

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

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INTRODUCTION

Hosea's message is directed to the Northern Kingdom which he often refers to as Ephraim because it is one of the largest, most dominant tribes. He also makes a couple of references, in passing, to the Southern Kingdom to warn them that the same thing could happen to them.

BACKGROUND

The stable reign of Jeroboam II was coming to an end. This would be followed by a period of instability when six kings reigned over the last 25 years. Four were murdered whilst in office, one was taken into captivity and only one died a natural death.

In 735 BC Tiglath-Pileser III invaded the Northern area of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, **2 Kings 15:29**. This was the beginning of the oppression. Later on, King Hoshea of Israel and King So of Egypt conspired against Assyria. Hoshea was arrested and imprisoned by Shalmaneser I, **2 Kings 17:1-6**. Shalmaneser began a siege which was to last for three years, 724-721 B.C. The siege was completed by Sargon II. The siege ended when the Israelites were carried off and foreigners were brought in to occupy Samaria.

Hosea warns about the people of Israel, that is, the Northern Kingdom, going into captivity.

HOSEA

The name Hosea means 'God is salvation' but there are various forms of the same name such as Hoshea, Joshua and Jesus. We know nothing else about the man, other than the fact that he ministered God's Word to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

He is the son of Beeri, **Hosea 1:1** and he had three children who played a vital part in his message to the nation of Israel, Jezreel, **Hosea 1:4**, Lo-Ruhamah, **Hosea 1:6**, and Lo-Ammi, **Hosea 1:8**.

AUTHOR

The very first verse of the Book of Hosea tells us that Hosea wrote the book, **Hosea 1:1**.

DATE

The date is indicated to us in **Hosea 1:1** 'The word of the Lord came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Joash king of Israel.' The probable date is around 750 B.C. although he was working as a prophet from 30 to 60/70 years according to these kingly reigns.

He was working under Assyrian depression at the time of Tiglath-Pileser III. Assyria is named several times in the book, Hosea 7:11 / Hosea 11:5 / Hosea 11:11 / Hosea 12:1 / Hosea 12:3.

OUTLINE

- The training of the Prophet. Hosea 1-3
- Domestic Circumstances. Hosea 1:1-2:1
- Gomer's unfaithfulness. Hosea 2:2-23
- Gomer restored. Hosea 3:1-5
- The teachings of the Prophet. Hosea 4-14
- Pollution and its cause. Hosea 4:1-6:3
- Pollution and its punishment. Hosea 6:4-10:15
- The love of God. Hosea 11:1-14:9

THEME

The basic theme and message of the book are God is a God of love and righteousness.

CHAPTER 1

'The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel: When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD." So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.' Hosea 1:1-3

HOSEA'S WIFE AND CHILDREN

The book begins by telling us that God spoke through Hosea, as well as through the personal words of God that Hosea recorded by inspiration, Jeremiah 1:2 / Joel 1:1 / Micah 1:1 / Zephaniah 1:1.

It also gives us the details of the date of Hosea's work as a prophet. He mentions the kings of Judah and Israel. Hosea is writing after the event, not as it is happening.

God commanded him to ‘go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her.’ His domestic life is going to become an object lesson of his message. There are several views on the phrase ‘a promiscuous woman’, some translations use the words, ‘wife of harlotry’.

Some commentators suggest that Gomer was a prostitute when he married her. Others suggest that at the time of her marriage she was a sacred prostitute, that is, she was working in a temple, perhaps to the god, Baal.

Some suggest because she was a woman from an immoral nation, she had been brought up under the influence of idolatry but she wasn’t a harlot or prostitute when she got married. Other commentators suggest that she was a woman with a tendency to harlotry and others suggest that the story is just an allegory.

We are told the reason why he should do this because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery by forsaking the Lord. In obedience to God’s command, Hosea marries Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim and together they have a son.

‘Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.”
Hosea 1:4-5

Gomer bears three children and although some suggest that she had been unfaithful and that these children were not Hosea’s, we have no reason to believe this.

The first of these three children are named Jezreel, which means ‘God will scatter’ and ‘God will sow’. The name symbolises a threat to the house of Jehu because of the massacre at Jezreel, **2 Kings 9:21-37 / 2 Kings 10:1-8 / 2 Kings 10:11**. Jehu was instructed to destroy the house of Ahab, but he went over the top.

The significance of the name, Jezreel is this bloodshed of Jehu and that Israel will scatter. In other words, God will bring an end to the house of Jehu by bringing vengeance upon him and his heritage. God is going to break the power of Israel and they would be taken into captivity.

‘Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them.” Hosea 1:6-7

Gomer now has another child, this time a daughter and she was named, Lo-Ruhamah which means, ‘not loved’ or ‘not pitied’. God will have no more pity upon Israel. The Northern Kingdom was to come to an end because she no longer represented God among the nations.

‘After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the LORD said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.’ Hosea 1:8-9

Gomer now has another child, this time a son and he is named, Lo-Ammi, which means ‘not my people’, **1 Peter 2:10 / Romans 4:25-26**. The name symbolises God’s rejection of His people. It represents a reversal of the covenant God made with them, **Leviticus 26:9 / Leviticus 26:12**.

God will no longer protect His people because Israel had violated the conditions of the covenant they made with God, **Exodus 19:5 / Psalm 118:6 / Ezekiel 16:8**. They became an idolatrous nation, serving other gods.

‘Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.’ Hosea 1:10-11

Although God will eventually send all His people into captivity, there would be a gathering of the two kingdoms, that is Israel and Judah, again into one nation.

God reminds them of His promise to Abraham, that his seed would be as the sand of the sea, **Genesis 22:17 / Genesis 32:12 / Revelation 7:9**.

The words ‘you who are not my people’ they will be called ‘children of the living God’, **Romans 9:25-26**, and the words recorded in **Hosea 2:1**, give hope for restoration in the future.

These words are quoted in the New Testament by Peter and by Paul who use them to show God’s acceptance of the Gentiles, **1 Peter 2:10 / Romans 9:25-26**. When Hosea wrote this it was directed at the Jews, Paul applies it to the Gentiles in his letter to the Romans.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fulfilment of the prophecy that the children of Judah and of Israel should be gathered together was fulfilled on Pentecost, ‘the one head’, being none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gentiles were adopted into the Church, which, at the Day of Pentecost, was formed of Jews and Gentiles become one in Christ.’

God says the time is coming when they will appoint one leader, in other words, they will finally accept God as their King and as time goes by they will eventually accept the Messiah, as their King, **Ephesians 1:20-23 / Colossians 1:18**. Please note that these words aren’t the end of chapter 1, the first verse of chapter 2, which actually closes the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’ Hosea 2:1

This verse is the closes thought from chapter 1. Notice the KJV says this, ‘Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.’

Paul quotes this verse in **Romans 9:25-26**, where he basically tells us, if God decides to show His grace by extending salvation to the Gentiles, no one has the right to question Him.

In fact, God has done what He said He would do, when through the prophet Hosea, He said, ‘Those who were not my people I will call my people. **Hosea 2:23**.

This can only mean that there would be a time when Gentiles become the people of God. And, as for Israel, who thinks so highly of herself.

And so, Paul is showing the Jews by their own prophets that the Gentiles would be called the people of God. He quotes **Hosea 2:23**, though not quite to the letter, a passage relating directly, not to the Gentiles, but to the kingdom of the ten tribes.

However, since they had sunk to the level of the Gentiles, who were ‘not God’s people,’ and in that sense ‘not beloved,’ the apostle legitimately applies it to the Gentiles. His point is that the prophet prophesied that those who were not God’s people would someday be His people.

He quotes **Hosea 1:10** which teaches the same as the preceding verse. ‘In the place...There’, **Romans 9:26**, this expression seems to be designed to give greater emphasis to the gracious change, from divine exclusion to divine

admission to the privileges of the people of God. Again, the point is that there would be a place (as well as a time) where those who were not His people would be His people.

In this section, Paul is showing God's right to choose the believers and to reject fleshly Israel. This is shown by many illustrations: Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh, the potter, by Hosea the prophet, and by Isaiah the prophet, [Isaiah 10:22-23](#) / [Isaiah 28:21-22](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This indicates a reversal of the symbolical names of judgment, as given to Hosea's children in the times of the new covenant, God's people will be 'Pitied' and 'My People'. The use of the terms 'brothers' and 'sisters' in this place also points to the time of the church in the new dispensation.'

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

'This as a prophecy was to be accomplished in the times foretold in [Hosea 1:10-11](#) when they 'would call one another as brothers and sisters in the family of God'.'

ISRAEL PUNISHED AND RESTORED

'Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst. I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery. Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.' Hosea 2:2-5

Hosea's personal circumstances symbolised Israel's unfaithfulness to God. God here, is the husband, Israel is the bride, however, the marriage relationship cannot continue whilst the bride is unfaithful, [Isaiah 54:5](#) / [Jeremiah 11:10](#) / [Jeremiah 31:32](#).

