

Introduction to Hosea
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Author: Hosea, son of Beeri. The name Hosea means *salvation*.

Audience: Ten northern tribes of Israel

Date of ministry: 756-725 B.C.

Purpose & Message:

Hosea prophesied to Israel, the northern kingdom, about their spiritual and moral decline as they trusted in foreign alliances rather than God and repeatedly worshiped idols (spiritual adultery). He prophesied in a politically hostile climate in which several kings were murdered by their successors (753-723 B.C.). Zechariah had reigned as king for six months and was murdered by Shallum (2 Ki. 15:8-10), and Shallum reigned one month and was murdered by Menahem, who reigned for ten years and died of unknown causes (2 Ki. 15:13-22). Menahem's son, Pekahiah, reigned two years and was murdered by Pekah (2 Ki. 15:22-25), and Pekah reigned twenty years and was murdered by Hoshea (2 Ki. 15:27-30), who reigned for nine years and was defeated by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria (2 Ki. 17:1-6). This behavior is symptomatic of the spiritual decline that started with Israel's leadership and influenced the thoughts, values, and behaviors of the nation.

Sin, judgment, and salvation are at the core of Hosea's message to Israel. Israel was guilty of idolatry, particularly the worship of Baal, the Canaanite fertility god (Hosea 4:17; 8:4-6; 11:2; 13:2). Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord was likened to a marriage; therefore, when she went after other gods, it was regarded as spiritual adultery (Hosea 1:2; 2:2-5; 3:1; 4:11-15; 5:4; 6:10). In the midst of these historical events, God called Hosea to marry a woman who would become unfaithful to him, yet he was to love her in spite of her infidelity, and in this sense, his marriage serves as a pedagogical analogy of God's covenant love for Israel.

The prophet's message is understood according to the background of the Mosaic covenant and the Deuteronomic blessings (Deut. 28:1-14) and cursings (Deut. 28:15-68). Israel had reached zero hour and there was no offer of repentance, only a message that judgment was coming (Hosea 1:2-9; 2:2-13; 4:1-5:15; 6:4-11:7; 11:12-13:16). However, according to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), God's people would never be completely destroyed, and so there was also a message of salvation and hope (Hosea 1:10-2:1; 2:14-3:5; 6:1-3; 11:8-11: 14:1-9).

Hosea 1:1-11

The word of the LORD [i.e. divine revelation] which came to Hosea [הוֹשֵׁעַ *Hoshea* = *salvation*] the son of Beerī, during the days of Uzziah [ca. 790-739 B.C.], Jotham [ca. 750-740 B.C.], Ahaz [ca. 735-732 B.C.] and Hezekiah [ca. 715-686 B.C.], kings of Judah [the southern kingdom], and during the days of Jeroboam [ca. 793-753 B.C.] the son of Joash, king of Israel [the northern kingdom].² When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and *have* children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry [spiritually chasing after other gods], forsaking the LORD.”³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.⁴ And the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel [Heb. *God sows or scatters*]; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel [i.e. the unjust actions of Jehu who killed king Joram, as God commanded (2 Ki. 9:1-26), but then went too far and killed Ahaziah, king of Judah, as well as his relatives, which God did not command (2 Ki. 9:27-28; 10:12-14)], and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel [which occurred in 722 B.C.].⁵ “On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”⁶ Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah [לֹא רַחֲמָה *Lo Ruchamah* = *no compassion*], for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them [national sin unto death].⁷ “But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen [i.e. not by natural means].”⁸ When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.⁹ And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-ammi [לֹא עַמִּי *Lo Ammi* – *not my people*], for you are not My people and I am not your God.”¹⁰ Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and 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.” [a future hope based on the Abrahamic covenant; Gen. 12:1-3]¹¹ And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together [as a united kingdom], and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

Summary:

God called Hosea to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him (Hos. 1:1-2), and the prophet chose to marry Gomer (Hos. 1:3). It is not known whether Gomer was a prostitute at the time of the marriage (perhaps she was a temple prostitute), or whether she became one afterward. “The expression ‘adulterous wife’ (lit., ‘wife of adultery’) does not describe her condition at the time of marriage, but anticipates

what she proved to be, a wife characterized by unfaithfulness.”¹ Gomer bore three children to Hosea during the time of her infidelity (Hos. 1:3-9). This unusual command of God was intended to make Hosea’s life a pedagogical analogy of God and Israel. Negatively speaking, Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea, and Israel was unfaithful to God. Positively speaking, Hosea loved Gomer and was faithful to her, and God loved and was faithful to Israel. It should be noted that God has called other prophets to behavior that pedagogically pictures His relationship with His people, such as when Isaiah was called to go naked and barefoot for three years (Isa. 20:1-4), or when He called Ezekiel to lay on his left side for three hundred and ninety days (Ezek. 4:1-5), then to lay on his right side for forty days (Ezek. 4:6), and to eat a barely cake that had been cooked over human excrement (Ezek. 4:12). Gomer’s first child was a son named Jezreel (Hos. 1:3b-5), a place noted for its bloodshed, where Jehu overthrew king Joram, as God commanded (2 Ki. 9:1-26), but went too far and killed Ahaziah and his family, as God had not commanded (2 Ki. 9:27-28; 10:12-14). Gomer then conceived and gave birth to a daughter named Lo-Ruhamah, which means “no compassion” (Hos. 1:6-7). This meant that God’s compassion for His people was now replaced by His demand for justice. Lastly, Gomer conceived and bore another son named Lo-Ammi, which means “not my people” (Hos. 1:8-9). This meant that Israel would no longer experience the blessings associated with being close to God and walking with Him.

The Lord no longer regarded the kingdom of Israel as His people or Himself as their God. He did not mean, of course, that He would break His unconditional promises to His people (e.g., Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26:17–18), but that the relationship that they had enjoyed so far would come to an end. The last phrase of verse 9 literally is “I [am] not I AM [‘*ehyeh*] to you” (cf. Exod. 3:14). He would withdraw the covenant He had so dramatically made with the revelation of this same name. He would remove protection that He had formerly provided and allow another nation to invade and discipline His people.²

The message of judgment is followed by one of salvation, where God reaffirmed His unconditional covenant promise that Israel would be numerous and would be called “sons of the living God” (Hos. 1:10). He also stated there would come a time when the kingdom would be united, and Israel and Judah would be one people, with one leader (Hos. 1:11).

¹ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “Hosea,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1379.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ho 1:8.

Hosea 2:1-23

Say to your brothers, “Ammi,” and to your sisters, “Ruhamah.” [Hos. 2:1 connects with the blessing mentioned in 1:10-11] ² “Contend [רִיב *rib* – *strive, contend* – indicates a formal legal accusation] with your mother [for her sins], contend, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband [functional separation based on Israel’s sin]; and let her put away her harlotry from her face and her adultery from between her breasts [i.e. stop being spiritually unfaithful], ³ or I will strip her naked and expose her as on the day when she was born [i.e. public shame]. I will also make her like a wilderness, make her like desert land and slay her with thirst [i.e. bring humility]. ⁴ “Also, I will have no compassion on her children, because they are children of harlotry [the judgment extends to all]. ⁵ “For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers [Baals], who give *me* my bread and my water [life sustaining food], my wool and my flax [for clothing], my oil and my drink [for pleasure].’ ⁶ “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths [i.e. cut off her pursuit of the Baals]. ⁷ “She will pursue her lovers [out of habit and desperation], but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say [having nowhere else to turn], ‘I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!’ ⁸ “For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil [cf. Deut. 26:10], and lavished on her silver and gold, *which* they used for Baal. ⁹ “Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time and My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax *given* to cover her nakedness [execute the Deuteronomic curses; Deut. 28:15-68]. ¹⁰ “And then I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will rescue her out of My hand. ¹¹ “I will also put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her festal assemblies [which had become perverted with Baal worship]. ¹² “I will destroy her vines and fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages which my lovers have given me.’ And I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them [God will destroy Israel’s false perception that her prosperity came from Baal]. ¹³ “I will punish her for the days of the Baals when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD [divine punishment for violation of the covenant]. ¹⁴ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her [i.e. draw Israel to Himself], bring her into the wilderness [a place of seclusion, separate from other lovers] and speak kindly to her [Lit. *Speak to her heart*]. ¹⁵ “Then I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor [אֶכּוֹר *Akor* - *trouble*] as a door of hope [the place of trouble becomes a door of hope]. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt [i.e. restored feelings of love, like when the covenant relationship was new]. ¹⁶ “It will come about in that day,”

