INTRODUCTION

The first of the twelve minor prophets in the order of the canon (called "minor," not as less in point of inspired authority, but simply in point of size). The twelve are first mentioned by Jesus, the son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 49:10). St. Stephen, in Ac 7:42 (in referring to Am 5:27), quotes them as forming one collective body of writings, "the book of the prophets." So JEROME and MELITO, the first Greek father who has left us a catalogue of these books. The collection of the sacred books is by Jewish tradition attributed to the great synagogue of learned scribes formed by Ezra. Many think Nehemiah completed this collection by adding to the books already in the canon those of his own times. Malachi, the last in the series, probably aided him in determining with infallible authority what books were entitled to be ranked in the inspired canon. The chronological order differs from the canonical. Joel, about 810 B.C.; Jonah, about 810 B.C., or, as others, first, 862 B.C.; Amos, about 790 B.C.; Hosea, about 784 B.C. Hosea, the contemporary of Isaiah, Micah, and Amos, seems to have entered on his prophetical office in the last years of Jeroboam (contemporary in part with Uzziah), and to have ended it in the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, 722 B.C., that is, about sixty years in all, from 784 B.C. to 722 B.C. The prophets, however, were not uninterruptedly engaged in prophesying. Considerable intervals elapsed, though their office as divinely commissioned public teachers was never wholly laid aside. The Book of Hosea which we have constitutes only that portion of his public teachings which the Holy Spirit saw fit to preserve for the benefit of the Church. The cause of his being placed first of the twelve was, probably, the length, the vivid earnestness, and patriotism of his prophecies, as well as their closer resemblance to those of the greater prophets. His style is abrupt, sententious, and unrounded; the connecting particles are few; there are changes of person, and anomalies of gender, number, and construction. His name means Salvation. He was son of Beeri, of the tribe of Issachar, born in Beth-shemesh [JEROME]. His mention, in the inscription, of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, is no proof that he belonged to Judah: for the prophets in Israel regarded its separation from Judah, civil as well as religious, as an apostasy from God, who promised the dominion of the theocracy to the line of David. Hence Elijah in Israel took twelve stones to represent Judah, as well as Israel (1Ki 18:31). Hence Hosea dates from Judah's kings, as well as from Jeroboam of Israel, though he belonged to Israel, with whose sins and fate his book is chiefly occupied. He, however, makes incidental references to Judah. His first prophecy foretells the overthrow of Jehu's house, fulfilled on the death of
Jeroboam, Jehu's great-grandson (2Ki 15:12), in Zachariah, Jeroboam's son, the fourth and last from Jehu, conspired against by Shallum. This first prediction was doubtless in Jeroboam's life, as Zachariah, his son, was only suffered to reign six months; thus the inscription is verified that "the word of the Lord came unto him in the days of Jeroboam" (Ho 1:1). Again, in Ho 10:14, Shalmaneser's expedition against Israel is alluded to as past, that is, the first inroad against King Hoshea, who began to reign in the twelfth year of Ahaz; so that as Ahaz' whole reign was sixteen years, the prophecy seems to have been given about the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. Thus the inscription is confirmed that the exercise of his prophetical functions was of such a protracted duration.

Hosea (Ho 11:1) is quoted in Mt 2:15; also Ho 6:6 in Mt 9:13; 12:7; compare Ro 9:25, 26, quoting Ho 1:10; 2:1, 23; 1Co 15:55, quoting Ho 13:14; 1Pe 2:10, quoting Ho 1:9, 10; 2:23. Messianic references are not frequent; but the predictions of the future conversion of Israel to the Lord their God, and David their king, and of the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that his spiritual seed should be as the sand of the sea (Ho 1:10; 3:5), clearly refer to the New Testament dispensation.

The first and third chapters are in prose, the rest of the book is rhythmical.

CHAPTER 1

Ho 1:1-11. INSCRIPTION.

Spiritual whoredom of Israel set forth by symbolical acts; Gomer taken to wife at God's command: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi, the children. Yet a promise of Judah and Israel's restoration.

1. The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea--See Introduction.
   Jeroboam--the second; who died in the fifteenth year of Uzziah's forty-one years' reign. From his time forth all Israel's kings worshipped false gods: Zachariah (2Ki 15:9), Menahem (2Ki 15:18), Pekahiah (2Ki 15:24), Pekah (2Ki 15:28), Hoshea (2Ki 17:2). As Israel was most flourishing externally under Jeroboam II, who recovered the possessions seized on by Syria, Hosea's prophecy of its downfall at that time was the more striking as it could not have been foreseen by mere human sagacity. Jonah the prophet had promised success to Jeroboam II from God, not for the king's merit, but from God's mercy to Israel; so the coast of Israel was restored by Jeroboam II from the entering of Hamath to the sea of the plain (2Ki 14:23-27).

2. beginning--not of the prophet's predictions generally, but of those spoken by Hosea.
   take . . . wife of whoredoms--not externally acted, but internally and in vision, as a pictorial illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness [HENGSTENBERG]. Compare Eze 16:8, 15, &c. Besides the loathsomeness of such a marriage, if an external act, it would require years for the birth of three children, which would weaken the symbol (compare Eze 4:4). HENDERSON objects that there is no hint of the transaction being fictitious: Gomer fell into lewdness after her union with Hosea, not before; for thus only she was a fit symbol of Israel, who lapsed into spiritual whoredom after the marriage contract with God on Sinai, and made even before at the call of the patriarchs of Israel. Gomer is called "a wife of whoredoms," anticipatively.
children of whoredoms--The kingdom collectively is viewed as a mother; the individual subjects of it are spoken of as her children. "Take" being applied to both implies that they refer to the same thing viewed under different aspects. The "children" were not the prophet's own, but born of adultery, and presented to him as his [KITTO, Biblical Cyclopædia]. Rather, "children of whoredoms" means that the children, like their mother, fell into spiritual fornication. Compare "bare him a son" (see Ho 2:4, 5). Being children of a spiritual whore, they naturally fell into her whorish ways.

3. Gomer . . . daughter of Diblaim--symbolical names; literally, "completion, daughter of grape cakes"; the dual expressing the double layers in which these dainties were baked. So, one completely given up to sensuality. MAURER explains "Gomer" as literally, "a burning coal." Compare Pr 6:27, 29, as to an adulteress; Job 31:9, 12.

4. Jezreel--that is, "God will scatter" (compare Zec 10:9). It was the royal city of Ahab and his successors, in the tribe of Issachar. Here Jehu exercised his greatest cruelties (2Ki 9:16, 25, 33; 10:11, 14, 17). There is in the name an allusion to "Israel" by a play of letters and sounds.

5. bow--the prowess (Jer 49:35; compare Ge 49:24).

valley of Jezreel--afterwards called Esdraelon, extending ten miles in breadth, and in length from Jordan to the Mediterranean near Mount Carmel, the great battlefield of Palestine (Jud 6:33; 1Sa 29:1).

6. Lo-ruhamah--that is, "not an object of mercy or gracious favor."

take . . . away--Israel, as a kingdom, was never restored from Assyria, as Judah was from Babylon after seventy years. MAURER translates according to the primary meaning, "No more will I have mercy on the house of Israel, so as to pardon them."

7. Judah is only incidentally mentioned to form a contrast to Israel.

by the Lord their God--more emphatic than "by Myself"; by that Jehovah (Me) whom they worship as their God, whereas ye despise Him.

not . . . by bow--on which ye Israelites rely (Ho 1:5, "the bow of Israel"); Jeroboam II was famous as a warrior (2Ki 14:25). Yet it was not by their warlike power Jehovah would save Judah (1Sa 17:47; Ps 20:7). The deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib (2Ki 19:35), and the restoration from Babylon, are herein predicted.

8. weaned--said to complete the symbolical picture, not having any special signification as to Israel [HENDERSON]. Israel was bereft of all the privileges which were as needful to them as milk is to infants (compare Ps 131:2; 1Pe 2:2) [VATABLUS]. Israel was not suddenly, but gradually cast off; God bore with them with long-suffering, until they were incurable [CALVIN]. But as it is not God, but Gomer who weans Lo-ruhamah, the weaning may imply the lust of Gomer, who was hardly weaned when she is again pregnant [MANGER].

9. Lo-Ammi--once "My people," but henceforth not so (Eze 16:8). The intervals between the marriage and the successive births of the three children, imply that three successive generations are intended. Jezreel, the first child, represents the dynasty of Jeroboam I and his successors, ending with Jehu's shedding the blood of Jeroboam's line in Jezreel; it was there that Jezebel was
slain, in vengeance for Naboth's blood shed in the same Jezreel (1Ki 16:1; 2Ki 9:21, 30). The scenes of Jezreel were to be enacted over again on Jehu's degenerate race. At Jezreel Assyria routed Israel [JEROME]. The child's name associates past sins, intermediate punishments, and final overthrow. Lo-ruhamah ("not pitied"), the second child, is a daughter, representing the effeminate period which followed the overthrow of the first dynasty, when Israel was at once abject and impious. Lo-Ammi ("not my people"), the third child, a son, represents the vigorous dynasty (2Ki 14:25) of Jeroboam II; but, as prosperity did not bring with it revived piety, they were still not God's people.

10. Literally fulfilled in part at the return from Babylon, in which many Israelites joined with Judah. Spiritually, the believing seed of Jacob or Israel, Gentiles as well as Jews, numerous "as the sand" (Ge 32:12); the Gentiles, once not God's people, becoming His "sons" (Joh 1:12; Ro 9:25, 26; 1Pe 2:10; 1Jo 3:1). To be fulfilled in its literal fulness hereafter in Israel's restoration (Ro 11:26).

the living God--opposed to their dead idols.


one head--Zerubbabel typically; Christ antitypically, under whom alone Israel and Judah are joined, the "Head" of the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23), and of the hereafter united kingdom of Judah and Israel (Jer 34:5, 6; Eze 34:23). Though "appointed" by the Father (Ps 2:6), Christ is in another sense "appointed" as their Head by His people, when they accept and embrace Him as such.

out of the land--of the Gentiles among whom they sojourn.

the day of Jezreel--"The day of one" is the time of God's special visitation of him, either in wrath or in mercy. Here "Jezreel" is in a different sense from that in Ho 1:4, "God will sow," not "God will scatter"; they shall be the seed of God, planted by God again in their own land (Jer 24:6; 31:28; 32:41; Am 9:15).

CHAPTER 2

Ho 2:1-23. APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOLS IN THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Israel's spiritual fornication, and her threatened punishment: yet a promise of God's restored favor, when chastisements have produced their designed effect.

1. Say . . . unto . . . brethren, Ammi, &c.--that is, When the prediction (Ho 1:11) shall be accomplished, then ye will call one another, as brothers and sisters in the family of God, Ammi and Ruhamah.

2. Plead--expostulate.

mother--that is, the nation collectively. The address is to "her children," that is, to the individual citizens of the state (compare Isa 50:1).

for she is not my wife--She has deprived herself of her high privilege by spiritual adultery.

out of her sight--rather, "from her face." Her very countenance unblushingly betrayed her lust, as did also her exposed "breasts."
3. set her as in the day . . . born—(Eze 16:4; 23:25, 26, 28, 29). The day of her political "birth" was when God delivered her from the bondage of Egypt, and set up the theocracy.

make her as a wilderness—(Jer 6:8; Zep 2:13). Translate, "make her as the wilderness," namely, that in which she passed forty years on her way to her goodly possession of Canaan.

With this agrees the mention of "thirst" (compare Jer 2:6).

4. her children--Not even her individual members shall escape the doom of the nation collectively, for they are individually guilty.

5. I will go after--The Hebrew expresses a settled determination.

lovers--the idols which Israel fancied to be the givers of all their goods, whereas God gave all these goods (Ho 2:8-13; compare Jer 44:17-19).

bread and . . . water--the necessaries of life in food.

wool . . . flax--clothing.

oil . . . drink--perfumed unguents and palatable drinks: the luxuries of Hebrew life.

6, 7. thorns . . . wall--(Job 19:8; La 3:7, 9). The hindrances which the captivity interposed between Israel and her idols. As she attributes all her temporal blessings to idols, I will reduce her to straits in which, when she in vain has sought help from false gods, she will at last seek Me as her only God and Husband, as at the first (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14; Eze 16:8).

then--before Israel's apostasy, under Jeroboam. The way of duty is hedged about with thorns; it is the way of sin that is hedged up with thorns. Crosses in an evil course are God's hedges to turn us from it. Restraining grace and restraining providences (even sicknesses and trials) are great blessings when they stop us in a course of sin. Compare Lu 15:14-18, "I will arise, and go to my father." So here, "I will go, and return," &c.; crosses in the both cases being sanctified to produce this effect.

8. she did not know that I--not the idols, as she thought: the "lovers" alluded to in Ho 2:5.

which they prepared for Baal--that is, of which they made images of Baal, or at least the plate covering of them (Ho 8:4). Baal was the Phœnician sun-god: answering to the female Astarte, the moon-goddess. The name of the idol is found in the Phœnician Hannibal, Hasdrubal. Israel borrowed it from the Tyrians.

9. my corn . . . my wool . . . my flax--in contrast to "my bread . . . my wool . . . my flax," (Ho 2:5). Compare also Ho 2:21-23, on God as the great First Cause giving these through secondary instruments in nature. "Return, and take away," is equivalent to, "I will take back again," namely, by sending storms, locusts, Assyrian enemies, &c. "Therefore," that is, because she did not acknowledge Me as the Giver.

in the time thereof--in the harvest-time.

10. lewdness--rather, "the shame of her nakedness"; laying aside the figure, "I will expose her in her state, bereft of every necessary, before her lovers," that is, the idols (personified, as if they could see), who, nevertheless, can give her no help. "Discover" is appropriate to stripping off the self-flatteries of her hypocrisy.
11. her feast days--of Jeroboam's appointment, distinct from the Mosaic (1Ki 12:32). However, most of the Mosaic feasts, "new-moons" and "sabbaths" to Jehovah, remained, but to degenerate Israel worship was a weariness; they cared only for the carnal indulgence on them (Am 8:5).