It's an appeal to the adulterous woman to forsake her adultery. Israel was the adulterous woman in her idolatry, [Exodus 34:14-15](#) / [Leviticus 17:7](#) / [Leviticus 20:5-6](#) / [Numbers 14:33](#) / [Numbers 15:39](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:21](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This horrible worship had been made the official religion of the state of Israel by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, who brought with her from her native Tyre the Sidonian paganism. She encouraged Ahab to build shrines for worship and brought hundreds of the religious priests and prophets to Israel. She persecuted the prophets of God and ordered those slain who spoke against her idolatrous ways, Through her daughter Athaliah, [2 Kings 8:18](#), who became wife of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, the same paganism also penetrated and later destroyed Judah also.'

Notice that the appeal was to the children, not the wife. This tells us that even though Israel as a nation had gotten into idolatry, not everyone was involved, there were some of Israel who remained faithful.

The day Israel was born was the day God brought them out of Egyptian slavery, she was naked, like a newly born baby, [Ezekiel 16:4-14](#). Because of Israel's idolatry, God once again is about to strip them naked, He was going to make them like the desert, that is, spiritually destitute.

This was going to happen literally, first for the ten northern tribes when they became slaves of Assyria, and then later, more completely when the two southern tribes, Benjamin and Judah, were carried away to Babylon in slavery.

God visits the sins of the parents upon the children until the entailed curse is cut off by repentance. They are all idolaters and have been consecrated to idols, whose marks they bear.

Israel said they would go after their ‘lovers’, [Ezekiel 16:34](#), that is, Baal, or Baalim, which is plural, in whom they put their trust in wealth and prosperity.

They turned to the Baals and relied on them for the basics in life such as food, water, wool, linen, olive oil and drink, instead of turning to God and relying on Him for them, [Matthew 6:25-34](#).

‘Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’ She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal.’ Hosea 2:6-8

Here we read of the severity of love in an attempt to bring the unfaithful bride back. Stern measures will be necessary to win back the unfaithful people, is the application of the message to the Israelites. God is going to cut off the idolatry from the nation, [Genesis 3:17-19](#).

In an effort to maintain her wealth, Israel would chase after the idolatrous nations, but not catch them, she will look for them but not be successful in finding them. The nations aren’t going to save them from the Assyrian captivity.

She will go back to her husband because she was better off then than she is now. This will happen when they repent. This shows the severity of God’s love for Israel, the punishment is severe and necessary.

Israel didn’t acknowledge that it was actually God who blessed them richly and the very things He blessed them with were used to worship Baal, [Romans 1:21](#) / [Hebrews 11:25](#).

After God blessed Israel, the people attributed their growth to prosperity and security to the Baal gods of the nations around them. Baal was the Phoenician sun-god, answering to the female Astarte, the moon-goddess.

‘Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her naked body. So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals. I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them. I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewellery, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,” declares the LORD.’ Hosea 2:9-13

In an effort to get Israel to repent, God is going to remove all the things they trusted in. Everything which God had given them to encourage thankfulness to Him, the grain, new wine, wool, lined, vines and fig trees, would be totally removed from them.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The regular sabbaths and annual festivals, such as Tabernacles, Pentecost, and Passover, could not possibly be observed during the period of Israel’s slavery in either Assyria or Babylon, except in some extremely abbreviated token form. Slaves would in no case have been exempted from work on a “sabbath” instituted by the God of the slaves! Thus, the sabbaths, etc., may be supposed to have ceased during the captivity; but there is more than that in this verse. It also has a prophecy of the ultimate removal of the sabbath day altogether, as indicated by the apostle Paul, [Colossians 2:15-17](#), who used some of the exact terminologies of this verse to describe how ‘the sabbath’, etc., had been taken out of the way, Jesus our Lord ‘nailing it to his cross’.’

Despite the truth that the observance of the sabbath and certain solemn assemblies had long been established as legitimate parts of the worship of the true God, Hosea reckons them here as the feast days of Baal, [Hosea 2:13](#).

The possessive ‘her’, repeated after each festival, emphasises that they now belonged, not to Yahweh, but Israel in her own mad pursuit of the gods of fertility.

Israel had adorned herself to attract the attention of the nations around them, [Jeremiah 4:30](#) / [Ezekiel 23:40](#), but they forget about God, [Deuteronomy 6:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:11](#) / [Hosea 13:6](#).

‘Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.’ Hosea 2:14-20

These verses speak of the restoration of the unfaithful bride and notice the initiative is taken by God.

It was in the wilderness when Israel came out of Egypt and He led them into the Promised Land, that God had a close relationship with His people and here, He once again promises that if His people repent, He will bring them back to the Promised Land.

They had lost the vineyards which God gave them in the Promised Land when they were taken away into Assyrian captivity, but God promises they will receive them back.

The Valley of Achor was the place where Israel sinned, when they first entered the Promised Land, [Joshua 7:20-26](#) / [Isaiah 65:10](#), was now going to become a place of hope.

He will allure her, she will call me ‘my husband’, this is the condition of Israel’s return.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following, concerning verse 16.

‘The church will then enter once more into the right relation to their God. Apostate Israel had really gone into the ‘Baal’ business. One of the sons of king Saul was named Esh-Baal, [1 Chronicles 9:40](#), a son of Jonathan was named Meri-Baal, [1 Chronicles 9:40](#), etc. There were at least ten personal proper names from that period which were made of compounds of the term Baal.’

God says He will make a new covenant, [Jeremiah 31:31-35](#), in other words, there will be a new relationship forever, [2 Corinthians 11:2](#).

Hailey, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A New Covenant would restore the relationship between God and his people, and a spirit of peace would characterize them. In the New Covenant, the animal nature of men would be brought under subjection to the Spirit of God.’

God says He will abolish, the bow, sword and battle in order that peace prevails, [Isaiah 2:1-4](#) / [Isaiah 35:9](#) / [Zechariah 9:10](#) / [Leviticus 26:3-8](#) / [Ezekiel 34:25-28](#).

This new relationship will be one of righteousness, justice, love, mercy, compassion and fellowship and they shall know the Lord, [Jeremiah 31:31-35](#).

‘In that day I will respond,” declares the LORD—“I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’” Hosea 2:21-23

Here we read of the completion of this restoration. The interpretation of Jezreel here is ‘God will sow’. Before this, it was ‘God will scatter’. This is the lesson of Hosea’s own marriage.

Hailey, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There can be no valid question that the above promises have reference to the present dispensation under Christ. They have been fulfilled in Him, and are not deferred to some future dispensation. ‘In that day’ refers to the day of the covenant and betrothal mentioned above.’

God will scatter the old Israel, but he will plant the new Israel all over the world. God will bless them with grain, new wine and oil, [Matthew 6:33](#). The spiritual would be sown in the earth and nourished by the mercy of God.

Notice the play on words here, remember the name of Gomer’s first child is ‘Jezreel’, which means ‘Scattered’, or ‘Sowing’, [Hosea 1:4-5](#), but here, God now says, that name will change, to mark Israel’s restoration, in other words, the scattering is going to be changed into sowing.

Gomer’s second child is named, ‘Lo-Ruhamah’, which means, ‘No Pity’, [Hosea 1:6](#), God here, now says, that name will be changed to mark Israel’s restoration, they will receive pity, they will receive mercy.

Gomer’s third child was named, ‘Lo-Ammi’. which means, ‘Not My People’, [Hosea 1:9](#), God here now says, that name will change, to mark Israel’s restoration, and Israel will be His people.

Those who were formerly disowned by God would once again be His people and they will declare that God is their God.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.” For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.’ Hosea 3:1-5

HOSEA’S RECONCILIATION WITH HIS WIFE

God tells Hosea to go and love his wife again. Gomer had left Hosea and given herself over to adultery and prostitution. However, God commands Hosea to bring her back as his wife.

God would bring Israel back into a relationship with Him in the same way. Surely we see the love of God in all of this, [1 John 4:8](#) / [1 John 4:16](#).

We read of Hosea’s obedience, 15 shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley is the price he paid to have her back, although we’re not told from whom, he bought her back.

The suggested value of the silver and barley was the price of a slave. So he had to buy her back from slavery. Her faithfulness is a condition of her coming back.

It is obvious that Gomer would have been unclean when Hosea took her home and so, she would have had to go through a period of purification.

Israel will be without leaders and their religious symbols, without a king or prince in captivity. God ruled as King in the post-captivity until the coming of David their king, who was King Jesus, [Daniel 2:44](#) / [Daniel 7:13-14](#).

The last days are the days of the Messiah when Jesus would reign and establish His kingdom, [Acts 2:16-17](#).

In these first three chapters, Hosea has learnt about the sins of Israel through his marriage and how God responded through love.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. “But let no one bring a charge, let no one accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother—my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.’ Hosea 4:1-6

THE CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL

Here, Israel is summoned to attend and to hear the word of the Lord. We have another picture of a court case where the Lord has a dispute with his people. The charges are as follows.

1. The absence of faithfulness, [James 1:21](#).
2. The absence of love.
3. The absence of knowledge of God.

In their place, there is this widespread evil. They were cursing, lying, committing murder, stealing and committing adultery, [Exodus 20:13-16](#).

They break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed for revenge and the consequence is shown in nature, birds of the air, fish of the sea, they are taken away, [Genesis 3:17-21](#).

Hosea tells us the cause of this condition and so, God begins with the priests. One of the functions of the priest was to teach the knowledge of God, to be teachers of the law, [Leviticus 10:10-11](#) / [Deuteronomy 17:8-13](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:10](#) / [Ezekiel 44:23](#) / [Malachi 2:7](#).

