

was utterly hateful to Jehovah, and entailed on those guilty of it, His severest indignation. To root it from the bosoms of the people, He threatened to visit them with the sternest punishments. Thus alone could His ancient relation to Israel be restored. The enforcing these truths was now the task of Ezekiel, and an occasion soon presented itself. Taking advantage of a visit from some elders of the people, he thus addressed the community through them. The Divine Voice had warned him of their secret leaning to heathenism. "Son of man,"¹ it had said, "these men cherish their loathsome gods² in their hearts, and set before their eyes, as the object of their worship, the images which are the stumbling block that causes their iniquity. Should I be inquired of at all by such as they?" He was therefore told to say to them:—

4 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Every man of the House of Israel that cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets before his eyes the idols which are the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I, Jehovah, will answer him as he deserves, with the punishment due for his multitude of loathsome gods; 5 that I may visit home the heart sins of the House of Israel,³ because they are all alienated from Me through their loathsome gods.

6 Therefore,⁴ say to the House of Israel: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Repent and turn back from your loathsome gods, and turn your faces from all idols, abominations as they are! 7 For every one of the House of Israel, and of the foreigners sojourning in Israel, who separates himself from Me and cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets up before his eyes the stumbling block which causes his iniquity, and yet comes to a prophet, to ask him to inquire of Me on his behalf, I, Jehovah, Myself will answer. 8 And I will set My face against that man,

¹ Ezek. xiv. 1-5.

² "Loathsome," lit., "filth-gods" and so throughout.

³ Lit., "take them in their heart."

⁴ Ezek. xiv. 6-8.