12. my rewards--my hire as a harlot (Isa 23:17, 18).
lovers--idols.
destroy . . . vines . . . make . . . forest-- (Isa 5:6; 7:23, 24). Fulfilled in the overthrow of Israel by Assyria (Ho 9:4, 5).

13. days of Baalim--the days consecrated to the Baals, or various images of Baal in different cities, whence the names Baal-gad, Baal-hermon, &c.
decked herself with . . . earrings--rather, "nose-rings" (Isa 3:21; Eze 16:12, Margin), with which harlots decked themselves to attract admirers: answering to the ornaments in which the Israelites decked themselves on the idols' feasts.

forgat me--worse than the nations which had never known God. Israel wilfully apostatized from Jehovah, whom she had known.

14. Therefore--rather, "Nevertheless" [HENDERSON]. English Version gives a more lovely idea of God. That which would provoke all others to unappeasable wrath, Israel's perversity and consequent punishment, is made a reason why God should at last have mercy on her. As the "therefore" (Ho 2:9) expresses Israel's punishment as the consequence of Israel's guilt, so "therefore" here, as in Ho 2:6, expresses, that when that punishment has effected its designed end, the hedging up her way with thorns so that she returns to God, her first love, the consequence in God's wondrous grace is, He "speaks comfortably" (literally, "speaks to her heart"; compare Jud 19:8; Ru 2:13). So obstinate is she that God has to "allure her," that is, so to temper judgment with unlooked-for grace as to win her to His ways. For this purpose it was necessary to "bring her into the wilderness" (that is, into temporal want and trials) first, to make her sin hateful to her by its bitter fruits, and God's subsequent grace the more precious to her by the contrast of the "wilderness." JEROME makes the "bringing into the wilderness" to be rather a deliverance from her enemies, just as ancient Israel was brought into the wilderness from the bondage of Egypt; to this the phrase here alludes (compare Ho 2:15). The wilderness sojourn, however, is not literal, but moral: while still in the land of their enemies locally, by the discipline of the trial rendering the word of God sweet to them, they are to be brought morally into the wilderness state, that is, into a state of preparedness for returning to their temporal and spiritual privileges in their own land; just as the literal wilderness prepared their fathers for Canaan: thus the bringing of them into the wilderness state is virtually a deliverance from their enemies.

15. from thence--returning from the wilderness. God gives Israel a fresh grant of Canaan, which she had forfeited; so of her vineyards, &c. (Ho 2:9, 12).

Achor--that is, "trouble." As formerly Israel, after their tedious journey through the wilderness, met with the trouble resulting from Achan's crime in this valley, on the very threshold of Canaan, and yet that trouble was presently turned into joy at the great victory at Ai, which threw all Canaan into their hands (Jos 7:1-8:28); so the very trouble of Israel's wilderness state will be the "door of hope" opening to better days. The valley of Achor, near Jericho, was specially fruitful (Isa 65:10); so "trouble" and "hope" are rightly blended in connection with it.
sing . . . as . . . when she came . . . out of . . . Egypt--It shall be a second exodus song, such as Israel sang after the deliverance at the Red Sea (Ex 15:1-21; compare Isa 11:15, 16); and "the song of Moses" (Re 15:2, 3) sung by those who through the Lamb overcome the beast, and so stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, emblems of fiery trial, such as that of Israel at the Red Sea.

16. Ishi . . . no more Baali--"my Husband . . . no more my Lord." Affection is the prominent idea in "Husband"; rule, in "Lord." The chief reason for the substitution of Husband for Lord appears in Ho 2:17; namely, Baali, the Hebrew for my Lord, had been perverted to express the images of Baal, whose name ought not to be taken on their lips (Ex 23:13; Zec 13:2).

17. Baalim--plural, expressing the various images of Baal, which, according to the places of their erection, received various names, Baal-gad, Baal-ammon, &c.

18. for them--for their benefit.

covenant . . . with the beasts--not to hurt them (Job 5:23). They shall fulfil the original law of their creation by becoming subject to man, when man fulfils the law of his being by being subject to God. To be realized fully in millennial times (Isa 11:6-9).

break the bow . . . out of the earth--rather, "out of the land"; that is, I will break and remove war out of the earth (Ps 46:9); and "out of the land" of Israel first (Isa 2:4; Eze 39:9, 10; Zec 9:9, 10).

lie down--A reclining posture is the usual one with Orientals when not in action.

safely-- (Jer 23:6).

19, 20. "Betroth" is thrice repeated, implying the intense love of God to His people; and perhaps, also, the three Persons of the Triune God, severally engaging to make good the betrothal. The marriage covenant will be as it were renewed from the beginning, on a different footing; not for a time only, as before, through the apostasy of the people, but "forever" through the grace of God writing the law on their hearts by the Spirit of Messiah (Jer 31:31-37).

righteousness . . . judgment--in rectitude and truth.

loving-kindness, &c.--Hereby God assures Israel, who might doubt the possibility of their restoration to His favor; low, sunk, and unworthy as thou art. I will restore thee from a regard to My own "loving-kindness," not thy merits.

20. faithfulness--to My new covenant of grace with thee (1Th 5:24; Heb 10:23).

21. in that day--of grace to Israel.

heavens . . . hear the earth--personification. However many be the intermediate instruments, God is the Great First Cause of all nature's phenomena. God had threatened (Ho 2:9) He would take back His corn, His wine, &c. Here, on the contrary, God promises to hearken to the skies, as it were, supplicating Him to fill them with rain to pour on the earth; and that the skies again would hearken to the earth begging for a supply of the rain it requires; and again, that the earth would hearken to the corn, wine, and oil, begging it to bring them forth; and these again would hear Jezreel, that is, would fulfil Israel's prayers for a supply of them. Israel is now no longer "Jezreel" in the sense, "God will SCATTER" (Ho 1:4), but in the sense, "God will PLANT" (Ho 1:11).
23. I will sow her--referring to the meaning of Jezreel (Ho 2:22).

CHAPTER 3

Ho 3:1-5. ISRAEL'S CONDITION IN THEIR PRESENT DISPERSION, SUBSEQUENT TO THEIR RETURN FROM BABYLON, SYMBOLIZED.

The prophet is to take back his wife, though unfaithful, as foretold in Ho 1:2. He purchases her from her paramour, stipulating she should wait for a long period before she should be restored to her conjugal rights. So Israel is to live for a long period without her ancient rites of religion, and yet be free from idolatry; then at last she shall acknowledge Messiah, and know Jehovah's goodness restored to her.

1. Go yet--"Go again," referring to Ho 1:2 [HENDERSON].
   a woman--purposely indefinite, for thy wife, to express the separation in which Hosea had lived from Gomer for her unfaithfulness.
   beloved of her friend--used for "her husband," on account of the estrangement between them. She was still beloved of her husband, though an adulteress; just as God still loved Israel, though idolatrous (Jer 3:20). Hosea is told, not as in Ho 1:2, "take a wife," but "love" her, that is, renew thy conjugal kindness to her.
   who look to other gods--that is, have done so heretofore, but henceforth (from the return from Babylon) shall do so no more (Ho 3:4).
   flagons of wine--rather, pressed cakes of dried grapes, such as were offered to idols (Jer 7:18) [MAURER].

2. I bought her--The price paid is too small to be a probable dowry wherewith to buy a wife from her parents; but it is just half the price of a female slave, in money, the rest of the price being made up in grain (Ex 21:32). Hosea pays this for the redemption of his wife, who has become the slave of her paramour. The price being half grain was because the latter was the allowance of food for the slave, and of the coarsest kind, not wheat, but barley. Israel, as committing sin, was the slave of sin (Joh 8:34; Ro 6:16-20; 2Pe 2:19). The low price expresses Israel's worthlessness.

3. abide for me--separate from intercourse with any other man, and remaining for me who have redeemed thee (compare De 21:13).
   so will I also be for thee--remain for thee, not taking any other consort. As Israel should long remain without serving other gods, yet separate from Jehovah; so Jehovah on His part, in this long period of estrangement, would form no marriage covenant with any other people (compare Ho 3:4). He would not immediately receive her to marriage privileges, but would test her repentance and discipline her by the long probation; still the marriage covenant would hold good, she was to be kept separated for but a time, not divorced (Isa 50:1); in God's good time she shall be restored.

4. The long period here foretold was to be one in which Israel should have no civil polity, king, or prince, no sacrifice to Jehovah, and yet no idol, or false god, no ephod, or teraphim. Exactly describing their state for the last nineteen centuries, separate from idols, yet without any
legal sacrifice to Jehovah, whom they profess to worship, and without being acknowledged by
Him as His Church. So KIMCHI, a Jew, explains it. The ephod was worn by the high priest above
the tunic and robe. It consisted of two finely wrought pieces which hung down, the one in front
over the breast, the other on the back, to the middle of the thigh; joined on the shoulders by
golden clasps set in onyx stones with the names of the twelve tribes, and fastened round the waist
by a girdle (Ex 28:6-12). The common ephod worn by the lower priests, Levites, and any person
performing sacred rites, was of linen (2Sa 6:14; 1Ch 15:27). In the breast were the Urim and
Thummim by which God gave responses to the Hebrews. The latter was one of the five things
which the second temple lacked, and which the first had. It, as representing the divinely
constituted priesthood, is opposed to the idolatrous "teraphim," as "sacrifice" (to Jehovah) is to
"an (idolatrous) image." "Abide" answers to "thou shalt abide for me" (Ho 3:3). Abide in solitary
isolation, as a separated wife. The teraphim were tutelary household gods, in the shape of human
busts, cut off at the waist (as the root of the Hebrew word implies) [MAURER], (Ge 31:19, 30-
35). They were supposed to give responses to consulters (2Ki 23:24; Eze 21:21, Margin; Zec
10:2). Saul's daughter, Michal, putting one in a bed, as if it were David, proves the shape to have
been that of a man.

5. Afterward--after the long period ("many days," Ho 3:4) has elapsed.

return--from their idols to "their God," from whom they had wandered.

David their king--Israel had forsaken the worship of Jehovah at the same time that they
forsook their allegiance to David's line. Their repentance towards God is therefore to be
accompanied by their return to the latter. So Judah and Israel shall be one, and under "one head,"
as is also foretold (Ho 1:11). That representative and antitype of David is Messiah. "David"
means "the beloved." Compare as to Messiah, Mt 3:17; Eph 1:6. Messiah is called David (Isa
55:3, 4; Jer 30:9; Eze 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25).

fear the Lord and his goodness--that is, tremblingly flee to the Lord, to escape from the
wrath to come; and to His goodness," as manifested in Messiah, which attracts them to Him (Jer
31:12). The "fear" is not that which "hath torment" (1Jo 4:18), but reverence inspired by His
goodness realized in the soul (Ps 130:4).

the latter days--those of Messiah [KIMCHI].

CHAPTER 4

Ho 4:1-19. HENCEFORTH THE PROPHET SPEAKS PLAINLY AND WITHOUT SYMBOL, IN
TERSE, SENTENTIOUS PROPOSITIONS.

In this chapter he reproves the people and priests for their sins in the interregnum which
followed Jeroboam's death; hence there is no mention of the king or his family; and in Ho 4:2
bloodshed and other evils usual in a civil war are specified.

1. Israel--the ten tribes.

controversy--judicial ground of complaint (Isa 1:18; Jer 25:31; Mic 6:2).

no . . . knowledge of God--exhibited in practice (Jer 22:16).
2. they break out--bursting through every restraint. 

blood toucheth blood--literally, "bloods." One act of bloodshed follows another without any interval between (see 2Ki 15:8-16, 25; Mic 7:2).

3. land . . . languish-- (Isa 19:8; 24:4; Joe 1:10, 12).

sea--including all bodies of water, as pools and even rivers (see on Isa 19:5). A general drought, the greatest calamity in the East, is threatened.

4. let no man . . . reprove--Great as is the sin of Israel, it is hopeless to reprove them; for their presumptuous guilt is as great as that of one who refuses to obey the priest when giving judgment in the name of Jehovah, and who therefore is to be put to death (De 17:12). They rush on to their own destruction as wilfully as such a one.

thy people--the ten tribes of Israel; distinct from Judah (Ho 4:1).

5. fall in the day--in broad daylight, a time when an attack would not be expected (see on Jer 6:4, 5; Jer 15:8).

in . . . night--No time, night or day, shall be free from the slaughter of individuals of the people, as well as of the false prophets.

thy mother--the Israelitish state, of which the citizens are the children (Ho 2:2).

6. lack of knowledge--"of God" (Ho 4:1), that is, lack of piety. Their ignorance was wilful, as the epithet, "My people," implies; they ought to have known, having the opportunity, as the people of God.

thou--O priest, so-called. Not regularly constituted, but still bearing the name, while confounding the worship of Jehovah and of the calves in Beth-el (1Ki 12:29, 31).

I will . . . forget thy children--Not only those who then were alive should be deprived of the priesthood, but their children who, in the ordinary course would have succeeded them, should be set aside.

7. As they were increased--in numbers and power. Compare Ho 4:6, "thy children," to which their "increase" in numbers refers.

so they sinned--(Compare Ho 10:1 and Ho 13:6).

will I change their glory into shame--that is, I will strip them of all they now glory in (their numbers and power), and give them shame instead. A just retribution: as they changed their glory into shame, by idolatry (Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11; Ro 1:23; Php 3:19).

8. eat . . . sin of my people--that is, the sin offerings (Le 6:26; 10:17). The priests greedily devoured them.

set their heart on their iniquity--literally, "lift up the animal soul to lust after," or strongly desire. Compare De 24:15, Margin; Ps 24:4; Jer 22:27. The priests set their own hearts on the iniquity of the people, instead of trying to suppress it. For the more the people sinned, the more sacrificial victims in atonement for sin the priests gained.

