

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 4

This chapter contains a new sermon or prophecy, delivered in proper and express words, without types and figures, as before; in which the people of Israel are summoned to appear at the tribunal of God, to hear the charge brought against them, and the sentence to be pronounced upon them, and which would be executed. They are charged with sins of omission and commission; with want of truth and mercy to men, and with ignorance of God; with swearing, lying, murder, theft, and adultery, (<sup><3001></sup>Hosea 4:1,2), the punishment threatened is the sword, famine, and pestilence; which should affect the whole land, and all creatures in it, men, beasts, fowls, and fishes, (<sup><3003></sup>Hosea 4:3), then the priests and false prophets are threatened with falling into calamities along with the people, and with rejection from their office, and forgetfulness of their posterity, and a taking away their glory from them, because of their striving with the true prophets; their rejection of knowledge; forgetfulness of the law of God; covetousness, adultery, and drunkenness, (<sup><3004></sup>Hosea 4:4-11), then the discourse is turned to the people again, who are charged with divination and idolatry, which is spiritual adultery; and therefore, by way of retaliation, their wives and daughters would be left to commit adultery and fornication, (<sup><3012></sup>Hosea 4:12-14), and the chapter is concluded with advice to Israel not to tempt Judah to sin; or to Judah not to do the like, after the example of Israel, who were backsliders, idolaters, left of God and alone; guilty of bribery, and the like shameful things, and would be suddenly filled with shame, (<sup><3015></sup>Hosea 4:15-19).

**Ver. 1.** *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel*, etc.] The people of the ten tribes, as distinct from Judah, (<sup><3015></sup>Hosea 4:15), the prophet having finished his parables he was ordered to take up and deliver, and his explanations of them, and concluded with a gracious promise of the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, enters upon a new discourse, which begins with reproof for various sins; since what had been delivered in parables and types had had no effect upon them, they are called upon to

hear what the Lord would say to them by the prophet, in more clear and express terms; silence is ordered, and attention required to what follows:

*for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land*; the land of Israel; against him they had sinned, before him they stood guilty; he had something, yea, many things, against them; a charge is brought into open court, the indictment is read, an answer must be made: God is the antagonist, that moves and brings on the controversy in a judicial way, and who can answer him for one of a thousand? or stand before him, or in court with him, when he marks iniquity? the charge is as follows,

*because there is no truth*; none that do or speak truth; that are true and faithful men, true to their word, and faithful to their trust; no truth of grace in them, nor truth of doctrine held and received by them; truth failed from among them, and none were valiant for it; no truth or civil faith with respect to men, nor any truth of word or worship with respect to God:

*nor mercy*: to poor and indigent creatures; no compassion shown them; no offices of humanity or acts of beneficence exercised towards them; though these are more desirable by the Lord than, and are preferred by him to, all ceremonial sacrifices, (<sup>צדק</sup>Hosea 6:6), or no piety, religion, godliness, powerful godliness, which has the promise of this life, and that to come:

*nor knowledge of God in the land*; in the land of Israel, where God was used to be known; where he had been worshipped; where his word had been dispensed, and his prophets had been sent, and his saints that knew him, and his mind and will, formerly had dwelt; but now a company of atheists, at least that lived as such, and had no true spiritual saving knowledge of God, and communion with him; they had not true love to him, nor a godly reverence of him, which this implies; and that was the source of all the wickedness committed by them, afterwards expressed. The Targum is,

“there are none that do truth, nor dispense mercy, nor walk in the fear of the Lord, in the land.”

**Ver. 2.** *By swearing, and lying*, etc.] Which some join together, and make but one sin of it, false swearing, so Jarchi and Kimchi; but that swearing itself signifies, as the Targum interprets it; for it not only takes in all cursing and imprecations, profane oaths, and taking the name of God in vain, and swearing by the creatures, but may chiefly design perjury; which, though one kind of “lying”, may be distinguished from it here; the latter intending “lying” in common, which the devil is the father of, mankind are

incident unto, and which is abominable to God, whether in civil or in religious things: “and killing, and stealing and committing adultery”; murders, thefts, and adulteries, were very common with them; sins against the sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments:

*they break out*; through all the restraints of the laws of God and man, like an unruly horse that breaks his bridle and runs away; or like wild beasts, that break down the fences and enclosures about them, and break out, and get away; or like a torrent of water, that breaks down its dams and banks, and overflows the meadows and plains; such a flood and deluge of sin abounded in the nation. Some render it, “they thieve”<sup>f61</sup>; or act the part of thieves and robbers: and the Targum,

“they beget sons of their neighbours’ wives;”

and so Abarbinel interprets it of breaking through the hedge of another man’s wife; but these sins are observed before:

*and blood toucheth blood*; which some understand of sins in general, so called, because filthy and abominable; and of the addition and multiplication of them, there being as it were heaps of them, or rather a chain of them linked together. So the Targum,

“and they add sins to sins.”

