

# CHAPTER 9

In this chapter,

- I.** God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they had forfeited their title to them; so that they should have no comfort either in receiving them themselves or in offering them to God (v. 1-5).
- II.** He dooms them to utter ruin, for their own sins and the sins of their prophets (v. 6-8).
- III.** He upbraids them with the wickedness of their fathers before them, whose steps they trod in (v. 9, 10).
- IV.** He threatens them with the destruction of their children and the rooting out of their posterity (v. 11-17).

## HOSEA 9:1-6

### THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

Here,

**I.** The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery: *O Israel! thou hast gone a whoring from thy God*, v. 1. Their covenant with God was a marriage-covenant, by which they were joined to him as their God, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour and put a confidence in them, they *went a whoring from God* as their God, and honoured the pretenders and rivals with the affection, adoration, and confidence, which were due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not, in them, going a whoring from God, as it was in Israel that had been married to him. Note, The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of their going a whoring from God, it is charged upon them that *they loved a reward upon every corn-floor*.

**1.** They loved to give rewards to their idols, in the offerings and first-fruits they presented to them out of every corn-floor. They took a strange

pleasure in serving their idols with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God and employ in his service. Note, It is common for those that are niggardly in the expenses of their religion to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or,

2. They loved to receive rewards from their idols; and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be: *These are my rewards, which my lovers have given me*, <sup><800></sup>Hosea 2:12. Note, Those are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry that love a reward in the corn-floor better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life.

II. They are forbidden to rejoice as other people do: *“Rejoice not, O Israel! for joy. Do not expect to rejoice. What peace, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many?”* <sup><100></sup>2 Kings 9:19-22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it does not become thee, but rather to *be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*, <sup><500></sup>James 4:9. Judah, that keeps close to the true God, nay, and other people that never knew him nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed as Israel has, that has gone a whoring from him. Some think that they had at this time particular occasions for joy, probably upon the account of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained, or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had public rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions; but God sends to them not to rejoice. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice, because they have gone a whoring from their God; and therefore,

1. Whatever it was that they rejoiced in, it would be no security nor advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have small joy of any of our creature-comforts if we make not God our chief joy.

2. The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy and a strong alloy to all their comforts. Note, Those who by departing from God have made work for repentance have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

III. They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before. <sup><170></sup>Psalm 72:27, *Thou hast destroyed all those that go a whoring from thee*. It is here threatened,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase. Canaan, that *fruitful land*, shall be *turned into barrenness for the wickedness of those that dwell therein*. They *love the reward in the corn-floor*, and are so full of the *joy of harvest* that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins; and therefore God will, for their effectual humiliation, take away from them, not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food (v. 2): *The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them*, much less feast them; they shall either be blasted by the hand of God or plundered by the hand of man. The *new wine* with which they used to make merry shall *fail in her*. Note, When we make the world, and the things of it, our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to show us our folly and correct us for it. Let those miss of their food in the corn-floor that look for their reward in the corn-floor. We forfeit the good things of this world if we love them as the best things.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them and to be a habitation for them; it shall *spue them out*, as it had done the Canaanites before them (v. 3): *They shall not dwell any longer in the Lord's land*. The land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner *the Lord's land*, *the land of the Shechinah* (so the Chaldee), *the land of the Lord of the world* (so the Arabic); he whose all the earth is (<sup>190</sup>Psalm 24:1) took that for his demesne. *The land is mine*, says God, (<sup>193</sup>Leviticus 25:23). They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services, due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly *enters*, and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease. "It is *my land*" (says God) "and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off, as bad tenants, and be made to know that, though they thought themselves freeholders, they were but tenants at will." Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness that those who go a whoring from God should not be suffered to dwell upon his land; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be *chased out of the world*. Or it is called the Lord's land because it was the holy land, *Immanuel's land*, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were; it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this. It was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him, in such a land as this, to *deal unjustly in a land of uprightness*, (<sup>230</sup>Isaiah

26:10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

**3.** That, when they are turned out from the Lord's land, they shall have no rest nor satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was *driven out from the presence of the Lord* he was a *fugitive and a vagabond* ever after, and dwelt in the land of *trembling*. So Israel here. Some shall *return into Egypt*, the old house of bondage; thither they shall flee from the Assyrian (<sup>2083</sup>Hosea 8:13) and they shall lose and ruin themselves where they thought to hide and help themselves. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria and there shall be forced to *eat unclean things*, either

**(1.)** Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrefied, intimating that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal that would fain have filled his belly *with the husks*. Or,

**(2.)** Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but, since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that, and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, and either through want or for our health are forced to eat or drink that which is displeasing, we must acknowledge that God is righteous, because we have sinned about our food, and have indulged ourselves too much in that which is pleasing.

