

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 9

This chapter is an address to Israel or the ten tribes, and contains either a new sermon, or is a very considerable part of the former upon the same subject, the sins and punishment of that people. It begins with an instruction to them, not to rejoice in their prosperity, as others did; since it would soon be at an end, because of their idolatry, which was everywhere committed, and for which they expected a reward of temporal good things, (~~2001~~Hosea 9:1); but, on the contrary, they are threatened with famine, with want both of corn and wine, (~~2002~~Hosea 9:2); and with an ejection out of their land into foreign countries; where they should be obliged to eat things unclean by their law, (~~2003~~Hosea 9:3); and where their sacrifices and solemnities should be no more attended to, (~~2004~~Hosea 9:4,5); yea, where their carcasses should fall and be buried, while their own country and houses lay waste and desolate, (~~2005~~Hosea 9:6); for, whatsoever their foolish and mad prophets said to the contrary, who pretended to be with God, and know his will, and were a snare to them that gave heed unto them, and brought hatred on them, the time of their punishment would certainly come, (~~2007~~Hosea 9:7,8); and their iniquities would be remembered and visited; seeing their corruptions were deep, like those that appeared in Gibeah, in the days of old, (~~2009~~Hosea 9:9); they acting the same ungrateful part their fathers had done, of whom they were a degenerate offspring, (~~2010~~Hosea 9:10); wherefore for these, and other offences mentioned, they are threatened with being bereaved of their children, and drove out of their land, to wander among the nations, (~~2011~~Hosea 9:11-17).

Ver. 1. *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as [other] people*, etc.] But rather mourn and lament, since such a load of guilt lay upon them, and they had so highly provoked the Lord to anger by their sins, and punishment would quickly be inflicted on them; and though they might be now in prosperity, through Jeroboam's success against their enemies, who by his victories had enlarged their border; yet they should not rejoice at it, as other people used to do on such occasions, by illumination of houses, making fires in the

streets, feasting, and the like, since this prosperity would be but short lived: or if it was on account of the league made by Menahem with the king of Assyria, this would not last long; or on account of a good harvest, they need not so much rejoice as they that rejoice in harvest, since there would quickly be a famine among them: or rather it may respect rejoicing at their idols, and in their idolatrous worship, as other people, which is forbidden; such as instituting plays to the honour of them, making feasts before them, and dancing about them; whatever others might do, who knew not the true God, had not his law before them, nor his prophets sent to them to make known his will; who had been brought up in idolatry, adhered to their gods, and never forsook them; it ill became Israel to do the like. So the words may be rendered, “rejoice not, O Israel”, at an idol^{f163}, or idols, “as [other] people”, idolatrous ones; the word signifies “similitude”^{f164} or “likeness”, which an idol is:

for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God; playing the harlot with many lovers; committing adultery with stocks and stones; worshipping idols, and so departing from God, the true God, they had professed to be their God, their God in covenant; who stood in the relation of a husband to them, but they proved treacherous to him, and were guilty of spiritual adultery, which is idolatry; and therefore had no cause to rejoice as other nations that never left their gods, but to take shame to themselves, and mourn over their sad departure; (see ^{<300B>}Hosea 1:3);

thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor; alluding to the hire of a harlot, prostituting herself for it on a corn floor, or any where else, and that for a measure of corn, or for bread: it may point either at their giving the tithes of their corn floors to their idols, instead of giving them to the Lord; or to their ascribing their plenty of corn, and all good things to their worship of them, which they called their rewards, or hires their lovers gave them, (^{<301B>}Hosea 2:5,12); or to their erecting of altars on their corn floors; as David erected one to the true God on the threshing floor of Araunah, (^{<1224>}2 Samuel 24:24,25); and which they might do, either by way of thanksgiving for a good harvest, which they imputed to them; or in order to obtain one, but in vain, as follows. The Targum is,

“for you have erred from the worship of your God; you have loved to serve idols on all, corn floors.”