They were failing in this duty, the people were being destroyed by lack of knowledge, 2 Timothy 4:2. Even the prophets stumble, that is, false prophets. It appears that God's people had little or no respect for their religious leaders, they intimidated the leaders because they just wanted to do their own thing, regardless of what God said. The mother of the individual citizen was the nation itself, Hosea 2:2, and so, God is going to destroy the mother, that is, the nation, so that He could preserve a faithful remnant. In other words, the priests and the prophets were being condemned because they followed the people into religious apostasy.

God was going to destroy the nation because they had a lack of knowledge of God, Mark 7:1-9 / James 1:25. They loved idolatry more than God, they followed the gods of the nations instead of the Living God. It's not that they forgot God but their delivery forsake Him and His laws.

This, of course, will have a knock-on effect, if God isn't important to the parents, then God won't be important to their children and the result is that their children would suffer the consequences because they too will have no knowledge of God, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 / Revelation 22:18-19.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following, concerning verse 6.

'It is not the priests who are addressed here, but the whole nation of the ten tribes which adhered to the image-worship set up by Jeroboam, with its illegal priesthood, 1 Kings 12:26-33, despite all threats and judgments and who would not desist from this sin of Jeroboam. The Lord would therefore reject it, the nation, from being priest, i.e., would deprive it of the privilege of being a priestly nation, Exodus 19:6, would strip it of its priestly rank, and make it like the heathen.'

'The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. "They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not flourish, because they have deserted the LORD to give themselves to prostitution; old wine and new wine take away their understanding.'" Hosea 4:7-11

The more priests there were, the more the people sinned, they exchanged their glorious God, Exodus 19:6, for something disgraceful, that is, idolatry.

Notice the words, 'like people, like priests', this tells us that the priests conformed to whatever the people wanted and so because the people were following the priests, God says He will punish both people and priests.

It appears that the priests were going along with the people in order to please the people instead of following and teaching God's laws, 1 Kings 12:31 / 1 Kings 13:33 / 2 Chronicles 11:13-16.

Harper, in his commentary, says the following.

'The priests encouraged the people to sin in order that they the priests might have larger numbers of sin offerings, i.e., greater perquisites, they live upon the vice of the day.'

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning verse 10.

'The purpose of harlotry is not to produce offspring, therefore, the meaning here is that Israel shall find their material prosperity quite inadequate and unsatisfactory and their harlotry in the matter of Baal-worship shall prove powerless to remedy their want. As the punishment of God closes in upon the kingdom, the vanity, futility, and ineffectiveness of their apostasy will be finally evident.'

May, in his commentary, says the following concerning verse 11.

'This is a general observation about how things work in life. Once a man turns to prostitutes and intoxicating drink for pleasure, he loses his judgment. Harlots and wine take away a man's mind. The Hebrew word is heart, the seat of the will and understanding in Hebrew psychology.'

‘My people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner’s rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. “I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes—a people without understanding will come to ruin!’ Hosea 4:12-14

The people are turning to idolatry, they are turning to wooden idols and diviner’s rod for guidance and answers.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Two rods were held upright, and then allowed to fall while incantations were uttered and the oracle was inferred from the way in which they fell, whether backwards or forward, to the right or to the left.’

They would go to the mountain tops for their religious ceremonies where their daughters were committing fornication and those who were married were committing adultery, Deuteronomy 12:2 / 2 Kings 17:10-11.

God said he wouldn’t punish the daughters, but that doesn’t mean they will go unpunished, they will eventually reap what they sow, Galatians 6:7-8, they will come to ruin

‘Though you, Israel, commit adultery, do not let Judah become guilty. “Do not go to Gilgal; do not go up to Beth Aven. And do not swear, ‘As surely as the LORD lives!’ The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer. How then can the LORD pasture them like lambs in a meadow? Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution; their rulers dearly love shameful ways. A whirlwind will sweep them away, and their sacrifices will bring them shame.’ Hosea 4:15-19

Here we have a warning to Judah not to follow them, a fleeting, passing warning to the Southern Kingdom. Gilgal, 2 Kings 2:1 / 2 Kings 4:38, and Beth Aven, 1 Kings 12:28-29, were the two main altars in the southern part of the Northern Kingdom. In other words, Hosea warned those of Judah not to go up to these altars of idolatry, Deuteronomy 12:2 / 2 Kings 17:10-11.

It’s interesting to note that Hosea changed the name of Bethel, which means ‘house of God’, to Beth-Aven, which means ‘house of iniquity’. Hosea is telling them they can’t have their feet in both camps, they can’t go to idols and at the same time claim to be swearing loyalty to God.

Israel is likened to a heifer rather than a lamb, that is, they have now become a stubborn cow. Because Ephraim had joined themselves to idols, spiritually speaking married to their idols, God would no longer feed them, He would leave them 1 Corinthians 5:11 / 1 Corinthians 5:13.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Leave him to himself. Let him reap the fruits of his own perverse choice. He is bent on his own ruin, leave him to his fate, lest instead of saving him thou shalt fall thyself.’

Despite there being no more drink, they continue to be involved with prostitution and their rulers continue to love shameful ways, Psalms 47:10.

As a result of their idolatry, a whirlwind would sweep them away, that is, the Assyrians were going to come and take them away into captivity.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against you: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them.

I know all about Ephraim; Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution; Israel is corrupt. “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD. Israel’s arrogance testifies against them; the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin; Judah also stumbles with them. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them. They are unfaithful to the LORD; they give birth to illegitimate children. When they celebrate their New Moon feasts, he will devour their fields.’ Hosea 5:1-7

JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

Here we have God speaking in another court scene, passing judgment on Israel. The priests and kings were meant to be leaders of the people.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All efforts to classify these evil religious leaders as being, in any sense, priests of God, are frustrated in the fact of their being, 1. illegitimate, not belonging to the tribe of Levi, from which alone it was lawful for God’s priests to be ordained, 2. imported from Sidon by Jezebel, enemies of God by definition, and devoted utterly to the old Bull-god of the Sidonians and Canaanites and 3. constantly engaged in the promulgation of the licentious rites deeply rooted in their inherent paganism.’

Although the religious leaders encouraged the people to follow after false religions, the people were still held accountable for following them, they too, like the leaders should have known better.

They worshipped the Baal gods on the two mountains of Mizpah, [Judges 10:17](#), and Tabor, [Judges 4:6](#). Because they rebelled against God, He was going to discipline them, they were going to be taken into captivity.

God knows Ephraim, He knows what is going on, He can see this harlotry, their idolatrous behaviour, he knows their hearts and their arrogance and so, He will judge them.

Israel and Judah will stumble and although Judah was warned not to follow the wickedness practices of those in the Northern Kingdom, Hosea says that they too would fall and go into captivity.

Despite going with their sacrifices, that is, their flock and herds, to the altar in order to perform the required rites of the law, their hearts were still far from the Lord.

God has now withdrawn from Israel and the verdict is, that they are guilty. God handed them over to the destruction of the Assyrians and Babylonians. As a result of their apostasy and idolatry, their children followed in their parent’s footsteps and they knew nothing of God and His ways, [Hosea 4:6](#).

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘According to Hosea, return for Israel is now no longer a human possibility. He also elaborated the basic reasons why this was true.

1. Sin robs a man of his faculty for God and of the strength of will to obey God.

2. The whole fabric of the nation's social, economic, political, and religious life was interwoven with the lustful indulgences of paganism.

3. There was no longer any true knowledge of God among the people. Without that knowledge, it was impossible to achieve either any communion with God or any kind of human conduct consistent with the terms of their ancient covenant with Jehovah.

The New Moon feasts were a time when sacrifices were to be offered, 1 Samuel 20:6 / 1 Samuel 20:29 / Isaiah 1:13-14. Some commentators suggest this is a reference to the imminent invasion of Tiglath-Pileser which took place at this time in their history, 2 Kings 15:29.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Biblical scholars are uncertain as to whether this means in the time of the new moon, meaning in a very short period of time their judgment will fall, or if it means the licentious worship associated with their feasts of the new moon would be the cancer that would devour them.'

'Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven; lead on, Benjamin. Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of reckoning. Among the tribes of Israel I proclaim what is certain. Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water. Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols. I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help.

But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face—in their misery they will earnestly seek me.'" Hosea 5:8-15

Here we read of the preparation of the people for the announcement of punishment. The trumpets were blown to alert the people of an invasion.

McKeating, in his commentary, says the following.

'Israel and Syria, who were old enemies decided to make common cause against Assyria. They tried to force Judah to join; and, when Judah under king Ahaz resisted, they attacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem. Judah in desperation appealed to the Assyrians, who were only too ready to intervene. In the end, Syria, Israel, and Judah were all losers, 2 Kings 16:5-9 / Isaiah 7.'

As Gibeah and Ramah are located in the land of the Northern Kingdom, this tells us that the invasion was coming upon them first. Because Benjamin were to 'lead on', this implies that the Northern Kingdom had already been invaded, and Judah was at this time threatened.

Ephraim will be laid waste because they turned from God and His ways, Deuteronomy 31:16-30. Judah had become thieves, stealing other people's lands, in terms of moving the boundaries stones, Deuteronomy 19:14 / Deuteronomy 27:17 / 2 Kings 16:10-18 / 2 Chronicles 28:3, they had followed the commanded of men rather than the commandments of God, Isaiah 28:10 / Isaiah 28:13 / Mark 7:1-9.

