnared by them; this is said, in opposition to their setting of them before their face, (^{<354B>}Ezekiel 14:3,4).

Ver. 7. *For everyone of the house of Israel, &c.*] King and subjects, princes and people, high and low, rich and poor, of every rank, sex, and age:

or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel; the proselytes; whether of righteousness, such as were circumcised, and embraced the Jewish religion; or of the gate, who were only inhabitants with them; one as another were obliged to worship the God of Israel, and abstain from idolatry; there was but one law to the Israelite and to the stranger, respecting this matter:

which separateth himself from me; from the worship of God, and so from communion with him; turns his back on him, and becomes an apostate from him, by joining himself with idols:

and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face; these things are repeated, partly to observe the heinousness of the sin they were guilty of; and partly to show the stupidity of this people, which required things to be said over and over, before they could take them in, and be convinced of their evil:

and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; this explains what such persons would come to a prophet for, (^{<354B>}Ezekiel 14:4); and exposes their hypocrisy:

I the Lord will answer him by myself; not by the prophet to whom he comes, but by himself: or, “in my word”, as the Targum; yet not by words, but by blows; not in mercy, but in wrath; and in such manner, that it shall appear to come from the Lord, and to be according to truth and justice.

Ver. 8. *And I will set my face against that man, &c.*] And look him out of countenance, notwithstanding all his daring impudence and presumption in coming to a prophet of the Lord, and inquiring of him by him, when guilty of gross idolatry; which must needs be the case, when the face of God is set against a man. The Targum renders it, “my fury”, or “wrath”; and indeed that is what is meant; when God sets his face against a man, he

pours out his wrath, or inflicts punishment on him; (see ^{<3816>}Psalm 34:16). Jarchi's note is,

“as a man that says I am at leisure from all business, and I will attend to this;”

laying aside all other business, wholly giving himself up to one thing, on which he is set. Dreadful is a man's case, when the Lord thus sets himself against him!

and will make him a sign and a proverb; a spectacle of horror to look at, because of his misery; and a proverb, to be took up, and spoke of, as Zedekiah and Ahab were, (^{<2927>}Jeremiah 29:22);

and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; by a sudden death, which the Jews call death from heaven, or by the immediate hand of God; and which is answering by himself, as in (^{<3447>}Ezekiel 14:7);

and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord; that is, those that remain, are not cut off, but are reclaimed by these examples from idolatry, and are brought to repentance, the remnant among them that should be saved; these should know and acknowledge the Lord was omniscient, and knew the hypocrisy of those men above described; and was omnipotent, and could make good his threatenings, and inflict deserved punishment; and that he was holy, just, and true, in all his ways.

Ver. 9. *And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, &c.]* That is pleasing to men, and is not true, in hope of reward and applause, but it never comes to pass, and his expectations are not answered:

I the Lord have deceived that prophet; by sending a lying spirit to him, as to Ahab's prophets, (^{<1022>}1 Kings 22:22,23); by giving him up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, and publish it, (^{<3211>}2 Thessalonians 2:11); and to his own heart's lusts; being willing, for the sake of gain, to prophesy smooth things, though false to the people, promising them peace when there was none; and then by frustrating his predictions, and disappointing him of his ends and views. R. Saadiah interprets this, as Kimchi observes, of God revealing and making it manifest that he was deceived; but more is meant by it than this, or even a bare permission; for though God is not the author of sin, yet he wills it to be done for wise ends and purposes, and sometimes in a way of judgment, as a punishment for sin; and which was the case here; both with respect to the prophet that deceived, who as the

fruit of his sin, his covetousness, was given up in just judgment to a reprobate mind; and the people that were deceived, who, rejecting the true prophets of the Lord, were willing to have smooth things prophesied to them:

and I will stretch out my hand upon them; his avenging hand; the stroke of his power, as the Targum; a heavy one, and that for giving heed to a lying spirit; for uttering falsehood, and that with a wicked design, to gain the applause of the people, or for filthy lucre's sake:

and I will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel; by some sore judgment or sudden death, and so be made a public example of.

Ver. 10. *And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity*, &c.] Both the false prophet, and those that sought unto him, and were deceived by him; and which being laid according to the strictness of divine justice, is intolerable: sad is the case when a man is obliged to bear his own sins, and the punishment of them, and has no surety to undertake for him, and be a mediator between God and him, and make atonement for him:

the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seekest [unto him]; they being both alike culpable, each pursuing the desires of their own evil hearts; the one seeking for smooth things to be spoken to him; the other speaking them, in order to gratify him, and for the sake of gain; the one being a false prophet, and the other seeking to and inquiring of him, though he was such, slighting and rejecting the true prophets of the Lord; both being deceived, and both blind, and so should fall into the same ditch, being under the same judicial blindness and hardness of heart. The Targum is,

“according to the sin of him that comes to learn and learns not; according to the sin of the false prophet shall it be.”