Ver. 2. *The floor and the winepress shall not feed them*, etc.] Though their expectations from their worship of idols were large, they should find

themselves mistaken; for there would not be a sufficiency of corn on the floor, nor of wine in the press, to supply them with what was necessary for their sustenance; either through a blight upon their fields and vineyards, or through the invasion of an enemy, treading them down, and spoiling and foraging them: or else supposing a sufficient quantity of corn and wine got in; yet those blessings should be either turned into curses, or carried off by the enemy, that they should do then, no good; or if they enjoyed them, yet they should receive no nourishment from them; but should become lean, and look like starved and famishing creatures in the midst of plenty; by all which it would appear that their idols could neither give them a sufficiency of provisions, nor make those nourishing to them they had:

and the new wine shall fail in her; in the congregation or land of Israel: or, “shall lie to her”^{f165}; shall not answer their expectations, but disappoint and deceive them; whereas they expected great plenty from the promising prospect of the vines, these by one means or another should be destroyed, so that they would yield but little, and balk them; (see ^{<RB7>}Habakkuk 3:17 ^{<RD6>}Haggai 1:6,10,11 2:16).

Ver. 3. *They shall not dwell in the Lord’s land*, etc.] The land of Israel, or Canaan; which, though all the earth is the Lord’s, was peculiarly his; which he had chosen for himself, and for this people; where he had his temple, and caused his Shechinah or divine Majesty to dwell in a very special manner, and where his worship and service were performed. So the Targum calls it the land of the Shechinah or majesty of the Lord. Sometimes it is called Immanuel’s land, where the Messiah Immanuel, God with us, was to be born, and dwell, and where he did. Kimchi wrongly interprets this of Jerusalem only; and others of Judea; but it designs the whole land of promise, which God gave by promise to the fathers of this people, and put them in the possession of, the tenure of which they held by their obedience; but they not living according to will, and in obedience to his laws, who was Lord of the land, sole Proprietor and Governor of it, he turned them out of it, and would not suffer them to continue any longer in it; and which was a great punishment indeed, to be driven out of such a land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and where they had been favoured with privileges and blessings of every kind;

but Ephraim shall return to Egypt; or the ten tribes; that is, some of them, who should flee thither for refuge and sustenance; when the Assyrian should invade their land, and besiege Samaria, they should go thither again,

where their ancestors had formerly been in a state of bondage: this is prophesied of them, (^{<BR8>}Deuteronomy 28:68);

and they shall eat unclean [things] in Assyria; that is, Ephraim or the ten tribes, the far greater part of there, should be taken captive, and carried into Assyria, and there eat food which by their law was unclean, as things sacrificed to idols, swine's flesh, and many others; or food that was not fit for men to eat, which nature abhorred; such bread as Ezekiel was bid to make and eat, (^{<BR0>}Ezekiel 4:9,12,13). This may be understood even of them that went to Egypt for help against the Assyrians, or for shelter from them, or for food to eat in the time of famine; who should be brought back again, and carried into Assyria, and there live a miserable and an uncomfortable life; who had been used to enjoy corn and wine, and plenty of all good things, to which these unclean things may be opposed.

Ver. 4. *They shall not offer wine [offerings] to the Lord*, etc.] This is either a threatening of the cessation of sacrifices, being carried into Assyria, a strange land, where it was not lawful to offer sacrifice, there being no temple nor altar to offer in or at; and so as they would not offer to the Lord when they should, now they shall not if they would: or this respects not, the future time of their exile, but their present time now, as Kimchi observes; and so is a reproof of their present sacrifices, which are forbidden to be observed; because they were offered not in faith, nor in sincerity, but hypocritically, and before their calves: besides, the future tease is sometimes put for the present; and this way goes Schmid;

neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto him; unto the Lord, if they were offered; and is a reason why they should not, because unacceptable to him, and that for the reasons before mentioned:

their sacrifices [shall be] unto them as the bread of mourners: all that eat thereof [shall be] polluted; as all that ate of the bread of such who were mourning for their dead, that partook of their funeral feasts, or ate bread with them at any time during their mourning, were defiled thereby, according to the Levitical law, and were unqualified for service, (^{<BR10>}Leviticus 21:1 ^{<BR14>}Deuteronomy 26:14); so the sacrifices of these people being offered up with a wicked mind instead of atoning for their sins, more and more defiled them; and, instead of being acceptable to God, were abominable to him:

for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord; in the captivity there was no house of the Lord for them to bring it into; and, when in their own land, they did not bring their offerings to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, as they should have done, but offered them before their calves at Daniel and Bethel; and which is the thing complained of, that the bread for their souls, that is, the offerings accompanied with the “minchah”, or bread offering, for the expiation of the sins of their souls, were not brought into the house of the Lord (the future for the present); or else, this being the case, their sacrifices were reckoned by the Lord as no other than common bread, which they ate for the sustenance of their lives.