declares the LORD, “That you will call Me Ishi [my husband] and will no longer call Me Baali [my master].¹⁷ “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more.¹⁸ “In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety [by removing all threats of harm].¹⁹ “I will betroth you to Me forever [i.e. renew marriage vows]; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion,²⁰ And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness [the qualities that make for a healthy relationship]. Then you will know the LORD [in a healthy relationship].²¹ “It will come about in that day that I will respond [with blessing],” declares the LORD. “I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth [with rain],²² and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil [and bring forth produce], and they will respond to Jezreel [i.e. Israel].²³ “I will sow her for Myself in the land [i.e. plant Israel in the land and provide for her]. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘*You are my God!*’”

Summary:

Hosea 2:1 continues the promised blessing begun in 1:10-11. Then, in Hosea 2:2-13, God describes Israel’s unfaithfulness to her covenant relationship with God and the punishment He would bring on her. Israel is called to put away her unfaithfulness (Hos. 2:2), or God will humiliate her (Hos. 2:3-4). Israel wrongly assumed her prosperity had come from Baal (Hos. 2:5), but God would cut off her resources (Hos. 2:6), and though Israel will continue in familiar paths of idolatry for a while, she will eventually seek the Lord (Hos. 2:7). God reveals it was He Who provided blessing, but Israel took what was given and gave it to Baal (Hos. 2:8). God promises to remove His provisions, humiliate Israel, and bring her festivities to an end (Hos. 2:9-13). Afterwards, the Lord will allure Israel back to Himself “and speak kindly to her” (Hos. 2:14). He will provide blessing, like that which was given at the beginning of their relationship (Hos. 2:15), and the language of mutual love will be renewed (Hos. 2:16), and the names of foreign lovers will not be mentioned again (Hos. 2:17). God promises to provide blessing to His people, which includes no more hostility and war (Hos. 2:18). Then using language of renewed marital vows, God declares, “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). God will then bring agricultural prosperity upon His bride, providing nourishment and pleasure (Hos. 2:21-22). The Lord concludes, “I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who

were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ and they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hos. 2:23). There are times when God’s people are unfaithful to Him and turn to other sources for things only He can provide. When this happens, the Lord will cut off our supply and bring us to the place of humility, where we have no place to look but to Him; then, when humility comes, He restores our walk with Him, which includes His blessings.

Hosea 3:1-5

In this autobiographical account, Hosea tells how the Lord instructed him to retrieve his wayward wife Gomer. By renewing his relationship with Gomer and reaching out to her in love, Hosea would become a living object lesson of the Lord's love for idolatrous Israel.³

Then the LORD said to me, “Go again [for a second time], love [אהב *aheb* – *love*] a woman who is loved by her husband [רע *rea* – *companion, friend, fellow*], yet an adulteress [unfaithful], even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods [spiritual adultery] and love raisin cakes [used in idolatry; cf. [Jer. 7:18; 44:19](#)].”² So I bought her for myself [apparently she'd sold herself into slavery] for fifteen shekels of silver [half the normal price for a slave; cf. [Ex. 21:32](#)] and a homer and a half of barley [a month's supply of barley, which was food for the poor and animals].³ Then I said to her [after purchasing her freedom], “You shall stay with me for many days [i.e. not leave again]. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you [i.e. remain faithful to each other].”⁴ For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince [after they are destroyed in 722 B.C.], without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols.⁵ Afterward [i.e. after God's appointed period of time] the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king [at the Second Coming of Christ]; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days [the millennial kingdom].

Summary:

Hosea was called by God to love Gomer, though she was actively in an adulterous relationship with another man (Hos. 3:1a). Hosea's love toward unfaithful Gomer is analogous to God's relationship with Israel (the ten northern tribes), though she is actively engaged in idolatry (Hos. 3:1b). It is likely that Gomer had sold herself as a slave to one of her paramours, perhaps because she thought he would provide for her material needs (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, etc.); however, when given the opportunity, he was willing to sell her to another man. In this instance, the buyer was Hosea, her former husband.

Wretched Gomer had come down in the world. Presumably she had sold herself as a slave to the man with whom she was living. He must not have cared that much about her, for he was quite willing to sell her back to Hosea.

³ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 346.

Evidently the man did not value her highly either, for he sold her for a paltry fifteen pieces of silver (half the price of a common slave; see Exodus 21:32) and a month's supply of barley (the food of the poor, the food usually given to animals).⁴

It is likely that the fifteen pieces of silver, coupled with the homer and a half of barely, equaled thirty pieces of silver, the normal price of a slave (cf. Ex. 21:32). Obedient Hosea paid the price for her redemption and she was set free to be in a relationship with him (Hos. 3:2). Hosea then commanded Gomer to remain faithful to him, and he promised to be faithful to her (Hos. 3:3). God then gave a prophetic statement that just as Gomer was to experience a period of time of committed separateness to Hosea, so Israel would experience a time where they would be “without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols” (Hos. 3:4). This period of time started with the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. God then revealed that after His appointed period of time, “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. 3:5). This most likely refers to Israel's restoration to God at the Second Coming of Christ, Israel's Messiah, and to the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.

⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ho 3:1–5.

Hosea 4:1-19

Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, for the LORD has a case [רִיב *rib* – *strive, contend*] against the inhabitants of the land [Hosea sets forth God’s legal charges against Israel], because there is no faithfulness [no commitment to the covenant] or kindness or knowledge of God in the land [no knowledge = no obedience].² There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery [violation of five of the Ten Commandments; Ex. 20:1-17]. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.³ Therefore the land mourns [i.e. drought because of their sin; see Deut. 28:23-24], and everyone who lives in it languishes along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and also the fish of the sea disappear [cursing by association].⁴ Yet let no one find fault [with himself], and let none offer reproof [for another]; for your people are like those who contend with the priest [or – “for My case is against you priests” (CSB)].⁵ So you [the priest] will stumble by day, and the [false] prophet also will stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother [i.e. the Israelite kingdom].⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [ignorance of God’s Word guarantees a sinful course]. Because you have rejected knowledge [i.e. become willfully ignorant], I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God [which they were to know and teach; Deut. 33:8-10; Mal. 2:7], I also will forget your children [i.e. reject them from holding priestly office – cursing by association].⁷ The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.⁸ They [Israel’s priests] feed on the sin of My people and direct their desire toward their iniquity [probably to benefit from their multiplied sacrifices; see Lev. 6:15-16, 25-26, 29].⁹ And it will be, like people, like priest [everyone guilty, from the leadership down]; so I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.¹⁰ They will eat [a portion of the sacrifices], but not have enough; they will play the harlot [spiritually and physically], but not increase, because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.¹¹ Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding [sin leads to spiritual insensitivity].¹² My people consult their wooden idol, and their diviner’s wand informs them; for a spirit of harlotry has led them astray [denoting demonic activity; see 1 Cor. 10:20], and they have played the harlot [worshipping idols], departing from their God.¹³ They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains and burn incense on the hills [the “high places” see Deut. 12:2], under oak, poplar and terebinth, because their shade is pleasant [commit sin in pleasant places]. Therefore your daughters play the harlot and your brides commit adultery [i.e. daughters and wives participated in pagan fertility practices, believing it will rejuvenate the land].¹⁴ I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot or your brides when they commit adultery [because the men were guilty too], for the men themselves go apart with harlots and offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes [failed leaders of the family]; so the people without understanding [of Scripture] are ruined.¹⁵ Though

you, Israel, play the harlot [commit personal sin], do not let Judah become guilty [of following Israel values and practices]; also do not go to Gilgal, or go up to Beth-aven [places of idolatry] and take the oath: “As the LORD lives!” [i.e. don’t drag God’s name into idolatry] ¹⁶ Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer [that throws off its yoke], can the LORD now pasture them like a lamb in a large field? ¹⁷ Ephraim is joined [חָבַר *chabar* – to join, unite, to bind with a spell] to idols; let him alone [i.e. don’t associate, his path is fixed]. ¹⁸ Their liquor gone, they play the harlot continually; their rulers dearly love shame. ¹⁹ The wind wraps them in its wings, and they will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

