

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 7

This chapter either begins a new sermon, discourse, or prophecy, or it is a continuation of the former; at least it seems to be of the same argument with the latter part of it, only it is directed to Israel alone; and consists of complaints against them because of their manifold sins, and of denunciations of punishment for them. They are charged with ingratitude to God, sinning in a daring manner against mercy, and with falsehood, thefts, and robberies, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:1); with want of consideration of the omniscience of God, and his notice of their sins, which surrounded them, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:2); with flattery to their king and princes, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:3); with adultery, which lust raged in them like a heated oven, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:4); with drunkenness, aggravated by drawing their king into it, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:5); with raging lusts, which devoured their judges, made their kings to fall, and brought on such a general corruption, that there were none that called upon the Lord, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:6,7); with mixing themselves with the nations of the earth, and so learning their ways, and bringing their superstition and idolatry into the worship of God, so that they were nothing in religion, like a half baked cake, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:8); with stupidity and insensibility of their declining state, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:9); with pride, impenitence, and stubbornness, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:10); with folly, in seeking to Egypt and Assyria for help, and not to the Lord; for which they would be taken as birds in a net, and sorely chastised, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:11,12); with ingratitude, hypocrisy, and deceitfulness; for all which they are threatened with destruction, (^{<2010>}Hosea 7:13-16).

Ver. 1. *When I would have healed Israel*, etc.] Or rather, “when I healed Israel”;^{f129} for this is not to be understood of a velleity, wish, or desire of healing and saving them, as Jarchi; nor of a bare attempt to do it by the admonitions of the prophets, and by corrections in Providence; but of actual healing them; and by which is meant, not healing them in a spiritual and religious sense, as in (^{<2010>}Hosea 6:1); but in a political sense, of the restoring of their civil state to a more flourishing condition; which was done in the times of Jeroboam the son of Joash, as Kimchi rightly observes;

who restored the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath, unto the sea of the plain, (^{<1245>}2 Kings 14:25,26);

then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; some refer this to the times of Jeroboam the first, and that the sense is, that the Lord having cured Israel of the idolatry introduced by Solomon, quickly a new scene of idolatry broke out in Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of which Samaria was the metropolis; for Jeroboam soon set up the calves at Daniel and Bethel to be worshipped; but it does not appear that Israel was corrupted with the idolatry of Solomon, and needed a cure then; nor was Samaria built in Jeroboam's time: others apply it to the times of Jehu, who, though he slew the worshippers of Baal, and broke his images, and destroyed him out of Israel, yet retained the worship of the calves at Daniel and Bethel, (^{<1205>}2 Kings 10:25-30); so, though they were healed of one sort of idolatry, another prevailed. It is right, in both these senses, that the iniquity of Ephraim, and wickedness or wickednesses of Samaria, are taken for the idolatrous worship of the golden calves; but then it respects the times of Jeroboam the second, the son of Joash, in whose days Israel was prosperous; and yet these superstitious and idolatrous practices of worship were flagrant and notorious, were countenanced by the king and his courtiers that dwelt at Samaria, as is clear from (^{<3070>}Amos 7:10-13); which was an instance of great ingratitude to the Lord;

for they commit falsehood; among themselves, lying to one another, and deceiving each other; or to God, deal falsely with him, are guilty of false worship, worshipping idols, which are vanities and lies:

and the thief cometh in, [and] the troop of robbers spoileth without; which may be interpreted either of their sins, their sins in general, both private and public; and their sins of theft and robbery in particular; both such as were committed in houses by the thief privately entering there, and by a gang of robbers in the streets, or on the highway: so the Targum,

“in the night they thieve in houses, and in the day they rob on the plain,”

or fields: or else of punishment for their sins; and then the words may be rendered ^{f130}, “therefore the thief entereth in, and the troop” or “army spreads without”; this thief was Shallum, who came in to kill and to steal; he slew Zachariah the son of Jeroboam, after he had reigned six months, and usurped the kingdom, and so put an end to the family of Jehu,

according as the Lord had threatened, (^{<1182>}2 Kings 8:12); the troop or army is the Assyrian army under Pul, who came against Menahem, king of Israel, of whom he exacted a tribute, and departed, (^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:19,20); so Cocceius.

