

That is, as the cedars which grew on that lofty mountain range and which were famous the world over for their luxuriance and strength. Beauty and strength are symbolized by the lily and the cedar. Notice the emphasis placed upon the roots. Cedars of Lebanon are said to throw their roots down as deeply as their heads reach upward. They are a type of permanence.

6. His branches shall spread. The figures of speech are mingled now with a profusion that reminds one of oriental jungles. "His branches" are his shoots or suckers or tendrils. **His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.** The prophet of God finds no one plant which combines all the graces of the people who return to God—lovely as the lily, firm as the cedar, they shall be fruitful as the olive, and fragrant as the choicest forest of the world, a forest full of aromatic shrubs.

7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. Probably this means that they that have dwelt under the shadow of Israel's throne, but who are about, because of Israel's sins, to be taken to a foreign land, shall be restored. **They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.** The disintegration and apparent death of a grain of corn and its rich reproduction gave to our Lord one of his most remarkable similes (John 12, 24.) The vine was a favorite national emblem of the Hebrews; and well it might be, for it was grown on almost every

hill-top. **The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.** A repetition of the promise of verse 6. The thought concerns the fame of Israel. As was said in Solomon's Song, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth."

8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? Meaning, "I will have nothing more to do with them." **I have heard him, and observed him.** "I have answered and will regard him." This is God's response to Ephraim's disavowal of his old life of sin. **I am like a green fir tree.** A cypress, an evergreen, strong and beautiful both in winter and in summer. The joy of the converted soul is here expressed. This is a morsel of personal testimony. **From me is thy fruit found.** "My God shall supply all your wants," wrote the apostle. "All my springs are in thee," sang the psalmist.

9. Who is wise . . . prudent. This question with its two clauses refers not simply to our lesson, but to the whole teaching of Hosea. It requires moral wisdom to understand moral truth. The prudent man, hearing the threatenings of God's providence, foreseeth the evil and hideth himself. **The ways of the Lord are right.** "Right are the ways of the Lord;" straightforward; directly leading to glory. **Transgressors shall fall therein.** They shall stumble because they transgress; that is, because they walk out of the way.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. O Israel. Hosea, like Amos, his contemporary, directed his prophecies to the Northern Kingdom, while Isaiah and Micah, also of the same period, labored chiefly in Judah. Hosea, though a prophet of Israel, disapproved of the secession of the ten tribes, since it made communion with God and his priests at Jerusalem more difficult, and rendered idolatry the more easy. (See chap. 3, 5, and 8, 4.) **Return unto the Lord.** This command to return shows clearly that the prophet, notwithstanding the gloomy pictures of depravity and idolatry painted in the preceding chapters, which no intelligent teacher should neglect to read, still cherishes the hope of Israel's return to Jehovah. We may remark here that the word "Lord" in small capitals is substituted for the Hebrew "Jehovah." **Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.** The downfall of most men and nations may be traced to iniquity. Since sin is a falling away from righteousness, the words "to fall" or "to stumble" are often used figuratively for "to sin." (See chap. 5, 5, and Prov. 4, 4.)

2. Take with you words. The law required (see Exod. 23, 15) that no one should appear empty before God. A returning to God, or conversion, requires some sacrifice from man. God cares more for a broken heart, a contrite spirit (Psa. 51, 16-18), and a genuine sorrow for sin than for all the costly offerings and most fastidious ceremonies. When there is true penitence in the heart there will be no lack of sacrifice of a material nature. "Take words"—that is, pour out your heart in earnest prayer. **Accept that which is good.** Literally, accept goodness—that is, receive our prayers and confession, the genuine offerings of the soul. **So will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.** The Hebrew is very obscure. A literal translation would read, "We will render bullocks our lips." In order to read "of our lips" we must drop the last letter in the Hebrew word for bullocks; if that were permissible, we might translate with the Septuagint, "the fruit of our lips." This phrase is used in Heb. 13, 15. Whether we read "fruit" or "bullocks" (A. V., "calves"), the