Summary:

God brought legal charges against Israel for violating the Mosaic Covenant, and some of the charges included “no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land” (Hos. 4:1). In addition, there was “swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery [and] they employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed” (Hos. 4:2). As a result, there was judgment upon the whole land, such that people and animals suffered (Hos. 4:3). God’s people were not to accuse each other, for the Lord’s main charge was against the priests (Hos. 4:4), who, along with the false prophets, were stumbling into sin (Hos. 4:5). Israel was being destroyed because of a lack of knowledge of God’s Word (Hos. 4:6a), and because the priests had rejected knowledge, God was going to reject them (Hos. 4:6b); and because of multiplied sin, He would turn their glory into shame (Hos. 4:7). The priests should have been teaching Scripture (Deut. 33:8-10; Mal. 2:7), but instead, were capitalizing on Israel’s sins, because it brought them more sacrifices and food to eat (Hos. 4:8). God promised to punish people and priest (Hos. 4:9), and to deprive them of the food they desired, because they had abandoned God (Hos. 4:10). Idolatry and drinking destroyed their understanding of God (Hos. 4:11), as the people consulted their idols rather than God (Hos. 4:12). Idolatry had become a family affair, as men, women and children gathered on mountains and hilltops, and under the trees for pleasant shade to worship idols and engage in sexual fertility practices, assuming it would please their pagan gods who would make the land productive (Hos. 4:13). Wives and daughters, as well as husbands and fathers, were all guilty of idolatry and sexual sins (Hos. 4:14a), demonstrating the point that ignorance of Scripture leads to ruin (Hos. 14b). Ignorance of God’s Word, rather than alleviating their guilt, actually added to it, as God charged Israel with not having knowledge of Him (vs. 1), forgetting His law (vs. 6), not heeding Him (vs. 10), and departing from Him (vs. 12), which ignorance and disobedience eventuated in their ruin (vs. 14). The tragedy is that God’s people had access to His Word, but they willfully rejected His light for darkness. Because people are influenced by the actions of others, Hosea warned Judah not to associate with Israel, who had abandoned God and was committed to

idolatry (Hos. 4:15-17). Hosea revealed that the idolatry included everyone in Israel, including their rulers, who are described as those who “dearly love shame” (Hos. 4:18). As a result of their idolatry, Israel would experience the wind of God’s judgment, and “be ashamed because of their sacrifices” (Hos. 4:19).

Hosea 5:1-15

Introduction:

God continues to focus primarily on Israel, the Northern Kingdom, but also addresses Judah, the Southern Kingdom, who is following their example of idolatry (See Hos. 4:15). Now, Judah is warned of God's judgment which will come upon them because of their sin (see Hos. 5:5, 10, 12-15). The theme of the chapter is God's withdrawal because of their sin (Hos. 5:6, 15).

Biblical Text:

Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! [priests, people, and king—all aspects of society = spiritual, social, political] For the judgment applies to you, for you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread out on Tabor [to trap others in sinful practices]. ² The revolvers [those who pursue idolatry] have gone deep in depravity, but I will chastise all of them [i.e. discipline them to return them to holiness]. ³ I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me [God is omniscient]; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot [i.e. worshipped idols], Israel has defiled itself [spiritually unclean]. ⁴ Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God [gone too far into sin, beyond the place of repentance]. For a spirit of harlotry is within them [demonic activity; 1 Cor. 10:19-20], and they do not know the LORD. ⁵ Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, and Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also has stumbled with them [is influenced by their sinful practices]. ⁶ They will go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD [i.e. turn to the Lord in the day of discipline], but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them [no God = no guidance, no provision, and no protection]. ⁷ They have dealt treacherously against the LORD [turned hostile toward Him], for they have borne illegitimate children [i.e. children born to fertility prostitutes]. Now the new moon will devour them with their land. ⁸ Blow the horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah. Sound an alarm at Beth-aven: "Behind you, Benjamin!" [A warning that judgment is coming] ⁹ Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure. ¹⁰ The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary [i.e. move a boundary marker to steal land – a metaphor for Judah's leaders who moved spiritual boundaries and stole people away from God]; on them [i.e. Judah's leaders] I will pour out My wrath like water. ¹¹ Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to follow *man's* command [צַו *tsav* – command, filth, worthless – i.e. follow what is filthy or worthless]. ¹² Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim and like rottenness to the house of Judah [silently eating away the fabric and substance of their lives]. ¹³ When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then

Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb [sought a human solution to their sickness; cf. Jer. 17:5-6]. But he is unable to heal you, or to cure you of your wound [God's discipline cannot be stopped].¹⁴ For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away [into captivity], and there will be none to deliver [from Assyrian and Babylonian aggression; 722 B.C. & 586 B.C.].¹⁵ I will go away *and* return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face [or – “until they have suffered their punishment” NET]; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.

Summary:

Hosea accuses the priests, people, and king of Israel of being an idolatrous trap to others (Hos. 5:1). Those who have revolted against God will be chastised (Hos. 5:2), for God knows their spiritual harlotry (Hos. 5:3). They have become so steeped in their deeds that they cannot return to God, for they are governed by a spiritual of harlotry and no longer know the Lord (Hos. 5:4). Israel has stumbled in their idolatry, and Hosea tells us that Judah has stumbled with them (Hos. 5:5). Though they will seek the Lord through ritual sacrifices (Hos. 5:6a), they will not find Him, because “He has withdrawn from them” (Hos. 5:6b). By withdrawing from them, the Lord had removed His guidance, provision, and protection. The charge against Israel was “They have dealt treacherously against the LORD, for they have borne illegitimate children” (Hos. 5:7). This is likely a reference to the children who were born out of Israel's adulterous relationships with pagan fertility prostitutes (see Hos. 4:13-15). God calls Israel to blow their trumpets and sound an alarm (Hos. 5:8) because judgment is coming and Israel “will become a desolation in the day of rebuke” (Hos. 5:9). A judgment is pronounced against Judah's princes, for they “have become like those who move a boundary; on them I will pour out My wrath like water” (Hos. 5:10). Moving boundary markers refers to stealing land from another and was forbidden under the Law (Deut. 19:14; 27:17). Here the boundary was spiritual as Judah's leadership redefined worship and stole people away from God. Israel (and Judah) was judged for following worthless advice rather than listening to God (Hos. 5:11), therefore, the Lord would destroy both Israel and Judah (Hos. 5:12). Israel then turned to Assyria for help, but the Assyrians were unable to cure them of the Lord's disease (Hos. 5:13). God then likens Himself to a lion, even a young lion, that will tear Israel and Judah to pieces and lead them away into captivity (Hos. 5:14). God then declares, “I will go away *and* return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me” (Hos 5:15). God is extremely patient, but His patience does not go forever (Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17-19), and after many centuries of rebellion, the Lord's judgment was coming.

Hosea 6:1-11

Introduction:

Hosea 6:1-3 opens with words of repentance toward God, which, on the surface, appear sincere. However, considering the Lord's reply in Hosea 6:4-11, it seems their cry is superficial, as the Lord charges them with ephemeral loyalty (vss. 4-6), breaking the Mosaic covenant (vs. 7), murder by citizens and priests (vss. 8-9), and idolatry (vs. 10). The theme of the chapter is God's disappointment over Israel's ephemeral loyalty (Hos. 6:4).

