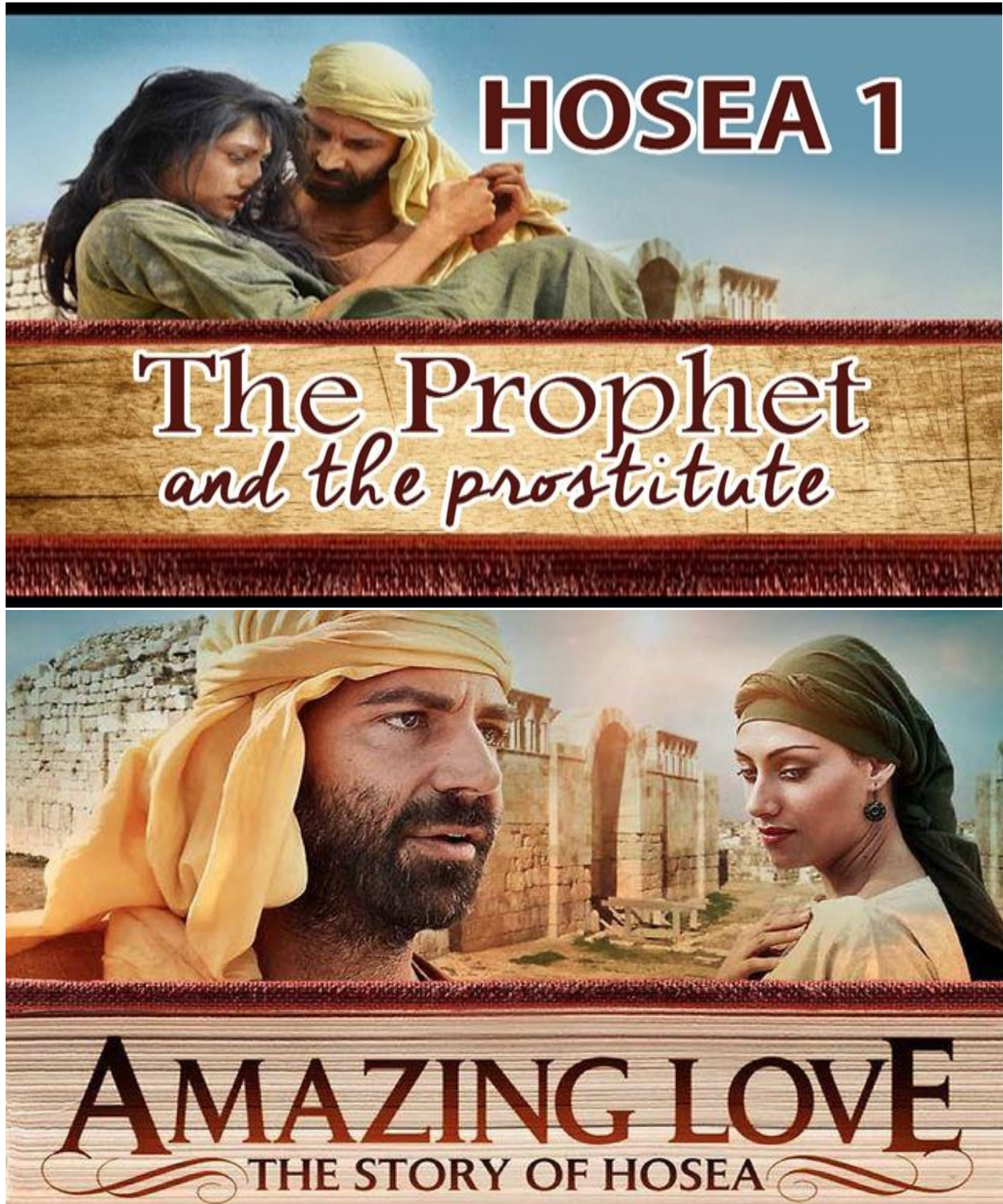


HOSEA WARNS THE LAST GENERATION  
SPIRITUAL POLYGAMY IS WHOREDOM!

by **David Lee Burris**





# HOSEA

FROM BROKEN TO BRAND NEW

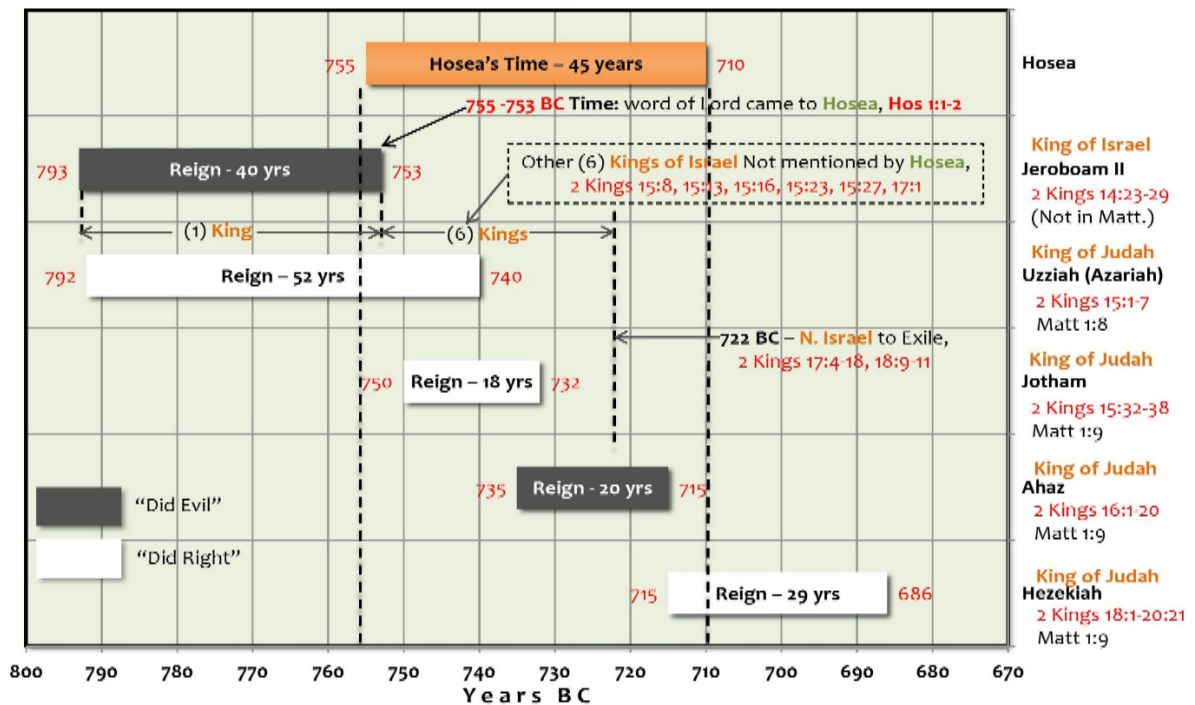


**Israel and Judah at the Time of Hosea**  
c. 740 B.C.

Hosea prophesied during a time of great political turbulence in Israel and Judah. The early part of his ministry witnessed a brief period of resurgence under the reign of Jeroboam II, who captured much of Syria for Israel. Within a couple decades, however, Israel and Syria attacked Judah, but Assyria in turn attacked Israel and captured Galilee and Gilead. Finally, in 722 B.C., the Assyrians captured Samaria itself and annexed the rest of Israel's territory into their empire.

**Hosea: During Days of 4 Kings of Judah and 1 King of Israel**

**Hosea 1:1-2 and 2 Kings 14:23 – 20:21**



## ***Kings of Israel during the Ministry of Hosea, 760 to 720 B.C.***

### **Dynasty of Jehu**

<b>Jeroboam II</b>	<b>793–752 B.C.</b>	<b>Gave throne to his son</b>
<b>Zechariah</b>	<b>753–752 B.C.</b>	<b>Assassinated</b>

### **Dynasty of Shallum**

<b>Shallum</b>	<b>752 B.C. (one month)</b>	<b>Assassinated</b>
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### **Dynasty of Menahem**

<b>Menahem</b>	<b>752–742 B.C.</b>	<b>Gave throne to his son</b>
<b>Pekahiah</b>	<b>724–740 B.C.</b>	<b>Coup d'etat Overthrown</b>

### **Dynasty of Pekah**

<b>Pekah</b>	<b>752–732 B.C.</b>	<b>Assassinated</b>
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### **Dynasty of Hoshea**

<b>Hoshea</b>	<b>732–722 B.C.</b>	<b>Died in exile<sup>1</sup></b>
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<sup>1</sup> Guzik, D. (2000). [Hosea](#) (Ho 1:1b). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

# HOSEA

**1-3 HOSEA'S MARRIAGE TO GOMER**

THE MARRIAGE | THE ADULTERY | THE RESTORATION

PROPHETIC SYMBOL OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

COVENANT AT MT SINAI | IDOLATRY-ADULTERY | END OF COVENANT  
REASON: GODS LOVE, COMPASSION, & FAITHFULNESS. 2:19-20

COVENANT BETRAYAL & EXILE | FUTURE RESTORATION & HOPE

MESSIAHIC KING | GODS BLESSING

**4-11 ACCUSATIONS & WARNINGS FOR ISRAEL**

1:10 CAUSES & EFFECTS OF ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS

1:2 THERE IS NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE LAND!

1:2 KNOWLEDGE REBREW YERBA (SEE THEE OF ISRAEL'S HEARTY RELATIONSHIP)

1:2 GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW HIM & EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE

HYPOCRISY OF ISRAEL'S WORSHIP

TRUSTING IN POLITICAL ALLIANCES WITH OTHER NATIONS

ASSYRIA | EGYPT

11 HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

GOD-LOVING FATHER: "I BRING ISRAEL TO DARKNESS, BUT THEY WALK IN LIGHT."

ISRAEL-KRELLIOUS SON: "HOW CAN I GIVE YOU UP, EPHRAIM? MY HEART CHURNS WITHIN ME; ALL MY COMPASSION IS AWAYED."

**12-14 MORE ACCUSATIONS & WARNINGS**

12-13 HOSEA'S WISDOMY LESSON

JACOB'S LYING TREACHERY (SEE GENESIS 27-28)

ISRAEL'S WILDERNESS REBELLION (SEE NUMBERS 12-20)

ISRAEL'S CHOICE OF KING SAUL (SEE 1 SAMUEL 12:1-15)

14 HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

REPENT! (SEE LEVITICUS 17:13)

IMAGE OF GOD BLESSING THE NATIONS THROUGH ABRAHAM'S FAMILY

GODS PROMISE: "CALL MEAL THEIR CATEARINESS & LOVE THEM FREELY."

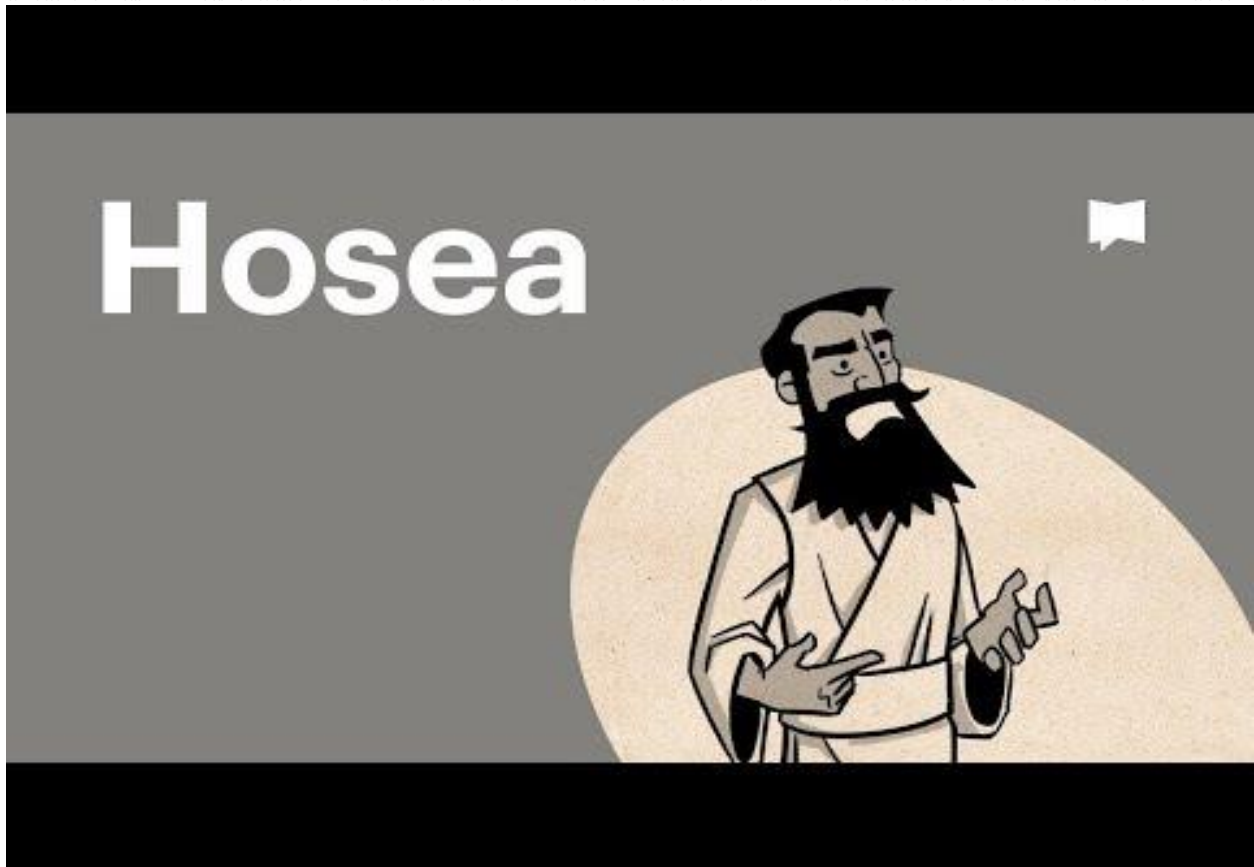
author's note \*

**INTRODUCE HOSEA'S MAIN THEMES:**  
ISRAEL HAS REBELLED & GOD WILL BRING SEVERE CONSEQUENCES.  
GOD'S LOVE & MERCY ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN ISRAEL'S SIN.

**AUTHORS CONCLUDING NOTE:**  
"GOD IS JUST & ACCEPTING TO UNDERSTAND ALL THIST THE CLAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, THE KRELLIOUS WALK IN THEM, BUT THE KRELLIOUS STUMBLE IN THEM."

HOSEA'S POETRY REVEALS DEEP TRUTHS ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER & HUMAN NATURE.  
GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE IS TO **Heal & Save**

created by the Bible Project



**Hosea & The Hooker.** This is the story of a match made in heaven. Far from an ideal marriage, it's a disaster – but that's the point. God wants to give the Jews a living, breathing, physical example of what they are doing to him on a spiritual level. What they are doing is committing adultery.

**Monolithic God Versus Demi-god.** They are worshipping foreign gods, especially the chief Canaanite god: Baal. This is a *fertility cult*. Many Jews consider Baal the source of *fertility in field, flock, and family*. Though it's disgusting to think about, many of Baal's faithful followers teach that the arid region's life-giving rain is his semen. So, they try to stimulate him to shower the earth. They do this by having ritual sex with shrine and temple prostitutes. So, Israel's adultery is not just spiritual. For many worshippers it's physical, as well.

**God Plans To Punish Israel.** But it doesn't have to be this way. There doesn't have to be a northern invasion. That's the message. Hosea delivers more dramatically than any other prophet. God has had other prophets act out some of his messages. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel performed skit-like performances to illustrate a point. Ezekiel throws hair into the wind to show that God will scatter the sinful Jews to the four winds. Hosea, on the other hand, must embrace an entirely new life – and a wife. He doesn't just act out a short scene to make God's point. His life becomes the point!

**God's Tough Love.** For Hosea, it's a tough life. But for Israel, it is a tough point. They are committing spiritual adultery by worshipping idols. In fairness, many Jews in Hosea's day don't think of it that way. They believe in God, they perform the right worship rituals, and they give their offerings. But they think of God as just one of the deities in a gallery of gods – perhaps the strongest god. And they certainly do consider him the God of war, since he gave their ancestors victory over the Egyptians and the Canaanites. But for abundant crops, herds, and having lots of children, many Jews turn to Baal and related deities worshipped throughout the ancient Middle East. *Spiritual polygamy is nothing but adultery.* – *The Complete Guide To The Bible*, page 229

# compelling **truth**



## **How does the Holy Bible use anthropomorphism to talk about God?**

The word anthropomorphism comes from the Greek word *Anthropos* (man) combined with the Greek word *morphe* (form). In theology, the term anthropomorphism includes the idea of referring to God by human characteristics. Though God is Spirit, Scripture sometimes speaks of Him in human terms to describe some of His actions in ways humans can understand.

For example, God is said to have a "face." He sets His face against evil (**Leviticus 20:6**). **Numbers 6:25** refers to God making His face shine upon us.

God is also referred to as having "hands" on many occasions. In **Exodus 7:5** God says, "I stretch out my hand against Egypt." In **Isaiah 23:11**, "He has stretched out his hand over the sea."

The psalmist referred to God having arms: "you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm" (**Psalms 89:10b**). **Deuteronomy 4:34** and **5:15**, as well as other passages, mention God's "outstretched arm."

Scripture also refers to God's "eyes." We read that, "The eyes of the Lord" are on the righteous (**Psalm 34:15**). And God keeps his eyes on the land (**Deuteronomy 11:12**).

In prayer, those in Scripture sometimes refer to God's ears. For example, **2 Kings 19:16** says, "Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear." **Nehemiah 1:6** includes, "let your ear be attentive."

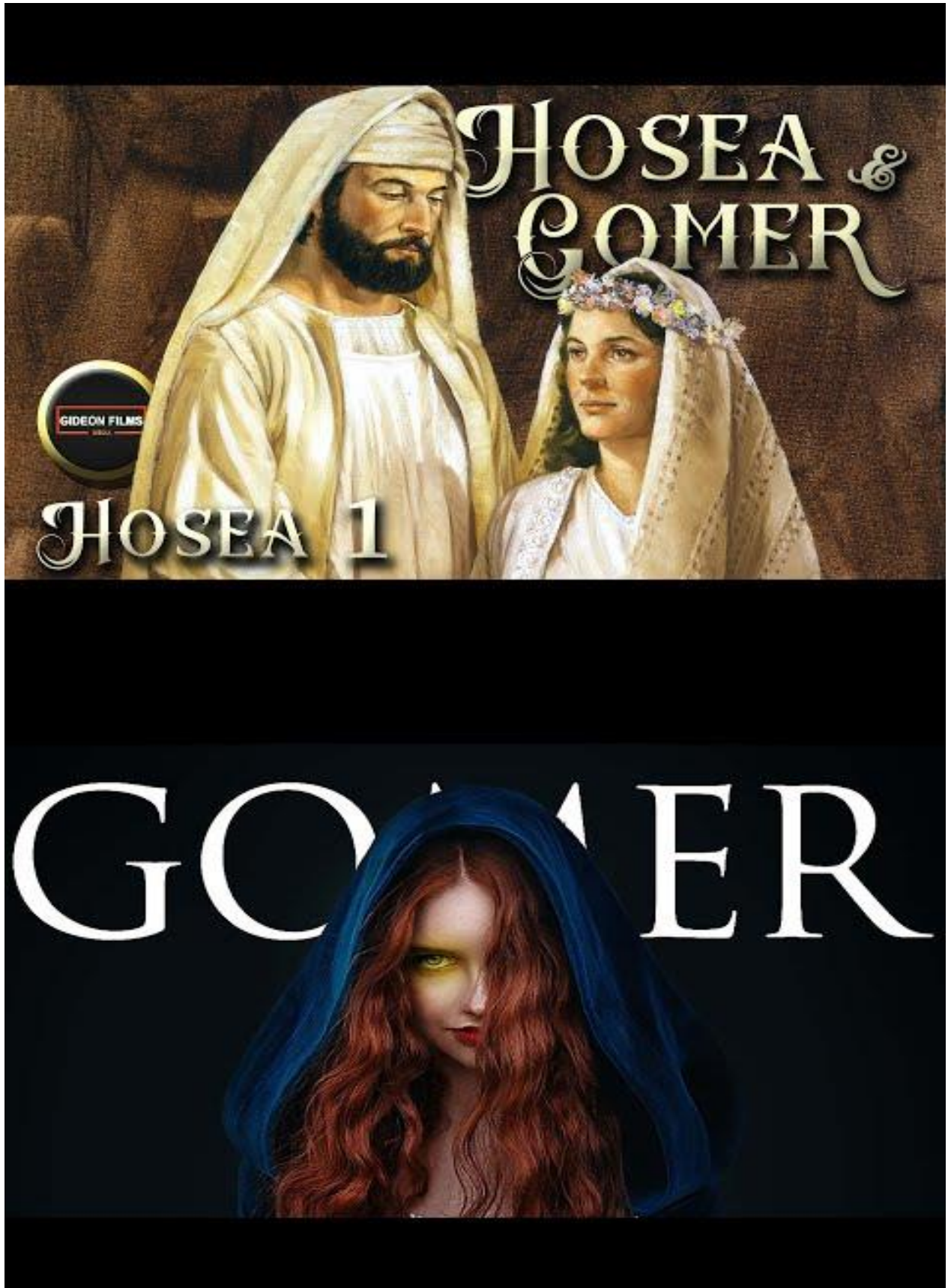
Some passages even refer to God's feet. For example, **Isaiah 66:1** says, "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ...'"

Many of these references are used to help readers understand a concept God was attempting to convey. However, it is clear God does not have a physical body like a human. Instead, Jesus Christ came to earth as God in human form (**John 1:1**) in order to both identify with humanity and to die as a sacrifice for the sins of people on their behalf.

While anthropomorphism can serve in helpful ways to better understand God's attributes, it is important not to interpret these human characteristics to mean God the Father exists in human form. As **Isaiah 55:8-9** notes, "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

**NOTE: IN HOSEA GOD REVEALS  
HIS MOST INTIMATE FEELINGS!**





HOSEA. Hosea prophesied in the prospect of the breaking up of the kingdom of the ten tribes, and near the end of the house of Jehu. He is full of the thought of the ruin that was at hand; but he anticipates scenes of restoration and glory beyond it. The death and resurrection of Israel is contemplated by him, and announced under different figures, in a very abrupt and vivid style.

At the opening of the book, the prophet is directed by the Lord to take to him a wife and children. And he might say to them, as Isaiah did of his two sons, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders.”

The first child is “Jezreel”—the sign of the doom, both of the house of Jehu, and of the house of Israel. The second child is “Lo-ruhamah”—the sign that God would withdraw His mercy from the house of Israel. The third is “Lo-ammi”—the sign that He would disclaim Israel, so that they should be no more His people. But all this is followed by a promise of final re-gathering, called “the day of Jezreel,” when the very same nation, now cast off, should be restored. The strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, pass by to do their appointed service; but the still, small voice closes the history.

The **second chapter** then gives us a more expanded view of this guilt and misery of Israel, and of their final blessedness. The beautiful description of the covenant made by the Lord for Israel, as between them and the beasts of the earth, after He has taken them in covenant with Himself, and the sight we get of the Lord at one direction of a magnificent system of blessing and of Israel at the other end, after wilderness-days, are exquisite indeed. “The valley of Achor” is also declared to be “a door of hope”—that is, judgment ending in victory or glory, tribulation in joy (Joshua 7) All these things bespeak the death and resurrection of the nation.

Then, in **chapter 3**, the prophet is directed to take a second wife. These marriages are *emblematic actions*, reminding us of many things in Ezekiel, of Jeremiah going to the Euphrates to hide his girdle there, and of Agabus in the Acts of the Apostles, taking Paul’s girdle and binding his own hands with it. All these were actions emblematically or typically fitted to give intimation of coming events.

The instruction of the prophet's first marriage is about the casting off of Israel as a nation, and of their return to blessedness in the last days. The instruction conveyed to us by his second marriage is about the political and religious history of the people; and this may well strike us as marvellous; for with our eyes we see this anticipation of the prophet verified and exhibited to the very life. **They are, at this moment, without a king, without a sacrifice, without teraphim. They have no political standing, and they are neither a sanctified nor an idolatrous people. They are not in the knowledge and worship of God, nor in the service of idols, as their fathers were.** Our own eyes do indeed see all this. But they are to revive politically and religiously. As the prophet goes on to tell us: "They shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Surely this is again their present death and coming resurrection.

Then, after these first three chapters, we get, in the great body of the prophecy, details of the sins which had provoked this judgment. "There is a sin unto death," as we read in John. Israel, as a nation, I may say, committed it. All the prophets, I may also say, tell us this. "This iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die," says Isaiah to them. But Ezekiel's "valley of dry bones" is the leading and the best-known Scripture on this mystery. And the Divine Prophet Himself talks to the Jews of His day, of the Lord God miserably destroying them as the wicked husbandmen; and says also to them, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." And surely it is a death-stricken land and people we see in them and their country at this moment. Surely it all tells us, "There is a sin unto death." They are as a nation in Ezekiel's valley, or in Hosea's graveyard.

But this death shall be triumphed over. The nation of the Jews shall have a resurrection, as the bodies of the saints shall have resurrection. And then, as the saints in their glories shall fill and adorn the heavens, so Israel shall blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

**In spirit, as well as in circumstances, there shall be revival, moral as well as national recovery, conversion as well as restoration. Hosea's last chapter lets us see this, and all the prophets.**

Very various and broken are the notices which our prophet gives us of those iniquities which were leading the people to their graves, or to the judgment of death.

**The land was to mourn—the people were to languish. The Lord would be to Ephraim as a moth, to the house of Judah as a worm; as the fowls of the heaven He would bring them down. They should be swallowed up; Memphis was to bury them; their children would be brought forth to the murderer; they should use the words prepared for the day of utter excision, “mountains cover us, hills fall on us.”**

Such words are used, such descriptions are given of them. But they were to revive, and of this we get abrupt witnesses also. The Lord's heart would turn within Him — His repentings should be kindled; there should be no full and final destruction. Resurrection, as in the third day (a glance at the resurrection of the Lord of Israel Himself) is spoken of. The coming out from Egypt also, as a renewal of their history, as though they were beginning afresh, under the hand and grace of God, and Jacob's history, are likewise referred to, with the same intent. Birth from the womb, and resurrection from the grave, are also called forth to set forth, as in figures, the same story of this people. And, again, the blighting force of the east wind, and then afterwards the bloom and beauty of Spring, tell us of the doom and the revival of the nation.

The language of resurrection itself is so employed in chap. 12, that the apostle can use it, when making literal resurrection his subject, in 1 Cor. 15. Here, however, it is the recovery of the nation. And standing, as Hosea was, in the full prospect of the Assyrian captivity, and in the near approach of the doom of the house of Jehu, it was natural and easy, so to speak, that the Spirit should lead him to see and speak of the death-stricken state of Israel as just about to begin.

In addition to the present casting-off of the Jews, and their future restoration, which, as we see, constitutes the great subject, we get the grafting of the Gentile on the Jewish root, intimated in chap. 1:10, used to that end by the apostle in Rom. 9:26. So the idea, the Scriptural idea, of a remnant in Israel is conveyed in the “Ammi” and “Ruhamah” of chap. 2:1, and thus we do get notices, of other points of truth beyond the leading ones.

There is nothing more affecting than this mixture on God's part of reproaches, of loving kindness, of appeal, of reference to happier moments, that touching mixture of affection and of judgment, which we find again and again in this prophet." In this way, we get variety of matter in Hosea, while, again I say, the death and resurrection of the nation of Israel constitutes the great theme.

The closing verse draws the moral. It tells us where wisdom, true and divine wisdom, wisdom in which the soul concerned for eternity, is to be found. It is in this mystery of death, resurrection, judgment and redemption, sin and salvation, the mystery, as I may say, of Adam and of Christ, that the grand moral of the story of this ruined world of ours lies. All that is to be brought back to God, all that is to stand in Christ, or under Christ, is to be in resurrected character, redeemed from the judgment of death.

We might formally close with this reflection on the closing verse:

*Redemption leads to relationship.* This is God's way. "God is love." Whom He redeems, He adopts. He puts His ransomed in relationship to Himself. It was thus in Israel. God speaks to Israel and of Israel, as betrothed and adopted. I might refer to Isa. 54, Jer. 3, Ezek. 16, Zeph. 3, and a multitude of other Scriptures, in proof of this. It is thus with us. We read this largely in the New Testament. Redemption from the curse of the law is followed by redemption from the bondage of it. In other words, the blessing of justification is waited on or followed by the Spirit of adoption (Galatians 3, 4)

It is enough Redemption leads to relationship, and so to glory; and in coming days, the heavens and the earth shall witness it, in its various, and excellent, and wondrous exhibition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bellett, J. G. (2004). [The Minor Prophets](#) (pp. 7–13). Galaxie Software.