Ver. 11. *That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me*, &c.] Or from his worship, as the Targum; from the law of God, and obedience to it: sin is a going astray from God, a deviation from his commandments; it leads men out of the way of their duty into wrong paths, which issue in ruin, if grace prevent not; and sometimes the means which God makes use of for the restoring of his own people, and bringing them back to himself, are the punishments which he inflicts upon others; and which is his end in so doing, as it was here; that the false prophets, and those that followed them, being made examples of, might be a warning unto others, and

caution them against falling into the same sins, that so they might not bear the same punishment; or be a means of reclaiming them from their errors, and for the future beware of going astray again:

neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; for every transgression, as it is an aberration from the law of God, so it is of a defiling nature: it defiles the mind and conscience, yea, the whole man, from which there is no cleansing but by the blood of Christ; it is loathsome in itself, contrary to the pure and holy nature of God, and abominable to a gracious mind, and therefore to be avoided; and which may be learnt from the punishment of it on others:

but that they may be my people and I may be their God, saith the Lord God; that is, that they may behave as such, and that it may appear that God is their God, and they are his people.

Ver. 12. *The word of the Lord came again unto saying.*] At the same time as before, continuing the prophecy, and a denunciation of judgments; for it does not seem to begin a new prophecy. The Targum renders it, the word of prophecy from the Lord.

Ver. 13. *Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, &c.*] That is, the inhabitants of the land, when they are in general become sinners against God and his law; and not merely sinners, as all men are, but grievous ones, notorious sinners, guilty of very gross enormities, of great prevarication, perfidy, and treachery; for God is a God longsuffering, and has great patience with a people; and does not usually come forth in his judgments against nation, until sin has universally prevailed among them, and they are guilty of grievous abominations, and those continued in: but when this is the case,

then will I stretch out mine hand upon it; his hand of vindictive wrath and justice, and cause it to fall heavily, and men to feel it:

and will break the staff of the bread thereof; take away bread corn from the nation, the support of human life; which is that unto it, and the stay of it, as a staff is to a decrepit old man, that cannot walk without one; or take away the virtue of it, so as though it might be had and eaten, yet not be nourishing; (see ²⁰¹⁶Ezekiel 4:16);

and will send famine upon it; by causing a drought, restraining rain, sending mildew, locusts, caterpillars, &c. to eat up the fruits of the earth:

and will cut off man and beast from it; the latter for the sake of the former, and both through want of food.

Ver. 14. *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, &c.]* In the sinning land, and made intercession for it, that the famine might be removed, and the inhabitants of it be saved alive, this would not be granted; though they were men that found favour in the sight of God, and were eminent for prayer, and successful in it, and the means of saving many; as Noah his family, by preparing an ark according to the will of God; and Daniel was an instrument of saving the lives of his companions, and of the wise men of Chaldea; and Job, by his prayer for his friends, prevented the wrath of God, that was kindled against them, coming upon them; and yet, if they had been upon the spot at this time, their intercession for this people would have been of no avail; the decree was gone forth, and was not to be called in; it was unalterable, and God was inexorable: nor could it have been depended upon, if this declaration had not been made, that their prayers would have been effectual, had they been upon the spot, and put them up for this nation; since it might be observed, that the old world was not saved from a deluge in Noah's time, only he and his family; nor were the people of the Jews preserved from captivity in Daniel's time, nor even he himself; nor were Job's children saved, though he was greatly concerned for them: it may be observed from hence, that there was such a man as Job, as well as Noah and Daniel; and that the latter, though a young man, not above thirty years of age, at this time, yet was become very famous, not only for his dignity and grandeur in Babylon, but for his religion and piety; and is placed between those two great men, Noah and Job; and being a person now living, precludes any argument being formed by the Papists, in favour of the intercession of departed saints; and which would not be conclusive from such a supposition as here made, had they been all such as had departed this life; (see ²⁴⁵¹Jeremiah 15:1); the design of the whole is only to show that the prayers of the best of men would not have prevailed with the Lord to avert his judgments from a people that had so grievously sinned against him:

they should deliver [but] their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord; as Noah was saved at the time of the flood; Daniel in the captivity; and Job midst his great afflictions: this is to be understood not of the eternal salvation of the souls of these men, which is not, nor can it be, by works of righteousness done by the best of men; by these men cannot be justified in the sight of God, and so not saved; but of temporal salvation, of

the salvation of their souls or lives from temporal calamities. Besides, these men had knowledge of another and better righteousness than their own, and believed in it, and trusted to it, even the righteousness of faith, the righteousness of Christ received by faith Noah was both an heir and a preacher of the righteousness which is by faith; and Daniel knew that it was one branch of the Messiah's work to bring in everlasting righteousness; and Job was fully persuaded that his Redeemer lived, by whom he should be justified, (^{<3107>}Hebrews 11:7 ^{<6076>}2 Peter 2:5 ^{<27024>}Daniel 9:24 ^{<48925>}Job 19:25 13:15,16,18).