Biblical Text:

“Come, let us return to the LORD [to alleviate the Lord's affliction upon them]. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us [inaccurate assessment, since God has already pronounced judgment].² “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him.³ “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth [correct thoughts offered too late to affect change].”⁴ What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? [Questions expressing frustration] For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early [like clouds and morning dew, their loyalty quickly disappears].⁵ Therefore I have hewn *them* in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth.⁶ For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings [cf. [1 Sam. 15:22-23](#); [Isa. 1:11-17](#); [Prov. 21:3](#); [Amos, 5:21-24](#)].⁷ But like Adam [who disobeyed God; see [Gen. 2:16-17](#); [3:1-8](#)] they have transgressed the covenant [i.e. the commands of the Mosaic Covenant]; there they have dealt treacherously against Me [rejecting His sovereignty and substituting their own].⁸ Gilead is a city of wrongdoers, tracked with bloody *footprints* [the people were guilty of rampant murder in the streets].⁹ And as raiders wait for a man, *so* a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem [the spiritual leadership was guilty of murder; see [Ex. 20:13](#)]; surely they have committed crime [זִמָּה *zimmah* – *lewdness, wickedness*; the same word is used elsewhere of sexual immorality; see [Lev. 18:17](#); [19:29](#); [Judg. 20:5-6](#); [Job 31:9-11](#)].¹⁰ In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself [idolatry; see [Ex. 20:4](#)].¹¹ Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you [of coming judgment], when I restore the fortunes of My people [see alternate readings].

Alternate readings of Hosea 6:11-7:1

Also for you, Judah, a harvest is appointed. Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people, whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed. They practice deceit, thieves break into houses, bandits rob in the streets. (Hos. 6:11-7:1 NIV)

I have appointed a time to reap judgment for you also, O Judah! Whenever I want to restore the fortunes of my people, whenever I want to heal Israel, the sin of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria are exposed. For they do what is wrong; thieves break into houses, and gangs rob people out in the streets. (Hos. 6:11-7:1 NET)

Summary:

Hosea opens with words of repentance from the people of Israel in which they said, “Come, let us return to the LORD” (Hos. 6:1), believing He will restore and revive them within a few days (Hos. 6:2). They also said, “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth” (Hos. 6:3). It would seem on the surface that their cry is sincere; however, the Lord knows them better than they know Him, and expresses His frustration with them (Hos. 6:4a), and reveals they lack the humility and integrity necessary to sustain their words. The Lord declared of them, “Your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early” (Hos. 6:4b). God declares His judgment upon them is certain, saying, “Therefore I have hewn *them* in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth” (Hos. 6:5). Having revealed their faults and His pending judgment, the Lord then reveals what He values, saying, “I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6:6). But Israel had failed to be loyally obedient to God, and, like Adam, were guilty of breaking His commands and violating the Mosaic Covenant (Hos. 6:7). Citing specific violations, the Lord references the cities of Gilead and Shechem, which were supposed to be cities of refuge (Josh. 20:1-2, 7-8), but had been turned into places of murder and sexual immorality, not only by its citizens, but by the priests, who should have been promoting God’s Word and holy living rather than being guilty of murder (Hos. 6:8-9). All this sinful behavior was born out of Israel’s spiritual harlotry, having turned to idols rather than God (Hos. 6:10). God promised a harvest of judgment for Judah as well (Hos. 6:11), but this would come nearly two centuries later (586 B.C.). God’s judgment on Israel (and Judah) could have been avoided if they’d been loyal to keep

fellowship with Him and obey His Word; for God wanted their obedience above all else.

Hosea 7:1-16

Introduction:

Hosea chapter 7 addresses the people (Hos. 7:1-3) and princes of Israel who reject God and conspire against Him. As a result, Israel has become worthless to others, silly in practice, and useless to God.

Biblical Text:

When I would heal Israel [i.e. restore their blessings], the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, and the evil deeds of Samaria, for they deal falsely; the thief enters in [to the home], bandits raid outside [in the streets],² and they do not consider in their hearts [at the moment of sin] that I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them [everywhere found]; they are before My face.³ With their wickedness they make the king glad, and the princes with their lies [Israel's leaders are bent on evil].⁴ They are all adulterers [i.e. idol worshippers], like an oven heated by the baker who ceases to stir up *the fire* from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened [i.e. evil passion smolders until the embers are stirred].⁵ On the day of our king [perhaps referring to the inauguration of a new king], the princes became sick with the heat of wine [intoxicated]; he stretched out his hand with scoffers [the king consorted with the foolish princes who conspired against him],⁶ for their [i.e. the princes] hearts are like an oven *as* they approach their plotting [for sin]; their anger smolders all night, in the morning it burns like a flaming fire.⁷ All of them are hot like an oven, and they consume their rulers [with violence]; all their kings have fallen [four of Israel's kings were murdered]. None of them calls on Me [i.e. none of Israel's kings or princes sought the Lord for counsel].⁸ Ephraim mixes himself with the nations [losing focus and purity]; Ephraim has become a cake not turned [i.e. burned on one side, raw on the other = not edible].⁹ Strangers devour his strength, yet he does not know *it* [lacks self-awareness]; gray hairs also are sprinkled on him [grows old and weak], yet he does not know *it* [thinks he's young and vigorous].¹⁰ Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, yet they have not returned to the LORD their God, nor have they sought Him, for all this.¹¹ So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense [unreasoning animal]; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria [seek political alliances to solve their problems].¹² When they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky [i.e. frustrate their plans]. I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.¹³ Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.¹⁴ And they do not cry to Me from their heart when they wail on their beds [i.e. they offer insincere prayers]; for the sake of grain and new wine they assemble

themselves [[pursue the flesh](#)], [they turn away from Me](#).¹⁵ Although I trained *and* strengthened their arms [[enabled them to succeed](#)], [yet they devise evil against Me](#).¹⁶ They turn, *but* not upward [[to God](#)], they are like a deceitful bow [[i.e. a useless weapon](#)]; their princes will fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongue. This *will be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

Summary:

Though God desired to heal Israel, their sins kept being uncovered (Hos. 7:1). Israel did not consider that God remembered their sins, but they were continually before His face (Hos. 7:2). The wickedness and lies of the people made the king and princes glad, as their behavior was consistent with the Israel's leadership (Hos. 7:3). "Their political leaders rejoiced in the wickedness of the people because that made it easier for them to get away with sinning."⁵ All the people of Israel were adulterers, both physically and spiritually, and their passion is likened to an oven that smolders overnight while the dough rises (Hos. 7:4). Israel's king and princes lived for themselves (Hos. 7:5), and the princes seething passion is compared to a burning oven that is dormant for a time, but erupts in fire as they plot to kill their king (Hos. 7:6-7). "Hosea saw this happen four times. Shallum assassinated Zechariah, Menahem assassinated Shallum, Pekah assassinated Pekahiah, and Hoshea assassinated Pekah (2 Kings 15:10, 14, 25, 30)."⁶ Israel's political practices excluded the Lord as they mingled with pagan nations. They became like a cake not turned, which meant they were burned on one side and raw on the other, which made them of no benefit to others (Hos. 7:8). As a result of their foolish international practices, foreigners consumed their strength, but they were ignorant of what was happening to them (Hos. 7:9), and the pride of Israel kept them from turning to the Lord (Hos. 7:10). God then compares Israel to a silly dove that flutters back and forth between Egypt and Assyria (Hos. 7:11), but the Lord will cast His net over them and put an end to their birdbrained practices (Hos. 7:12). Their destruction is because they have become hostile toward God, in which He declares, "they have strayed from Me!...they have rebelled against Me!...they speak lies against Me...they turn away from Me...[and] they devise evil against Me" (Hos 7:13-15). Israel had become like a crooked bow that is useless in battle and worthless to the Lord (Hos. 7:16). Israel's turning away from God made them worthless to others, silly in everyday practices, and useless to the Lord.