Ver. 2. *And they consider not in their hearts [that] I remember all their wickedness*, etc.] That is, the people of the ten tribes, and the inhabitants of Samaria, whose iniquity and wickedness are said to be discovered, and to be very notorious: and yet “they said not to their hearts”^{f131}, as in the original text; they did not think within themselves; they did not commune with their own hearts; they did not put themselves in mind, or put this to their consciences, that the Lord saw all their wicked actions, their idolatry, falsehood, thefts, and robberies, and whatsoever they were guilty of; that the Lord took notice of them, and put them down in the book of his remembrance, in order to call them to an account, and punish them for them:

now their own doings have beset them about; or, “that now their own doings”, etc.^{f132}; they do not consider in their hearts that their sins are all around them, on every side, committed by them openly, and in abundance, and are notorious to all their neighbours, and much more to the omniscient God: and that

they are before my face; so the Targum,

“which are revealed before me;”

were manifest in his sight, before whom all things are; but this they did not consider, and therefore went on in that bold and daring manner they did. Some understand these clauses of the punishment of their sins, which should surround them on every side, that they should not be able to escape, like persons closely besieged in a city, that they cannot get out; alluding to the future siege of Samaria, when it would be a plain case, though they did not now think of it, that all their sins were before the Lord, and were observed by him.

Ver. 3. *They make the king glad with their wickedness*, etc.] Not any particular king; not Jeroboam the first, as Kimchi; nor Jehu, as Grotius; if any particular king, rather Jeroboam the second; but their kings in general, as the Septuagint render it, in succession, one after another; who were highly delighted and pleased with the priests in offering sacrifice to the calves, and with the people in attending to that idolatrous worship, by

which they hoped to secure the kingdom of Israel to themselves, and prevent the people going to Jerusalem to worship: it made them glad to the heart to hear them say that God was as well pleased with sacrifices offered at Daniel and Bethel, as at Jerusalem:

and the princes with their lies; with their idols and idolatrous practices, which are vanity and a lie; though some interpret this of their flatteries, either of them, or their favourites; and of their calumnies and detractions of such they had a dislike of.

Ver. 4. *They [are] all adulterers*, etc.] King, princes, priests, and people, both in a spiritual and corporeal sense; they were all idolaters, given to idols try, eager of it, and constant in it, as the following metaphors show; and they were addicted to corporeal adultery; this was a prevailing vice among all ranks and degrees of men. So the Targum,

“they all desire to lie with their neighbours’ wives;”

(see ^{<4107>}Jeremiah 5:7,8 9:2);

as an oven heated by the baker; which, if understood of spiritual adultery or idolatry, denotes their eagerness after it, and fervour in it, excited by their king, or by the devil and his instruments, the priests and false prophets; and if of bodily uncleanness, it is expressive of the heat of that lust, which is sometimes signified by burning; and is stirred up by the devil and the corrupt hearts of men to such a degree as to be raised to a flame, and be like a raging fire, or a heated oven; (see ^{<4107>}Romans 1:27 ^{<4109>}1 Corinthians 7:9);

[who] ceaseth from raising; that is, the baker, having heated his oven, ceaseth from raising up the women to bring their bread to the bake house; or he ceaseth from waking, or from watching his oven; he lays himself down to sleep, and continues in it:

after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened; having kneaded the dough, and put in the leaven, he lets it alone to work till the whole mass is leavened, taking his rest in the mean while: as the former clause expresses the vehement desire of the people after adultery, spiritual or corporeal, this may signify their continuance in it; or rather the wilful negligence of the king, priests, and prophets, who, instead of awaking them out of their sleep on a bed of adultery, let them alone in it, until they were all infected with it.

Ver. 5. *In the day of our king*, etc.] Either his birthday, or his coronation day, when he was inaugurated into his kingly office, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi; or the day on which Jeroboam set up the calves, which might be kept as an anniversary: or, “it is the day of our king”^{f133}; and may be the words of the priests and false prophets, exciting the people to adultery; and may show by what means they drew them into it, saying this is the king’s birthday, or coronation day, or a holy day of his appointing, let us meet together, and drink his health; and so by indulging to intemperance, through the heat of wine, led them on to adultery, corporeal or spiritual, or both:

the princes have made [him] sick with bottles of wine: that is, the courtiers who attended at court on such a day to compliment the king upon the occasion, and to drink his health, drank to him in large cups, perhaps a bottle of wine at once; which he pledging them in the same manner, made him sick or drunk: to make any man drunk is criminal, and especially a king; as it was also a weakness and sin in him to drink to excess, which is not for kings, of all men, to do: or it may be rendered, “the princes became sick through the heat of wine”^{f134}, so Jarchi; they were made sick by others, or they made themselves so by drinking too much wine, which inflamed their bodies, gorged their stomachs, made their heads dizzy, and them so “weak”, as the word^{f135} also signifies, that they could not stand upon their legs; which are commonly the effects of excessive drinking, especially in those who are not used to it, as the king and the princes might not be, only on such occasions:

he stretched out his hand with scorners; meaning the king, who, in his cups, forgetting his royal dignity, used too much familiarity with persons of low life, and of an ill behaviour, irreligious ones; who, especially when drunk, made a jest of all religion; scoffed at good men, and everything that was serious; and even set their mouths against the heavens; denied there was a God, or spoke very indecently and irreverently of him; these the king made his drinking companions, took the cup, and drank to them in turn, and shook them by the hand; or admitted them to kiss his hand, and were all together, hail fellows well met. Joseph Kimchi thinks these are the same with the princes, called so before they were drunk, but afterwards “scorners”.

Ver. 6. *For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait*, etc.] The prince, people, and scorners before mentioned, being

heated with wine, and their lust enraged, they were ready for any wickedness; for the commission of adultery, lying in wait for their neighbours' wives to debauch them; or for rebellion and treason against their king, and even the murder of him, made drunk by them, whom they now despised, and waited for an opportunity to dispatch him:

their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire; as a baker having put wood into his oven, and kindled it, leaves it, and sleeps all night, and in the morning it is all burning, and in a flame, and his oven is thoroughly heated, and fit for his purpose; so the evil concupiscence in these men's hearts, made hot like an oven, rests all night, devising mischief on their beds, either against the chastity of their neighbours' wives, or against the lives of others, they bear an ill will to, particularly against their judges and their kings, as (~~<3007>~~Hosea 7:7); seems to intimate; and in the morning this lust of uncleanness or revenge is all in a flame, and ready to execute the wicked designs contrived; (see ~~<3011>~~Micah 2:1). Some by "their baker" understand Satan; others, their king asleep and secure; others Shallum, the head of the conspiracy against Zachariah.

Ver. 7. *They are all hot as an oven*, etc.] Eager upon their idolatry, or burning in their unclean desires after other men's wives; or rather raging and furious, hot with anger and wrath against their rulers and governors, breathing out slaughter and death unto them:

and have devoured their judges; that stood in the way of their lusts, reproved them for them, and restrained them from them; or were on the side of the king they conspired against, and were determined to depose and slay:

all their kings have fallen; either into sin, the sin of idolatry particularly, as all from Jeroboam the first did, down to Hoshea the last; or they fell into calamities, or by the sword of one another, as did most of them; so Zachariah by Shallum, Shallum by Menahem, Pekahiah by Pekah, and Pekah by Hoshea; (see ~~<2511>~~2 Kings 15:1-38). So the Targum,

"all their kings are slain:"

[there is] none among them that calleth unto me; either among the kings, when their lives were in danger from conspirators; or none among the people, when their land was in distress, either by civil wars among themselves, or by a foreign enemy; such was their stupidity, and to such a height was irreligion come to among them!

Ver. 8. *Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people*, etc.] Either locally, by dwelling among them, as some of them at least might do among the Syrians; or carnally, by intermarrying with them, contrary to the command of God; or civilly, by entering into alliances and confederacies with them, as Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel did with Rezin king of Syria, (^{<300>}Isaiah 7:2,5); or by seeking to them for help, calling to Egypt, and going to Assyria, as in (^{<301>}Hosea 7:11); so Aben Ezra; or morally, by learning their manners, and conforming to their customs, especially in religious things: though some understand this as a punishment threatened them for their above sins, that they should be carried captive into foreign lands, and so be mixed among the people, and which is Jarchi's sense: but it is rather to be considered as their evil in joining with other nations in their superstition, idolatry, and other impieties; and it is highly offensive to God when his professing people mix themselves with the world, keep company with the men of it, fashion themselves according to them, do as they do, and wilfully go into their conversation, and repeat it, and continue therein, and resolve to do so: for so it may be rendered, "he will mix himself"^{f136}; it denotes a voluntary act, repeated and persisted in with obstinacy;

