

# *Hosea*

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# *Hosea*

## *The Book*

The name Hosea means salvation or deliverer.

Hosea's prophecies were given to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Except for the beginning, chapters 1 - 3, the book is a collection of sayings from different periods of his life but the circumstances under which they were given are not known.

The book is divided into two major parts. The first being a description of a the marriage between Hosea and an adulterous wife. This marriage is symbolical of the spiritual adultery of Israel. Israel's sin of idolatry, of following after other gods, was a breaking of the covenant established between God and his people. (Ex. 34:28, Deut. 4:13) Through this marriage is shown the rejection of the people by the Lord and the eventual return and restoration of the nation.

In the second part of the book the emphasis is on the announcement of judgment upon Israel for her apostasy and continued corruption despite the warnings given by the prophets. Along with the warnings and pronounced judgments there is still the promise of God's love if there is true repentance.

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## Background (Hosea 1:1)

*v. 1:1 The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jerobiam the son of Joash, king of Israel.*

There is not much known about the prophet except what is written in his book. The prophet's father's name is Beeri which is of no major importance except that it distinguishes the author of this book from others with the same name, Hoshea being the same as Hosea.

The period in which he lived is given by a listing of kings who reigned during his lifetime. Although a prophet to Israel the majority of the kings given are from Judah. It is generally agreed upon that the reason for this is that they were the legitimate line of David. Jeroboam II being mentioned because he was the last king of Israel helped by God.

The naming of the kings also indicates how long he prophesied, 60 - 65 years.

Israel was prosperous under king Jeroboam II, however they were on the decline both morally and spiritually. (2 Kings 14:23-25; Amos 2:6, 4:1, 5:12)

## Hosea's marriage (Hosea 1:2)

*v. 1:2 The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.*

God's initial command to Hosea is to take a wife, a "*wife of whoredoms*". The term whoredom when used in context with a person means prostitute. (Lev. 19:29) When used in connection with a nation it refers to deserting God for idols. (Ezk. 16:17)

There is a split among commentators as to whether Gomer was a prostitute prior to the marriage or became one after the marriage. Logically an argument could be made either way, but the past is not what is important, it is the keeping of the vow in the future. Gomer is being set as a symbol of Israel and will, just as the adulterous wife, break the vow it had taken.

The phrase "*children of whoredoms*" means that the children of this marriage would follow in their mother's footsteps into a life displeasing to God.

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## Hosea's first son (Hosea 1:3-5)

*v. 1:3-5 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.*

The first son of Hosea's was to be named Jezreel. The name is significant in that its meaning is 'scattered by God' and Jezreel was the city in which Jehu killed the kings of Israel and Judah. Hosea is given a prophecy through his first born. It is the affirmation that the reign of the house of Jehu will in a short time come to an end. (2 Kings 10:30)

The reason for the vengeance on the house of Jehu was that he had taken more lives than God had intended. Although Jehu had followed God's instructions his desire for personal advancement probably led him to abuse the power given to him thereby causing God to pronounce judgment. (2 Kings 9:7, 16, 24, 27, 10:1, 7, 11)

The judgment that the house of Jehu would end is not the only judgment given, the entire nation of Israel will come to the same end. It is assumed the judgment made against Israel is coupled with the end of Jehu's line because Jehu did nothing to turn the nation away from the golden calves setup by Jeroboam I. This may also show that his zeal in taking over as king was not entirely driven by his desire to all for the Lord. (2 Kings 10:29,31)

The bow is the symbol of might, strength or power. Israel, in this time of prosperity has put its trust in its military strength. The breaking of the bow symbolizes the breaking of Israel's might and power. The breaking of this power will occur in the valley of Jezreel.

## Hosea's daughter (Hosea 1:6-7)

*v. 1:6-7 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.*

Hosea's daughter's name, given by God, was Loruhamah, meaning 'not loved'. Because of their continuing apostasy God will totally forsake Israel and give them over to their enemies. As history shows, within 50 years Israel is defeated and taken into captivity by the Assyrians. (2 Kings 15:29, 17:5-6) Israel, the northern nation, would never rise again.

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Because the word 'him' is not mentioned in conjunction with the birth of the daughter (or the second son) the question is raised as to whether or not Hosea is the actual father. To this there is no answer.

In contrast to Israel, Judah's kings were obedient to the Lord.. (2 Chr. 26: 3-4; 27:1-2; 29:1-2) Because they did what was right in the sight of the Lord they were saved, at least for the time being, from the same fate suffered by Israel. Judah would be saved not by their strength but by the saving grace of the Lord. (2 Chr. 32:1-3, 20-22)

In the future, after the captivity, the Lord will save his people by his spirit not by any power or strength an individual or nation might possess. (Zach. 4:6; 2 Chr. 36:22-23))

## Hosea's second son (Hosea 1: 8-9)

*v. 1:8-9 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.*

A third child was born to Gomer about the time she had weaned the second, about two to three years, and indicates the length of time between births. The name Loammi was given and means 'not my people'.

The third child represents the final stage of God's association with the northern 10 tribes. Because of the continued wickedness God totally rejects them as his people and revokes the pledge given to Moses. (Ex. 6:6-7; Lev. 26: 12)

In the names of the three children we see the progression of God's judgment. First the prophecy of the end of the line of Jehu and the subsequent assassinations. Second, the withdrawal of his mercy. And third, the disowning of the nation.

## Hope for the future (Hosea 1:10-2:1)

*v. 1:10-11 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. v.2:1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi, and to your sisters, Ruhamah.*

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Even though God will punish his people there is still the promise of reunion with him. Hosea gives the people hope in his prophecy of saving grace. The promise God made to Abraham still stands. (Gen. 22:16) This prophecy is fulfilled both literally and spiritually.

Literally, the Jewish nation returns from captivity to Judah. The once separate nations of Israel and Judah unite as one nation. (Ezk. 37:16-22) The temple would be rebuilt and God would appoint the king (head) to be over them. (Ezk. 37:23-25; Jer. 23:5-6; Luke 1:31-33)

"*to come up out of the land*" means the people will come out of the lands where they lived during the time their nation was occupied, principally Babylon.

