

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 22

In this chapter a catalogue or list of the sins of the Jews is given; a comparison of them to dross is made, and they are dealt with accordingly; and a complaint is lodged against all ranks and orders of men for their sins; on account of which, there being no intercessor for them, they are threatened with captivity and destruction. The prophet is ordered to judge them, and lay before them their abominable sins, (³²¹¹Ezekiel 22:1,2), of which a long list is given, as murder, idolatry; contempt of parents; oppression of the stranger, fatherless, and widow; negligence of holy things; profanation of the sabbath; tale bearing, lewdness and uncleanness of various sorts; bribery, usury, extortion, and dishonest gain, (³²¹³Ezekiel 22:3-13) for which the Lord threatens to deal with them in a manner that would be intolerable to them; that he would carry them captive, and scatter them among the Heathen, (³²¹⁴Ezekiel 22:14-16), they are compared to dross, and as such should be gathered into a furnace, and melted down, (³²¹⁷Ezekiel 22:17-21), all ranks and orders of men are complained of, because of their sins, and threatened, (³²²³Ezekiel 22:23,24), the prophets for their voraciousness, rapine, murder, and lies, (³²²⁵Ezekiel 22:25,28), the priests, for their violation of the law, neglect of holy things, and profanation of the sabbath, (³²²⁶Ezekiel 22:26), the princes, for their cruelty, murder, and dishonest gain, (³²²⁷Ezekiel 22:27), the people of the land, for their oppression and robbery, (³²²⁹Ezekiel 22:29), and there being none to stand in the gap for them, the Lord threatens to pour out his wrath upon them, and consume them, (³²³⁰Ezekiel 22:30,31).

Ver. 1. *Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me.* &c.] The word of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum, another prophecy:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 2. *Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city?* &c.] Or, “city of bloods”^{f332}? the city of Jerusalem, in which was shed the blood of the prophets sent unto her; the doubling of the word denotes the vehemency with which it was expressed: wilt thou plead for and excuse

such a city as this? surely no; so some: or wilt thou do thy work and office as a prophet? hast thou courage enough to do it? will thou rebuke and reprove? as the Targum; wilt thou examine her case, judge truly, and condemn her, as thou oughtest to do? hast thou an inclination to take this affair in hand? then be directed to it, as follows:

yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations; lay them before her; convict her of them; show her the evil of them, and the punishment they deserve; every kind of sin she was guilty of; for, as for particular acts, it was impossible to reckon them; those sins that were the most flagrant, and most frequently committed, and which were abominable to the Lord, and rendered her so in his sight, are intended.

Ver. 3. *Then say thou, thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] For though the prophet was to sit as judge, yet in the name of the King of kings, under whose authority he acted:

the city sheddeth blood in the midst of it; openly and impudently, in the face of all, and in great abundance; even innocent blood, as the Targum has it: murders were frequent and common, either through quarrels, or through unrighteous judgments in courts of judicature:

that her time may come; to fill up the measure of her iniquity, and to receive the just punishment of her sins. So the Targum,

“the time of her destruction:”

and maketh idols against herself, to defile herself; being guilty, not only of murder, but of idolatry; she was an idol maker and an idol worshipper; and which was against herself, as well as against God; to her own ruin and destruction, as well as to his dishonour; and it is no wonder she should be defiled with such dunghill gods as these were, as the word used signifies. The Targum renders it, “in the midst of her”; and Kimchi interprets it, by “her”, or “above her”, upon the mountains and hills.

Ver. 4. *Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, &c.*] Not only she contracted guilt by the innocent blood she shed, but she was tried and found guilty; her guilt was notorious, plain, and evident, as well as exceeding great, and much aggravated:

and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made: she not only made them, in doing which she sinned; but polluted herself with them, by

worshipping them; her mind and conscience were defiled with them; and which brought such a stain and pollution, as could not be removed by anything that she could do: there are both pollution and guilt in sin, and neither can be removed but by the blood of Christ; and, unless removed that way, punishment must follow:

and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years; to full age, to ripeness for judgment; she had hastened by her sins her days of affliction and distress appointed for her, and was come to years of maturity to suffer for her sins; the years of her captivity, which would soon take place; years in which she would have no pleasure:

therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the Heathen, and a mocking to all countries; who, instead of praising them for their idolatry, would deride them for leaving the God of their fathers, which they did not; and insult over them in their affliction and distress, though they joined with them in idolatrous practices.