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ho 7:3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Ho 7:6.

Introduction:

God pronounces Israel's unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant (Hos. 8:1), promising military destruction (Hos. 8:2-3) and agricultural ruin (Hos. 8:7-8). This was promised because of their sin of idolatry (Hos. 8:4-6, 11, 13), political alliances (Hos. 8:9-10), and neglect of God and His Word (Hos. 8:12, 14).

Biblical Text:

Put the trumpet to your lips! [Sound the warning] Like an eagle *the enemy comes* against the house of the LORD [i.e. Assyria would attack Israel], because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law [God was faithful to curse because Israel transgressed the Mosaic Covenant; see [Deut. 28:47-50](#)]. ² They cry out to Me [in distress], “My God, we of Israel know You!” [A false claim; see [Hos. 4:6; 8:12, 14](#)] ³ Israel has rejected [נָזַח *zanach* – *to reject, spurn*] the good [i.e. the good blessing of God associated with adherence to the covenant]; the enemy will pursue him. ⁴ They have set up kings, but not by Me [i.e. according to their own values and did not consult the Lord]; they have appointed princes, but I did not know *it*. With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves [used God's resources for selfish and sinful purposes], that they might be cut off [from God's blessing]. ⁵ He has rejected [נָזַח *zanach* – *to reject, spurn*] your calf [most likely the calf worship established by Jeroboam, 1 Ki. 12:28-29], O Samaria, *saying*, “My anger burns against them!” How long will they be incapable of innocence? ⁶ For from Israel is even this! [i.e. idols from the special people that are called by God's name] A craftsman made it [of human origin], so it is not God; surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. ⁷ For they sow the wind [plant into their lives what is worthless] and they reap the whirlwind [reap worthlessness with interest]. The standing grain has no heads; it yields no grain [agricultural distress as a covenant curse; see [Deut. 28:38-40](#)]. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up. ⁸ Israel is swallowed up [by strangers]; they are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights [no distinction from other nations]. ⁹ For they have gone up to Assyria [seeking human solutions to their problems], *like* a wild donkey all alone [i.e. an animal without reason]; Ephraim has hired lovers [Ephraim = Israel]. ¹⁰ Even though they hire *allies* among the nations, now I will gather them up [God will frustrate their plans]; and they will begin to diminish because of the burden of the king of princes. ¹¹ Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin, they have become altars of sinning for him [what should have removed sin became places of sin]. ¹² Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing [i.e. God's clear guidance in Scripture had become foreign to His

people].¹³ As for My sacrificial gifts, they sacrifice the flesh and eat *it*, *but* the LORD has taken no delight in them [because the sacrifices are not according to Scripture]. Now He will remember their iniquity, and punish *them* for their sins; they will return to Egypt [to the land of captivity; see Deut. 28:68].¹⁴ For Israel has forgotten his Maker [i.e. neglected God] and built palaces [i.e. lived as though God did not exist]; and Judah has multiplied fortified cities [i.e. followed Israel's example], but I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings [which occurred when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked Judah; see 2 Ki. 18:13].

Summary:

God instructs Israel to sound the trumpet because an enemy is coming, “Because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law” (Hos. 8:1). Israel cried out to the Lord, claiming they knew Him (Hos. 8:2), but their actions betrayed their claim. In fact, God declares “Israel has rejected the good” by refusing to follow His commands, and so He would judge them by sending an enemy (Hos. 8:3). Israel’s rejection of God was seen in their independent selection of kings (Hos. 8:4a) as well as their idolatrous practices (Hos. 8:4b). Because they’d rejected Him, He rejected their idols in which they’d trusted (Hos. 8:5); idols that could not even protect themselves, as God declares, “Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces” (Hos. 8:6). Israel had brought judgment upon themselves, and God declares, “For they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind” (Hos. 8:7a). As a result of their rebellion against God, He would also bring about agricultural devastation (Hos. 8:7b). Having forfeited their own blessing from God, Israel had become common, like the nations around them, and had become “like a vessel in which no one delights” (Hos. 8:8). And like an unreasoning animal—a wild donkey—Israel sought an alliance with Assyria, and so became intimate with them, like a hired lover (Hos. 8:9). However, their political alliances could not stay the hand of God who would “gather them up” for judgment (Hos. 8:10). Israel’s practices had become nationwide, for they’d constructed pagan altars across the land, and so multiplied their sin (Hos. 8:11). This was contrary to how they should have lived, for God had clearly given them His Word, yet His guidance was “regarded as a strange thing” (Hos. 8:12). Though they offered many sacrifices, “the LORD has taken no delight in them” (Hos. 8:13a). Judgment was coming, as Hosea declared, “Now He will remember their iniquity, and punish *them* for their sins; they will return to Egypt” (Hos. 8:13b). The sad thing is that “Israel has forgotten His Maker” (Hos. 8:14a), and lived as though He did not exist; and Judah behaved similarly, in that they’d focused on their human projects and “multiplied fortified cities” (Hos. 8:14b). However, Judah would not escape God’s judgment if they followed in Israel’s footsteps, as God announces, “I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its

palatial dwellings” (Hos. 8:14c). Human cities and fortresses cannot protect in the day of God’s judgment, and this became evident when God sent the Assyrians against Israel and Judah.

Hosea 9:1-17

Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations! For you have played the harlot [pursuing idols], forsaking your God. You have loved harlots' earnings on every threshing floor [earnings = the perceived wages Israel thought came to them through Baal worship; see Hos. 2:5, 12].² Threshing floor and wine press will not feed them, and the new wine will fail them [the curse of agricultural ruin; see Deut. 28:38-40].³ They will not remain in the LORD'S land [God owned the land; see Lev. 25:23], but Ephraim will return to Egypt, and in Assyria they will eat unclean food [i.e. go into exile; see Deut. 28:36, 63-68].⁴ They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD, their sacrifices will not please Him. *Their bread will be like mourners' bread; all who eat of it will be defiled, for their bread will be for themselves alone; it will not enter the house of the LORD.*⁵ What will you do on the day of the appointed festival and on the day of the feast of the LORD? [being in captivity will not permit them to offer true worship]⁶ For behold, they will go because of destruction; Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them. Weeds will take over their treasures of silver; thorns *will be* in their tents [economic ruin].⁷ The days of punishment have come, the days of retribution have come; let Israel know *this!* [God's judgment has arrived] The prophet is [regarded as] a fool, the inspired man is [regarded as] demented, because of the grossness of your iniquity, and because your hostility is so great [sin darkened their spiritual perception].⁸ Ephraim *was* a watchman with my God, a prophet [or – “The prophet is a watchman over Ephraim on behalf of God” NET]; *yet* the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways [i.e. Israel laid traps for God's prophets], and there is only hostility in the house of his God.⁹ They have gone deep in depravity as in the days of Gibeah [when perverse bisexual Benjamites raped and murdered a Levite's concubine; see Judg. 19:1-30]; He will remember their iniquity, He will punish their sins [God is faithful to keep His word].¹⁰ I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season* [i.e. God originally delighted in them]. *But* they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame [the worship of Baal; see Num. 25:1-3], and they became as detestable as that which they loved.¹¹ As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away [suddenly] like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy and no conception! [i.e. no offspring of Abraham to fill the land]¹² Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave them until not a man is left. Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them! [no God = no blessing]¹³ Ephraim, as I have seen, is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre; but Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter [the Assyrians butchered women and children].¹⁴ Give them, O LORD-- what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.¹⁵ All their evil is at Gilgal [which had become a center of idolatry; Hos. 4:15]; indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels

[*rebels = defying God's will and leading others into sin*]. ¹⁶ Ephraim is stricken [*destined to die*], their root is dried up, they will bear no fruit. Even though they bear children, I will slay the precious ones of their womb. ¹⁷ My God will cast them away because they have not listened to Him [*see Deut. 28:20, 45-47, 62*]; and they will be wanderers among the nations [*scattered; see Deut. 28:64*].