The phrase "*in the place where*" can also be said "instead of". thereby reading 'instead of saying unto them Ye are not my people ...' Spiritually the meaning is that both Jew and Gentile (those who were not his people) would make up the spiritual nation of Israel. The promise given to Abraham is one of faith and all those who believe are of the seed which cannot be numbered. (Rom. 9:7-8; Gal. 3:6-7; Gal. 4:28-29)

The faith that makes us the seed and therefore the "*sons of the living God*" is the faith we have in Jesus Christ. (John 1:12; Rom. 9:25-26; Gal. 3:26)

"*to come up out of the land*" spiritually means to leave behind death and a life headed for destruction and to come into the light of saving grace in Jesus Christ. (Job 10:21-22; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

The name Jezreel also takes on a different meaning. Instead of 'God will scatter' it means 'God will sow'. God will sow the seed which in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ will be a glorious day for the believer. (John 12:23-24)

Ammi means 'my people' and Ruhamah means 'obtained mercy'. So, when the promise is fulfilled God will be reconciled with his people and we can say that we are truly his people and that we have obtained mercy.

The other thought is that the nations of Judah and Israel will be united after the Babylonian captivity which only partially fulfills the promise. The 'place' is interpreted as being a physical place, Palestine, where God rejected his people. The Jewish nation will return to this place and be accepted into the new covenant making them the sons of the living God. The recognition of being a completely unified nation does not occur until 1948 when Israel becomes a nation and has set before them a governmental head of state.

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The prefiguring of this event was when the 12 tribes of Israel left Egypt headed for the promised land. A head was appointed by God, Moses. The going up out of the land was the people leaving Egypt. The restoration of Israel is when Israel inhabits Canaan.

In the end the Jews return from the other lands where they had been scattered to Palestine (Jezreel), here they are converted to Christ, and this ushers in the 1,000 year reign of Christ prophesied by Isaiah and John in the book of Revelation.

## *First judgment speech (Hosea 2:2-13)*

*v.2:1 Plead with your mother, plead: for she [is] not my wife, neither [am] I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;*

The parallel of Hosea's marriage continues with him telling his children to plead with their mother to give up the life of prostitution she has gone into. The situation has gone so far that he no longer considers Gomer to be his wife. The only way he will accept her back is if she would give up her adulterous lifestyle. The implication is that divorce is eminent.

Spiritually the mother is the nation of Israel and the children are its people. The nation has left God and gone after other gods, the original golden calves, Baal and other various idol worship. The people are implored to bring the nation back to the Lord. The only way this can happen is if the other gods are given up and idol worship stopped.

*v.2:3-4 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.*

The threat of discipline is made by Hosea against his wife. If she does not give up her present life she will be stripped naked, that is, publicly exposed for what she is, an adulteress. All form of support would be withdrawn by him leaving her helpless and alone.

Symbolically God would take away every thing from the nation. Israel would be as she was in Egypt, helpless under the rule of Pharaoh. Without God's mercy they would be unable to free themselves. The land would be like that of the wilderness during the Exodus. Not only would there be physical suffering but spiritual as well. The people would thirst after God but he would not bring them comfort. (Amos 8:11)

The children have followed in their mothers footsteps therefore Hosea will disown them as

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well. God in the same manner will not show his mercy upon the people of a wicked nation. The sins of the parent would be visited upon the children and by the same token the people of the nation for generations to come would be made to suffer for those who followed the nation into sin.

*v.2:5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*

The wife has gone after other lovers in her adulterous life and claims that they are the ones who have given her food and clothing. The husband really is not the one who has provided these things in their marriage.

So too, Israel has clung to her idols to which she has given the credit for providing the necessities of life. They chase after other nations believing that their gods have provided them with a better life and therefore must have the true god.

*v.2:6-7 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.*

The judgment given by God is that he would let them go their own way but that it would be painful and without the pleasure they think they will have. (Sam. 8:4-7) The "thorns" are meant to be troubles, a pain. (Num. 33:55; Prov. 15:19) The "wall" may mean that God would put a stop to any sinful pleasure.

The adulterous wife will continue to seek after other lovers but will not find comfort or satisfaction in any of them. Realizing this she will desire to return to her husband, finally understanding that she already had all that she needed.

Israel will, as the wayward wife, continue to seek after idols and other gods but will never find satisfaction in them. Israel will then return once again to the Lord remembering that it was in him that their needs were met. (Luke 15:21)

*v.2:8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.*

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The reason given for Israel's unfaithfulness is that the people did not recognize God was the source of all their needs. Gold and silver were used (prepared) to make idols for Baal worship. The underlying reason they did not know who their provider was is that God had, as punishment, given them over to their own wickedness. (Rom 1:24-28)

*v.2:9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.*

The result of not recognizing that God was the provider was that he would withdraw these things from them. The corn and wine represent food, the wool and flax clothing. The two basic necessities of life would be withheld. Presumably there would be drought or invasion to prevent the harvests of the spring and fall. (Amos 4:7-10)

The Assyrians had made it a practice to invade during the harvest so their troops could have food while on their campaign.

*v.2:10 And now I will discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.*

Discovering her lewdness is to expose her foolishness. An individual can cover and surround themselves with many good things and everyone will believe they are wise and honorable. But, as soon as God withdraws his gifts their esteem vanishes. God is the giver of all things and we must recognize this.

As a nation Israel was prosperous during this time in history, possibly the envy of the other nations around her. As God withdrew his gifts there was no longer the respect for her that there once was. As the nation declined there would be no one that could change the direction God had intended for them to go.

*v.2:11-13 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and the fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the Lord.*

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Israel had three major feast days; Passover, Pentecost, and the feast of the tabernacles. (Deut. 16:16) The new moons were days that occurred at the first of each month where the people were to make special offerings. (Num. 10:11) The sabbaths were the once a week gatherings and the solemn feasts were other various occasions set aside for worship, the largest being the feast day Jeroboam I added on the 15th day of the 8th month. (1 Kings 12:32-33)

God instituted these days and they were to be times of sacrifice, worship and joy (mirth). The people evidently were keeping the observance of them but not to honor God. They became only a time of feasting and festivities. The Lord promises to remove the joy from these festive days. (Amos 8:10)

The nation has become prosperous by producing a good crop represented by vines and fig trees. The credit for this prosperity is once again given to someone other than God. Because of this God will destroy the crops by allowing weeds and other types of vegetation to grow to choke them out. Animals would also eat the crop before it could be harvested.

In the past Israel worshipped Baals of different types. From the earliest days to the time of Hosea they had continually forgot what the Lord had done for them. He would, as he did in the past, send them into captivity. (Judges 3:7-8)

## Salvation Speech II (Hosea 2:14 - 3:5)

*v.2:14-15 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Immediately after the condemnation for following idols and forgetting the Lord, he promises a new and prosperous life. Although they have fallen away and are in captivity God will entice them to come back to him.

