

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 5

The design of this chapter is to expose the sins of Israel and of Judah, and to declare the judgment of God upon them for them. Men of all ranks in Israel are summoned to attend to the charge brought against them, and the sentence on them, (~~2891~~Hosea 5:1). The charge exhibited is, that they were guilty of in, hating men to the slaughter of idolatrous sacrifices, though they had been sufficiently rebuked and corrected, (~~2891~~Hosea 5:1,2); of both corporeal and spiritual adultery, whereby they were defiled, and which was well known to the Lord, (~~2898~~Hosea 5:3); of obstinate persistence in impenitence, owing to the efficacy of an unclean spirit in them, and their want of the knowledge of God, (~~2891~~Hosea 5:4); of open pride, which stared them in the face, and for which they fell into calamities, and Judah with them, and should not be able with all their sacrifices to find favour with God, who had withdrawn himself from them, (~~2895~~Hosea 5:5,6); also of treacherous dealing with the Lord by their spiritual adultery, and begetting strange children, (~~2897~~Hosea 5:7); next their punishment is denounced, of which notice was to be given them by the sound of the trumpet, as an alarm of war, or as calling for mourning, (~~2898~~Hosea 5:8); since Ephraim would become desolate, of which notification had been made among the tribes, (~~2898~~Hosea 5:9); and wrath would be poured out in great abundance on the princes of Judah, who were very wicked men, (~~2891~~Hosea 5:10); and Ephraim would be oppressed and broken by the judgment of God, who would be as a moth unto them, and also rottenness to Judah, because they followed the commandments of men, (~~2891~~Hosea 5:11,12); and, what was still more provoking, when they were sensible of their calamities and distresses, they sought not help from the Lord, but from men that could do them no good; and therefore he threatens to be as a devouring lion to them, (~~2893~~Hosea 5:13,14); and yet the chapter concludes with a promise of the conversion of these people, after the Lord had dealt with them in an angry manner, (~~2895~~Hosea 5:15).

Ver. 1. *Hear ye this, O priests*, etc.] Though idolatrous ones, who called themselves priests, and were reckoned so by others, though not of the tribe

of Levi, but such as Jeroboam had made priests, or were their successors; and there might be some of the family of Aaron and tribe of Levi, that might continue in the cities of Israel, and who gave in to the idolatrous worship of those times. Some render it “princes”^{f98} and the word signifies both:

and hearken, ye house of Israel; not the kingdom of Judah, as Kimchi, for this is manifestly distinguished from Israel in this chapter; nor the sanhedrim, to which sense Aben Ezra seems to incline; but the ten tribes, the whole kingdom of Israel, the common people in it:

and give ye ear, O house of the king; of the king of Israel, who, at this time, is thought to be Menahem; the royal family, the princes of the blood, and all that belonged to the king’s court; all of every office, priestly or kingly, of every rank, high and low, are called upon to hearken to what is about to be said, both concerning their sin and punishment:

for judgment [is] toward you: either to know and do that which is just and right; it belonged to the priests to know and teach divine judgment, to instruct the people in the knowledge of the judgments, statutes, and laws of God; and it belonged to, the king to execute human judgment, to do justice and judgment according to the laws of God, and of the realm; and it belonged to the people to attend to both: so the Targum,

“does it not “belong” to you to know judgments?”

or rather this is to be understood of punitive justice and judgment, of the sentence of condemnation, or denunciation of punishment for sin: the reasons of which follow,

because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor; these were two high mountains in the land of Israel; the former was near Hermon and Lebanon, and the same with Gilead, (^{<611B>}Joshua 11:3 ^{<611B>}Judges 11:29); the latter was a mountain in Galilee, between Issachar and Zebulun, six miles from Nazareth: it was, according to Joseph ben Gorion^{f99} almost four miles high, had on the top of it a plain of almost three miles; the true Josephus^{f100} says it was three and a quarter miles; (see Gill on “^{<241B>}Jeremiah 46:18”); the Jews^{f101} have a tradition, that Jeroboam set spies upon these mountains at the time of the solemn feasts, to watch who went to them out of Israel, and to inform against them; but these could not command all the roads leading to Jerusalem. It may be these mountains were much infested with hawkers and hunters, to which there may be an

allusion; and the sense be, ye priests, people, and king, are like to those that set snares and nets on those hills, as they to ensnare and catch creatures, so ye to ensnare and draw men into idolatrous practices; or rather, since there is no note of comparison, the meaning is, that they set up altars, and offered sacrifices on these hills, and thereby ensnared not only those of their own tribes, but drew and enticed many of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to fall in with the same idolatrous practices.