Ver. 5. *What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord?*] Since their sacrifices now were so disagreeable and displeasing to the Lord, and so unavailable to themselves, what would they do when in captivity, “in the solemn day”, the seventh day of the week, appointed by the Lord for rest and religious worship; and in the first day of the month, which also was to be solemnly observed, by offering sacrifice, etc. and on feast days of the Lord’s instituting, as the feasts of the passover, pentecost; and tabernacles? seeing those that carried and held them captive would not allow them time for such solemnities; nor would they be furnished with proper sacrifices; nor could they be accommodated with a proper place to offer them at; nor be able, in a strange land, and under hardships and miseries, to express that joy that is suitable to such occasions: thus should they learn, by sad experience, the want of those means and opportunities of serving the Lord, which in their own land they rejected and despised. Jarchi and Kimchi interpret this of the destruction of Israel, and of punishment inflicted on them at the time appointed by the Lord; and which would be a solemn time, a feast with the Lord, to which he should invite their enemies, and they should spill their blood as the blood of sacrifices; and when he would display the glory of his justice, truth, and faithfulness, before all the world. And it is asked, what will you do then? whither will you flee for help? or what sacrifice can you offer up to the Lord to atone for sin, or appease his wrath? will you be able to rejoice then? no, your joy will be turned into mourning; (see ^{230B} Isaiah 10:3 34:6).

Ver. 6. *For, lo, they are gone, because of destruction,* etc.] That is, many of the people of Israel were gone out of their own land to others, particularly to Egypt, because of the destruction that was coming upon them, and to avoid it; because of the Assyrian army which invaded their land, and besieged Samaria, and threatened them with entire destruction;

and upon which a famine ensued, and which is thought by Kimchi to be here particularly meant;

Egypt shall gather them up: being dead; for they shall die there, perhaps by the pestilence, and never return to their own country, as they flattered themselves; and they shall make preparations for their funeral:

Memphis shall bury them; or they shall be buried there; which was a principal city in Egypt, here called Moph, in (^{289B}Isaiah 19:13), Noph. It was the metropolis of upper Egypt, and the seat of the Egyptian kings. In it, as Plutarch says^{f166}, was the sepulchre of Osiris; and some say its name so signifies. Near to it were the famous pyramids, as Strabo^{f167} says, supposed to be built for the sepulchre of them. Herodotus^{f168} places these pyramids at Memphis, and says there were three of them; the largest had several subterraneous chambers in it; the next in size had none; the smallest was covered with Ethiopic marble. Strabo, in the place referred to, speaks of many pyramids near it, of which three were very remarkable, and expressly says they were the burying places of the kings. Diodorus^{f169} agrees with these, as to the number of them, but places them fifteen miles from Memphis. Pliny^{f170} places them between Memphis and the Delta, six miles from Memphis; pretty near to which is Strabo's account, who in the above place says, they stood forty furlongs, or five miles, from the city. Near it was the lake of Charon or Acherusia, over which he ferried dead bodies from Memphis to the pyramids, or to the plains of the mummies, the Elysian fields. Now since this was so famous for the burying places of kings, there may be an allusion to it in this expression. Here also were buried their deities, the Apis or ox when it died;

the pleasant [places] for their silver, nettles shall possess them; such beautiful edifices as were made for the repositories or treasure houses for their silver; or were built or purchased at great expense of silver; or were decorated with it; now should lie in ruins, and be like a waste, desert, and desolate place, all overrun with nettles, and uninhabited:

briers [shall be] in their tabernacles; their dwelling houses, which being demolished, briers shall grow upon the ground where they stood, and overspread it; another token of desolation. The Targum interprets it of living creatures, beasts of prey, that should dwell there; wild cats particularly.