**4.** That in the land of their enemies, to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God or obtaining favour with God, by offering any acceptable sacrifice to him; they should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or show of religion among them; “and so” (as Dr. Pocock expresses it) “should be as it were quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace, and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people.”

(1.) They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, nor priests to offer them; they shall not so much as *offer drink-offerings* to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices.

(2.) If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are their hearts humbled.

(3.) Instead of their sacrifices of joy and praise, they shall *eat the bread of mourners*; they shall live desolate, and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations and their own miseries, so that if they had opportunity of sacrificing they should never be themselves in a frame fit for it; for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in *their mourning*, ~~(v. 14)~~ Deuteronomy 26:14. *All that eat of the bread of mourners are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar.*

(4.) Their *bread for their soul*, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread which they shall have for the support of their lives, *shall not come into the house of the Lord*; they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to, or, if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought, nor are they rightly disposed to bring it.

(5.) The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy and uncomfortable to them (v. 5): *What will you do in the solemn day, in the sabbath, the solemn day of every week, in the new moons, the solemn days of every month, at the return of the times for keeping the passover, pentecost, and feast of the tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feasts of the Lord?* Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days; and, when we are invited to those feasts, we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts, “*What will you do then?* You will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation which, if it had not been your own fault, you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it.” Note, When we enjoy the means of grace we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them, if either they should be taken from us or we be disabled to attend upon them.

**5.** That they should perish in the land of their dispersion (v. 6): *For, lo, they have gone out of the Lord's land, where they might have spent both their sabbath days and other days with comfort, gone because of destruction, gone to Egypt because of the destruction of their own country by the Assyrians, flattering themselves with hopes that they shall return when the storm is over; but those hopes also shall fail them; they shall find there are graves in Egypt, as their murmuring ancestors said (<sup><01411></sup>Exodus 14:11), graves for them; for Egypt shall gather them up, as dead men are gathered up and carried forth to the grave, and Memphis (one of the chief cities of Egypt) shall bury them. Gathering and burying are put together, <sup><2482></sup>Jeremiah 8:2; <sup><8279></sup>Job 27:19. Note, Those that think presumptuously to flee from the judgments of God are likely enough to meet their death where they hoped to save their lives.*

**6.** That their land, which they left behind and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolation: As for *their tabernacles*, where they formerly dwelt and where they kept their stores, *the pleasant places for their silver*, they shall be demolished and laid in ruins, to such a degree that they shall be overgrown with *nettles*; so that if they should survive the trouble, and return to their own land again, they would find it neither fruitful nor habitable; it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make their money their god reckon the *places of their silver* their *pleasant places*, as those that make the Lord their God reckon his tabernacles amiable and his ordinances their pleasant things, <sup><23411></sup>Isaiah 64:11. But, while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of chance and change, the *pleasant places of men's silver*, which were purchased with silver, or in which they deposited their silver, or which were beautified and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and therewith all the pleasure men took in them.

## <sup><390></sup>HOSEA 9:7-10

### THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

For their further awakening, it is here threatened,

**I.** That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily. They shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not; it is at the door (v. 7): *The days of visitation have come, and there shall be no*

more delay; *the days of recompence have come*, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them that destruction *would come*, and now *it has come*, and the time of the divine patience has expired. Note,

1. The day of God's judgments is both a *day of visitation*, in which men's sins are enquired into and brought to light, and a *day of recompence*, in which men's doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution.

2. This day of visitation and recompence is hastening on apace. It is sure; it is near; as if it had already come.

II. That hereby they shall be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes *Israel shall know it*, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not know by instruction. *Israel shall know* then what an *evil and bitter thing* it is to *depart from God*, and what a *fearful thing* it is to *fall into his hands*. *When thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see*. Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false.

1. They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them that they should have peace though they went on, however they pretended to be *spiritual men* (as Ahab's prophets did, <sup>10224</sup>1 Kings 22:24) were *fools and madmen*, and not true prophets; they deceived themselves and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, "*It is for the multitude of thy iniquity* which, in contempt of the divine law, thou hast persisted in, *and, for the great hatred of the true prophets*, that reproved thee, in God's name, for it." Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquities bid defiance to it, therefore God shall *send them strong delusions, to believe a lie*, so strong that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them.