Summary:

God rebuked Israel for their idolatry and for falsely thinking their prosperity came from Baal (Hos. 9:1-2). God promised Israel would go into captivity for their gross violation of the covenant (Hos. 9:3). Once in captivity, they will be perpetually defiled and not able to offer true sacrifices to God (Hos. 9:4-5). Being in captivity, weeds will overrun their treasures and home (Hos. 9:6). God pronounces, "The days of punishment have come, the days of retribution have come; let Israel know this!" (Hos 9:7a). Because of Israel's sin, God's prophet was regarded as a fool and demented. Another rendering reads, "Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac" (Hos. 9:7b NIV). In reality, God's prophet was to serve as a watchman over His people, warning them of approaching danger. However, God's people turned on the prophet and laid traps for him and treated him with hostility (Hos. 9:8). Another rendering reads, "The prophet is a watchman over Ephraim on behalf of God, yet traps are laid for him along all of his paths; animosity rages against him in the land of his God" (Hos. 9:8 NET). The phrase, "They have gone deep in depravity as in the days of Gibeah" (Hos. 9:9) refers to an event in the book of Judges where bisexual Benjamites raped a Levite's concubine (Jud. 19:1-30). This moral depravity spoke of Israel's spiritual condition. Early in Israel's history, God delighted in them, as one might be delighted in finding grapes and figs in a desert land (Hos. 9:10a). However, their glory turned to shame when they engaged in idol worship at Baal-peor (Hos. 9:10b; cf. Num. 25:1-3). The act of idolatry became a normal pattern for Israel, and God promised to execute the curses of the Mosaic Covenant by bringing infertility, death, and exile into a foreign land (Hos. 9:11-14). Because of their evil, God would drive them out of His land, giving special mention of Israel's leaders, saying, "All their princes are rebels" (Hos. 9:15). God promised that Israel would no longer advance as a nation, saying the fruit of their wombs would be destroyed (Hos. 9:16). God would cast them away "because they have not listened to Him; and they will be wanderers among the nations" (Hos. 9:17).

Hosea 10:1-15

Israel is a luxuriant vine; he produces fruit for himself [[lives selfishly](#)]. The more his fruit, the more altars he made; the richer his land, the better he made the *sacred* pillars [[wealth led to greater sin](#)]. ² Their heart is faithless [[to God and the covenant](#)]; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars *and* destroy their *sacred* pillars [[i.e. destroy what they trusted in](#)]. ³ Surely now they will say [[with insincerity](#)], “We have no king [[to help](#)], for we do not revere the LORD. As for the king, what can he do for us?” ⁴ They speak *mere* words [[i.e. empty words](#)], with worthless oaths they make covenants [[lack integrity](#)]; and judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. ⁵ The inhabitants of Samaria will fear for the [[safety of the](#)] calf of Beth-aven. Indeed, its people will mourn for it, and its idolatrous priests will cry out over it, over its glory, since it has departed from it. ⁶ The thing itself will be carried to Assyria as tribute to King Jareb [[a defeated idol, carried away into captivity; cf. Isa. 46:1-2](#)]; Ephraim will be seized with shame and Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel. ⁷ Samaria will be cut off *with* her king like a stick on the surface of the water [[floating helplessly down a roaring river](#)]. ⁸ Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel [[who failed to destroy these pagan worship sites as God directed; see Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2-3](#)], will be destroyed [[by the pagan Assyrians](#)]; thorn and thistle will grow on their altars [[a picture of ruin](#)]; then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!” And to the hills, “Fall on us!” [[like unbelievers during the Tribulation; see Rev. 6:16](#)] ⁹ From the days of Gibeah you have sinned [[reference to Judges 19:1-30](#)], O Israel; there they stand! Will not the battle against the sons of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah? ¹⁰ When it is My desire, I will chastise them; and the peoples will be gathered against them when they are bound for their double guilt [[perhaps a reference to the two calf idols at Bethel & Dan; see 1 Ki. 12:26-30](#)]. ¹¹ Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh [[easy work by an unmuzzled ox](#)], but I will come over her fair neck *with a yoke* [[of slavery](#)]; I will harness Ephraim, Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself [[i.e. be saddled by an enemy for hard labor](#)]. ¹² Sow with a view to righteousness [[God’s expectation](#)], reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground [[i.e. the fallow ground of the heart = confess sin](#)], for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you. ¹³ You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your way [[human viewpoint](#)], in your numerous warriors [[human strength](#)], ¹⁴ therefore a tumult will arise among your people, and all your fortresses will be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, *when* mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children [[what they valued they could not protect](#)]. ¹⁵ Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.

Summary:

Hosea describes Israel as a luxuriant vine that produces fruit for itself, and then uses that fruit for promoting idolatry (Hos. 10:1); but their unfaithfulness results in guilt, and God promises to break down their pagan altars and pillars (Hos. 10:2). Like other times, Israel will utter insincere words, saying, “We have no king, for we do not revere the LORD. As for the king, what can he do for us?” (Hos. 10:3; cf. 6:1-3; 7:14; 8:2); but Hosea tells us, “They speak *mere* words, with worthless oaths they make covenants; and judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field” (Hos. 10:4). The truth is that Israel will mourn and cry over their idols, when they are taken away into captivity by the Assyrians (Hos. 10:5-6), and the king of Israel will prove helpless to stop these events (Hos. 10:7). In addition, God will destroy the high places of worship and weeds will consume their altars (Hos. 10:8a); then, in a state of spiritual irrationality, “they will say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’” (Hos. 10:8b). Israel’s sin is not merely the failure of the moment, but the sin of many years, reaching back to the days of bisexual perversion and rape as occurred in Gibeah (Hos. 10:9; cf. Judg. 19:1-30). God promises to chastise Israel for their “double guilt” (Hos. 10:10), which likely refers to the two places of calf worship that had previously been set up in Bethel and Dan (see 1 Ki. 12:26-30). Israel is then described as a heifer that enjoyed easy threshing, unmuzzled and able to eat when they wanted (Hos. 10:11a), but God would change their condition by placing a yoke over their neck and giving them the more difficult task of plowing a field (Hos. 10:11b). Though judgment is certain for Israel, He still calls for them to “Sow with a view to righteousness, [and] reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you” (Hos. 10:12). Sadly, Israel’s history was that of rebellion and sin, for God states, “You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies” (Hos 10:13a). Because Israel had trusted in their own way and relied on the strength of human warriors (Hos. 10:13b), God would bring destruction upon their fortresses (Hos. 10:4a), and compares their devastation to an assault by a contemporary king named Shalman, who “destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, *when* mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children” (Hos. 10:14b). God then explains this judgment is the result of their sin, saying, “Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off” (Hos. 10:15). So Hosea continues to level charges against Israel because of their unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant.