Ver. 2. *And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter,* etc.] The revolvers are the king, priests, and people, who had revolted from the true worship and ways of God unto idolatry. These formed deep laid schemes, and took crafty methods, like hawkers; who lay themselves flat upon the ground to manage their snares and nets, and observe the creatures that fall into them, and take them, and whom they artfully decoy, to which the allusion is; and that either to slay those who would not comply with their false worship; or rather to multiply the sacrifices of slain beasts, and offer them with a great show of devotion and religion, and thereby beguile, entice, and ensnare simple and unwary souls; so the Targum,

“they sacrifice to idols abundantly;”

and which, in the sight of God, was mere slaughter and butchery:

though I [have been] a rebuker of them all; king, priests, and prophets; those idolaters, revolvers, or worshippers of Baal, as Aben Ezra calls them: this is to be interpreted either of the prophet, who had freely, faithfully, and openly reprov'd all orders of men for their departure from God and his worship, and for their idolatrous practices; or of the Lord himself, which comes to the same sense, who had rebuked them by his prophets, and corrected them by his judgments, but to no purpose: and therefore they could not plead ignorance, or excuse themselves upon that account.

Ver. 3. *I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me,* etc.] Though they may cover their designs from men, and seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and make plausible pretences for what they do, and put on an appearance of religion; yet God, who knows all men, and their hearts, cannot be deceived; he judges not according to outward appearance; all things are naked and open to him; nor can any hide themselves from him; he knows their persons, intentions, and designs, as well as actions. Kimchi interprets Ephraim of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who was of that tribe; others, of the tribe itself, and Israel of the other nine tribes; others take

Ephraim for the ten tribes, and Israel for the two tribes: but it is best to understand Ephraim and Israel of the same, even of the ten tribes; whose works, as the Targum paraphrases it, the Lord knew, particularly what follows:

for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom; both corporeal and spiritual adultery, which frequently went together, as observed in the preceding chapter: the Lord knew their corporeal whoredom, though ever so secretly committed, and their spiritual adultery or idolatry, under all the specious pretences of worshipping him; which was an abhorrence to him, as well as a pollution to them:

[and] Israel is defiled; with the same sins; for all sin is of a defiling nature, and especially those mentioned, which defile body and soul, and render men loathsome and abominable in the sight of God.

Ver. 4. *They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God*, etc.] Either their evil doings; they will not leave, as the Targum and Jarchi^{f102}; their evil ways and worship, their adultery and idolatry; which was necessary to repentance and true conversion to God, whom they yet professed to be their God, though they had so sadly departed from him: or their good works; they did not choose to do them, which were leading steps to repentance and conversion, or fruits and evidences of it: they had no mind to repent of their sins, and turn from them to the Lord; they had no thought, care, or concern, about these things, but obstinately persisted in their sins and in their impenitence: their wills were wretchedly depraved and corrupted; their hearts hard, perverse, and obstinate; they had no will to that which is good:

for the spirit of whoredom [is] in the midst of them; an unclean spirit, that prompts them to and pushes them on to commit corporeal and spiritual whoredom; the bias and inclination of their minds were this way which put them upon such evil practices; the spirit of error, which caused them to err, as the Targum and Kimchi; the lying spirit in the false prophets which encouraged them therein; and even himself, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience:

and they have not known the Lord; ignorance of God, his nature and perfections, his will, word, and worship, was the cause of their idolatry, and other sins; (see ~~200~~ Hosea 4:1); and this was wilful and affected

ignorance; they knew not, nor would they understand: they rejected the knowledge of God, and the means of it; so the Targum,

“and they sought not instruction (or doctrine) from the Lord.”