2. They shall know then whether the *true prophets*, that were really *spiritual men*, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, *fools and madmen*; and they shall be convinced that they

were so far from being so that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words *fell to the ground* they knew he was *established to be a prophet* (<sup>498b</sup>1 Samuel 3:20); and so here, when God fulfils the word of his messengers, by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought Bedlam the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of *the multitude of their iniquities* of that kind, and of *their great hatred*, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

**III.** That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves shall be manifested to their shame (v. 8): "*The watchman of Ephraim was with my God*; he had been formerly. They had a set of worthy good ministers, that kept close to God and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt, malignant, persecuting prophets, that are the ring-leaders of all mischief." Or, "The *watchman of Ephraim* now pretends to have been *with my God*, and prefaces his lies with, *Thus saith the Lord*; but he is *a snare of a fowler in all his ways*, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men that he has become *hatred itself in the house of his God, or against the house of his God.*" Note, Wicked prophets are the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast that they are *watchmen, speculators*, and, as far as speculation goes, they may be right, and *with my God*, may have their heads full of good notions; but look into their lives, and they are the *snare of a fowler in all their ways*, catching for themselves and making a prey of others; look into *their hearts*, and they are *hatred in the house of my God*, very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Woe unto thee, O land! unto thee, O church! that hast such watchmen, such prophets, that are seers, but not doers! *Corruptio optimi est pessima — The best things, when corrupted, become the worst.*

**IV.** That God will now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers, which they have trod in the steps of, v. 9, 10.

**1.** They were as bad as their fathers: *They have deeply corrupted themselves*; they are rooted and riveted in sin; they are far gone in the *depths of Satan* (<sup>238b</sup>Isaiah 31:6), so that it is next to impossible that they



should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out; it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leopard: and it is their own fault; they have *corrupted themselves*, have polluted and hardened their own hearts, as *in the days of Gibeah*, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death by the men of Gibeah and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronised the villany; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as impudent and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and therefore what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on Gibeah? Every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

**2.** They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers' sins: *He will remember their iniquity and visit their sins*, the iniquity they have by kind and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood; the *sin of the father* shall now be *visited upon the children*. Hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostasy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, v. 10. Here observe,

**(1.)** The great honour God put upon Israel when he first formed them into a people: *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*. He took as much delight and pleasure in them as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them and least expected them. Or when they were *in the wilderness* he *found them as grapes*, not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first-ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were *precious in his sight, and honourable* (<sup>23804</sup>Isaiah 43:4); he planted them a *choice vine, a right seed* (<sup>24121</sup>Jeremiah 2:21), and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. *I saw them with pleasure, as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at the first time*. Good people are compared to the *good things that are first ripe*, <sup>24212</sup>Jeremiah 24:2. One then is worth more than many afterwards. This intimates the delight God took in them and in doing them good, not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully, as a man does the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard. Now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency; but,

**(2.)** See the great disgrace they put upon themselves. God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with

the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghill deity (~~GEN~~ Numbers 25:2, 3), and they *separated themselves unto that shame*, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if (as should seem) the *whoredom* which the people *committed with the daughters of Moab* was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. *Their abominations* are here said to be *as they loved*; their practices which were an abomination to God were as the best-beloved of their souls. Or when they had once forsaken God they multiplied *their abominations*, their idols and abominable idolatries, at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers; God had done well for them, but they had acted ungratefully towards him, and in the same manner had the present generation *deeply corrupted themselves*.

## ~~HOSE~~ HOSEA 9:11-17

### THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers; here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for, as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it. We may observe, in these verses,

**I.** The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions are here which describe that.

**1.** *They did not hearken to God* (v. 17); they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod; they did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear,

**2.** Of the *wickedness of their doings* (v. 15), the downright malice that was in their sins; they were not infirmities, but daring presumptions. How can those but do wickedly who will not hearken to the word of God, that would teach and persuade them to do well? And no wonder that there were wicked doings among them when,

**3.** Their worship was corrupt (v. 15): *All their wickedness is in Gilgal*, which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, <sup><3045></sup>Hosea 4:15; 12:11; <sup><3004></sup>Amos 4:4; 5:5. It is probable that the idolaters chose that place for their head-quarters because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as <sup><662></sup>Joshua 5:2, 10; <sup><008></sup>1 Samuel 10:8; 11:15. There, where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said that *all their wickedness* was, for all other wickedness owed its origin to that. Corruptions in worship make way for corruptions in morals. The *mother of harlots* is the *mother of all other abominations*, <sup><675></sup>Revelation 17:5. The learned Grotius conjectures that there is a mystical sense here. Golgotha in Syriac is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the greatest sin of the Jewish nation, and of which it might truly be said, *All their wickedness* was summed up in that. And no wonder that the people did wickedly, both in worship and conversation, when

**4.** *All their princes were revolters*; the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord, or all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked; they turned aside to sinful ways and persisted in those ways.

**II.** The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to show what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how odious it makes the sinner to him.