Ver. 15. *If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, &c.*] Evil and hurtful ones; not so much those that are poisonous as pernicious; such, as lions, tigers, foxes, wolves, and bears, that are very ravenous and devouring, and especially in a time of famine before threatened; though sometimes God makes use of lesser creatures to do damage to a land, and the fruits of it, as locusts, caterpillars, &c. but the former seem to be intended here, which sometimes God threatens and sends to a people disobedient and rebellious; (see ^{<1832>}Leviticus 26:22) (^{<2175>}2 Kings 17:25);

and they spoil it; or, “make it childless”^{f188}; they or I bereave the inhabitants of it of their children; or bereave it of other cattle that are tame, as sheep and oxen, as well as of men and women also, and even destroy the fruits of the earth:

so that it be desolate; having neither men nor cattle, corn or tillage, or any other fruit; all being destroyed by the evil beasts, who have commission to pass through it, and lay it waste wherever they come, without control:

that no man may pass through because of the beasts; for fear of them: not only the inhabitants of the land should be destroyed by them, but even travellers, such as come from other countries, would not choose to pass through it because of the beasts; so that it would on this account be destitute both of inhabitants and of travellers; and must be a most desolate place, where only wild beasts were to be seen, ranging about at pleasure.

Ver. 16. *[Though] these three men [were] in it, &c.*] Above named, Noah, Daniel, and Job; as they were not, two of them not being in the land of the living, and the other in Babylon; but if all three had been in a land so threatened, and used all the interest they had with God, by fervent prayer and supplication, to have called in the wild beasts, and chained them up, and to preserve the people from being destroyed by them, it would have

been all in vain; the Lord was determined upon the destruction of them, and by means of these, as one of his sore judgments:

[as] I live, saith the Lord God; or by my life; for it is an oath with which God swears by himself, who has life in himself, and is the author and giver of life to others, and can take it away when, and in what manner, he pleases; and this oath is used, to show the unalterableness of the judgment threatened, it being decreed and sworn to: God's word or decree, and his oath, are two immutable things, in which he cannot lie, and from which he never departs:

they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; meaning not adult persons, but little ones, infant sons and daughters; such as had not been guilty of the actual sins and transgressions their parents were charged with; even these they should not deliver by their prayers and supplications from being destroyed by noisome beasts, God punishing the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and much less should they deliver those that were adult, and had committed the same idolatries and other sins their parents had; no, not even their own sons and daughters; for no exception is made but of themselves, as follows:

they only shall be delivered: as Noah with his family was in the ark, when amidst wild beasts; and Daniel in the lions den; and Job, with whom the beasts of the field were at peace, (~~3123~~ Job 5:23);

but the land shall be desolate; (see ~~3120~~ Ezekiel 12:20).

Ver. 17. *Or [if] I bring a sword upon that land, &c.]* The land which had grievously sinned; the same land into which a famine should come, and through which evil beasts should pass; to which, if the Lord should add, as he would, a third judgment, the sword; suffer a foreign enemy to come in among them, and destroy them. So the Targum,

“or if those that slay with the sword I should bring upon that land;”

the Chaldean army, as he did; the sword has its commission from God; war is not by chance; the invasion of a foreign enemy is from the Lord; and all the mischiefs and ravages of a tumultuous army are all by divine order:

and say, sword, go through the land; not only enter the borders of it, or proceed far in it, but even go through it; which is terrible indeed! but if the Lord bids it go, it must go, and does; it is a servant of his, and punctually

obeys his commands; that is, such are those that use it, however profane and wicked they may be in themselves, as generally armies consist of dissolute persons; yet these are under a divine direction, and are obedient to the will of God, though they may know it not. So the Targum,

“and I say that they that kill with the sword pass through the land:”

so that I cut off man and beast from it; by the sword; the one being destroyed as an enemy, the other for food.

Ver. 18. *Though these three men [were] in it, &c.*] Before mentioned:

[as] I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters: believe me no more, or be it so and so, if they do; it is in the form of an oath, and in the same manner it is expressed in (²³⁴⁴⁶Ezekiel 14:16,20);

but they only shall be delivered themselves; their own souls or lives, and by their righteousness, as in (²³⁴⁴⁴Ezekiel 14:14).