Ver. 5. *Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, &c.*] The neighbouring nations, as the Edomites, Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites; and distant ones, as the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians; all that either hear of, or see their misery, shall rejoice at it, and triumph over them:

which art infamous and much vexed; or they shall say, O thou of an infamous name and character; who hast defiled thy name, got a blot upon it, and lost thy credit by thy conduct and behaviour; and now fretting and vexing under the afflictions and calamities that lie upon thee: or whose tumults are many, as the Targum; who hast been full of noise, and factions, and tumults; thou art now come to a righteous end.

Ver. 6. *Behold, the princes of Israel, &c.*] Those that belonged to the royal family, or the nobles of the land, or the members of the grand sanhedrim of the nation:

everyone were in thee to their power to shed blood; everyone exerted himself to the uttermost, according to his ability, to shed blood, or cause it to be shed; everyone strove, as it were, who should shed most, to exceed each other in this abominable sin.

Ver. 7. *In thee have they set light by father and mother, &c.*] Through whom they received their being from God; by whom they were brought

into the world, brought up and educated; and to whom they owed great respect, honour, and obedience; but, on the contrary, they wanted affection to their persons, showed great disrespect to their commands, and treated them with irreverence and contempt; a sin of a very heinous nature, of the first magnitude; reckoned among the very Heathens as next to contempt of God, and disobedience to him; is directly contrary to a law of God, and threatened with a curse, and a severe punishment, (⁽¹²¹⁾Exodus 20:12 ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾Deuteronomy 27:16 ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾Proverbs 30:17) by the connection of the words with the preceding, the princes of Israel seem intended; the children of the nobles, and the sons and daughters of the king; who, it might have been thought, by the character they bore, the station they were in, and the politeness of their education, would have behaved in another manner; and if this sin prevailed among them, no doubt it did among those of a lower class, who are always influenced by such examples:

in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; the proselyte, as the Septuagint; him that was converted to me, as the Syriac version; which is an aggravation of the sin, that it was not merely a stranger that came about civil business, but one who came from foreign parts to worship the Lord at Jerusalem, as the Ethiopian eunuch did: now, to oppress such an one, either by private frauds, or by injustice in a court of judicature; to exact upon him for food or lodging; or circumvent and overreach him in trade and commerce; or distress him by vexatious lawsuits, when ignorant of the laws and customs of the country; at a distance from his friends, and in want of money, must be a very great evil; and yet even the princes themselves in Jerusalem were guilty of it:

in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow; that were weak and helpless, and had none to protect them, father and husband being dead; when, according to their first rank and station as princes, they ought to have been the defenders of them; but, instead of that, distressed, afflicted, and grieved them.

Ver. 8. *Thou hast despised mine holy things*, &c.] The holy place, the temple, and the worship of it; holy persons, the priests that officiated there; holy sacrifices offered up by them; the holy word of God read and explained; and all holy ordinances there administered. These words are directed to Jerusalem, the holy city, and to the inhabitants of it, who ought to have been holy men:

and hast profaned my sabbaths; by doing their own work, and neglecting the service of God; and which was an inlet, as it usually is, to all manner of sin.

Ver. 9. *In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood*, &c.] Innocent blood, as the Targum; such who go from house to house, as pedlars do, with their wares or spices, as the word^{f333} signifies; hence the Syriac version renders it “merchants”; and carry tales and lies of innocent persons, and stir up others against them to wrath and revenge, and shed their blood; or that go to the courts of judicature, and there accuse innocent persons, and bear false witness against them, to the taking away of their lives. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it “thieves”: who commonly are murderers: and in thee they eat upon the mountains; that is, there were such in Jerusalem who used to go to the mountains where idols were worshipped, and eat the things that were sacrificed to them; or partook of the feast made to the honour of them. So the Targum,

“in thee they served idols on the mountains:”

in the midst of thee they commit lewdness; a general word for all manner of uncleanness, as adultery, fornication, incest, &c. of which some particulars follow.