9. like people, like priest--They are one in guilt; therefore they shall be one in punishment ( Isa 24:2).

reward them their doings--in homely phrase, "pay them back in their own coin" (Pr 1:31).
10. eat, and not have enough--just retribution on those who "eat up (greedily) the sin of My people" (Ho 4:8; Mic 6:14; Hag 1:6).

whoredom, and . . . not increase--literally, "break forth"; used of giving birth to children (Ge 28:14, Margin; compare Ge 38:29). Not only their wives, but their concubines, shall be barren. To be childless was considered a great calamity among the Jews.

11. A moral truth applicable to all times. The special reference here is to the licentious orgies connected with the Syrian worship, which lured Israel away from the pure worship of God (Isa 28:1, 7; Am 4:1).

take away the heart--that is, the understanding; make men blind to their own true good (Ec 7:7).

12. Instances of their understanding ("heart") being "taken away."

stocks--wooden idols (Jer 2:27; Hab 2:19).

staff--alluding to divination by rods (see on Eze 21:21, 22). The diviner, says ROSENMULLER, threw a rod from him, which was stripped of its bark on one side, not on the other: if the bare side turned uppermost, it was a good omen; if the side with the bark, it was a bad omen. The Arabs used two rods, the one marked God bids, the other, God forbids; whichever came out first, in drawing them out of a case, gave the omen for, or against, an undertaking.

declareth--that is, is consulted to inform them of future events.

spirit of whoredoms--a general disposition on the part of all towards idolatry (Ho 5:4).

err--go astray from the true God.

from under their God--They have gone away from God under whom they were, as a wife is under the dominion of her husband.

13. upon . . . mountains--High places were selected by idolaters on which to sacrifice, because of their greater nearness to the heavenly hosts which they worshipped (De 12:2).

elms--rather, "terebinths" [MAURER].

shadow . . . good--screening the lascivious worshippers from the heat of the sun.

daughters . . . commit whoredom . . . spouses . . . adultery--in the polluted worship of Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of love.

14. I will not punish . . . daughters--I will visit with the heaviest punishments "not" the unchaste "daughters and spouses," but the fathers and husbands; for it is these who "themselves" have set the bad example, so that as compared with the punishment of the latter, that of the former shall seem as nothing [MUNSTER].

separated with whores--withdrawn from the assembly of worshippers to some receptacle of impurity for carnal connection with whores.

sacrifice with harlots--They commit lewdness with women who devote their persons to be violated in honor of Astarte. (So the Hebrew for "harlots" means, as distinguished from "whores"). Compare Nu 25:1-3; and the prohibition, De 23:18.

not understand-- (Isa 44:18; 45:20).

shall fall--shall be cast down.
15. Though Israel's ten tribes indulge in spiritual harlotry, at least thou, Judah, who hast the legal priesthood, and the temple rites, and Jerusalem, do not follow her bad example.

Gilgal--situated between Jordan and Jericho on the confines of Samaria; once a holy place to Jehovah (Jos 5:10-15; Isa 10:8; 15:21); afterwards desecrated by idol-worship (Ho 9:15; 12:11; Am 4:4; 5:5; compare Jud 3:19, Margin).

Beth-aven--that is, "house of vanity" or idols: a name substituted in contempt for Beth-el, "the house of God"; once sacred to Jehovah (Ge 28:17, 19; 35:7), but made by Jeroboam the seat of the worship of the calves (1Ki 12:28-33; 13:1; Jer 48:13; Am 3:14; 7:13). "Go up" refers to the fact that Beth-el was on a hill (Jos 16:1).

nor swear. The Lord liveth--This formula of oath was appointed by God Himself (De 6:13; 10:20; Jer 4:2). It is therefore here forbidden not absolutely, but in conjunction with idolatry and falsehood (Isa 48:1; Eze 20:39; Zep 1:5).

16. backsliding--Translate, "Israel is refractory, as a refractory heifer," namely, one that throws the yoke off her neck. Israel had represented God under the form of "calves" (1Ki 12:28); but it is she herself who is one.

lamb in a large place--not in a good sense, as in Isa 30:23. Here there is irony: lambs like a large pasture; but it is not so safe for them as a small one, duly fenced from wild beasts. God will "feed" them, but it shall be with the "rod" (Mic 7:14). It shall be no longer in the narrow territory of Israel, but "in a large place," namely, they shall be scattered in exile over the wide realm of Assyria, a prey to their foes; as lambs, which are timid, gregarious, and not solitary, are a prey when scattered asunder to wild beasts.

17. Ephraim--the ten tribes. Judah was at this time not so given to idolatry as afterwards.

joined to--closely and voluntarily; identifying themselves with them as a whoremonger becomes one flesh with the harlot (Nu 25:3; 1Co 6:16, 17).

idols--The Hebrew means also "sorrows," "pains," implying the pain which idolatry brings on its votaries.

let him alone--Leave him to himself. Let him reap the fruits of his own perverse choice; his case is desperate; say nothing to him (compare Jer 7:16). Here Ho 4:15 shows the address is to Judah, to avoid the contagion of Israel's bad example. He is bent on his own ruin; leave him to his fate, lest, instead of saving him, thou fall thyself (Isa 48:20; Jer 50:8; 51:6, 45; 2Co 6:17).

18. Their drink is sour--metaphor for utter degeneracy of principle (Isa 1:22). Or, unbridled licentiousness; not mere ordinary sin, but as abandoned as drunkards who vomit and smell sour with wine potations [CALVIN]. MAURER not so well translates, "When their drinking is over, they commit whoresoms," namely, in honor of Astarte (Ho 4:13, 14).

her rulers--Israel's; literally, "shields" (compare Ps 47:9).

with shame . . . love, Give ye-- (Pr 30:15). No remedy could be effectual against their corruptions since the very rulers sold justice for gifts [CALVIN]. MAURER translates, "The rulers are marvelously enamored of shame." English Version is better.

19. Israel shall be swept away from her land (Ho 4:16) suddenly and violently as if by "the wings of the wind" (Ps 18:10; 104:3; Jer 4:11, 12).

ashamed . . . of their sacrifices--disappointed to their shame in their hope of help through their sacrifices to idols.
CHAPTER 5

Ho 5:1-5. God's Judgments on the Priests, People, and Princes of Israel for Their Sins.

Judah, too, being guilty shall be punished; nor shall Assyria, whose aid they both sought, save them; judgments shall at last lead them to repentance.

1. The king—probably Pekah; the contemporary of Ahaz, king of Judah, under whom idolatry was first carried so far in Judah as to call for the judgment of the joint Syrian and Israelite invasion, as also that of Assyria.

Judgment is towards you—that is, threatens you from God.

Ye have been a snare on Mizpah . . . net . . . upon Tabor—As hunters spread their net and snares on the hills, Mizpah and Tabor, so ye have snared the people into idolatry and made them your prey by injustice. As Mizpah and Tabor mean a "watch tower," and a "lofty place," a fit scene for hunters, playing on the words, the prophet implies, in the lofty place in which I have set you, whereas ye ought to have been the watchers of the people, guarding them from evil, ye have been as hunters entrapping them into it [Jerome]. These two places are specified, Mizpah in the east and Tabor in the west, to include the high places throughout the whole kingdom, in which Israel's rulers set up idolatrous altars.

2. Revolters—apostates.

Profound—deeply rooted [Calvin] and sunk to the lowest depths, excessive in their idolatry (Ho 9:9; Isa 31:6) [Henderson]. From the antithesis (Ho 5:3), "not hid from me," I prefer explaining, profoundly cunning in their idolatry. Jeroboam thought it a profound piece of policy to set up golden calves to represent God in Dan and Beth-el, in order to prevent Israel's heart from turning again to David's line by going up to Jerusalem to worship. So Israel's subsequent idolatry was grounded by their leaders on various pleas of state expediency (compare Isa 29:15).

To . . . slaughter—He does not say "to sacrifice," for their so-called sacrifices were butcheries rather than sacrifices; there was nothing sacred about them, being to idols instead of to the holy God.

Though—Maurer translates, "and (in spite of their hope of safety through their slaughter of victims to idols) I will be a chastisement to them all." English Version is good sense: They have deeply revolted, notwithstanding all my prophetic warnings.

3. Ephraim—the tribe so called, as distinguished from "Israel" here, the other nine tribes. It was always foremost of the tribes of the northern kingdom. For four hundred years in early history, it, with Manasseh and Benjamin, its two dependent tribes, held the pre-eminence in the whole nation. Ephraim is here addressed as foremost in idolatry.

I how . . . not hid from me—notwithstanding their supposed profound cunning (Ho 5:2; Re 2:2, 9, 13, 19).

Now—"though I have been a rebuker of all them" (Ho 5:2) who commit such spiritual whoredoms, thou art now continuing in them.

4. They—Turning from a direct address to Ephraim, he uses the third person plural to characterize the people in general. The Hebrew is against the Margin, their doings will not suffer
them" the omission of "them" in the Hebrew after the verb being unusual. The sense is, they are incurable, for they will not permit (as the Hebrew literally means) their doings to be framed so as to turn unto God. Implying that they resist the Spirit of God, not suffering Him to renew them; and give themselves up to "the spirit of whoredoms" (in antithesis to "the Spirit of God" implied in "suffer" or "permit") (Ho 4:12; Isa 63:10; Eze 16:43; Ac 7:51).

5. the pride of Israel--wherewith they reject the warnings of God's prophets (Ho 5:2), and prefer their idols to God (Ho 7:10; Jer 13:17).
   testify to his face--openly to his face he shall be convicted of the pride which is so palpable in him. Or, "in his face," as in Isa 3:9.
   Judah . . . shall fall with them--This prophecy is later than Ho 4:15, when Judah had not gone so far in idolatry; now her imitation of Israel's bad example provokes the threat of her being doomed to share in Israel's punishment.

6. with . . . flocks--to propitiate Jehovah (Isa 1:11-15).
   seek . . . not find--because it is slavish fear that leads them to seek Him; and because it then shall be too late (Pr 1:28; Joh 7:34).

7. treacherously--as to the marriage covenant (Jer 3:20).
   strange children--alluding to "children of whoredoms" (Ho 1:2; 2:4). "Strange" or foreign implies that their idolatry was imported from abroad [HENDERSON]. Or rather, "regarded by God as strangers, not His," as being reared in idolatry. The case is desperate, when not only the existing, but also the rising, generation is reared in apostasy.
   a month--a very brief space of time shall elapse, and then punishment shall overtake them (Zec 11:8). The allusion seems to be to money loans, which were by the month, not as with us by the year. You cannot put it off; the time of your destruction is immediately and suddenly coming on you; just as the debtor must meet the creditor's demand at the expiration of the month. The prediction is of the invasion of Tiglath-pileser, who carried away Reuben, Gad, Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh.
   portions--that is, possessions. Their resources and garrisons will not avail to save them.
   HENDERSON explains from Isa 57:6, "portions" as their idols; the context favors this, "the Lord" the true "portion of His people" (De 32:9), being in antithesis to "their portions," the idols.

8. The arrival of the enemy is announced in the form of an injunction to blow an alarm.
   cornet . . . trumpet--The "cornet" was made of the curved horn of animals and was used by shepherds. The "trumpet" was of brass or silver, straight, and used in wars and on solemn occasions. The Hebrew is hatzotzerah, the sound imitating the trumpet note (Ho 8:1; Nu 10:2; Jer 4:5; Joe 2:1).
   Gibeah . . . Ramah--both in Benjamin (Isa 10:29).
   Beth-aven--in Benjamin; not as in Ho 4:15; Beth-el, but a town east of it (Jos 7:2). "Cry aloud," namely, to raise the alarm. "Benjamin" is put for the whole southern kingdom of Judah (compare Ho 5:5), being the first part of it which would meet the foe advancing from the north. "After thee, O Benjamin," implies the position of Beth-aven, behind Benjamin, at the borders of Ephraim. When the foe is at Beth-aven, he is at Benjamin's rear, close upon thee, O Benjamin (Jud 5:14).
9, 10. Israel is referred to in Ho 5:9, Judah in Ho 5:10.

the day of rebuke--the day when I shall chastise him.

among the tribes of Israel have I made known--proving that the scene of Hosea's labor was among the ten tribes.

that which shall surely be--namely, the coming judgment here foretold. It is no longer a conditional decree, leaving a hope of pardon on repentance; it is absolute, for Ephraim is hopelessly impenitent.

10. remove the bound-- (De 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Pr 22:28; 23:10). Proverbial for the rash setting aside of the ancestral laws by which men are kept to their duty. Ahaz and his courtiers ("the princes of Judah"), setting aside the ancient ordinances of God, removed the borders of the bases and the layer and the sea and introduced an idolatrous altar from Damascus (2Ki 16:10-18); also he burnt his children in the valley of Hinnom, after the abominations of the heathen (2Ch 28:3).

11. broken in judgment--namely, the "judgment" of God on him (Ho 5:1).

walked after the commandment--Jeroboam's, to worship the calves (2Ki 10:28-33). Compare Mic 6:16, "the statutes of Omri," namely, idolatrous statutes. We ought to obey God rather than men (Ac 5:29). JEROME reads "filthiness." The Septuagint gives the sense, not the literal translation: "after vanities."

12. as a moth--consuming a garment (Job 13:28; Ps 39:11; Isa 50:9).

Judah . . . rottenness--Ephraim, or the ten tribes, are as a garment eaten by the moth; Judah as the body itself consumed by rottenness (Pr 12:4). Perhaps alluding to the superiority of the latter in having the house of David, and the temple, the religious center of the nation [GROTIUS]. As in Ho 5:13, 14, the violence of the calamity is prefigured by the "wound" which "a lion" inflicts, so here its long protracted duration, and the certainty and completeness of the destruction from small unforeseen beginnings, by the images of a slowly but surely consuming moth and rottenness.