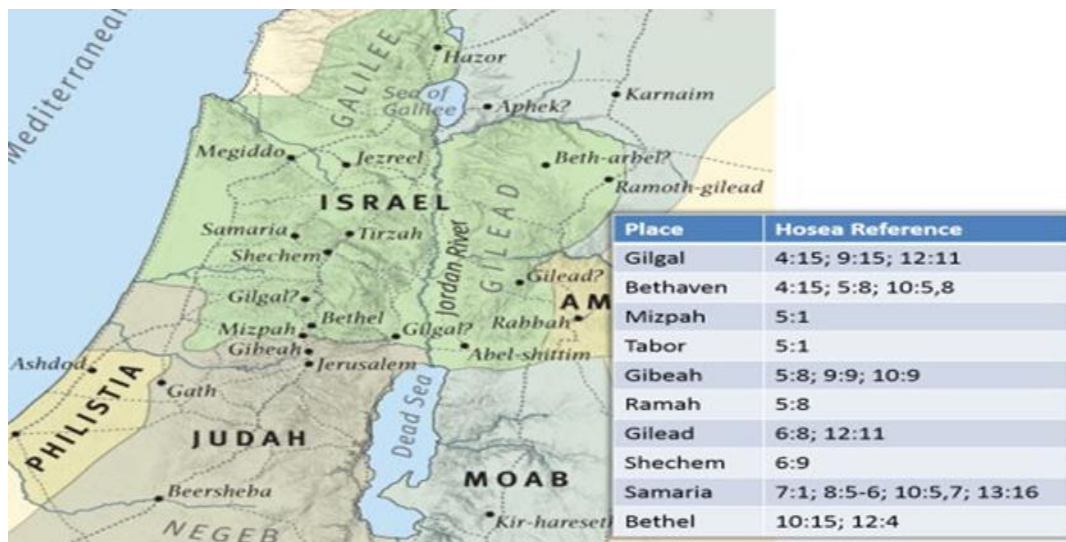
# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

### I. THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK—Hosea

Of the human author of our book, Hosea (Hoshea), we know very little, just as we know very little concerning many other of the Bible's human authors. His father's name was Beeri and his own name means "salvation" or "deliverance." We know nothing of his life before his call to his prophetic ministry or of his call to that ministry. He, ministering to the Northern kingdom, was probably a native of that kingdom.

We do know: (1) that he ministered chiefly to the Northern kingdom; (2) that he ministered for around 55 or 60 years (from around 780–722 B.C., from the reign of Jeroboam II to the fall of the Northern kingdom); (3) that Amos was his contemporary in the Northern kingdom; and (4) that his contemporaries in the Southern kingdom were Isaiah and Micah.



Hosea has been called by three names: (1) "the prophet of love"; (2) "the Jeremiah of the Northern kingdom"; and (3) "the Saint John of the Old Testament." He is one of the greatest of the Minor Prophets.

## II. THE ADDRESSEES OF THE BOOK

The messages of the book are addressed primarily to the people of the Northern kingdom. A few of the book's exhortations and warnings are addressed to the people of Judah, the people of the Southern kingdom.

## III. THE TIME OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

The messages of the book probably were first delivered *orally* during the long ministry of Hosea. Probably each of the messages was *recorded* soon after it was delivered and then after the long ministry of *Hosea* was completed, these messages were edited by him and were *gathered* by him into a book, our book of *Hosea*. The book probably was written a short time before Hosea's death, which probably occurred a short time after the fall of the Northern kingdom in 722 B.C.

## IV. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE BOOK

### A. IT IS ONE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETICAL BOOKS

The Old Testament has 17 historical books (*Genesis* through *Esther*), 5 poetical books (*Job* through *Song of Solomon*), and 17 prophetic books (*Isaiah* through *Malachi*).

### B. IT IS ONE OF "THE MINOR PROPHETS"

The Old Testament has 5 "Major Prophets" (*Isaiah* through *Daniel*) and 12 "Minor Prophets" (*Hosea* through *Malachi*). The "Minor Prophets" are so-called not because they are unimportant in their *contents* but because they are *short* in their length.

## V. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK

In 933 B.C., the United Kingdom of Israel divided into the ten-tribed Northern kingdom ("Israel") and the two-tribed Southern kingdom ("Judah"). God acknowledged, and sent His prophets to, both kingdoms, but both kingdoms followed a downward course, both spiritually and morally.

At the time of Hosea's call, the Southern kingdom had had ten kings (two of them, Asa and Jehosaphat, being good kings) and one great spiritual revival (during the reign of Jehoshaphat).

At the time of Hosea's call, the Northern kingdom had had thirteen kings (from five dynasties), all of them being evil (all of them were calf-worshippers and three of them were also Baal-worshippers). The Northern kingdom had been greatly declined spiritually, morally, socially, politically, economically, and even territorially, but in the early days of Hosea's ministry, the nation, under Jeroboam II, was experiencing both a great political and economic revival, but certainly not a spiritual or a moral one. In religion and morals, the nation was at an all-time low. The political and economic revival under Jeroboam II was short-lived, for after his death, the nation entered a period of rapid decline and near-anarchy, ending in the destruction of the nation and deportation to Assyria of a large number of the remnant of her people. During the last thirty years of the kingdom's existence, it was ruled by 6 kings from 4 dynasties.

Hosea ministered during many of the years of Jeroboam's long, stable, and prosperous reign and during the around thirty years of his six successors' turbulent and unstable reigns. Hosea's ministry was contemporaneous with the ministry of Amos but continued on for several years after the ministry of Amos had ceased.

## **VI. THE OCCASION FOR THE WRITING OF THE BOOK**

From the divine standpoint, Hosea's messages were gathered into a book by the direction of God. From the human standpoint, these messages probably were gathered into a book at the request of those who heard the messages when they were delivered orally.

## **VII. THE FIVE-FOLD MESSAGE OF THE BOOK**

The same 5-fold message is common to all O.T. prophetic books:

- A. The Israelites are denounced for their sins.**
- B. The Israelites are called upon to repent.**
- C. The Israelites are promised blessing if they do repent.**
- D. The Israelites are threatened with cursing if the present generation does not repent.**
- E. The Israelites are promised ultimate blessings even though the present generation does not repent and the threatened judgment does fall.**



## VIII. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK

- A. It is one of the greatest of the books of “the Minor Prophets.”
- B. It is one of the greatest of the 18 prophetic books of the Bible.
- C. It is the greatest book in the Bible on the subject of God’s love for His people, Israel.

## IX. THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

### A. ITS STYLE IS POETICAL

With the exception of chapters one and three, the book is poetical in its style.

### B. ITS LANGUAGE IS FIGURATIVE AND METAPHORICAL

Hosea uses figurative and metaphorical language frequently and masterfully.

### C. ITS SENTENCES ARE BRIEF AND UNCONNECTED

### D. ITS MESSAGES ARE ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY

There is ample evidence to support this statement.

### E. ITS SPAN IS WIDE

Its messages were delivered over a period of fifty or sixty years. Its prophecy spans a period of many hundreds of years.

### F. ITS THEME IS LOVE (God’s love for Israel)

### G. ITS OUTLOOK IS HOPEFUL

Ultimately, all will be well with Israel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gingrich, R. E. (2004). [\*The Books of Hosea and Joel\*](#) (pp. 3–38). Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing.

## Notes on the Book of Hosea

### HOSEA'S BROKEN MARRIAGE

1:2-3. These verses raise the most difficult problem of the Book of Hosea. This is the problem of God telling Hosea he is to marry “an adulterous wife” (Hebrew: “a wife of adulteries”). Would the holy God tell a true prophet to do such a thing? Scholars have given a variety of possible solutions to this problem.

1. Some have suggested that the account of the marriage is simply allegorical and not historical at all. These authors have felt that they must deny that the prophet actually married an adulterous woman. There are two problems here. This would not solve the problem of Hosea's marriage, but only push it back a step. Second, **this solution, if adopted, would make it impossible to decide whether anything described in the Bible is historical or allegorical.**

2. Gomer was pure when they married, but became a prostitute later. Perhaps she had such tendencies in the beginning, and acted on them later. This would exonerate Hosea, but would leave God commanding him to do what he should not do. It has also been suggested Hosea married Gomer, wrongly thinking that it was God's will for him to do so. Later, he learned so much about God's love for the sinful nation that he thought God had planned this life for him.

3. Gomer was a member of a nation which was worshiping Baalim, committing spiritual adultery. One point in favor of this concept is that the term used for “wife of adulteries” is found only here in the Old Testament. It is an unusual expression, and is similarly matched by two other expressions in Hosea: “children of adulteries”<sup>3</sup> (1:2, 2:6) and “spirit of adulteries” (4:12; 5:4). The Prophet Hosea used these unusual expressions to emphasize the sin of the people in turning from God to worship Baalim. Note that he closes the verse by saying that the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord. It's clear here that the prophet is speaking of spiritual adultery. The nation is married by a covenant to God, yet is unfaithful to God by turning to idolatry. Gomer is simply of the people who had done such wickedness. Hosea was also, but was faithful to God.

To understand the spiritual adultery of the nation, makes it easier to understand why Hosea married Gomer, and why God was pleased with the marriage. She was pure when he married her, but was a citizen of a nation which was known for its spiritual adultery and the physical adultery connected with the false worship of Baal. The verse itself explains: because the land is judged guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.

I will soon punish the house of Jehu (1:4). The massacre at Jezreel (a valley in northern Israel) is found in 2 Kings 9-10. Elisha initiated it, but wasn't responsible for the brutality with which it was carried out. Jezreel is also where King Ahab had Naboth killed in order to possess Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-29). Final fulfillment of the prophecy of God's punishment was in the fall of Israel in 722-721 BC, when it was conquered by Assyria. The name, Jezreel, reminded Hosea and others who knew the boy, of the great crime committed in that place. To break Israel's bow (1:5) means to break the power of the nation.

1:6 Lo-Ruhamah is Hebrew for "Not pitied" or "Not shown love." Hosea gave her this name to call attention to the fact that God would not forever go on showing love to the nation which rebelled against him. Yet I will show love to the house of Judah (1:7). After Israel was taken captive in 722-721, Judah, the southern kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem, continued as a nation for more than another century. As verse 7 shows, they did this, not because of their own power, but by the grace and power of the Lord their God.

1:9 The next child was a son, of whom the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi". This name Lo-Ammi is Hebrew meaning "Not my people". By giving the boy this name, God was saying through Hosea that He refuses to claim a wicked people as his own. He refuses to let them any longer call him their God. God was here renouncing the northern kingdom, and would cast them off. This did take place not long after this prophecy. It is possible that Hosea lived to see the fulfillment.

**1:10-2:1. What we usually see as the first verse of the second chapter truly belongs with the last two verses of Chapter 1, as it is part of the same statement about the two nations. These three verses abruptly change from a promise of punishment to a promise of better things in the future.**

Shall be like the sand of the sea (1:10) reminds us of the promise to Isaac in Genesis 26:4 that his descendants would be more than could be counted. And the promise was that instead of being called forever “Not my people” they would eventually be called sons of the living God. 1:11 says that the northern and southern nations would eventually be reunited, and have one ruler. *The way this was fulfilled in Christ is stated in John 1:12. This passage is also quoted by Paul in Romans 9:25-26 and applied to the whole church with Christ as the Head.* It is additionally referred to in 1 Peter 2:10. There’s never a question about the meaning of a prediction, when the New Testament itself gives the interpretation, as it does so clearly, of these verses. The writers of the New Testament were careful students of the Old Testament. Jesus did not cancel the value of the Old Testament or call it worthless (Mt. 5:17)

The people of Judah and the people of Israel (1:11). These had been divided into two nations since the death of Solomon. When they first divided, the king of the North country built temples at the northern and southern parts of Israel in which he put two calves for the people to worship. He told them it was too far for them to go all the way to Jerusalem to worship. But his real reason was to keep his people from mingling with the people of the southern kingdom, and remaining totally loyal to him. This encouraged the idolatry which the prophets were denouncing. The two nations came to dislike each other more and more.

Say to your brother “My people,” and your sister “She has obtained mercy” (2:1). Both Paul (Ro. 9:25) and Peter (1 Pet. 2:10) use this passage and apply it to the Gentiles, who were not the people of God before Christ, but now have the right to be the people of God. The Apostle Paul emphasized the equality of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 3:4-6. Gentiles were no people in the Old Testament, but since Christ we can be the people of God. This truth is basic if we are to see the relationship between Old and New Testaments.

In Chapter two is God’s plea with Israel, even though some of the wording sounds like what Hosea would say to his wife. God is speaking as the spiritual “husband” of the nation which he had brought out of Egyptian bondage. He had done so much for them, but they had been so long unfaithful. God loved the people and wanted them to return.

She is not my wife (2:2) means simply that she is not acting like a wife should act. (The Hebrew statement can be translated as statement or as a question, as at least one translation does.)

Rebuke your mother, rebuke her (2:2). The prophet would not have rebuked the people in this way if he had not believed there was some chance they would repent. There were some good people who had never turned from God. In the same way, one hundred years before, God had told the discouraged prophet Elijah he still had 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:1-18). Even when we feel that the whole nation is backslidden, we need to have faith that God still has some good people who will listen to the word of God, and obey. Hosea had that kind of faith.

2:3 Here God tells how he will punish people if they don't obey. To say I will strip her is to say God will take away the money and the ornaments of the nation, so the nation will be as poor, helpless and suffering as when he found them in Egypt. Compare with the description in Ezekiel 16:4-7.

Their mother has been unfaithful and she has conceived them in disgrace (2:5). Every generation is totally ignorant of God and his will until we teach them. This is why it is so important for us to work with our children so carefully and ceaselessly. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me ...' This shows exactly what Israel had done in turning from God. Israel had gone after the Canaanite gods (Baal and Ashtoroth) in the false belief that these idols could give them food, water and good crops.

2:6: God says that he will block her way so Israel will get nothing from Baal. He hopes that after that Israel will return to the Lord. The nation would finally realize that it was better off with the Lord than with Baal.

2:8: I was the one who gave the nation all the prosperity they had, even when they were worshiping their idols. (Compare Job 22:17-18). The I is emphasized in Hebrew, to contrast with Baal, which can do nothing. God says that it is time to punish the nation with poverty and hunger for the sin of turning away to worship idols instead of their Lord God (2:10-13).

After the punishment, God says that he will seek to please the nation and draw her back to himself (2:14-15). I will lead her into the desert does not mean punishment, but rather safety and deliverance. The reason for this meaning is that when God delivered the people from Egypt, he led them into the desert on their way to the promised land. Achor means “trouble.” So, God is saying through the prophet Hosea that he will make the trouble into a door of hope for the nation. In all this, God is saying he will take the nation to a private place and speak winningly to her, so as to bring her to repentance. You will no longer call me ‘my master’ (2:16). The Hebrew original uses the word “baal”, the name of the idol they had been worshiping. The nation would learn to worship God alone, and not confuse Him with idols. They would no longer give Baal credit for their blessings, but the Lord God. After the period of captivity, they no longer wanted to wander off in idolatry. This was the good result of the exile. Verses 17-23 describe the result of the nation turning away from their idols to worship their Creator.

Chapter three is a return to the story of Hosea and Gomer, adding some details. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites. This command by God emphasizes the fact that the love for Gomer is like God’s love for the nation of Israel. Both Gomer and Israel were unfaithful. Hosea loved Gomer enough to even buy her back from slavery, as God loved Israel enough to do whatever necessary to bring the nation back to himself. Sacred raisin-cakes were offered to Baal in idolatrous worship.

It sounds as though Hosea did not have enough money to buy back his wife, but wanted her so much he added enough barley to make up the price (3:2). Hosea lays down the requirement that Gomer must be faithful to him (3:3), which is a reasonable thing for him to do.

3:5. The Hebrew phrase (*acharim yamim*) is often used in the Old Testament, and simply means, “in the future” or “later on.” God is simply saying that many of the nations will return to the worship of the true and only God as God continues to work with them. This did happen, although the nation as a whole did not return from Assyria to their former home, but turned to God in the lands where they lived.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, K. E. (2005; 2005). [The Minor Prophets](#) (Ho 1:2–14:9). James L. Fleming.

## HOSEA 1:4 – A FACTUAL CONTRADICTION?

**Motives Matter.** The prophet Hosea expressed words that many skeptics have claimed are in opposition to what is stated in 2 Kings 9-10. When Gomer, Hosea's wife, bore a son, Hosea declared that the Lord said, "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel" (1:4). Those trying to discredit the Bible's integrity argue that Hosea put himself into **obvious disagreement** with the inspired writer of 2nd Kings, who thought that Jehu had done "all" that was in God's heart. Skeptics claim that the author of 2 Kings heaped praise on Jehu for the Jezreel massacre, but Hosea contradicted him when he said the Lord would avenge the blood of Jezreel, and bring to an end the reign of the house of Jehu in Israel. What can be said about this "obvious disagreement"? Are these two passages harmonious, or is this a legitimate contradiction that should cause Bible believers to reject the book that has been tried and tested for hundreds of years?

First, we cannot be 100% certain that **Hosea 1:4** is referring to the events recorded in 2 Kings 9-10. Although nearly all skeptics (and Bible commentators) link the two passages together, it must be understood that just because 2 Kings 9-10 is the only place in the Old Testament that describes suitable events located at Jezreel, it does not mean that Hosea must have been referring to those events. The honest student of God's Word has to admit that Hosea could've been referring to Jehu's sons who reigned after him. Perhaps his sons performed serious atrocities in Jezreel that aren't recorded in 2 Kings. One cannot be certain that Hosea was indeed referring to the events recorded in 2 Kings 10. Having made such a disclaimer, it is my position that these two passages **should** be linked, and thus the alleged contradiction raised by skeptics deserves an adequate explanation: How could God tell Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab, and then later condemn him (his house) via the words of Hosea for having done so?

The answer really is quite simple. As Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe observed: “God praised Jehu for obeying Him in destroying the house of Ahab, but condemned Jehu for his sinful motive in shedding their blood” (1992, p. 194). Skeptics are fond of citing 2 Kings 10:30 to support their position, but they often conveniently overlook verses 29 and 31, which state:

“Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan. . . . Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.”

Jehu obeyed God’s command to “strike down the house of Ahab” and utterly exterminate his descendants (2 Kings 9:7-8; 10:30), but he did not obey God in **all** that he did (Genesis 6:22). The passage in 2 Kings 10:29-31 indicates even though Jehu had done what God commanded, “he did so out of a carnal zeal that was tainted with protective self-interest” (Archer, 1982, p. 208). It seems obvious since Jehu followed in the footsteps of Israel’s first wicked king by worshipping false gods and not walking according to God’s law, he did not destroy Ahab’s descendants out of any devotion to the Lord. Furthermore, in commenting on Jehu’s actions, biblical scholar Gleason Archer noted:

The important principle set forth in Hosea 1:4 was that when blood is shed, even in the service of God and in obedience to His command, blood-guilt attaches to God’s agent himself if his motive was tainted with carnal self-interest rather than by a sincere concern for the purity of the faith and the preservation of God’s truth.

Considering Jehu’s actions by examining the motives behind those actions solves the alleged contradiction. Jehu’s failure to obey God’s commands and depart from the sins of Jeroboam revealed that he would have equally disobeyed the other commands as well, had it been contrary to his own desires. The story of Jehu’s conquest does teach a great lesson, which Albert Barnes acknowledged in his Bible commentary on Hosea: “[I]f we do what is the will of God for any end of our own, for anything except God, we do, in fact, our own will, not God’s” (1997). Indeed, just as the apostle Paul taught in his discourse on love—**motives matter** (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)! — *Apologetics Press*



## ***Hosea 1—The Prophet and the Prostitute***

### **A. The life and times of the Prophet Hosea [1:1a–b]**

#### **1. Hosea the man (1a)**

a. **The word of the LORD:** Plainly said, Hosea was a *prophet*. He spoke forth the **word of the LORD**, and applied that word to his life, and to the people and circumstances around him. Hosea was a man, but he was a man God used to speak through.

b. **Hosea the son of Beeri:** The name **Hosea** means “salvation.” It comes from the same Hebrew root (*hoshea*) as the names *Joshua* and *Jesus*. Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the LORD and away from our sin.

c. **Son of Beeri:** This tells us the name of Hosea’s father. We also know that he had a wife named *Gomer* (Hosea 1:3), and two sons and a daughter (Hosea 1:4, 1:6, 1:9). Nowhere else in the Bible is Hosea mentioned.

#### **2. The times Hosea lived in (1b)**

a. **Kings of Judah ... king of Israel:** Hosea’s ministry spanned the years 760 to 720 B.C. during the days of the *divided monarchy*. This was after days of David and Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, creating two nations: Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. This is some 250 years after the time of King David, and some 650 years after Israel came into the Promised Land.

b. **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah:** Hosea’s ministry was in the *northern* kingdom of Israel. We know this because in Hosea 7:5 he calls the king of Israel *our king*, and because his ministry is focused towards the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city Samaria. But for the benefit of his readers in the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea gives them a reference point for the days of his ministry according to the **kings of Judah**.

c. **Jeroboam ... king of Israel:** Hosea began his ministry in the days of Jeroboam II. From a political and economic standpoint Jeroboam II was a successful and good king (2 Kings 14:23–29). Israel prospered politically and materially under his reign, but it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay. The terrible result of this decay wouldn’t become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were finished.

i. A dramatic example of this is seen in the lives of the six kings that followed Jeroboam II during the time of Hosea’s ministry. Of those six kings, four were violently overthrown and one died as a conquered exile in Assyria.

ii. Hosea began his ministry at a time when things were so politically successful and economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should. The seeds of idolatry, spiritual failure, and moral corruption sown in days of Jeroboam II produced a tragic harvest in the following years.

iii. Significantly, Jeroboam I was the first king of a divided Israel, leading a popular revolt against the high taxation of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Jeroboam II followed in the wicked footsteps of Jeroboam I.

## **B. Israel's unfaithfulness and a promise of restoration [1:2–2:1]**

### **1. The command to take a prostitute as a wife (2)**

a. **The LORD said to Hosea:** God's first word to Hosea was something for his own life. This is how God almost always works. Hosea probably would have preferred it if God gave him a word for someone else. But before the prophet can speak to the nation, he first has to hear from God for himself.

b. **Go take yourself a wife of harlotry:** The word God had for Hosea wasn't easy. Hosea was told to take a prostitute for a wife. Why? Because **the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.**

i. Through His command to Hosea, God brings to life a consistent picture used throughout the Old Testament. In this picture, the LORD is the husband of Israel, and their passionate, chronic attraction for idols was like the lust of an adulterer. His people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was.

ii. In this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and rejection of the LORD feels to God. When we put anything in front of the LORD, it hurts Him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage. By commanding Hosea to **take ... a wife of harlotry, God will put Hosea in the place where he feels what God feels—and it won't feel good.**

iii. "We cannot say that God grieves exactly as we grieve, if only because He controls all things and always works them out in accordance with His own good pleasure. Nevertheless, there is a parallel between God's feelings and ours." (Boice)

iv. Many commentators press the idea that Gomer was not a prostitute when Hosea first met and married her, she only *became* that later and Hosea knew from the LORD that she would become that. This may be the case, but we don't know this from the text. It could go either way.

## 2. Hosea's marriage to Gomer and their first son (3–5)

a. **So he went and took Gomer:** We can assume that Hosea would never marry a prostitute except by the commandment of the LORD. It showed a lot of obedience for him to actually carry out this difficult command.

i. As will be made clear, when Hosea married Gomer, she did not give up her career as a prostitute. It wasn't that Hosea found a fallen woman and through love and kindness restored her to virtue. **He married a prostitute—no doubt hoping she would give up her sin and be devoted only to him—and she stayed a prostitute.**

ii. No doubt, this happened after the pattern of human nature. When Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably promised eternal love and devotion. She probably showed every sign of being committed to Hosea. But after a while, and in difficult circumstances, she fell back into prostitution. *Perhaps it was out of boredom. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of neglect. Perhaps it was out of a sense of need.* Sadly, we share the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry, when we prefer another god to the LORD God.

iii. Some commentators believe this never really happened, and that Hosea is only telling a vivid story. They think it could never have happened because God would never have a prophet marry a prostitute. But Boice rightly observes, **“If Hosea's story cannot be real (because ‘God could not ask a man to marry an unfaithful woman’), then neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us.”**

b. **Call his name Jezreel:** The first son born to Hosea and Gomer was “**Jezreel**” and the name spoke of two things. First, **Jezreel** means “Scattered,” and Israel would soon be scattered in exile by a conquering Assyrian army. Second, **Jezreel** refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu—the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne—massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (2 Kings 10:11). God directed Hosea to name his son **Jezreel** to confirm His promise to **avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel** by judging the **house of Jehu**.

i. Obviously, this was not good news to Jeroboam II. It said that his dynasty, the dynasty of Jehu, was coming to an end. In fact, after the death of Jeroboam II in 752 B.C. his son Zechariah barely reigned only six months before being assassinated (2 Kings 15:8–10), and that was the end of the **house of Jehu**.

c. **And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel:** Just as the house of Jehu would fall, so would the whole **kingdom** of Israel. Before the prophetic ministry of Hosea was finished, Israel was defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the mighty Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 17:20–23).

d. **Break the bow of Israel:** “The bow was a symbol of power in a day when it was the principle instrument of warfare. Thus, a broken bow symbolized the loss of power.” (Hubbard)

### 3. A daughter born to Hosea and Gomer (6–7)

a. **Call her name Lo-Ruhamah:** The name **Lo-Ruhamah** means “No Mercy.” Every call to this child with the unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everyone else of coming judgment and exile.

b. **Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah:** The army of Assyria that destroyed Israel also attacked Judah, but they did not conquer them. Instead, God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah against Assyria when the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Assyria in one night (2 Kings 19:35).

i. The fact that God had *no mercy* to Israel and *had mercy* towards Judah shows two things. First, it is true that Judah and her kings were more faithful unto the Lord during these years, as exemplified by King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1–8). Second, it does not really matter if Judah was more worthy of mercy than Israel was, because by its very nature mercy is mercy. **If one *deserves* leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy is only shown to the *guilty*. Therefore it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Romans 9:15). But no one is ever *unfair* for *not* showing mercy.**

### 4. A second son born to Hosea and Gomer (8–9)

a. **Call his name Lo-Ammi:** The name **Lo-Ammi** means “Not My People.” Every call to this unfortunately named child reminded Hosea and everyone else that the people of Israel had pushed away the Lord God, and should no longer be considered His **people**.

i. Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, there may have been a cruel irony in the name **Lo-Ammi**. Perhaps this son really was not the son of Hosea, but of another man. Perhaps the appearance of the child made this evident. The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God also made Hosea have to *live* it.

b. **For you are not My people, and I will not be your God:** This is not so much of a *sentence* or a *penalty*, as it is a *simple stating of fact*. It isn't as if the people really wanted to be the people of God, yet God will not have them. Instead, the people of Israel rejected God, and here the LORD simply recognizes that fact. **He won't play “let's pretend”: “You pretend to be My people and I will pretend to be your God.” The time for those games is over.**

## 5. A promise of future restoration (1:10–2:1)

a. **Yet the number of the children of Israel:** Though God has promised judgment, the days of judgment won't last forever. After judgment, there will come a day of prosperity, increase, and blessing.

b. **Not My people ... You are sons of the living God:** God would fulfill the promise of *Lo-Ammi* (Hosea 1:9), but the judgment would not last forever. One day Israel will return to the LORD, and once again be called **sons of the living God**.

c. **Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together:** God promised a restoration so complete that the division caused by the civil war of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I—a division that stood for 170 years—would one day be erased.

i. We can say that one way this promise is fulfilled is in the church, where God brings together Israel, Judah—and even Gentiles—into one body (Ephesians 2:14–16).

d. **For great will be the day of Jezreel!** The first child of Hosea and Gomer was named *Jezreel* as a sign of judgment. But God promises a restoration so complete that **Jezreel** will once again be a name of greatness, not judgment.

e. **Say to your brethren, “My people,” and to your sisters, “Mercy is shown”:** This shows that the redemption is complete. The child named **Jezreel** has his name redeemed, and now the next two children (*Lo-Ruhamah*, “No Mercy” and *Lo-Ammi*, “Not My People”) have their name redeemed as Israel is once again regarded as **“My People”** unto the LORD and **“Mercy is shown”** unto them. What was a sign of judgment is now evidence of redemption.

CHAP. 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.

*Remarks.*—1. God in this chapter sets forth the apostasy of the Israelite kingdom of the ten tribes, not only by word, but by action, which is more impressive than words. The prophet Hosea is directed to take, in vision, a wife of whoredoms, and thus to have, as his children, children of whoredoms, as a vivid pictorial representation of God's grace to Israel, in having joined her to Him originally, when she was naturally impure, in order that He might make her pure in holy communion with Himself. Herein we have an affecting image of the Lord's unmerited grace towards us, in that, “whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

The Church, whom He hath espoused to Himself, is composed of those who originally were all alike defiled with corruption, and estranged from their rightful Lord and Head; but He, with marvellous and gratuitous love, deigns, out of such impure elements, to mold a church, to become, in communion with Him, a bride, without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:25–32). 2. The wife so taken by the prophet in vision bare him a son, whose name was called, by the direction of God, “Jezreel”—that is, God will scatter. Hereby God intimated that, as formerly His covenant-people were rightly called Israel—that is, *Princes with God*—by the might of faith and prayer, so now, because of their unfaithfulness, they should become that which Jezreel, the name of their royal city, means, *scattered by God*. As the mother Gomer, whose name implies *complete devotion to sensuality*, represents man in his natural carnality before the call of God, so the children represent the awful tendency of man, even when in outward communion with God, to prove unfaithful to Him, and therefore the consequent rejection of the false professor by God. The Lord bears our provocations and inconsistencies with exceeding long-suffering. We should be wearied out with half the ingratitude and perverseness from others with which we try the patience and grieve the gracious Spirit of God. Yet there is a judicial limit even to God’s long-suffering. And as in the case of Israel, so in the case of all who long abuse great spiritual privileges—God will cast them out from His presence at last, and punish with the heavier stripes in proportion to the greater degree of knowledge of His will which once they enjoyed. 3. God, moreover, declared that He would avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu (v. 4). At first sight it may seem strange that God should punish for what He Himself had commanded to be done. But let us remember, when God commands, He requires that He should be obeyed, not merely in the outward act, but also in the inward motion. **Jehu had obeyed God’s command in the outward act of shedding the blood of Ahab’s doomed race, and received a present reward accordingly. But in the inward motive which God requires, a complete surrender of man’s will to God’s will, Jehu was utterly wanting. So long as his so-called “zeal for the Lord” (2 Ki. 10:16) coincided with his own personal ambition, so long he obeyed God; but when false political expediency required, as he thought, that he should disregard God’s will, by worshipping the golden calves, he did not hesitate to do the very sin for which the Divine judgment had been inflicted by the hands of himself on the house of Jeroboam. By his disobedience in this case he plainly showed that he would have disobeyed in the other case also, had it been contrary to his own impetuous will and selfish ambition.** Let us hence learn that if we do the will of God merely for the sake of our own ends, and not from the pure principle of obedience, we are not pleasing God, but pleasing ourselves: and however prosperous we be for a time, in the end must pay an awful penalty for virtual disobedience. 4 Hosea foretold that the kingdom of Israel would ere long “cease” to exist (v. 4). Yet at the time Israel was in a state of prosperity, under Jeroboam II., such as it had not enjoyed since the days of Solomon.