A three-fold judgment is mentioned.

1. Moth and rottenness. This is a picture of slow destruction, Isaiah 51:8.

When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his sores, there was absolutely nothing they could do, there was no cure. In a state of desperation for help, Ephraim went to Assyria to try and make an alliance with them, the very same nation that would eventually take them into captivity.

Notice they would turn to the ‘great king’, or ‘King Jareb’ as the KJV has it. The word ‘Jareb’ means ‘warrior’ or ‘great king’ but this isn’t speaking of a specific king of Assyria, this is used as a title that was commonly used to refer to all kings of Assyria as great kings, [2 Kings 5:15](#).

2. God as a Lion. This is a picture of strong, devouring destruction.

God was going to use the nation of Assyria to discipline both Israel and Judah.

3. God withdraws. This is a picture of God withdrawing from His people.

When the Assyrians came, there was no one to help them, God wasn’t going to save them.

God wasn’t going to do anything and He was going to leave them in captivity until Israel fully repented.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.’ Hosea 6:1-3

ISRAEL UNREPENTANT

There are two points of view on these opening verses.

1. They are expressing the sincere desire of the people to return to God. This view follows on from verse 15 of the previous chapter.

2. It is an insincere desire. This view ties these three verses with the fourth verse. The people don’t really mean what they say, they are insincere.

The first view seems to be the most likely one. They are asking for God’s mercy.

Ward, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The repentance here is not something that comes on this side of national disaster, it is on the other side of it. So, the repentance that finally comes to the survivors of the nation’s death is not one that will serve to heal the nation as a whole and let it live. It is one that will affect an entirely new life with Yahweh, on different terms.’

Compared to the time it took them to go into captivity, Hosea appears to say that their binding will be brief, that is ‘two days’. Most commentators aren’t sure what the reference to ‘third day’ is, although some suggest it’s used symbolically of the resurrection of Christ, [Hosea 11:1](#) / [Matthew 2:15](#) / [Luke 13:32-33](#) / [1 Corinthians 15:4](#).

It’s at this point they will be restored to live in God’s presence and eventually acknowledge God as their God and be obedient to His laws in all aspects of their lives.

When the sunsets, that is, morning, after they have repented, a new life will begin for them, [Isaiah 58:8](#) / [Isaiah 60:1-2](#). When there is rain, there is the beginning of a new existence, [Leviticus 26:4-5](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 28:12](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Israel’s God is brought within the frame of reference of the deities of Canaan, whose activity was a function of weather and season. Rain is the peculiar provenance of Baal in Canaanite theology.’

When Israel finally becomes obedient to God, He will bless them richly. This will be fulfilled in the time of the Messiah, [Isaiah 35:5-6](#) / [Isaiah 44:3](#) / [Ezekiel 36:25-28](#).

‘What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth—then my judgments go forth like the sun. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. As at Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there. Gilead is a city of evildoers, stained with footprints of blood. As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes. I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: There Ephraim is given to prostitution, Israel is defiled. “Also for you, Judah, a harvest is appointed. “Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people.’ Hosea 6:4-11

God appears to be perplexed by their insincerity as He says, ‘just what can I do with you, Ephraim?’

Mauchline, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord had done everything possible in the way of training his people, now there was nothing more which he could do. What was the use of continuing to make endeavours to redeem a people whose love was a transient thing, like morning dew?’

Israel’s behaviour was like the dew that goes away quickly. In other words, the righteous behaviour of the nation was short-lived.

God sent prophets with a message of rebuke and condemnation and gives a list of their transgressions. Some translations say different things in verse 7.

The Revised Version makes Adam a place.

The Authorised has Adam as men.

The NIV refers to Adam, the individual, the man.

God tells them what He requires, He requires mercy rather than meaningless sacrifices, [Isaiah 1:11-15](#) / [Isaiah 43:22-24](#) / [Amos 5:21-25](#) / [Micah 6:6-8](#) / [Proverbs 21:3](#) / [Matthew 12:7](#).

They were just going through the motions of religion with their hearts not it, [Mark 7:1-9](#). Just knowing God isn’t enough, [1 Samuel 15:22](#) / [Psalm 40:6-9](#) / [Psalm 50:8-15](#) / [Isaiah 1:11-17](#) / [Micah 6:8](#).

Gilead was known as a city of murderers and evildoers, [2 Kings 15:25](#). Shechem was one of the Levitical cities and a city of refuge, [Joshua 20:7](#) / [Joshua 21:21](#). The priests at Shechem are being condemned for their crimes, they are committing murder.

God now expresses His astonishment at Israel’s harlotry, [1 Kings 12:29](#), and concludes the chapter with a word of warning to Judah. As God had harvested the wickedness of Israel by sending her into captivity, Judah also would suffer the same harvest.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ammi, my people, means the people of Jehovah; and it is not Israel alone of the ten tribes, but the whole covenant nation as a whole.’

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘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; but they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me. “They delight the king with their wickedness, the princes with their lies.’ Hosea 7:1-3

This chapter deals with the corruption of Israel and appears to be the final thought of Hosea 6:1.

It appears that every time God healed Israel, 2 Kings 10:25, the more sinful they became. Ephraim and Samaria both were practising deceit, they became burglars and bandits.

They didn’t realise that God remembered every evil thing they were doing, Ecclesiastes 12:14 / Romans 2:16 / Revelation 20:12. God saw it all and their sin had become so bad, that God turned away from them.

Mays, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They do not remember the history of Yahweh’s revelation. Now their deeds surround them like the wall of a prison. When they worship, he is ready to heal and restore but when he looks upon them he must see the reality before him — the evil, the iniquity, and the sin.’

Despite being the nation’s leaders, it appears the king and the princes, were totally involved with the people’s sinfulness.

‘They are all adulterers, burning like an oven whose fire the baker need not stir from the kneading of the dough till it rises. On the day of the festival of our king the princes become inflamed with wine, and he joins hands with the mockers. Their hearts are like an oven; they approach him with intrigue. Their passion smoulders all night; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven; they devour their rulers. All their kings fall, and none of them calls on me.’ Hosea 7:4-7

As far as God is concerned they are all adulterers, Jeremiah 5:7, burning like an oven, Romans 1:27.

McKeating, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When left alone, the fire may look black and dead, but fierce heat is below the surface. It can be stirred into life at a moment’s notice.’

Their sin was so widespread that it was like the heated oven of a baker that is continually hot except for the time when he is kneading the dough.

The ‘festival day’ was possibly the king’s birthday or some other important occasion and it was time they all got themselves inflamed, that is, drunk with wine.

They get the king drunk with wine, while he joined hands with the mockers. They were plotting against him and planned to murder him, 2 Kings 15.

The fires of their evilness never went out and it was while they were in this sinful condition, that they now thought about calling out to God for help.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the third usage of the oven metaphor, as follows.

1. They are like the banked fire ready to flare up at the slightest chance, Hosea 7:4.
2. They were an oven fire, waiting while preparations are being completed, using the occasion to plan new evil, Hosea 7:6.
3. They ‘are hot as an oven’, their evil passions are a vicious, burning lust.

‘Ephraim mixes with the nations; Ephraim is a flat loaf not turned over. Foreigners sap his strength, but he does not realize it. His hair is sprinkled with gray, but he does not notice. Israel’s arrogance testifies against him, but despite all this he does not return to the LORD his God or search for him.’ Hosea 7:8-10

Here we read of Ephraim mixing themselves with foreign nations, 1 Corinthians 15:33 / 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Given, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The best comment on this verse is Psalm 106:35-36 / Psalm 106:39. They mingled among the heathen and learned their works. And they served their idols which were a snare unto them. Thus, they were defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions.’

Ephraim is like a half-baked cake, cooked on one side but soggy on the other. They had become a worthless cake, which needs to be thrown into the rubbish bin.

Hailey, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ephraim burned on one side, raw on the other, fit for nothing. They were cooked by heathenism, but uncooked, raw, in their relations to God.’

They had become like the foreign nations around them, 2 Kings 12:7 / 2 Kings 15:19, they got involved in idolatry without realizing it and so, God refused to help them.

Gray hair signifies age, they were coming to the end of life but didn’t notice. Israel became arrogant in their idolatry, they had forgotten all about God and His ways, Hosea 4:6, and tried to keep up with the nations around them.

They didn’t return to God or even search for Him. They depended upon themselves, the nations around them when they should have been dependent upon God. God had indeed become a distant memory.

‘Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless—now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria. When they go, I will throw my net over them; I will pull them down like the birds in the sky. When I hear them flocking together, I will catch them. Woe to them, because they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, because they have rebelled against me! I long to redeem them but they speak about me falsely. They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail on their beds. They slash themselves, appealing to their gods for grain and new wine, but they turn away from me. I trained them and strengthened their arms, but they plot evil against me. They do not turn to the Most High; they are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because of their insolent words. For this they will be ridiculed in the land of Egypt.’ Hosea 7:11-16

Ephraim became like a dove, easily deceived and senseless. They aimlessly flew back and forth to Egypt, 2 Kings 17:4, and Assyria for help, 2 Kings 15:19. Ephraim had no idea that they would end up being caught in a trap by the Assyrians, 2 Kings 17:4.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The mention of both Egypt and Assyria suggests that there were probably pro-Egypt and pro-Assyria parties in Samaria and as conditions changed, first one and then the other had the ear of the gullible and indecisive king. This panicky dependence on foreign powers was also condemned by other prophets of the time, Isaiah 30:1-7.’