Others interpret it of impure mixtures, of incestuous lusts, or marriages contrary to the ties of blood, and laws of consanguinity, (<sup><1816></sup>Leviticus 18:6 <sup><1211></sup>Ezekiel 22:11), or rather it is to be understood of the great effusion of blood, and frequency of murders; so that there was scarce any interval between them, but a continued series of them. Some think respect is had to the frequent slaughter of their kings; Zachariah the son of Jeroboam was slain by Shallum, when he had reigned but six months; and Shallum was slain by Menahem when he had reigned but one month; and this Menahem was a murderer of many, smote many places, and ripped up the women with child; Pekahiah his son was killed by Pekah the son of Remaliah, and he again by Hoshea, (<sup><1218></sup>2 Kings 15:8,10,13,14,16,25,30).

**Ver. 3.** *Therefore shall the land mourn*, etc.] Because of the calamities on it, the devastations made in it; nothing growing upon it, through a violent drought; or the grass and corn being trodden down, or eaten up, by a foreign army:

*and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish*; that is, every man, an inhabitant thereof, shall become weak, languish away, and die through wounds received by the enemy; or for want of food, or being infected with the wasting and destroying pestilence:

*with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven*; the one shall die in the field for want of grass to eat, and the other shall drop to the earth through the infection of the air:

*yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away*; or “gathered”<sup>f62</sup>; to some other place, so as to disappear; or they shall be consumed and die, as Kimchi interprets it; and as all these creatures are for the good of men, for sustenance, comfort, and delight, when they are taken away, it is by way of punishment for their sins. So the Targum,

“the fishes of the sea shall be lessened for their sins.”

**Ver. 4.** *Yet, let no man strive, nor reprove another*, etc.] Or rather, “let no man strive, nor any man reprove us”<sup>f63</sup>; and are either the words of the people, forbidding the prophet, or any other man, to contend with them, or reprove them for their sins, though guilty of so many, and their land in so much danger on that account: so the Targum,

“but yet they say, let not the scribe teach, nor the prophet reprove:”

or else they are the words of God to the prophet, restraining him from striving with and reproofing such a people, that were incorrigible, and despised all reproof; (see <sup><418></sup>Ezekiel 3:26) or of the prophet to other good men, to forbear anything of this kind, since it was all to no purpose; it was but casting pearls before swine; it was all labour lost, and in vain:

*for thy people are as they that strive with the priest*; they are so far from receiving correction and reproof kindly from any good men that they will rise up against, and strive with the priests, to whom not to hearken was a capital crime, (<sup><457></sup>Deuteronomy 17:12). Abarbinel interprets it, and some in Abendana, like the company of Korah, that contended with Aaron; suggesting that this people were as impudent and wicked as they, and there was no dealing with them. So the Targum,

“but thy people contend with their teachers;”

and will submit to no correction, and therefore it is in vain to give it them. Though some think the sense is, that all sorts of men were so corrupt, that

there were none fit to be reprovers; the people were like the priests, and the priests like the people, (~~2049~~Hosea 4:9), so that when the priests reproved them, they contended with them, and said, physician, heal thyself; take the beam out of your own eye; look to yourselves, and your own sins, and do not reprove us.

**Ver. 5.** *Therefore shall thou fall in the day*, etc.] Either, O ye people, everyone of you, being so refractory and incorrigible; or, O thou priest, being as bad as the people; for both, on account of their sins, should fall from their present prosperity and happiness into great evils and calamities; particularly into the hands of their enemies, and be carried captive into another land: and this should be “in the day”, or “today”,<sup>f64</sup>; immediately, quickly, in a very short time; or in the daytime, openly, publicly, in the sight of all, of all the nations round about, who shall rejoice at it; or in the day of prosperity, while things go well, amidst great plenty of all good things, and when such a fall was least expected:

*and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night*: or the false prophets that are with you, as the Targum, and so Jarchi; either with you, O people, that dwell with you, teach you, and cause you to err; or with thee, O priest, being of the same family, as the prophets, many of them, were priests; now these should fall likewise into the same calamities, as it was but just they should, being the occasion of them: and this should be in the night; in the night of adversity and affliction, in the common calamity; or in the night of darkness, when they could not see at what they stumbled and fell, and so the more uncomfortable to them; or as the one falls in the day, the other falls in the night; as certainly as the one falls, so shall the other, and that very quickly, immediately, as the night follows the day:

*and I will destroy thy mother*; either Samaria, the metropolis of the nation; or the whole body of the people, the congregation, as the Targum, and Kimchi, and Ben Melech, being as a mother with respect to individuals; and are threatened with destruction because the corruption was general among prophets, priests, and people, and therefore none could hope to escape.