To "*bring her into the wilderness*" is to release her from captivity. In Egypt they were captive. When they went into the wilderness on their way to Canaan they were brought out of captivity. Once out of captivity God would assure them that they were his people.

As believers in Christ, we, the seed of Abraham, have been brought out of the captivity of sin and have been given the assurance that we are his people and that we will enter into his kingdom.

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What was taken away prior to going into captivity will be restored, prosperity (vineyards) will be returned.

The meaning of Achor is trouble and is representative of the trouble Israel had when first entering into Canaan. (Josh. 7) Once the sin was revealed and punishment handed out the hope of victory was present.

*v.2:16-17 And it shall be in that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*

When Israel became right with God he wanted to be known as her husband (Ishi) and to no longer be called lord (Baali). The people must have looked on God as being one of the deities of Baal. The lord of '...'. God did not want his name associated in any way with a false deity. To rid the people of this way of thinking he would take the many lords out of their life, for he is the one Lord, the Lord of all things.

*v.2:18 And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.*

God makes a twofold promise with Israel, contingent upon their return to him. The first is that they will no longer have to fear losing their crops to any kind of animal. Once again they would be prosperous. Second, there would be no more wars. Israel would be a peace with their neighboring nations. (Lev. 26:5-6)

*v.2:19-20 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.*

God offers a new covenant to his people. It is defined much like a marriage. When one is betrothed to another it is for life. When one is betrothed to Christ it is forever. (Eph. 5:31-32) We do not come into this relationship of ourselves. God establishes the relationship by betrothing us to him.

The nature of the relationship is described by five attributes:

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- 1) righteousness, which describes God's loyalty or honesty in dealing with the covenant.
- 2) justice, which tells us of God's fairness when dealing with us in the covenant
- 3) steadfast love, which shows us his attitude and behavior concerning the covenant
- 4) mercy, which is his tenderness and compassion
- 5) faithfulness, which shows his dependability and reliability concerning the covenant

These are the things that God brings into the relationship. Since we, of ourselves, can bring nothing into the relationship God promises to give these attributes to us by instilling them in us. (Jer. 31:33-34)

*v.2:21-22 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*

In the day that Israel once again comes to realize God's sovereignty he will hear them. The things previously taken away (v.2:9) would be returned. God would once again provide the people with the necessities of life.

The providing of his gifts is represented by the heavens crying out to provide rain to the earth. The earth in turn cries out to the heavens for rain. The earth will respond to the cry of the crops by providing fertile ground in which to grow. God has sovereignty over all things and will respond to the prayers of the people (Jezreel). (Zech. 8:12-13)

Spiritually, the drought of the word of God (Amos 8:11) would be lifted and once again the people would respond with prayers and worship. The Lord returning to the people would be like the refreshing rain returning to a parched earth.

*v.2:23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

Once again the promise is that he will call to all people, Jew and Gentile alike, throughout all the earth. (v.1:10)

## Reunited (Hosea 3:1-5)

*v.3:1 Then the Lord said unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look*

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*to other gods, and love flagons of wine.*

Hosea is commanded by God to go and take back his wife who was living in adultery with another man. 'A woman' is used to indicate the separated state of Gomer from her husband. 'Beloved of a friend' shows that Hosea had loved, and still loves his wife even though she is having a relationship with another. (Song of S. 5:16)

The parallel of Hosea and Gomer with that of God and Israel is shown by the command that Hosea love his wife just as God loves Israel even though they had deserted him for other gods. (Jer. 3:20)

Flagons of wine were pressed cakes of grapes used as offering to idols. The people evidently enjoyed sacrificing to these idols.

*v.3:2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.*

Gomer must have become a slave or concubine to her master and Hosea had to buy her freedom. The price paid for her was lower than the price paid for slaves which would indicate the low worth of Gomer. (Ex. 21:32) Barley was low grade grain and used more often to feed animals also indicating worthlessness of Israel.

The parallel drawn here is that spiritual Israel is worthless and lives as a slave to sin. To get freedom from sin we had to be purchased for a price. (John 8:34; 1 Cor. 7:23)

*v.3:3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.*

Upon Gomer's return to the household of her husband she would be in a state of discipline for her sin. She would be under this discipline for an undetermined period of time described as 'many days'. (Num. 12:14) During this time she would not have any intimate relations with her husband or with any other man. Hosea would also refrain from relations with her.

*v.3:4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:*

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The meaning of Gomer's isolation from her husband and how it related to Israel's isolation from God is given in this verse. Israel will be placed in a wait state, deprived of participation in both political and spiritual areas.

Israel would not have a king or a prince. They would not have a governmental head to protect them, fight their battles, administer justice and take care of their common welfare.

There would be no sacrifice. Sacrifice was the center of religious worship in the Old Testament. Without a sacrifice there would be no worship. Images or idols were made to be worshipped, they would no longer have the means to make their idols and therefore could not even worship false gods.

There would be no priesthood to lead their worship and receive the divine word of God. The ephod was the sacred garment worn by the high priest. A breastplate was connected to the ephod and on the breastplate were placed the Urim and Thummim through which God communicated his will in important matters. (Ex. 28:30) Without an ephod this communication with God could not take place.

A teraphim was an idol or image in human form and was used by the owner as sort of a good luck charm or could be prayed to in time of need. (household idol) In captivity they would be without these personal items.

*v.3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*

The promise is that after the period of 'many days' without the Lord they will return to Him. The return would involve the process of seeking to find God and the promised Messiah. (Jer. 50:4; 30:9)

Seeking after the Lord would begin a learning process. Through this learning process a reverence and awe of God and his goodness would result.

Those searching for Christ will find him in the "latter days". The latter days being the times in which Christ, the apostles and we ourselves live. (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1-2)

*Breaking the covenant (Hosea 4:1-10)*

*v.4:1-2 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a*

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*controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.*

In this speech Hosea takes a much more direct approach than in the previous chapters. He is making an announcement to the entire nation of Israel and is giving three general areas in which they have been lacking. The overall idea is that they had broken the covenant with God to which they had agreed. (Ex. 34:28; 24:3)

First, they were without truth. They were not faithful in keeping the covenant which they had agreed upon. (Ezek. 20:7-8)

Second, they had no mercy. They were without love for God and without compassion for their fellow man. (Amos 8:4-6)

Third, they had no knowledge of God. They had forgotten with whom they had made the covenant. (2:8)

After these more general sins Hosea continues by listing specific sins against God thus showing how they have broken the covenant.