Through God's tender pity for Israel in her affliction by the Syrians, Jeroboam was permitted to recover all the territory that had been lost to Israel, and even to gain possession of Damascus. So entirely independent of mere human sagacity and foresight was the prophet's prediction. No material prosperity is a guarantee of safety to that people whose stability rests not on the moral basis of the fear of God and obedience to His laws. Where the will of God is regarded, there, even amidst outward trials, there is a pledge of final prosperity. Where God is set at nought, and men proudly rely on temporal resources as securing them from evil, there they are on the verge of an awful downfall. 5. **Three successive stages are marked in God's judgments on Israel, by the three children born in succession to the prophet by his wife, according to the vision. As "Jezreel" marks the period when, under Jeroboam II., the nation was seemingly in the robustness of masculine strength, but was doomed to have that strength *scattered* by the Lord, so "Lo-ruhamah" corresponds to the period which followed of woman-like weakness, when law and government had no power to establish the throne and kingdom, and the God who yearns with fatherly pity over His children doomed Israel to exclusion from His tender pity and love. Finally, the people having been "weaned" (v. 8) from the milk of the Word, and from all their former rich privileges, were to be "not the Lord's people," the last awful stage in their doom, marked by the name of the third child, Lo-ammi. How terrible is the case of that people, or that individual, who, after chastisements, remains still unchanged, and is therefore given up to eat the fruit of his own way! Such a one may temporally prosper for a time; but spiritually God seals his speedily coming doom for ever with that sentence, "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God."** 6. In lovely contrast to this stands the promise, "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God" (v. 7). God saves His people, not by their own efforts or powers, but by Himself, and by the Savior, one with Himself, whom the love of the Father provided. Judah's deliverance from the mighty hosts of Sennacherib, "without bow or sword, horses or horsemen," is a vivid type of the spiritual deliverance which is wholly effected by the Lord for us, and in which we must be content, if saved at all, to be simply recipients of his grace. 7. Though then excluded from the favor of God, Israel also was not always to be so. God remembers mercy amidst wrath; and the same hand which wounded was also to heal. But besides the *spiritual* restoration, Hosea, in common with all the prophets, promises also a *national* restoration, when united as one nation, shall "come up out of" all the several lands of their exile (v. 11). That shall be "the great day of Jezreel," when He who hath "scattered" Israel shall gather and "plant them upon their own land" (Amos 9:15). Let us see that, as "sons of the living God" by the spirit of adoption, we "live by the faith of the Son of God," even whilst we are still in the flesh. And let us look joyfully for that great day when "God shall sow"—that is, shall give the full increase of the falling into the ground of that One Divine Seed-corn which died in order that He might bring forth much fruit! (John 12:24.)

## ***Hosea 2—Sin, Judgment, and Restoration***

### **A. Israel's sin [2:2–5]**

#### **1. Charges against Israel (2–3)**

a. **For she is not My wife:** God paints Israel as an adulterous wife, who is no longer worthy to be compared to a wife. **This shows that *relationship* is broken.**

i. Israel lewdly offered herself to other gods, in the way that a woman lewdly offers herself to lovers. This is communicated by the phrase **her adulteries from between her breasts**. “The reference to her ‘breasts’ may imply that she had laid bare her bosom to entice her lovers ... If she did not change, she would be stripped naked.” (Hubbard)

b. **Lest I strip her naked and expose her ... and make her like a wilderness:** God warns Israel that if she will not put away her harlot-like ways, she will be judged. Though *relationship* is broken, *blessing* continues—but will be taken away if Israel does not turn.

#### **2. Israel tries to justify her harlotry (4–5)**

a. **I will not have mercy on her children:** If Israel as a whole is represented as an unfaithful wife, then her children represent the individual people of Israel. If they do not turn back to the LORD, they will personally experience His judgment.

b. **I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen:** Israel justified her harlotry because she received things from her “lovers.” She looked at all the good she seemed to get from her sin, and it seemed like a good deal. **Israel didn't understand the *passing pleasures of sin*** (Hebrews 11:25).

### **B. God's judgment [2:6–13]**

#### **1. How God will draw Israel back (6–8)**

a. **I will hedge up your way with thorns:** To bring Israel to repentance, God promised to set a hedge of thorns on the sides of her path, so that it would hurt whenever Israel went off the correct path, and so the wrong paths would be hard to find.

i. When God hedges our **way with thorns**, we usually don't like it. We sometimes think God is against us when the thorns hurt and we can't find the wrong paths. But it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to **hedge up your way with thorns** and to **wall us in**.



b. **I will go and return to my first husband:** When God allows the passing pleasures of sin to pass, we often then see how good it was to follow the LORD. In a marriage sometimes the grass can seem greener even with the best spouse; in our walk with the LORD our idols seem attractive until God exposes them. Then we are ready to **return to** our **first husband**, the LORD.

c. **For she did not know that I gave her grain:** Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. This showed His great, unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and **prepared it for Baal**, He still loved them.

i. When Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It's as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer's lover, where she lived apart from her husband and in adultery. He knew that this scoundrel of a man couldn't provide for Gomer, and that she lived in poverty and rags. Hosea knocked at the door. He spoke to the man who answered, "Are you the man living with Gomer?" The man wondered what business it was of Hosea's; then he revealed: "I'm Hosea, her husband. I've brought these groceries and money so she can be provided for." When Hosea left, Gomer and her lover must have thought he was a fool. What a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea brought! But this is how the Lord loves us, lavishing blessing on us even when we are worshipping idols, providing us with blessings we waste on other gods.

c. **Which they prepared for Baal:** This principle shows how offensive idolatry really is to God. **Whatever we give to an idol, we have received from God.**

i. God gives to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. He gives man the brains to make an axe and nails from the iron, and the energy to cut down the tree, the skill to fashion the wood into beams. God gives man the cleverness to make a handle from the wood, and head from the iron, and combine it into an effective hammer. Then man takes the beams, the nails, and the hammer and he nails God to the cross—where God *willingly stretched out His arms*, dying on the cross to take the guilt and penalty man's sin deserved—and to make an new, restored relationship between God and man possible.

## 2. How God will punish Israel (9–13)

a. **I will return and take away My grain:** God gave grain to Israel, and she gave what He provided in sacrifice to Baal. So, God will take away this provision, and as Israel feels her need and deprivation—perhaps she will turn back to the LORD.

b. **But Me she forgot:** During the time of Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed great prosperity. But she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures, so God will take away her prosperity.

## C. The restoration of Israel [2:14–23]

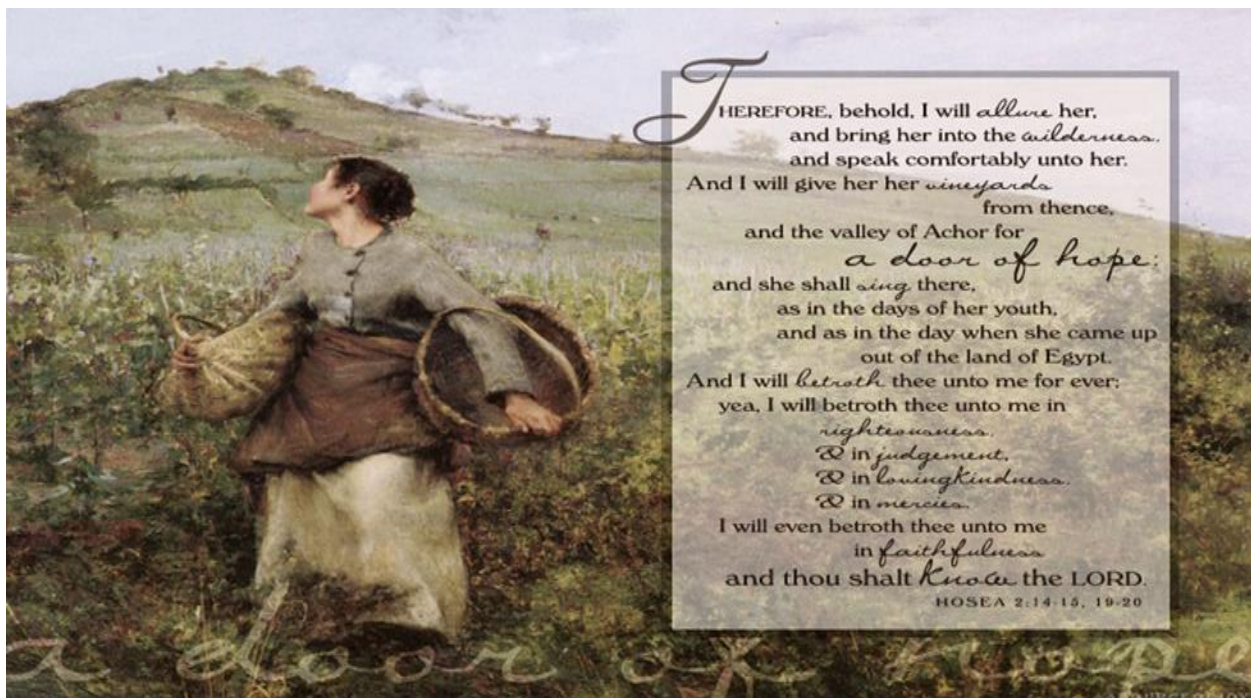
### 1. Abundance and joy restored (14–15)

a. **I will allure her ... speak comfort to her:** Once Israel has felt the discomfort of her deprivation, then she will listen to the voice of God once again, and He will **allure** her back to Himself.

i. Spurgeon on **I will allure her:** “This is a singular kind of power: ‘I will allure her;’ not, ‘I will drive her’ not even, ‘I will draw her,’ or, ‘I will drag her;’ or, ‘I will force her.’ No, ‘I will allure her.’ It is a very remarkable word, and it teaches us that *the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces.* That is how the devil ruins us; he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like; and the Lord in mercy determines that, in all truthfulness, he will outbid the devil, and he will win us to himself by fascinations, enticements, and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer. This is a wonderfully precious word: ‘I will allure her.’ ”

b. **The Valley of Achor as a door of hope:** **Achor** means “trouble,” so the **Valley of Achor** is the “Valley of Trouble.” It was a place of trouble, where Achan’s sin was discovered and judged (Joshua 7:26). God’s restoration is so great that He will transform the “Valley of Trouble” into **a door of hope**.

c. **She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth:** When Israel is restored, she will be restored to joy. The passing pleasures of sin are forgotten and the true pleasures of God are restored.



## 2. Relationship restored (16–20)

a. **You will call Me “My Husband”:** With great anticipation, God looks forward to the day when relationship is genuinely restored with His people. *He wants* an intimate love-relationship with His people, and longs for the day when His people will have a marriage-like love and commitment to their God.

b. **And not longer call Me “My Master”:** God was not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with His people where they thought of Him primarily as **Master**. He wanted a relationship where they thought of Him primarily as **Husband**.

c. **I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals:** In Hebrew, the name “Baal” comes from the word “**Master**” and the two words sound alike. It was the **Baals**, the idols of the nations, that wanted this “master-slave” relationship with man. But not the LORD God; He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people.

d. **Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth; I will betroth you to Me forever:** When relationship with the LORD is ultimately restored, it will never be broken again. Relationship will be restored on a solid foundation (**In righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy**), and will result in deeper and deeper relationship (**you shall know the LORD**).

## 3. Blessing restored (21–23)

a. **I will answer:** This is great blessing of real, vibrant relationship with God. Our hearts beat in rhythm to His, and so we want what He wants. So, when we ask God to do things, we already ask what He wants to do—so He **will answer**.

i. This is the same principle Jesus taught: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.* (John 15:7)

b. **The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil:** When relationship is where it is supposed to be, God abundantly provides. This is the same principle Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33: *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

c. **They shall answer Jezreel:** The name “**Jezreel**” means “Scattered,” and could be used in a negative sense (as in Hosea 1:4–5). But it was also the word used to describe the good scattering of seed, “Sowing.” Here, the LORD promises glorious redemption of the name **Jezreel**, which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgment. Now it becomes a prophecy of the promise, “**I will sow her for Myself in the earth.**” God will restore His people to abundance and blessing. **Scattering will be transformed into sowing.**

d. **And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy:** Hosea's second child, a daughter, was named *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning "No Mercy" (Hosea 1:6). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

e. **Then I will say to those who were not My people, "You are My people!"** Hosea's third child, a son, was named *Lo-Ammi*, meaning "Not My People" (Hosea 1:9). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment, is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

f. **And they shall say, "You are my God!"** With this, the restoration is complete. The LORD relates to His people as their God, and His people relate to Him as His people. This is *relationship*, full of warmth and love, and what God longs for.

i. Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the love of their followers? Which of them ever asked, "Do you love me?" False gods don't want our love, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. But the true God, the living God, isn't satisfied with just our fear, our obedience, or even with our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. He wants our love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with Him. If we miss this, we miss the heart of God's work in us and for us.

ii. We see *complete* restoration. All three of Hosea's children, named as marks of judgment, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!

CHAP. 2. 1-23.—APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOLS IN CHAP. 1.—*Israel's spiritual fornication, and her threatened punishment: yet a promise of God's restored favor, when chastisements have produced their designed effect.*

*Remarks.*—1. When Israel and Judah shall be united to God (ch. 1:10, 11), they shall also become united to one another as "brethren" and "sisters" in the one blessed family of God (ch. 2:1). So, in the case of the spiritual Israel, all alike being Ammi and Ruhamah, *the people of God* and *objects of God's gratuitous mercy*, cannot but have mutual love one towards the other. Let us test our son-ship by this divinely-constituted mark, and seek more and more, as we experience the love of God in Christ, to love one another as brethren in the Lord! 2. The faithful few in faithless Israel are told, Plead with your mother, plead (v. 2). So, the duty of those who have been brought to know the grace of God is to expostulate with all around them on the awful consequences of unbelief, in order that the whole Church and nation may be brought to put away all unfaithfulness, and so may not be put away by the holy God. The Bride must put away all spiritual adulteries from between her breasts (v. 2); that is, all attachments to worldly things which alienate the heart from God and Christ.

3. If the visible Church put off the inward adornments of grace, God will at last strip her naked of the outward privileges which were her boast, but which she failed to use to His glory. The world-powers with whom she committed her spiritual adulteries shall be made, in righteous retribution, the very instruments of her punishment. "These shall make her desolate and naked," and shall strip her of her carnal possessions (Rev. 17:16). Then shall she who was once the garden of the Lord become "as the wilderness, "dry" and barren: she who drank not of the waters of life whilst they were within her reach, shall have them removed from beyond her reach when "the Lord God will send a thirst not for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

4. The shameless and perverse alienation of Israel from God appears in this, that, notwithstanding God's warnings by His prophets, instead of turning penitently to Him, she encouraged and emboldened herself in idol-worship, saying, "Come, let me go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" (v. 5). Turning her back on Him who would so lovingly have drawn her, she passionately pursues those who draw her not, and attributes to these dead idols the gifts which she owed to God alone, the giver of every good gift. We, too, have our idols, which our natural hearts madly run after, turning away from God. Whatever we make our chief good, outside of God, is an idol. How apt, moreover, we are to take God's gifts, our food, clothing, comforts, and luxuries, as if they were our own by some peculiar right, calling them "*my bread, my water, my wool, my flax,*" and to attribute our possession of them to our gold, our industry, and our talents, making these our gods. Or else, as Israel by the unconscious instinct of human weakness, though she rejected God, was constrained to acknowledge some power above her; so many still, having wandered from the God of revelation, either turn to degrading superstition, or else, professing themselves wise, become fools by virtually deifying the so-called powers and laws of nature, which are nothing but the expression of the will of the omnipresent and omnipotent God.

5. Though Israel thus dishonored God, God's mercy still yearns over her. If the sinner were left to himself, and suffered to take his own way without hinderance or cross, he would go on to certain ruin. **But God, in order to save His people, "hedges up their way with thorns" (v. 6). The pains which, by God's gracious ordinance, often attend sinful pleasure, are the thorny hedge which tear the transgressor in attempting to find his way to his guilty desires. If even this is insufficient to deter him, God makes also a "wall" to cut off His people from the paths to hell.** The result with Israel was to be, she would follow with desperate tenacity after her lovers, but should not find them; then, wearied out at last with her profitless though laborious search, she would finally say, no longer as before, Come, let me go after *my lovers* (v. 5), but, Come, let me go and return to *the Lord*, my first husband; for when I walked in communion with Him it was better with me than now (v. 7).

How often thus those who have been originally joined in church-covenant with the Lord by baptism, afterwards search far and wide in worldly pleasure, ambition, and gain, for that satisfying happiness which can never be found in them! Then at last, through the Spirit of God acting on the heart, in concert with his afflictive providences, the prodigal son is brought to feel the contrast between the blessedness of the people of God and the misery of himself in his vain search for good outside of God. How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father (Luke 15:17). Then is there joy in the presence of God over the returning backslider. 6. **When men will not know God as the Giver of all their temporal blessings, they shall be compelled to know Him as the Withholder of them.** Yea more, in order to mark His hand the more palpably in the visitation of wrath, He will take away the corn and other fruits of the earth “in the time thereof” (v. 9), that is, in the harvest time, when they were all but ours, and nothing seemed to remain to be done save to gather them in. It is altogether just that when men claim the corn and wine as their own by right, God should vindicate *His* right to them, saying, I will take away *my* corn, *my* wine, and *my* wool. Then shall the worldling, stripped of all the temporal prosperity and the gaudy finery (vv. 10, 13) to which he owed his seeming greatness among men, appear in his true foulness and folly. The mask of formal and false religion (such as Jeroboam introduced to serve his ends), and of hypocritical worship, with which conscience was lulled, shall drop off (v. 11); and the unfaithful professor shall be made to feel that, in forgetting God, he forgot his chief good, and the source of all true blessedness. 7. Yet such is the marvellous grace of God that the very thing which would provoke all other masters to cut off the transgressor from all hope, is the very reason with God for opening to Israel a “door of hope.” Israel’s misery, the just fruit of Israel’s sin, is what draws forth the tender pity of Israel’s God. God *therefore* has mercy, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. He therefore draws us because we are so deeply sunken (*Pusey*). (v. 14.) God speaks to the heart in solitude, by His sweet promises and comforts, alluring and attracting it away from Satan’s and the world’s enticements. The ‘valley of trouble’ becomes the door of ‘patient longing’ after Him (v. 15). So, the cry of trouble is exchanged for the “song” of joy, such as the believer sings in the freshness of new-born spiritual life, or such as Israel, ‘in the youth’ of her national existence, sang at the Red Sea, after her final deliverance from her cruel oppressors. Then shall every name of idolatry cease from among His people (v. 17). Peace with God, as not merely our Lord, but also *our Husband* (v. 16), peace among men, and peace with the very beasts of the field, shall supersede the present disordered state of things, wherein, through man’s sin, alienation from God, war, and bloodshed, and the raging of wild beasts prevail (v. 18). Then shall the eternal marriage of God and His people be realized (v. 19). His “righteousness” and “mercies,” His “judgment” and His “loving-kindness,” shall be manifested, as brought into lovely harmony in the holy union which shall subsist between Himself and future Israel (vv. 19).

## *Hosea 3—The Restoration of an Adulterous Wife*

### **A. The restoration of Gomer [3:1–3]**

#### **1. God commands Hosea to love Gomer again (1)**

a. **Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery:** God directs Hosea to go back to his wife, even though she is **committing adultery**. It isn't in the past; it is in the present; yet he is commanded to go back to her and to **love** her.

i. This shows us that though Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:7–8 permit divorce when adultery breaks the marriage union, it by no means commands divorce. If God commanded divorce in the case of adultery, the He would go against His own command here.

ii. This also shows us an important principle about love: Hosea is *directed to love, even when it must have been hard to love*. We are filled with many romantic illusions about love, and one of these illusions is that love has very little to do with our *will*—we are just “captured” by love and follow whatever course it leads. **But in principle, the Scriptures show us another way: That love is largely a matter of the will, and when we direct ourselves to love someone God tells us we must love, it can and will happen.** This is why “We're not in love anymore” isn't valid grounds for a bad relationship or divorce. It assumes that love is something beyond or outside of our will.

b. **Just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel:** Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the LORD's relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the LORD still loved them.

#### **2. Hosea demonstrates his love to Gomer & restores her through purchase (2–3)**

a. **So I bought her for myself:** Hosea didn't really need to “buy” His own wife, to hire her as a prostitute. She was his wife! But as a display of love and commitment, he goes the “extra mile,” beyond what is expected or even reasonable.

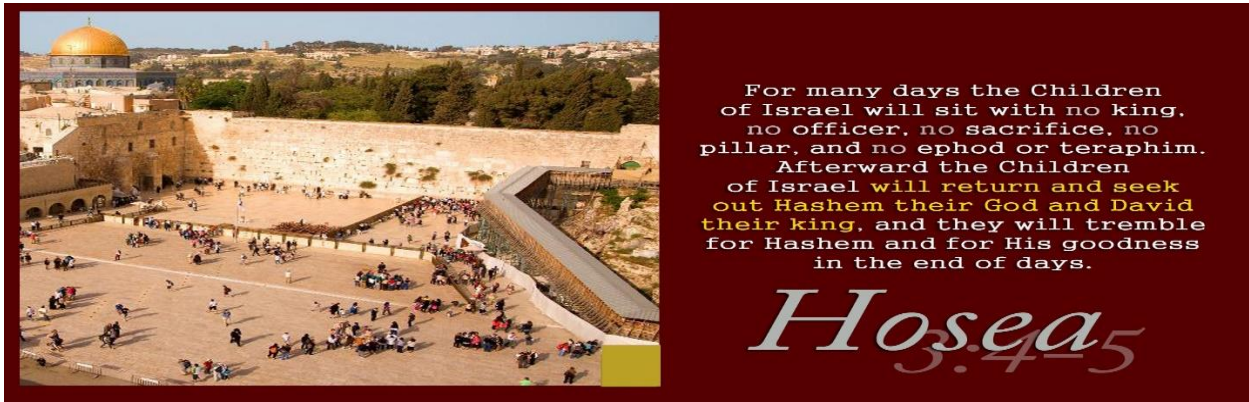
i. Boice takes **bought her for myself** to mean that Gomer was sold as a slave and Hosea bought her out of her slavery. This is possible, but not necessary. It seems more natural to regard the payment as “buying her out of prostitution.”

b. **You shall stay with me many days:** The point of paying Gomer wasn't just to get her to give up her trade as a prostitute. It was to bring her into relationship with Hosea, her husband. **Relationship and living together was the goal.**

## B. The restoration of Israel [3:4-5]

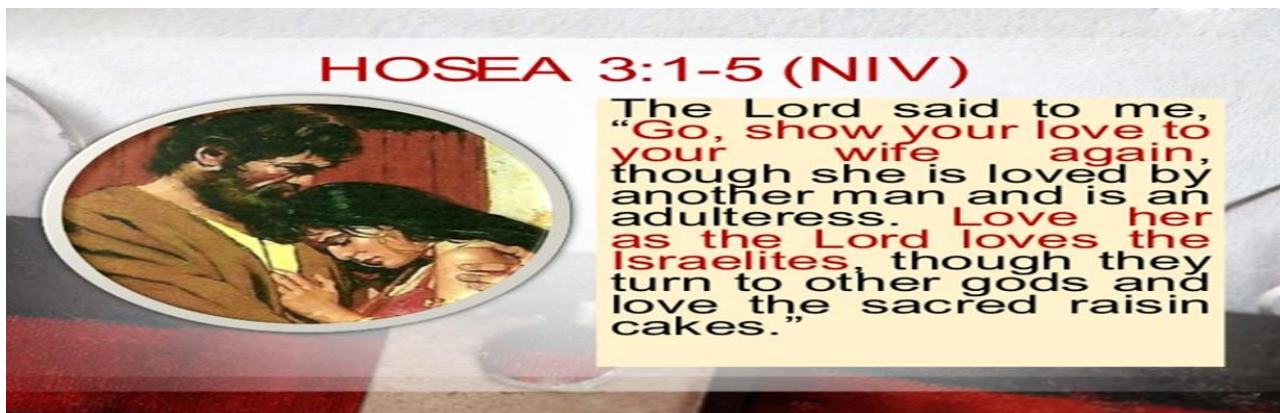
### 1. The fallen state of Israel (4)

- a. **Without king or prince:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the national or political leadership she needs.
- b. **Without sacrifice or sacred pillar:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the spiritual service she needs.
- c. **Without ephod or teraphim:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the supernatural guidance and direction she needs.



### 2. The restored state of Israel (5)

- a. **The children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God:** In this time of political and spiritual ruin, Israel will **return and seek the LORD** again. This will mark their restoration—and there will be no restoration until they turn back to the LORD.
- b. **And David their king ... in the latter days:** This shows that this prophecy will be *ultimately* fulfilled in the millennial kingdom, where David will reign over Israel (Isaiah 55:3-5, Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23-25). But any individual *right now* can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if they will turn back to the LORD.





CHAP. 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 (ch. 1:2). He purchases her from her paramour, stipulating she should wait for a long period, living on coarse fare, and kept apart as a slave, before she should be restored to her full 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.*

*Remarks.*—1. This short chapter contains one of the most explicit prophecies respecting Israel contained in the Bible—part of which prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes, part remains to be fulfilled. The marvelous grace of God to His ancient people is vividly set forth by the direction to Hosea to exercise active love again towards one who had been originally unworthy of his love, yet raised to be his wife and beloved, and who notwithstanding had again played the harlot to the true friend and husband who had loved her throughout. Hosea's love to Gomer was to be exercised even after her fall, in order that at last he might raise her from her fallen state to become his forever. So, the love of God was towards Israel even whilst she was looking to other gods and loving the sweets of carnal indulgence (v. 1). All gratifications outside of God are like the cakes of raisins eaten by idolaters—luscious, indeed, at first, but dry, and so sure soon to cloy the taste, and become loathsome and hurtful. The Jews, and not only they, but all whosoever seek justification outside of Jesus Christ, are leaving the true vine, the source of all spiritual life, for legal observances and their own righteousness, which, however for a time they may please the flesh, are dry and lifeless as far as the spirit and soul are concerned. 2. **The price which Hosea paid to redeem his erring wife from her paramour was the price usually paid for a slave, equivalent to thirty pieces of silver, the very price at which Messiah was sold by Judas the traitor to His murderers.** Israel's degradation beneath the level of man is marked by the food which was her appointed portion in her separation from God,—*barley*, the food of beasts. Yet it was for one so vile that the Lord still bore such love, that to reclaim her to Himself, He paid the price of His precious blood. 3. Still, though the Lord has the most yearning love towards Israel, she must undergo a long preparatory discipline, in which she is to be kept as one no longer indeed wedded to idolatry, but not yet admitted to full communion with Him, for whom therefore she must long wait. They, whose former besetting sin was idolatry and lying divination, have, in strict consonance with the prophecy, which was so contrary to what was to be expected from their previous character, remained for ages loathing idols, and “without an image and teraphim” (v. 4). They, of whose religion *sacrifice* was an essential part, have remained “without a sacrifice and without an ephod” all that time. 4. Then shall the goodness of the Lord towards them melt them into penitent love towards Him who has so marvelously covered over their past unfaithfulness, and into fear of ever more displeasing Him again and losing His favor (v. 5).

## ***Hosea 4—Israel’s Sin and God’s Remedy***

### **A. The charge against Israel [4:1–14]**

#### **1. A statement of the charge: Israel’s sin and God’s remedy (1–3)**

a. Clarke on **brings a charge**: “What we should call a *lawsuit*, in which God is *plaintiff*, and the Israelites *defendants*. It is *Jehovah versus Israel and Judah*.”

b. **There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land**: Each of these three points is connected. When people forsake the **knowledge of God**, soon **truth** and **mercy** are both gone. **Truth** must be rooted in something more than personal opinion, and **mercy** means going beyond self-interest.

i. Proverbs 9:10 says, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

c. **They break all restraint**: It all connects back to leaving **the knowledge of God**. Soon, **truth** and **mercy** are things of the past, and people no longer practice **restraint**. When man will not or cannot restrain himself, **bloodshed** and destruction follow.

i. Our modern age is completely set against the idea of **restraint**. You see it in modern advertising slogans. The message is the same: You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you. You should only restrain yourself if you want to.

ii. The ultimate result is **bloodshed after bloodshed**. In the ancient Hebrew, this is literally “bloody deed touches bloody deed.” “Apparently violent crimes had become so common that one seemed immediately to follow another, as if touching it.” (Wood)

d. **Everyone who dwells there will waste away**: This is the tragic fruit of forsaking the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint. Satan sings sweetly to us, making us think that casting these things away is a doorway to freedom—but it is only a path to destruction.

i. “Paul probably had Hosea’s chapter in mind as he penned his own indictment of the gentile nations (cf. Hosea 4:6 with Romans 1:24, 26, 28; Hosea 4:7 with Romans 1:23; Hosea 4:11 with Romans 1:21, 22).” (Boice)

#### **2. The corrupt and ineffective leadership of the priests (4–8)**

a. **Your people are like those who contend with the priest**: God clearly commanded His people to listen to and submit to the priests, who would lead and help the people with the Word of God.