Ephraim is a cake not turned; like a cake that is laid on coals, if it is not turned, the nether part will be burnt, and the upper part unbaked, and so be good for nothing; not fit to be eaten, being nothing indeed, neither bread nor dough; and so may signify, that Ephraim having introduced much of the superstition and idolatry of the Gentiles into religious worship, was nothing in religion, neither fish nor flesh, as is proverbially said of persons and things of which nothing can be made; they worshipped the calves at Daniel and Bethel, and Yet swore by the name of the Lord; they halted between two opinions, and were of neither; they were like the hotch potch inhabitants of Samaria in later times, that came in their place, that feared the Lord, and served their own gods: and such professors of religion there are, who are nothing in religion; nothing in principle, they have no scheme of principles; they are neither one thing nor another; they are nothing in experience; if they have a form of godliness, they deny the power of it; they are nothing in practice, all they do is to be seen of men; they are neither hot nor cold, especially not throughout, or on both sides, like a cake unturned; but are lukewarm and indifferent, and therefore very disagreeable to the Lord. Some take this to be expressive of punishment, and not of fault; either of their partial captivity by Tiglathpileser, when only a part of them

was carried captive; or of the swift and total destruction of them by their enemies, who would be like hungry and half starved persons, who meeting with a cake on the coals half baked, snatch it up, and eat it, not staying for the turning and baking it on the other side; and thus it should be with them. So the Targum,

“the house of Ephraim is like to a cake baked on coals, which before it is turned is eaten.”

Ver. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength*, etc.] Or his substance, as the Targum; his wealth and riches, fortresses and strong holds: these strangers were either the Syrians, who, in the times of Jehoahaz, destroyed Ephraim or the Israelites, and so weakened them, as to make them like the dust by threshing, (~~217~~2 Kings 12:7); or the Assyrians, first under Pul king of Assyria, who came out against Menahem king of Israel, and exacted a tribute of a thousand talents of silver, and so drained them of their treasure, which was their strength, (~~219~~2 Kings 15:19,20); and then under Tiglathpileser, another king of Assyria, who came and took away from them many of their fortified places, and carried the inhabitants captive, (~~219~~2 Kings 15:29);

and he knoweth [it] not; is not sensible how much he is weakened by such exactions and depredations; or does not take notice of the hand of God in all this; does not consider from whence it comes, what is the cause of it, and for what ends;

yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not; or, “old age has sprinkled itself upon him”^{f137}; or, “gray hairs are sprinkled on him”; gray hairs, when thick, are a sign that old age is come; and, when sprinkled here and there, are symptoms of its coming on, and of a person’s being on the decline of life; and here it signifies the weak and declining state of Israel, through the exactions and depredations of their neighbours, and that theft utter ruin was near; and yet they did not know nor consider their latter end, nor repent of their sins and acknowledge them, and return unto the Lord, and implore his mercy: so carnal professors, who mix with the men of the world, that are strangers to God and godliness, and everything that is divine and good, are devoured by them; they lose their time and substance, and their precious souls, and are not aware of it. The symptoms of the declining state of the church of God are at this time upon us, and yet not taken notice of; such as great departures from the faith; a number of false teachers risen up; great failings off of professors, and of such who

have made a great figure in the church; a small number of faithful men; great coldness and lukewarmness to spiritual things; little faith on the earth; great neglect of Gospel worship and ordinances; much sleepiness and drowsiness; great immorality and profaneness: as also the symptoms of the declining state of the world, and of its drawing to its period; as wars, and rumours of wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places; volcanos, burning mountains, eruptions of subterraneous fire, which portend the general conflagration; and yet these things are little attended to.

Ver. 10. *And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face*, etc.] (See Gill on “~~2885~~ Hosea 5:5”); notwithstanding their weak and declining state, they were proud and haughty; entertained a high conceit of themselves, and of their good and safe condition; and behaved insolently towards God, and were not humbled before him for their sins. Their pride was notorious, which they themselves could not deny; they were self-convicted, and self-condemned:

and they do not return to the Lord their God; by acknowledgment of their sins, repentance for them, and reformation from them; and by attendance on his worship, from which they had revolted; so the Targum,

“they return not to the worship of the Lord their God:”

nor seek him for all this; though they are in this wasting, declining, condition, and just upon the brink of ruin, yet they seek not the face and favour of the Lord; they do not ask help of him, or implore his mercy; and though they have been so long in these circumstances, and have been gradually consuming for many years, yet in all this time they have made no application to the Lord, that he would be favourable, and raise their sinking state, and restore them to their former glory.