Ver. 10. *In thee have they discovered their father’s nakedness*, &c.] Or, “he discovered”^{f334}, or “uncovered”, it being in the singular number; though the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, read in the plural; this, though committed, was done but by a few; it being a sin not so much as named among men, as for a man to lie with his father’s wife, (^{<401>}1 Corinthians 5:1) as Reuben did, (^{<402>}Genesis 35:22) and which is expressly forbidden; and is mentioned first as the capital sin of uncleanness, (^{<403>}Leviticus 18:6):

in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution; ravished and deflowered such women who had their menstrues; to lie with such was prohibited by the law of God, (^{<404>}Leviticus 18:19 20:18), so that here was a double sin committed; a rape of a woman, whether married or unmarried, at the time of her purgation or sickness; and such a copulation, which at another time would be lawful, ought to be abstained from at such a time, as prejudicial to themselves, and to their posterity, as well as contrary to the divine law.

Ver. 11. *And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife,* &c.] The sin of adultery, which is an abominable sin; it is so to God, and it should be so to man: or, "a man hath committed"^{f335}; some man of note, a great man; for this sin prevailed among the princes and nobles: or "everyone"; it being a general vice, which obtained among all ranks, high and low, rich and poor:

and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; his wife's daughter, or his son's wife, contrary to (^{4B1815}Leviticus 18:15,17):

and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter: his own sister, begotten of the same father, though it may be not born of the same mother; yet the relation is too near for marriage; and besides, it is a rape that is here intended; and the uncovering of the nakedness of a sister, whether by father or mother's side, whether born at home or abroad, is prohibited, (^{4B1819}Leviticus 18:9), and some have thought that all these acts of uncleanness were committed in honour of their idols, and when they worshipped them on the mountains, (²⁶²¹⁹Ezekiel 22:9).

Ver. 12. *In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood.* &c.] Innocent blood, as the Targum; judges upon the bench, whose office it is to take the part of the innocent, and clear him from unjust charges; and protect him from the violence of wicked and unreasonable men; that lay things to his charge, which, if true, would require blood; and yet men in such offices took bribes to bring in the innocent guilty, and pass sentence of death on him; which is a most shocking iniquity indeed: to take bribes in pecuniary matters is very wicked; but to do it in cases which affect life is most dreadfully cruel: or if it is to be understood of such persons who take bribes to bear false witness against a man, to the taking away of his life, it is a very heinous and detestable sin; for, as for a set of jurymen bribed to bring in a wrong verdict, which would be equally a most enormous crime; such a custom to try causes to be determined by a jury did not obtain among the Jews:

thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion; not content with moderate usury, and increase, and even that were forbid the Jews among themselves; so greedy were they of gain at any rate, that they extorted it of their neighbours, in the most violent and oppressive manner. Kimchi, by her "friends or neighbours", understands the Assyrians and Egyptians; to whom she gave gifts, extorted by oppression from her own people, to get help of them:

and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord; to seek for help from me; or they had forgotten his law, which forbids the above sins; they had forgotten the instructions, cautions, and directions he had given them. The Targum is,

“and hast forsook my worship;”

forgetfulness of God is the cause of all sin.

Ver. 13. *Behold, therefore, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, &c.*] As one amazed at it; or as filled with indignation against it; or as grieved and distressed at it; so Jarchi and Kimchi: or else as rejoicing at the punishment going to be inflicted on them for it. So the Septuagint renders it,

“I will bring my hand upon them;”

and the Targum,

“behold, I will bring my vengeance upon thee for the sins of mammon, &c.

Jarchi and Kimchi observe from their Rabbins, that four and twenty sins are recited by Ezekiel; but the final sentence of punishment is for rapine or dishonest gain, which is the greatest evil of all, (⁵¹⁶⁰1 Timothy 6:10):

and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee; the innocent blood shed in the midst of her; not so much by thieves and cutthroats, as under a pretence of justice which was very abominable indeed; against which the Lord expresses just and strong resentment.