Ver. 7. *The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come,* etc.] In which the Lord would punish the people of Israel for their sins, and reward them in a righteous manner, according as their evil works deserved; which time, being fixed and appointed by him, are called “days”; and these, because near at hand, are said to be “come”; and this is repeated for the certainty of it:

Israel shall know [it]; by sad experience, that these days are come; and shall acknowledge the truth of the divine predictions, and the righteousness of God in his judgments. Schultens^{f171}, from the use of the phrase in the Arabic language, interprets it of Israel’s suffering punishment; with which agrees the Septuagint version, “Israel shall be afflicted”, or it shall go ill with him; and to the same purpose the Arabic version:

the prophet [is] a fool; so Israel said, before those days came, of a true prophet of the Lord, that he was a fool for prophesying of evil things, but now they shall find it otherwise. So the Targum,

“they of the house of Israel shall know that they who had prophesied to them were true prophets;”

but rather this is to be understood of false prophets, who, when the day of God’s visitation shall come on Israel in a way of wrath and vengeance, will appear both to themselves and others to be fools, for prophesying good things to them, when evil was at hand:

the spiritual man [is] mad; he that was truly so, and prophesied under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, was accounted a madman for speaking against the idolatry of the times, and foretelling the judgments of God that would come upon the nation for it; but now it would be manifest, that not he, but such who pretended to be spiritual men, and to be directed and dictated by the Spirit of God, when they promised the people peace, though they walked after the imagination of their hearts, were the real madmen; who pursued the frenzies and fancies of their own minds, to the deception of themselves and the people, and called these the revelations of God, and pretended they came from the Spirit of God:

for the multitude of thine iniquities, and the great hatred; that is, either those evil days came upon them for their manifold sins and transgressions, which were hateful to God, and the cause of his hatred of them; or they were suffered to give heed to those foolish and mad prophets, because of their many sins, especially idolatry; and because of their great hatred of

God, and of his true prophets, and of his laws and ordinances, of his word, will, and worship, and of one another, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart, to believe a lie, and whatsoever those false prophets declared unto them, because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge, to walk according to his law, and to believe his prophets. The Targum is,

“but the false prophets besotted them, so as to increase thy transgression, and strengthen thine iniquities.”

Ver. 8. *The watchman of Ephraim [was] with my God*, etc.] Formerly the watchmen of Ephraim, or the prophets of Israel, were with the true God, whom the prophet calls his God; as Elijah and Elisha, who had communion and intimacy with him; had revelations and instructions from him; and were under the direction and inspiration of his Spirit, and prophesied in his name things according to his will, and for the good of his people: or “the watchman of Ephraim [should be] with my God”; on his side, and promote his worship and service, his honour and interest; and give the people warning from him, having heard the word at his mouth: but now they were not with him, nor for him, nor did as they should: or one that bore this character of a watchman in the ten tribes, pretended to be such a one, and would be thought to be with God, and to have his mind and will, and to be sincere for his glory:

[but] the prophet [is] a snare of a fowler in all his ways; the false prophet, the same with the watchman, instead of guiding and directing Ephraim in the right way in which he should go, lays snares for him in all the ways he takes, to lead him wrong, and draw him into sin, particularly into idolatry, both by his doctrine and example:

[and] hatred in the house of his God; and so became detestable and execrable it the house of his own god, the calf at Bethel, in the temple there: prophesying such things as in the event prove false, and drawing into such practices as brought on ruin and desolation. The Targum interprets it, of laying snares for their prophets, their true prophets; and Kimchi and Jarchi of slaying Zechariah the prophet in the temple.

Ver. 9. *They have deeply corrupted [themselves], as in the days of Gibeah*, etc.] Not the false prophets and watchmen only; but rather Ephraim, or the ten tribes, through their means became extremely corrupt in principle and practice; they had most sadly degenerated, and were deeply

sunk and immersed in all manner of wickedness, and rooted in it, and continued obstinate and incorrigible, so that there was no hope of reformation among them; they had got to as great a pitch of wickedness, and were guilty of the like uncleanness, lewdness, barbarity, and cruelty, as were acted by the men of Gibeah, with respect to the Levite and his concubine, (^{<0790>}Judges 19:1-30); for Gibeah of Benjamin is here meant, where the people asked a king, and rebelled against the words of the prophet, as some in Jarchi interpret it:

[therefore] he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins: that is, God, my God, as the prophet calls him in (^{<2008>}Hosea 9:8), will not forgive and forget their sins; pardon being often expressed by a non-remembrance of sins; but will make inquiry after them, and visit them in a way of wrath and vengeance, and punish for them as they deserve: they being obstinate and impenitent, and persisting in their sins, like the men of Gibeah and Benjamin.