**Ver. 6.** *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, etc.] This is not to be understood of those who are the Lord’s people by special grace; for they cannot be destroyed, at least with everlasting destruction; God’s love to them, his choice of them, covenant with them, the redemption of them by Christ, and the grace of God in them, secure them from such destruction: nor can they perish through want of knowledge; for though

they are by nature as ignorant as others, yet it is the determinate will of God to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, in order to salvation; and that same decree which fixes salvation as the end, secures the belief of the truth as the means; and the covenant of grace provides for their knowledge of spiritual things, as well as other spiritual blessings; in consequence of which their minds are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, and they have the knowledge of God and Christ given them, which is life eternal. But this is to be understood of the people of the ten tribes of Israel, who were nationally and nominally the people of God, were so by profession; they called themselves the people of God; and though they were idolaters, yet they professed to worship God in their idols; and as yet God's "loammi" had not taken place upon them; he still sent his prophets among them, to reprove and reform them, and they were not as yet finally rejected by him, and cast out of their land. These may be said to be "destroyed", because they were threatened with destruction, and it was near at hand, they were just upon the brink of it; and because of the certainty of it, and this "through the lack of knowledge": either in the people, who were ignorant of God, his mind, and will, and worship, and without fear and reverence of him, which was the cause of all the abominations they ran into, for which they were threatened with ruin; or in the priests, whose business it was to teach and instruct the people; but instead of teaching them true doctrine, and the true, manner of worship, taught them false doctrine, and led them into superstition and idolatry; and so they perished through the default of the priests in performing their office; which sense is confirmed by what follows:

*because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me;* the priests that Jeroboam made were of the lowest of the people, ignorant and illiterate men, (~~1123~~1 Kings 12:31 ~~1133~~13:33) and they chose to continue such; they rejected with contempt and abhorrence, as the word signifies, the knowledge of God, and of all divine things; of the law of God, concerning what was to be done, or not to be done, by the people; and of all statutes and ordinances relating to divine worship, and the performance of the priestly office: and though there might be some of Aaron's line that continued in the land of Israel, and in their office; yet these affected the same ignorance, and therefore the Lord threatens them with a rejection from the priesthood; or, however, that they should be no priests to him, or in his account, but should be had in the utmost abhorrence and contempt, The word here used has a letter in it more than

usual<sup>f65</sup>, which may signify the utter rejection of them, and the great contempt they were had in by the Lord; this was to take place, and did, at the captivity by Shalmaneser.

*Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God:* which he had given them, who was their God by profession; and which they had forgot as if they never had read or learnt it; and so as not to observe and keep it themselves, nor teach and instruct others in it:

*I will also forget thy children;* have no regard to them, take no notice and care of them, as if they were never known by him; meaning either the people in general, their disciples and spiritual children; or else their natural children, who should be cut off, and not succeed them in the priesthood. The words are very emphatic, “I will forget them, even I”<sup>f66</sup>; which expresses the certainty of it more fully, as well as more clearly points at the justness of the retaliation.

**Ver. 7.** *As they were increased, so they sinned against me,* etc.] As the children of the priests increased and grew up, they sinned against the Lord, imitating their parents; they were as many sinners as they were persons, not one to be excepted: this expresses their universal depravity and corruption. Some understand it of their increase, as in number, so in riches, wealth, honour, dignity, and authority, and yet they sinned more and more; which shows their ingratitude. So the Targum,

“as I have multiplied fruits unto them, etc.”

*Therefore will I change their glory into shame,* take away their priesthood from them, so that they shall be no more priests, and as if they never had been; and reduce them to a state of poverty, meanness, and disgrace; and cause them to go into captivity with the meanest of the people; and be in no more honour, but subject to as much scorn and contempt as they.

**Ver. 8.** *They eat up the sin of my people,* etc.] That is, the priests did so, as the Targum, the priests of Jeroboam; they ate up the sacrifices which the people brought for their sins: and their fault was, either that they ate that which belonged to the true priests of the Lord, so Jarchi; or they did that, and had no concern to instruct the people in the right way; all that they regarded were good eating and drinking, and living voluptuously; and were altogether careless about instructing the people in the nature of sacrifices, and in the way of their duty: or this may regard the Bacchanalian feasts, as some think, which the people made in the temples of idols, and so sinned;

and of which the priests greatly partook, and encouraged them in, and so were partakers not only of their banquets, but of their sins.