Ver. 11. *Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without heart*, etc.] Or understanding; which comes and picks up the corns of grain, which lie scattered about, and does not know that the net is spread for it; and when its young are taken away, it is unconcerned, and continues its nest in the same place still; and, when frightened, flees not to its dove house, where it would be safe, but flies about here and there, and so becomes a prey to others. Thus Ephraim, going to Egypt and Assyria for help, were ensnared by them, not having sense enough to perceive that this would be their ruin; and though they had heretofore suffered by them, yet still they continued to

make their addresses to them; and instead of keeping close to the Lord, and to his worship and the place of it, and asking counsel and help of him they ran about and sought for it here and there:

they call to Egypt; that is, for help; as Hoshea king of Israel, when he sent messengers to So or Sabacon king of Egypt, for protection and assistance, (^{<12704>}2 Kings 17:4). Such a foolish part, like the silly doves, did they act; since the Egyptians had been their implacable enemies, and their fathers had been in cruel bondage under them:

they go to Assyria; send gifts and presents, and pay tribute to the kings thereof, to make them easy; as Menahem did to Pul, and Hoshea to Shalmaneser, (^{<12519>}2 Kings 15:19 17:3). Some understand this last clause, not of their sin in going to the Assyrian for help; but of their punishment in going or being carried captive thither; and so the Targum seems to interpret it,

“they go captive, or are carried captive, into Assyria.”

Ver. 12. *When they shall go*, etc.] That is, to Egypt or Assyria:

I will spread my net upon them; bring them into great straits and difficulties; perhaps the Assyrian army is meant, which was the Lord’s net, guided, and directed, and spread by his providence, and according to his will, to take this silly dove in; and which enclosed them on all sides, that they could not escape; (see ^{<13213>}Ezekiel 12:13). Hoshea the king of Israel was taken by the Assyrian, and bound and shut up in prison; Samaria the capital city was besieged three years, and then taken, (^{<12704>}2 Kings 17:4-6);

I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; though they fly on high, soar aloft, and behave proudly, and fancy themselves out of all danger; yet, as the flying fowl, the eagle, and other birds, may be brought down to the earth by an arrow from the bow, or by some decoy so should they be brought down from their fancied safe and exalted state, and be taken in the net, and become a prey to their enemies:

I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard; what was written in the law, and in the prophets, were read and explained in the congregations of Israel on their stated days they met together on for religious worship; in which it was threatened, that if they did not observe the laws and statutes of the Lord their God, but neglected and broke them, they should be severely chastised and corrected with his sore judgments, famine,

pestilence, the sword of the enemy, and captivity: and now the Lord would fulfil his word, agreeably to what had often been heard by them, but not regarded; (see ^{<530>}Leviticus 26:1-46) (^{<530>}Deuteronomy 28:1-68).

Ver. 13. *Woe unto them, for they have fled from me*, etc.] From the Lord, from his worship, and the place of it; from obedience to him, and the service of him; as birds fly from their nests, and leave their young, and wander about; so they had deserted the temple at Jerusalem, and forsaken the service of the sanctuary, and set up calves at Daniel and Bethel, and worshipped them; and, instead of fleeing to God for help in time of distress, fled further off still, even out of their own land to Egypt or Assyria: the consequence of which was, nothing but ruin; and so lamentation and woes:

destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me; against the laws which God gave them; setting up idols, and worshipping them, and so broke the first table of the law; committing murder, adultery, thefts and robberies, with which they are charged the preceding part of this chapter, and so transgressed the second table of the law; and by all brought destruction upon themselves, which was near at hand, and would certainly come, as here threatened; though they promised themselves peace, and expected assistance from neighbouring nations, but in vain, having made the Lord their enemy, by breaking his laws:

though I have redeemed them; out of Egypt formerly, and out of the hands of the Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and others, in the times of the judges; and more lately in the times of Joash and Jeroboam the second, who recovered many cities out of the hands of the Syrians. Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret this of the good disposition of God towards them, having it in his heart to redeem them now from their present afflictions and distresses, but that they were so impious and wicked, and so unfaithful to him:

yet they have spoken lies against me; against his being and providence, being atheistically inclined; or pretending repentance for their sins, when they were hypocrites, and returned to their former courses; or setting up idols in opposition to him, which were vanity to him; attributing all their good things to them, and charging him with all their evils. Abendana reads the words interrogatively, “should I redeem them, when they have spoken lies against me?”^{f138} no, I will not.