- a) swearing, third commandment (Ex. 20:7)
- b) lying, ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16)
- c) killing, sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13)
- d) stealing, eighth commandment (Ex. 20:15)
- e) adultery, seventh commandment (ex. 20:14)

Hosea decrys the acts of moral injustice as becoming more prevalent in society. "*They break out*" indicating that these acts were becoming increasingly hard to control. And, "*blood toucheth blood*" meaning that the acts of violence were becoming more frequent. (2 Kings 15:8, 10, 13, 14, 16)

*v.4:3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.*

Because of their sin a sentence must be passed against the people. The land will be devastated causing death to anything living in the land, both plant and animal. (Amos 8:8; 9:5) The statement that the fish would also die would indicate a severe drought.

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(1 Kings 17:1, 7; 18:5) Once the water dries up the crops cannot grow resulting in widespread famine. (2 Kings 6:26-29)

*v.4:4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.*

Israel had long been going down the wrong path and all were just a guilty for the sins being committed. Some individuals were contending with others and charging them with various wrongdoings as if they were free of sin. Hosea compares their actions with those receiving judgment by the priest. According to the law when a case was brought before the priest and he rendered his decision all parties were to abide by the decision because it was, in effect, given by God. (Deut. 17:8-11) Those who chose not to abide with the priest's decision were at odds not only with the priest but with God and could be put to death. (Deut. 17:12)

*v.4:5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.*

Because the people had gone after other gods the judgments of the Lord would come upon them both day and night. There would be no escape from the judgments. (Amos 9:2-4) The false prophets would be judged along with the people.

The mother is the nation of Israel of which the people are her children. Together both the people and nation would be destroyed.

*v.4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

The reason for the destruction of the nation is because they forgot God. They forgot who he was and what he had done for them, that he had chosen them as his people and had made his covenant with them. (Is. 5:13, Prov. 1:7)

The priests are singled out because they had known God's law but rejected it. They preferred to direct their worship and the people's toward Baal and various other gods. To reject God is a conscious, willful decision, to forget God is negligent.

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*v.4:7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.*

The word "*they*" is the key to whom Hosea is referring. There is a variation in how this word is interpreted. Some versions of the Bible interpret the word as "*priests*". The effect of changing the word puts the blame for the increasing movement away from God on the priesthood. As the number of priests increased they took the nation and the people farther away from God.

On the other hand, using the word "they" condemns the entire nation. As the nation increased in numbers, prosperity, wealth and prestige they became more sinful. As they became more prosperous the more credit they gave to their false gods. This led to more fervent worship of the false gods taking them farther away from the true God.

Because they gloried in their accomplishments and failed to give God the credit for their increase he would strip them of their power and wealth and reduce them to nothing.

*v.4:8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.*

The priests were making a profit off the sins of the people. Sin offerings were to be offered on a regular occasions such as the Passover, Pentecost or the feast of the tabernacles. Also special sin offerings were given when a person committed a sin unintentionally or in ignorance. (Lev. 4:2-3) The sin offerings were to be done in a prescribed way and after the sacrifice was complete the meat left over could be eaten by the priests. (Lev. 6:25-26)

The priests, according to Hosea, were abusing this privilege. Their interests centered on receiving the food for themselves rather than centering the offering on what it was intended, that of making an atonement for the sin to the people.

The priests in addition were not admonishing the people for their sin. They would rather have them continue to sin so that they would have to make continued atonement. The more sin, the more sacrifices, the more food.

*v.4:9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.*

Hosea does not lay all the blame on the priests for promoting sin. He states that the

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people are exactly like the priests. The people saw what the priests were doing and turned a blind eye to their actions. They also took the priests actions as an example to follow and did not concern themselves with their sin. (Jer. 5:31)

Because of this nobody would escape the judgment. (Is. 24:2-3)

*v.4:10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord.*

The priests will never be satisfied with what they take in from the sin offerings. The people will prostitute themselves before the gods of Baal. Even though they do these things which they think will bring them increase, they will not increase.

The reason for this is that they have neglected to follow God in obedience. As soon as man takes his eyes off God he falls hopelessly into sin.

## Corrupted religion (Hosea 4:11-19)

*v.4:11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.*

People are generally guided by their affections. The term heart expresses understanding or intellect as well as affections. The heart usually guides the head. The pleasures of life, prostitution and drunkenness, appeal to the affections of the heart. The heart guiding the head allows for the rationalization of the pleasures thereby giving a distorted or perverted view of the pleasures. Once the pleasures are rationalized the understanding of what is right and wrong is gone. (Prov. 2:2; 3:3; Is. 28:7)

*v.4:12-13 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.*

Hosea gives three examples of how the people have lost their understanding and are unable to make rational judgments.

First, they seek advice and guidance from wooden objects (stocks).

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Second, they seek direction by casting lots, sticks or small pieces of wood (staff).

Third, they worship on mountain tops so as to be closer to their gods. They also sacrifice under large trees in the shade because the trees may have been considered sacred. The oak is known for strength (Amos 2:9). The poplar for fertility (Gen. 30:37-38).

The reason the people keep going down the wrong path is that they are driven by the evil in their hearts and urged on by the devil and evil spirits which foster the sin and idolatry.

Generally the worship of the gods such as Astarte, a goddess of love, involved sexual activity as part of the ritual. The result of this type of worship would eventually lead to the involvement of wives and children. As people became more and more involved it became a good thing to become a consecrated prostitute in honor of the pagan god.

*v.4:14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.*

The decision of God regarding prostitution was that he wouldn't even bother to stop those that prostituted themselves because they had for so long lived and sacrificed with whores and prostitutes that they didn't know any better.

However it is stated that ignorance of the true God is not an excuse for committing sin. Even those who did not have knowledge of the true God will not survive the final judgment. (Rom. 1:20)

*v.4:15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The Lord liveth.*

Hosea issues a warning to Judah. Israel had fallen away and went worshipping after idols. Judah is warned not to follow the example of Israel.

Judah had the legal priesthood and the temple in Jerusalem, they were not to make pilgrimages to Gilgal and Bethel. Gilgal was once a holy place where Israel stopped after crossing the Jordan River when entering the holy land. (Josh. 5:6-9) Since that time idol worship had taken over. (Judg. 3:19; Amos 4:4)

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Bethel, referred to as Bethaven or house of idols, had also been an important city where the ark of the covenant had been for a long time. (Judg. 20:26-27). Jeroboam turned the city into one of his holy cities. (1 Kings 12:28-29; Amos 3:14)

They were also cautioned not to take oath using God's name in connection with calf worship or other idolatry. (Is. 48:1).