*They set their heart on their iniquity*: either their offerings for their iniquity, or their iniquity itself: or, “lift up their soul”<sup>f67</sup> to it; diligently looking after it, not caring how much they committed; since the more sin offerings would be brought which would be to their advantage. Though some think the sin of whoredom, frequently and impudently committed at these idol feasts, is meant, which the priests were much addicted to, and very greedy of; they committed cleanness with greediness, (~~4019~~ Ephesians 4:19).

**Ver. 9.** *And there shall be, like people, like priest*, etc.] No difference between them in their festivals, the one being as greedy of committing intemperance and uncleanness as the other, and in their common conversation of life; though the priests ought both to have given good instructions, and to have set good examples; but instead of that were equally guilty as the people, and so would be alike in their punishment, as it follows:

*and I will punish them for their ways*; their evil ways, as the Targum; their wicked manner of life and conversation, both of the people and the priests; especially the latter are meant: or, “I will visit upon him his ways”<sup>f68</sup>; upon everyone of the priests, as well as the people; which visit must be understood in a way of wrath and vengeance:

*and reward them their doings*; reward them according to their doings, as their sins deserve, and as it is explained in the next verse: or, “I will return their doings to them”<sup>f69</sup>; bring them back again, when they seemed to be past and gone, and set them before them, and charge them with them, and punish for them.

**Ver. 10.** *For they shall eat, and not have enough*, etc.] Namely, the priests; for of them the words are continued, who ate of the sacrifices of the people, and of feasts made in honour of idols; and yet, either what they ate did not satisfy or nourish them, or else their appetites were still greedy after more of the same kind: or this may respect a famine, either at the siege of Samaria, or in their captivity; when they who had lived so voluptuously should have so little to eat, that it should not satisfy them: or though, as others, they eat to the honour of their idols, expecting to be blessed with plenty by them, they shall not have it:



*they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase*; that is, their offspring; they shall not beget children, so the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi; or the children they beget shall quickly die; yea, though they commit whoredom in the idol's temple with that view, where the women prostituted themselves for that purpose:

*because they have left off to take heed to the Lord*; to his word, and worship, and ordinances, which they formerly had some regard unto, but now had relinquished: or, "the Lord they have forsaken", or "left off to observe"<sup>f70</sup>; his ways, his word, and worship. R. Saadiah connects this with the following words, they have forsaken the Lord to observe fornication and wine; but wrongly.

**Ver. 11.** *Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart.*]

Uncleanness and intemperance besot men, deprive them of reason and judgment, and even of common sense, make them downright fools, and so stupid as to do the following things; or they take away the heart from following the Lord, and taking heed to him, and lead to idolatry; or they "occupy"<sup>f71</sup> the heart, and fill it up, and cause it to prefer sensual lusts and pleasures to the fear and love of God: their stupidity brought on hereby is exposed in the next verse; though it seems chiefly to respect the priests, who erred in vision through wine and strong drink, and stumbled in judgment, (<sup><23XU></sup>Isaiah 28:7).

**Ver. 12.** *My people ask counsel at their stocks*, etc.] Or "at his wood"<sup>f72</sup>, or stick; his wooden image, as the Targum; their wooden gods, their idols made of wood, mere stocks and blocks, without life or sense, and much less reason and understanding, and still less divinity. Reference is here had either to the matter of which an idol was made, being the trunk of a tree, or a block of wood; as the poet<sup>f73</sup> introduces Priapus saying, "olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum": or to sticks of wood themselves, without being put into any form or shape; for so it is reported<sup>f74</sup>, that the ancient idolaters used to receive for gods, with great veneration, trees or pieces of wood, having the bark taken off; particularly the Carians worshipped for Diana a piece of wood, not hewed, squared, or planed<sup>f75</sup>: though the first seems rather to be the sense here; and either was extremely foolish. And yet such was the stupidity of this people, whom God had formerly chose for his people and had distinguished them by his favours from others, and they had professed themselves to be his people, and as yet were not utterly cast off, as to forsake him and his divine oracles, and all methods of

knowing his will; as to ask counsel of such wooden deities in matters of moment and difficulty, what should be done by them, or concerning things to come.

*And their staff declareth unto them*; what methods are to be taken by them in the present case, or what shall come to pass, as they fancy; that is, either their idol, made of a staff or stick of wood, or a little image carried on a staff; such as probably were the teraphim they consulted, instead of the Urim and Thummim; and imagined they declared to them what they should do, or what would befall them. Kimchi's father interprets it of the false prophets on whom they depended, and whose declarations they received as oracles. Perhaps some respect is had to a sort of divination used among the Heathens by rods and staves, called "rhabdomancy", which the Jews had learnt of them; like that by arrows used by Nebuchadnezzar, (<sup>322b</sup>Ezekiel 21:21). This was performed by setting up a stick or staff, and as that fell, so they judged and determined what was to be done. The manner, according to Theophylact on the place, was this,

"they set up two rods, and muttered some verses and enchantments; and then the rods falling through the influence of demons, they considered how they fell, whether forward or backward, to the right or the left; and so gave answers to the foolish people, using the fall of the rods for signs."