Ver. 5. *And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face*, etc.] Or, “does” or “shall answer to his face”^{f103}; contradicts him, convicts him, and fills him with shame; the pride of his heart, and of his countenance, and which appears in all his actions, and which is open and manifest to all, shall stare him in the face, and confound him; even all the sinful actions done by him in a proud and haughty manner, in contempt of God and of his laws, shall fly in his face, and fill him with dread and horror. The Targum is,

“the glory of Israel shall be humbled, and they seeing [it]:”

instead of greatness, glory, and honour, they formerly had, they shall be in a mean low condition, even in their own land, before they go into captivity; and which their eyes shall behold, as Kimchi explains the paraphrase; and to this sense Jarchi and Aben Ezra incline; and so read the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions. Some understand this of God himself, who, formerly, at least, was the pride, glory, and excellency of Israel; of whom they were proud, and boasted, and gloried in; even he shall be a swift witness against them: and

therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; that is, the ten tribes shall fall by and for their iniquities, such as before mentioned, into ruin and misery; it has respect to their final destruction and captivity by the Assyrians; they first fell into sin, and then by it into ruin: (see ^{<3840>}Hosea 14:1);

Judah also shall fall with them; the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as they fell into idolatry, and were guilty of the same crimes, so should be involved in the same or like punishment, though not at the same time; for the Babylonish captivity, in which Judah was carried captive, was many years after Israel was carried captive by the Assyrians: unless this is to be understood of the low, afflicted, and distressed condition of Judah, in the times of Ahaz, by Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, who had a little before carried captive part of Israel, and by others; and in which times Judah fell into idolatrous practices, and fell by them; (see ^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:29 ^{<1267>}16:7,8 ^{<1405>}2 Chronicles 28:5,6,16-20).

Ver. 6. *They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord*, etc.] Not only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, to whom Kimchi, Aben Ezra, and Abarbinel, restrain the words; but the ten tribes of Israel also, who, when in distress, and seeing ruin coming upon them, should seek the Lord; seek help from him against their enemies, and the pardon of their sins; seek his face and favour, and to appease his wrath, by bringing a multitude of sacrifices out of their flocks and herds; such a number of them, as if they brought all their flocks and herds with them; but not with true repentance for their sins, nor with faith in the great sacrifice, which legal sacrifices, rightly performed, prefigured. Kimchi refers this to the times of Josiah; but, as it respects Israel as well as Judah, it seems to design some time a little before the ruin of them both:

but they shall not find [him]; shall not find grace and mercy with him; he will not be favourable to them, will not afford them any help, but give them up to utter ruin and destruction; as he did Israel at the Assyrian captivity, and Judah at the Babylonish captivity:

he hath withdrawn himself from them; the glory of the Lord departed from them; his Shechinah, or divine Majesty, as the Targum, removed from them, because of their idolatry, and other sins; they sought him not where and while he was to be found; and therefore, when they sought him, found him not, because he had withdrawn his presence from among them, being provoked by their iniquities.

Ver. 7. *They have dealt treacherously against the Lord*, etc.] Which was the reason of his departure from them; as a woman deals treacherously with her husband when she is unfaithful to him, and commits adultery; so Israel and Judah dealt treacherously with the Lord, who stood in the relation of a husband to them in covenant, by committing idolatry;

for they have begotten strange children; either of strange women, the daughters of idolatrous Heathens they married, so the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi; or rather their natural children, though born of Israelitish or Jewish parents, both such; yet being educated by them in an idolatrous way, and brought up in the commission of the evils their parents were guilty of, are said to be strange children to the Lord, alienated from him and his worship, and as such to be begotten:

now shall a month devour them with their portions; the Jews understand this literally of the month Ab, the time of Jerusalem's destruction, so Jarchi

and R. Jeshuah in Aben Ezra and Ben Melech; or the month Tammuz, in which the city was broke up, and the month Ab, in which it was destroyed, as Kimchi; or rather, which is also a sense he mentions, it signifies a short time, a very little while before the destruction should come; and compares it with (^{<3818>}Zechariah 11:8); though, according to the Targum, it is to be understood of every month; and so denotes the continual desolation that should be made, until they were utterly destroyed; but others seem better to interpret it of their new moon, or first day of the month, which they observed in a religious way, by offering sacrifice, etc. and on which they depended; but this should be so far from being of any service to them, that it should turn against them; and, because of the idolatry committed in them, the Lord would hate them, and destroy them on account of them; even their farms, and fields, and vineyards, which were their portions and inheritances; (see ^{<2013>}Isaiah 1:13,14); unless it is rather to be understood of the parts of the beasts slain in sacrifice on those days, to appease the Lord; which would be so far from doing it, that they would provoke him yet more to wrath, and slay them.