Ver. 14. *And they have not cried unto me with their heart*, etc.] In their distress, indeed, they cried unto the Lord, and said they repented of their sins, and promised reformation, and made a show of worshipping God; as invocation is sometimes put for the whole worship of God; but then this was not heartily, but hypocritically; their hearts and their mouths did not go together, and therefore was not reckoned prayer; nothing but howling, as follows:

when they howled upon their beds; lying sick or wounded there; or, as some, in their idol temples, those beds of adultery, where they pretended to worship God by them, and to pray to him through them; but such idolatrous prayers were no better than the howlings of clogs to him; even though they expressed outwardly their cries with great vehemency, as the word used denotes, having one letter more in it than common:

they assemble themselves for corn and wine: either at their banquets, to feast upon them, as Aben Ezra; or to the markets, to buy them, as Kimchi suggests; or rather to their idol temples, to deprecate a famine, and to pray for rain and fruitful seasons; or if they gather together to pray to the Lord, it is only for carnal and worldly things; they only seek themselves, and their own interest, and not the glory of God, and ask for these things, to consume them on their lust. The Septuagint version is, “for corn and wine they were cut”, or cut themselves, as Baal’s priests did, when they cried to him, (~~1~~1 Kings 18:28); and Theodoret here observes, that they performed the Heathen rites, and in idol temples made incisions on their bodies:

[and] they rebel against me: not only flee from him transgress his laws but cast off all allegiance to him and take up arms, and commit hostilities against him. The Targum joins this with the preceding clause,

“because of the multitude of corn and wine which they have gathered they have rebelled against my word;”

and to the same sense Jarchi; thus, Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.

Ver. 15. *Though I have bound [and] strengthened their arms*, etc.] As a surgeon sets a broken arm and swathes and binds it, and so restores it to its former strength, or at least to a good degree of strength again, so the Lord dealt with Israel; their arms were broken, and their strength weakened, and they greatly distressed and reduced by the Syrians in the times of Jehohaz; but they were brought into a better state and condition in the times of

Joash and Jeroboam the second; the former retook several cities out of the hands of the Syrians, and the latter restored the border of Israel, and greatly enlarged it; and as all this was done through the blessing of divine Providence, the Lord is said to do it himself. Some render it, “though I have chastised, I have strengthened their arms”^{f139}; though he corrected them for their sins in the times of Jehoahaz, and suffered their arms to be broken by their enemies, for their instruction, and in order to bring them to repentance for their sins; yet he strengthened them again in the following reigns:

yet do they imagine mischief against me; so ungrateful were they, they contrived to do hurt to his prophets that were sent to them in his name, to warn them of their sins and danger, and exhort them to repent, and forsake their idolatrous worship, and other sins; and they sought by all means to dishonour the name of the Lord, by imputing their success in the reigns of Joash and Jeroboam to their idols, and not unto him; and so hardened themselves against him, and in their evil ways.

Ver. 16. *They return, [but] not to the most High*, etc.] To Egypt, and not to Jerusalem, and the temple there, and the worship of it; to their idols, and not to him whose name alone is Jehovah, and is the most High all the earth, the God of gods, and Lord of lords, and King of kings; though they made some feint as if they would return, and did begin, and take some steps towards repentance and reformation; but then they presently fell back again, as in Jehu’s time, and did not go on to make a thorough reformation; nor returned to God alone, and to his pure worship they pretended to, and ought to have done: or, “not on high, upwards, above”^{f140}; their affections and desires are not after things above; they do not look upwards to God in heaven for help and assistance, but to men and things on earth, on which all their affection and dependence are placed:

they are like a deceitful bow; which misses the mark it is directed to; which being designed to send its arrow one way, causes it to go the reverse; or its arrow returns upon the archer, or drops at his feet; so these people deviated from the law of God, acted contrary to their profession and promises, and relapsed into their former idolatries and impieties, and sunk into earth and earthly things; (see ~~19857~~ Psalm 78:57);

their princes shall fall by the sword: either of their conspirators, as Zachariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah; or by the sword of the Assyrians, as Hoshea, and the princes with him, by Shalmaneser;

for the rage of their tongue; their blasphemy against God, his being and providences; his worship, and the place of it; his priests and people that served him, and particularly the prophets he sent unto them to reprove them;

this [shall be] their derision in the land of Egypt; whither they sent, and called for help; but now, when their princes are slain, and they carried captive into a foreign land, even those friends and allies of theirs shall laugh and mock at them. The Targum is,

“these [were] their works while they were in the land of Egypt;”

or rather the words may be rendered, “this is their derision, [as of old] in the land of Egypt”^{f141}; that is, the calves they now worshipped, and to which they ascribed all their good things, were made in imitation of the gods of Egypt, their Apis and Serapis, which were in the form of an ox, and which their fathers derided there; and these were justly to be derided now, and they to be derided for their worship of them, and ascribing all their good things to them; and which would be done when their destruction came upon them.