*v.4:16-17 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the Lord will feed them as a Lamb in a large place. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*

Hosea uses a cow to describe the attitude of Israel. Just as a cow resists the yoke when placed upon it, so Israel resisted the yoke of God's law. (Jer. 7:24, Deut. 21:18)

Ephraim is the tribe most thought of when referring to Israel since it was the most influential. They are so caught up with idols and joined to them that they could not be separated  
(1 Cor. 6:16; Matt. 15:14)

*v.4:18-19 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye. The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.*

Their drink is sour refers to the life of sin that they have followed (Prov 4:17; Jer. 31:29-30) They continually partake of the idolatry of their false gods. The rulers of the land love to shame themselves by following these practices.

Because of their shameful doings they will be swept away from their land as suddenly as a gust of wind. When brought down they will be ashamed of what they had done because they will know the truth.

## Criticism of leadership (Hosea 5:1-7)

*v.5:1 Hear ye this, O priests; and harken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.*

Hosea continues to make charges against those that oppose God. To make no mistake about who is guilty he once again states the priests and the general populace, but now includes the royal family.

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The priests and royal family are singled out because they were supposed to be the leaders. They were the ones who had the responsibility to lead the people in righteousness. But, they are being rebuked because they failed in this leadership role. Instead their actions were a snare or a net to trap the people.

Hosea compares the entrapment of the people to the catching of game in Mizpah and Tabor. Just as hunters had trapped their game so the leaders had lured and got the people caught in idolatry.

The cities identified as Mizpah and Tabor are also used to indicate that the entire kingdom was involved in this idolatry because one is east of the Jordan and the other west.

*v.5:2 And the revolters are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all.*

In speaking of the leaders he calls them "revolters" or those who would corrupt others. They have also revolted against God. (Jer. 6:28)

The leaders are also said to be profound, that is, to have deep knowledge, which was used to lure the people to the slaughter or spiritual death. (Prov. 7:6-22)

Hosea was, as was God, a witness to this cunning and had attempted to refute the false wisdom of the leaders.

*v.5:3-4 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled. They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord.*

Ephraim is singled out as being the tribe foremost in committing idolatry, the rest of Israel to a lesser extent. The fact that they may do these things in private does not escape the notice of God. (Ps. 90:8; Heb. 4:13)

So long as they were driven by their evil ways they would not return to God. Their attitude had to change before they could see the truth. They were not willing to adjust their attitudes to allow themselves to see the true God. (Acts 7:51)

At the center of their lives was this false worship and they were not about to change. Many

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were brought up in these beliefs and did not have any knowledge of God.

*v.5:5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.*

Israel was rejecting the warnings of the prophets preferring to rely on the gods they had setup for themselves. When presented with the truth Israel refused to believe it thereby estifying to itself that its pride would not let it return to God. This pride was openly displayed in the sins they committed against God. The result was that the nation would fall.

By the time this speech is given Judah, who had been warned not to follow Israel into sin, was on its way down. Here the prophecy is given that Judah would also fall.  
(2 Chron. 28:24-25)

*v.5:6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.*

Once the judgment of God starts the people will attempt to gain God's favor by sacrificial offerings from their flocks and herds. But, because God had declared that he would not remember them he would not accept their offerings and withdraw himself from them.  
(4:6, 14)

*v5:7 They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.*

Another accusation towards Israel is that they were dishonest in their dealings with the Lord. "*Strange children*" can take on two meanings; first, they had broken the covenant by taking on heathen partners in marriage and having children within this marriage, (Jer. 3:20) and second, that the next generation of children would be strangers in God's eyes because they would be brought up in the beliefs of their parents not knowing God.

*Invasion and judgment (Hosea 5:8-15)*

*v5:8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin.*

The battle alert is to be sounded in three cities; Gibeah, Ramah and Bethel. The cities are

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all located in territory given to Benjamin. The cities lie in a line stretching north from Jerusalem. The direction from which the attack is coming is not mentioned. Assyria is to the north, Judah to the south.

*v5:9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.*

The prophecy is given to Ephraim that it will be made desolate and the time has now arrived. The prophets have been telling that it would be so. (Amos 2:6; 3:15; 4:2; 5:27)

*v5:10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.*

The Judgment of God is upon Judah for her crimes. The removal of bounds refers to the taking of the property of another of the tribes of Israel. Judah either actually expands its territorial borders or was seriously thinking about it because of the weakened state of Israel at the hands of Assyria. (Deut. 19:14; 27:17)

A more broad interpretation would indicate that the boundaries between God and Judah were broken when Judah decided to follow the gods of the Syrians. (2 Chron 28:23-25)

*v5:11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.*

The judgment against Ephraim was that they would be crushed. The reason is because they willingly rejected God's laws in favor of the command of Jeroboam to worship the golden calves. (1 Kings 12:28) This command was used continually by all the kings to maintain power and control of the people. The people in turn took advantage of the commandment by using it as an excuse to not make the pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the true God as required.

*v5:12 Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.*

The effect of God's judgment is described as to that of a moth on wool clothing or to the rotting of wood. In both examples progress is slow, over time the decay could be seen. If

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nothing is done to check the advance the decay eventually everything would be consumed.

*v.5:13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.*

God tells them how they've acted when he sent his judgments upon them. In Israel internal problems were taking their toll on the kingdom. Three kings died, with two being assassinations, in the span of seven months (2 Kings 15:8, 10, 13, 14) Menaham was having trouble being recognized as the rightful king and had to attack one of his own cities. (2 Kings 15:16) This is the "sickness" referred to by Hosea.

The Assyrians seeing what was happening in Israel made it apparent that it might attack. Instead of repenting of their sin and turning to God for help Israel struck a bargain with Pul the Assyrian king to pay tribute. (2 Kings 15:19-20)

The "wound" for Judah was when Israel, Syria and other nations attacked them. Ahaz, king of Judah, went to the Assyrians for help. This was done, once again, instead of calling upon God for help.

Even though Ahaz paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser to help Judah he did not receive the help that he wanted. The Assyrians did not strengthen him against his enemies. (2 Chron. 28:16-20) In fact, Assyria not only was not the cure but was the disease God sent to punish Israel and Judah.

*v.5:14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.*

The lion is a symbol of strength and ferocity. Since Ephraim had been in sin longer than Judah the ferocity of judgment coming against Ephraim would be greater or more advanced at this time than the ferocity indicated by the young lion coming against Judah. Judah would in her own time be getting a harsher judgment but at this time was just beginning to fall into sinful practices.