But because the people cast off the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint, they wouldn't listen to the priests, and contended with them instead.

i. This helps to explain the opening of the verse: **Now let no man contend, or rebuke another**. The idea is "They won't listen to the priest, but they **contend** with him instead. So don't waste your time trying to **contend** or **rebuke** them yourself."

b. **Therefore you shall stumble in the day**: It's bad enough to stumble in the night, but at least we can understand it. But when God's people cast off the knowledge of God, restraint, and guidance from leaders then they shall **stumble** even **in the day**.

c. **The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night**: God paints a picture so bleak that even the **prophet** is dragged down to the level of the people and stumbles. Perhaps the prophet thought he was safe or immune because of his spiritual standing or reputation, but he is not. **The prophet also shall stumble with you**.

d. **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**: When God's people are **destroyed** and waste away, it isn't because God has lost either His love or strength. It's because His people **lack ... knowledge**.

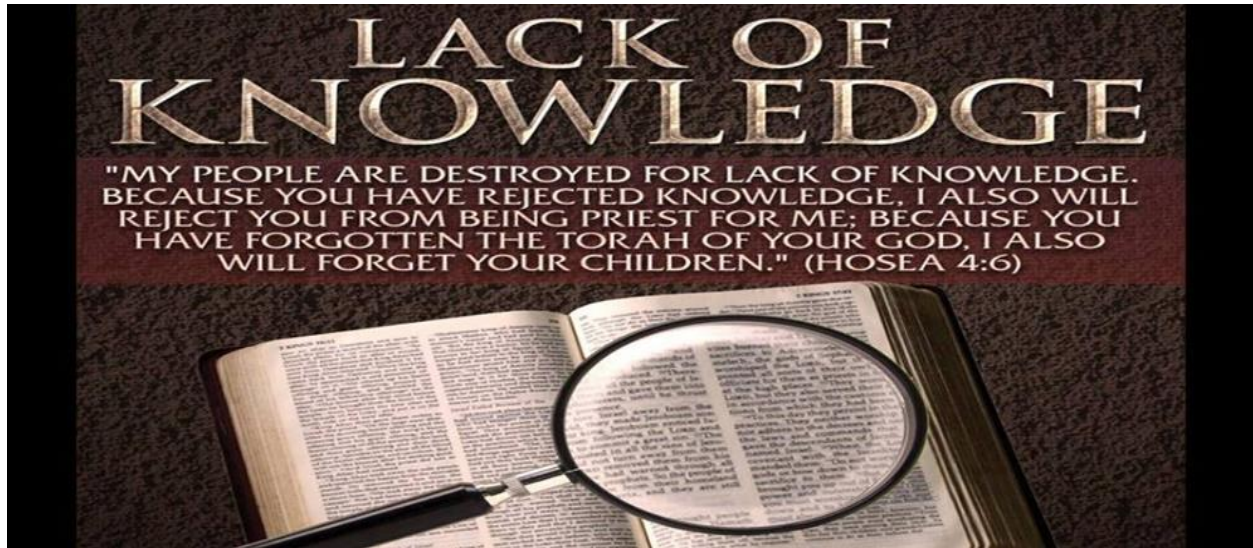
i. It isn't that God says His people are completely ignorant. They have *some knowledge*, but not enough. They may have just enough to make them think they know it all.

ii. What kind of **knowledge** do they **lack**? In the context, the first answer must be they lack *the knowledge of God* (Hosea 4:1). They know God some—perhaps a little—but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God well enough already.

iii. The second kind of **knowledge** they **lack** is the knowledge of God's Word (**you have forgotten the law of your God**). They know the Word of God some—perhaps a little—but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God's Word well enough already.

iv. It should not surprise us that there is a connection between knowing God and knowing His Word. Some people think that Bible knowledge is boring and brainy and not necessary for a real walk with God. But God and His Word are vitally connected. Psalm 138:2 says, *You have magnified Your word above all Your name*. When God sought for a term to express His nature, He calls Himself "The Word" (John 1:1).

v. **When we know God for who He really is, it affects our conduct**. "Where there is *no knowledge of God*, no conviction of his *omnipresence* and *omniscience*, private offences, such as stealing, adulteries, and so forth, will prevail." (Clarke)



e. **Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me:** Here we see who is responsible for the **lack of knowledge** among the people of God—the priests who **rejected knowledge**, the knowledge of God and His Word.

i. Teaching was an important duty of the priests (Deuteronomy 33:10, Ezekiel 44:23, Malachi 2:7). Their neglect of this demonstrates what an important place the minister, the pastor, the preacher has in presenting God and His Word to the people. If he neglects his duty to *preach the word* (2 Timothy 4:2), then he can't lead the people into the true knowledge of God, and will lead them into destruction.

ii. **I will also forget your children:** God will hold the unfaithful minister, pastor, or preacher accountable. They have much to answer for before God.

iii. **Priest for Me** reminds us that the priest didn't only serve on behalf of the people, but also on behalf of the LORD. The priest represented the people to God, but also represented—through the preaching of the word—God to the people.

f. **The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame:** God blessed the priests with *increase*, but they took God's blessing for granted and only **sinned against** God all the more. Blessing is a two-edged gift; it is obviously wonderful to be blessed, but it also brings more accountability and more opportunity for sin.

g. **They eat up the sin of My people:** "They did this by enjoying the benefits of the people's sins, such as taking bribes and eating the sin offerings. So, the priests actually relished Israel's wickedness." (Wood)

### 3. Judgment is promised (9–10)

a. **Like people, like priest:** The priests may have thought they would be immune from the judgment coming upon Israel. After all, they were priests! But God promises that when it comes to judgment, **like people, like priest.**

i. There is no doubt that the priesthood of Israel was corrupt. “Jeroboam I had made priests ‘from all sorts of people’ (1 Kings 12:31; 13:33). Therefore, large numbers of true priests—and doubtless true prophets, also—had left the northern kingdom (2 Chronicles 11:13–16).” (Wood)

ii. There is also another way to understand the phrase “**like people, like priest.**” It also means that *as the people go, so go the priests*. Sometimes people expect their religious leaders to be holy *for them* or *instead of them*. But since the “priests” come from the people, if the people are backslidden then many backslidden men will seek to be “priests.”

b. **They shall eat, but not have enough:** One aspect of the judgment God promises is that Israel will not be blessed with increase. They will have, but it will never seem to be **enough**, and they will never be satisfied.

#### 4. **The adultery of idolatry (11–14)**

a. **The spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray:** Israel’s idolatry was like adultery against the LORD. Every sacrifice made to a pagan god was like an act of adultery.

i. The picture is striking when we consider *what a faithful and good husband the LORD is to His people*. **Adultery is never excusable, but is even more heinous against a good, faithful, loving spouse.**

ii. The picture is striking when we consider *how Israel wanted to add pagan gods to their worship of the LORD*. It isn’t as if Israel officially said, “We want to leave the LORD, and now serve only pagan gods.” Instead, Israel wanted to *add the worship of pagan gods to their worship of the LORD*. God received this the same way a husband would if his wife said, “**I want you to still be my husband, I just want to take on a few more lovers also.**”

b. **For the men themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot:** Describing idolatry as spiritual adultery is especially appropriate when we understand that many pagan gods were “worshipped” by the hiring of a **ritual harlot**. This was far more enticing than just praying to a statue.

i. **I will not punish your daughters:** Because the men of Israel sinned this way, God would not single the women of Israel out for judgment when it came to this sin. God doesn’t have a double standard for sexual conduct between men and women.

c. **Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled:** The idea of Hosea 4:6 is repeated (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Without understanding God and His word, God's people are destined for destruction.

## B. A warning to Judah [4:15–19]

### 1. Judah is warned not to follow Israel's sinful ways (15)

a. **Let not Judah offend:** At this time, God's people were divided into two nations—Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. Israel's apostasy was far more ingrained, so Judah is cautioned that they must not follow her neighbor's sinful ways.

b. **Do not come up to Gilgal:** The cities of **Gilgal** and **Beth Aven** were centers of idolatry in Israel. For a citizen of Judah to travel there meant they shared in Israel's idolatry. **When we get too close to sinful practices, they often rub off on us: Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."** (1 Corinthians 15:33)

i. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1; 4:38). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (Hosea 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5).

ii. There is no city actually named **Beth Aven**. Hosea is twisting the name of the city of *Bethel*—meaning "House of God"—into the more fitting name **Beth Aven**, meaning "House of Deceit." Bethel was the southern center of calf worship established by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:28–29).

### 2. A summary of the charge: Israel's sin and God's remedy (16–19)

a. **Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf:** Cattle can safely feed out on the open range, because they are not easy prey for predators. But **a lamb in open country** has strayed from the shepherd and is vulnerable. Hosea's point is plain: if you act like a stubborn cow, don't expect to be protected like an obedient sheep.

b. **Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:** This is one way to express the judgment that is coming against Israel. God will simply leave Ephraim **alone**. When the mighty Assyrian army comes against them, they may fight for themselves—God will **let him alone**.

i. We don't want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against our spiritual enemies. We don't want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against ourselves. Left to ourselves, with our own sinful hearts, we will surely drift away from the LORD. All God must do to make certain a man goes to hell is simply **let him alone**. Our prayer should always be, "LORD, don't leave me alone. Keep working on me."

CHAP. 4, 1-19).—HENCEFORTH THE PROPHET SPEAKS PLAINLY AND WITHOUT SYMBOL, IN TERSE SENTENTIOUS PROPOSITIONS.—*In this chapter he reproveth the people and priests for their sins in the eleven years' interregnum which followed Jeroboam's death; hence there is no mention of the king or his family; and in v. 2 bloodshed and other evils usual in a civil war are specified.*

*Remarks.*—1. The Lord begins His expostulation with His apostate people by calling them “children of Israel”—a name which ought to have fired them with a holy zeal not to prove unworthy of Israel, their God-fearing ancestor. 2. When God is about to enter into judgment with His people for sin, He appeals in His “controversy” with them to their own consciences to attest the righteousness of His dealings. In the great day of judgment every mouth shall be stopped, and conscience shall cause the lost to justify the Judge. The sinner shall be without excuse, and “speechless” as he who had not on the wedding garment (Matt. 22:11, 12). If the former “inhabitants of the land” (v. 1) were cast out of it for their abominations, how could the righteous God connive at the same abominations perpetrated by His own people, who enjoyed so much higher privileges than their heathen predecessors? If the heathen and the Jew were punished for guilt, how shall we escape if we neglect the far-clearer revelation which we enjoy? 3. Where there is neither truth nor mercy, uprightness nor generosity, there is no true “knowledge of God,” however much men may know *about God*. For “hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.—Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 2:3; 4:7, 8). The speculative knowledge which unbelievers have, like Balaam, will only increase their condemnation: and bad practice is sure, sooner or later, to corrupt even such barren head-knowledge as they have. Then, when the soul is empty of good, it is sure to become full of evil, so that “swearing, lying,” bloodshed, and “adultery” (v. 2), will, as in Israel, “burst through” all restraints, as a flood sweeping away the whole embankment through which a passage has been once made. Then as the outward world is made by God to correspond to the inward, at last even the productions of the earth—are withdrawn from a godless land, and the physical desolation answers to the moral desolation caused by its inhabitants (v. 3). 4. When the Lord has a controversy with presumptuous scorers (v. 4), it is useless for man to “strive” with the Lord in their behalf. They who resist the ministers of God in the exercise of their office, resist God Himself; and as such, if unchanged, they must be given over to their doom. “He that despiseth you,” said Christ to His seventy missionaries, “despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). 5. Many fancy that they know God, who know Him not. Of these it may be said by God, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (v. 6). Whatever else men know, if they know not God as a reconciled Father in Christ, they are destitute of the only knowledge which is essential to an immortal being.

And what renders their ignorance inexcusable is, they *might* know the saving truth, and Him who is the Truth, if they would know both it and Him. But if they will not, **God will reject them, even as they reject the knowledge of Him.** He will forget them and their children who forget Him (v. 6). 6. How often people turn the very resources and increased numbers which God gives, in order that He may therewith be the more glorified, into the instruments of increased sinning against Him! (v. 7.) Then God, in righteous retribution, makes what should have been their glory become their shame. Increased wealth, begetting pride, becomes the occasion of falling. Let us see that we use God's multiplied gifts to the glory of the Giver; so shall they tend to our own true honor, and not to our shame. 7. The priests in Israel, profiting by the calf-worship which was countenanced by the rulers, and deriving; their fees from the idolatrous sacrifices, not only connived at, but even abetted, the national apostasy (v. 8). Ministers conniving at the corrupt ways of the people, and the people screening their sin behind the worldliness of ministers, are both alike in guilt, and shall therefore be also alike in punishment. God will make their sin their punishment; their own presumptuous doings shall be their reward. Nor can any more awful punishment be imagined than sin left to its own unrestricted working in the transgressor. In hell the libertine, the covetous, the ambitious, and the greedy shall have the same restless longings as on earth, but shall never have them satisfied. Even already here they who "have left off to take heed to the Lord" are tormented by their own insatiable desires. 8. Of all sins none more blunt the fine edge of the understanding and degrade the affections, than whoredom, voluptuousness, and drunkenness (v. 11). Any lust indulged will paralyze the better feelings of the heart. 9. Now that Israel had fallen through willful blindness (vv. 14, 15), Judah was to beware of being corrupted by needless intercourse with her, especially by taking any part in or giving a tacit sanction to her idolatries: so now Christians should beware of all defilements of those around them, whether in doctrine or practice. Religious professors should beware of sanctioning the worldly usages and amusements in which their God and Savior can have no place, and where Satan's anti-trinity reigns—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." They who, like Ephraim, are "joined" heart and body "to idols" must be "left" to themselves, to eat the awful fruit of their own ways (v. 17): the godly should have nothing to say to them, lest, partaking in their sin, the godly should partake also in their punishment. It is the last and most hopeless stage of guilt when the sinner's conscience ceases to chide him, and the godly must leave him to himself. The sinner, like Israel, often is impatient of the narrowness of God's way; but woe be to him when God gives him his guilty wish, and lets him roam at "large" (v. 16). Let us all shun Israel's sin, as we would escape Israel's doom. Let us shrink from every pollution, and give all diligence, amidst our higher privileges, to make our calling and election sure.



## ***Hosea 5—The Folly of Trusting in Man’s Deliverance***

### **A. Israel’s sinful idolatry [5:1–9]**

#### **1. Israel’s leaders are rebuked for the sinful state of the nation (1–3)**

a. **Hear this, O priests:** When God saw the sinful state of the nation of Israel, He saw that it was because the leaders did not lead in a godly way. It would be tempting for the priests to blame the people, but it was really the fault of the spiritual leadership (**priests**) and political leadership (**house of Israel**) of the nation.

b. **The revolvers are deeply involved in slaughter, though God rebukes them all:** The real tragedy of Israel’s sin wasn’t so much that they stumbled. It was more so that they did not respond to God’s **rebuke** when they did stumble. If a man knows how to humbly respond to God’s correction, God can always work with him.

#### **2. Israel’s double desolation (4–9)**

a. **The pride of Israel testifies to his face:** Like all rebellion, Israel’s rebellion was centered on *pride*. They arrogantly thought that what God said didn’t really matter compared to their own opinions and desires.

b. **They shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him:** When God promised to leave rebellious Israel alone (Hosea 4:17), it means that when they make superficial gestures of repentance, **they will not find Him**. Their repentance was superficial because **they do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God**.

i. In many ways today, people *think* they are seeking God when they really aren’t. It’s just a superficial investigation. You may imagine you have searched hard after God, but that is an illusion. The truth is that you are running away from God. You’ve followed the same pattern—a superficial search for God that backs away when you really start getting close to God.

ii. **He has withdrawn Himself from them:** It can happen. We can be so set in our sin and rebellion that God just leaves us to ourselves. Usually, we don’t even notice at first, but when we call upon the LORD and do **not find Him**, then we start to see the result of pushing God away.

c. **Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke:** Because God **has withdrawn Himself from them**, they will find no help or refuge when the Assyrian army attacks. They will be made **desolate**.

### **B. Israel’s sinful trust in man for deliverance [5:10–15]**

#### **1. Israel and Judah looked to man’s wisdom (10–13)**

a. **The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark:** This means that the political leaders of Judah were corrupt and cheaters. They were the kind of men who would change property boundaries to their advantage if they thought they could get away with it. This reminds us that while Judah may have been better than Israel, they still had to repent.

i. **“Judah’s leaders, however, were not shifting physical property lines but spiritual lines established by God, changing the boundary between right and wrong, between true and false religion, between the true God and the idols.”** (Wood)

ii. We can imagine a citizen of Judah reading Hosea’s prophecy and being a bit smug that their neighbor to the north was so roundly rebuked. God reminds Judah that she has her own sin to deal with.

b. **He willingly walked by human precept:** Ephraim’s sinned by living by man’s standards and opinions instead of God’s. We can’t walk **by human precept** unless we first reject God’s precepts, and that was exactly what Israel did.

i. **Ephraim went to Assyria:** Israel was foolish enough to trust in man—her eventual conqueror—instead of trusting in God. Choosing a **King Jareb** instead of the LORD is always foolish and ends in ruin.

ii. **“‘Jareb’ is not a known Assyrian’s name but means ‘warrior’.”** (Wood)

c. **Like a moth ... like rottenness:** God will be the one who eats away and corrodes what Israel and Judah have. They will not be blessed, and they will not increase.

## 2. God’s judgment and the goal behind it (14–15)

a. **I will be like a lion:** God’s judgment would come against Israel and Judah in subtle ways (*like a moth ... like rottenness*). But it would also come in obvious, unmistakable ways. **Both a moth and a lion bring destruction, just in different ways.**

b. **In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me:** This was the goal of God’s judgment against Israel. **The goal was not destruction, but restoration.** Sadly, it is often only in our **affliction** that we **earnestly seek** the LORD. Why not seek the LORD now, before **affliction** forces you to?

CHAP. 5. 1–15.—**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.**

*Remarks.*—1. They who set snares to entrap others to their destruction shall be caught themselves in the judgment of God. They who, as ministers of God and in high places, ought to have been watchers of the people, guarding them from evil, had become hunters of their souls to their ruin (v. 1).

“Profound” and deeply laid as were their schemes of revolt from their allegiance to Jehovah (v. 1), they were “not hid from” God’s all-seeing eye (v. 3). State expediency was Jeroboam’s plea for the worship of the calves, as it has been the plea in all ages for compromises of the truth. But as the division of the nation was of God’s appointment, had he, with simple faith, done what God had ordained, and continued to worship in the temple of Jerusalem, God would have assuredly blessed him and Israel in the end; whereas, by a tortuous and God-dishonouring policy of man’s devising, he brought ultimately on his line and upon his kingdom destruction from the Lord. Let the worldly wise remember God’s words, “I know Ephraim” (v. 3); and so learn, as under God’s all-seeing eye at all times, to follow the true wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord. 2. It is the ruin of transgressors that, like Israel, “they will not frame their doings to turn unto their God” (v. 4). The reason is, because there is in their inmost souls a spirit of apostasy, emanating from the father of evil, to whom they yield themselves up, and resist the Spirit of God, who waits to be gracious if they would but suffer Him. But “pride” is their bane (v. 5). **They are too proud to own themselves wrong, and to humble themselves before Him as sinners, and to become meek, gentle, and loving toward their fellow-men. Their pride is betrayed in their haughty bearing and self-satisfied expression of countenance; and as “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,” their fall is nigh at hand; and with them shall fall all who take part with them, as Judah ultimately did with Israel.** 3. Sinners think to compound for past disobedience with sacrifice. But there is a time when it is too late to seek the Lord, even though one offer to Him costly gifts. That awful stage was already reached by Israel. The same stage shall be at last reached by all who long harden themselves against the grace of God. Slavish fear, when the judgment from God is in the act of descending, will constrain even the most reprobate to seek God: but then the Lord’s words will be proved terribly true, “Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34). Even the godliness of a Josiah, though it saved his own soul, could not turn away “the fierceness of God’s great wrath against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal” (2 Ki. 23:25–27) **Let us be wise in time, and “seek the Lord while He is to be found.”**

4. The respite afforded to transgressors is short (v. 7). The unfaithfulness and treachery towards God of the Israelite fathers was transmitted to the children. The case is peculiarly desperate when the children, who ought to be the hope of the next age, are reared in the apostasy of the parents, the men of the present generation. Nothing then remains but immediate judgments, cutting off the apostate race. "Their portions" (v. 7) shall perish with them; whereas the Lord is the everlasting portion of His people. 5 The prophecies of Scripture are "that which shall surely be" (v. 9), because they are "grounded" on the truth, the justice, and the holiness of God.

They who "remove the boundary" which the law of God hath set (v. 10), in order that they may, self-willed presumption, "walk after the commandment" of men, shall, like Ephraim, who preferred Jeroboam's will to God's will, suffer God's just "wrath poured out" like an overwhelming flood. As Israel's sin was their following man's ungodly will, so should their punishment be their being led away against their will, at the will of the men who should be their conquerors. 6. **The judgments of God at first are, like the transgressor's own beginnings of apostasy, slow, silent, and imperceptible, as the "moth" that eateth a garment, or the "rottenness" that gradually and without observation sows the seeds of consumption in the body (v. 12).** When the man is fancying himself safe and sound, a moral decay has set in at the heart, and with it come the first small unobserved beginnings of God's judgments. If the sinner would take heed to these lesser judgments in time, he would escape those greater and final ones, which "tear" to destruction like a "lion" rushing upon his victim (v. 14). But the sinner, instead of searching into the deeply-seated spiritual cause of his malady, and of God's consequent judgments, and so finding the true remedy (v. 13), flees to human physicians of no value, who only **aggravate the disease.** So, Ephraim, when he saw his sickness, went to the Assyrian; and Judah, when he saw his wound, sent to King Jareb. These human objects of trust proved to the impenitent unbelievers who had recourse to them, not "defenders," as they had hoped, but God's "avengers" on their impenitence and unbelief. So will it ever be with all who, instead of penitently bowing under God's judgments for sin, "make flesh their arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). 7. God withdraws His presence and His grace until men "acknowledge their offence, and seek His face."

## *Hosea 6—“Come, Let Us Return to the Lord”*

### **A. A call to return to the LORD [6:1–3]**

#### **1. Israel should trust in the God who chastened her (1–2)**

a. **He has torn, but He will heal us:** Hosea prays with the right heart in response to the chastening hand of God. Instead of arguing with God, or resenting His correction, Hosea leads Israel in humble prayer.

i. This is a prayer that trusts the love of God, and sees His loving hand even in correction. Often, a rebellious child will complain that their parents do not love them. Of course, the parents do love the child, but in their rebellion and lack of submission, they can't receive or respond to that love. Hosea prays with a different heart.



b. **After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up:** Hosea prayed this full of confidence in God's love and power to restore. In the prayer, there is a shadowy prophecy of Jesus' resurrection on the **third day**. The context supports this wonderfully; on the cross Jesus was **torn** and **stricken** for our sake, yet He was also gloriously raised up **on the third day**.

#### **2. Walking in confidence (3)**

a. **Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD:** Israel's problem was described back in Hosea 4:6 (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Hosea leads the nation in a repentant correction of this problem.

i. We should also know that when we **pursue the knowledge of the Lord**, He blesses it. It must be more than superficial, it must be a pursuit. But when we endeavor to know the Lord, especially through His word, He reveals Himself to us. *He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* (Hebrews 11:6)

b. **He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain:** In Israel, the only way crops were watered was by **rain**. So, farmers waited for the rain with great anticipation. When we anticipate and wait for God with this kind of earnest expectation, He answers and **will come to us**.

i. Clarke on **the latter and former rain to the earth:** “The first, to prepare the earth for seed; this fell in *autumn*; the second, to prepare the full ear for the harvest; this fell *in spring*.”



## B. The sin of Israel and Judah [6:4–11]

### 1. How God’s people missed God’s heart (4–6)

a. **Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud:** It wasn’t that there was *no faithfulness* among the people of God. It’s just that whatever there was quickly dissipated **like the early dew**.



b. **For I desire mercy and not sacrifice:** At this time, God’s people were still good at bringing sacrifice (Hosea 5:6). But they had forsaken **mercy**, and they abandoned **mercy** because they gave up the knowledge of God and truth (Hosea 4:1). God would rather have right hearts, full of truth and mercy than sacrifice.

i. Jesus twice quoted this passage of Hosea to the religious leaders of His day (Matthew 9:13 and 12:7). They also missed the heart of God, focusing on the wrong and superficial things.

**In Hosea 6, God rebukes their shallow attempt at piety. Their godliness was an empty form, a hollow shell. "For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (6:4). Clouds and dew soon disappear and evaporate. So had Israel's goodness. In place of lasting, inner character, they substituted perishing, outward burnt offerings. In effect, God said, "I wish mercy kindness, humanity, compassion rather than external elements such as burnt offerings." The mercy desired describes man's relationship to his fellow man. The knowledge demanded is man's relationship unto God. – *Truth Magazine***

# A Warning from God!

**And what shall be the fate of those whose goodness is “as the morning dew”?**

*Therefore, I have hewn them as the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:5-6).*

**The prophets of the Lord had warned of coming judgment with words that are as cutting as an instrument of destruction. Men like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and now Hosea have rebuked their spiritual superficiality.**

**The words of God have inflicted mortal wounds. Note that the messages of the prophets ultimately are viewed as from the Lord. And as surely as the light (of the sun) goes forth with certain regularity (Hos. 6:3), so the chastisements from the Holy One will continue. This pronouncement will be more immediately recognized in the forthcoming Assyrian captivity (722/21 B.C.).**

**The Lord takes no pleasure in perfunctory acts of worship that aren't properly motivated by love and knowledge. Cheap efforts to squeeze by with minimal formalities designed to manipulate the Creator for favors are disgusting. – Christian Courier Magazine**



c. **And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings:** Israel brought animals for sacrifice, but they never brought themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). They missed what God really wants: a deep, close relationship with Him.

## 2. The transgression of idolatry (7–11)

a. **As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man, so the company of priests murder:** When the priests went to places of pagan sacrifice, it was a thieving, killing sin.

b. **Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives:** When the people of God came back into the land after the Babylonian exile, they mainly settled in the area of Judah. The **harvest** of returned exiles was mainly for Judah, not for Israel.

CHAP. 6. 1–11.—THE ISRAELITES' EXHORTATION TO ONE ANOTHER TO SEEK THE LORD.—At v. 4 a new discourse, *complaining of them*, begins; for vv. 1–3 evidently belongs to v. 15 of ch. 5., and forms the *happy* termination of Israel's *punishment*: primarily, the return from Babylon; ultimately, the return from their present long dispersion. The eighth verse perhaps refers to the murder of Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, by Pekah, the son of Remaliah, who conspired against him, being a captain of his. The discourse cannot be later than Pekah's reign, for it was under it that *Gilead* was carried into captivity (2 Ki. 15:29).

*Remarks.*—1. If sinners would have God return to them, they must return to the Lord. When we are truly penitent we ascribe our punishment, not to chance, but to God's gracious appointment. And as God has wounded, so must we look to Him alone, and not to man, to heal the wound. The firm persuasion of His mercy prompts the penitent to seek Him: for without this persuasion we should flee *from* Him, not *to* Him. 2. The resurrection of Christ on the third day, according to the Scriptures, is the foundation of all hope to the Church of all ages. Israel's hope of resurrection is inseparably linked with the resurrection of Christ, the antitypical Israel. It is "together with His dead body" that the spiritual Israel shall arise. Already in spirit, if we be believers, God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4–6). As believers were crucified in the person of Christ, so are they risen with Christ (Col. 3:1). Much more do we, the spiritual Israel of God, "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). It is true, already in spirit believers walk in the light of God's countenance, referring all their ways to Him, and enjoying the sense of His favor. But not until the resurrection shall we fully "live in His sight" (v. 2), "beholding the King in His beauty" (Isa. 33:17), "seeing Him as He is" (1 John 3:2), "face to face," and "knowing" Him "even as also we are known" (1 Cor. 13:12). 3. The first-fruit of the recovered favor of God will be progressive advancement in the knowledge of God.

But we must “follow on,” and “follow hard after (Ps. 63. 9) God,” “forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,” in order that we “may apprehend that for which we are also apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12, 13). We know in order to follow, and we must follow in order to know. Light illumines the path of love; and love prompts us to press onward in the path of light, that knowing more, we may love and obey the more. True and saving knowledge of God is heat as well as light, the warmth of spiritual life, not the moonlight of mere dogmas. Yet there must be knowledge and doctrine; else there could be no love, and no true obedience; for the root of faith would be wanting. Throughout eternity the ever-fresh and enlarged views of the infinite God given us, as “we follow on to know the Lord,” shall constitute the ever-increasing bliss of the redeemed in heaven.