Ver. 8. *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, [and] the trumpet in Ramah,* etc.]

As an alarm of war, to give notice that the enemy is at hand, just ready to invade the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and bring destruction upon them; according to the Targum, the words are directed to the prophets,

“O ye prophets, lift up your voice like a trumpet;”

to declare to the people of Judah their sins and transgressions, and the punishment that would be inflicted on them for them; or it may be, this is a call of the people to fasting, mourning, and lamentation, as in (^{<2011>}Joel 2:1,15). Gibeah is the same which is called “Gibeah of Saul”, (^{<0110>}1 Samuel 11:4); it being the birth place of that prince; and which Josephus^{f104} calls Gabathsaul, and interprets it the hill of Saul, and says it was distant from Jerusalem about four miles; though elsewhere^{f105} he represents it as but two and a half miles; perhaps in the latter place there is a corruption in the number; for, according to Jerom, it was near Ramah, which was seven miles from Jerusalem; he says it is called also “Gibeah of Benjamin”, (^{<0112>}1 Samuel 13:2); because it was in that tribe, as was also Ramah; which, according to Eusebius^{f106}, was six miles from Jerusalem; these were near to each other; (see ^{<07913>}Judges 19:13); so that the calamity threatened is what respects the two tribes:

cry aloud [at] Bethaven; the same with Bethel, or a place near unto it, in the tribe of Benjamin, or on the borders of Ephraim; (see ^{<3045>}Hosea 4:15). According to the above writer^{f107}, it lay about twelve miles from Jerusalem; in the way to Sichem; and being upon the borders both of Benjamin and Ephraim, it sometimes belonged to Israel, and sometimes to Judah; (see ^{<4139>}2 Chronicles 13:19); and seeing, as Jerom observes, that Benjamin was at the back of it (for where the tribe of Benjamin ended, not far in the tribe of Ephraim, according to him, was this city built), it therefore very beautifully follows,

after thee, O Benjamin; that is, either the enemy is after thee, O Benjamin, is just at hand, ready to fall upon thee, and destroy thee, as Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech; or rather, after the trumpet is blown in Gibeah and Ramah, cities which belonged to Benjamin, let it be blown, either in Bethaven, on the borders of Benjamin and Ephraim; or let it be blown in the tribe of Judah, so that all the twelve tribes may have notice, and prepare for what is coming upon them.

Ver. 9. *Ephraim shall he desolate in the day of rebuke*, etc.] The country of the ten tribes shall be laid desolate, the inhabitants of them destroyed either by the sword, or famine, or pestilence, and the rest carried captive, as they were by Shalmaneser; and this was the day of the Lord's rebuke and chastisement of them: or of the reward of their sins, as the Targum, when the Lord punished them for them; and this is what the trumpet was to be blown for, in order to give notice of, or to call for mourning on account of it:

among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be; this desolation was foretold by the prophets, and published in all the tribes of Israel, as what should certainly come to pass; and therefore they could not plead ignorance of it, or say they had no notice given them, or they would have repented of their sins. The Targum is,

“in the tribes of Israel I have made known the law;”

so Jarchi; which they transgressed, and therefore were made desolate; or the word of truth, as Kimchi; the true and faithful word, that if they walked in his ways, hearkened unto him, it would be well with them; but, if not, he would destroy their land, and carry them captive.