13. wound--literally, "bandage"; hence a bandaged wound (Isa 1:6; Jer 30:12). "Saw," that is, felt its weakened state politically, and the dangers that threatened it. It aggravates their perversity, that, though aware of their unsound and calamitous state, they did not inquire into the cause or seek a right remedy.

went . . . to the Assyrian--First, Menahem (2Ki 15:19) applied to Pul; again, Hoshea to Shalmaneser (2Ki 17:3).

sent to King Jareb--Understand Judah as the nominative to "sent." Thus, as "Ephraim saw his sickness" (the first clause) answers in the parallelism to "Ephraim went to the Assyrian" (the third clause), so "Judah saw his wound" (the second clause) answers to (Judah) "sent to King Jareb" (the fourth clause). Jareb ought rather to be translated, "their defender," literally, "avenger" [JEROME]. The Assyrian "king," ever ready, for his own aggrandizement, to mix himself up with the affairs of neighboring states, professed to undertake Israel's and Judah's cause; in Jud 6:32, Jerub, in Jerub-baal is so used, namely, "plead one's cause." Judah, under Ahaz, applied to Tiglath-pileser for aid against Syria and Israel (2Ki 16:7, 8; 2Ch 28:16-21); the Assyrian "distressed him, but strengthened him not," fulfilling the prophecy here, "he could not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.
14. lion—The black lion and the young lion are emblems of strength and ferocity (Ps 91:13).
I, even I—emphatic; when I, even I, the irresistible God, tear in pieces (Ps 50:22), no Assyrian power can rescue.
go away—as a lion stalks leisurely back with his prey to his lair.

15. return to my place—that is, withdraw My favor.
till they acknowledge their offence--The Hebrew is, "till they suffer the penalty of their guilt." Probably "accepting the punishment of their guilt" (compare Zec 11:5) is included in the idea, as English Version translates. Compare Le 26:40, 41; Jer 29:12, 13; Eze 6:9; 20:43; 36:31.
seek my face--that is, seek My favor (Pr 29:26, Margin).
in . . . affliction . . . seek me early—that is, diligently; rising up before dawn to seek Me (Ps 119:147; compare Ps 78:34).

CHAPTER 6

Ho 6:1-11. THE ISRAELITES' EXHORTATION TO ONE ANOTHER TO SEEK THE LORD.

At Ho 6:4 a new discourse, complaining of them, begins; for Ho 6:1-3 evidently belong to Ho 5:15, and form the happy termination of Israel's punishment: primarily, the return from Babylon; ultimately, the return from their present long dispersion. Ho 6:8 perhaps refers to the murder of Pekahiah; the discourse cannot be later than Pekah's reign, for it was under it that Gilead was carried into captivity (2Ki 15:29).

1. let us return--in order that God who has "returned to His place" may return to us (Ho 5:15).
torn, and . . . heal-- (De 32:39; Jer 30:17). They ascribe their punishment not to fortune, or man, but to God, and acknowledge that none (not the Assyrian, as they once vainly thought, Ho 5:13) but God can heal their wound. They are at the same time persuaded of the mercy of God, which persuasion is the starting-point of true repentance, and without which men would not seek, but hate and flee from God. Though our wound be severe, it is not past hope of recovery; there is room for grace, and a hope of pardon. He hath smitten us, but not so badly that He cannot heal us (Ps 130:4).

2. Primarily, in type, Israel's national revival, in a short period ("two or three" being used to denote a few days, Isa 17:6; Lu 13:32, 33); antitypically the language is so framed as to refer in its full accuracy only to Messiah, the ideal Israel (Isa 49:3; compare Mt 2:15, with Ho 11:1), raised on the third day (Joh 2:19; 1Co 15:4; compare Isa 53:10). "He shall prolong His days." Compare the similar use of Israel's political resurrection as the type of the general resurrection of which "Christ is the first-fruits" (Isa 26:19; Eze 37:1-14; Da 12:2).
live in his sight--enjoy His favour and the light of His countenance shining on us, as of old; in contrast to Ho 5:6, 15, "Withdrawn Himself from them."

3. know, if we follow on to know the Lord--The result of His recovered favor (Ho 6:2) will be onward growth in saving knowledge of God, as the result of perseverance in following after Him (Ps 63:8; Isa 54:13). "Then" implies the consequence of the revival in Ho 6:2. The "if" is not so much conditional, as expressive of the means which God's grace will sanctify to the full.
enlightenment of Israel in the knowledge of Him. As want of "knowledge of God" has been the source of all evils (Ho 4:1; 5:4), so the knowledge of Him will bring with it all blessings; yea, it is "life" (Joh 17:3). This knowledge is practice, not mere theory (Jer 22:15, 16). Theology is life, not science; realities, not words. This onward progress is illustrated by the light of "morning" increasing more and more "unto the perfect day" (Pr 4:18).

prepared--"is sure," literally, "fixed," ordered in His everlasting purposes of love to His covenant-people. Compare "prepared of God" (Ge 41:32, Margin; Re 12:6). Jehovah shall surely come to the relief of His people after their dark night of calamity.

as the morning--(2Sa 23:4).

as the rain . . . latter . . . former--(Job 29:23; Joe 2:23). First, "the rain" generally is mentioned; then the two rains (De 11:14) which caused the fertility of Palestine, and the absence of which was accounted the greatest calamity: "the latter rain" which falls in the latter half of February, and during March and April, just before the harvest whence it takes its name, from a root meaning "to gather"; and "the former rain," literally, "the darting rain," from the middle of October to the middle of December. As the rain fertilizes the otherwise barren land, so God's favor will restore Israel long nationally lifeless.

4. what shall I do unto thee--to bring thee back to piety. What more could be done that I have not done, both in mercies and chastenings (Isa 5:4)? At this verse a new discourse begins, resuming the threats (Ho 5:14). See opening remarks on this chapter.

goodness--godliness.

morning cloud--soon dispersed by the sun (Ho 13:3). There is a tacit contrast here to the promise of God's grace to Israel hereafter, in His going forth is "as the morning," shining more and more unto the perfect day; your goodness is "as a morning cloud," soon vanishing. His coming to His people is "as the (fertilizing) latter and former rains"; your coming to Him "as the early dew goeth away."

5. I hewed them by the prophets--that is, I announced by the prophets that they should be hewn asunder, like trees of the forest. God identifies His act with that of His prophets; the word being His instrument for executing His will (Jer 1:10; Eze 43:3).

by . . . words of my mouth--(Isa 11:4; Jer 23:29; Heb 4:12).

thy judgments--the judgments which I will inflict on thee, Ephraim and Judah (Ho 6:4). So "thy judgments," that is, those inflicted on thee (Zep 3:15).

are as the light, &c.--like the light, palpable to the eyes of all, as coming from God, the punisher of sin. HENDERSON translates, "lightning" (compare Margin, Job 37:3, 15).

6. mercy--put for piety in general, of which mercy or charity is a branch.

not sacrifice--that is, "rather than sacrifice." So "not" is merely comparative (Ex 16:8; Joe 2:13; Job 6:27; 1Ti 2:14). As God Himself instituted sacrifices, it cannot mean that He desired them not absolutely, but that even in the Old Testament, He valued moral obedience as the only end for which positive ordinances, such as sacrifices, were instituted--as of more importance than a mere external ritual obedience (1Sa 15:22; Ps 50:8, 9; 51:16; Isa 1:11, 12; Mic 6:6-8; Mt 9:13; 12:7).

knowledge of God--experimental and practical, not merely theoretical (Ho 6:3; Jer 22:16; 1Jo 2:3, 4). "Mercy" refers to the second table of the law, our duty to our fellow man; "the knowledge of God" to the first table, our duty to God, including inward spiritual worship. The
second table is put first, not as superior in dignity, for it is secondary, but in the order of our understanding.

7. like men--the common sort of men (Ps 82:7). Not as Margin, "like Adam," Job 31:33. For the expression "covenant" is not found elsewhere applied to Adam's relation to God; though the thing seems implied (Ro 5:12-19). Israel "transgressed the covenant" of God as lightly as men break everyday compacts with their fellow men.

there--in the northern kingdom, Israel.


work iniquity-- (Ho 12:11).

polluted with blood--"marked with blood-traces" [MAURER]. Referring to Gilead's complicity in the regicidal conspiracy of Pekah against Pekahiah (2Ki 15:25). See on Ho 6:1. Many homicides were there, for there were beyond Jordan more cities of refuge, in proportion to the extent of territory, than on this side of Jordan (Nu 35:14; De 4:41-43; Jos 20:8). Ramoth-gilead was one.

9. company--"association" or guild of priests.

murder by consent--literally, "with one shoulder" (compare Zep 3:9, Margin). The image is from oxen putting their shoulders together to pull the same yoke [RIVETUS]. MAURER translates, "in the way towards Shechem." It was a city of refuge between Ebal and Gerizim; on Mount Ephraim (Jos 20:7; 21:21), long the civil capital of Ephraim, as Shiloh was the religious capital; now called Naploos; for a time the residence of Jeroboam (1Ki 12:25). The priests there became so corrupted that they waylaid and murdered persons fleeing to the asylum for refuge [HENDERSON]; the sanctity of the place enhanced the guilt of the priests who abused their priestly privileges, and the right of asylum to perpetrate murders themselves, or to screen those committed by others [MAURER].

commit lewdness--deliberate crime, presumptuous wickedness, from an Arabic root, "to form a deliberate purpose."

10. horrible thing-- (Jer 5:30; 18:13; 23:14).

whoredom--idolatry.

11. an harvest--namely, of judgments (as in Jer 51:33; Joe 3:13; Re 14:15). Called a "harvest" because it is the fruit of the seed which Judah herself had sown (Ho 8:7; 10:12; Job 4:8; Pr 22:8). Judah, under Ahaz, lost a hundred twenty thousand "slain in one day (by Israel under Pekah), because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers."

when I returned the captivity of my people--when I, by Oded My prophet, caused two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters, of Judah to be restored from captivity by Israel (2Ch 28:6-15). This prophecy was delivered under Pekah [LUDOVICUS DE DIEU]. MAURER explains, When Israel shall have been exiled for its sins, and has been subsequently restored by Me, thou, Judah, also shalt be exiled for thine. But as Judah's punishment was not at the time when God restored Israel, LUDOVICUS DE DIEU'S explanation must be taken. GROTIUS translates, "When I shall have returned to make captive (that is, when I shall have again made captive) My people." The first captivity of Israel under Tiglath-pileser was followed by a second
under Shalmaneser. Then came the siege of Jerusalem, and the capture of the fenced cities of
Judah, by Sennacherib, the forerunner of other attacks, ending in Judah's captivity. But the
Hebrew is elsewhere used of restoration, not renewed punishment (De 30:3; Ps 14:7).

CHAPTER 7

Ho 7:1-16. REPROOF OF ISRAEL.

Probably delivered in the interreign and civil war at Pekah's death; for Ho 7:7, "all their kings
. . . fallen," refers to the murder of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah. In Ho
7:8 the reference seems to be to Menahem's payment of tribute to Pul, in order to secure himself
in the usurped throne, also to Pekah's league with Rezin of Syria, and to Hoshea's connection
with Assyria during the interregnum at Pekah's death [MAURER].

1. I would have healed Israel--Israel's restoration of the two hundred thousand Jewish
captives at God's command (2Ch 28:8-15) gave hope of Israel's reformation [HENDERSON].
Political, as well as moral, healing is meant. When I would have healed Israel in its calamitous
state, then their iniquity was discovered to be so great as to preclude hope of recovery. Then he
enumerates their wickedness: "The thief cometh in (indoors stealthily), and the troop of robbers
spoileth without" (out-of-doors with open violence).

2. consider not in their hearts--literally, "say not to," &c. (Ps 14:1). 
that I remember--and will punish. 
their own doings have beset them about--as so many witnesses against them (Ps 9:16; Pr
5:22). 
before my face-- (Ps 90:8).

3. Their princes, instead of checking, "have pleasure in them that do" such crimes (Ro 1:32).

4. who ceaseth from raising--rather, "heating" it, from an Arabic root, "to be hot." So the 
Sequwagint. Their adulterous and idolatrous lust is inflamed as the oven of a baker who has it at
such a heat that he ceaseth from heating it only from the time that he hath kneaded the dough,
until it be leavened; he only needs to omit feeding it during the short period of the fermentation
of the bread. Compare 2Pe 2:14, "that cannot cease from sin" [HENDERSON].

5. the day of our king--his birthday or day of inauguration. 
have made him sick--namely, the king. MAURER translates, "make themselves sick." 
with bottles of wine--drinking not merely glasses, but bottles. MAURER translates, "Owing
to the heat of wine." 
he stretched out his hand with scorners--the gesture of revellers in holding out the cup and
in drinking to one another's health. Scorners were the king's boon companions.

6. they have made ready--rather, "they make their heart approach," namely their king, in
going to drink with him. 
like an oven--following out the image in Ho 7:4. As it conceals the lighted fire all night
while the baker sleeps but in the morning burns as a flaming fire, so they brood mischief in their
hearts while conscience is lulled asleep, and their wicked designs wait only for a fair occasion to break forth [HORSLEY]. Their heart is the oven, their baker the ringleader of the plot. In Ho 7:7 their plots appear, namely, the intestine disturbances and murders of one king after another, after Jeroboam II.

7. all hot--All burn with eagerness to cause universal disturbance (2Ki 15:1-38).
   devoured their judges--magistrates; as the fire of the oven devours the fuel.
   all their kings . . . fallen--See on Ho 7:1.
   none . . . calleth unto me--Such is their perversity that amid all these national calamities, none seeks help from Me (Isa 9:13; 64:7).

8. mixed . . . among the people--by leagues with idolaters, and the adoption of their idolatrous practices (Ho 7:9, 11; Ps 106:35).
   Ephraim . . . cake not turned--a cake burnt on one side and unbaked on the other, and so uneatable; an image of the worthlessness of Ephraim. The Easterners bake their bread on the ground, covering it with embers (1Ki 19:6), and turning it every ten minutes, to bake it thoroughly without burning it.

   gray hairs--that is, symptoms of approaching national dissolution.
   are here and there upon--literally, "are sprinkled on" him.
   yet he knoweth not--Though old age ought to bring with it wisdom, he neither knows of his senile decay, nor has the true knowledge which leads to reformation.

10. Repetition of Ho 5:5.
    not return to . . . Lord . . . for all this--notwithstanding all their calamities (Isa 9:13).