4. As the penitent in affliction seek the Lord early and in the morning (ch. 5:15), so are His goings forth to them “as the morning, prepared” and sure in His eternal purposes of grace (v. 3). Whilst His people are “waiting for Him more than they that watch for the morning” (Ps. 130:6), He shall come to them as the morning (“Dayspring from on high,” Luke 1:78), all-radiant with joy and blessedness. **As the early and the latter rains were needed in the thirsty soil and terraces of Palestine, respectively to form and to mature the grain, at the seed-time and at the harvest, so Christ is the Beginner and Finisher of our faith, coming down to the soul spiritually athirst, “as rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth” (Ps. 72:6).**

5. The all-perfect and all-knowing God asks sinners to prescribe to Him what other means they would have Him to adopt, since they will not be drawn by those all-wise and all-gracious means which He has already used. **Sometimes, indeed, Ephraim and Judah seemed to be disposed to repent under chastisements: but their godliness soon disappeared as the morning cloud, which promised to give the fertilizing rain for a time, but was quickly dried up by the sun’s heat: or, as the sparkling dew, presenting the appearance of moisture at early dawn, but speedily disappearing, and leaving the ground dry and parched as ever: whereas, on the contrary, Christ’s “going forth” to His people is “as the morning” “shining more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18), and “as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (v. 3).**

Therefore, the judgments of God upon Ephraim and Judah shall correspond to their sins. “The words of God’s mouth,” whereby they might have been saved, shall be the very “two-edged sword” whereby they shall be “hewn” asunder (v. 5). The coming of Christ to all unbelievers, which might have been, but for their sinful folly, as the light of morning (v. 3), shall be as the destroying “lightning” flash. For “he that receiveth not Christ’s words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word* that Christ hath spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). 6. Sinners plead as a ground of pardon in the judgment their formal prayers and services, just as the Israelites pleaded their “sacrifices” (ch. 5:6); but God will not have sacrifices where “mercy” and love are wanting. God requires outward confession of His name and religious services, but He requires mercy and beneficence more: for it is for the sake of these that those are enjoined.

Whilst He ordains that we “forsake not the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25), He tells us that the most essential religious service [θρησκεία] is, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one’s self unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). “The knowledge of God” must go hand in hand with “mercy:” Faith towards God must accompany love to man: for ‘vain were it to boast that we have the other members, if faith, the head, were cut off’ (*Jerome*). The covenant of God with men will not avail for salvation those who “have transgressed” it (v. 7). As Adam was cast out of paradise, so shall all transgressors be deprived of the privileges of the covenant, and of the goodly inheritance which the faithful are heirs to according to the covenant. 7. Ramoth-Gilead and Shechem (vv. 8, 9), the cities of refuge, the former beyond, the latter on this side of Jordan, were made the scenes of blood-shedding by the very priests whose duty was there to save life. They intercepted and slew at Shechem the pilgrims who rested there on their way to Jerusalem to the temple worship. It is peculiarly hateful to God, and marks presumptuous, *deliberate*, and wanton wickedness, when the very places which God hath sanctified, are desecrated to the perpetration of heinous sin and crime. And all this was done “in the house of Israel” (v. 10), among God’s own chosen people. This made the thing peculiarly “horrible,” and was the seed of a “harvest” of awful punishment to both Ephraim and Judah (v. 11). And yet from that harvest of wrath there is yet to be a “return,” through the grace of God.

## *Hosea 7—The Oven, the Bread, and the Dove*

### A. A heart like an oven [7:1–10]

#### 1. The sinful ignorance and willful blindness of Israel (1–3)

a. **They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness:** The problem among the people and leaders of Israel was they forgot—willfully—that the LORD saw and remembered their sin. *We often deliberately forget that the LORD sees and remembers when we sin. It may be secret before men, but not before God—He says, “they are before My face.”*

i. Have you forgotten? Do you think God doesn't see? We often wish that time would make God forget, but it doesn't. Only the atoning substitute of Jesus, crucified in our place under the New Covenant makes God forget our sin.

b. **When I would have healed Israel:** God was willing to heal Israel from their sin and its effects, but not as long as they acted as if God did not see their sin. They had to treat *God as He really is, a God who sees and remembers unrepentant, uncovered sin.*

c. **They make a king glad with their wickedness ... princes have made him sick ... all their kings have fallen:** The phrases probably all refer to one of the successful assassination plots against the throne of Israel during the ministry of Hosea. Since there were four kings violently overthrown during his ministry, it's hard to pin down which one he means.

#### 2. Israel's heart is inflamed after idols (4–7)

a. **Like an oven heated by a baker:** Israel was inflamed with desire and passion after idols like the coals of a freshly stoked fire, ready to bake bread.

i. Paul used the same image of **“burning lust”** in 1 Corinthians 7:9: *but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

b. **None among them calls upon Me:** Israel could not be **hot, like an oven** after idols and also call upon the LORD. They did in fact continue to sacrifice to the LORD (Hosea 5:6) but it was empty ceremony, not a true calling upon the LORD.

#### 3. The pride and stubbornness of Israel (8–10)

a. **Ephraim is a cake unturned:** The idea is of a “half-baked” cake. In that day, bread was often prepared as a cake that was cooked on both sides, something like a pancake. In thinking they can serve both the Lord and idols, Israel is like an **unturnd** pancake—burned on one side, uncooked on the other.

b. **Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it:** This makes the tragedy of Israel's ruin worse. The nation is being ravaged by sin but **does not know it**. They should know it, because even **the pride of Israel testifies to his face**—yet in their blind ignorance **they do not return to the LORD their God**.

i. Man has an amazing ability to deceive himself when he is in sin. Well did Jeremiah say, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* (Jeremiah 17:9). Considering **how easily we deceive our self, and how our sin can be apparent to everyone but us**, Israel's condition isn't unusual:

- **Burned and ruined—but he does not know it**
- **Strength devoured—but he does not know it**
- **Aging and weakening—but he does not know it**
- **Pride testifies against him—but he does not know it**

ii. It was said of Samson after Delilah cut his hair: *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him* (Judges 16:20). This is where the people of Israel—and some followers of God today—were. They are far from God and already suffering the effects, but they can't see it.

c. **Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it:** Israel is as foolish as an old man who thinks and acts like he is still young.

## B. Silly like a dove [7:11–16]

### 1. Like a dove, Israel flies about to the nations (11–12)

a. **Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense:** Hosea piles image upon image. Now Israel is like a bird fluttering about, confused and without direction. They think they can escape God by running to other nations, but the Lord says, **“I will spread My net on them.”**

b. **I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard:** Israel's guilt is increased **according to what they have heard**. **Greater knowledge means great accountability**. As Jesus said, *for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.* (Luke 12:48)

### 2. In running to the nations, Israel has run away from God (13–16)

a. **They return, but not to the Most High:** Israel saw their *problem*, but not their *sin*. When God's hand is against man, he easily sees he has a problem but often does not see it as *sin against the LORD*. So, when Israel had problems, they **wailed upon their beds**, but not to the LORD. They sought remedies, but not from **the Most High**.

b. **They are like a treacherous bow:** Hosea adds another image, of a faulty bow that won't shoot an arrow straight. Everything that comes from Israel misses the mark, because **they are like a treacherous bow. They are like a useless and dangerous weapon.**

CHAP. 7. 1-16.—REPROOF OF ISRAEL.—Probably delivered in the interreign and civil war at Pekah's death; for v. 7, "all their kings are fallen," refers to the murder of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah: in v. 8, "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people," 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 interreign at Pekah's death (*Maurer*).

*Remarks.*—1. The very love of God, and His willingness to save and "heal," is turned, by the sinner's perversity, only into a fresh occasion for discovering his inbred "iniquity." The malady was only brought out into greater virulence by the loving remedy applied (v. 1), as if the patient were to turn upon the good physician who sought to cure him. No power short of the Almighty Spirit of God can conquer the self-destroying stubbornness of the carnal heart. 2. Want of 'consideration' ruins millions (v. 2). They will not commune with their own hearts, and consult their consciences. They will not stop to say to themselves that God "remembers all their wickedness," however they may try to dismiss it from their memory. And what God remembers, that God will take a strict account of. 3. The king and the people in Israel were a mutual curse to each other. He who ought to have been the punisher of sin was its encourager. His delight was in wickedness; and they, seeing this, were glad to gratify his corrupt taste by first doing, and then recounting for his amusement, deeds that should not be so much as named. **Adultery was the universal sin of all classes (v. 4).** Their heart was as an oven, first heated by Satan, and then left to burn with the pent-up fire and fuel of the corrupt passions. Though not breaking out into actual crime at all times, the interval of rest is rather apparent than real. **The evil spirit has lodged the leaven of lust in the soul, and leaves it to work of itself, secure of the result. Like the baker sleeping at night, Satan rests secure that, at the first opportunity, the hidden fires will break forth, ready for the execution of whatever purpose of evil he devises and suggests. The actual wickedness of men's lives bears a very small proportion to what burns within their hearts! But when lust is inwardly fostered, it will, as occasion presents itself, break forth into outward sin (vv. 4, 6).** 4. How many there are who make holy days - days of excess! Even the great forget their dignity, as the princes tempted the King of Israel to forget his, and to play the buffoon, through bottles of wine (v. 5). Then, as "wine is a mocker" (Prov. 20:1), so he who indulges too freely in wine soon "stretches out his hand with scorners." Scoffers are the boon companions of drunkards. The king or nobleman who listens to such flatteries, listens to his own ruin; even as the wretched King Zachariah was "lain in wait" for by Shallum and those who "made him sick" with wine (vv. 5, 6). But plots of sin at last recoil on their originators.

Those who had inflamed the popular passions perished by them (v. 7), just as the kindlers of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace were themselves "devoured" by it. Murderers of others were murdered themselves, so that of all Israel's kings - but *eight* - died a natural death. 5. The professors of religion who needlessly intermix with sinners, as Ephraim did with the heathen, are sure to suffer by it in religious principle and practice (v. 8). Ephraim was as "a cake not turned," overburnt on one side, doughy and unpenetrated by the heat on the other side. The fire spoiled, and did not penetrate through it. **Such are many religious professors, having on the one hand outward warmth, on the other hand inward coldness. God's fire of discipline has outwardly impressed, but not inwardly changed them.** 6. Yet all the while Ephraim was unconscious of his own real state. The foreign powers, Assyria and Egypt, whose aid he had invoked, only "devoured his strength" (v. 9); yet he knew it not. Like men who shut their eyes to the gray hairs here and there, the tokens of their approaching old age and death, so men spiritually will not take notice of the signs of their own declension in vital religion. The outward forms and the stated services remain, but, like Sampson, after he had, for the sake of sensual pleasure, betrayed the secret of his strength, they are unconscious that God has departed from them. **And when God's chastisements are sent upon them, their "pride" (v. 10) keeps them from acknowledging and repenting of their sins, and "returning to the Lord their God."** "For all" their afflictions they will not "seek" Him, so that nothing remains but destroying judgments, now that all the means of correction and grace have been tried in vain. Yet, like a silly dove, Ephraim, when ruin threatened him from God, still called to Egypt, who could not help him, instead of calling to God, who both could and would. **Israel thought to make each of the two rival empires, Assyria and Egypt, to be her helper by turns against the other. It was seemingly a clever piece of state policy, but proved to be the very means of her destruction, because she had forsaken God. Let our statesmen beware of any fancied security resting on the so-called "balance of power" in Europe, and learn that our true safety is in the favor of God alone. God can "spread his net upon" the silly dove, which leaves its nest to flee elsewhere for help in time of alarm, and can "bring down" also the high-soaring "fowls of the heaven" (v. 12).**

7. All who depart from God to any human help are like the bird that “flees” (v. 13) from her secure resting-place only to be caught in the net of ‘destruction.’ “Woe” is their heritage. Perversity, short-sighted selfishness, and ingratitude are their ruin. God hath “redeemed them” at the cost of His beloved Son’s suffering: *they* requite Him by lying misrepresentations of His character and His dealings, and of His people, and of all true religion. Then, when just judgments descend on them, they “cry” indeed, but it is the cry of impatience under pain, the mere “howling” of animal suffering “upon their beds” of anguish, not the cry of a child to a chastening but loving father from “their heart” (v. 14). Instead of complaining *to* God, they complain *of* God, and are angry, not with themselves, but with God. It is true “they assemble themselves together” as if for a religious service; but if they come before God at all, it is as a *tumultuous assembly* clamouring for “corn and wine,” God’s gifts, but having no longing after God Himself. Theirs is the cry of Esau, who only desired his father’s blessing for the sake of the earthly wealth which it carried with it. 8. Whether God tried chastening, or “strengthened the arms” of Ephraim (v. 15), all means alike proved vain. They only rebelled and imagined mischief against God. ‘Man would dethrone God if he could’ (*Pusey*). Whenever under trial they turned, it was “not to the Most High” (v. 16). When the God of Israel would have bent his covenant-nation as a bow to direct arrows against the kingdom of Satan, heathendom, and ungodliness, they were “like a deceitful bow,” which carries not its arrows true to the mark: “the rage of their tongue” was “as an arrow shot out” (Jer. 9:8) against God and man: and ultimately they themselves “fall” by it. The very heathen were amazed at it. Egypt, in whom they trusted, made them “their derision.” The raging and suicidal fanaticism of the Jews astonished even the Romans, who were the executioners of God’s vengeance on them.



## ***Hosea 8—Sow the Wind, Reap the Whirlwind***

### **A. Sowing idolatry, reaping exile [8:1–10]**

#### **1. Casting off God and embracing idols (1–6)**

a. **Set the trumpet to your mouth!** Trumpets were used to assemble God's people and to call troops to battle. Here, God commands the **trumpet** to sound to gather the mighty Assyrians against Israel for judgment, **because they have transgressed My covenant.**

b. **Israel will cry to Me, “My God, we know You!”** But their cry is not sincere, because **Israel has rejected the good.** They set up rulers and princes against the Lord, and were steeped in idolatry.

i. **My God, we know You!** But they didn't really know God. It will be the same way for many church-goers today. Jesus said, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ”* (Matthew 7:22–23)

c. **They set up kings, but not by Me:** “To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, it is foolish. Those who follow their own wisdom in the choice of leaders inevitably get what they deserve.” (Boice)

d. **The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces:** Israel made beautiful idols out of silver and gold, but they will not stand. In judgment, God will break them **to pieces.**

i. **Your calf is rejected** “is literally ‘your calf stinks.’ ” (Wood) That's what God thought of their idols!

#### **2. Israel judged and regathered (7–10)**

a. **They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind:** It will seem to Israel that they judgement they receive is worse than the sin they committed. This isn't true in the sense of God being worse to us than our sin deserves, but it is true in how judgment feels. This is usually because our sin is *sown* over a long period of time, but often *reaped* in a contracted period of judgment.

b. **Now they are among the Gentiles ... now I will gather them:** God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, but also that He would one day **gather them** again. This note of mercy is sprinkled through the song warning of judgment.

### **B. Why God will not accept their offerings [8:11–14]**

### 1. Israel considers God's word a *strange thing* (11–13)

- a. **They have become for him altars for sinning:** Israel foolishly built **altars for sin**. It is no surprise those altars became **altars for sinning**. When we give ourselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it is never surprising when we end up **sinning**.
- b. **I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing:** In their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God. God had **great things** for Israel, but they seemed like a **strange thing** because their hearts were far from God.
- c. **I have written for him:** This tells us the *author* of the Bible—God Himself.
- d. **The great things of My law:** This tells us the *content* of the Bible—**great things**. “The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning, and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it.” (Spurgeon)
- e. **But they were considered a strange thing:** This tells us the way the Bible is received by the *natural man*. Paul expressed the same idea in 1 Corinthians 2:14: *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
- f. **But the LORD does not accept them:** Sure, they still brought sacrifices to the LORD. But it was all just an outward ceremony because they were still steeped in sin and idolatry. Therefore, their sin remained uncovered, and God will **remember their iniquity and punish their sins**.

### 2. When God's people forget their Maker, there is no refuge (14)

- a. **For Israel has forgotten his Maker:** Israel **built temples**, but not unto the LORD who made them. Therefore, the judgment described in this chapter is coming upon them.
- b. **Judah also has multiplied fortified cities:** While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a **more subtle sin**. They trusted in the **fortified cities** they built against the Assyrians. Those **cities** would be of no help (**I will send fire upon his cities**), and the only the LORD would preserve Judah from total destruction (Isaiah 37:33–36).
  - i. Perhaps we can capture some of the ungodly heart of Israel and Judah by examining our own attraction to bigness and nice facilities. What could be wrong with success and nice buildings? They easily become idols if your heart turns from God. If God brings size and great buildings, it is wonderful—as long as we don't turn our eyes of Him, making those things idols.

CHAP. 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 v. 14 *Judah* is said to multiply fenced cities; and in vv. 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 (2 Chr. 26:6, 9, 10). Then also Israel turned to Assyria, and had to pay for their sinful folly a thousand talents of silver (2 Ki. 15:19). (*Maurer.*)

*Remarks.*—1. Even the professing Church, “the house of the Lord,” shall not be spared when its members ‘transgress the covenant, and trespass against the law of its Lord’ (v. 1). It is in vain that such professors “shall cry” in the day of judgment, “My God, we know thee” (v. 2). God will not acknowledge as His the workers of iniquity. 2. The Israel of Hosea’s day was only Israel in name. Having “cast off” God, they had cast off in Him and with Him “the thing that is good” (v. 3); for He is the center and the essence of all that is good. In ‘setting up’ their several kings they did not consult God, or seek to please Him, therefore He owned none of their proceedings (v. 4). So blindly headstrong were they in their sin that they seemed to act as if their aim was “that they might be cut off.” Thus, all sinners who pursue objects, the end of which, according to God’s law, is death, are really, though they do not stop to consider it, choosing hell as their portion. Oh, the infatuation of those who rush blindfold on their eternal ruin! Would that they could be taught by the case of Israel to see the suicidal madness of their course. Israel cast off her God for the golden calf of her own making; and in righteous retribution the calf which was her trust “cast her off” (v. 5). So, all the idols of men, wealth, beauty, and ambition, fail men in their hour of sorest need; and sooner or later all who have forsaken God for them shall have to say of them, as Cardinal Wolsey said of his royal patron, ‘Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies.’ 3. What rendered Israel’s sin peculiarly aggravated was, it emanated from herself. She knew what she was doing. She was not ignorant that a calf-image, ‘made by the workman,’ could not be, and “is not God” (v. 6). Their boasted name as “Israel” only rendered their sin the more inexcusable. Therefore, they and their “calf” should be “broken in pieces.” As they had sown, so must they reap—the same grain, but with an awful increase. **“Wind” was the seed, the destructive “whirlwind” was to be the harvest (v. 7).** So, all unbelievers sow the wind of vanity and emptiness here, and shall reap the whirlwind of destruction. As chaff they shall be borne along as the sport of it to their doom. Their undertakings either have “no stalk,” or else, if they have stalk, have no full grain in the ear, so as to yield “meal;” or if even they “yield” stalk and grain, still hostile “strangers” shall “swallow” all up. **The hopes of sinners are disappointed, some at the very beginning, others in a further stage of progress; and at last the most prosperous transgressors here shall be swallowed up by the powers of darkness and the waves of the ever-burning lake.**

4. Hosea prophesied that Israel should be a dishonored “vessel among the Gentiles,” though at the time Israel, however disliked, was rather an object of envy than contempt among the neighboring nations; for still the fame of Solomon’s wisdom, and the wide extent of his kingdom, were proverbial in all the East. The very cause of their exile was that policy whereby they expected to ensure their permanence as a nation: “FOR they are gone up to Assyria,” saith the prophet. Like the untamed “wild ass,” they rushed into the wilderness of the Gentile nations, there to bring on themselves their own ruin. The very nations, Assyria and her subject-peoples, whom Israel “hired” to help her, God “gathered” to destroy her (v. 10). The true position of the Israel of God in the world is to be “alone by himself” (v. 9). Whenever professing believers, instead of making God their confidence, have recourse to the godless world and its unhallowed powers, at the cost of religious principle, to save them from anticipated evils, God, in just retribution, makes those very world-powers the instruments of executing His judgments on them.

5. Ephraim tried to secure himself from Divine judgment for sin, by raising “many altars” (v. 11). But God declares these very means, taken for the expiation of sin, to be but “altars to sin,” and that He will prove them to be such by inflicting punishment for them. The devices of ‘will-worship’ and formalism will never avert, but rather will hasten, the penal consequences of men’s guilt. And what will most aggravate sin is, if the transgressor had within his reach the divinely-written record of ‘the great things of God’s law’ (v. 12), and yet treated it “as a strange thing.” How many there are among us who, though commanded by God to have His word continually “in their heart,” on their lips, and before their eyes (Deut. 6:6–9), are practically strangers to it, or only know it to explain its strictness away, and to widen the narrow way, so as to suit the carnality and worldliness of themselves and of society around them! The religious services and gifts of all such, however highly meritorious the worshippers may account them, are regarded by God as made for self-gratification (v. 13). Whilst they ‘build temples’ as memorials of their Maker, they all the while in heart ‘forget’ Him (v. 14). Therefore, their defenses against calamity shall prove unavailing. The only services which God will “accept” (v. 13), are those which are done in accordance with His ‘great law,’ from the Gospel motives of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

## ***Hosea 9—Exiled and Dried Up***

### **A. Israel exiled in judgment [9:1–9]**

#### **1. The end of the good life in Israel (1–4)**

a. **Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples:** At the time Hosea brought this prophecy, things perhaps were not so bad in Israel. Maybe there were plenty of fun and good times among the people. But they shouldn't rejoice **like other peoples**, because judgment was on the way.

i. "It was probably the case, though we do not know this for sure, that **Hosea delivered the opening part of this oracle as a sermon on the occasion of a harvest festival ... characterized by feasting, mirth, and dancing.**" (Boice)

b. **You have made love for hire on every threshing floor:** Israel practiced idolatry on the **threshing floor**, a place where grain was processed. *They worshipped idols here because they believed that it helped the harvest.* Because of their idolatry, the LORD would curse their harvest, and **the threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them.**

c. **They shall not dwell in the Lord's land:** Not only would God curse their grain and grape harvest, but He would also cast them out of the land in exile to both Egypt and Assyria. In the lands of exile there would be no bread or food for sacrifice to the LORD, only for survival (**their bread shall be for their own life**).

#### **2. The days of Israel's punishment in Egypt (5–9)**

a. **They are gone because of destruction:** Israel did not honor the LORD in their **appointed** feast days, so they LORD will take them away. In their lands of exile, they will not be able to honor the feasts of the LORD.

b. **The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane:** This is what the people of Israel said about Hosea. When things prospered and everyone was happy, Hosea announced coming judgment and called for repentance. They thought he was a fool and crazy.

i. "They said in effect, 'Who in his right mind would prophesy a judgment like this when we are in the midst of such a bountiful harvest, in itself a proof of God's blessing?' " (Boice)

c. **As in the days of Gibeah:** Judges 19 describes horrific crimes of perversion and violence in Israel in the days of the Judges. Hosea says that in his day it is just as bad in Israel.

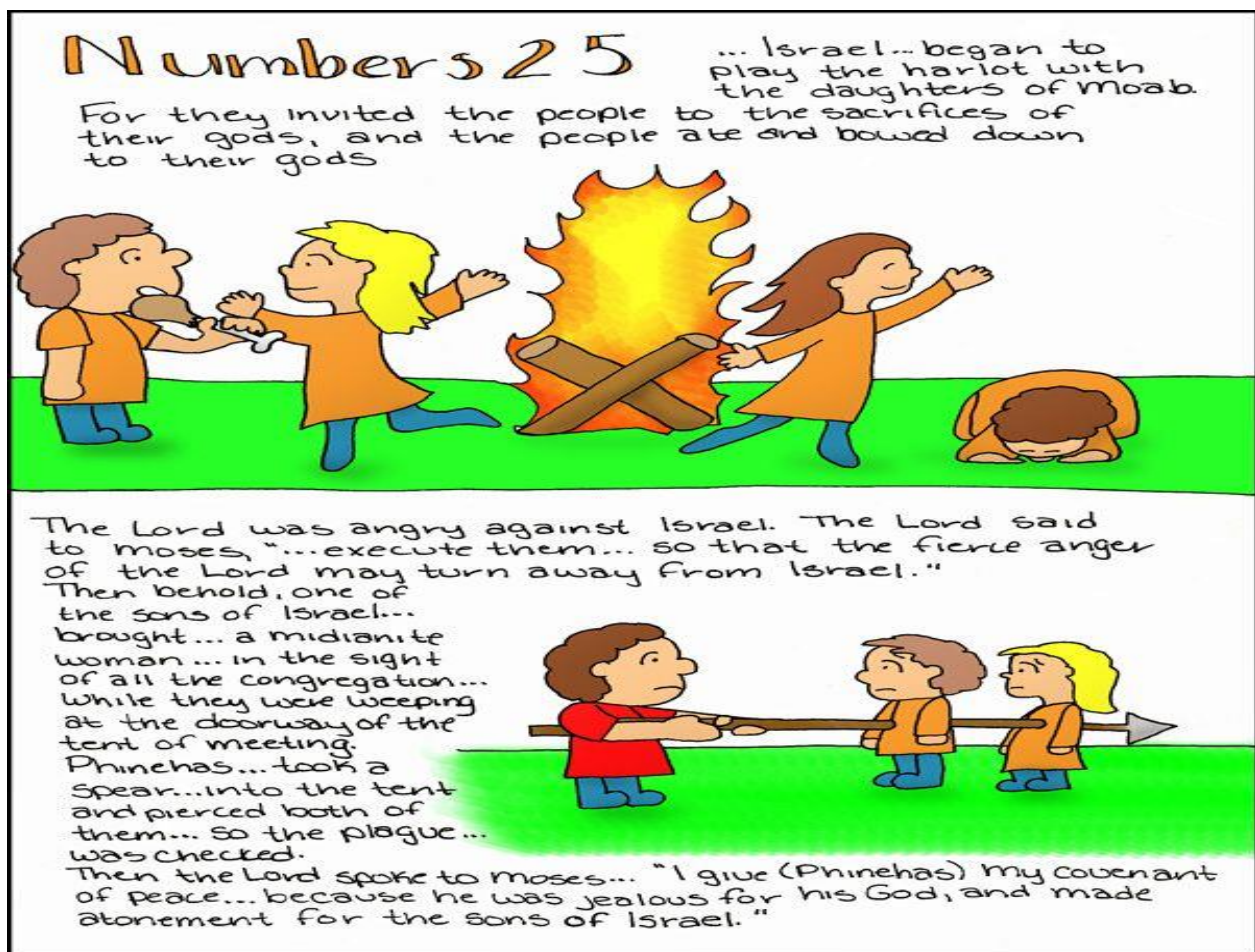
### **B. Israel barren and dried up in judgment [9:10–17]**

### 1. God sends barrenness and bereavement (10–14)

a. **Like grapes in the wilderness ... as the first-fruits on the fig tree:** God fondly remembers the days when Israel was faithful and fruitful unto Him. **Grapes in the wilderness** and the **first-fruits on the fig tree** are unexpected blessings. There was a time when Israel was something special to God, as if one found luscious **grapes in the wilderness**.

i. "While they were faithful, they were as *acceptable* to me as *ripe grapes* would be to a *thirsty traveler* in the desert." (Clarke)

b. **But they went to Baal Peor:** Israel's sin and idolatry in the days of Hosea is like their sin at **Baal Peor** in Numbers 25, associated with immorality and idolatry.



c. **They became an abomination like the thing they loved:** Israel loved their disgraceful idols, and they have become like them. We will become like the god we love and serve, whether it is the Lord or like an **abomination**.

d. **No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception:** In contrast to their past fruitfulness, now Israel will experience barrenness and bereavement (**I will be bereave them to the last man**), given to them by the God they rejected.

e. **Give them, O LORD—What will You give?** The idea is that Hosea began an angry prayer against the people (“**Give them, O LORD**”), then he stopped because he checked his heart and didn’t know what to pray (“**What will you give?**”). In the end, he asked for **a miscarrying womb and dry breasts**. Really, Hosea prayed for mercy. Knowing the coming judgment, he prayed “LORD, give them few children so those children will not have to face the horrors of Your coming judgment.”

i. Sometimes those who see themselves—perhaps accurately—as more spiritual and closer to God than others in a church get angry and frustrated with those who don’t seem to have hearts burning for the LORD. Their frustration is understandable but the pause in Hosea’s prayer should give them pause. It is a good thing to long for revival and passion among God’s people, but if that makes us proud, angry, or bitter then Satan has won a great victory.

## 2. God sends dryness and wandering upon Israel (15–17)

a. **All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them:** As mentioned before in Hosea 4:15, God despised the city of **Gilgal** as a center of idolatry in Israel. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1; 4:38). But in Hosea’s day it had become a center of false worship (Hosea 4:15, 12:11; Amos 4:4, 5:5).

b. **I will drive them from My house:** In this sense, exile was the perfect punishment for Israel. They had disgraced God’s **house**, His land, so **He would “evict” them**.

c. **They shall bear no fruit ... I would kill the beloved fruit of their womb:** One of the major reasons Israel went after idols like Baal and Ashtoreth was because those gods were thought to bring fertility and fruitfulness. God reminds Israel that He is really the Lord over the womb, and that He will turn their fruitfulness into barrenness.

d. **My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him:** This is exactly what the Lord promised under the terms of the Old Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:14–20). Thankfully, we can come to God by faith in a new and better covenant, where He promises to remember our sins no more (Hebrews 8:12, 10:16–17).