God threw the net and pulled His people down like birds in the sky, Ezekiel 12:13. God was going to use the Assyrians to punish His people, Leviticus 26:14-44 / Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

Israel had totally forgotten about how God redeemed them out of Egypt and protected them along the way and instead of turning to God, they turned to these foreign nations for protection.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The construction of the phrase is impressive. And I, I would have redeemed them, but they, they spoke lies against me. The contrast between the Lord’s intention and Israel’s action is deliberately pointed.’

They cried out to their idol gods instead of crying out to God for help, Leviticus 26:1. They slash themselves, as the prophets of Baal practice, 1 Kings 18:25-30, and they turned to their idols for grain and wine, that is, for their sustenance, instead of turning to God to take care of their daily needs. It appears that they will turn to everything and everyone except God.

Instead of turning to God for strength and protection, they relied on a faulty bow, Psalms 78:57. Anyone who goes to war with a faulty bow will tell you they won’t last long because their bow is as good as useless, it is unreliable.

Harper, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The comparison is not to a bow which has lost its elasticity, Psalms 120:2f / Psalms 78:37, nor one that cannot be used because it is relaxed, nor one whose string breaks without shooting the arrow, nor one which strikes and wounds the bowman, but rather to a bow which is expected to shoot in one direction but actually shoots in another, thus failing to accomplish its end.’

The leaders will reap the reward of every idle word that ever came from their mouths and as a result, they will be ridiculed in Egypt. In other words, the Egyptians would make fun of them when Israel fell into the hands of the Assyrians.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the LORD because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law. Israel cries out to me, ‘Our God, we acknowledge you!’ But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him. They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction. Samaria, throw out your calf-idol!

My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of purity? They are from Israel! This calf—a metalworker has made it; it is not God. It will be broken in pieces, that calf of Samaria.’ Hosea 8:1-6

ISRAEL TO REAP THE WHIRLWIND

Here we read that the trumpet is blown as an alarm. The coming judgment is portrayed as an eagle, Job 39:27-30, that is, Assyria, hovering over the people.

Ward, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The eagle was a familiar Assyrian state symbol and since Assyria was the obvious threat to Israel’s sovereignty in the eighth century B.C., there is every reason to conclude that the eagle symbolizes Assyria here.’

The reason for judgment is given, they have broken the covenant and rebelled against the law. The people make a shallow, unconvincing cry to God, hence, why God didn’t answer them.

They claimed to know God but they didn’t and so God was no longer their God. Israel had the opportunity to do good, but now the eagle will come.

They set up their own kings which God never wanted them to have, 1 Samuel 8:19-22. They made idols with their silver and gold, they get involved in calf worship in Samaria, 1 Kings 12:28, which is condemned, Exodus 20:3-6 / Exodus 20:23 / Exodus 34:17. It was men who made these things, not God, 1 Kings 8:27.

‘They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now she is among the nations like something no one wants. For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has sold herself to lovers. Although they have sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them together. They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king.’ Hosea 8:7-10

Here we read that they will reap the consequences of what they sowed, Galatians 6:7. They were to reap national destruction and captivity. They would be swallowed up, that is they would become worthless vessels that wouldn’t hold water.

Israel’s alliances are mentioned, which is Israel’s tribute to Assyria in order to buy their preservation from an invasion by the Assyrians. Israel sold herself to lovers, that is, they went into alliances with the nations in order to stand against those who would seek to conquer her.

As far as God is concerned, they have already gone into exile. Their alliances will be of no use to them. God would bring them into judgment as they began to waste away as a nation.

‘Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning. I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as something foreign. Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me, and though they eat the meat, the LORD is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten their Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses.’ Hosea 8:11-14

Ephraim had built many altars of sin but they should have been altars of forgiveness.

Hindley, in his commentary, says the following.

‘At any one time, only one altar was to be set up for the nation in the place which God would choose, Deuteronomy 12:26f / Deuteronomy 14:24 / Deuteronomy 27:4-8 / 2 Kings 21:4-5. No special stress on write in the following verse suggests that Hosea was already familiar with a written law.’

Their sacrifices are meaningless to God. God’s law had become foreign to them, they simply couldn’t see the difference between God and their idols, God’s laws and their own made-up laws, Psalms 19:7-1. It appears the only reason they enjoyed sacrificing was because they were allowed to eat it.

The sacrifices which should have been devoted to God had become a time where they could enjoy the food themselves. God didn’t accept their sacrifices because all they did was offer them and eat them, without really acknowledging God and His ways, Micah 6:6-9.

Egypt is referred to as a symbol of bondage, but it is to Assyria that they will be taken. They had forgotten the very One who brought them out of Egypt and as a result, they built temples to their foreign gods, they forgot that God doesn't dwell in temples, Acts 17:24-27.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As a matter of fact, the bondage into which the northern kingdom fell was far worse than that of Egypt.’

1. The nation would not continue to grow as it had in Egypt.
2. There would be no terminus of it.
3. The complete amalgamation of the once chosen people with their pagan captors would be final. They would no longer exist as a separate people, distinguished in any manner from the populations of the world.

When God says He will send fire on their cities which will consume their fortresses, this would apply to both Israel and Judah. God would send the Assyrians to burn the cities and temples of the Northern Kingdom in 722/21 B.C. and He would send the Babylonians to burn Jerusalem and its temple in 586 B.C.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘Do not rejoice, Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor. Threshing floors and winepresses will not feed the people; the new wine will fail them. They will not remain in the LORD's land; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria. They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves; it will not come into the temple of the LORD. What will you do on the day of your appointed festivals, on the feast days of the LORD? Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents.’ Hosea 9:1-6

PUNISHMENT FOR ISRAEL

As the nation was now ready for captivity, there will be no rejoicing for Israel because everything will be taken from them. They have become unfaithful to God and they loved the wages of a prostitute on every threshing floor.

Harvest time was the time when they reaped the fruits of the harvest and was supposed to be a time of thanksgiving to God for supplying the harvest. However, they won't be enjoying any harvest, there will be no celebrating because they will have to carry the burden of captivity.

Polkinghorne, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This remark about harlotry on the threshing floor has a double meaning. Not only is there sacred prostitution, but there is the worship of false gods also.’

Israel must go into exile, they will not remain in the land. They will return to slavery, the kind of slavery they experienced in Egypt, but this time, with the Assyrians, Hosea 8:13.

Assyria is named and Israel will become slaves, they will eat unclean food and will have no sacrifices to offer. They will eat anything just to survive, and they will be taken away from all those places they once offered sacrifices.

While they are in exile, they won't be able to observe any of the appointed feasts which God asked them to in His laws. Egypt will gather them and Memphis will bury them, Egypt is figurative of slavery, and Memphis is figurative of a graveyard.

In other words, they will be taken into bondage and everything they have, including their treasured wealth, will be taken from them, 2 Kings 17:24-26 / 2 Kings 25:26.

‘The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac. The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God. They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.’ Hosea 9:7-9

This is the end of prophesy, the end of the Word of God for them. These are the days of God's judgment that had come because of their idolatry, 2 Kings 17:7-18.

The prophet who is considered a fool is a false prophet, Jeremiah 5:13 / Jeremiah 13:10 / 1 Kings 22:22 / Micah 2:11. He was the one who proclaimed peace when there wasn't any, Ezekiel 13:10. The inspired person is a maniac, this is the person who thought they were Israel's spiritual leader.

They were a maniac in terms of proclaiming that everything was going to be fine, when in fact it wasn't. The prophets and the priests proclaimed peace only because they wanted to hold onto their positions, 1 Kings 22:22. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Ephraim and the watchman.

‘What is plainly said here is that Ephraim had climbed up presumptuously and seated himself with God and in the place of God as the monitor and watchman of Israel's fortunes. He has taken God's place! How incredible that a reprobate like Ephraim is here bracketed with God himself, an exclamatory witness of the unbelievable arrogance and unbelief of Ephraim.’

Butler, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the snares.

‘The meaning is that Israel searches out divine revelations on her own, along with the God of Hosts. In other words, Israel does not depend on Hosea to be declaring to her the revelation of God, but she trusts in her own so-called prophets, who were not inspired of God.’

Gibeah became symbolic of moral disgrace when everyone did what they thought was right in their own eyes, Judges 19 / Judges 21:25 / 1 Samuel 10:26 / 1 Samuel 14:2 / 1 Samuel 22:6.

‘When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved. Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy, no conception. Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of every one. Woe to them when I turn away from them! I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place. But Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer.’ Hosea 9:10-

Here, Israel is pictured under the figure of a vine or fig tree. God found Israel as a traveller and found grapes and a fig tree in the desert, Micah 7:1. Their fruits have gone rotten and they will be punished for their association with Baal, Numbers 25:1-9 / Numbers 23:28.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning God finding them as grapes.