Ver. 10. *The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound*, etc.] Or landmark, which to do was contrary to the law, (^{<6594>}Deuteronomy

19:14); and has always been reckoned a heinous sin among all nations, and is only done by such who have no regard to right and wrong, and by them secretly; and such were the kings, princes, and nobles of Judah; they secretly committed the grossest iniquities, yea, were abandoned to their vile lusts, and could not be contained within any bounds. The “caph” here used is, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, not a note of similitude, but of certainty; and then the sense is, that the princes of Judah did remove the bound; either, in a literal sense, by force and violence seized on the possessions and inheritances of their neighbours which lay next to theirs; or, in a figurative sense, they broke through all bounds and limits, and transgressed the laws of God and men, being not to be restrained by either:

[therefore] I will pour out my wrath upon them like water; in great abundance, and with such force and vehemence, as not to be stopped, but utterly destroy; like a flood of water, which overflows the banks, or breaks them down, and carries all before it; or like the flood of water that came upon the earth, and carried off the world of the ungodly; in like manner should the wrath of God be poured down from heaven upon these princes without measure, exceeding all bounds, in just retaliation for their removing the bounds of their neighbours, or transgressing the laws of God: this was fulfilled either in the times of Ahaz, when Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, as well as Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, greatly afflicted Judah, (~~420~~2 Chronicles 28:1-27); or at the time of the Babylonish captivity.

Ver. 11. *Ephraim [is] oppressed, [and] broken in judgment*, etc.] Here the prophet again returns to the ten tribes, who were oppressed and broken, either by their own judgments, as the Targum; by the tyranny of their kings, and the injustice of their judges, who looked only for the mammon of unrighteousness; or by the judgment of their enemies, the Assyrians, the taxes they laid upon them, the devastations they made among them, and by whom, at last, they were carried captive; or by the judgments of God upon them; for all the enemy did was by his permission, and according to his will:

because he willingly walked after the commandment; not after the commandment of God, but after the commandment of men, as Aben Ezra; or after the commandment of the prophets of Baal, as Jarchi; or after the commandment of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, as Kimchi, by worshipping the calves at Daniel and Bethel he set up there.

Ver. 12. *Therefore [will] I [be] unto Ephraim as a moth*, etc.] Which eats garments, penetrates into them, feeds on them privately, secretly, without any noise, and gradually and slowly consumes them; but at last utterly, that they are of no use and profit: this may signify the various things which befell the ten tribes in the reigns of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah, which secretly and gradually weakened them; and the utter consumption of them in the times of Hoshea by Shalmaneser:

and to the house of Judah as rottenness; as rottenness in the bones, (^{<3004>}Proverbs 12:4); which can never be got out or cured; or as a worm that eats into wood, as Jarchi interprets it; and gets into the very heart of a tree, and eats it out: thus the Lord threatens the house of Judah, or the two tribes, with a gradual, yet thorough, ruin and destruction.

Ver. 13. *When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah [saw] his wound*, etc.] That their civil state were in a sickly condition, very languid, weak, feeble, and tottering, just upon the brink of ruin; (see ^{<2006>}Isaiah 1:6);

then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb; that is, the ten tribes, or the king of them, went and met the Assyrian king; and Judah the two tribes, or the king of them, sent ambassadors to King Jareb; which sense the order of the words, in connection with the preceding clause, seems to require: by the Assyrian and King Jareb we are to understand one and the same, as appears from the following words, “yet could he not heal etc.”, whereas, if they were different, it would have been expressed, “yet could they not heal etc.”, and the king of Assyria is meant, who: also is called King Jareb, or rather king of Jareb^{f108}; (see ^{<3006>}Hosea 10:6); for this does not seem to be the name of the king of Assyria himself; though it may be that Pul, or Tiglathpileser, or Shalmaneser, might have more names than one, whoever is meant; but rather it is the name of some place in Assyria, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, from which the country may be here denominated; though the Targum takes it to be, not the proper name of a man or place, but an appellative, paraphrasing it,