Hosea 11:1-12

When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son [Historically, this refers to Israel's call out of Egypt (Deut. 7:8); however, Matthew analogously applied it to Christ (Matt. 2:15)].² The more they [God's prophets] called them [Israel], the more they [Israel] went from them; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols [see Judg. 2:11-13; 2 Ki. 17:13-17; Jer. 7:25-26].³ Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk [in the ways of the Lord], I took them in My arms [i.e. carried them like little children; see Deut. 1:31]; but they did not know that I healed them [God acted in ways they did not perceive].⁴ I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love [i.e. with gentle constraints], and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws [i.e. relieves the burden]; and I bent down *and* fed them [provided nourishment].⁵ They will not return to the land of Egypt [specifically]; but Assyria [for punishment in captivity]—he [the king of Assyria] will be their king because they refused to return *to Me* [i.e. would not listen to the Lord; see Deut. 28:20, 45-47, 62].⁶ The sword will whirl against their cities, and will demolish their gate bars and consume *them* because of their counsels [judgment is coming; see Deut. 28:36, 63-68].⁷ So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they [God's prophets] call them [Israel] *to the One* on high, none at all exalts *Him*.⁸ How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? [God's compassionate heart for Israel; see Isa. 49:15; Jer. 31:20] How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? [cities that were totally destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah; see Gen. 10:19; Deut. 29:23] My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled.⁹ I will not execute My fierce anger [i.e. restrained anger]; I will not destroy Ephraim again [i.e. will not destroy totally]. For I am God and not man [who does not always check his emotions], the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in [unrestrained] wrath.¹⁰ They will walk after the LORD [in the future], He will roar like a lion; indeed He will roar and *His* sons will come trembling from the west [God will restore the remnant to Israel; see Isa. 11:11-16; 35:10; 60:4; Jer. 16:15].¹¹ They will come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria [i.e. with a healthy respect for the Lord]; and I will settle them in their houses [in the millennial kingdom], declares the LORD.¹² Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against God, even against the Holy One who is faithful [unruly translates the Hebrew verb רוד *rud*, which means *to wander restlessly, roam*. The NAS translates this word negatively as “unruly against God”; however, the ESV and NET translate it positively, as “Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One” (ESV) and “Judah still roams about with God; he remains faithful to the Holy One” (NET)].

Summary

God is pictured as a Father who had called His son, Israel, out of Egyptian bondage (Hos. 11:1), but even though He sent prophets to guide them, they rejected His messengers and kept pursuing idols (Hos. 11:2). Their behavior was contrary to what God had taught them, for He'd instructed them in His ways, carried them in His arms as little children and healed their wounds (Hos. 11:3). Using an analogy of caring for an animal, the Lord guided them with bonds of love, lifting the burden of their yoke and bending down to their level to feed them (Hos. 11:4). "In Hosea 11:4 Israel is compared to a work animal (cf. 10:11). The Lord is likened to a master who gently (in **kindness** and **love**; cf. 11:1) leads his animal and removes (or perhaps repositions) its **yoke** so that it might eat with greater ease the food he kindly provides. The Lord treated Israel with compassion and love."⁷ But God declared they'd go into captivity in Assyria (Hos. 11:5), which nation would destroy their cities (Hos. 11:6), because of their continual rebellion in turning away from God and refusing to hear the messages of His prophets (Hos. 11:7). "In other messages Hosea identified Egypt as the place of Israel's future exile (cf. 8:13; 9:3, 6), but here it becomes clear that He was only using Egypt as a metaphor for a place of captivity. Assyria would be the geographical location of Israel's exile."⁸ Then, we see a passionate outburst of God's love for His people as He reflected on the judgment He intended for them, saying, "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" (Hos. 11:8). Though His righteousness demanded that He judge them because of their gross sin, His love guaranteed that they would never be totally destroyed like Admah and Zeboim. Because He is God, He will not behave with unrestrained anger like a man who lacks such control (Hos. 11:9). In addition, He promises that Israel will have a future and that there will be a time when they will walk after the Lord, when He roars like a lion, and "His sons will come trembling from the west" (Hos. 11:10). In the future, "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. 11:11). This will happen in the millennial kingdom. However, in Hosea's day, God must deal with them in judgment declaring, "Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against God, even against the Holy One who is faithful" (Hos. 11:12). It appears the NASB translates this verse correctly in light of Hosea 12:2.

⁷ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "Hosea," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1402.

⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ho 11:5.

Hosea 12:1-14

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. ² The LORD also has a dispute [רִיב *rib* – *strive, contend* – indicates a formal legal accusation; cf. 4:1] with Judah, and will punish Jacob [i.e. Israel; see Gen. 32:28] according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds [in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant]. ³ In the womb he [Jacob] took his brother [Esau] by the heel [Gen. 25:26], and in his maturity he contended with God [where Jacob received the name Israel; see Gen. 32:28]. ⁴ Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor. He [Jacob] found Him at Bethel and there He spoke with us, ⁵ even the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is His name. ⁶ Therefore [Judah], return to your God [as Jacob had done at Bethel after his fight with the Lord], observe kindness and justice [as the Mosaic Law prescribed], and wait [קָוָה *qavah* – *to wait for, eagerly look* – Piel/Imperative] for your God continually. ⁷ A merchant [Israel], in whose hands are false balances [cheats others], he loves to oppress. ⁸ And Ephraim said, “Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself [assuming prosperity indicates God’s blessing and approval]; in all my labors they will find in me no iniquity, which *would be* sin [Israel’s perception ≠ reality].” ⁹ But [God answers their claim] *I have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival [alluding to the Feast of Tabernacles; see Lev. 23:39-43]. ¹⁰ I have also spoken to the prophets, and I gave numerous visions, and through the prophets I gave parables [repeatedly communicated divine revelation to Israel]. ¹¹ Is there iniquity in Gilead? Surely they are worthless [criminals and murderers; see Hos. 6:8]. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls [to idols], yes, their altars are like the stone heaps beside the furrows of the field [see Hos. 4:15; 9:15]. ¹² Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram [when fleeing from Esau], and Israel worked for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep* [for Rachel]. ¹³ But by a prophet [Moses] the LORD brought Israel from Egypt [from a place of captivity], and by a prophet he was kept. ¹⁴ Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and bring back his reproach to him.

Summary

Hosea opens with a continued charge against Israel in the north, in which they multiply “lies and violence” (Hos. 12:1a), and pursue diplomatic alliances with Assyria and trade with Egypt (Hos. 12:1b). Such actions are born out of human viewpoint that exclude God. Hosea then declares, “The LORD also has a dispute⁹

⁹ The word *dispute* translates the Hebrew verb רִיב *rib* which is used some places in Scripture in a non-legal sense of people who fight with each other (Gen. 13:7; Ex. 17:7; Jer. 15:10),

with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds” (Hos. 12:2). Whereas God had previously brought legal charges against the ten northern tribes of Israel (Hos. 4:1), here He addresses the two southern tribes of Judah. The threat of punishment directed at Judah is in keeping with the terms of blessing and cursing as stated in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:1-68). The Lord spoke to Judah, comparing their present attitudes and circumstances with their progenitor, Jacob, who, from infancy to adulthood fought with others and God (Hos. 12:3-5). God instructs Judah, “Therefore, return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually” (Hos. 12:6). The word *wait* translates the Hebrew verb *qavah* which means to *wait for*, or *eagerly look*. The form of the verb is intensive (Piel imperative) which communicates the idea of concentrated expectant waiting. The idea is that Judah should seek God, pursue kindness and justice, and wait for the Lord to fulfill His promises to them. God then addresses Israel (the ten northern tribes) and compares their behavior to Jacob, who, like his uncle Laban, practiced deceit for personal gain (Hos. 12:7). Hosea challenged the nation of Israel with a false perception that prosperity was a sign of God’s approval. They’d been telling themselves, “Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they will find in me no iniquity, which *would be* sin” (Hos. 12:8). Yet they were guilty of idolatry and atrocious sins that warranted God’s judgment. Though they’d been unfaithful to God, He’d remained faithful to them, since the days of their exodus from Egypt (Hos. 12:9a). And God promised to humble them, saying, “I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival” (Hos. 12:9b). God has spoken to Israel repeatedly through His prophets (Hos. 12:10), yet they rejected His messages, declaring, “Surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, yes, their altars are like the stone heaps beside the furrows of the field” (Hos. 12:11). Hosea draws a parallel between Israel’s progenitor, Jacob, who fled to Aram and “kept” sheep to acquire Rachel, the woman he loved (Hos. 12:12). Likewise, God loved Israel and rescued her from Egyptian captivity, and “kept” her by means of a prophet (Hos. 12:13). However, though God loved Israel, He could not abandon His righteousness, or the promises He’d made through His covenant. Therefore, He told them, “Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and bring back his reproach to him” (Hos. 12:14). Though God had repeatedly called His people back to a life of righteousness, they’d continually chosen to rebel against Him, and so would reap the consequences of their actions.

as well as a legal sense in which one person takes up a lawsuit or legal case against another (Deut. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5). In Hosea, the term is used of a legal charge that God is bringing against His people who are in violation of the Mosaic Covenant.