*v.5:15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.*

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After God renders his judgment he withdraws his presence from Israel. He will not return until the people acknowledge their sin, repent of it and ask for God's forgiveness. At the time that they realize their sin they will seek God diligently and earnestly.

## Revival (Hosea 6:1-3)

*v.6:1 Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

It is not clear in this verse whether it is Hosea making an appeal for Israel to return to the Lord or whether the people themselves are appealing to each other. In any case the people must acknowledge God. That it was by his sovereign will that they were being torn apart. The only way that the nation could be brought back together would be by God's will. (Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6)

*v.6:2 After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.*

There are two different thoughts concerning the days mentioned. The first is that the "two days" and "third day" are used to represent a short period of time rather than an exact number of days. The hope of the people appealing for a return to God was that God would in a short time heal the nation. Once they were restored their promise was that they would continue to live according to God's law.

The second is that the days are a prefiguring of Christ's resurrection, two days in the grave and rising on the third day. (1 Cor. 15:4) No where else are the two days and a third day referred to except in the fulfillment by Christ. With knowledge of his resurrection all believers would have assurance of being with him, in his sight.

Note: Used in connection with a fallen Israel the analogy of Christ's resurrection does not fit since Israel (the ten tribes of the north) never were restored.

*v.6:3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain unto the earth.*

The reason for being punished was because they did not know God. Now that they had

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sought him he gives to them the knowledge of himself. (Matt. 7:7-8; Rev. 3:20) This is, of course, contingent on their continuing to follow him.

The promise is that he will come to them as surely as the morning comes each day and just as the rain in the fall and spring bring relief to the land so to will the people find relief and comfort in the Lord.

## Corruption (Hosea 6:4-6)

*v.6:4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, an as the early dew it goeth away.*

In the past God had shown his mercy to Israel, had sent them prophets and had even punished them as ways of getting them to recognize that he was their God. All these things seemed to have no lasting affect on them. He now appeals to the people for a answer to the question, what shall I do unto thee? What could God do that he had not already done to get the people to convert to him so he could save them. (Is. 5:4, 2)

What God expects is obedience and consistancy. God's promises are to those who truly repent and continue to do his will. What Israel did not do was maintain their love and respect for God. They continually fell away and sought after things that they thought would bring them pleasure.

Two illustrations are given describing Israel's goodness or love. The "*morning cloud*" quickly disappears as the sun rises and its heat disappates it. The "*morning dew*" does the same, as the day goes on the dew eventually evaporates.

*v.6:5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.*

As evidence of what he had done to bring the people to him he first states that he sent the prophets. The prophets were armed with the word of God through which they were able to tell the people exactly what their motivations and intentions were. (Heb. 4:12)

The word of God as given by the prophets should have shown the Israelites where they had gone wrong and been a warning for them to change (Jer. 23:29)

The judgments of God were another way in which he tried to enlighten the people. These judgments, always in fulfillment of prophecy, should have clearly been a signal to the people that they had strayed.

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*v.6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God is more than burnt offerings.*

The second of the great commandments was to love your fellow man. (Matt. 22:37-39)

The people were not showing love or mercy to their brethren and were under the assumption that because they were sacrificing and making offerings their actions didn't matter. Even though God required sacrifice there really was no sacrifice if it was not motivated by love.

Having knowledge of God implies that we will do according to his will. God would rather have obedience than offerings. (1 Sam. 15:22; John 17:3)

## Conviction (Hosea 6:7-

*v.6:7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.*

Hosea identifies specific areas where Israel has transgressed against God. The first is their adherence to the covenant. Israel had transgressed against the covenant just as it is the corrupt nature of all ordinary men to transgress against God's law.

All men follow in the footsteps of Adam who broke the first covenant. (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6) Adam willfully broke the covenant and in a similar fashion Israel has also knowingly broken its covenant.

*v.6:8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.*

Since there was no known city named Gilead to views have been given as to the place in question. One being that an entire region known as Gilead was considered a city in terms of the common sin being committed in the area. The other is that the actual city was Ramoth-gilead, which was a city of refuge. Individuals could bring their case to court in a city of refuge if they believed they were innocent. (Num. 35:11-12)

Since the judicial system was corrupt murders may have been buying their freedom while the innocent were be convicted. (Amos 5:10-12)

*v.6:9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.*

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Among Israel's sins was that of robbery and murder. Priests banded together in gangs and attacked travelers along the road to Shechem. Shechem was a city located between Samaria and Bethel.

Committing lewdness means that the commission of these crimes was deliberate, open and appalling.

*v.6:10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.*

Another sin was that of idolatry. Ephraim, meaning all Israel, had for a long period of time been worshipping idols and is here viewed as a horrible thing. Considering all of Israel's past and how God had made himself known to them it is almost unbelievable what they had turned to.

To be defiled is to be corrupted, Israel had become spiritually and morally corrupt. (Lev. 11:44, 18:20, 23)

*v.6:11 Also, o Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.*

Hosea gives a warning to Judah which will go unheeded. The harvest is a term used for judgment. God knows the way Judah will eventually end up going and has set the time at which they will return to captivity.

## Problems internally (Hosea 7:1-7)

*v. 7:1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.*

The attempts by God to heal Israel were done by sending the prophets. As the prophets began to preach against the evils being committed the sin became more evident or exposed.

Ephraim again stands for Israel, although at this time most of the country may be occupied by the Assyrians. Samaria is mentioned because it is the capital city presumably where the king and princes lived.

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The sins mentioned as being committed are; 1) falsehood, lying and deception both to God and their fellow man, 2) theft, breaking and entering, and 3) robbery, street crime (mugging).

*v.7:2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.*

The sins mentioned were being done willfully without regard of the consequences. The crimes being committed were common place and those perpetrating the crimes no longer even considered the acts as crimes.

They flaunted their wickedness in the face of God and because they saw no immediate consequences of their sin they thought it was missed by God.

God sees all things. All the sins that are committed by an individual will follow him to judgment. (Ps. 90:8; Num 32:23)

*v.7:3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.*

The leaders of the nation, the kings and princes, were to uphold the law. As has been shown the judicial system was corrupt and the leaders had made no effort to correct the situation. Most likely they were glad at some of the practices because they could take advantage of them.

*v.7:4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.*

The statement "*are all adulterers*" refers to the nation as a whole, the king, princes and common people.

Their sin is compared to a heated oven. The oven is heated by the baker so hot that he can take time to prepare the dough and sleep until it is leavened. When properly fermented the oven would still be hot enough to bake the dough.