The Jews take this to be forbid by that negative precept, (<sup>688d</sup>Deuteronomy 18:10), "there shall not be found among you any that useth divination". So Jarchi and Baal Hatturim on that text explain a diviner by one that holds his staff; and the former adds and says, shall I go, or shall I not go? as it is said, "my people ask counsel at their stocks", etc.; the manner of which they thus describe<sup>f76</sup>,

"when they are about to go on a journey, they inquire before they set out, i.e. whether it will be prosperous or not; and the diviner takes a branch of a tree, and takes off the bark on one side, and leaves it on the other, and then throws it out of his hand; if, when it falls, the bark is uppermost, he says, this is a man; then he casts it again, and if the white is uppermost, this is a woman; to a man, and after that a woman, this is a good sign, and he goes his journey, or does what he desires to do: but if the white appears first, and after that the bark, then he says, to a woman, and after that a man, and he forbears (that is, to go on his journey, or do what he desired):

but if the bark is uppermost in both (throws), or the white uppermost in both, to a man after a man, and a woman after a woman, then his journey (as to the success of it) is between both; and so they say they do in the land of Slavonia.”

And from the Slavonians, Grotius says, the Germans took this way of divination, of which Tacitus<sup>f77</sup> gives an account; and it seems by him that the Chaldeans also had it, from whom the Jews might have it. This way of divination by the staff is a little differently given in Hascuni:<sup>f78</sup> the diviner measures his staff with his finger, or with his hand; one time he says, I will go; another time, I will not go; but if it happens, at the end of the staff, I will not go, he goes not.

*For the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err*; a violent inclination and bias of mind to idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, and a strong affection for it, stirred up by an evil spirit, the devil; which so wrought upon them, and influenced them, as to cause them to wander from the true God, and his worship, as follows:

*and they have gone a whoring from under their God*; or

“erred from the worship of their God,”

as the Targum; from the true God, who stood in the relation of a husband to them; but, led by a spirit of error, they departed from him, and committed spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry; which is explained and enlarged upon in the next verse.

**Ver. 13.** *They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains*, etc.] The highest part of them, nearest to the heavens, where they built their altars to idols, and offered sacrifice unto them, as we often read in Scripture they did:

*and burn incense upon the hills*; to their idols, which was one kind of sacrifice put for all others:

*under oaks, and poplars, and elms*; and indeed under every green tree that grew upon them, where there were groves of them raised up for this purpose; (see <sup>2422</sup>Jeremiah 2:20 <sup>2406</sup>3:6):

*because the shadow, thereof is good*; the shadow of these trees, of each of them, was large, and preserved them from the sultry heat of the sun, as well as hid them from the sight of men; they could perform their idolatrous rites, as well as gratify their impure lusts, with more privacy and secrecy;

and perhaps they thought the gods delighted in such shady places, and that these were frequented by spirits, and the departed souls of men; in such places the Heathens, whom the Jews imitated, built their temples, and offered their sacrifices<sup>f79</sup>. The “oak” is a very spreading tree; its branches are large, and its shadow very great: hence the religious Heathens in ancient times used to live under them, and worship them as gods, and dedicate temples to them, because they furnished them with acorns for food, and a shelter from the rain, and other inclemencies of the heavens<sup>f80</sup>; particularly the oak was consecrated to Jupiter, as appears from what Virgil says<sup>f81</sup>. The oak at Dodona is famous for its antiquity, where were a fountain and groves, and a temple dedicated to the same Heathen deity; and from whence oracles were given forth<sup>f82</sup>. The Druids here in Britain chose to have their groves of oaks; nor did they perform any of their sacred rites without the leaves of them: hence Pliny<sup>f83</sup> says they had their name. The “poplar” mentioned is the white poplar, as the word used signifies, and which affords a very hospitable shadow, as the poet<sup>f84</sup> calls it; and this was a tree also with the Heathens sacred to their gods, particularly to Hercules<sup>f85</sup>; because it is said he brought it first into Greece from the river Acheron, where it grew; and the wood of no other tree would the Eleans use, in preparing the sacrifices for Jupiter Olympius<sup>f86</sup>. The “elm” is also a very shady tree; hence Virgil<sup>f87</sup> calls it “*ulmus opaca, ingens*”: and under this tree sacrifices used to be offered to idols, as is evident from (<sup>2363</sup>Ezekiel 6:13), where the same word is used as here, though it is there rendered an “oak”; but that it is different from the oak appears from these two words being read together, so that they cannot be names of one and the same tree, (<sup>2363</sup>Isaiah 6:13), where it is rendered the “teal tree”, as distinct from the oak. Now these trees being very shady ones, and under which the Gentiles used to perform their religious rites, the Jews imitated them therein, which is here complained of.