Ver. 10. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness,* etc.] Not Jacob or Israel personally, with the few souls that went down with him into Egypt; for these died in Egypt, and never returned from thence, or came into the wilderness to be found; nor Israel in a spiritual sense, the objects of electing, redeeming, and calling grace; though it may be accommodated to them, who in their nature state are as in a wilderness, in a forlorn, hopeless, helpless, and uncomfortable condition; in which the Lord finds them, seeking them by his Son in redemption, and by his Spirit in the effectual calling; when they are like grapes, not in themselves, being destitute of all good, and having nothing but sin and wickedness in them; for, whatever good thing is in them at conversion, it is not found, but put there; but the simile may serve to express the great and unmerited love of God to his people, who are as agreeable to him as grapes in the wilderness to a thirsty traveller; and in whom he takes great delight and complacency, notwithstanding all their sinfulness and unworthiness; and bestows abundance of grace upon them, and makes them like clusters of grapes indeed; and such were many of the Jewish fathers, and who are here intended, even the people of Israel brought out of Egypt into the wilderness of Arabia, through which they travelled to Canaan: here the Lord found them, took notice and care of them, provided for them, and protected them, and gave them, many tokens of his love and affection; (see ^{<6520>}Deuteronomy 32:10); and they were as acceptable to him, and he took as much delight and pleasure in them, as one travelling through the deserts

of Arabia, or any other desert, would rejoice at finding a vine laden with clusters of grapes. The design of this metaphor is not to compare Israel with grapes, because of any goodness in them, and as a reason of the Lord's delight in them; for neither for quantity nor quality were they like them, being few, and very obstinate and rebellious; but to set forth the great love of God to them, and his delight and complacency in them; which arose and sprung, not from any excellency in them, but from his own sovereign good will and pleasure; (see ^{<B06>}Deuteronomy 7:6-8 9:5,6 10:15);

I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time; the Lord looked upon their ancestors when they were settled as a people, in their civil and church state, upon their being brought out of Egypt, with as much pleasure as a man beholds the first ripe fig his fig tree produces after planting it, or the first it produces in the season, the fig tree bearing twice in a year; but the first is commonly most desired, as being most rare and valuable; and such were the Israelites to the Lord at first, (^{<301>}Micah 7:1 ^{<402>}Jeremiah 2:2). This is observed, to aggravate their ingratitude to the Lord, which soon discovered itself; and to suggest that their posterity were like them, who, though they had received many favours from the Lord, as tokens of his affection to them, and delight in them; yet behaved in a most shocking and shameful manner to him:

[but] they went to Baalpeor: or “went into Baalpeor”^{f172}; committed whoredom with that idol, even in the wilderness where the Lord found them and showed so much regard to them; this refers to the history in (^{<023>}Numbers 25:1-18). Baalpeor is by some interpreted “the lord” or “god of opening”: and was so called, either from his opening his mouth in prophecy, as Ainsworth^{f173} thinks, as Nebo, a god of Babylon, had his name from prophesying; or from his open mouth, with which this idol was figured, as a Jewish writer^{f174} observes; whose worshipper took him to be inspired, and opened their mouths to receive the divine afflatus from him: others interpret it “the lord” or “god of nakedness”; because his worshippers exposed to him their posteriors in a shameful manner, and even those parts which ought to be covered; and this is the sense of most of the Jewish writers. So, in the Jerusalem Talmud^{f175}, the worship of Peor is represented in like manner, and as most filthy and obscene, as it is by Jarchi^{f176}, who seems to have taken his account from thence; and even Maimonides^{f177} says it was a known thing that the worship of Peor was by uncovering of the nakedness; and this he makes to be the reason why God

commanded the priests to make themselves breeches to cover their nakedness in the time of service, and why they might not go up to the altar by steps, that their nakedness might not be discovered; in short, they took this Peor to be no other than a Priapus; and in this they are followed by many Christians, particularly by Jerom on this place, who observes that Baalpeor is the god of the Moabites, whom we may call Priapus; and so Isidore^{f178} says, there was an idol in Moab called Baal, on Mount Fegor, whom the this call Priapus, the god of gardens; but Mr. Selden^{f179} rejects this notion, and contends that Peor is either the name of a mountain, of which Isidore, just now mentioned, speaks; (see ~~<1023>~~ Numbers 23:28); where Baal was worshipped, and so was called from thence Baalpeor; as Jupiter Olympius, Capitolinus, etc. is so called from the mountains of Olympus, Capitolinus, etc. where divine honours are paid him; or else the name of a man, of some great person in high esteem, who was deified by the Moabites, and worshipped by them after his death; and so Baalpeor may be the same as “Lord Peor”; and it seems most likely that Peor is the name of a man, at least of an idol, since we read of Bethpeor, or the temple of Peor, in (~~<1630>~~ Deuteronomy 34:6);