**1.** He *departs from them*, v. 12. When they revolt from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them and withdraw both his protection and his bounty? And well may his threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible: *Woe also unto them when I depart from them!* Note, Those are in a woeful condition indeed whom God has forsaken. Our weal or woe depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and, if he goes, all weal goes with him and all woes come upon us. *God has forsaken him; persecute and take him.* Saul knew this when he laid such an emphasis upon this part of his complaint, *The Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me.* Nay, he does not only depart from them, but,

**2.** He hates them. *In Gilgal, where all their wickedness is, there I hated them.* There, where the abominations of sin are committed, there God

abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but now that is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them, but,

**3.** He *will love them no more*, will never take them into his favour again; the breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he had said, (<sup><3016></sup>Hosea 1:6, 7), *I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel*, the ten tribes.

**4.** He will discard them, and have no more to do with them: *For the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of my house*. He will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work. Note, Those that profane God's house can expect no other than to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but,

**5.** He will drive them far enough (v. 17): *My God will cast them away*, not only out of his house, but out of his sight; he will quite abandon and reject them; they shall be *cast-aways*. God said that he would *drive them out of his house*, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his Master's mind very well: *My God will cast them away*. See with what comfort and pleasure he calls God his God. Note, When others disown God, and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God their God, can cheerfully own him and see themselves owned by him — all revolvers, all ruined, yet God is *my God*.

**III.** The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

**1.** How numerous Ephraim seemed likely to be. The name *Ephraim* is derived from *fruitfulness*, (<sup><0415></sup>Genesis 41:51. Joseph is a *fruitful bough*, (<sup><0422></sup>Genesis 49:22. And Moses's blessing foretold the *ten thousands of Ephraim*, (<sup><0537></sup>Deuteronomy 33:17. This was his glory, v. 11. For this he seemed designed by him that appoints the bounds of men's habitation; for *Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place*, to encourage his increase, which one may expect as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure.

The Chaldee paraphrase gives this sense of it, *The congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyrus in prosperity and security.*

**2.** How few Ephraim should be (v. 11): *Their glory shall fly away like a bird*; their children shall be taken away and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly *as an eagle towards heaven*, swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will *fly away*; but those that have their God their glory have in him an unfading everlasting glory. Ephraim has been as a fruitful tree. But now *Ephraim is smitten*, is blasted; *their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit*, v. 16. If the root be dried, the branch must wither of course. Observe,

**(1.)** God's threatening this judgment of the destroying of their children.

**[1.]** They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God (v. 11): They shall *fly away from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception*. Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born; the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin. Others of them shall be *still-born*, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there their mothers' death too. Of others their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as untimely fruit. See how easily God can, and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind, that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven; it is but doing as he does by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to *fly away from the birth, the womb, and the conception*, drying up their root, that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years.

**[2.]** They shall perish by the hand of their enemies; they shall die violent deaths (v. 12): *“Though they bring up their children to some maturity, though they escape the diseases and deaths which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet will I bereave them* (v. 12), by one judgment or other, so that *there shall not be a man left to build up their families and bear up their name.”* Again (v. 13), *Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer*. The mothers shall travail with pain to bear their children, and a great deal of care, and pains, and cost shall be bestowed upon the nursing of them, and when a cruel enemy comes and puts all to the sword, young and old, without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter. Note, It is a great alloy to the comfort parents have in their children that they know not what they have brought them forth and brought them up for, perhaps

*for the murderer*, or, which is worse, to be themselves the plagues of their generation. It is threatened again (v. 16), *Though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb*, those children that they are most fond of. Note, The parents' love is no security to the children's lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family and leave the burdens of it. When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, this mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest which they through unbelief could not enter into. But this is a total and final rejection; even their children shall be cut off, and the land shall escheat to the crown, *ob defectum sanguinis* — *shall be lost for want of heirs*. The Chaldee-paraphrase, and many of the rabbin, by the *murderers* to whom the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed their children to Moloch, a sin which was its own punishment, which showed the parents void of bowels and justly left them void of blessings.

[3.] Those few that escape and remain shall be dispersed (v. 17): They shall be *wanderers among the nations*; so the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

(2.) The prophet's prayer relating to it (v. 14): *Give them, O Lord! what wilt thou give?* What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? It is this; since the decree has gone forth, that they must either die from the womb or be brought forth for the murderer, of the two let them rather *die from the womb*. Rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable; for the same reason, when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, *Blessed is the womb that never bore and the paps that never gave suck*, <sup>4239</sup>Luke 23:29. “Give therefore *a miscarrying womb and dry breasts*; for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of man.” Note, Those that are childless may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come when, if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.