*Therefore your daughters shall commit whoredoms, and your spouses shall commit adultery*; or their “sons’ wives”<sup>f88</sup>; either spiritually, that is, commit idolatry by the example of their parents and husbands; or corporeally, being left at home while their parents and husbands were worshipping their idols upon the mountains, as Aben Ezra and Kimchi: and so this is to be considered as a punishment of the idolatry of their parents and husbands; that as they commit spiritual adultery against God, or idolatry, their daughters and wives shall be given up to such vile affections, or by force shall be made to commit corporeal adultery against them; or

rather the sense is, led by the example of their parents and husbands, whom they see not only sacrifice to idols in the above places, but commit uncleanness with harlots there, they will throw off all shame, and commit whoredom with men: for so the words may be rendered, “hence your daughters”, etc.; so Abarbinel.

**Ver. 14.** *I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredoms, nor your spouses when they commit adultery,* etc.] Either not punish them at all, so that they shall go on in sin, and to a greater degree, to the disgrace and reproach of their parents and husbands; or not as yet, or not so severely in them, because it was by their example they were led into it. Jarchi’s note is very impertinent, that God threatens them with the disuse of the bitter waters of jealousy. The words are by some rendered interrogatively, “shall I not punish your daughters?” etc.<sup>f89</sup>; verily I will; and not them only, but their parents and husbands too, who deserve more severe corrections:

*for themselves are separated with whores, and sacrifice with harlots;* they separated themselves to Baalpeor, that shameful idol, (<sup><3090></sup>Hosea 9:10), the Priapus of the Gentiles, in whose idolatrous worship many obscene rites were used; these men separated themselves from their wives, as well as from God and his worship, and from the company and conversation of men, and in private committed uncleanness with the women that attended, and with the female priests that officiated at the worship of idols; those “sanctified” ones, as the word may be rendered; and after that ate of things offered to idols with them. So the Targum,

“they associated themselves with whores, and ate and drank with harlots.”

Some versions understand the latter of catamites, or sodomitical persons, and of the wickedness practised by them in such places.

*Therefore the people that doth not understand;* the law, as the Targum; what is to be done, and what to be avoided; the difference between the true and false religion; have no knowledge of divine and spiritual things, at least are very wavering and unsettled in their minds about religion, having thought little, and know less, of the matter:

*shall fall:* into idolatry and adultery, led by such examples. So the Septuagint version, “is implicated with a whore”; or “embraces a whore”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions; (see <sup><3102></sup>Proverbs 7:22 <sup><3124></sup>22:14) or shall

fall into calamities, ruin, and destruction; shall be dashed, as the Targum; so the Arabic interpreter of (~~4025~~ Mark 9:26 ~~4042~~ Luke 9:42), uses the word: though Aben Ezra and Kimchi say, that in the Arabic language it signifies to be perplexed and disturbed, so as not to know what to do<sup>f90</sup>. The first sense seems to be best, of being scandalized, offended, and stumbling and falling into sin; and which Abarbinel suggests, and it agrees with what follows concerning Judah.

**Ver. 15.** *Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend,* etc.] That is, though the Israelites, the people of the ten tribes, committed adultery, both corporeal and spiritual, in their idolatrous worship, as before observed, to which they had been used ever since the times of Jeroboam the first, and were hardened therein, and from which there were little hopes of reforming them; yet let not the men of Judah be guilty of the same crimes, who have as yet retained the pure worship of God among them; where the house of God is, and the priests of the Lord officiate, and sacrifices are offered up to him according to his will, and all other parts of religious service are performed: or the whole seems to be directed to Israel, as an exhortation to them, that though they had given into such abominations, yet should be careful not to offend Judah, or cause them to stumble and fall, and become guilty of the same sins, and so be exposed to the same punishment; and which would be an aggravation of Israel's sin, to draw others into it with them:

*and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven;* to worship idols in those places; otherwise it might be lawful to go to them on any civil accounts: Gilgal was upon the borders of the ten tribes, between them and Judah, where Joshua circumcised the Israelites; kept the first passover in the land; and where the ark and tabernacle were for a time; and perhaps for these reasons was chosen for a place of idolatrous worship: Bethaven is the same with Bethel, the name Jacob gave it, signifying the house of God; but when Jeroboam set up one of his calves here, the prophets, by way of contempt, called it Bethaven, the house of iniquity, or the house of an idol; though there was a place called Bethaven near Bethel, and Ai, as Kimchi observes, and as appears from (~~4072~~ Joshua 7:2), yet Bethel was sometimes so called, as it seems to be here, because of the idolatry in it; and so the Talmudists<sup>f91</sup> say, the place called Bethel is now called Bethaven. Now the question is, whether Judah or Israel are here addressed; many interpreters carry it in the former sense, as if the men of Judah were dissuaded from going to these places for worship, when the temple, the proper place of

worship, was in their own tribe; but the speech seems rather to be directed to the Israelites, to stop going to these places for worship; for being so near to Judah, they might be the means of ensnaring and drawing them into the same idolatrous practices:

*nor swear, the Lord liveth*; or swear by the living God, so long as they worshipped idols; for it was not well pleasing to God to have his name used by idolaters, or joined with their idols: especially as they meant their idol when they swore by the Lord.

**Ver. 16.** *For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer*, etc.] A heifer or young cow Israel is compared unto; the rather, because of the object of their idolatrous worship, the calves at Daniel and Bethel: the Septuagint calls them “heifers”: which they are hereby put in mind of, and upbraided with; as also to express their brutish stupidity in worshipping such idols, in which they obstinately persisted: and so were like a “refractory” and “untamed” heifer, as some<sup>f92</sup> render it, which will not be kept within bounds, either within doors or without, but breaks through, and passes over, all fences and enclosures; as they did, who transgressed the laws of God, and would not be restrained by them: or like a heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, which will not submit to it, but wriggles its neck from under it: so the Israelites would not be subject to the yoke of the law of God, were sons of Belial, children without a yoke; or like one, though yoked, yet would not draw the plough, but slid back in the furrows, even though goaded; so they, though stimulated by the prophets, whose words were as goads and pricks to push them on, yet would not hearken to them, but pulled away the shoulder, and slid back from the ways and worship of God; hence called backsliding Israel, (<sup>2486</sup>Jeremiah 3:6), and this is either a reason why Judah should not follow their example, because backsliders, or why they should be punished, as follows:

*now*, or “therefore”<sup>f93</sup>,

*the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place*: not that they were like lambs for the good properties of them, innocence, harmlessness, meekness, and patience; nor fed as the Lord feeds his lambs, and gathers them in his arms; but either as a heifer in sheep pasture, in short commons, for that creature cannot live where sheep and lambs can; or rather as a lamb that is alone, separate from the flock, not under the care of any shepherd; but exposed to every beast of prey upon a large common, on a wild desert and uncultivated place; afraid of every thing it hears and sees; bleating after its

dam, of whose sustenance and nourishment it is destitute; and so is expressive of the state and condition of Israel in captivity, in the large Assyrian empire; and dispersed among the nations, where they were weak and helpless, destitute of all good things, and exposed to all dangers, and to every enemy. Aben Ezra and Kimchi understand the words in a good sense, that the Lord would have fed them as lambs in a large place, in an affluent manner, but that they rebelled and backslided: and to this sense the Targum seems to incline, which paraphrases the whole verse thus,

“for as an ox which is fattened and kicks, so Israel rebels because of the multitude of good things; now the Lord will lead them as a choice lamb in a valley,”

or plain: and so Noldius, “though Israel is refractory”, etc.

*notwithstanding the Lord will feed them*, etc.; and indeed the phrase is used in a good sense in (<sup>2313</sup>Isaiah 30:23), but there herds and flocks are spoken of, and not a single lamb, as here; though Kimchi thinks the singular is put for the plural, lamb for lambs.

**Ver. 17.** *Ephraim is joined to idols*, etc.] That is, the ten tribes of Israel, frequently so called after their separation from the rest, because that Jeroboam, by whom the revolt was made, was of that tribe; and because that tribe was the principal of them, and Samaria, the metropolis of their kingdom, was in it: and so the Targum here renders it,

“the house of Israel are joined to idols;”

to the calves at Daniel and Bethel; to Baal, and other idols, they worshipped: the phrase expresses their strong affection for them, their constant worship of them, and their obstinate persisting therein, and the difficulty there was of bringing them off of it; they cleaved to their idols, were glued, and as it were wedded unto them, and there was no separating of them; as men are, who are addicted to the lusts of the flesh, to the mammon of unrighteousness, or to their own self-righteousness, or to any idol they set up in their hearts as such: hence it follows,

*let them alone*: which are either the words of the Lord to the prophet, enjoining him to prophesy no more to them; to reprove them no more for their sins, since it was all to no purpose, there was no reclaiming them, so Jarchi and Kimchi; and therefore let them alone, let them go on in their sins, and in their errors, and in their superstition and idolatry; (see