‘While they were faithful, they were as acceptable to me as ripe grapes would be to a thirsty traveller in the desert.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning God finding them as grapes.

‘This is a reference to the early favour which was found from God in the lives of the early patriarchs of Israel. Men of the stature of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were among the noblest ever to grace the ranks of mankind.’

The name Ephraim means ‘fruitfulness’ [Genesis 41:52](#), but the pride of an Israelite woman was to bear children. However, the time had come when Israel would no longer be fruitful. The people will be cast out, they will become wanderers and their offspring will be destroyed.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Their children were to perish at every stage in which they received life. This sentence pursued them back to the very beginning of life. First, when their parents should have joy in ‘their birth,’ they were to come into the world only to go out of it; then, their mothers womb was to be itself their grave; then, stricken with barrenness, the womb itself was to refuse to conceive them.’

Ephraim’s glory was their relationship with God, but they lost that glory when they turned to idolatry. When God turned away from them, Israel had no one to protect them from the Assyrians or the Babylonians. It was God who took them to the pleasant place, that is, Palestine, and it was Tyre, which was also given to Israel by God.

In other words, they were supposed to take God and His Word, into the world, to bring the world into a relationship with God, [Exodus 19:5-7](#), however, they failed and ended up embracing the idolatrous practices of the nations around them.

‘Give them, LORD—what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry. “Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious. Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring.” My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.’ Hosea 9:14-17

Hosea more or less says it would have been better for Israel not to have any children whilst in captivity, [Job 3:3](#) / [Jeremiah 20:14](#) / [Luke 23:29](#) / [1 Corinthians 7:26](#).

When Israel crossed into the Promised Land, the first place they came to was Gilgal and it was there they offered sacrifices to God, [Joshua 4:20](#) / [Micah 6:5](#). By the time Hosea is writing, Gilgal had become a place for idol worship, [Hosea 4:15](#) / [Hosea 12:11](#). God says He ‘hated them’ for their idolatrous behaviour at Gilgal, [Numbers 25:3](#). God was now driving them out of His house because of their sinfulness, [Hosea 8:1](#) / [Hosea 9:3](#). In other words, God is cancelling their salvation. He says He will no longer love them and highlights that even the leadership had become corrupt, [Malachi 2:8](#).

They were in such a sinful state they weren’t able to produce any kind of fruit for God, the only fruit they produced was that of idolatry, [Matthew 3:8](#) / [Matthew 21:33-43](#).

God is going to reject them because they rejected Him, [Hosea 4:6](#). The picture painted in this chapter is a picture of total destruction, they will have no children and there will be no one to inherit from them, [Proverbs 17:6](#).

They will become wanderers among the nations, [Deuteronomy 28:64-65](#), which is the same sentence that Cain received, [Genesis 4:12](#).

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘Israel was a spreading vine; he brought forth fruit for himself. As his fruit increased, he built more altars; as his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones. Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones.’ Hosea 10:1-2

Here again, we read that the figure of Israel is described as a luxuriant vine yielding fruit, [John 15:1](#), but the fruit becomes evil, [Hebrews 6:8](#).

They were supposed to bring fruit which honoured God, however, they brought fruit which honoured their idols. As their fruit increased, they built more altars, instead of destroying them as God commanded, [Exodus 23:24](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:22](#) / [1 Kings 14:23](#).

They must pay for their guilt because of their divided loyalty between God and their idols, [2 Kings 17:32-33](#) / [2 Kings 17:41](#), and so, God was going to demolish their idol altars and destroyed their sacred stones, [2 Kings 17:9](#).

‘Then they will say, “We have no king because we did not revere the LORD. But even if we had a king, what could he do for us?” They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a ploughed field. The people who live in Samaria fear for the calf-idol of Beth Aven. Its people will mourn over it, and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendour, because it is taken from them into exile. It will be carried to Assyria as tribute for the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be ashamed of its foreign alliances. Samaria’s king will be destroyed, swept away like a twig on the surface of the waters. The high places of wickedness will be destroyed—it is the sin of Israel. Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!” and to the hills, “Fall on us!” Hosea 10:3-8

Here we read of the people lamenting over the destruction of their idolatry. They would have no physical king whilst in exile because they didn’t honour or fear God. The point is, if they had honoured and feared God, they wouldn’t need a physical king in the first place, as God was their King.

The kings on earth would keep their covenants only if it benefitted them and they made false promises, only to keep themselves right with the people. They have become like poisonous weeds, [Deuteronomy 29:18](#), [Amos 5:7](#) / [Amos 6:12](#) / [Habakkuk 1:4](#), in a ploughed field.

The calf-idol of Beth Aven will be taken to Assyria as a spoil of war and the idolatrous priests would mourn over their destruction. The golden calf idol, [1 Kings 20:23](#) / [1 Kings 20:28](#), will also be carried into captivity as spoil, [Isaiah 46:2](#) / [Isaiah 46:7](#) / [Jeremiah 10:5](#).

Butler, in his commentary, says the following.

‘But this idol, this calf-god thing, will be carried off helplessly into captivity with Israel, as a present to the great warrior king of Assyria. Israel and her calf-god will be disgraced and then the advice and programs which Israel thought were so politically and religiously wise will appear foolish to Israel at that time.’

The ‘great king’ or ‘King Jareb’ as the KJV has it, is a reference not to a specific king but a general reference to the kings of Assyria. Samaria’s king will perish like a twig on the surface of water, [Isaiah 8:7-8](#). The people would be shamed because they believed the false prophets who were proclaiming peace when there wasn’t any peace.

The high places of Aven will be destroyed, these were the places where they practised their idolatry and debauchery, [1 Kings 12:31](#). God destroyed their idols through the conquest of the Assyrians, and later the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians. Because God destroyed everything they trusted in, they would rather die instead of go into captivity.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These very words were used by Jesus in [Luke 23:30](#), and by the prophet in [Revelation 6:16](#), as a statement of the terror that shall accompany the final judgment.’

‘Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, Israel, and there you have remained. Will not war again overtake the evildoers in Gibeah? When I please, I will punish them; nations will be gathered against them to put them in bonds for their double sin. Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh; so I will put a yoke on her fair neck. I will drive Ephraim, Judah must plow, and Jacob must break up the ground.’ Hosea 10:9-11

Israel has sinned since the days of Gibeah, [Judges 19:13-14](#) / [Hosea 9:9](#), Gibeah was the scene of brutalities given in [Judges 19-20](#). They had many victories over their enemies but they couldn’t conquer their own sinfulness, [Jeremiah 2:13](#), and as a result, God was going to punish them, [Lamentations 3:33](#) / [Ezekiel 5:13](#). Threshing the grain was easy to work with a heifer because the heifer ate the grain as it went along, [Deuteronomy 25:4](#). Now, Israel is going to be taken from the easy work to plough in the field of captivity. Assyria would become their yoke.

‘Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors, the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated—as Shalman devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children. So will it happen to you, Bethel, because your wickedness is great. When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.’ Hosea 10:12-15

Israel are now encouraged to seek the Lord, [2 Corinthians 6:2](#) / [2 Peter 3:9](#), they are encouraged to sow righteousness, [Psalms 72:6](#) / [1 John 3:7](#), and reap the fruit of love. In contrast to reaping the fruit to love, Israel had planted wickedness, [Isaiah 59:4-5](#) / [Hosea 4:1-2](#) / [Hosea 7:3](#), and so, they will reap evil, [Galatians 6:7-9](#). Without God, their own strength and their best soldiers couldn’t stand against the warrior soldiers of the Assyrian Empire. They are warned of war, where mothers and children will be killed, [2 Kings 8:12](#) / [Isaiah 13:16](#) / [Psalms 137:8-9](#).

Shalman and Beth Arbel are both unknown places, however, some scholars believe Shalman is short for Shalmaneser, [2 Kings 17:3](#) / [2 Kings 17:6](#), but this doesn’t seem to fit in with any of the Shalmanesers. Others say he was the Moabite king, Salamanu. Others think that this refers to Jerubbaal, or Gideon’s victory over Zalmunna, general of the Midianites, [Judges 7:1-21](#).

Because of their great wickedness, at the dawn of day, they will lose their king. God brought an end to their early kings when the Northern and Southern kingdoms were taken into captivity.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.’
Hosea 11:1-4

GOD’S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

In this chapter, Hosea recalls the love that God has for His people despite their sins. We see the ultimate victory of love over sin.

God's past love for Israel is remembered, Israel was God's son, Deuteronomy 32:6 / Deuteronomy 32:18 / Isaiah 63:16 / Isaiah 64:8 / Jeremiah 3:19 / Malachi 1:6 Malachi 2:10.

Here the relationship is shown as parent and child, the child turning further away from the parent who loves him. God first called Israel as His son out of Egyptian captivity, Exodus 4:22-23 / Matthew 2:14-15, however, Israel turned to worthless idols and the nations around them.

It appears the more God taught His people, the further away from Him they went. They didn't know it was God who healed them.

Butler, in his commentary, says the following.

'I eased all their burdens as a farmer pushes back the yoke upon his oxen, so they may eat their food in comfort, I even fed them manna from heaven, food for which they did not work.'

God led them with cords of kindness and ties of love. He carried them and blessed them with food along the road, so that they may live and grow.

'Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? A sword will flash in their cities; it will devour their false prophets and put an end to their plans. My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them.' Hosea 11:5-7

Despite God's love for His people, they need to be punished for their sinfulness.

Back in Hosea 8:13 and Hosea 9:3, returning to Egypt was used figuratively for returning to bondage. Here, it is to be taken literally. Israel will have to return to slavery, in Assyria and Assyria will be their king.

Smith, in his New English Bible rendition, gives the following interpretation.

'If they want Egypt, then Egypt they shall have. But it shall not be the old literal Egypt, but rather another bondage in which Assyria shall be their king.'

Because Israel refused to repent, they are going to reap the consequences of their sinfulness. Their cities will be destroyed, their false prophets will be devoured and all their plans will come to an end when the Assyrians take them into captivity.

When the Assyrians finally arrive, God's people would cry out to Him for help, but He will not listen to them.

'How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities. They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. They will come from Egypt, trembling like sparrows, from Assyria, fluttering like doves. I will settle them in their homes,' declares the LORD. Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One. Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One.' Hosea 11:8-13

Here we read that God's love is reaffirmed, even though Israel will have to be punished., God won't give up on them. Admah and Zeboyim were two of the four cities of the plain that was destroyed by God during the time of Abraham, Genesis 14:8 / Genesis 19:24-25, the other two cities were Sodom and Gomorrah, Deuteronomy 29:23. God loved His people as any child yearns for their child, regardless of their rebellion. God isn't going to give up on His people, despite their sinfulness, Romans 3:21-26.

Butler, in his commentary, says the following, concerning verse 10.

‘This verse is positively Messianic and noted that the roaring lion as a figure of the Lord is like those of [Joel 3:16-17](#) and [Amos 1:2](#), which is, of course, ‘A sending forth of the gospel from Jerusalem to all those who will hear and become sons of the covenant in the Messianic age’.

We also read of the restoration of Israel, a remnant will return to their homes.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nothing is said here of their returning to Palestine.’ The dwelling in ‘their houses’ is used as a metaphor for the blessings in the kingdom of Christ. This mercy of God which the prophet foresees is fulfilled in Christ. The physical facts of the situation force this interpretation, because Assyria no longer exists and we cannot take the ‘return from Assyria’ as figurative, and the entering into their houses as literal.’

Note that the NIV uses the words, ‘Judah is unruly, even against the faithful Holy One’. The KJV uses the words, ‘Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.’ The two different versions appear to conflict with each other, however, the KJV appears to be more accurate.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ephraim had cast off the rule of God, the kings and priests whom He had appointed, so that his whole kingdom and polity was without God and against Him. In contrast with this, Judah, amid all His sins, was outwardly faithful.’

Because of their faithfulness, God would allow Judah to continue, however, Judah eventually went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. because of their idolatry.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

‘Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother’s heel; as a man he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favour. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there—the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name! But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.’ Hosea 12:1-6

Hosea speaks here of Ephraim’s sin figuratively. He says God’s people pursued the hot east wind, but if they caught it, they would be burned by their own sin, [Hosea 8:7](#).

They made a treaty with Assyria, to keep them happy and they also sent olive oil to the Egyptians, in an effort to keep them close, just in case the Assyrians came against them. They trusted everyone except God for protection.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom were following in the steps of the Northern Kingdom, [Hosea 4:1](#). Although they weren’t going to be sent into captivity at this moment, they were warned by the punishment that befell Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, in their captivity.

Jacob grasped his brother’s heel in his mother’s womb, [Genesis 25:26](#). The name, ‘Jacob’ here, refers to all of the twelve tribes of Israel, all of them would eventually be punished because of their idolatry.

The twelve tribes of Israel were Jacob's sons. Jacob was full of deceit but later repented, he struggled with God, but then finally submitted to Him, [Genesis 32:22-32](#). In the same way, Israel was striving against God, but could still repent.

Because Jacob struggled with God, his name was changed to Israel, the name by which all twelve tribes became known. God's name is everlasting and eternal, it never changes, and so, Israel is asked to return to God who will deliver them for their future existence.

Hailey, in his commentary, says the following.

'The power of Jacob to prevail was the power of Israel of Hosea's day if they would but avail themselves of it. The power was in the name of Jehovah, the God of hosts, and was to be laid hold upon by weeping and supplication, as in the case of Jacob.'

DID JACOB STRUGGLE WITH GOD OR AN ANGEL?

Jacob struggled with God, but he struggled with the angel. The way to understand this passage is possibly by reminding ourselves, that the word 'angel' means a messenger.

As an angel, he is a representative of God, which would mean that Jacob wrestled with God's representative and therefore he wrestled with God.

When we go back to the Genesis account, [Genesis 32:22-32](#), we see that Jacob wanted a blessing from the man and wanted to know the man's name. He received the blessing, but not the name.

However, Hosea said that Jacob received the blessing but found the name of his benefactor in Bethel and it was there it was revealed that the blessing came from the Lord God of hosts, [Genesis 35:9-15](#).

It's because of these parallels that many people believe that Jacob wrestled with the being known as 'the angel of the Lord.' It's certainly possible that this is God, the Son who interacted with men in the form of an angel.

Notice again, Hosea says he was an angel, [Hosea 12:4](#), and He was God, [Hosea 12:3](#). It's possible that [Hosea 12:5](#) is a later answer to Jacob's question, the Lord is His name. So, it's reasonably possible to believe that Jacob wrestled with God, in the form of a man.

This is one of those areas where we may never come to a definite answer, in the grand scale of things it doesn't really matter who this person was wrestling with Jacob.

'The merchant uses dishonest scales and loves to defraud. Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." "I have been the LORD your God ever since you came out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed festivals. I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them." Hosea 12:7-10

Here Israel are described as a deceitful merchant, using dishonest scales, [Leviticus 19:36](#) / [Deuteronomy 25:13](#) / [Deuteronomy 25:15](#) / [Proverbs 16:11](#).

They had a clear lust for wealth and would go to any length to accumulate it and as a result, they thought their wealth would be a substitute for their sinfulness.

God reminds them that He has been their God since He brought them out of Egyptian bondage. Israel's exile would be both punishment and restoration to God. Whilst in exile they would lose all their riches and so become poor but it would be in their poor state that God would restore their faith.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This plain reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, during which the children of Israel lived in make-shift outdoor shelters as a reminder of their once great poverty, is another example of the way the Book of Genesis and the whole Pentateuch dominate every word of Hosea. Without that prior written Covenant in all its details, Hosea has no meaning whatever. What is promised here is that Israel shall again dwell in tents, not for a few days, as in the feast, but permanently. God will again reduce the nation to poverty, slavery, and deprivation, because they forgot the Lord and walked in wicked ways.’

Hailey, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They had no excuse for their ignorance of Jehovah, for he had spoken to them through prophets, through multiplied visions, and by the use of similitudes through which they should have learned.’

‘Is Gilead wicked? Its people are worthless! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Their altars will be like piles of stones on a ploughed field. Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep. The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him. But Ephraim has aroused his bitter anger; his Lord will leave on him the guilt of his bloodshed and will repay him for his contempt.’ Hosea 12:11-

14

Hosea now gives Israel a history lesson. Gilead, [Hosea 6:8](#), and Gilgal, [Hosea 4:15](#), had become the main places for idol worship. He reminds them of their father Jacob, [Genesis 29-31](#), who fled to Aram. It was there he served Laban for his wife.

God spoke through a prophet to bring them out of Egypt, God spoke through a prophet to call Israel out of Egyptian captivity through Moses.

Despite everything God has done and said through His prophets, Israel still rebelled against Him and provoked Him to anger. Israel’s blood was upon their own shoulders and they are going to have to pay for their own sin by going into captivity.

Polkinghorne, in his commentary, says the following.

‘[Hosea 12:14](#) gives the final verdict on Israel from the patriarchal period onward. His severe provocation of the Lord necessitates the death penalty, which it is not proposed to waive. Only here does Hosea use the Hebrew word for ‘Lord’, ‘Adonai’, as distinct from ‘YHWH’.’

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

‘When Ephraim spoke, people trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died. Now they sin more and more; they make idols for themselves from their silver, cleverly fashioned images, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of these people, “They offer human sacrifices! They kiss calf-idols!” Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears, like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window.’ Hosea 13:1-3

THE LORD'S ANGER AGAINST ISRAEL

Hosea now tells Israel that their doom is unavoidable. As the father of one of the tribes of Israel, Genesis 48:14, Ephraim was a dominant personality, in the main tribe in the Northern Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:20 / 2 Kings 14:25-27. When he spoke others trembled but their punishment is coming because of their idolatry and as a result, they died spiritually.

Hosea tells them they just keep on sinning, especially in connection with idolatry, 1 Kings 12:25-30 / 1 Kings 16:29-33. They made idols out of silver and worshipped them and they offered human sacrifices and kissed the calf idols, the idols of fertility.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Kissing the calves, or kissing the hand toward the calves or idols, was an act of devotion or homage expressed toward the false deity. The practice of ‘kissing the hand toward’ is found as early as Job and later in the days of Elijah, Job 31:27 / 1 Kings 19:18. The Spirit instructs the kings of the earth to kiss the Son, that is, to do homage to Him, Psalms 2:12.’