11. like a silly dove--a bird proverbial for simplicity: easily deceived.
    without heart--that is, understanding.
    call to Egypt--Israel lying between the two great rival empires Egypt and Assyria, sought each by turns to help her against the other. As this prophecy was written in the reign of Hoshea, the allusion is probably to the alliance with So or Sabacho II (of which a record has been found on the clay cylindrical seals in Koyunjik), which ended in the overthrow of Hoshea and the deportation of Israel (2Ki 17:3-6). As the dove betrays its foolishness by fleeing in alarm from its nest only to fall into the net of the fowler, so Israel, though warned that foreign alliances would be their ruin, rushed into them.

12. When they shall go--to seek aid from this or that foreign state.
    spread my net upon them--as on birds taken on the ground (Eze 12:13), as contrasted with "bringing them down" as the "fowls of the heavens," namely, by the use of missiles.
    as their congregation hath heard--namely, by My prophets through whom I threatened "chastisement" (Ho 5:9; 2Ki 17:13-18).

13. fled--as birds from their nest (Pr 27:8; Isa 16:2).
    me--who both could and would have healed them (Ho 7:1), had they applied to Me.
    redeemed them--from Egypt and their other enemies (Mic 6:4).
lies-- (Ps 78:36; Jer 3:10). Pretending to be My worshippers, when they all the while worshipped idols (Ho 7:14; Ho 12:1); also defrauding Me of the glory of their deliverance, and ascribing it and their other blessings to idols [CALVIN].

14. not cried unto me--but unto other gods [MAURER], (Job 35:9, 10). Or, they did indeed cry unto Me, but not "with their heart": answering to "lies," Ho 7:13 (see on Ho 7:13).

when they howled upon their beds--sleepless with anxiety; image of deep affliction. Their cry is termed "howling," as it is the cry of anguish, not the cry of repentance and faith.

assemble . . . for corn, &c.--namely in the temples of their idols, to obtain from them a good harvest and vintage, instead of coming to Me, the true Giver of these (Ho 2:5, 8, 12), proving that their cry to God was "not with their heart."

rebel against me--literally, "withdraw themselves against Me," that is, not only withdraw from Me, but also rebel against Me.

15. I . . . bound--when I saw their arms as it were relaxed with various disasters, I bound them so as to strengthen their sinews; image from surgery [CALVIN]. MAURER translates, "I instructed them" to war (Ps 18:34; 144:1), namely, under Jeroboam II (2Ki 14:25). GROTIUS explains, "Whether I chastised them (Margin) or strengthened their arms, they imagined mischief against Me." English Version is best.

16. return, but not to the Most High--or, "to one who is not the Most High," one very different from Him, a stock or a stone. So the Septuagint.

deceitful bow-- (Ps 78:57). A bow which, from its faulty construction, shoots wide of the mark. So Israel pretends to seek God, but turns aside to idols.

for the rage of their tongue--their boast of safety from Egyptian aid, and their "lies" (Ho 7:13), whereby they pretended to serve God, while worshipping idols; also their perverse defense for their idolatries and blasphemies against God and His prophets (Ps 73:9; 120:2, 3).

their derision in . . . Egypt--Their "fall" shall be the subject of "derision" to Egypt, to whom they had applied for help (Ho 9:3, 6; 2Ki 17:4).

CHAPTER 8

Ho 8:1-14. PROPHECY OF THE IRRUPTION OF THE ASSYRIANS, IN PUNISHMENT FOR ISRAEL'S APOSTASY, IDOLATRY, AND SETTING UP OF KINGS WITHOUT GOD'S SANCTION.

In Ho 8:14, Judah is said to multiply fenced cities; and in Ho 8:7-9, Israel, to its great hurt, is said to have gone up to Assyria for help. This answers best to the reign of Menahem. For it was then that Uzziah of Judah, his contemporary, built fenced cities (2Ch 26:6, 9, 10). Then also Israel turned to Assyria and had to pay for their sinful folly a thousand talents of silver (2Ki 15:19) [MAURER].

1. Set the trumpet, &c.--to give warning of the approach of the enemy: "To thy palate (that is, 'mouth.' Job 31:30, Margin) the trumpet"; the abruptness of expression indicates the suddenness of the attack. So Ho 5:8.

as . . . eagle--the Assyrian (De 28:49; Jer 48:40; Hab 1:8).
against . . . house of . . . Lord—not the temple, but Israel viewed as the family of God (Ho 9:15; Nu 12:7; Zec 9:8; Heb 3:2; 1Ti 3:15; 1Pe 4:17).

2. My God, we know thee—the singular, "My," is used distributively, each one so addressing God. They, in their hour of need, plead their knowledge of God as the covenant-people, while in their acts they acknowledge Him not (compare Mt 7:21, 22; Tit 1:16; also Isa 29:13; Jer 7:4). The Hebrew joins "Israel," not as English Version, with "shall cry," but "We, Israel, know thee"; God denies the claim thus urged on the ground of their descent from Israel.

3. Israel—God repeats the name in opposition to their use of it (Ho 8:2). the thing that is good—JEROME translates, "God" who is good and doing good (Ps 119:68). He is the chief object rejected, but with Him also all that is good. the enemy shall pursue him—in just retribution from God.

4. kings . . . not by me—not with My sanction (1Ki 11:31; 12:20). Israel set up Jeroboam and his successors, whereas God had appointed the house of David as the rightful kings of the whole nation.

   I knew it not—I approved it not (Ps 1:6).

   of . . . gold . . . idols—(Ho 2:8; 13:2).

   that they may be cut off—that is, though warned of the consequences of idolatry, as it were with open eyes they rushed on their own destruction. So Jer 27:10, 15; 44:8.

5. hath cast thee off—As the ellipsis of thee is unusual, MAURER translates, "thy calf is abominable." But the antithesis to Ho 8:3 establishes English Version, "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good"; therefore, in just retribution, "thy calf hath cast thee off," that is, is made by God the cause of thy being cast off (Ho 10:15). Jeroboam, during his sojourn in Egypt, saw Apis worshipped at Memphis, and Mnevis at Heliopolis, in the form of an ox; this, and the temple cherubim, suggested the idea of the calves set up at Dan and Beth-el.

   how long . . . ere they attain to innocency?—How long will they be incapable of bearing innocency? [MAURER].

6. from Israel was it—that is, the calf originated with them, not from Me. "It also," as well as their "kings set up" by them, "but not by Me" (Ho 8:4).

7. sown . . . reap—(Pr 22:8; Ga 6:7). "Sow . . . wind," that is, to make the vain show of worship, while faith and obedience are wanting [CALVIN]. Rather, to offer senseless supplications to the calves for good harvests (compare Ho 2:8); the result being that God will make them "reap no stalk," that is, "standing corn." Also, the phraseology proverbially means that all their undertakings shall be profitless (Pr 11:29; Ec 5:16).

   the bud—or, "growth."

   strangers—foreigners (Ho 7:9).

8. vessel wherein is no pleasure—(Ps 41:12; Jer 22:28; 48:38).

9. gone . . . to Assyria—referring to Menahem's application for Pul's aid in establishing him on the throne (compare Ho 5:13; 7:11). Menahem's name is read in the inscriptions in the
southwest palace of Nimrod, as a tributary to the Assyrian king in his eighth year. The dynasty of Pul, or Phalluka, was supplanted at Nineveh by that of Tiglath-pileser, about 768 (or 760) B.C. Semiramis seems to have been Pul's wife, and to have withdrawn to Babylon in 768; and her son, Nabonassar, succeeding after a period of confusion, originated "the era of Nabonassar," 747 B.C. [G. V. SMITH]. Usually foreigners coming to Israel's land were said to "go up"; here it is the reverse, to intimate Israel's *sunken* state, and Assyria's superiority.

- **Wild ass**--a figure of Israel's headstrong perversity in following her own bent (*Jer 2:24*).
- **Alone by himself**--characteristic of Israel in all ages: "Lo, the people shall dwell alone" (*Nu 23:9*; compare *Job 39:5-8*).
- **Hired lovers**--reversing the ordinary way, namely, that lovers should hire her (*Eze 16:33, 34*).

10. **Will I gather them**--namely, the *nations* (Assyria, &c.) against Israel, instead of their assisting her as she had wished (*Eze 16:37*).

- **A little**--rather, "in a little" [HENDERSON]. *English Version* gives good sense: They shall sorrow "a little" at the imposition of the tribute; God suspended yet the *great* judgment, namely, their deportation by Assyria.

- **The burden of the king of princes**--the tribute imposed on Israel (under Menahem) by the Assyrian king Pul, (*2Ki 15:19-22*), who had many "princes" under his sway (*Isa 10:8*).

11. God in righteous retribution gives them up to their own way; the sin becomes its own punishment (*Pr 1:31*).

- **Many altars**--in opposition to God's law (*De 12:5, 6, 13, 14*).
- **To sin . . . to sin**--Their altars which were "sin" (whatever religious intentions they might plead) should be treated as such, and be the source of their punishment (*1Ki 12:30; 13:34*).

12. **Great things of . . . law**--(*De 4:6, 8; Ps 19:8; 119:18, 72; 147:19, 20*). MAURER not so well translates, "*the many* things of My law."

- **My law**--as opposed to their inventions. This reference of Hosea to the Pentateuch alone is against the theory that some earlier written prophecies have not come down to us.

- **Strange thing**--as if a thing with which they had nothing to do.

13. **Sacrifices of mine offerings**--that is, which they offer to Me.

- **Eat it**--Their own carnal gratification is the object which they seek, not My honor.
- **Now**--that is, "speedily."

- **Shall return to Egypt**--(*Ho 9:3, 6; 11:11*). The same threat as in *De 28:68*. They fled thither to escape from the Assyrians (compare as to Judah, *Jer 42:1-44:30*), when these latter had overthrown their nation. But see on *Ho 9:3*.

14. **Forgotten . . . Maker**--(*De 32:18*).

- **Temples**--to idols.

- **Judah . . . fenced cities**--Judah, though less idolatrous than Israel, betrayed lack of faith in Jehovah by trusting more to its fenced cities than to Him; instead of making peace with God, Judah multiplied human defenses (*Isa 22:8; Jer 5:17; Mic 5:10, 11*).

- **I will send . . . fire upon . . . cities**--Sennacherib burned all Judah's fenced cities except
Jerusalem (2Ki 18:13).

palaces thereof--namely, of the land. Compare as to Jerusalem, Jer 17:27.

CHAPTER 9

Ho 9:1-17. WARNING AGAINST ISRAEL'S JOY AT PARTIAL RELIEF FROM THEIR TROUBLES: THEIR CROPS SHALL FAIL, AND THE PEOPLE LEAVE THE LORD'S LAND FOR EGYPT AND ASSYRIA, WHERE THEY CANNOT, IF SO INCLINED, SERVE GOD ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT RITUAL: FOLLY OF THEIR FALSE PROPHETS.

1. Rejoice not . . . for joy--literally, "to exultation." Thy exultation at the league with Pul, by which peace seems secured, is out of place: since thy idolatry will bring ruin on thee.
   as other people--the Assyrians for instance, who, unlike thee, are in the height of prosperity.
   loved a reward upon every corn floor--Thou hast desired, in reward for thy homage to idols, abundance of corn on every threshing-floor (Ho 2:12).

2. (Ho 2:9, 12).
   fail--disappoint her expectation.

3. return to Egypt--(See on Ho 8:13). As in Ho 11:5 it is said, "He shall not return into . . . Egypt." FAIRBAIRN thinks it is not the exact country that is meant, but the bondage state with which, from past experience, Egypt was identified in their minds. Assyria was to be a second Egypt to them. De 28:68, though threatening a return to Egypt, speaks (De 28:36) of their being brought to a nation which neither they nor their fathers had known, showing that it is not the literal Egypt, but a second Egypt-like bondage that is threatened.
   eat unclean things in Assyria--reduced by necessity to eat meats pronounced unclean by the Mosaic law (Eze 4:13). See 2Ki 17:6.

4. offer wine offerings--literally, "pour as a libation (Ex 30:9; Le 23:13).
   neither shall they be pleasing unto him--as being offered on a profane soil.
   sacrifices . . . as the bread of mourners--which was unclean (De 26:14; Jer 16:7; Eze 24:17).
   their bread for their soul--their offering for the expiation of their soul [CALVIN], (Le 17:11). Rather, "their bread for their sustenance ('soul' being often used for the animal life, Ge 14:21, Margin) shall not come into the Lord's house"; it shall only subserve their own uses, not My worship.

5. (Ho 2:11).

6. because of destruction--to escape from the devastation of their country.
   Egypt shall gather them up--that is, into its sepulchres (Jer 8:2; Eze 29:5). Instead of returning to Palestine, they should die in Egypt.
   Memphis--famed as a necropolis.
   the pleasant places for their silver--that is, their desired treasuries for their money. Or, "whatever precious thing they have of silver" [MAURER].
   nettles--the sign of desolation (Isa 34:13).
7. visitation--vengeance: punishment (Isa 10:3).
   Israel shall know it--to her cost experimentally (Isa 9:9).
   the prophet is a fool--The false prophet who foretold prosperity to the nation shall be
   convicted of folly by the event.
   the spiritual man--the man pretending to inspiration (La 2:14; Eze 13:3; Mic 3:11; Zep 3:4).
   for the multitude of thine iniquity, &c.--Connect these words with, "the days of visitation
   ... are come"; "the prophet ... is mad," being parenthetical.
   the great hatred--or, "the great provocation" [HENDERSON]; or, "(thy) great apostasy"
   [MAURER]. English Version means Israel's "hatred" of God's prophets and the law.

8. The watchman ... was with my God--The spiritual watchmen, the true prophets,
   formerly consulted my God (Jer 31:6; Hab 2:1); but their so-called prophet is a snare, entrapping
   Israel into idolatry.
   hatred--rather, "(a cause of) apostasy" (see Ho 9:7) [MAURER].
   house of his God--that is, the state of Ephraim, as in Ho 8:1 [MAURER]. Or, "the house of
   his (false) god," the calves [CALVIN]. Jehovah, "my God," seems contrasted with "his God." 
   CALVIN'S view is therefore preferable.