The adultery, corruption and many other sins were so prevalent in society that no external source was needed to keep it burning. The devil, being the source, did not need to intervene to keep the people in their sin.

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*v.7:5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorers.*

The illustration of the bakers oven is brought to life in the history of Israel. "*The day of our king*" is some special celebration, possibly the kings birthday. The king, being urged on by others, becomes drunk at this celebration. He is stretching out his hand making toasts of friendship with those plotting against him.

*v.7:6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.*

Just as the oven was made hot by adding fuel so to does the hatred and evil build in those plotting against the king. They are seething, the plan is set in their heart and all they need to do is wait for the right time and place.

"*Their baker*" is their evil will or evil thoughts and this is the fuel that keeps the sin in their hearts until suddenly the thoughts become action.

*v.7:7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.*

In reality the government of Israel was very unstable. Of the twenty kings that ruled Israel only eight died natural deaths, with assassination being the end of most. Through all their history none of the kings completely turned to God for help and guidance.

## Fatal foreign affairs (Hosea 7:8-16)

*v.7:8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.*

God had meant for Israel to separate from the other nations. (Lev. 20:24, 26; Ex 34:12-16) The reason for this was to keep the idolatrous practices of the heathen from creeping into their lives. It is evident that Israel was letting foreigners come into their country bringing with them their beliefs and idols. (1 Kings 16:31)

The condition of the people was such that they were as useless as a cake of dough which was left on the fire, burned on one side and uncooked on the other. The people were zealous for all the false religions that had been brought in from the outside, but when it

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came to understanding the true God they knew nothing of him. (1 Kings 18:28; 2 Kings 16:10-11)

*v.7:9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.*

Strangers were bringing in beliefs and idols which the people began following in ever increasing numbers. Slowly, as more and more people began practicing these false beliefs they were losing their spiritual strength.

The strangers mentioned here are the nations surrounding Israel, principally Assyria, which were increasingly taking over their land. Israel was paying tribute to prevent the takeover. These payments were really taking away their economic strength.

The loss of both their spiritual strength and economic strength was a slow gradual process and as such it went without notice among the leaders and people. The analogy given is that of a person growing old with gray hairs beginning to appear. The hair turning gray is gradual and sprinkled and therefore goes unnoticed.

*v.7:10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this.*

Despite all that has happened to Israel the corruption, murders, robbery and prostitution, the people are still too proud to seek after the Lord. They are intent on relying on their own wisdom to deliver them. The fact that all these sins were occurring and getting worse was testimony that they themselves could not change the course of the nation.

*v.7:11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.*

Hosea refers to all their maneuvering to prevent a takeover of their nation as actions of folly, of a silly bird. The dove jumps from place to place in search of what it needs, just as

Israel changes its policies in its dealings with other nations. The dove is also a simple animal which can easily be deceived because it lacks understanding. Israel acted in much the same way being deceived in its foreign policies. They had no understanding of God and that he could bring stability and provide for the needs and protection of the nation.

(1 Kings 15:18-19, 1 Kings 20:34, 22:1-3, 2 Kings 15:19, 29, 2 Kings 16:5, 9, 2 Kings 17:3, 4)

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Simply put, Hosea considers Israel to be stupid for turning to their own devices instead of turning to God.

*v.7:12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.*

The prophets had been telling Israel of their sin and warning them of the coming judgment if they did not change their ways. They continually went to other nations for help and for this God would bring them under condemnation.

*v.7:13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.*

The threat of destruction was real for them because they had forsaken God and had broken the covenant. God had delivered them in the past from Egypt, Moab, Edom, the Philistines and others but yet they still lied about who had saved them. (1 Kings 12:28)

They pretended to worship God while all along they were worshipping idols. (Amos 4:4-5)

The blessings that God gave them were attributed to the pagan gods they were worshipping. (v. 2:5)

*v.7:14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.*

As things became worse the people cried to God but they did not cry from the heart. There was no sincerity or a change in their lives. It was basically only a complaint over the loss of what they once had.

When they assembled together it was not a time of worship and praise to God but only a time to present their needs and expect God to fill them. They were thinking of themselves first and becoming angry when their needs were not satisfied.

*v.7:15 Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.*

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God had tried by all means to get Israel to recognize him. He brought enemies against them as punishment and then gave them the strength to defeat them. Despite this the people refused to believe and put their trust in him.

*v.7:16 They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.*

As the end came near the people knew they must return to some spirituality but it was not to God. They pretended to seek God but are described as a warped bow or a bow with a bad string. The arrow shot from such a bow would not hold a true course.

The leaders of the nation would all be purged by the enemy. One of the reasons for this is because they continued to rely on false gods and promote them before the people. One of their claims was that the Egyptians were their allies and therefore the nation was safe.

It would be proven that Egypt would not give them protection and they would go into captivity.

## Broken law (Hosea 8:1-3)

*v.8:1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.*

Just as the trumpet sounded the alarm for battle Hosea was to alert the people of the coming judgment of God. The enemy who would come against Israel would come swiftly, as an eagle upon its prey. Israel is the house of the Lord and Assyria the eagle.

The reason the judgment was coming was because Israel had broken the covenant. Within the covenant Israel had promised to be God's people but had through their idolatry turned their backs on God. The law had been broken by their sins against God and their fellow man. (v.4:1-2)

*v.8:2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.*

When the judgment comes Israel will cry to God saying they know him and that they are his covenant people. (Is. 29:13; Matt. 7:21) The fact that they were the descendants of

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Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be of no use to them.

*v.8:3 Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him.*

The good thing that Israel had rejected was God and all the blessings he could have provided. As a result the nation would be overrun by its enemies.

*v.8:4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.*

The later kings that came to power were not chosen by God. Israel did not come to God and ask for his guidance when setting up the government. Since the king was not of God's choice neither were the princes who were generally the relations of the king. (1 Sam. 9:16-17, 1 Sam. 16:1, 1 Kings 2:24, 1 Kings 11:31)

Idols were made by the kings, principally the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Once again the consequences of their sin was that they would be destroyed.

*v.8:5-6 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.*

The calves were another of the reasons why God would cast off Israel. Israel had cast off the good. in favor of something of their own making. (v.8:3)

The patience of God has finally worn thin. His anger has now reached the point where he must take the final action. The reason God was angry is that the calf was made by humans, because humans made it, it could not be God.

*"Can anything be more foolish than to worship what we outrank, a no-god, our creation is not our creator" Hubbard*

But as the action is about to take place God still has compassion as he laments "*how long will it be until they cast off their sin.*"

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The calf would be destroyed just as the one made at Mt. Sinai, showing that it was just a manmade idol that contained no power whatsoever.