Ver. 14. *Can thine heart endure, &c.*] Or “stand”^{f336}: surely it must fall within thee; become like water, and melt as wax, be it ever so hard and adamantine:

or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? surely they must become weak, and drop, and not be able to hold a weapon for defence: and, if this would be the case, when God should deal with the Jews for their sins, by sending the Chaldean army to besiege their city, and take it; how will it be with sinners at the day of judgment, and to all eternity, when the awful sentence shall be pronounced, “go ye cursed”; when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon them; when they shall be cast into hell, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched? this

will be intolerable by the most stout hearted sinner; no heart will be strong enough to stand up under it, or hands to keep it off:

I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it; he who is the mighty God, the eternal and unchangeable Jehovah; he has said it, that he will deal with impenitent sinners in a way of wrath, and he will be as good as his word; he will certainly accomplish it; it is in vain for men to flatter themselves to the contrary; or to put away the evil day far from them; it shall surely be. The Targum is,

“I have decreed by my word, and I will establish it.”

Ver. 15. *And I will scatter thee among the Heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, &c.*] Not only cause them to be carried captive to some one place, as Babylon; but to be scattered and dispersed throughout the various provinces of it, and in other nations, as chaff is by the winds; signifying hereby the power by which it would be done; their weakness, who would not be able to hinder it; and the uncomfortable condition they would be in:

and will consume thy filthiness out of thee; by destroying some filthy persons, and reforming others; by bringing them by means of those afflictions to a sense of their sins, and to forsake them; and so would be refined as silver from its dross in a furnace: it may have a particular reference to their idolatry, that filthy sin, which they were cured of, and purged from, by their captivity, and to which they returned no more.

Ver. 16. *And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the Heathen, &c.*] No longer be the inheritance of God, but their own; and not have God to be their portion and inheritance, but themselves; and a poor portion and inheritance that must be, being in captivity, poverty, and distress; enjoying neither their civil nor religious liberties, as heretofore; it would be now manifest to the Heathens that they were forsaken of God, and left to themselves. Some render it, “and thou shalt be profaned, or polluted in thyself”^{f337}; shalt be known to be so to thyself, as well as appear so to others. The Targum is,

“I will be sanctified in thee before the people:”

and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; able to do what I say; faithful to my word; omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; and this thou shalt not only know, but own and acknowledge, when these calamities take place, and have their effect.

Ver. 17. *And the word of the Lord came unto me, &c.*] The word of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 18. *Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross, &c.*] Vile, despicable, useless, and unprofitable; to which the wicked of the earth are compared, (⁴⁹¹⁹Psalm 119:119) and here the Lord's professing people, they differing nothing from them, being sadly degenerated; formerly they were as silver, and so they might be reckoned among themselves; but to God, who is omniscient, the searcher of the hearts and reins, who saw all their actions, and knew the spring of them, in his sight they were as dross:

all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace: or "crucible"^{f338}; where they are put together, in order to be set in the furnace, and melted down. It is not usual to put so many different metals together for melting, but separately; but here it seems to intend a mixture of them all together; and so the Targum and Septuagint render it,

"all they as brass, &c. are mixed;"

several metals of the baser sort are here mentioned, by a gradation from the better to the worse; tin being not so good as brass, and iron of less value than either, and lead than any of them. Some think the different characters of the people are here described; impudent persons by "brass"; hypocrites by "tin"; cruel and savage ones by "iron"; and such as were sottish and stupid by "lead"; or, as others, covetous ones:

they are even the dross of silver; once they were like silver, precious and valuable, while they retained the true religion, and the worship of God, and behaved agreeably to their character in the performance of all good works, and were in outward flourishing circumstances; but now degenerated from the pure worship of God, and sunk into idolatry and wickedness, and become poor and miserable.

Ver. 19. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because ye are all become dross, &c.*] King, princes, nobles, prophets, priests, as well as the common people; the apostasy was general, in city and country; scarcely any exceptions to be made:

therefore will I gather you into the midst of Jerusalem; from the several parts of the country, thinking they should be safe there, when the design of God by this providence was the destruction of them in it.