9. as in the days of Gibeah--as in the day of the perpetration of the atrocity of Gibeah,
   narrated in Jud 19:16-22, &c.

10. As the traveller in a wilderness is delighted at finding grapes to quench his thirst, or the
    early fig (esteemed a great delicacy in the East, Isa 28:4; Jer 24:2; Mic 7:1); so it was My delight
    to choose your fathers as My peculiar people in Egypt (Ho 2:15).
    at her first time--when the first-fruits of the tree become ripe.
    went to Baal-peor--(Nu 25:3): the Moabite idol, in whose worship young women
    prostituted themselves; the very sin Israel latterly was guilty of.
    separated themselves--consecrated themselves.
    unto that shame--to that shameful or foul idol (Jer 11:13).
    their abominations were according as they loved--rather, as Vulgate, "they became
    abominable like the object of their love" (De 7:26; Ps 115:8). English Version gives good sense,
    "their abominable idols they followed after, according as their lusts prompted them" (Am 4:5,
    Margin).

11. their glory shall fly away--fit retribution to those who "separated themselves unto that
    shame" (Ho 9:10). Children were accounted the glory of parents; sterility, a reproach. "Ephraim"
    means "fruitfulness" (Ge 41:52); this its name shall cease to be its characteristic.
    from the birth ... womb ... conception--Ephraim's children shall perish in a threefold
    gradation; (1) From the time of birth. (2) From the time of pregnancy. (3) From the time of their
    first conception.

12. Even though they should rear their children, yet will I bereave them (the Ephraimites) of
    them (Job 27:14).
    woe ... to them when I depart--Yet the ungodly in their madness desire God to depart from
    them (Job 21:14; 22:17; Mt 8:34). At last they know to their cost how awful it is when God has
    departed (De 31:17; 1Sa 28:15, 16; compare Ho 9:11; 1Sa 4:21).
13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus . . . in a pleasant place--that is, in looking towards Tyrus (on whose borders Ephraim lay) I saw Ephraim beautiful in situation like her (Eze 26:1-28:26).
   is planted--as a fruitful tree; image suggested by the meaning of "Ephraim" (Ho 9:11).
   bring forth his children to the murderer-- (Ho 9:16; Ho 13:16). With all his fruitfulness, his children shall only be brought up to be slain.

14. what wilt thou give?--As if overwhelmed by feeling, he deliberates with God what is most desirable.
   give . . . a miscarrying womb--Of two evils he chooses the least. So great will be the calamity, that barrenness will be a blessing, though usually counted a great misfortune (Job 3:3; Jer 20:14; Lu 23:29).

15. All their wickedness--that is, their chief guilt.
   Gilgal--(see on Ho 4:15). This was the scene of their first contumacy in rejecting God and choosing a king (1Sa 11:14, 15; compare 1Sa 8:7), and of their subsequent idolatry.
   there I hated them--not with the human passion, but holy hatred of their sin, which required punishment to be inflicted on themselves (compare Mal 1:3).
   out of mine house--as in Ho 8:1: out of the land holy unto ME. Or, as "love" is mentioned immediately after, the reference may be to the Hebrew mode of divorce, the husband (God) putting the wife (Israel) out of the house.
   princes . . . revolters--"Sarim . . . Sorerim" (Hebrew), a play on similar sounds.

16. The figures "root," "fruit," are suggested by the word "Ephraim," that is, fruitful (see on Ho 9:11, 12). "Smitten," namely, with a blight (Ps 102:4).

17. My God--"My," in contrast to "them," that is, the people, whose God Jehovah no longer is. Also Hosea appeals to God as supporting his authority against the whole people.
   wanderers among . . . nations-- (2Ki 15:29; 1Ch 5:26).

CHAPTER 10


The prophecy was uttered between Shalmaneser's first and second invasions of Israel.

   bringeth forth fruit unto himself--not unto ME.
   according to . . . multitude of . . . fruit . . . increased . . . altars--In proportion to the
abundance of their prosperity, which called for fruit unto God (compare Ro 6:22), was the abundance of their idolatry (Ho 8:4, 11).

2. heart . . . divided-- (1Ki 18:21; Mt 6:24; Jas 4:8).
   now--that is, soon.
   he--Jehovah.
   break down--"cut off," namely the heads of the victims. Those altars, which were the scene of cutting off the victims' heads, shall be themselves cut off.

3. now, &c.--Soon they, deprived of their king, shall be reduced to say, We have no king (Ho 10:7, 15), for Jehovah deprived us of him, because of our not fearing God. What then (seeing God is against us) should a king be able to do for us, if we had one? As they rejected the heavenly King, they were deprived of their earthly king.

4. words--mere empty words.
   swearing falsely in making a covenant--breaking their engagement to Shalmaneser (2Ki 17:4), and making a covenant with So, though covenants with foreigners were forbidden.
   judgment . . . as hemlock--that is, divine judgment shall spring up as rank, and as deadly, as hemlock in the furrows (De 29:18; Am 5:7; 6:12). GESENIUS translates, "poppy." GROTIUS, "darnel."

5. fear because of the calves--that is, shall fear for them.
   Beth-aven--substituted for Beth-el in contempt (Ho 4:15).
   it--singular; the one in Beth-el; after the pattern of which the other "calves" (plural) were made. "Calves" in the Hebrew is feminine, to express contempt.
   priests--The Hebrew is only used of idolatrous priests (2Ki 23:5; Zep 1:4), from a root meaning either "the black garment" in which they were attired; or, "to resound," referring to their howling cries in their sacred rites [CALVIN].
   that rejoiced on it--because it was a source of gain to them. MAURER translates, "Shall leap in trepidation on account of it"; as Baal's priests did (1Ki 18:26).
   the glory thereof--the magnificence of its ornaments and its worship.

6. It . . . also--The calf, so far from saving its worshippers from deportation, itself shall be carried off; hence "Israel shall be ashamed" of it.
   Jareb--(See on Ho 5:13). "A present to the king (whom they looked to as) their defender," or else avenger, whose wrath they wished to appease, namely, Shalmaneser. The minor states applied this title to the Great King, as the avenging Protector.
   his own counsel--the calves, which Jeroboam set up as a stroke of policy to detach Israel from Judah. Their severance from Judah and Jehovah proved now to be not politic, but fatal to them.

7. (Ho 10:3, 15).
   foam--denoting short-lived existence and speedy dissolution. As the foam, though seeming to be eminent raised on the top of the water, yet has no solidity, such is the throne of Samaria. MAURER translates, "a chip" or broken branch that cannot resist the current.
8. Aven—that is, Beth-aven.
the sin—that is, the occasion of sin (De 9:21; 1Ki 12:30).
they shall say to . . . mountains, Cover us--So terrible shall be the calamity, that men shall prefer death to life (Lu 23:30; Re 6:16; 9:6). Those very hills on which were their idolatrous altars (one source of their confidence, as their "king," Ho 10:7, was the other), so far from helping them, shall be called on by them to overwhelm them.

there they stood--The Israelites have, as there and then, so ever since, persisted in their sin [CALVIN]. Or, better, "they stood their ground," that is, did not perish then [MAURER].
the battle . . . did not overtake them--Though God spared you then, He will not do so now; nay, the battle whereby God punished the Gibeonite "children of iniquity," shall the more heavily visit you for your continued impenitence. Though "they stood" then, it shall not be so now. The change from "thou" to "they" marks God's alienation from them; they are, by the use of the third person, put to a greater distance from God.

10. my desire . . . chastise--expressing God's strong inclination to vindicate His justice against sin, as being the infinitely holy God (De 28:63).
the people--Foreign invaders "shall be gathered against them."
when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows--image from two oxen ploughing together side by side, in two contiguous furrows: so the Israelites shall join themselves, to unite their powers against all dangers, but it will not save them from My destroying them [CALVIN]. Their "two furrows" may refer to their two places of setting up the calves, their ground of confidence, Dan and Beth-el; or, the two divisions of the nation, Israel and Judah, "in their two furrows," that is, in their respective two places of habitation: Ho 10:11, which specifies the two, favors this view. HENDERSON prefers the Keri (Hebrew Margin) "for their two iniquities"; and translates, "when they are bound" in captivity. English Version is best, as the image is carried out in Ho 10:11; only it is perhaps better to translate, "the people (the invaders) binding them," that is, making them captives; and so Ho 10:11 alludes to the yoke being put on the neck of Ephraim and Judah.

11. taught—that is, accustomed.
loveth to tread out . . . corn—a far easier and more self-indulgent work than ploughing. In treading corn, cattle were not bound together under a yoke, but either trod it singly with their feet, or drew a threshing sledge over it (Isa 28:27, 28): they were free to eat some of the corn from time to time, as the law required they should be unmuzzled (De 25:4), so that they grew fat in this work. An image of Israel's freedom, prosperity, and self-indulgence heretofore. But now God will put the Assyrian yoke upon her, instead of freedom, putting her to servile work.
I passed over upon--I put the yoke upon.
make . . . to ride—as in Job 30:22; that is, hurry Ephraim away to a distant region [CALVIN]. LYRA translates, "I will make (the Assyrian) to ride upon Ephraim." MAURER, "I will make Ephraim to carry," namely, a charioteer.
his clods--"the clods before him."
12. Continuation of the image in Ho 10:11 (Pr 11:18). Act righteously and ye shall reap the reward; a reward not of debt, but of grace.

- **in mercy**--according to the measure of the divine "mercy," which over and above repays the *goodness* or "mercy" which we show to our fellow man (Lu 6:38).
- **break . . . fallow ground**--Remove your superstitions and vices, and be renewed.
- **seek . . . Lord, fill he come**--Though not answered immediately, persevere unceasingly "*till He come.*"
- **rain**--send down as a copious shower.
- **righteousness**--the reward of righteousness, that is, *salvation*, temporal and spiritual (1Sa 26:23; compare Joe 2:23).

13. reaped iniquity--that is, the *fruit* of iniquity; as "righteousness" (Ho 10:12) is "the *fruit* of righteousness" (Job 4:8; Pr 22:8; Ga 6:7, 8).

- **lies**--false and spurious worship.
- **trust in thy way**--thy perverse way ( Isa 57:10; Jer 2:23), thy worship of false gods. This was their internal safeguard, as their external was "the multitude of their mighty men."

14. tumult--a tumultuous war.

- **among thy people**--literally, "peoples": the war shall extend to the whole people of Israel, through all the tribes, and the peoples allied to her.
- **Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel**--that is, Shalmaneser, a compound name, in which the part common to it and the names of three other Assyrian kings, is omitted; Tiglath-pileser, Esarhaddon, Shar-ezer. So Jeconiah is abbreviated to Coniah. Arbel was situated in Naphtali in Galilee, on the border nearest Assyria. Against it Shalmaneser, at his first invasion of Israel (2Ki 17:3), vented his chief rage. God threatens Israel's fortresses with the same fate as Arbel suffered "in the day (on the occasion) of the battle" then well-known, though not mentioned elsewhere (compare 2Ki 18:34). This event, close on the reign of Hezekiah, shows the inscription of Hosea (Ho 1:1) to be correct.

15. So shall Beth-el do unto you--that is, Your idolatrous calf at Beth-el shall be the cause of a like calamity befalling you.

- **your great wickedness**--literally, "the wickedness of your wickedness."
- **in a morning**--that is, speedily, as quickly as the dawn is put to flight by the rising sun (Ho 6:4; 13:3; Ps 30:5).
- **king**--Hoshea.

CHAPTER 11

Ho 11:1-12, GOD'S FORMER BENEFITS, AND ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE RESULTING IN PUNISHMENT, YET JEHOVAH PROMISES RESTORATION AT LAST.

Ho 11:5 shows this prophecy was uttered after the league made with Egypt (2Ki 17:4).

1. Israel . . . called my son out of Egypt--BENGEN translates, "*From* the time that he (Israel) was *in* Egypt, I called him My son," which the parallelism proves. So Ho 12:9 and Ho 13:4 use "from . . . Egypt," for "from the time that thou didst sojourn *in* Egypt." Ex 4:22 also shows that
Israel was called by God, "My son," from the time of his Egyptian sojourn (Isa 43:1). God is always said to have led or brought forth, not to have "called," Israel from Egypt. Mt 2:15, therefore, in quoting this prophecy (typically and primarily referring to Israel, antitypically and fully to Messiah), applies it to Jesus' sojourn in Egypt, not His return from it. Even from His infancy, partly spent in Egypt, God called Him His son. God included Messiah, and Israel for Messiah's sake, in one common love, and therefore in one common prophecy. Messiah's people and Himself are one, as the Head and the body. Isa 49:3 calls Him "Israel." The same general reason, danger of extinction, caused the infant Jesus, and Israel in its national infancy (compare Ge 42:1-43:34; 45:18; 46:3, 4; Eze 16:4-6; Jer 31:20) to sojourn in Egypt. So He, and His spiritual Israel, are already called "God's sons" while yet in the Egypt of the world.

2. As they called them--"they," namely, monitors sent by Me. "Called," in Ho 11:1, suggests the idea of the many subsequent calls by the prophets.

went from them--turned away in contempt (Jer 2:27).

Baalim--images of Baal, set up in various places.

3. taught . . . to go--literally, "to use his feet." Compare a similar image, De 1:31; 8:2, 5, 15; 32:10, 11; Ne 9:21; Isa 63:9; Am 2:10. God bore them as a parent does an infant, unable to supply itself, so that it has no anxiety about food, raiment, and its going forth. Ac 13:18, which probably refers to this passage of Hosea; He took them by the arms, to guide them that they might not stray, and to hold them up that they might not stumble.

knew not that I healed them--that is, that My design was to restore them spiritually and temporally (Ex 15:26).

4. cords of a man--parallel to "bands of love"; not such cords as oxen are led by, but humane methods, such as men employ when inducing others, as for instance, a father drawing his child, by leading-strings, teaching him to go (Ho 11:1).