CHAP. 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.**

*Remarks.*—1. They who are in favor with God may truly “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” For “in His presence is fulness of joy” (Ps. 16:11). But for men to rejoice when they have, like Israel, “gone a whoring from their God,” and have therefore God’s judgments hanging over them, is most unseasonable.

Israel's prosperity under Jeroboam II. had made her elated: what she "loved" was temporal goods, and these she greedily and insatiably sought as her "rewards" from her idols for her apostasy towards her God (v. 1). But inasmuch as she loved the temporal rewards, and rejected the real Giver of them, the rewards themselves should be taken away. The people thought their stores were secure when the corn was on "the floor," and the grapes "in the winepress;" but even then God would cause them to "fail," and disappoint the people's hopes. No possession is secure that belongs to the forsakers of God. 2. God claimed the Holy Land as peculiarly His (Lev. 25:23). **It was impossible, therefore, that He could allow those to remain as tenants of the land who disowned Him as their and its Lord (v. 3).** Similarly, as "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1), He will not allow those who avowedly, or else practically, deny Him, to continue to **cumber His earth.** The Lord Jesus, to whom the kingdom of the earth belongs of right, will remove "out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41). 3. God had delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian house of bondage, that they might serve Him whose service is perfect freedom. But as they had voluntarily preferred the spiritual bondage of Satan to the liberty of the children of God, **it was but just that they should be reduced again to a state of Egyptian-like temporal bondage.** Let us therefore prize and use aright our spiritual privileges. For "whosoever hath not (*i.e.*, hath to no good purpose), from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18). 4. So also, now that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, to think to please God by any will-worship or merit of our own devising, is as loathsome to God as the offerings of one polluted by a dead body would have been in Mosaic times. 5. A day is coming when despisers of holy things shall wish to have again the opportunities which now they make so light of. **Man would like to have God at His command—not to be at the command of God; to have him near as a Helper in times of adversity, and yet to put Him to a distance in times of prosperity.** But this cannot be. They who forsake God in the days of His visitation of grace shall be forsaken of God "in the days of His visitation" of wrath and "recompence" to the ungodly (v. 7). "Nettles" and desolation "shall possess" (v. 6) their treasures; whereas the treasures laid up in heaven by the godly are abiding. Then, too late, the worldly man, like Israel, "shall know" himself to be "a fool," and the godly man, whom he had charged with madness (2 Ki. 9:11; Jer. 29:26; John 10:20; Acts 26:24), shall be known to be the truly wise man. The teachers who flattered the pleasure-seeker and the mammon-worshipper, in their God—hating ways, shall be in the end unmasked; and the everlasting contrast shall be manifested between the spiritual "watchman," who walked in continual communion "with God" (v. 8), and the false teacher, who was "a snare in all his ways," being himself the embodiment of "hatred" to vital godliness—and this "in the house of his God"! 6. The depth of Israel's corruption is compared to the corruption of Benjamin, when, in the days of the Judges, they espoused the cause of the men of Belial, who treated so revoltingly the Levite's concubine in Gibeah.



For a time Benjamin seemed to prosper, but in the end they were exterminated, excepting six hundred men. So, though Israel now prospers for a time, saith Hosea, "God will remember their iniquity, He will visit their sins" (v. 9). What aggravated their sin was God's past loving-kindness to them. He had "found" them when they were lost "in the wilderness" (v. 10). He had made them pleasant to Himself, as the grape or early fig (Isa. 28:4) is to the taste. But these same persons went off to Baal-peor, the foul and shameful idol of lust; and the people who had been "separated" unto God as His peculiar people, "separated themselves unto that shame," and became filthy, like the filthy god "they loved." He who parts from God parts from his own true "glory" (v. 11); and the earthly riches which he has made his glory "make themselves wings," "and shall fly away" (Prov. 23:5). Like the fruitfulness of Ephraim, for which, as his name implies, he was famed, but which was turned by God for his sin into barrenness "from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception;" so the fame of backsliding professors shall at last be turned into shame, and their cherished aims shall prove abortive in every stage, from their first conception to their attempted completion. 7. The worldly, in their madness, say virtually to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14). But saith God, "Woe to them, when I depart from them" (v. 12). When God departs from a people or an individual, then indeed "the glory is departed" (1 Sam. 4:21). God repays in kind those who depart from Him, by departing from them; and what else is the chief horror of hell, save that God is not there? Terrible as is the withdrawal of all God's gifts, it is as nothing compared with the withdrawal of God Himself. 8. Ephraim, as his neighbor Tyrus, was "planted" by a special providence "in a pleasant place," like the primeval Paradise; but now, on account of "all his wickedness" (v. 15), he was as a blasted and "smitten" tree, with "dried up root," and therefore without hope of "fruit" in time to come (v. 16).

The God who is love itself, because of their "great hatred" (v. 7), and their provocations in the very scenes of His former loving-kindness (v. 15), now "hated them" with that holy abhorrence with which **He must ever regard that which is opposed to love.** He cast them away, to become "wanderers among the nations," like Cain, with the brand of His displeasure attending them everywhere, "because they did not hearken unto Him" (v. 17). If, then, God so punished the apostasy of His own chosen nation, what guarantee of impunity can any Christian nation have, that they shall escape the wrath of God, if they fail to bring forth fruits consonant to their high calling? Let us not be high-minded but fear. For "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee" (Romans 11:20. 21).

## *Hosea 10—Israel Has No King*

### A. The analysis of Israel's sinful state [10:1–8]

#### 1. Israel's empty vine (1–2)

a. **He brings forth fruit for himself:** God blessed Israel with material abundance, but they spent it on themselves and their own idolatrous desires (**he has increased the altars**). Israel enjoyed the blessing of God, but used those blessings in ungodly ways.

i. Paul warns against the same sin in Galatians 5:13: *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.*

b. **Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty:** Because Israel has received blessing, they were more responsible than ever to use it wisely. Because they used God's bounty in wicked ways, God will **break down their altars** to pagan gods and **ruin their sacred pillars** made unto idols.

i. **Their heart is divided:** The word **divided** is *halaq*, which has the ideas of “**divided**” (Genesis 14:15, 49:7), of “smooth” (Genesis 27:11, Psalm 55:21) or of “flattering” (Psalm 5:9, 36:2). So, it may be accurate to translate this phrase as **their heart is divided**, but it may also be that God wants to say that Ephraim has a “smooth, flattering,” insincere heart.

ii. The idea of Israel's “smooth” or “insincere” heart is reflected by the adulteries of Hosea's wife Gomer earlier in the book. In the same way that an unfaithful spouse will say they love their partner, all the while living a lie, is the same way Israel's heart was towards God.

iii. Israel had this divided, insincere heart and expressed it on the altars of idolatry. Now, **He will break down their altars**. “Now GOD will do in *judgment* what *they* should have done in *contrition*, ‘break down their altars, and spoil their images.’ ” (Clarke)

#### 2. Israel's empty throne (3–8)

a. **We have no king:** Under the judgment of the LORD, foreign powers dominated Israel so they no longer had their own king. Even the idols they honored and trusted so much will be taken to foreign lands as treasure for foreign kings.

b. **The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars:** After the desolation of exile, the once-busy pagan altars of Israel are now overgrown with thorns and thistles. This is the result of Israel's rejection of the LORD and embrace of pagan gods.

### B. God's counsel to sinful Israel [10:9–15]

## 1. God tells Israel to see their sin and to submit to His chastening (9–11)

a. **You have sinned from the days of Gibeah:** **Gibeah** was already mentioned in Hosea 9:9, recalling the horrific sin described in Judges 19. Even though there was a **battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity**, there was still iniquity in Israel. Here, God wants a willfully blind Israel to see their sin and repent of it.



"The Sodomites"  
By James Tissot (1836-1902)

b. **When it is My desire, I will chasten them:** Like unruly farm animals, God will control and guide Israel and Jacob, even if they kick against Him.

## 2. God tells Israel to break up the hard ground of their heart (12)

a. **Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy:** Israel had sown the seed of sin, and they would soon reap judgment from God. Even now, if they would sow **righteousness**, they would **reap in mercy** at the next harvest.

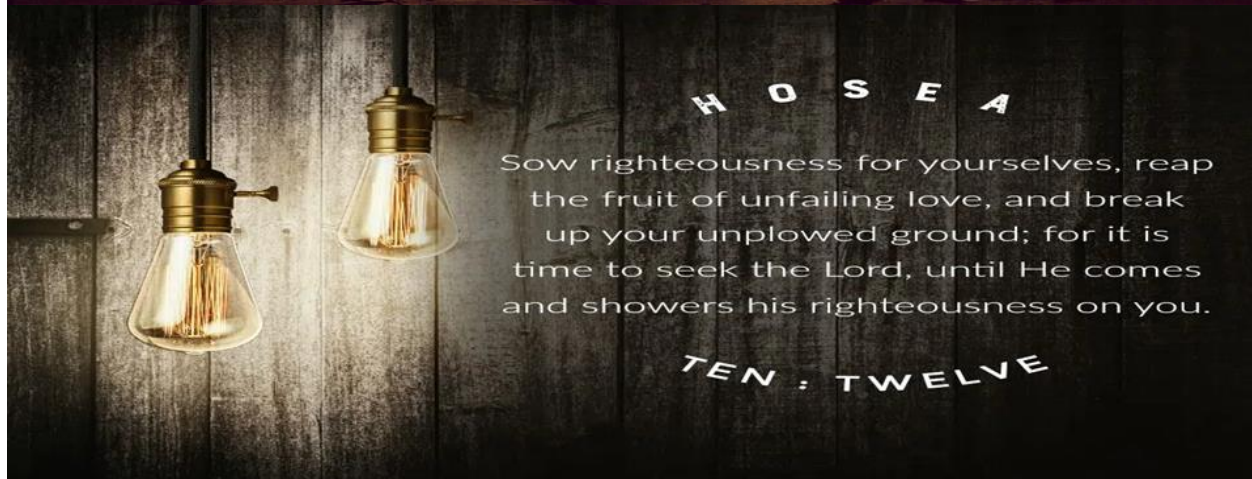
b. **Break up your fallow ground:** God builds on the picture of sowing and reaping by telling Israel to **break up your fallow ground**—ground that hasn't been plowed for more than a year. It is ground that is hard and stubborn, resistant to the seed. It does little good to sow seed on **fallow ground**; it must be broken up first.

i. Sometimes when the word of God goes forth and seems to have little effect, it is because it falls on **fallow ground**—the hard ground that will not allow the seed of the word to penetrate and become fruitful.

ii. Since **fallow ground** is hard, it probably doesn't "want" to be broken up. It is hard and compact, and the blade of the plow hurts as it cuts through. If the **fallow ground** could talk, it would probably cry out when it is plowed. Yet it is useless as ground as long as it is **fallow**.

iii. **For it is time to seek the LORD** reminds us of *how* we break up the fallow ground. We do it by seeking the LORD, not our self or idols.

iv. **For it is time** shows that the time to break up the fallow ground is *now*. “This should be immediately done: the season is passing; and if you do not get the seed in the ground, the early rain will be past, and your fields will be unfruitful.” (Clarke)



[I said.] 'Sow for yourselves **righteousness** and you will reap according to **kindness**: till for yourselves a tilling and [set] a time to seek Hashem until He comes and teaches you righteousness.'

But you have plowed wickedness, and you have reaped iniquity and eaten the fruit of denial; for you relied on your [evil] way, on your many mighty men.

Hosea  
10:12-13

c. **Till He comes and rains righteousness on you:** This tells us how long we should break up the fallow ground and sow the seed of righteousness. We do it until the harvest comes.

i. God use of the figures of sowing and reaping remind us that harvest is sometimes a season away. Sometimes people expect to sow sin for years, but to immediately **reap in mercy** after sowing **righteousness** for one day. Stick with sowing in righteousness, you will **reap in mercy** in due time.

### 3. God tells Israel the terrible result of resisting Him (13–15)

a. **Because you trusted in your own way:** This is the essence of all sin. We trust in our **own way** instead of in God's way. Ruin always comes when we trust in our **own way** instead of God's way, and that ruin was about to come upon Israel.

CHAP. 10. 1–15.—ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY, THE SOURCE OF PERJURIES AND UNLAWFUL LEAGUES, SOON DESTINED TO BE THE RUIN OF THE STATE—THEIR KING AND THEIR IMAGES BEING ABOUT TO BE CARRIED OFF—A JUST CHASTISEMENT, THE REAPING CORRESPONDING TO THE SOWING.—The prophecy was uttered between Shalmaneser's first and second invasions of Israel. Cf. v. 14; also v. 6 ("Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel"), referring to Hoshea's calling So of Egypt to his aid; also vv. 4, 13.

*Remarks.*—1. We should beware of letting our religion evaporate into 'empty' aspirations, desires, and transports, instead of producing the true and solid fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, meekness, and faith. 2. **Prosperity, wealth, health, and intellect are the gifts of God, bestowed on men that they may have the more power to glorify Him: but when they abuse these gifts to sin, they actually turn God's gifts into weapons of offence against the gracious Giver; just as Israel, "according to the multitude of his fruit, increased his altars" to idols.** 3. They whose "heart is divided" between God and mammon "shall be found faulty" before God, and shall suffer accordingly. Israel thought to serve God and idols at once. But in fact, they served only their idols, which they would not give up for the sake of God; and their sin became the very means of their punishment, the gold of their idols being the bait that tempted the invader (v. 2). **So, all who think to give their heart to any earthly idol, as ambition, wealth, or pleasure, and yet at the same time to serve God, shall, through their heart-idolatry and double-mindedness, lose both Him and their idol together, and, worst of all, shall lose their own selves, and be a cast-away.** 4. Israel, too late, discovered her fatal mistake in preferring an earthly king to God (v. 3). From Saul, their first king, to Jeroboam, the originator of the idolatrous calves, and from him to Hoshea, under whom the kingdom ceased, the people had almost a continual experience of how unavailing to them were the kings for whom they had rejected their God. But their groaning was for their suffering, not for their sin. Their heart was still unchanged. Such shall be the remorse of the lost—unavailing regrets and tormenting self-reproaches shall abound.

The season of grace shall have then been sinned away, and there shall be no possibility of, or inclination to, repentance. Let all be wise, and repent ere it be too late. 5. Israel's professions were but empty "words" (v. 4). She thought nothing of "swearing falsely." **'Covenants' violated by her were therefore the prepared "furrows" into which was cast, as the seed, the Divine "judgment," destined to spring up in a crop of evil to her, deadly as the poisonous "hemlock."** Israel was now no longer the people of Jehovah, but the people of the golden calf. For this they "mourned," whilst they were utterly unconcerned at having lost God, their true glory. Not even the miseries and desolation of their country caused them such regrets as their gilded idol. So now, when men have once parted with God, their true glory, for any earthly objects of desire, if these be taken from them, the **tendency of the unrenewed heart is to mourn, not for their sins, but for their heart-idols,—not to long for reconciliation with God, but for the restoration of their objects of desire.** 6. That which was thought by Israel a master-stroke of policy for the permanent establishment of the kingdom of the ten tribes proved to be ultimately the source of its shame and overthrow (v. 6). For it was the golden calf, the fruit of state policy, that brought down God's vengeance both on it and its worshippers; that vengeance was executed by the Assyrian king as the Jereb, or Avenger in God's hand, of the insulted majesty of God. Then Israel's king, in complaisance to whom she had forsaken her heavenly King, passed away as the bubble upon the water. **Separated from God, all seeming power is weakness, all apparent stability is fluctuating and perishing as the foam—'One moment white, then gone for ever.'** The fear of God is the only true basis of solidity and permanence. 7. A day of judgment is coming to all the ungodly, when they shall wish death rather than life. As Israel once trusted in the idolatrous high places as her protection, but in the end sought one only good from them—viz., that they should fall on her and save her by death from evils worse than death—so the earthly-minded, whose portion was this earth, shall at last long only that the earth and its mountains may entomb them, in order that they may, if possible, by death escape that second death which ever killeth but never destroyeth. Surely it is infinitely better for us now to pray to the Lord Jesus to "cover" our transgression with the blood of His atonement, than through neglect of this to have to cry to the mountains at last, "Fall on us, and cover us" (v. 8).

Our prayer to Jesus, if offered in obedient faith, shall surely be heard; but prayer to the mountains then shall be in vain. 8. How fearful must be men's guilt when the loving God is constrained by His own holiness to have a righteous satisfaction in their chastisement! (v. 10.) Once all Israel gathered together as one man at Gibeah, to vindicate God's justice against Benjamin; but now the ten tribes banded together, not against sin, but for sin. Therefore God, in just retribution, was about to gather the Gentile peoples against His apostate people. As the latter would not bow to God's mild and blessed yoke, they were to be made to feel the galling yoke of the heathen, for whose ways they had forsaken the Lord's way.

In harmony in nothing else, in Satan's service only do men bind themselves together as two oxen ploughing under one team. Refusing God's "bands of love" (ch. 11:4), they yet put shoulder to shoulder, and **"draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope" (Isa. 5:18).** Oh that all would rather come to Jesus for refreshment, and take His yoke upon them, and they shall find His yoke truly "easy," and His "burden light" (Matt. 11:28–30). 9. The way to "sow to ourselves for righteousness" (v. 12) is first of all to make by faith "Christ the end of the law for righteousness" to us (Rom. 10:4). If we do so, *ours* is the gain, the profit is not to God (Job 22:2, 3; 35:7, 8). It is *to ourselves* that we sow; and it is "according to" His grace and "mercy" that we shall reap. The reward is altogether of grace, not debt. Then, too, even in this life, grace well used is rewarded gratuitously with more grace; for "out of Christ's fulness" believers "receive grace for (*i.e.*, upon) grace" (John 1:16). But in eternity especially we shall marvel at the amazing harvest of good which shall result from the apparently small seeds that we have sown in time. Therefore, we must be ever diligent. Unlike earthly husbandry, the spiritual field is apt again and again to become fallow almost directly after it has been ploughed and harrowed. They, on the contrary, who 'plow wickedness,' shall only 'reap iniquity' as their harvest. An awful harvest truly Israel experienced when Shalman, the Avenger, "in the day of battle dashed in pieces the mother upon her children" (v. 14). Let us beware of trusting, like her, 'in our own way,' or our own strength (v. 13). Only when we mistrust ourselves, and trust in the Lord and His righteousness alone are we safe, justified, and blessed.

## ***Hosea 11—Drawn with Gentle Cords***

### **A. God's tender love for Israel [11:1–4]**

#### **1. Israel: Called by God and called by the Baals (1–2)**

a. **I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son:** God remembers His tender love for Israel, when more than 500 years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of **Egypt**.

i. This is an “unexpected prophecy” fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Matthew 2:15 shows how the words **out of Egypt I called My son** were fulfilled when the child Jesus return from Egypt after escaping there on the eve of Herod's massacre of the innocents.

b. **As they called them, so they went from them:** God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals called to Israel, and they forsook the LORD and followed the Baals (the local deities of Canaan).

#### **2. God's tender love for an unseeing Israel (3–4)**

a. **I taught Ephraim to walk ... but they did not know that I healed them:** God does so much for His people that they are unaware of. Often we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

i. **Taking them by their arms:** The picture is of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child's arms and supporting the child as they make their awkward steps.

b. **I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love:** Even when **God draws His people, it is with gentle cords of love, not with harsh manipulation or coercion.** God wants to win us over, but not will brute force.

i. Clarke on **gentle cords**: “This is a reference to *leading strings*, one end of which is held by the child, the other by the nurse, by which the little one, feeling some support, and gaining confidence, endeavours to walk. God, their heavenly Father, made use of every means and method to teach them to walk in the right and only safe path.”

ii. In the ancient world, the empires of Persia and Greece fought bitter wars. There was said to be a great difference between their soldiers. In the Persian army, soldiers were like slaves and driven into battle with whips and threats. In the Greek army, soldiers were free men and patriots, and fought for Sparta and Greece out of love for country and a sense of duty. The smaller armies of Greece usually beat the larger armies of Persia. God calls us as an army of free men, grateful patriots of the kingdom of God.



iii. “Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are ‘cords of a man.’ The bands he employs are ‘bands of love.’ ” (Spurgeon)

c. **As those who take the yoke from their neck** refers to relaxing and loosening the yoke-collar of a plowing animal, giving the animal rest and the freedom to breathe.

d. **I stooped and fed them:** God humbled Himself to minister to His needy people. One might almost think it is beneath the dignity and honor of God to stoop so for His people, but He never thinks so. This is the heart reflected in the servant nature of Jesus (Philippians 2).

## B. God’s strict hand towards Israel [11:5–12]

### 1. Empty profession brings the chastening of God (5–7)

a. **Because they refused to repent:** In this sense, it wasn’t so much the sin of Israel that got them into trouble. It was their stubborn refusal **to repent** after their sin. For that, God would make sure that destruction and exile waited for them.

b. **My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him:** **Backsliding** means that at one time, Israel had a closer and more real walk with God. Now that is in the past, and their profession is simply empty. They **call to the Most High** in a formal sort of way, but they do not **exalt Him** with their lives.

### 2. God’s sympathy in the midst of chastening (8–9)

a. **How can I give you up, Ephraim?** Though the dark clouds of judgment are on the horizon, God takes no pleasure in the chastening about to come upon Israel. Instead He says, “**My sympathy is stirred.**”

i. We are in sin, and guilty before God. Yet He says, **How can I give you up?** Justice demands that He do this, yet in His heart He must find a way of salvation. In this, God sends Jesus Christ, and on the cross Jesus was “given up” in our place.

b. **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were two cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that were also destroyed (Deuteronomy 29:23). God says, “I can’t bear to allow My people to be caught up in the destruction that will come upon all the nations, as **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were caught up on the destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah.”

c. **I will not again destroy Ephraim:** Though their sin deserves it, God will not wipe out Israel. He will leave a remnant, and will restore the nation.

d. **For I am God, and not man:** The longsuffering, forgiveness, and compassion of the Lord toward His people seems unbelievable until we recognize that He is **not man**, but God. His love and forgiveness are of a different order. There are many differences between God and man in the matter of forgiveness.

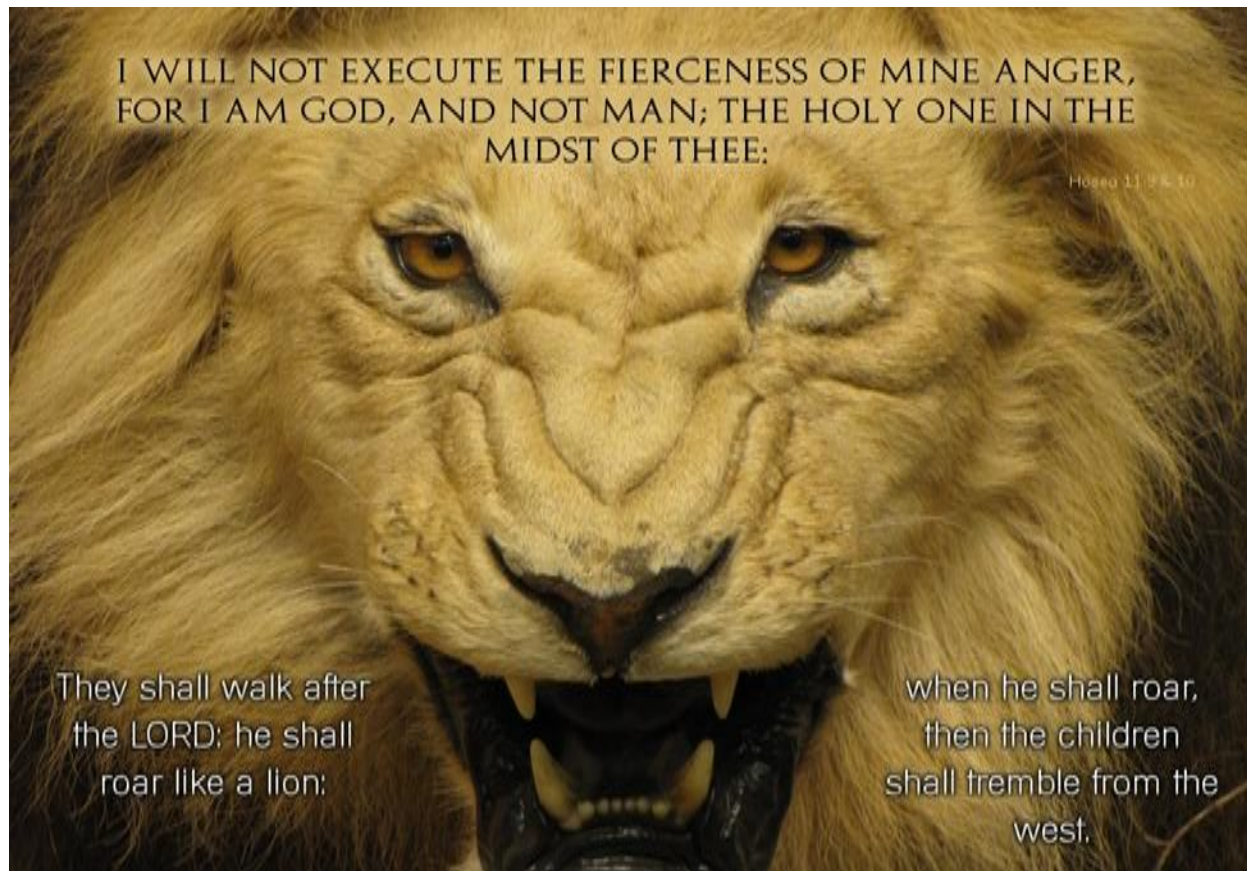
- *Man cannot hold back his anger very long*
- *Man cannot bear with others when he is tired, stressed, or annoyed*
- *Man will not reconcile if the person who offended him is a person of bad character*
- *Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offender makes the first move*
- *Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offender never repeats the wrong*
- *Man, when he does reconcile, does not lift the former offender to place of high status*
- *Man, when he is wronged, does not bear all the penalty for the wrong done*
- *Man, when he attempts reconciliation, will not continue if he is rejected*
- *Man will not restore an offender without a period of probation*
- *Man will not love adopt, honor, and associate with one who has wronged him*
- *Man will not trust someone who has formerly wronged them*

i. What passes for forgiveness among men is nothing like the amazing forgiveness of God. “Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you, and that he asked your forgiveness, do you not think that you would probably say to him, ‘Well, yes, I forgive you; but I—I—I—cannot forget it?’ Ah! dear friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off, it is a lame forgiveness, and is not worth much.” (Spurgeon)

### 3. The roar of God calls Israel back (10–12)

a. **When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west:** God speaks of the ultimate restoration of Israel, an expression of His mercy to Ephraim.

b. **Ephraim has encircled Me with lies:** God makes these promises knowing the present state of Israel. Though Judah is in a better place than Israel, God still makes the promises with full knowledge of their present state.



CHAP. 11, 1—12.—GOD'S FORMER BENEFITS AND ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE RESULTING IN PUNISHMENT, YET JEHOVAH PROMISES RESTORATION AT LAST.—Ver. 5 (“He shall not return into ... Egypt”) shows this prophecy was uttered after the league made with Egypt (2 Ki. 17:4).

*Remarks.*—1. When Israel was weak, wayward, and ignorant as a child, then God loved him, and exhibited His love in choosing him out of all nations to be His peculiar people and heritage. God publicly owned Israel, who was then but a bond-servant in Egypt, as His own son—yea, even His first-born; and as such God claimed him from his Egyptian oppressor. Egypt itself was caused by God to afford for a time shelter and sustenance to Israel, as it did subsequently to Israel's great antitype, Messiah. **Herein Israel is a type also of the Church and the true believer. God, by sending the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of His people (Gal. 4:6) as the spirit of adoption, calls them His whilst they are still in the Egypt of this world. Indeed, He separates them to Himself *from the womb*, and calls them by His grace, as He did Paul (Gal. 1:15).** 2. How sad a contrast to God's love is presented by Israel's perversity! Besides His first call to him in Egypt, God addressed many subsequent calls by Moses, Joshua, the judges, and the prophets (v. 2). **But the more He called, the more the Israelites turned away from Him and His ministers. So also, when the Son of God Himself subsequently addressed the heavenly call to them, they went away from even Him, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; whilst the rest, with the exception of but the few who believed, shed the blood of their Savior who would have been their king, but that they declared, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”** 3. Whereas Ephraim thus rebelled, God, on the other hand, had shown the tenderness of one who combined in Himself the character of Father and nurse to Ephraim, teaching him gently, in the weakness of national infancy, how to walk step by step; then, when Ephraim was wearied, God “took them by their arms,” or, as it may be *translated*, **‘God took them up in *His arms*,’ just as a loving father does his child when tired with its first efforts to walk (Num. 11:12; Isa. 63:9).** He gave them the law, the ordinances of worship, and the priesthood, all to teach them the way that they should go. Then by day He guided them with the pillar of cloud, the symbol of His presence among them, and by night with the pillar of fire. But, oh, how sad to think that such wondrous love should not be appreciated! “They knew not,” saith God, in sorrowful expostulation, “that I healed them” (v. 3). The spiritual Israel of God are similarly supported and guided. The Savior, as their great High Priest, bears their names on his breast, for their acceptance before God. By His Spirit *in* them, and by His providence *for* them, He teaches them the way that they should go. Let us never, then, forget for a moment Him who hath so graciously **healed our soul-disease.** 4. God adds, “I drew him with cords of a man, with bands of love.” **God draws, not drives or drags. Jesus was “lifted on the cross” for the very purpose of “drawing all men unto Him” (John 12:32). His love is the magnet that draws His people to Him.**

God draws with the cords of a *man*, not with the ropes needed for dragging a beast. The Son of God became *man*, in order to draw *men*, as such, by the cords of sympathy, as partaking of a common nature with us. His “bands of love” sit so lightly on those of us who wear them, that they are no hinderance to us in enjoying all that is really good for us, and which God has so richly “laid” before us (v. 4).