Ver. 20. *As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, &c.]* As refiners of metal do; though not together, as here, but each metal apart. Silver is here mentioned, to denote that those who were truly good should suffer in this calamity, and be tried and purified by it:

to blow the fire upon it, and to melt it; the metal being covered with fuel, this is kindled and blown upon, to cause the greater heat, in order to melt it down; expressive of the wrath of God, as follows:

so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury; from the several parts of the land unto the city of Jerusalem: this they thought was for their good and safety, but it was in wrath, and in order to ruin:

and I will leave you there, and melt you; that is, I will leave you in the city of Jerusalem, to the sword, famine, and pestilence, to be destroyed by them; or with fire at the burning of the city: or, “I will rest”^{f339}; as the refiner does; having put his metal into the furnace, and blown the fire, sits still till all is melted.

Ver. 21. *Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, &c.]* Not only gather them in wrath, as before; but blow upon them in wrath, which is often compared to fire in Scripture; and besides, the city and temple of Jerusalem were to be burnt, and were burnt with material fire, in consequence of God’s displeasure against his people:

and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof; of the city of Jerusalem; be destroyed by one judgment or another in it; or perish in the conflagration of it.

Ver. 22. *As silver is melted in the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof, &c.]* This is repeated for the greater confirmation of it; and the people might assure themselves that it would verily be, as was threatened:

and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you; feel it upon them; be sensible of it, and acknowledge it; and that it is the Lord’s doings, and righteously done; these are they who are meant by the silver,

who, though cast into the furnace, were not destroyed, only purified, and made the better and brighter for their afflictions.

Ver. 23. *And the word of the Lord came unto me, &c.*] The word of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 24. *Son of man, say unto her, thou land, &c.*] Thou land of Israel, as the Targum:

thou art not cleansed; from filthiness, by the fire of divine judgments; or reformed from sins, by the instructions, cautions, and exhortations of the prophets; none of these things had any effect upon her to make her wiser and better. So the Targum,

“a land not cleansed it is, and good works are not done in it, to protect it in the day of cursing:”

nor rained upon in the day of indignation; no cooling shower to quench the fire of divine wrath; nothing to avert or stop the judgments of God; no refreshment and comfort from the doctrines of the prophets, which fell like rain: it is a judgment upon a people to have no rain, either in a temporal or spiritual sense; (see ^{<347>}Zechariah 14:17,18). In the Talmud^{f340}, this text is brought to prove that the flood did not come upon the land of Israel.

Ver. 25. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, &c.*] Not of the prophets of the Lord, but of her prophets; such as were agreeable to her, the false prophets. The Targum renders it,

“a company of scribes;”

the interpreters of the law; these entered into a confederacy together against the true prophets, and agreed to prophesy the same things, to flatter the people with peace and prosperity, when sudden destruction was at hand:

like a roaring lion ravening the prey; that roars when hungry, and while it is tearing the prey in pieces; so these false prophets thundered out their menaces against the true prophets, and those that adhered to them; clamouring against them as enemies to the state; and threatening them with accusations to it; and carrying on a judicial process against them:

they have devoured souls; persecuted men to death, that would not give credit to their prophecies; and destroyed the souls of those that did, with their false doctrines and prophecies:

they have taken the treasure and precious things; of those they destroyed; or of others, for prophesying smooth things to them; filthy lucre being the principal thing they had in view:

they have made her many widows in the midst thereof; by persecuting their husbands to death for not believing their prophecies; or by persuading to hold out the siege, under a notion of deliverance; whereby the lives of many were lost by the sword, famine, and pestilence, to whose death they might be said to be accessory.

Ver. 26. *Her priests have violated my law*, &c.] Or, “forced it”^{f341}; they gave a wrong explanation of it, made it speak what it should not; they wrested the sense and meaning of it, and did and taught things contrary to it; they broke it themselves, who should have instructed others in it, and exhorted them to have kept it, and encouraged them by their own example:

and have profaned my holy things; sacrifices and oblations, which were only to be offered and eaten by holy persons; they made them common to others who should not have partook of them:

they have put no difference between the holy and the profane; between holy persons and things, and profane persons and things; they made no difference in their practice between the one and the other; but promiscuously conversed with holy and profane persons, and used holy and profane things, without distinguishing one from the other:

neither have they showed the difference between the unclean and the clean: they did not show to the people, as was the duty of their office, what was clean or unclean for sacrifice; what was clean and allowed to be eaten, and what was unclean and forbid to be eaten; nor who were clean and who were unclean persons for conversation; who were to be kept company with, and who not:

and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths; were not careful to observe them themselves, and connived at them that broke them; they might have seen men carrying burdens, and doing other servile works on such days, but they turned their eyes another way, and would not look at them; and when they did see them were silent, and would not reprove them:

and I am profaned among them; for the law of God being profaned, his institutions profaned, and his sabbaths profaned, he himself was profaned; inasmuch as he was not sanctified by them, through the just observation of those things. The Targum is,

“my will is profaned among them.”