“and sent to the king that shall come to avenge them;”

and so other interpreters^{f109} understand it, rendering it, either the king that should defend, as Tremellius; or the king the adversary, or litigator, as Cocceius, Hillerus^{f110}, and Gussetius^{f111}; a court adversary, that litigates a point, contends with one, and is an advocate for another; or, as Hiller elsewhere^{f112} renders it, the king that lies in wait: this was fulfilled with

respect to Ephraim, when Menahem king of Israel, or the ten tribes, often meant by Ephraim, went and met Pul king of Assyria, and gave him a thousand talents to depart out of his land; perceiving his own weakness to withstand him, and in order to strengthen and confirm the kingdom in his hand, (^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:19); or when Hoshea king of Israel gave presents to Shalmaneser king of Assyria, and became a servant to him, till he could get stronger, and shake off his yoke, (^{<1278>}2 Kings 17:3); and with respect to Judah it had its accomplishment when Ahaz king of Judah sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria to come and help him against the kings of Syria and Israel, finding he was not strong enough to oppose them himself, (^{<1267>}2 Kings 16:7); now all this was highly provoking to the Lord, that when both Israel and Judah found themselves in a weak condition, and unable to resist their enemies, instead of seeking to him for help they applied to a foreign prince, and which proved unsuccessful to them:

yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound; but, on the contrary, afflicted them, hurt and destroyed them; there being a “meiosis” in the words, which expresses less than is designed; for though, with respect to Ephraim or Israel, Pul king of Assyria desisted from doing any damage to Israel, yet a successor of his, TiglathPileser, came and took several places of Israel, and carried the inhabitants captive; and at last came Shalmaneser, and took Samaria, the metropolis of the land, and carried all the ten tribes captive, (^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:29 ^{<1270>}17:4-6); and so, with respect to Judah, Tiglathpileser, whom Ahaz sent unto for help, not only did not help and strengthen him, but afflicted him, (^{<1483>}2 Chronicles 28:20); thus when sensible sinners see their spiritual maladies, and feel the smart of their wounds, and make a wrong application for relief, to their tears, repentance, and humiliation, and to works of: righteousness, or to anything or person short of Christ the great Physician, they meet with no success, find no relief until better directed.

Ver. 14. *For I [will be] unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah,* etc.] Being provoked by their above conduct and behaviour in seeking to others, and not to him, for help, he threatens to punish them in a more public and severe manner; not be to them only as a moth and rottenness, but as a lion, and as a young lion, creatures strong and fierce, that destroy and devour all that come into their hands, and from whom there is no deliverance: thus the Lord was both to Israel and Judah, by means of the Assyrians and Babylonians; the former are compared to a lion, that devoured Israel; and the latter to a young lion, that broke the

bones of Judah; (see ²⁸¹⁷Jeremiah 50:17); and last of all by means of the Romans, especially to Judah:

I, [even] I, will tear and go away; as a lion tears its prey in pieces it seizes upon, and goes away, and leaves it torn, having satisfied itself; and is in no fear of being pursued, or any vengeance taken on him for what he has done; so the Lord would destroy Israel and Judah, and leave them in their ruinous state, none being able to rise up and avenge their cause. The “I” is doubled, to express the certainty of it:

I will take away, and none shall rescue [him]; as the lion, having glutted itself with its prey, takes the rest away, and carries it to its den, where none dare come and take it from him; so the Lord signifies, that those of Israel and Judah that perished not by the sword of the enemy, or by famine or pestilence, should be carried captive, and none should be able to return them till he pleases: under the wrath and displeasure of God, and under this tearing, rending, and afflictive dispensation, they now are, and will continue till the time of their conversion.

Ver. 15. *I will go [and] return to my place*, etc.] Leave the countries of Israel and of Judah, where he had used to grant his gracious and spiritual presence unto his people, and watched over them, and cared for them, and bestowed many favours on them, and go up to heaven, the place of his more glorious presence, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret it; and there, as it were, shut himself up, particularly with respect to these people, as if he had no more thought of them, or concern for them: this is to be understood in a sense becoming and agreeable to the omnipresence of God:

till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; till the Israelites acknowledge their idolatry, and the Jews their disbelief and rejection of the Messiah, and all other sins; till they ingenuously confess themselves to be guilty, or know and acknowledge they have sinned, as the Targum; and then humbly seek the face and favour of God, the remission of their sins from him, and acceptance with him:

in their affliction they will seek me early; in the morning, betimes, early, and earnestly; which affliction may be understood both of the Assyrian and Babylonish captivity; or rather of their present affliction toward the close of it, when they shall be sensible of their sins, and confess them, and look to him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and seek for pardon,

righteousness, and salvation, from him; and so all Israel shall be saved, of whose conversion this is a prophecy.