I was . . . as they that take off the yoke on their jaws . . . I laid meat--as the humane husbandman occasionally loosens the straps under the jaws by which the yoke is bound on the neck of oxen and lays food before them to eat. An appropriate image of God's deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian yoke, and of His feeding them in the wilderness.

5. He shall not return into . . . Egypt--namely, to seek help against Assyria (compare Ho 7:11), as Israel lately had done (2Ki 17:4), after having revolted from Assyria, to whom they had been tributary from the times of Menahem (2Ki 15:19). In a figurative sense, "he shall return to Egypt" (Ho 9:3), that is, to Egypt-like bondage; also many Jewish fugitives were literally to return to Egypt, when the Holy Land was to be in Assyrian and Chaldean hands.

Assyrian shall be his king--instead of having kings of their own, and Egypt as their auxiliary.

because they refused to return--just retribution. They would not return (spiritually) to God, therefore they shall not return (corporally) to Egypt, the object of their desire.

6. abide--or, "fall upon" [CALVIN].

branches--that is, his villages, which are the branches or dependencies of the cities [CALVIN]. GROTIUS translates, "his bars" (so La 2:9), that is, the warriors who were the bulwarks of the state. Compare Ho 4:18, "rulers" (Margin), "shields" (Ps 47:9).
because of their own counsels—in worshipping idols, and relying on Egypt (compare Ho 10:6).

7. bent to backsliding—Not only do they backslide, and that too from ME, their "chief good," but they are bent upon it. Though they (the prophets) called them (the Israelites) to the Most High (from their idols), "none would exalt (that is, extol or honor) Him." To exalt God, they must cease to be "bent on backsliding," and must lift themselves upwards.

8. as Admah . . . Zeboim—among the cities, including Sodom and Gomorrah, irretrievably overthrown (De 29:23).

heart is turned within me—with the deepest compassion, so as not to execute My threat (La 1:20; compare Ge 43:30; 1Ki 3:26). So the phrase is used of a new turn given to the feeling (Ps 105:25).

repentings—God speaks according to human modes of thought (Nu 23:19). God's seeming change is in accordance with His secret everlasting purpose of love to His people, to magnify His grace after their desperate rebellion.

9. I will not return to destroy Ephraim—that is, I will no more, as in past times, destroy Ephraim. The destruction primarily meant is probably that by Tiglath-pileser, who, as the Jewish king Ahaz' ally against Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria, deprived Israel of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali (2Ki 15:29). The ulterior reference is to the long dispersion hereafter, to be ended by God's covenant mercy restoring His people, not for their merits, but of His grace.

God, . . . not man—not dealing as man would, with implacable wrath under awful provocation (Isa 55:7-9; Mal 3:6). I do not, like man, change when once I have made a covenant of everlasting love, as with Israel (Nu 23:19). We measure God by the human standard, and hence are slow to credit fully His promises; these, however, belong to the faithful remnant, not to the obstinately impenitent.

in the midst of thee—as peculiarly thy God (Ex 19:5, 6).

not enter into the city—as an enemy: as I entered Admah, Zeboim, and Sodom, utterly destroying them, whereas I will not utterly destroy thee. Somewhat similarly JEROME: "I am not one such as human dwellers in a city, who take cruel vengeance; I save those whom I correct." Thus "not man," and "in the midst of thee," are parallel to "into the city." Though I am in the midst of thee, it is not as man entering a rebellious city to destroy utterly. MAURER needlessly translates, "I will not come in wrath."

10. he shall roar like a lion—by awful judgments on their foes (Isa 31:4; Jer 25:26-30; Joe 3:16), calling His dispersed "children" from the various lands of their dispersion.

shall tremble—shall flock in eager agitation of haste.

from the west—(Zec 8:7). Literally, "the sea." Probably the Mediterranean, including its "isles of the sea," and maritime coast. Thus as Ho 11:11 specifies regions of Africa and Asia, so here Europe. Isa 11:11-16, is parallel, referring to the very same regions. On "children," see Ho 1:10.

11. tremble—flutter in haste.

dove—no longer "a silly dove" (Ho 7:11), but as "doves flying to their windows" (Isa 60:8).
in their houses—(Eze 28:26). Literally, "upon," for the Orientals live almost as much upon their flat-roofed houses as in them.

12. MAURER joins this verse with the twelfth chapter. But as this verse praises Judah, whereas Ho 12:2 censures him, it must belong rather to the eleventh chapter and a new prophecy begins at the twelfth chapter. To avoid this, MAURER translates this verse as a censure, "Judah wanders with God," that is, though having the true God, he wanders after false gods.

ruleth with God—to serve God is to reign. Ephraim wished to rule without God (compare 1Co 4:8); nay, even, in order to rule, cast off God's worship [RIVETUS]. In Judah was the legitimate succession of kings and priests.

with the saints—the holy priests and Levites [RIVETUS]. With the fathers and prophets who handed down the pure worship of God. Israel's apostasy is the more culpable, as he had before him the good example of Judah, which he set at naught. The parallelism ("with God") favors Margin, "With The MOST HOLY ONE."

CHAPTER 12

Ho 12:1-14. REPROOF OF EPHRAIM AND JUDAH: THEIR FATHER JACOB OUGHT TO BE A PATTERN TO THEM.

This prophecy was delivered about the time of Israel's seeking the aid of the Egyptian king So, in violation of their covenant with Assyria (see Ho 12:1). He exhorts them to follow their father Jacob's persevering prayerfulness, which brought God's favor upon him. As God is unchangeable, He will show the same favor to Jacob's posterity as He did to Jacob, if, like him, they seek God.

1. feedeth on wind—(Pr 15:14; Isa 44:20). Followeth after vain objects, such as alliances with idolaters and their idols (compare Ho 8:7).

east wind—the simoom, blowing from the desert east of Palestine, which not only does not benefit, but does injury. Israel follows not only things vain, but things pernicious (compare Job 15:2).

increaseth lies—accumulates lie upon lie, that is, impostures wherewith they deceive themselves, forsaking the truth of God.

desolation—violent oppressions practised by Israel [MAURER]. Acts which would prove the cause of Israel's own desolation [CALVIN].

covenant with . . . Assyrians—(Ho 5:13; 7:11).

oil . . . into Egypt—as a present from Israel to secure Egypt's alliance (Isa 30:6; 57:9; compare 2Ki 17:4). Palestine was famed for oil (Eze 27:17).

2. controversy with Judah—(Ho 4:1; Mic 6:2). Judah, under Ahaz, had fallen into idolatry (2Ki 16:3, &c.).

Jacob—that is, the ten tribes. If Judah, the favored portion of the nation, shall not be spared, much less degenerate Israel.

3. He—Jacob, contrasted with his degenerate descendants, called by his name, Jacob (Ho 12:2; compare Mic 2:7). He took Esau by the heel in the womb in order to obtain, if possible, the
privileges of the first-born (Ge 25:22-26), whence he took his name, Jacob, meaning "supplanter"); and again, by his strength, prevailed in wrestling with God for a blessing (Ge 32:24-29); whereas ye disregard My promises, putting your confidence in idols and foreign alliances. He conquered God, ye are the slaves of idols. Only have Jehovah on your side, and ye are stronger than Edom, or even Assyria. So the spiritual Israel lays hold of the heel of Jesus, "the First-born of many brethren," being born again of the Holy Spirit. Having no right in themselves to the inheritance, they lay hold of the bruised heel, the humanity of Christ crucified, and let not go their hold of Him who is not, as Esau, a curse (Heb 12:16, 17), but, by becoming a curse for us, is a blessing to us.

**power with God**—referring to his name, "Israel," prince of God, acquired on that occasion (compare Mt 11:12). As the promised Canaan had to be gained forcibly by Israel, so heaven by the faithful (Re 3:21; compare Lu 13:24). "Strive," literally, "as in the agony of a contest." So the Canaanitess (Mt 15:22).

**his strength**—which lay in his conscious weakness, whence, when his thigh was put out of joint by God, he hung upon Him. To seek strength was his object; to grant it, God's. Yet God's mode of procedure was strange. In human form He tries as it were to throw Jacob down. When simple wrestling was not enough, He does what seems to ensure Jacob's fall, dislocating his thigh joint, so that he could no longer stand. Yet it was then that Jacob prevailed. Thus God teaches us the irresistible might of conscious weakness. For when weak in ourselves, we are strong by His strength put in us (Job 23:6; Isa 27:5; 2Co 12:9, 10).

4. the angel— the uncreated Angel of the Covenant, as God the Son appears in the Old Testament (Mal 3:1).

**made supplication**— Ge 32:26: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

**he found him**— The angel found Jacob, when he was fleeing from Esau into Syria: the Lord appearing to him "in Beth-el" (Ge 28:11-19; 35:1). What a sad contrast, that in this same Beth-el now Israel worships the golden calves!

**there he spake with us**—"with us," as being in the loins of our progenitor Jacob (compare Ps 66:6, "They . . . we;" Heb 7:9, 10). What God there spoke to Jacob appertains to us. God's promises to him belong to all his posterity who follow in the steps of his prayerful faith.

5. Lord God—JEHOVAH, a name implying His immutable constancy to His promises. From the Hebrew root, meaning "existence." "He that is, was, and is to be," always the same (Heb 13:8; Re 1:4, 8; compare Ex 3:14, 15; 6:3). As He was unchangeable in His favor to Jacob, so will He be to His believing posterity.

**of hosts**—which Israel foolishly worshipped. Jehovah has all the hosts (saba) or powers of heaven and earth at His command, so that He is as all-powerful, as He is faithful, to fulfil His promises (Ps 135:6; Am 5:27).

**memorial**—the name expressive of the character in which God was ever to be remembered (Ps 135:13).

6. thou—who dost wish to be a true descendant of Jacob.

**to THY God**—who is therefore bound by covenant to hear thy prayers.

**keep mercy and judgment**— (Mic 6:8). These two include the second-table commandments, duty towards one's neighbor, the most visible test of the sincerity on one's repentance.
wait on thy God—alone, not on thy idols. Including all the duties of the first table (Ps 37:3, 5, 7; 40:1).

7. merchant—a play on the double sense of the Hebrew, "Canaan," that is, a Canaanite and a "merchant" Eze 16:3: "Thy birth is . . . of Canaan." They who naturally were descendants of pious Jacob had become virtually Canaanites, who were proverbial as cheating merchants (compare Is 23:11, Margin), the greatest reproach to Israel, who despised Canaan. The Phenicians called themselves Canaanites or merchants (Isa 23:8).

oppress—open violence: as the "balances of deceit" imply fraud.

8. And—that is, Notwithstanding.

Yet I am . . . rich—I regard not what the prophets say: I am content with my state, as I am rich (Re 3:17). Therefore, in just retribution, this is the very language of the enemy in being the instrument of Israel's punishment. Zec 11:5: "They that sell them say . . . I am rich." Far better is poverty with honesty, than riches gained by sin.

my labours—my gains by labor.

they shall find none—that is, none shall find any.

iniquity . . . that were sin—iniquity that would bring down the penalty of sin. Ephraim argues, My success in my labors proves that I am not a guilty sinner as the prophets assert. Thus sinners pervert God's long-suffering goodness (Mt 5:45) into a justification of their impenitence (compare Ec 8:11-13).

9. And—rather, "And yet." Though Israel deserves to be cast off for ever, yet I am still what I have been from the time of My delivering them out of Egypt, their covenant God; therefore, "I will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles," that is, to keep the feast of tabernacles again in remembrance of a new deliverance out of bondage. Fulfilled primarily at the return from Babylon (Ne 8:17). Fully and antitypically to be fulfilled at the final restoration from the present dispersion (Zec 14:16; compare Le 23:42, 43).

10. by . . . the prophets—literally, "upon," that is, My spirit resting on them. I deposited with them My instructions which ought to have brought you to the right way. An aggravation of your guilt, that it was not through ignorance you erred, but in defiance of God and His prophets [CALVIN]. Ahijah the Shilonite, Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Joel, and Amos were "the prophets" before Hosea.

visions . . . similitudes—I adopted such modes of communication, adapted to man's capacities, as were calculated to arouse attention: I left no means untried to reform you. The first, second, and third chapters contain examples of "similitudes."

11. Is there iniquity in Gilead?—He asks the question, not as if the answer was doubtful, but to strengthen the affirmation: "Surely they are vanity"; or as MAURER translates, "They are nothing but iniquity." Iniquity, especially idolatry, in Scripture is often termed "vanity." Pr 13:11: "Wealth gotten by vanity," that is, iniquity. Is 41:29: "They are all vanity . . . images." "Gilead" refers to Mizpah-gilead, a city representing the region beyond Jordan (Ho 6:8; Jud 11:29); as "Gilgal," the region on this side of Jordan (Ho 4:15). In all quarters alike they are utterly vile.

their altars are as heaps in the furrows—that is, as numerous as such heaps: namely, the
heaps of stones cleared out of a stony field. An appropriate image, as at a distance they look like altars (compare Ho 10:1, 4; 8:11). As the third member in the parallelism answers to the first, "Gilgal" to "Gilead," so the fourth to the second, "altars" to "vanity." The word "heaps" alludes to the name "Gilgal," meaning "a heap of stones." The very scene of the general circumcision of the people, and of the solemn passover kept after crossing Jordan, is now the stronghold of Israel's idolatry.

12. Jacob fled . . . served--Though ye pride yourselves on the great name of "Israel," forget not that your progenitor was the same Jacob who was a fugitive, and who served for Rachel fourteen years. He forgot not ME who delivered him when fleeing from Esau, and when oppressed by Laban (Ge 28:5; 29:20, 28; De 26:5). Ye, though delivered from Egypt (Ho 12:13), and loaded with My favors, are yet unwilling to return to Me.

country of Syria--the champaign region of Syria, the portion lying between the Tigris and Euphrates, hence called Mesopotamia. Padan-aram means the same, that is, "Low Syria," as opposed to Aramea (meaning the "high country") or Syria (Ge 48:7).