5. Israel would not have God for his king, therefore, in just retribution, “the Assyrian should be his king” (v. 5). Israel’s own politic counsels (as he thought them) proved the source of his ruin (v. 6). Hoshea the king, by conspiring with the Egyptian so thought to secure his kingdom; but this proved to be the very occasion of its overthrow, by his thereby bringing down upon himself and his people the destroying hosts of Assyria. So short-sighted is human sagacity apart from piety towards God. Surely “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong” (Job 5:13).

6. Yet such is the tender compassion of God towards the people of His covenant, that though they were “bent to backsliding,” and ‘clung to it’ with desperate tenacity (v. 7), God still cries, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” (v. 8.) It is true, Israel deserved to be treated as Admah and the other four guilty cities of the plain. But “God is not man,” that He should change from the everlasting covenant made with Israel’s forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 9). Therefore, though His justice requires that the guilty ones in Israel should suffer, since He is “the Holy One in the midst” of the chosen nation; yet His covenanted “mercy rejoices over judgment” as regards *the nation*. Accordingly, having once punished Ephraim, He will, when He shall have restored the people, “destroy” them no more. The time will come when His heart of infinite love shall turn to His long cast-off people, and His “repentings” of the past evil inflicted on them shall be “kindled together” (v. 8). Then “shall they walk after the Lord” (v. 9). His “children” shall flock to Him “as the doves to their windows,” from the various regions of their dispersion (v. 10); and they shall occupy permanent “houses” in their own lands (v. 11). So also, the children of the spiritual Israel, “the last remnant according to grace,” both of the circumcision and the uncircumcision, shall at last “come from the *east* and *west*, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Christ will place them in the “many mansions” of His “Father’s house” (John 14:2). Just as Judah when was “faithful with the saints,” and the Holy One (v.12).

## ***Hosea 12—Ancient Jacob and Latter Israel***

### **A. The deeply rooted deceit of Israel [12:1–6]**

#### **1. Israel trusts in deals and alliances with surrounding nations (1)**

a. **Ephraim feeds on the wind:** The idols and foreign alliances Israel trusts in are useless. They are like trying to feed **on the wind**.

i. Clarke on the **east wind**: “They are not only empty, but *dangerous* and *destructive*. The *east wind* was, and still is, in all countries, a *parching, wasting, injurious* wind.”

b. **Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil carried to Egypt:** Instead of trusting in the LORD, Israel trusted in deals and payoffs to the surrounding superpowers. It was foolish for them to think that Assyria or Egypt was more powerful or dependable than the LORD was.

#### **2. Ancient Jacob is an example of Israel’s deceit (2–6)**

a. **He took his brother by the heel in the womb:** Here, God looks back at the patriarch Jacob and how Israel in Hosea’s day was just like their forefather Jacob in the days of Genesis. **In ancient Israel, a “heel-catcher” was a double-dealer, someone who achieved their goals through crafty and dishonest means.** Through Hosea, God says, “That was Jacob then and it is Israel now.”

i. **“To grasp the heel’ also meant to go behind one’s back in order to deceive or trick him, and this became the dominant characteristic of the man.”** (Boice)

b. **In his strength he struggled with God:** The prophet recalls the struggle between Jacob and the Man of Genesis 32:24–30. Jacob refused to submit to God, so *God demanded submission from him in a literal wrestling match.*

i. **He struggled with God** reinforces a point already made clear in Genesis 32:24–30: Jacob wrestled with the LORD God, who appeared in human form as a Man. Since this was a unique messenger from heaven, He is also appropriately described as an **Angel** of the LORD.

c. **He struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him:** Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Hosea emphasizes two more details from the Genesis 32:24–30 account. First, he tells us that Jacob **prevailed** in the wrestling match. Second, he tells us that Jacob **wept** in the struggle.

i. How can it be said that Jacob **prevailed**? **He prevailed** in the only way anyone can when they struggle against God. We prevail **when we lose and know it, surrendering to God.**

ii. Why is it important to know that Jacob **wept**? Because it helps us understand how desperate and broken he was as he hung on the LORD, now pleading only for a blessing.

d. **So you, by the help of your God, return:** Jacob came to the place where he knew God had beaten him, and all he could do was hang on to God and plead for a blessing. **So you** speaks to Israel, saying they should return to God the same way.

## **B. Judgment promised against a confident Israel [12:7–14]**

### **1. Though Israel is confident in its wealth, God will bring them low (7–11)**

a. **Surely, I have become rich:** Hosea prophesied during a time of great prosperity, but spiritual and moral decadence in Israel. When things are good financially, it's hard for people to believe that their society is in trouble.

i. **Canaanite** in this context probably means “merchant” because the Canaanites at this time were well-known merchants and traders. Clarke says, “Ephraim is as corrupt as those heathenish traffickers were.”

b. **I will again make you dwell in tents:** Though Israel enjoyed financial prosperity and fine homes, God's judgment would bring them into exile and humble **tents** again. This judgment is certain because God has **spoken by the prophets**, yet they did not listen.

c. **Their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field:** Pagan altars were built high and stately to add dignity to the pagan god. When God's judgment comes, all those altars will be brought low, so the only altars will be the hills made by the **furrows of the field**.

### **2. Reproach will return upon Ephraim (12–14)**

a. **Jacob fled to the country of Syria:** The previous passage brought up the impending exile of Israel, and now Hosea makes a connection between the coming exile of Israel and the “exile” of Jacob when he fled from Esau to his uncle Laban in Syria.

b. **By a prophet he was preserved ... therefore the Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him:** Though God send prophets to Israel, they still rejected His word. They **provoked Him to anger most bitterly**, so **God will leave them in their guilt, and return the reproach of Egypt's slavery upon them.**

CHAP. 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 v. 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.

*Remarks.*—1. Ephraim, by following after the alliances of idolaters and the worship of their idols, "fed on wind:" nay, worse, not only were they as empty and unsatisfying as the wind would be to the hungry, but they were also hurtful and deadly, as is the scorching "east wind" (v. 1). Instead of having God as their shelter, they exposed themselves to the fatal blast by "increasing lies:" for **the inevitable result of all that is false in intention, opinion, words, deeds, dealings, worship, and hopes, is "desolations."** Instead of renewing their covenant with God, they made a covenant with the Assyrians; and then, with characteristic fickleness, they tried to escape from the obligations of their covenant, by applying to Egypt for help. **They who deal falsely with God are little to be trusted in their dealings with men.** Most justly, therefore, God executed His judgments on them by the hands of the world-powers through whom they had hoped to escape them. 2. Not even Judah was blameless, though less guilty than Israel (v. 2). God therefore admonishes the former, and declares His purpose to the latter of "recompensing them according to their doings." Their apostasy stood in marked contrast to their forefather, "Jacob," by whose name, therefore, He calls them (v. 2), taking his brother by the heel in the womb (v. 3). His descendants were more like Esau, the creature of sense and self-indulgence. Jacob "by his strength had power with God." But it was not inherent strength, but strength derived from the Divine angel with whom he wrestled. The angel of Jehovah was overcome, because he wished to be overcome. Instead of "pleading against Jacob with His great power, He put strength in him" (Job 23:6). Jacob's conscious weakness made him cast himself with his whole weight upon Almighty strength. So, he became an "Israel," or prince, having such power with Him that God would deny him nothing that he asked of real blessing. 3. Jacob not only wrestled and "made supplication unto" the Lord, but also "wept." Tears were the indication of one whose words of prayer were no feigned words, but whose heart was deeply moved with the sense of his great needs, and whose feelings were excited to vehement and longing desires. Therefore, at Bethel "he found God," because God first "found him," and moved him so to weep and supplicate. 4. The "memorial" or character by which the Lord desires to be remembered by His people is "Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord." As JEHOVAH, He is now still the same unchangeable God such as He manifested Himself to Jacob. And He is as all-powerful as He is all-gracious, for He is "the Lord, the God of hosts," having all the powers of heaven and earth at His command. "Therefore," as the practical inference, God speaks to each individual soul as He spake to Israel, "Turn thou to thy God."



Israel after the flesh could claim God as *their* God: so, all the spiritual Israel can equally regard God as *their* God in the covenant of grace. What consolation it is calculated to impart, that we should, in turning to God, regard as *ours* Him who is as unchangeably faithful to His promises as He is all-powerful in fulfilling them! At the same time, as a proof of our sincerity, let us, whilst we “wait on our God,” be careful to “keep mercy and justice” towards our fellow-man (v. 6). Above all, let our waiting on God be not by fits and starts, but “continually.” “Men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Even unfaithful Ephraim had intervals of goodness, but their “goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew” that soon “goeth away” (ch. 6:4). But it is peculiar to the believer to *wait* on God *patiently* (Ps. 40:1), and “continually:” whereas of the hypocrite Job asks (27:10), “Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he *always* call upon God?” 5. In sad contrast to God’s command to “keep mercy and judgment” stood Ephraim’s “deceit” as a “merchant,” whereby he was no longer entitled to the honorable title of “Israel,” but rather to be named “Canaan.” None are more blind to their spiritual danger than those eager in pursuing gain. The conventional tricks of trade, and the alleged difficulty of competing with others save by practising the usual frauds, are made the excuses for usages which, whatever else they gain, end in the eternal loss of the soul! Let us beware of boasting of or trusting in riches of our own making, and let us make Christ our treasure, both for time and for eternity. 6. Notwithstanding Ephraim’s sin, God has still mercy in store for the nation; “and will yet make” His ancient people “to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.” **As the former observance of the feast of tabernacles reminded them of the contrast between their fixed homes in Canaan and their shifting tent-life in the wilderness, thus calling forth their joyful thanksgivings to the gracious God who had led them through the latter to the former, so shall Israel hereafter recall with adoring thankfulness her weary state of unsettled restlessness for ages, as bringing into brighter contrast her then existing blessedness in her settled habitations and in her own land.** Such shall be still more the feeling of the redeemed in their “everlasting habitations,” when this tabernacle-scene shall be looked back upon in the light of eternity. The feast of tabernacles was a scene of joy following five days after the day of atonement, which was one of sorrow. 7. On Israel’s part there was nothing but “iniquity” and “vanity” (v. 11); they were wedded to idols and to idolatrous altars, worthless as the heaps in the furrows of the field: whereas on their ancestor Jacob’s part there was such strong faith towards God that, rather than marry an idolatress, he was content to be a fugitive and a servant in Syria (v. 12). His honest poverty was a tacit reproof to their dishonestly-gained riches. He returned to his land with “two bands:” whereas their end should be the loss of all their boasted wealth, “reproach,” and exile for ages from their own land. A man or a nation never dishonors the Lord without being sooner or later repaid in kind.

## ***Hosea 13—“I Will Be Your King”***

### **A. Two pictures of judgment [13:1–8]**

#### **1. Sinful Israel will be scattered like the morning clouds (1–3)**

a. **Now they sin more and more:** God never blessed Israel when they worshipped Baal, but that didn't stop them. They kept after their idolatry **more and more**.

b. **The men who sacrifice** may instead have the idea of *engaging in human sacrifice*, and could be translated “the sacrificers of men.” In ancient Israel human sacrifice was almost always child-sacrifice. Hosea has already spoken of this horrible practice in Hosea 9:13 and perhaps in Hosea 5:2.

i. “Viewed together, the sin is a total perversion of values. A craftsman's work is elevated to divine status; human beings sacrifice their offspring to a metal object from whose lifeless form they also beg help; persons embrace with adulation the images of the very animals that they use for ploughing, threshing and hauling.” (Hubbard)

c. **Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes:** Because Israel trusted in themselves and in idols, they could not *stand*. They would pass like the **early dew**.

#### **2. Sinful Israel will be torn apart as if by a lion (4–8)**

a. **Yet I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt:** Israel changed, but the LORD God did not. He is still the only God and the only Savior, and His people will be left desolate when they leave Him.

b. **They were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore, they forgot Me:** It is a strange and terrible aspect of human nature that when times are good, we often forget the God who blessed us. When times are bad we are often more likely to turn our hearts back to God.

i. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Americans were in a season of unprecedented prosperity. Yet statistics show that in the 1990s churchgoers gave a smallest percentage of their income in contributions since the Great Depression. Sadly, often when we are **filled**, then we find our hearts **exalted**, and we forget God.

c. **So I will be to them like a lion:** When we neglect and affront God as He blesses, we then will often face the chastening hand of God. It isn't because God hates us, but because we have demonstrated we will only turn to Him when times are bad.

i. “The three mentioned—lion, leopard, and bear—were all native to Palestine and known for their relentless manner of killing prey.” (Wood)

## B. God, the only hope of Israel [13:9–16]

### 1. The rejected King and the imposed king (9–11)

a. **You are destroyed, but your help is from Me:** Even when Israel feels the sting of God's chastening hand, they can still find **help** from the LORD, if they will only turn to Him.

b. **I will be your King ... I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath:** God wanted to be recognized as the King of Israel, no matter which man sat on the royal throne. When they rejected the LORD as King, He gave them the kind of kings their hearts wanted and deserved, and then even took those kings as further judgment.

### 2. The sorrowful judgment of Ephraim and her children (12–16)

a. **The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him:** Labor pains often come unexpectedly, are intense, and increase in their pain and duration. In the same way, judgment will come upon Israel.

b. **I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death:** The sin and judgment of Israel is great, but not greater than God's ability and power to redeem. He can even **redeem ... from death**, so that **death** and the **grave** are mocked as defeated foes.

i. Paul quoted the Septuagint translation of Hosea 13:14 in describing our triumph over death in our sharing in the resurrection of Jesus: *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

c. **Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God:** In the long term, Israel will see the glory of God's redemption and His power over sin and death. In the near term, Israel will be chastened for their rebellion against God.

CHAP. 13. 1–16.—EPHRAIM'S SINFUL INGRATITUDE TO GOD, AND ITS FATAL CONSEQUENCES—GOD'S PROMISE AT LAST.—This chapter and 14. probably belong to the troubled times that followed Pekah's murder by Hoshea (cf. ch. 13:11; 2 Ki. 15:30). The subject is the idolatry of Ephraim, notwithstanding God's past benefits, destined to be his ruin.

*Remarks.*—1. Sin was the cause of the awful change about to pass on Ephraim, as contrasted with the exalted station which he once held. "The wages of sin is death." **Yea, sin has in itself from the first the seed of death, though that seed may not be developed and manifested in its terrible effects till a subsequent time.** Thus, from the moment that Ephraim "offended in respect to Baal" "he died" before God. Sin separates from God, the true life of the soul. Let all professors of religion ever remember this, that sin, habitual or unatoned for, and spiritual life, cannot co-exist in the same individual; for, saith the apostle (Romans 8:6).

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” 2. Sin is essentially cumulative in its nature; one sin entailing another, and that other the third. From rebellion the ten tribes passed on to the adoration of the *true* God under the form of a calf, and from that lesser form of idolatry to open adoration of *false* gods—Baal, Ashtaroth, and other heathen abominations. What ingenuity do men display in perverting religion “according to their own understanding”! (v. 2.) Oh, that even as much expenditure of mind and money were devoted to the propagation of truth as there is to that of error! The weight of influence, and even the strong hand of persecuting power, have been again and again exercised in behalf of false systems, virtually insisting, “Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves” (v. 2). 3. Ephraim’s “goodness” had been as “a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away” (ch. 6:4). In just retribution, then, Ephraim’s prosperity, bright for a season as a gilded morning-cloud or as the glistening dew-drop, should in like manner “pass away.” Nay, worse, “as the chaff driven with the whirlwind,” and “the smoke out of the chimney,” so the worthless people themselves, and their pride and smoke-like inflation, should be swept away. Yet God was the same God as of old, who led them out of Egypt. He had the same power and will to save them then as ever; and none else could be their “Savior” (v. 4). Let this truth be engraven on our hearts, that “there is salvation in none other (than the Lord Jesus): for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He is still the same God who “knew,” acknowledged, and treated Israel as His people “in the wilderness, in the land of great drought” (v. 5). We are sojourning in a moral wilderness, wherein He alone can satisfy the hunger and thirst of our immortal souls. As He “knows them that are his” (2 Tim. 2:19), so their part is to “know no god” and “no savior besides” him (v. 4). 4 The “pasture” (v. 6) which the worldly seek is carnal gratification. If they seek Christ, it is not because of His doctrine and miracles, but “because they eat of the loaves, and are filled” (John 6:26, 27). They “labor for the meat which perisheth, not for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” So the carnal among the Israelites sought only to be filled with pasture for their appetites; and the Lord, in judicial wrath, “gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls” (Ps. 106:15). **Their satiety produced “exaltation of heart,” and this in turn produced “forgetfulness” of God, which is the root of all evil.** Let us make it our chief desire that our Good Shepherd may “make us to lie down in the green pastures” of His Word (Ps. 23:2), and as to earthly things fulfil our desires only so far as is really for our good. 5. How sad the change, when He who had been Israel’s Creator and Preserver became her Destroyer! With the fierceness of the lion, the sudden swiftness of the leopard, the determination of the bear robbed of her cubs, the judgments of God would overwhelm them (vv. 7, 8). “Their heart” (v. 8), heretofore closed against God, would be “rent” open. How awful in the last day it will be when the sinner’s heart shall be laid bare, with all its impure, malicious, and unholy thoughts, before the Righteous Judge!

Two great truths shall then be manifested to the sinner himself—first, that his damnation was solely due to himself; secondly, that “in God” would have been saving “help” for him, if only he had accepted that help (v. 9). Let every sinner take home to himself, for both warning and encouragement, God’s words, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” God often punishes men by giving them their wish. Israel had wished to have a king, like the nations around; as though a king could save them in battle, and as though God could not! Again, they had wished to have Jeroboam, instead of the king of David’s line whom God had appointed. They got their wish, but not with it the good that they expected. “Where is now thy king?” cried the prophet, when their king proved not only unable to help them, but even unable to save himself from captivity (v. 10). As “God gave them a king in his anger, so he took him away in his wrath” (v. 11). The demons were heard when they asked to enter into the swine. Let us jealously watch over our desires, lest they harmonize not with the will of God, and so God should be tempted to “give us up” to “our own affections” (Rom. 1:26).

7. No greater evil can befall men than that God should treasure up their iniquity, about in due time to bring it forth for condign punishment. Sin is “bound up” (v. 12) as Ephraim’s was, when it is not loosed or remitted. Self-justification and pride cover up transgression, so as to be hidden for a time; and the sinner flatters himself, like Agag, that “the bitterness of death is past” because execution is deferred. But the very way which the sinner takes to escape punishment is the very way whereby he brings it on himself. When he *covers* his sin, God also covers or *binds it up*. But God does so in order that in His own time He may bring forth to light the accumulated mass of sin heretofore hidden, and may inflict commensurate condemnation. If we would, instead of covering our sins, lay them all bare before God, He would cover them with the blood of the atonement, and then we should know the blessedness of the man “whose sin is covered” (Ps. 32:1).

8. Sorrows poignant and sudden as those of a woman in travail are coming upon the impenitent (v. 13). How fatally “unwise” are all who, though judgment is impending, “stay long,” deferring a new birth unto righteousness, whereby they might avert the coming evil! Those who halt between two opinions, reaching the verge of new life, and yet never being born again of the Spirit, shall perish eternally. But in the case of the true “children” of God, God gives them spiritual power to live in His sight now; they are “translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13); He hath “ransomed them” already, in title, “from the grasp of the grave” (v. 14); and hereafter He will, in actual fact, “redeem them from death.” When Christ “gave his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28), He by death gave death its death-blow. He will hereafter be the actual destruction of the grave, when “death and hell (the world of separate spirits) shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.”

9. All that dazzled the eyes in worldly pomp, glory, wealth, luxury, and beauty, for which men cast away the favor of God, shall leave no memorial behind, “What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

## ***Hosea 14—Real Wisdom Turns Israel back to the LORD***

*“No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea; and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgment. Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!” (Charles Spurgeon)*

### **A. Israel’s repentance and God’s response [14:1–7]**

#### **1. What Israel should say in their repentance (1–3)**

a. **Take words with you, and return to the LORD:** In returning to the Lord, Israel must come on God’s terms, not their own. God says, *“When you return to Me, **take words with you**. I want you to return to Me not with a silent feeling in your heart, but with proper words of repentance and trust in Me.”*

i. When we come before the LORD, it is essential to **take words with you**. There is a place for sharing the inarticulate feelings of the heart with God, but that is not the essence of fellowship and prayer with Him. The worship of God is intelligent, and God made us able to communicate ideas and feelings with words. It isn’t enough to sit before the LORD and feel love towards Him. Instead, **take words with you—tell God that you love Him**. It isn’t enough to feel repentance before the LORD. Instead, **take words with you and tell God you repent before Him**.

ii. This is the same idea that Paul expressed in Romans 10:8–10: *But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. God commands us to communicate with Him in **words**, not only ideas or feelings.*

b. **Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously:** When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, *we must first come humbly*. We recognize our sin and our total dependence on the grace of God.

c. Literally, Hosea 14:2 says *for we will offer the calves of our lips*. Since bull calves were often brought for sacrifice, the translators felt justified in putting it **for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips**. However, the more literal rendering shows just how plainly our words of praise, worship, confession, petition, or intercession can be a sacrifice before God.

d. **Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, “You are our gods”**: When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come renouncing our dependence on all other things. We recognize that the LORD and the LORD alone can make the difference in our life.

e. **For in You the fatherless finds mercy**: When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come declaring His greatness. We tell of what a great and merciful God we have.

## 2. God promises to restore a repentant Israel (4–7)

a. **I will heal their backsliding**: God saw that Israel was bent on backsliding from Him (Hosea 11:7), but He promises to heal the backsliding of a repentant Israel. He does it not because Israel now deserves it, but because it is in His nature to **love them freely**.

i. The word is *compassionate*: **I will heal their backsliding**. This shows God looks on our **backsliding** more like a *disease* than a *crime*. He does not say, “I will pardon their backsliding.” It is “as though he said, ‘My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust; they are liable to a thousand temptations, and they soon go astray; but **I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients, and they shall look upon me as a physician.**’ ” (Spurgeon)

ii. The word is certain: **I will heal their backsliding**. Not “I might heal” or “I could heal” or “I can try to heal,” but **I will heal their backsliding**. Come to God for healing of your backsliding, and He **will** do it! God is too great a physician to allow any patient to leave His office without being healed.

iii. Are you backsliding? The signs may not be so obvious to others. When you see a tree broken over in a windstorm, it’s easy to think that it was the wind. If you look closer, you will often see that insects have been at work a long time on the tree, making it weaker and weaker. It really wasn’t the wind that did it—other trees around it withstood the wind. It was the slow decline of strength, as insects nibbled away month after month.

b. This passage shows us what is restored when we return to the LORD.

- Growth is restored (**He shall grow**)
- Beauty is restored (**He shall grow like the lily**)
- Strength is restored (**lengthen his roots like Lebanon**)
- Value is restored (**His beauty shall be like an olive tree**)
- Delight is restored (**His fragrance like Lebanon**)
- Abundance is restored (**revived like grain ... grow like the vine ... scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon**)

c. **His branches will spread:** When God restores Israel, he will be a blessing to others, not blessed only unto himself.

## B. A new Israel [14:8–9]

### 1. Renewed Israel is free from idols (8)

a. **What have I to do anymore with idols?** When God's people are healed from backsliding, they focus on the LORD Himself and not on any kind of idol.

b. **Your fruit is found in Me:** At one time, Israel thought they might find fruit in themselves or in the idols of the nations. Now, healed of their backsliding, they find their fruit only in God.

i. **Your fruit is found in Me** can have two ideas, equally true. First, we find the **fruit to nourish our soul** in God, and God alone. Second, we find the fruit that we are **to bear unto the world** in God, and God alone.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Guzik, D. (2000). [Hosea](#) (Ho 1–14:8). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.



CHAP. 14, 1—9.—**GOD'S PROMISE OF BLESSING, ON THEIR REPENTANCE—THEIR ABANDONMENT OF IDOLATRY FORETOLD—THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE, THE JUST SHALL WALK IN GOD'S WAYS, BUT THE TRANSGRESSORS SHALL FALL THEREIN.**

*Remarks.*—1. God herein at once invites Israel to repentance, and gives a promise of the spiritual power whereby His people, in God's good time, shall accept His gracious invitation. Every word of the invitation is full of mercy, and speaks as much to us as to the literal Israel. We have all gone astray from the ways of God. He, in condescending love, urges us to return, as though in doing so we should be conferring some great favor on Him. **He assures us that He is the God of His people, and invites us not merely to return towards, but never to rest till we have reached even UP TO Himself—to be satisfied with nothing short of Himself.** 2. In order truly to be raised up to Him, **we must be taught by God the depth into which we have “fallen by our iniquity.”** Israel, in the day of her coming repentance, shall ascribe her fall as a nation, not to misfortune or fate, the power of the enemy, or her own weakness, but to its true cause, her own iniquity, which provoked the wrath of God. **True confession is the first step in conversion. Instead of laying the blame on others, or palliating sin, the true penitent accuses himself, and justifies God even in His afflictive dealings towards him.** 3. Wherewith, then, shall the returning sinner come before God? God does not ask for costly offerings; He simply tells the penitent, **when turning to the Lord, “Take with you words” (v. 2).** What so cheap as words? And yet words such as God requires are not natural to man. The Spirit of God alone can teach such words. God Himself here supplies a form; but the form must be used in concert with a heart full of humility, penitence, and sincere confession of sin, in order to be acceptable before Him. “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously,” shall be the cry of Israel returning to her Lord. As they have “fallen by their iniquity,” so, in order that they may rise again, the Lord must take away *all* iniquity. **They shall no longer, as in times past, try to make a compromise between the service of God and the service of their lusts;** but shall earnestly seek to be delivered, not only from the penalty, but from the power of *all* sin. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Ps. 119:133) is the cry of every true penitent.

4. In Gospel times we have no longer burdensome literal sacrifices to offer, but we have an offering continually to “render,” which is more acceptable to Him (Ps. 69:30, 31), the thanksgivings of unfeigned “lips,” sanctified through the offering of Christ once for all. God, after having of His justifying grace “taken away all iniquity” from His people, and imputed to them, for their justification, the righteousness of Christ, “accepts” the “good” which they present before Him, because it is He who hath wrought all that is good in them (Isa. 26:12).

5. They “said to the work of their own hands, Ye are our gods” (v. 3); but now they wish solely to lean upon God. Feeling that without Him they were as fatherless orphans, a prey to every injury, they appeal to Him “in whom the fatherless find mercy.” Whenever we come to God in this spirit we shall not come in vain. God replies most graciously, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (v. 4.) Believers complain often of their tendency, like Israel of old, to backslide. Let them, therefore, take home the comfort of this promise. For God’s “anger is turned away from” all who believe and obey; they are “justified freely through his grace” (Romans 3:24).

6. One image is not enough to express the manifold graces of God’s people as they shall be. The beauty of the lily’s color needs to be combined with the deep-rooted growth of the cedar; the fragrance of the aromatic shrubs of Lebanon with the everlasting verdure and fruitfulness of the olive. All that is beautiful, solid, attractive, and enduring, shall be found in harmonious unison in “the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified” (Isa. 61:3). The Lord’s people are “rooted in Him” (Col. 2:7) “like a green olive tree in the house of God” (Ps. 52:8): their prayers are as “odors” (Rev. 5:8), and their deeds of love as an “odor of a sweet smell” before God (Phil. 4:18). 7. This is the best test whether we belong to the spiritual Israel, Are we determined to part with everything that would come between us and God? 8. The concluding lesson is all-important to be remembered by those who desire to be spiritually “wise, so as to understand these” spiritual truths, practically “prudent,” so as to “know” and apply them in daily life (v. 9).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Jeremiah–Malachi* (Vol. IV, pp. 458–510). London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

## CHAPTER 14: GOD'S FINAL WORD TO THE LAST GENERATION

### The way home: an exposition of Hosea 14

This little chapter of only nine verses, as quiet and gentle as its predecessors are tumultuous, leads us back again through the main areas of the book of Hosea, this time on our way home. Israel is being beckoned, and the way is signposted with the landmarks she has passed on her journey into the far country. . .

#### **'Draw near to God ...' (verses 1–3)**

The first word, 'Return,' is an old friend, a strong feature of the book. Up to now it has brought only disappointment and reproach. Basically, it means 'turn'; and Israel has habitually turned the wrong way. They have been 'bent on turning away from me', as 11:7 puts it. This, incidentally, was obscured by the older translations that spoke of 'backsliding', which has a sound of failure rather than perversity, whereas in fact there had been a flat refusal to respond (11:5), born of pride (7:10) and of settled preference (5:4, 'Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God'). Even the sudden change of mind which had prompted the words, 'Come, let us return to the Lord', had been as shallow as a passing impulse (6:1, 4). But God will not give up—how could he? If their repentance has been shallow, he will deepen it. There is warmth in the emphatic form of the word, 'Return' (la; verse 2 uses the ordinary form), and the preposition is a strong one. We could almost translate it, 'Oh turn, Israel, right back to the Lord.' Even the familiar words 'your God' have gained a new intensity from the threat which Israel's fickleness had seemed to pose to her marriage bond with the Lord. Against all deserving, the marriage holds; he is still hers.