Ver. 27. *Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, &c.*] The king and his nobles, those of the first rank and quality, who ought to have protected the persons and property of the meaner sort; these were like “wolves” themselves, subtle, voracious, and cruel, preying upon harmless persons, as those creatures do upon the sheep and lambs:

to shed blood; innocent blood, as the Targum:

and to destroy souls; take away lives, under a pretence of treasonable practices, and all with a view to get dishonest gain; that their estates may be forfeited, their goods confiscated, and got into their hands.

Ver. 28. *And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, &c.*] Palliated their sins, declared it to be right to shed the blood they did; and seize on the estates of men; but this, though it might for a while satisfy the consciences of these princes, and stop the clamours of the people against them; yet would not last long, but be like the building of a wall with bad stuff, which will not stand; and daubing it with mortar, which will soon wash off. So the Targum,

“and the false prophets which are in the midst of her are like to those that build a wall, and daub it with mere clay, without straw;”

(See Gill on “²⁶³⁰Ezekiel 13:10”).

Seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them; pretending visions from God, when what they see, or pretend to see, is nothing but vanity and emptiness, mere delusions; and prophesying good things, peace and prosperity, when they are all lies; giving out they have messages from God, and are ordered to foretell that happy times will be, when it is all falsehood:

saying, thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken; herein mimicking the true prophets, who came in the name of the Lord, and usually prefaced their prophecies with a thus saith the Lord; and so did these false prophets, when the Lord said nothing to them, and gave them no commission to speak in his name, or say the things they did.

Ver. 29. *The people of the land have used oppression, &c.*] The common people, the more powerful among them, such as were in greatest authority in cities and towns, in neighbourhoods and families, the richest among them; these oppressed the poor, and those that were under them, the servants of them, and tenants to them, and who were not able to defend themselves against them: the Septuagint and Syriac versions understand this of the prophets using the people of the land ill:

and exercised robbery; such who had not the power as others had, became thieves and robbers, went on the highway, and took men's money from them; broke up houses, and plundered them, and stole away their goods:

and have vexed the poor and needy; by their oppressions, rapines, and robberies, when they should rather have relieved them:

yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully; or, “without right or judgment”^{f342}; in a very unjust manner, contrary to the due course of law, against all equity and justice; which the Israelites were warned and ordered not to do, in many passages of Scripture; and for this reason, because they had been strangers in Egypt.

Ver. 30. *And I sought for a man among them, &c.*] among the princes, priests, prophets, and people of the land, who acted the part as above described; for otherwise, no doubt, there were good people in the land, as Jeremiah, Baruch, and others, but not among these:

that should make up the hedge; that was broken down by the transgressions of the people, who exceeded all bounds of law and justice; one that would restrain them from sinning, and reform them, and set them a good example; one, as the Targum has it,

“whose works were good;”

a good man, that would endeavour by his influence to stop the breaking in of sin, and the consequences of it:

and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; in the gap that sin had made, at which the Lord was entering as a man of war to destroy the transgressors; one that should present himself to the Lord on the behalf of the people; seek mercy for them, as the Targum; interpose between God and them, and act the part of an intercessor; pray for them,

as Moses did for the people of Israel, that he would not destroy them; (see ~~19462~~ Psalm 106:23):

but I found none; no reformer of them, no repairer of the breach, nor restorer of paths, to dwell in; no intercessor for them, as Abraham for Sodom, Moses for Israel; or any, like Aaron, that stood between the living and the dead to stay the plague.

Ver. 31. *Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, &c.*] Like a mighty torrent, carrying all before it:

I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; by the sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity:

their own way have I recompensed on their heads, saith the Lord; brought just punishment upon them, such as their ways and works deserved;

“the vengeance of their way,”

as the Targum.