<sup><418></sup>Ezekiel 3:26 <sup><1514></sup>Matthew 15:14). God was determined to let them alone himself, and therefore bids his prophet to do so likewise: and sad is the case with men when he lets them alone, and will not disturb their consciences any more by jogs and convictions, but gives them up to a seared conscience, to hardness of heart, and to their own lusts; when he will not hedge up their way with thorns, or distress them with afflictive providences, and hinder them from going on in a course of sin and wickedness; nor give them restraining grace, but suffer them to go on in the broad road, till they drop into hell; and says of them,

*let him that is filthy be filthy still*, (<sup><621></sup>Revelation 22:11) or else they are the words of the prophet to the men of Judah, to have nothing to do with Israel, since they were such backsliders and idolaters; to have no communion and conversation with them, but let them be alone, and worship alone for them; since what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, a believer with an infidel, or the temple of the living God with idols and idolaters? (<sup><404></sup>2 Corinthians 6:14,15 <sup><451></sup>Ephesians 5:11), some take them to be the words of the prophet to God concerning Israel, approving of his righteous judgments, in threatening to feed them as a lamb in a large place; dismiss him thither, suffer and leave him to feed there. The Targum interprets it of their sin, and not their punishment,

“they have left their worship;”

the service of God.

**Ver. 18.** *Their drink is sour*, etc.] In their stomachs, having drank so much that they cannot digest it; hence nauseous eructations, with a filthy stench, are belched out; so it is a charge of drunkenness which Ephraim or the ten tribes were addicted to, and are accused of, (<sup><230></sup>Isaiah 28:1) or “their drink is gone”<sup>f94</sup>; it has lost its colour, brightness, smell, and flavour; it is turned to vinegar; expressive of the general corruption and depravity of manners and religion among them; (see <sup><202></sup>Isaiah 1:22) or “their drink departeth”, or “causeth to depart”; or “is refractory”<sup>f95</sup>; that is, it made them refractory, like a refractory belief, as before; caused them to depart from God and his worship, and led them into all sin and irreligion, particularly what follows:

*they have committed whoredom continually*; corporeal whoredom, which drunkenness leads to; and spiritual whoredom or idolatry, which they had

committed, and continued in, ever since the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and increased therein:

*her rulers with shame do love, give ye*; or “her shields”<sup>f96</sup>; those that should have been the protectors of Israel, compared before to a heifer; and preserved them not only from their external enemies, but from all innovations in religion; and which we rightly enough render “rulers”, civil and ecclesiastic, kings, princes, and priests; (see <sup><BR></sup>Psalm 47:9), these “loved, give ye”, which was a “shame” to them: the sense is, either they loved gifts and bribes, and were continually saying, “give, give”, when causes were to be tried, and so perverted justice and judgment, which was very shameful; or they loved wine and strong drink, and therefore required it to be continually given them, which was very scandalous in rulers more especially, (<sup><BR></sup>Proverbs 30:4); or they loved whoredom, both in a corporeal and spiritual sense, and desired more harlots and more idols, and added to their old ones, which was very abominable and ignominious. So the Targum,

“they turned themselves after fornication they loved, which brought shame unto them;”

and these may be considered as so many reasons why Judah should have nothing to do with Israel.

**Ver. 19.** *The wind hath bound her up in her wings*, etc.] That is, the wind in its wings hath bound up Ephraim, Israel, or the ten tribes, compared to a heifer; meaning, that the wind of God’s wrath and vengeance, or the enemy, the Assyrian, should come like a whirlwind, and carry them swiftly, suddenly, and irresistibly, out of their own land, into a foreign country: the past tense for the future, as is common in prophecy, because of the certainty of it; so Jarchi and Joseph Kimchi: but Aben Ezra, David Kimchi, Abarbinel, and Abendana, render it “she”, that is, Israel, “hath bound up the wind in her wings”<sup>f97</sup>; meaning that they had laboured in vain in their idolatrous worship; and it was all one as if a than should attempt to gather the wind, and bind it up in the skirts of his garment, and when he opens them there is nothing to be found: and to this sense is the Targum,

“the works of their great men are not right, as it is impossible to bind the wind in a wing;”

referring to the sins of their rulers, as before: or rather the sense is, the wind shall get into the loose skirts of the garments of, he Israelites, which

shall be as a sail to it, as Schmidt observes, and shall carry them into distant lands; which falls in with the first sense of the words, and is best:

*and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices*: they of the ten tribes, the people of Israel; or their shields, their rulers, as Aben Ezra, shall be filled with shame, being disappointed of the help they expected from their idols, to whom they offered sacrifices; and the more, inasmuch as they will find that these idolatrous sacrifices are the cause of their ruin and destruction. The Targum is,

“because of the altars of their idols;”

and so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, “because of their altars”.