Here is the costly equivalent of his word to the cuckolded Hosea: ‘Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour ..., even as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods’ (3:1).

Repentance, then, will be first and foremost personal. ‘I will allure her ... and ... she shall answer as in the days of her youth’ (2:14f.). As George Adam Smith finely puts it, ‘Amos cries, “Turn, for in front of you is destruction;” but Hosea, “Turn, for behind you is God.” ’

For all its warmth, though, God’s call is exacting. It leaves no room for humbug: there must be ‘fruit that befits repentance’. Already 12:6 (Hebrew, verse 7) has held up to us the challenging implications of the word ‘return’. Manward, it will mean, ‘Hold fast to love and justice;’ heavenward, ‘Wait continually for your God.’ It is the second of these that our chapter will be chiefly spelling out.

First, then, ‘Take with you *words*’ (verse 2). Words can be facile, but so can actions. A major contrast in this book is between articulate, meaningful encounter, and the mere formalities and gifts which people try to substitute for it. ‘With their flocks and their herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him’ (5:6). Sub-personal religion never will (cf. 5:15).

These ‘words’ are to be without reservations or excuses. God has spoken of ‘your iniquity’ (verse 1); man must accept and echo that (verse 2), not jib at it as he did in 12:8 (Hebrew, verse 9), with his boast, ‘they shall find in me none iniquity that were sin’ (RV).

But what of the next plea, ‘Accept that which is good’? The AV, perhaps scenting salvation by works, gave the rather forced translation, ‘Receive (us) graciously.’ Another just-possible rendering is mentioned by G. A. F. Knight (Torch Commentary): ‘Receive (us), O Good One.’ But more probably it is simply a plea that God will accept the offering from the lips and the heart which he has required of his people. This chimes in with the famous saying in 6:6 about the things which he desires above sacrifice, and with Psalm 51:17; perhaps, too, with the verbal echo, obscured in translation, between God’s call, ‘Take with you ...’, and man’s responding plea, ‘Accept (lit. ‘take’) ...’

The offering of words, which began with one kind of confession, the acknowledgment of sin, now turns into confession in its other sense, the acknowledgment of God in praise. The Hebrew of verse 2c is awkward again: lit., ‘and we will render bullocks, our lips’; but at least the word ‘render’ gives a good clue to the sense. It is the term used for paying one’s vows (e.g., Ps. 116:14), in due gratitude for answered prayer. Lips, then, will be our votive offering, our ‘bullocks’. But the point is made more gracefully in the Greek and Syriac versions, which read the same consonants to mean ‘the fruit of our lips’, and this is how Hebrews 13:15 quotes it.

**So far, then, the positive side of repentance has been uppermost. The runaway must return, the sinner plead, the formalist use his mind and lips, to come back into fellowship with God. It is a turning to the light!**

Now with verse 3 comes the negative requirement, a turning *from* the old ways, in a clear farewell to futile hopes and false beliefs. Both are familiar from the earlier chapters. For security, Israel has been flitting like ‘a silly senseless pigeon’ (7:11, NEB) between the two great powers of the day: placating Assyria, cultivating Egypt (that source of chariots and horses, verse 3a; cf. Is. 31:1). Those two names appear in almost every chapter in the latter half of Hosea—for Israel was as loth as we are to think God relevant to practical affairs. *His* name carried no weight in politics. As a consequence, Israel’s outlook had become as worldly as her friends’. ‘Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; ... Aliens devour his strength, and he knows it not’ (7:8f.).

As for false beliefs, the gods of verse 3b are constantly in evidence throughout this book. Hosea’s scorn for them is as total as Israel’s infatuation. ‘Men’, he exclaims, ‘kiss calves!’ ‘A workman’ made the thing they bow to, using the very gold that the true God had lavished on them (13:2; 8:5; 2:8). The lunacy and ingratitude of all this is of course more obvious to us than are its modern counterparts. But as long as man-made deities, visible and invisible, keep their power to seduce us, verse 3b will still have words for us to use.

The trustful climax of the confession is beautifully if freely expressed in NEB: ‘for in thee the fatherless find a father’s love’—which brings out the allusion in the Hebrew to the way the book began, with the prophet’s broken marriage and disowned daughter, Lo-ruhamah, which means virtually ‘Unloved’ (1:6). For Lo-ruhamah was to be re-named Ruhamah, ‘She is loved’ (2:1, 23), in token of the Lord’s reclaiming grace for Israel. The word is usually translated by some expression for pity, which it certainly implies; but it is an emotional word, well suited to express a father’s or a mother’s tender affection (cf. Ps. 103:13; Is. 49:15). Once again this chapter has taken up the opening themes of the book, filling them with hope.

### **‘... and he will draw near to you’ (verses 4–7)**

Now God speaks, and the whole scene lights up before us. The word ‘(Re)turn’ still echoes through the chapter, as it has echoed through the whole book. It was heard in verses 1 and 2, and will reappear in verse 7; meanwhile it comes twice in verse 4, first concealed in the word ‘faithlessness’ (verse 4, RSV; lit., ‘turning’; *i.e.*, ‘apostasy’, NEB), to remind us that our waywardness is incurable until God heals it, and then in the assurance of the last line that his anger has turned away. Between these two reminders of the past comes one of the purest expressions of what the New Testament will call grace, prevailing over the language of judgment and desert heard in 9:15 (‘I will love them no more’). The NEB translates our present line, ‘Of my own bounty I will love them.’ We can notice, too, a striking contrast, not only between this outgoing love and the scant affection of Israel’s paramours (2:7), but between this tireless Giver and the reluctant hirelings of 8:8f.

After the perfect clarity of these promises—and clarity is vital to the anxious and conscience-stricken—the poetry is free to spread itself in the next verses (5–7). All the imagery of them is from nature, at its happiest and most bountiful.

Without laboring the details, we can gain from this a threefold impression of Israel revived and reconciled to God. First, freshness (dew, flowers, fragrance, beauty, shade); secondly, stability (rooted like the poplar, perhaps; or like Lebanon; verse 5); thirdly, vigor (the spreading shoots of new growth, verse 6; the ‘corn in abundance’, verse 7, NEB).

But such a summary is only useful if it makes us look more closely at the passage, which has all the grace and vitality to match the realities of which it speaks. There is nothing stifling or constricting in the divine love expressed here. Like the river of Ezekiel 47, it brings life to everything it reaches.

## **The appeal pressed home (verse 8)**

‘O Ephraim!’ In Hosea such an exclamation has more than once laid bare the heart of the prophecy and of its ultimate Author. Like David’s cry, ‘O my son Absalom!’ or our Lord’s ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!’ it has voiced both love and anguish—‘What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?’ ‘How can I give you up, O Ephraim!’ (6:4; 11:8). Now (as I see it) it is as though God turns to reason with the hearer for the last time—for the penitent words of verses 2f. and the fair prospect of verses 4–7 were part of an invitation (verses 1, 2a) which has yet to be accepted and made Israel’s own.

The plea (on this view) rests on the incomparable claims of God. Can he any longer be spoken of, even thought of, in the same breath as idols? Can Egypt’s or Assyria’s protection compete with his? Do they answer when you call? Do they care as he cares?

The last two lines of verse 8 read strangely until we remember that Hebrew thought has none of our inhibitions against mixed metaphors. God, these lines can well be saying, has all the constancy of the evergreen, all the richness of the fruit tree. Ephraim, if he is to live up to his own name ('For God has made me fruitful ...', Gn. 41:52), need look no further.

## To the reader (verse 9)

Whether the prophet himself or an editor added these words need hardly concern us here. The point that they drive home is that the prophecy is open-ended: its eloquence and passion could win Israel to repentance or could leave her unmoved. The response was hers to make. But not only hers. The 'whoever' of this verse suddenly exposes us to the same searching encounter, for the word of God goes on speaking; it never slips safely into the past. The rightness of God's ways as revealed in this book is so far above us in both holiness and love, as to leave self-sufficient man without excuse, self-condemned, while those who turn into the way of righteousness find themselves met more than half-way.

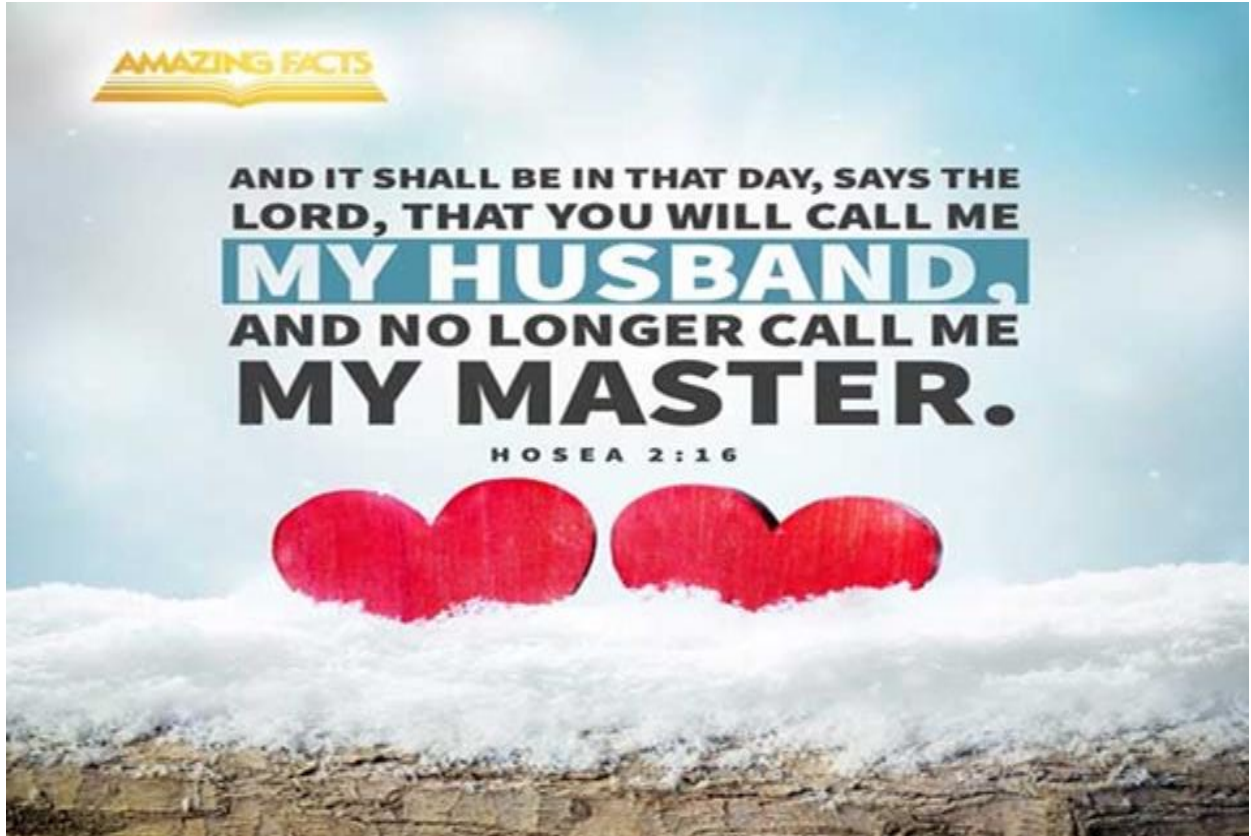
**'To turn aside from thee is hell,  
To walk with thee is heaven.'**

The comment of G. A. F. Knight on this verse deserves to be the last word: 'Therefore, dear reader, so runs the content of this Epilogue, ask yourself the question—how would you apply this message of Hosea to your own knowledge and experience of Israel's God?'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kidner, D. (1976). [The Way Home: An Exposition of Hosea 14](#). *Themelios*, 1(2), 34–36.





HOSEA  
A Love Story

John M. Kilgore

**“How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?”  
(Hosea 11:8)**

I suppose everyone loves a love story—not just the steamy, sinful variety of daytime TV (although these are popular enough), but a good love story, one based in reality with its highs and lows, joys and sorrows, one which leads us to a deeper understanding of love, and one with a happy ending. We are drawn to a good love story. I think it is because everyone wants to be loved and to give love, and most of us feel unfulfilled in this area. There is something about love that completes us as human beings. Is it not completing the circle back to God, to be like Him, for “God is love” (1 John 4:16)? Love is the ultimate expression of who we were made to be, God’s children, free to be our intimate selves without fear of punishment (1 John 4:17–18).

But what is this thing called love? Every day we hear or use expressions of love, like “love at first sight,” “falling in or out of love,” “making love,” “I love this dress,” “I love my dog,” “I love you,” and “I love God.” When love can mean anything, i.e. *everything*, it means *nothing*! No wonder the TV soaps of today are so confused about who is loving whom. No wonder we are wondering as well!

In order to restore meaning to our word “love” and then to ourselves, we must return to Him who is love and study His nature, for to know Him is to know love. Therefore, to answer the question, “What is love?” we must first ask, “Who is God?”

The apostle John offers the following three simple but deep statements: “God is spirit” (John 4:24), “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Add to these the statement of Hebrews, “God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29), and you have a four sided context in which to define God. Since God is light or truth, there is no contradiction in anything that He is or does. Said another way, God never contradicts one aspect of His nature while He is expressing another. God must be all that is God all of the time and in all circumstances. Consequently, one aspect of God, such as love, must be understood in harmony with, and in light of, all else that God is. What is love? It is everything that God is. Let us consider each.

In conversation with the Samaritan woman on the nature of true worship, Jesus said, “God is spirit” (John 4:24). This spiritual view of God, obviously, stands in opposition to any material or physical conception of God. Therefore, love is also spirit. Although it does have physical means of expression, love, at its essence is spiritual, not physical. Since the spirit is composed of intellect, will, and emotion, so is love.

Jesus said that because God is spirit, those who would be true worshipers must worship not only in their spirit (from their heart) but also in truth. This truth must be that which is revealed by God because physical man, although he has a spiritual component, cannot know all a spirit God wants him to know unless God tells him (1 Cor. 2:11–13).

This leads us to “God is light” (1 John 1:5). Light stands for truth and the doing of truth, righteousness. Therefore, love is always doing the truth or obeying God’s commands, which are always given in His love (1 John 5:3). It is wrong ever to describe sinful acts as “making love” or as being motivated by love, and it is equally wrong to think of God’s commands or actions as capricious or hateful.

But since God is light, there can be no darkness at all in Him (1 John 1:5). Darkness represents error and wickedness. To be light is to be opposed to darkness. To be truth and righteousness is to be opposed to error and wickedness. Therefore, “God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). For many, this aspect of God seems the characteristic which is the most incompatible with love, but such is not the case. In fact, true love demands that one actively oppose and eradicate anything that would harm the person who is loved. God’s wrath should be viewed in this light, for His love of man and for truth is so complete that He must oppose and destroy their evil enemies, even if He must do so through much personal sorrow. This aspect of God reveals that He is a God of tough, sacrificial love, who is able and willing to do the hard things that real love demands, whether they be the disciplining of wayward children (Heb. 12:4–11) or the destruction of the devil and his followers (Rev. 20:10–15).

By this approach, we can see that all real love emanates originally from God who is love (1 John 4:7, 10, 19), and this love is spiritual, righteous, and just. God loves because of who He is, not because of who we are. This enables God to love the unlovable and to be longsuffering toward the weak and the wicked. In this regard, God’s love is unconditional because it is only the expression of His unchanging, eternal nature. But since His unconditional love is governed by His own reality (truth), holiness (righteousness), and justice (rewards or punishment), His chosen means of expressing His love is conditional; that is, it is able to adapt itself to meet varying circumstances requiring different responses. Our challenge of faith is always to trust His unconditional love, even as we experience the conditional expressions of that love.

Hosea is the story of this unconditional, one-sided love and how it was expressed to meet the varying conditions of a nation on the doorstep of disaster. It is a love story, which is first seen in the relationship of Hosea and his wife Gomer and then in the relationship of God and his people Israel.

### **Hosea and Gomer**

Hosea, whose name means salvation, deliverance, or help, was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, often called Ephraim after its largest tribe.

Hosea probably lived in Israel and thus was the only resident northern prophet who preached to Israel. (Amos was from Judah in the South, and Jonah preached to Ninevah.) Hosea's father was Beerī, about whom we know nothing else. Some have suggested because he emphasizes the high responsibilities of the priest that he was a priest, but we can not be certain of this.

Hosea prophesied during the last days of Israel. He began during the prosperous reign of "Jeroboam the son of Joash, King of Israel" (Hos. 1:1) and continued into the period of anarchy and ultimate collapse. This Jeroboam was Jeroboam II (786–746 BC) who led Israel to its national zenith as a military and economic power. He was a true descendant of Jehu's dynasty, and although God allowed Israel to prosper under his rule, the evil of Israel's first king, Jeroboam I (922–901 BC), was continued during his reign (2 Kings 14:23–29). Upon Jeroboam II's death, the weight of 176 years of religious, moral, and political corruption hastened its fall in 721 BC on to its end in the last twenty-five years.

With the last strong King of Israel gone, internal feuds with murderous plots drove the nation into anarchy (see Hos. 7:6). Kings were "cut off ... like a stick on the surface of the water" (Hos. 10:7) because the Lord had said, "They have set up kings but not by Me ... that they might be cut off" (Hos. 8:4). Of the last six kings, four were murdered in office by their successors, only one died a natural death, and only one was succeeded by his son. After 200 years of national existence, Assyria came and destroyed Israel and carried it into exile (see Hos. 11:5). Hosea had to live and preach during this period, to see and experience the collapse of his beloved nation.

A few years before Hosea, Amos, a stern southern preacher, also prophesied Israel's fall. His reaction to the nation's moral bankruptcy was to condemn the doers of injustice as those "who oppress the poor, who crush the needy" (Amos 4:1) and "who distress the righteous and accept bribes" (Amos 5:12). Therefore, he gave the admonition, "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). But the Lord was not yet through appealing to His people. To Amos' emphasis on sin against law (injustice), Hosea adds his emphasis on sin against love (idolatry), which he calls harlotry. To Hosea, not only had Israel sinned, but also she had been disloyal and unfaithful to the Lord (Hosea 4:1). Israel had gone after other lovers, and this, for hire. Thus, **Israel was a whore!** (Hosea 1:2; 9:1) Therefore, the Lord admonished, "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). The Lord's heart was broken, for He still loved Israel (Hos. 3:1).

The Lord prepared Hosea to understand His anguish and to feel it personally by commanding him to marry Gomer (Hos. 1:2), a woman of the age. Although she probably was not a harlot at the time of their marriage, her values and spirit were of the nation who "commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord" (Hos. 1:2). This disposition, ultimately, led her into adultery. The last two of her three children were probably not Hosea's.

As each child was born, Hosea's love was tested. Their prophetic names revealed the parallel pain of Hosea with Gomer and the Lord with Israel. The first, a son named Jezreel meaning scattered, predicted the end of Israel (Hos. 1:4); that is, the Lord would scatter them among the nations. The next one was a girl named Lo-ruhamah meaning no compassion, for the Lord said, "I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them" (Hos. 1:6). The last one was a boy named Lo-ammi meaning not my people, for the Lord said, "You are not my people and I am not your God" (Hos. 1:9). The covenant was broken! Neither Hosea nor the Lord could live with one who would not be faithful, nor either be a father to offspring of adultery who were not of their character. Gomer either left or was sent away to fall into further harlotry and then possibly into slavery. Hosea's heart was broken!

Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Go again love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes" (Hos. 3:1). Hosea obeyed by buying Gomer and placing her in a period of isolation until she would prove herself to be a faithful wife. This, Gomer apparently did, for the Lord says of His parallel relationship with Israel:

For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king, without sacrifice ... Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their King; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days. (Hos. 3:4-5)

Thus, the Lord had taught Hosea through the sorrow and joy of his own family, the message of unconditional spiritual love that acts on the conditions of truth, righteousness, and justice; but, even more so, He had taught him the feelings that go with such love. Hosea could now speak to the Lord's wife Israel and to her children. In short, the prophet was prepared with both the proper message and the proper motivation.

### **The Lord and Israel**

Hosea's central charge against Israel is that "a spirit of harlotry is within them, and they do not know the Lord" (Hos. 5:4). This "do not know" is more than being completely ignorant, for they were not. This was the "not knowing" of harlotry, i.e., unfaithfulness to intimate, covenant love. The Lord's covenant with Israel meant that they were "not to know any god except Me" (Hos. 13:4). Now they had given themselves to other lovers to "know" them rather than the Lord. Israel's spiritual harlotry expressed itself in at least the following four areas: spiritual leadership, worship, morals, and politics. Let us consider each.

## Leadership

For Israel's lack of "knowledge," the priests as the teachers and spiritual leaders bore a special responsibility. Instead of leading the people to an intimate relationship with the Lord, the priests, having also rejected "knowledge," were prosperously feeding on the people's sin. As sin increased, so did sacrifice and the priests' portion. They had become priests for hire and often encouraged the people into iniquity (Hos. 4:6–9). Hosea even charges them with becoming a gang of murderers (Hos. 6:8–9). The point which he is making is that Israel's priests were totally corrupt.

## Worship

With the corruption of the priesthood, the Lord's worship was no more than formalistic ritual. Israel had sacrifices without loyalty and burnt offerings without love (Hos. 6:6). Their real devotion and praise were given to idols. For power and strength, they worshiped the calf introduced by Jeroboam I (Hos. 13:2; 8:4–6). For prosperity, they worshiped Baal, originally accepted from the Canaanites from time to time but introduced officially by Jezebel (Hos. 2:8; 4:11–13). For all of the Lord's gifts of peace and prosperity, idols were praised and worshiped. What little love there was for the Lord was shallow and temporary like the morning cloud and the dew (Hos. 6:4).

## Morals

Hosea says, "There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing, and adultery" (Hos. 4:2). All of the Lord's laws were being broken. The Ten Commandments were shattered and forgotten. In Baal worship, both men and women practiced adultery and prostitution (Hos. 4:13–14). The nation was in the grip of sensual lust and moral depravity. It had sunk so low that it would not recover.

## Politics

Times of national peril from invading armies did not bring true repentance but foreign alliances. Hence, Hosea complains, "So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" (Hos. 7:11). Israel trusted in diplomacy rather than devotion. But the prophet points out the futility of such, "Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is carried to Egypt" (Hos. 12:1).

## The Lord's Response

In exasperation, the Lord virtually exclaims, "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim!" (Hosea 6:4) Within these words of the Lord, there is anger and love spoken from a heart offended and hurt. Israel has sown the wind and now must reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Hosea reveals that it will be Assyria who will be the instrument of the Lord's wrath (Hos. 10:6; 11:5, 11).

Even as the Lord issues His verdict of punishment, He cannot help but recall the beginning of His covenant love with the nation Israel:

When Israel was a youth I loved him,  
And out of Egypt I called my son.  
The more they called them,  
The more they went from them;  
They kept sacrificing to the Baals  
And burning incense to idols.  
Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them in My arms;  
But they did not know that I healed them (Hos. 11:1-3).

The Lord had been a loving father to His young son, but Israel refused to honor his Father by obeying Him. This child must be punished; love demanded it.

How can I give you up, O Ephraim?  
How can I surrender you, O Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?  
My heart is turned over within Me,  
All my compassions are kindled.  
I will not execute My fierce anger;  
I will not destroy Ephraim again.  
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,  
And I will not come in wrath. (Hos. 11:8-9)

As His love demands punishment, His love also allows Him to withhold the complete destruction (Deut. 29:23). The Lord, not being limited in love as men are, can forgive and yearn for a time when a remnant of repentant children return.

They will walk after the Lord,  
He will roar like a lion;  
And His sons will come trembling from the west.  
They will come trembling like birds from Egypt,  
And like doves from the land of Assyria;  
And I will settle them in their houses, declares the Lord.  
(Hos. 11:10-11)

To this glorious end, the Lord can again woo His unfaithful love and speak kindly to her. In that day she will again call Him Ishi (my Husband), for the name of other gods would be removed from her mouth (Hos. 2:14–17). The character of this reunion is stated by the Lord as follows:

And I will betroth you to Me forever;  
Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice,  
In lovingkindness and in compassion,  
And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.  
Then you will know the Lord. (Hos. 2:19–20)

At that time, He sees the remnant's expanding into a mighty multitude:

The number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea,  
Which cannot be measured or numbered;  
And it will come about that in the place  
Where it is said to them,  
'You are not My people,'  
It will be said to them,  
'You are the sons of the living God.' (Hos. 1:10)

### **The Lord and Us**

Paul and Peter (Rom. 9:25–26; 1 Pet. 2:10) say that these prophecies are fulfilled in spiritual Israel, the bride of Christ, composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Even the meaning of Hosea's name, salvation, finds its ultimate fulfillment in those in Christ, the Savior, for there is salvation in no other.

The Lord's final and best love story is being lived out every day in the lives of those who are His children, the betrothed bride of His Son. By His unconditional love, He sent His Son to save us while we were yet sinners. By His love, He continues to forgive us as we return and keep His covenant of righteousness. He warns us to be faithful. His love is based on truth and justice, but He will forgive, for He loves us indeed. Oh, how He loves us! Therefore, as Hosea says:

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;  
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.  
For the ways of the Lord are right,  
And the righteous will walk in them,  
But transgressors will stumble in them. (Hos. 14:9)

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**REALIZING HOW GOD LOVES ALL  
& HOW HE “FEELS” ABOUT THE  
STUBBORN SINNER & STRONGLY  
DESIRES THEIR RECONCILIATION -**



**HOW WOULD WE RESPOND “IF” ?**

## **Would You Fellowship A Hosea?**

**If Hosea and Gomer were members of the congregation where you worship, could Hosea preach? Could Gomer teach a Bible class?**

**The message of the book of Hosea is one that needs to be taught and practiced today. Hosea did not just teach his message of mercy, he lived it! He could preach with a broken heart about the broken-hearted God, because of his own experiences, but many today would not listen to him because he was divorced from his wife! Many brethren would not listen because “all the guilt is not on one side” or “no one is completely innocent in a divorce.” But, was Hosea a better preacher because of his experiences or a worse one?**

**What about his wife? Would you allow a reformed prostitute to teach your children? Granted that she would have to show “fruit” of repentance, but granting that she has done that, would you forgive her?**

**Let’s look at the story in Hosea again. God told Hosea to “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and her children of harlotry, for the land has committed a great harlotry by departing from the Lord” (Hosea 1:2).**

**Hosea's relationship to his wife and children were used to help him understand the relationships between God and his people. The meaning of the children's names indicated the spiritual condition of Israel. The first boy was named "Jezreel" (God will scatter), the little girl was named "Lo-Ruhamah" (either not loved, or no mercy) and imagine the bitterness of his soul as Hosea named his next boy "Lo-Ammi" (either "not my people," or "illegitimate")! After doubting the parentage of his own children, Hosea's wife left him to live with her "lovers." Even after those heart-breaking experiences, God told Hosea, "Go again, love a women like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans" (Hosea 3:1). He bought her back for the price of wounded slave, and after a period of "proving" he then accepted her back as his wife. Remember, she represents God's people and Hosea is to represent the forgiving God. Hosea saw God's willingness to forgive and his very own willingness to forgive the wife helped him to understand God's!**

**Many today catalog sins. They are willing to "forgive" some sins, but not others. Maybe we will forgive "white lies," but harlotry? Paul said about and to the Corinthians, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."**

**And such were some of you. But you (is that “all” of you, or just “some” of you?) were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). How many of those who were “washed, sanctified and justified” in Corinth would you use as preachers, elders, or Bible class teachers? How many of them would you “forgive”?**

**Brethren, “the way of the transgressor is hard” enough without us making it harder by unforgiveness! Paul told the Corinthians to “forgive and comfort” the fornicator who had repented “lest such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2:7). If two years later, if any of the Corinthians would not call upon him for prayer, allow him to teach a class or preach a sermon, have they forgiven him? When we continue to treat the person as a sinner while we protest we have forgiven, we need to remember the words of the Lord: “for if ye forgive not men their trespasses. . .” (Matt. 6:15; 18:35).**

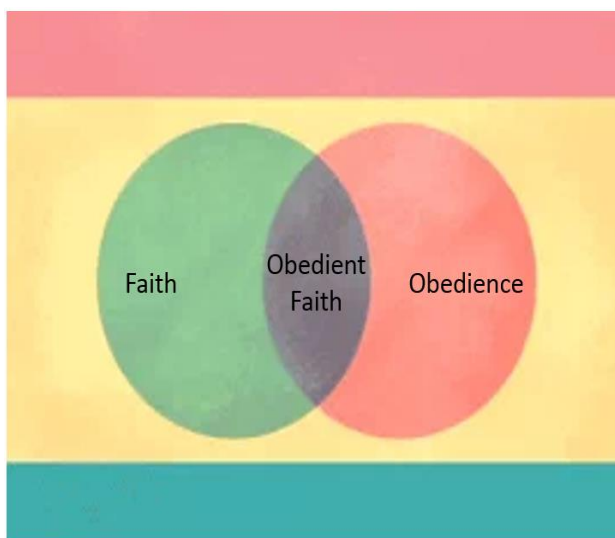
**Finally, to those who have experienced the unforgiveness of brethren, do not be angry with God, for he is not its source. Be angry with Satan and refuse to serve him!**

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Frank Jamerson, July 6, 1989**

## AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

# Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