Ver. 19. *Or [if] I send a pestilence into that land, &c.*] Or the plague, which is the destruction that wastes at noon day; this is from the Lord, and a sore judgment it is:

and pour out my fury upon it in blood; or, “by blood”^{f189}; by corrupting the blood, which is done when a man is seized with the pestilence. The Targum renders it, “with slaughter”; by slaying a great number of persons by that disease, as a token of fury and wrath, because of their transgressions. It may be rendered, “because of blood”^{f190}; and so express the cause and reason of the judgment, the shedding of innocent blood:

to cut off from it man and beast; man by the pestilence, and beast by some contagious distemper or another.

Ver. 20. *Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, [were] in it, &c.*] Who are again mentioned by name, as in (²³⁴⁴⁴Ezekiel 14:14); and are the three men referred to in (²³⁴⁴⁶Ezekiel 14:16,18);

[as] I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; not so much as an only son, or an only daughter, no, not even a single child: the plural number is used before, as in (²³⁴⁴⁶Ezekiel 14:16,18); here the singular, to show how resolutely determined the Lord was upon the destruction of the land; that even the prayers of the best of men among

them should not prevail with him to save a single person, no, not a single infant: they

shall [but] deliver their own souls by their righteousness; (see Gill on “^{<3544>}Ezekiel 14:14”).

Ver. 21. *For thus saith the Lord God, how much more, &c.]* If the Lord would not be entreated by such good men as those mentioned, for a land that had sinned against him, to whom he only sends some one of the above judgments, either famine, or noisome beasts, or the sword, or the pestilence, how much more inexorable and deaf to all entreaties must he be; or if anyone of those judgments makes so great a desolation in the land, then how much greater must that detraction be,

when I send my four sore judgments on Jerusalem: or “evil”^{f191} ones; as they are to men, though righteously inflicted by the Lord; when all these four are sent together, what a devastation must they make! namely,

the sword, and the famine, and the, noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast; three of them, it is evident, were sent upon Jerusalem at the time of its siege by Nebuchadnezzar, the sword, famine, and pestilence; and no doubt the other, even the noisome beasts; and if not literally, yet figuratively, for Nebuchadnezzar himself is compared to a lion, (^{<2047>}Jeremiah 4:7 50:17).

Ver. 22. *Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant, &c.]* That is, in Jerusalem, on which God’s four sore judgments should be sent: though in a sinful land, as before described, where only one judgment was sent, there was no escape, not so much as a son or a daughter were delivered; yet here, where four sore judgments came together, there is a remnant that are saved; and which being wonderful, and beyond all expectation, is introduced with a “behold”, not only as a note of attention, but of admiration:

that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters; that is, which should be brought forth out of Jerusalem when taken, and should not be destroyed either by famine, or by noisome beasts, or by the sword, or by the pestilence; and these, many of them, both sons and daughters; some of each sex, that should be the means of propagating a posterity, that should return again, and repeople the land, and continue for many ages, as they have done: this is said with respect to (^{<3546>}Ezekiel 14:16,18,20);

behold, they shall come forth unto you; come out of Jerusalem, and their own land, into Babylon, to the captives already there; with whom Ezekiel now was, and to whom he is speaking:

and ye shall see their way and their doings; their wicked course of life and evil actions; which now being convinced of, and humbled for, they shall ingenuously acknowledge and confess to their brethren in captivity: though some think this is to be understood of wicked and reprobate men, that should be not at all reformed by the judgments of God, but continue in their wicked course; which the godly captives seeing, would conclude from thence their manner of life before, and so the righteous judgment of God upon them; and their being a remnant preserved is thought not to be in a way of mercy, but judgment; who though they escaped each of the four sore judgments, yet had a worse inflicted on them, even captivity:

and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, [even] concerning all that I have brought upon it; that is, they should be satisfied with the justice of God, and be reconciled to the providence of God, in bringing destruction upon Jerusalem; which perhaps before they murmured at, or had hard thoughts of God concerning it; but now hearing the confessions of those that were brought from thence to them, or seeing their wicked lives and conversations, they would now be fully satisfied that God was righteous in all that he had done; and that, instead of being rigorous and severe, he had been kind and merciful.

Ver. 23. *And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings, &c.*] Not that their sinful ways and doings would be comfortable to them, but either their acknowledgments of them, and repentance for them; or, seeing their dissolute manner of life, it would be a means of composing their minds, and making them easy under the providence; being now satisfied that God was just in bringing upon them all the evils he had, and that they were punished according to their deserts, and less than their sins deserved:

and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God; that there was just reason for it; that he was sufficiently provoked to do it; and that it was necessary it should be done, for his own honour, and the good of others.