and separated themselves unto [that] shame; they separated themselves from God and his worship, and joined themselves to that shameful idol, and worshipped it, thought by many, as before observed, to be the Priapus of the Gentiles, in whose worship the greatest of obscenities were used, not fit to be named: so that this epithet of shame is with great propriety given it, and aggravates the sin of Israel, that such a people should be guilty of such filthy practices; though Baal, without supposing him to be a Priapus, may be called “that shame”, for Baal and Bosheth, which signifies shame, are some times put for each other; so Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, is called Jerubbesheth, (~~<1085>~~ Judges 8:35 ~~<1012>~~ 2 Samuel 11:21); and Eshbaal appears plainly to be the same son of Saul, whose name was Ishbosheth, (~~<1383>~~ 1 Chronicles 8:33 ~~<1020>~~ 2 Samuel 2:10); and Meribbaal is clearly the same with Mephibosheth (~~<1384>~~ 1 Chronicles 8:34 ~~<1006>~~ 2 Samuel 9:6); yea, it may be observed that the prophets of Baal are called, in the Septuagint version of (~~<1185>~~ 1 Kings 18:25); **προφητας της αισχυνης**, “the prophets of that shame”; every idol, and all idolatry being shameful, and the cause of shame, sooner or later, to their worshippers; especially when things obscene were done in their religious rites, as were in many of the Heathens in which the Jews followed them; (see ~~<1024>~~ Jeremiah 3:24,25 11:13);

and [their] abominations were according as they loved: or, “as they loved them”, the daughters of Moab; for it was through their impure love of them that they were drawn into these abominations, or to worship idols, which are often called abominations; or, as Joseph Kimchi reads the words, and gives the sense of them, “and they were abominations as I loved them”; that is, according to the measure of the love wherewith I loved them, so they were abominations in mine eyes; they were as detestable now as they were loved before.

Ver. 11. [*As for* Ephraim, *their glory shall flee away like a bird*, etc.] That is, suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably, and never return more; which some understand of God their glory, and of his departure from them, as in (²³⁹²Hosea 9:12); others of their wealth and riches, and whatever was glorious and valuable among them, which should fly away from them in a moment, when taken and carried captive; rather their numerous posterity, in which they were very fruitful, according to their name, and in which they gloried, as children are the glory of their parents, (³¹⁷⁶Proverbs 17:6); which sense agrees with what follows, and which explains the manner of their fleeing away, and the periods of it:

from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception; that is, some of them, as soon as they were born; others while in the womb, being abortives; or, however, when they should, or as soon as they did, come from thence; and others, as soon as conceived, never come to any thing; or not conceived at all, as Kimchi interprets it, the women being barren.

Ver. 12. *Though they bring up their children*, etc.] Though this be the case of some, as to be conceived, carried in the womb to the full time, and be born, and brought up to a more adult age, and appear very promising to live, and perpetuate the names of their fathers and their families:

yet will I bereave them; their parents of them, by the sword, famine, pestilence, or by carrying them captive into a foreign country:

[that there shall] not [be] a man [left]; in the whole land of Israel, but all shall be destroyed, or carried captive; or, “from men”^{f180}; that is, either from being men, as the Targum; though they are brought up to some ripeness, and a more adult age than others, yet arrive not to such a time and age as to be called men, as Kimchi observes; or from being among men, being either taken away by death, or removed from the society of men to live among beasts, and to be slaves like them:

yea, woe also to them, when I depart from them; withdraw my presence, favour, and protection from them; or remove my Shechinah from them, as the Targum; and leave them to the spoil and cruelty of their enemies, which would be a greater calamity and judgment than the former. The Septuagint, and so Theodotion, render it, “woe is to them, my flesh is of them”; which some of the ancients interpret of the incarnation of Christ, not considering that the words are spoken of Ephraim, or the ten tribes; whereas the Messiah was to spring, and did, from the family of David, and tribe of Judah.