13. by a prophet--Moses (Nu 12:6-8; De 18:15, 18).
preserved--Translate, "kept"; there is an allusion to the same Hebrew word in Ho 12:12, "kept sheep"; Israel was kept by God as His flock, even as Jacob kept sheep (Ps 80:1; Isa 63:11).

14. provoked him--that is, God.
leave his blood upon him--not take away the guilt and penalty of the innocent blood shed by Ephraim in general, and to Molech in particular.
his reproach shall his Lord return unto him--Ephraim's dishonor to God in worshipping idols, God will repay to him. That God is "his Lord" by right redemption and special revelation to Ephraim only aggravates his guilt, instead of giving him hope of escape. God does not give up His claim to them as His, however they set aside His dominion.

CHAPTER 13

Ho 13:1-16. Ephraim's Sinful Ingratitude to God, and Its Fatal Consequence; God's Promise at Last.

This chapter and the fourteenth chapter probably belong to the troubled times that followed Pekah's murder by Hoshea (compare Ho 13:11; 2Ki 15:30). The subject is the idolatry of Ephraim, notwithstanding God's past benefits, destined to be his ruin.

1. When Ephraim spake trembling--rather, "When Ephraim (the tribe most powerful among the twelve in Israel's early history) spake (authoritatively) there was trembling"; all reverentially feared him [JEROME], (compare Job 29:8, 9, 21).
offended in Baal--that is, in respect to Baal, by worshipping him (1Ki 16:31), under Ahab; a more heinous offense than even the calves. Therefore it is at this climax of guilt that Ephraim "died." Sin has, in the sight of God, within itself the germ of death, though that death may not visibly take effect till long after. Compare Ro 7:9, "Sin revived, and I died." So Adam in the day of his sin was to die, though the sentence was not visibly executed till long after (Ge 2:17; 5:5). Israel is similarly represented as politically dead in Eze 37:1-28.
2. according to their own understanding--that is, their arbitrary devising. Compare "will-worship," Col 2:23. Men are not to be "wise above that which is written," or to follow their own understanding, but God's command in worship.

kiss the calves--an act of adoration to the golden calves (compare 1Ki 19:18; Job 31:27; Ps 2:12).

3. they shall be as the morning cloud . . . dew--(Ho 6:4). As their "goodness" soon vanished like the morning cloud and dew, so they shall perish like them.

the floor--the threshing-floor, generally an open area, on a height, exposed to the winds.

chimney--generally in the East an orifice in the wall, at once admitting the light, and giving egress to the smoke.

4. (Ho 12:9; Isa 43:11).

no saviour--temporal as well as spiritual.

besides me--(Isa 45:21).

5. I did know thee--did acknowledge thee as Mine, and so took care of thee (Ps 144:3; Am 3:2). As I knew thee as Mine, so thou shouldest know no God but Me (Ho 13:4).

in . . . land of . . . drought--(De 8:15).

6. Image from cattle, waxing wanton in abundant pasture (compare Ho 2:5, 8; De 32:13-15). In proportion as I fed them to the full, they were so satiated that "their heart was exalted"; a sad contrast to the time when, by God's blessing, Ephraim truly "exalted himself in Israel" (Ho 13:1).

therefore have they forgotten me--the very reason why men should remember God (namely, prosperity, which comes from Him) is the cause often of their forgetting Him. God had warned them of this danger (De 6:11, 12).

7. (Ho 5:14; La 3:10).

leopard--The Hebrew comes from a root meaning "spotted" (compare Jer 13:23). Leopards lurk in thickets and thence spring on their victims.

observe--that is, lie in wait for them. Several manuscripts, the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic read, by a slight change of the Hebrew vowel pointing, "by the way of Assyria," a region abounding in leopards and lions. English Version is better.

8. "Writers on the natures of beasts say that none is more savage than a she bear, when bereaved of her whelps" [JEROME].

caul of . . . heart--the membrane enclosing it: the pericardium.

there--"by the way" (Ho 13:7).

9. thou . . . in me--in contrast.

hast destroyed thyself--that is, thy destruction is of thyself (Pr 6:32; 8:36).

in me is thine help--literally, "in thine help" (compare De 33:26). Hadst thou rested thy hope in Me, I would have been always ready at hand for thy help [GROTIUS].

10. I will be thy king; where--rather, as the Margin and the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, "Where now is thy king?" [MAURER]. English Version is, however, favored both by the Hebrew,
by the antithesis between Israel's self-chosen and *perishing kings*, and God, Israel's *abiding* King (compare Ho 3:4, 5).

**where . . . Give me a king**—Where now is the king whom ye substituted in My stead? Neither Saul, whom the whole nation begged for, not contented with Me their true king (1Sa 8:5, 7, 19, 20; 10:19), nor Jeroboam, whom subsequently the ten tribes chose instead of the line of David My anointed, can save thee now. They had expected from their kings what is the prerogative of God alone, namely, the power of saving them.

**judges**—including all civil authorities under the king (compare Am 2:3).

11. I gave . . . king in . . . anger . . . took . . . away in . . . wrath—true both of Saul (1Sa 15:22, 23; 16:1) and of Jeroboam's line (2Ki 15:30). Pekah was taken away through Hoshea, as he himself took away Pekahiah; and as Hoshea was soon to be taken away by the Assyrian king.

12. bound up . . . hid—Treasures, meant to be kept, are bound up and hidden; that is, do not flatter yourselves, because of the delay, that I have forgotten your sin. Nay (Ho 9:9), Ephraim's iniquity is kept as it were safely sealed up, until the due time comes for bringing it forth for punishment (De 32:34; Job 14:17; 21:19; compare Ro 2:5). Opposed to "blotting out the handwriting against" the sinner (Col 2:14).

13. sorrows of a travelling woman—calamities sudden and agonizing (Jer 30:6).

**unwise**—in not foreseeing the impending judgment, and averting it by penitence (Pr 22:3).

**he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children**—When Israel might deliver himself from calamity by the pangs of penitence, he brings ruin on himself by so long deferring a new birth unto repentance, like a child whose mother has not strength to bring it forth, and which therefore remains so long in the passage from the womb as to run the risk of death (2Ki 19:3; Isa 37:3; 66:9).

14. Applying primarily to God's restoration of Israel from Assyria partially, and, in times yet future, fully from all the lands of their present long-continued dispersion, and political *death* (compare Ho 6:2; Isa 25:8; 26:19; Eze 37:12). God's power and grace are magnified in quickening what to the eye of flesh seems dead and hopeless (Ro 4:17, 19). As Israel's history, past and future, has a representative character in relation to the Church, this verse is expressed in language alluding to Messiah's (who is the ideal Israel) grand victory over the grave and death, the first-fruits of His own resurrection, the full harvest to come at the general resurrection; hence the similarity between this verse and Paul's language as to the latter (1Co 15:55). That similarity becomes more obvious by translating as the *Septuagint*, from which Paul plainly quotes; and as the same *Hebrew* word is translated in Ho 13:10, "O death, where are thy plagues (paraphrased by the *Septuagint*, 'thy victory')? O grave, where is thy destruction (rendered by the *Septuagint*, 'thy sting')?" The question is that of one triumphing over a foe, once a cruel tyrant, but now robbed of all power to hurt.

**repentance shall be hid from mine eyes**—that is, I will not change My purpose of fulfilling My promise by delivering Israel, on the condition of their return to Me (compare Ho 14:2-8; Nu 23:19; Ro 11:29).

15. fruitful—referring to the meaning of "Ephraim," from a *Hebrew* root, "to be fruitful" (Ge 41:52). It was long the most numerous and flourishing of the tribes (Ge 48:19).
wind of the Lord--that is, sent by the Lord (compare Isa 40:7), who has His instruments of punishment always ready. The Assyrian, Shalmaneser, &c., is meant (Jer 4:11; 18:17; Eze 19:12).

from the wilderness--that is, the desert part of Syria (1Ki 19:15), the route from Assyria into Israel.

he--the Assyrian invader. Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria in 723 B.C. Its close was in 721 B.C., the first year of Sargon, who seems to have usurped the throne of Assyria while Shalmaneser was at the siege of Samaria. Hence, while 2Ki 17:6 states, "the king of Assyria took Samaria," 2Ki 18:10 says, "at the end of three years they took it." In Sargon's magnificent palace at Khorsabad, inscriptions mention the number--27,280--of Israelites carried captive from Samaria and other places of Israel by the founder of the palace [G. V. SMITH].

16. This verse and Ho 13:15 foretell the calamities about to befall Israel before her restoration (Ho 13:14), owing to her impenitence.

her God--the greatest aggravation of her rebellion, that it was against her God (Ho 13:4).

infants . . . dashed in pieces, &c.--(2Ki 8:12; 15:16; Am 1:13).

CHAPTER 14


1. fallen by thine iniquity--(Ho 5:5; 13:9).

2. Take with you words--instead of sacrifices, namely, the words of penitence here put in your mouths by God. "Words," in Hebrew, mean "realities," there being the same term for "words" and "things"; so God implies, He will not accept empty professions (Ps 78:36; Isa 29:13). He does not ask costly sacrifices, but words of heartfelt penitence.

receive us graciously--literally "(for) good."

calves of our lips--that is, instead of sacrifices of calves, which we cannot offer to Thee in exile, we present the praises of our lips. Thus the exile, wherein the temple service ceased, prepared the way for the gospel time when the types of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament being realized in Christ's perfect sacrifice once for all, "the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is the fruit of our lips" (Heb 13:14) takes their place in the New Testament.

3. Three besetting sins of Israel are here renounced, trust in Assyria, application to Egypt for its cavalry (forbidden, De 17:16; compare Ho 7:11; 11:5; 12:1; 2Ki 17:4; Ps 33:17; Isa 30:2, 16; 31:1), and idolatry.

fatherless--descriptive of the destitute state of Israel, when severed from God, their true Father. We shall henceforth trust in none but Thee, the only Father of the fatherless, and Helper of the destitute (Ps 10:14; 68:5); our nation has experienced Thee such in our helpless state in Egypt, and now in a like state again our only hope is Thy goodness.

4. God's gracious reply to their self-condemning prayer.

backsliding--apostasy: not merely occasional backslidings. God can heal the most desperate
sinfulness [CALVIN].

freely—with a gratuitous, unmerited, and abundant love (Eze 16:60-63). So as to the spiritual Israel (Joh 15:16; Ro 3:24; 5:8; 1Jo 4:10).

5. as the dew--which falls copiously in the East, taking the place of the more frequent rains in other regions. God will not be "as the early dew that goeth away," but constant (Ho 6:3, 4; Job 29:19; Pr 19:12).

the lily--No plant is more productive than the lily, one root often producing fifty bulbs [PLINY, Natural History, 21.5]. The common lily is white, consisting of six leaves opening like bells. The royal lily grows to the height of three or four feet; Mt 6:29 alludes to the beauty of its flowers.

roots as Lebanon--that is, as the trees of Lebanon (especially the cedars), which cast down their roots as deeply as is their height upwards; so that they are immovable [JEROME], (Isa 10:34). Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root which is out of sight.

6. branches--shoots, or suckers.

beauty . . . as the olive--which never loses its verdure. One plant is not enough to express the graces of God's elect people. The lily depicts its lovely growth; but as it wants duration and firmness, the deeply rooted cedars of Lebanon are added; these, however, are fruitless, therefore the fruitful, peace-bearing, fragrant, ever green olive is added.

smell as Lebanon--which exhaled from it the fragrance of odoriferous trees and flowers. So Israel's name shall be in good savor with all (Ge 27:27; So 4:11).

7. They that used to dwell under Israel's shadow (but who shall have been forced to leave it), shall return, that is, be restored (Eze 35:9). Others take "His shadow" to mean Jehovah's (compare Ps 17:8; 91:1; Isa 4:6), which Ho 14:1, 2 ("return unto the Lord," &c.) favor. But the "his" in Ho 14:6 refers to Israel, and therefore must refer to the same here.

revive as . . . corn--As the corn long buried in the earth springs up, with an abundant produce, so shall they revive from their calamities, with a great increase of offspring (compare Joh 12:24).

scent thereof--that is, Israel's fame. Compare Ho 14:6, "His smell as Lebanon"; So 1:3: "Thy name is as ointment poured forth." The Septuagint favors the Margin, "memorial."

as the wine of Lebanon--which was most celebrated for its aroma, flavor, and medicinal restorative properties.

8. Ephraim shall say--being brought to penitence by God's goodness, and confessing and abhorring his past madness.

I have heard . . . and observed him--I Jehovah have answered and regarded him with favor; the opposite of God's "hiding His face from" one (De 31:17). It is the experience of God's favor, in contrast to God's wrath heretofore, that leads Ephraim to abhor his past idolatry. Jehovah heard and answered: whereas the idols, as Ephraim now sees, could not hear, much less answer.

I am . . . a green fir--or cypress; ever green, winter and summer alike; the leaves not falling off in winter.

From me is thy fruit found--"From Me," as the root. Thou needest go no farther than Me for the supply of all thy wants; not merely the protection implied by the shadow of the cypress,
but that which the cypress has not, namely, fruit, all spiritual and temporal blessings. It may be also implied, that whatever spiritual graces Ephraim seeks for or may have, are not of themselves, but of God (Ps 1:3; Joh 15:4, 5, 8; Jas 1:17). God's promises to us are more our security for mortifying sin than our promises to God (Isa 27:9).

9. EPILOGUE, summing up the whole previous teaching. Here alone Hosea uses the term "righteous," so rare were such characters in his day. There is enough of saving truth clear in God's Word to guide those humbly seeking salvation, and enough of difficulties to confound those who curiously seek them out, rather than practically seek salvation.

fall--stumble and are offended at difficulties opposed to their prejudices and lusts, or above their self-wise understanding (compare Pr 10:29; Mic 2:7; Mt 11:19; Lu 2:34; Joh 7:17; 1Pe 2:7, 8). To him who sincerely seeks the agenda, God will make plain the credenda. Christ is the foundation-stone to some: a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to others. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But their fall is the most fatal who fall in the ways of God, split on the Rock of ages, and suck poison out of the Balm of Gilead.