The morning mist, James 4:13ff, the early dew, the chaff, Matthew 3:12, and smoke are all used figuratively of Israel’s existence. They are soon to pass away because of their idolatry.

‘But I have been the LORD your God ever since you came out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Saviour except me. I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me. So I will be like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open; like a lion I will devour them—a wild animal will tear them apart.’ Hosea 13:4-8

God now reminds them of the time when He gave birth to them, back in Egypt, the time He delivered them from Egyptian slavery. He took care of their every need whilst they were in the wilderness, He provided good grazing grounds for their flocks.

Butler, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Their trouble was pride. They did exactly what Moses warned them not to do, Deuteronomy 8:11-20. When they become affluent, they did like so many other nations have done, and like America is doing today, they lifted up their hearts in pride and said, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ Pride, whether it is military pride, political pride, affluent pride, or intellectual pride, causes men wilfully to ignore the facts of history, 2 Peter 3:3-7. Pseudoscientists, proud of their intellectualism, proud of their erudition, or their religious heritage, will deliberately ignore the historical, textual integrity of the Bible and substitute theology and philosophy for the Word of God. Pride is the trap that snared the devil, snared Eve, and then Adam, and snares many millions today.’

They had forgotten God, Deuteronomy 6:10 / Deuteronomy 8:11, and God is now going to become like a lion, leopard and bear to them. He is going to totally rip them apart and devour them. After their time in captivity, they would have certainly learned the lesson that there is only One God, Exodus 20:3 / Isaiah 43:11.

‘You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your helper. Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes’? So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away.’ Hosea 13:9-11

God tells Israel that they were their own worst enemy. Because they rebelled against Him, they were actually rebelling against the only One who could help them.

Butler, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Man’s sin, judgment, sentence, and destruction are not, in themselves, from God, but from man’s moral choice to rebel against God. Whoever casts himself against the Rock of Ages will destroy himself, Matthew 21:42-44.’

Israel longed for a king, 1 Samuel 8:5, the problem was most of the kings led them into idolatry, they led God’s people away from Him and His ways. Because the kings led the people away from God, when the remnant returned from captivity, there would be no physical king again. God Himself, would once again be their King.

Mays, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In Hosea 8:4, Hosea said that Yahweh had no part in Israel’s kingmaking. Here the assessment is even more negative. Yahweh had no responsibility for Israel’s kings, and all that his people can receive from God through them is his anger.’

‘The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record. Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he doesn’t have the sense to come out of the womb. “I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? “I will have no compassion. Even though he thrives among his brothers. An east wind from the LORD will come, blowing in from the desert; his spring will fail and his well dry up. His storehouse will be plundered of all its treasures. The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open.”

Hosea 13:12-16

Ephraim’s guilt was stored up and kept on record, 2 Corinthians 5:10, that is, the sin was stored and kept for punishment, Revelation 18:5. Hosea tells us that Israel, despite their sin would give birth to a new nation, Isaiah 13:8 / Micah 4:9-10.

Harper, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The figure represents the woman, come to term, but unable to perform the act. But with the privilege of a Hebrew poet, Hosea suddenly shifts from the mother to the child that is to be born. He is an unwise son. The child is represented as failing to do the part assigned to him by nature and in this failure he shows himself unwise and foolish. The result will be that, instead of an occasion for rejoicing, a new birth, there will rather be an occasion for grief, for the parturition will be fatal to both mother and son. Not only is there no new being in the world; that one which did exist is taken away. Israel, in order to continue life, must be born again, without such new birth, old Israel must perish.’

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord will no longer have compassion, there is an end to the patience of God. Consequently, the answer to the two rhetorical questions in verse 14a is no. The Lord will not redeem them from the power of Sheol.’

The east wind, that is, Assyria would come from the east and totally destroy Israel. The spring and well are also metaphors in relation to the Assyrian invasion.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Assyrian invader, Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria in 723 B.C. Its close was in 721 B.C., the first year of Sargon, who seems to have usurped the throne of Assyria while Shalmaneser was at the siege of Samaria. Hence, while 2 Kings 17:6 states, ‘the king of Assyria took Samaria,’ 2 Kings 18:10 says, ‘at the end of three years they took it!’

Paul quotes from Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55, saying, “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The prophet foretold of a resurrection of the dead so that at the point in which it occurs one would exclaim, ‘where is thy sting o’ death?’

Death stings as a scorpion while man is in the terrestrial state; however, once the transformation of resurrection occurs, death and Hades will be cast into hell and will never more exist, [Revelation 20:14](#). If the scorpion is gone, so is its sting!

There is no escape for Samaria, they need to bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. During the Assyrian invasion, the Assyrians will kill many by the sword, little ones will be dashed to the ground and pregnant women's wombs will be ripped open.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'These stark and terrible details are all that is needed to describe the horrible Assyrian invasion that carried Northern Israel away forever. They ruthlessly butchered the vast majority of the population, burned, looted, and demolished their cities, destroyed their fortresses, and carried away into slavery more than 27,000 of the Israelites whose youth, strength, and ability would make them profitable as slaves. Children too young to work were destroyed. The nobility in the greater part, all of the aged, infirm, or disabled were killed.'

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

'Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion." Hosea 14:1-3

REPENTANCE TO BRING BLESSING

The book ends with a call to repentance, [Mark 1:14](#) / [Acts 2:38](#), which involves confession, and abandoning their sin. It appears there was still time to repent and save themselves from the Assyrian captivity.

They were to take words with them, the words, 'forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips', [Psalms 69:30-31](#) / [Romans 10:8-10](#) / [Hebrews 13:15](#) / [1 Peter 2:5](#).

Butler, in his commentary, says the following.

'The idyllic portrait of the Messianic Age now comes to a climax from the artist Hosea. God's gracious invitation is responded to by the New Israel who finds God able to do exceeding abundantly above all that can be imagined.'

Israel must realise that Assyria won't save them, they must realise that Assyria won't save them. They must realise that warhorses won't save them, [Psalms 33:17](#).

Some commentators suggest that the reference to the warhorses is a metaphorical way of declaring that, 'neither can Egypt help us.' Egypt was the principal source of the world's war horses in those times, [1 Kings 10:28](#) / [2 Kings 18:23](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the meaning of warhorses.

‘We shall no more fix our hopes on the proud Egyptian cavalry, to deliver us out of the hands of enemies to whom thy Divine justice has delivered us. We will expect no rest nor happiness in the elegances of life, and gratification of our senses.’

They must realise their manmade idols won’t save them, [Habakkuk 2:18-19](#). The only One who can save them is God Himself, [Psalms 103:4](#) / [Hosea 5:6](#) / [Habakkuk 2:20](#) / [Jeremiah 31:31-35](#).

‘I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendour will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. People will dwell again in his shade; they will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine—Israel’s fame will be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me.’ Hosea 14:4-8

Here we read that blessings are promised when they return, it’s a picture of prosperity, [Luke 15:11-32](#). When God’s people repent, God will receive them back as His people.

If they repent, God promises to heal them, [Hosea 6:1](#) / [Hosea 11:7](#), and love them, [Psalm 136](#), and He will turn away from His anger, [Romans 3:9-10](#) / [Romans 3:23](#). In other words, if they want to escape judgment and captivity, they must repent of their idolatry, [1 John 1:8-10](#).

God says He will be like dew to Israel, that is, ever refreshing and blossom like a lily, [Psalm 133](#) / [Matthew 6:28-29](#), that is, beautiful and strong. These are pictures of God’s continual love for them, [Psalms 36:9-10](#). God promises that they will grow despite the captivity.

They were previously a bad smell in the nose of God while they were involved in idolatry, but God says, after their repentance, they will smell like the sweet aroma which comes from the cedar tree, [Numbers 24:6](#) / [Song of Solomon 4:10](#). They will grow whilst in captivity just as the grain germinates into new wine.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God’s goodness will not merely forgive and restore, but also beautify and make fruitful and fragrant the New Israel of God.’

Their idols were nothing but man-made, [Exodus 32:4](#), dead pieces of wood, [Jeremiah 10:8-11](#) / [Isaiah 44:9-20](#), but God was the One who heard and answered their cries for help. Their idols produced no fruit at all, but they will recognise that all fruit comes from God.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The salvation which this promise sets before the people when they shall return to the Lord is indeed depicted according to the circumstances and peculiar views prevailing in the Old Testament, as earthly growth and prosperity but its real nature is such that it will receive a spiritual fulfilment in those Israelites alone who are brought to belief in Jesus Christ.’

‘Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.’ Hosea 14:9

This is the lesson to be learnt, ‘let the wise and discerning understand this’, [Isaiah 1:3](#).

The wise are to walk in the righteous of God, they will hunger and thirst for righteousness, [Isaiah 55:1-2](#) / [Matthew 6:33](#). However, the rebellious will stumble and fall over God and His Word.

Out of the experience of his own life, Hosea had learnt the message of God. God continued to love them, and Hosea passed on the message to the people. God will still forgive us, if we turn back to Him, [Acts 17:30](#).

Wood, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In beauty of expression these final words of Hosea rank with the memorable chapters of the Old Testament. Like the rainbow after a storm, they promise Israel’s final restoration. Here is the full flowering of God’s unfailing love for his faithless people, the triumph of his grace, the assurance of his healing, all described in imagery that reveals the loving heart of God.’