Ver. 13. *Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, [is] planted in a pleasant place*, etc.]

That is, either as the city of Tyre, a very famous city in Phoenicia, was situated in a very pleasant place by the sea, and abounded in wealth and riches, and was well fortified, and seemed secure from all danger, and from all enemies; so Ephraim or the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, were in like circumstances, equal to Tyre, as the Targum paraphrases it, in prosperity and plenty; yet as the prophet in the vision of prophecy saw that Tyre, notwithstanding all its advantages by power and wealth, by art and nature, would be destroyed, first by Nebuchadnezzar, and then by Alexander; so by the same prophetic spirit he saw that Ephraim or the ten tribes, notwithstanding their present prosperity, and the safety and security they thought themselves in, yet should be given up to ruin and destruction by the hand of the Assyrians; or it may be rendered thus, “Ephraim as”, or “when I saw it, unto Tyre”^{f181}; reaching unto that place, and bordering upon it, as part of the ten tribes did; I saw it, I observed it, took a survey of it, and I perceived it was “planted in a pleasant place”; like a tree planted in a fruitful soil, well rooted, and in a flourishing condition; so were they, abounding with all good things, and having a numerous offspring; from all which they promised themselves much happiness for ages to come:

but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer; to sacrifice them to Moloch, as some; so the Targum,

“they of the house of Ephraim have sinned in slaying their children to the service of idols;”

with which Jarchi agrees; but rather the sense is, with Kimchi, and others, when their enemies shall come against them, as the Assyrian army, they shall go out with their sons to fight with them, and these shall be destroyed and murdered by them; it will be like leading lambs to the slaughter to be butchered and devoured by them.

Ver. 14. *Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give them?* etc.] The prophet foreseeing the butchery and destruction of their children, his heart ached for them; and, to show his tender affection for this people, was desirous of putting up a supplication for them; but was at a loss what to ask, their sins were so many, and so aggravated, and the decree gone forth for their destruction: or, “give them what thou wilt give them”^{f182}; so Jarchi, Kimchi, and Abarbinel, what thou hast threatened before to give them, (^{<2811>}Hosea 9:11); do not give them to be butchered and murdered before the eyes of their parents by their enemies; but rather let them die in the womb, or as soon as born; so it follows:

give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts; the latter being a sign of the former, as physicians observe; or the words may be rendered disjunctively, give them one, or the other; that is, to the wives of the people of Israel, if they conceive, let them miscarry, prove abortive, rather than bring forth children to be destroyed in such a cruel manner by murderers; or if they bear them to the birth, and bring them forth, let their breasts be dried up, and afford no milk for their nourishment; and so die for lack of it, rather than fall into the hands of their merciless enemies: thus, of two evils, the prophet chooses and prays for the least. Some interpret this as a prediction of what would be, or an imprecation of it; but it rather seems a pathetic wish, flowing from the tender affection of the prophet, judging such a case to be preferable to the former; (see ^{<2739>}Luke 23:29); though the other sense seems best to agree with what follows, and which is favoured by the Targum,

“give thou, O Lord, the recompence of their works; give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.”

Ver. 15. *Ah their wickedness [is] in Gilgal*, etc.] A place in the ten tribes, where the covenant of circumcision was renewed in Joshua’s time; the first passover was kept in the land of Canaan, and the people of Israel ate the firstfruits of the land; where the tabernacle was for a while, and sacrifices were offered up to the Lord: but now things were otherwise; all manner of iniquity was committed in it, especially idolatry; for which it was chosen by idolaters, because it had formerly been famous for religious worship: here, though not to the exclusion of other places, as Daniel and Bethel, was the above sin committed; here it begun and spread itself, and had the measure of it filled up; here began the first departure from the Lord, rejecting him, and asking a king in the days of Samuel, as Kimchi and Abarbinel observe;

and here were high places and altars erected for idolatry; and this is now the reason of the above threatenings of God, and the predictions of the prophet. Grotius thinks there is a mystical sense in the words, and that they have reference to the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ on Golgotha; which, in the Syriac language, is the same with Gilgal; but both the people spoken of, and the place, are different:

for there I hated them; or “therefore”^{f183}, because they sinned so greatly against him in a place where they had formerly worshipped him; their sacrifices there, instead of being acceptable, were the more abominable to him, as they were offered there where his tabernacle once was, and sacrifices were offered to him according to his will:

for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house; not out of the house of my sanctuary, or the temple, as the Targum; unless this is to be understood of losing the opportunity of going to the temple at Jerusalem, which those of the ten tribes had while they were in their own land, which the few godly persons among them then took, and made use of; but now their idolatry increasing in Gilgal, and other places, they should be carried captive; and, if they would, could not go up to the house of the Lord, and worship him there: or rather this may design, either the visible church of God, out of which they would be now ejected; or their native country, where they had been, as the family and household of God; but now should be so no more, but, as afterwards said, wanderers among the nations, and no more reckoned as belonging to the Lord, and under his paternal care and protection:

I will love them no more; which is not to be understood of the special love and favour the Lord bears to his own people in Christ, which is everlasting and unchangeable; but of his general and providential favour and regard unto these people, which he had manifested in bestowing many great and good things upon them; but now would do so no more; he would do nothing to them, or for them, that looked like love, or be interpreted of it, but all the reverse; and, by his behaviour to them, show that they were the objects of his aversion and hatred; and this was to continue, and has continued, and will continue unto the time of their conversion in the latter day, when “all Israel shall be saved”, (^{<6126>}Romans 11:26);

all their princes [are] revolters; from God and his worship, who should have set a good example to the people; and since these were perverse and rebellious against God, it is no wonder that the people in general

apostatized. This is to be understood of their king as supreme, and all subordinate rulers; of their judges and magistrates of every order; of all their governors, both civil and ecclesiastic; and not at Gilgal only, but in all the land. There is an elegant play on words^{f184} in the original, the beauty of which cannot be expressed in the translation.

Ver. 16. *Ephraim is smitten*, etc.] The people of the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, who had been like a tree planted in a pleasant place, (^{<2093>}Hosea 9:13); and were in very flourishing circumstances in the times of Jeroboam the second; but now were like a tree smitten with thunder and lightning, or hail stones, and beat to pieces; or with the heat of the sun, or with blasting winds, or by worms; as in the succeeding reigns, by the judgments of God upon them; by civil wars, conspiracies, and murders among themselves; and by the exactions of Pul and depredations of Tiglathpileser kings of Assyria; and quickly would be smitten again; the present being put for the future, because of the certainty of it, as usual in prophetic writings; or be utterly destroyed by Shalmaneser, and be no more a kingdom:

their root is dried up; like the root of a tree that has no sap and moisture in it, and can communicate none to the body and branches of the tree, which in course must die. This may be understood of their king, princes, nobles, and chief men, the support and strength of the nations; and of parents and heads of families, cut off by one judgment or another:

they shall bear no fruit; as a tree thus smitten, and its root dried up, cannot; so neither, this being their case, there would be none to beget, nor any to bear children, and bring them forth; called the fruit of the womb, in allusion to the fruit of trees:

yea, though they bring forth; though some of them should be spared, women with their husbands, and should procreate children:

yet will I slay [even] the beloved [fruit] of their womb; their children they should bring forth, on whom their affections were strongly set; and the rather, as they were but few, and from whom they had raised expectations of building up their families; even these the Lord would slay, or suffer to be slain, either by the sword of the enemy, or by famine, or by pestilence, or by some disease or another; so that there should be no hope of a future posterity, at least of no great number of them.

Ver. 17. *My God will cast them away*, etc.] With loathsomeness and contempt, having sinned against him, and done such abominable things; cast them out of their own land, as men not fit to live in it; cast them out of his sight, as not able to endure them; cast them away, as unprofitable and good for nothing; reject them from being his people; no more own them in the relation they had stood in to him; nor show them any more favour, at least until the conversion of them in the times of the Messiah. These are the words of the prophet, who calls the Lord his God, whom he worshipped, by whom he was sent, and in whose name he prophesied; and this in opposition to, and distinction from Israel, who worshipped other gods, and who had cast off the true God, and were now, or would be, cast away by him, and so no longer their God:

because they did not hearken unto him; to his word, as the Targum; to him speaking by his prophets; to the instructions, admonitions, threatenings, and predictions delivered to them from him; they did not obey his law, regard his will, or attend his worship; which was the cause of the rejection of them, and a just one:

and they shall be wanderers among the nations; being dispersed by the Assyrians in the several nations of the world, where they were fugitives and vagabonds; as their posterity are to this day.