Hosea 13:1-16

When Ephraim spoke [*Ephraim* = a synecdoche of location referring to the royal palace where rulers made decisions. e.g. the city of *Washington* as a reference to the US government], *there was* trembling [i.e. throughout the whole region because of the rulers]. He [the king of Samaria] exalted himself in Israel, but through Baal he did wrong and died. ² And now they [Israelites who follow their king] sin more and more [cf. [Hos. 4:7](#); [11:2](#)], and make for themselves molten images, idols skillfully made from their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen [c.f. [Hos. 8:6](#); [Isa. 40:19-20](#)]. They say of them, “Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!” [possibly a reference to human sacrifice per the NIV/ESV; c.f. [Isa. 57:5](#); [Jer. 7:31](#)] ³ Therefore they [idol worshippers] will be like the morning cloud and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney [which pass away quickly]. ⁴ Yet [in contrast] *I have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt [faithful from the beginning]; and you were not to know any god except Me [first commandment; see [Ex. 20:1-3](#)], for there is no savior besides Me. ⁵ I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. ⁶ As *they had* their pasture [in the Promised Land], they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud [i.e. looking only to themselves]; therefore they forgot Me [did not think they needed God]. ⁷ So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. ⁸ I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests; there I will also devour them like a lioness, *as* a wild beast would tear them. ⁹ *It is* your destruction, O Israel, that *you are* against Me, against your help [to turn from God is an act of self-harm]. ¹⁰ Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested [in prayer, saying], “Give me a king and princes?” [Israel preferred to look to human rulers rather than God] ¹¹ I gave you a king in My anger [answered their prayer to teach them a lesson] and took him away in My wrath [to punish them for their wrong]. ¹² The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up [i.e. collected over time]. ¹³ The pains of childbirth come upon him [suddenly]; he is not a wise son, for it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb [hiding in the place of perceived safety]. ¹⁴ Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? [*Sheol* = the place of the grave] Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight [judgment is coming]. ¹⁵ Though he flourishes among the reeds, an east wind will come [from Assyria], the wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; and his fountain will become dry and his spring will be dried up [God will cut off resources]; it [Assyria] will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article. ¹⁶ Samaria [Samaria = Israel] will be held guilty [for sin], for she has rebelled against her God [i.e. broken the covenant]. They will fall by the sword [see [Deut. 28:52-57](#)], their little ones will

be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open [by the Assyrian army; see 2 Ki. 15:16; Amos 1:13].

Summary

Ephraim (Israel's king and princes) exalted themselves and engaged in Baal worship (Hos. 13:1), and they "sin more and more, and make for themselves molten images, idols skillfully made from their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen" (Hos. 13:2a). The phrase "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!" (Hos. 13:2b) could refer to an act of homage and devotion on the part of the idolaters. However, it might also refer to human sacrifice, as the NIV translates, "They offer human sacrifices! They kiss calf-idols!" and the ESV renders, "Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!" God declares these idolaters would perish quickly, "like the morning cloud and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney" (Hos. 13:3). In contrast, God had been faithful from the beginning, when His people were called out of Egypt, and they were to be faithful to Him, for there is no other Savior besides God, who cared for them in the wilderness (Hos. 13:4-5). However, after entering the Promised Land and tasting of prosperity, "they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; therefore they forgot Me" (Hos. 13:6). Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, God would render fierce judgment upon the nation, as a lion, leopard or bear attacks and devours its prey (Hos. 13:7-8). God reveals that Israel was engaging in self-harm, saying, "It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help" (Hos. 13:9), and He would remove Israel's king, the person in which they trusted for salvation from their enemies (Hos. 13:10-11). The iniquity of Israel had been storing up for many years and reached full capacity (Hos. 13:12), and, like a baby in its mother's womb, the nation was unwilling to leave the familiar place of sin from which God had called them (Hos. 13:13). God would not redeem His people, Israel, from the short term judgment that was coming upon them (Hos. 13:14). Later, the apostle Paul quoted this verse and applied it to Christ who died for the sins of His people and will rescue us from death and the grave (1 Cor. 15:55). "Here in Hosea the promise is that Israel would indeed suffer death and the grave, not that she would escape it. Paul turned the passage around and showed that Jesus Christ's resurrection overcame the judgment and death that are inevitable for sinners."¹⁰ In this regard, because Jesus overcame death and the grave, so those who trust in Him will eventually be resurrected and not held in the power of sin's grip. Though Israel flourished for the moment like a reed in shallow water, God would send a scorching wind to dry them up. This refers to the Assyrians who would plunder their cities and engage in merciless acts of hostility, even against women

¹⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ho 13:14.

and children (Hos. 13:15-16). All of this could have been avoided if Israel had humbled themselves and turned back to God and not broken the covenant promises.

Hosea 14:1-9

The book of Hosea serves as a legal indictment against the ten northern tribes of Israel and promises judgment upon them for their violation of the Mosaic Law. However, Hosea 14:1-9 promises a future hope for the nation of Israel and is to be compared with the message of hope offered in Jeremiah 29:1-11.

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity [this is what God expects of His people].² Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity and receive *us* graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips [i.e. praise to God].³ “Assyria will not save us [i.e. not trust in another nation], we will not ride on horses [i.e. not trust in military strength]; nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’ to the work of our hands [i.e. not trust in idols]; for in You [God] the orphan [Israel] finds mercy.”⁴ I will heal their apostasy [when they respond to God’s call to return to Him in the future], I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them [after judgment].⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel [refreshing]; he will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*.⁶ His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*.⁷ Those [other nations] who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine [i.e. experience agricultural prosperity; see Deut. 28:4, 8, 11]. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.⁸ O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit [not their dumb idols; see Hos. 2:8].⁹ Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *whoever* is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD [i.e. His covenant commands] are right [i.e. best], and the righteous will walk in them [obey His commands], but transgressors will stumble in them [the disobedient will fall].

Summary

God calls Israel to return to Him (Hos. 14:1), even though He knows they won’t, and has already promised judgment (see Hos. 10:2, 6-8, 14; 11:6). If they were to return to Him, He tells them the words He wants to hear, specifically, “Take away all iniquity and receive *us* graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips” (Hos. 14:2). These words reflect a humble heart appealing to the grace of God, and once forgiven, there follows the fruit of praise. Furthermore, they are to say, “Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’ to the work of our hands; for in You the orphan finds mercy” (Hos. 14:3). These words display a dependence on God alone, as Israel will not rely on political alliances (Assyria), military strength (horses), or the work of their own hands (idols), but will regard themselves as helpless orphans who seek God’s mercy and care. When this happens,

God will love them tenderly, for His anger will not be kindled against their sin (Hos. 14:4). Furthermore, he will send refreshment to them and they will flourish and become strong and beautiful to God and others (Hos. 14:5-6). When Israel is restored and blessed, they will again experience agricultural prosperity (Hos. 14:7). God is the One who looks after Israel, saying, “It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit” (Hos. 14:8).

The Israelites have not yet met these conditions for restoration, and restoration has not yet come to them. Fulfillment awaits the return of Christ to the earth and His millennial reign that will follow. Then Israel will be blessed and will become a source of blessing for all the other nations of the world, as the prophet predicted.¹¹

Finally, the book of Hosea closes out with wisdom to those who will heed the words of the book, saying, “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). The “ways of the Lord” refer to His covenant commands, the righteous are those who obey them, and transgressors are those who choose a faulty path and stumble.

¹¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ho 14:8.