*v.8:7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.*

The wind blows in all different directions not in one constant direction. Israel's beliefs were founded on doctrines which are represented by "*the wind*". When faith is put in such doctrines it is not known where it will end up, not known in which direction it will go. (Eph. 4:14)

The result of placing faith in such doctrines will ultimately lead to destruction represented by "*the whirlwind*". (Prov. 1:27, Jer 23:19)

If their faith was not in God all of what they do would not profit them anything.

Taken literally the failure of crops would be a punishment. If the crop did manage to grow there would be no grain on it. If there was grain on it, it would be taken by the foreign invaders of the land.

*v.8:8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.*

Israel will be overcome by its enemies. It will become among the heathen nations as an old vessel which has no use and is discarded.

*v.8:9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.*

Menahem had gone to Assyria and paid them for protection and assurance of his crown. For doing this Israel is described as a "*wild ass*" which is a term to be used as being undisciplined, obstinate and unruly. Israel had come up with this policy by itself, not with God's backing, and were on their own. Israel had rejected God and their hope was placed in other nations.

*v.8:10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.*

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Israel had paid the other nations for security. It had thought that these nations were friendly toward them. God's plan is to gather the nations together to bring his punishment upon Israel.

The gradual decline first begins with the 1,000 talents of silver given to the Assyrians. This tribute would be small in comparison to what they would suffer in "*a little*" while. This suffering would be at the hands of the Assyrian king, also known as the "*king of princes*".

*v.8:11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.*

The only altar appointed by God at which sacrifice could be done was the altar at Jerusalem. (Deut. 12:5, 6, 13, 14) They were not to make altars anywhere they wanted. Since Israel chose to make altars at other places God considered them altars of sin. When they sacrificed at these altars it was a sin to them.

*v.8:12 I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.*

Because God had given them his law they had no excuse for not knowing it. The term "great" is interpreted as "ten thousand". All of God's rules and regulations were given to Moses and put in writing. (i.e. ten commandments, ways to worship, cities of refuge, judicial order)

All the laws were for a purpose. (Deut. 4:6-8) Unfortunately the Israelites looked at these laws as foreign doctrine and therefore did not follow them.

*v.8:13 They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.*

Israel continued to make the animal sacrifices that they thought was required. The priests ate the remaining parts of the sacrifice as they thought the law allowed. But, the people had not accepted God's laws therefore he would not accept their offerings.

Since Israel had not heeded the warnings and continued in their sin God will now remember what the people had hoped he had forgotten. (v.7:2)

The punishment would be that they would return to captivity, Assyria would be the Egypt of

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this and the next generation.

*v.8:14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.*

Hosea sums up all his prophecy and once again it is stated that Israel had forgotten who God was, the creator and preserver of all things. Again it is stated that Israel sinned in building temples for worship other than the one in Jerusalem implying that they were sacrificing at unauthorized altars.

Judah is reprimanded for building fortified cities and relying on them to keep the enemy from invading. Because of this lack of faith its cities would come under attack and be destroyed. (2 Kings 18:13)

## Prophecy of captivity (Hosea 9:1-5)

*v.9:1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.*

The time of year seems to be around the harvest. This is when the people gathered together to celebrate. The heathen nations had the same kinds of feasts, they gave honor to their gods, thanking them for the harvest. On their part it was done out of ignorance, the true God had not revealed himself to them.

Israel was pleased with the temporal blessings and would follow any deity they thought had blessed them. It must have been a time of a plentiful harvest and they were prepared to celebrate at every cornfloor. Cornfloors or threshing floors were wide open areas where the kernels were beaten out of the sheaves of grain.

Israel was not to take joy or pleasure from the harvest because they were not giving thanks to the true God for their blessing. They attributed the good harvest to their Baals even though they had been given the knowledge of the true God. (v.2:8)

*v.9:2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.*

Grain, wine and oil were important products and symbols of prosperity. (Deut. 16:13; Joel 2:24) These signs of prosperity would be taken away. (v.2:9,12)

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Also, the first fruits of the land were to be sacrificed before the Lord. Since the sacrifices were either being given to the false gods or being rejected by God he would now remove the things that were used as sacrifices. (v.8:13)

*v.9:3 They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.*

After crop failure exile into captivity will be the ultimate fate of Israel. The result of going into captivity will be that they would not be able to observe their dietary laws. (Lev. 11)

Egypt, once again, is not the literal place of exile but is symbolic of captivity. (v.8:13)

Since Israel had no first fruits to be accepted and sanctified by the Lord the food they were eating was considered to be unclean. (Lev. 23:10-12)

*v.9:4 They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord.*

The giving of the wine or drink offering was not allowed by God. The drink offering was part of many other offerings required to be made by the Israelites. The fact that the drink offering was not accepted by God would make all other forms of offering or sacrifice unacceptable.

Peace offering (Num. 15:8-10)

Sabbath day offerings (Num. 28:9-10)

Sin offering (Num. 28:15)

First fruits (Num. 28:26-31)

Feast of the tabernacles (Num. 29:12-38)

in general all burnt offerings (Num. 15:3-7)

Daily burnt offerings (Num. 28:3-8)

First day of the month (Num. 28:11-14)

Passover (Num. 28:16-24)

Day of atonement (Num. 29:7-11)

Peace offering (Num. 15:8-10)

The offerings were to be given in thankfulness and joy to God for what he had provided. In denying Israel to sacrifice he is telling them that their service to him is at an end. (v.3:4; Ex. 12:25-27) They are now without a way to be reconciled with God. (Ez. 45:17-20)

Knowing that their sacrifices would no longer be accepted, should they still decide to make a sacrifice it would defile them. The defilement would be as if one would give a sacrifice within seven days of coming into contact with a dead body (Num. 19:14-22; Deut 26:3; 12-14; Matt. 5:23-24)

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The summation of God's command is that whatever animal is killed for the sacrifice would only be of use to that person as food for their body and would in no way be accepted as a sacrifice to reconcile them with God.

*v.9:5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord?*

Knowing that God would not accept any sacrifices or offerings and that if made they would be a defilement rather than an atonement what would a person do on the Sabbath day or holy day or feast day? How could they be glad and joyous knowing that they had been cast off. At no time would this become more apparent than at a time when they would normally be giving the required sacrifice.

*Attempted escape (Hosea 9:6-9)*

*v.9:6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: The pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.*

Some in Israel will see the coming destruction by the Assyrians. These individuals will flee to the south hoping to escape. Egypt will be the place where they seek refuge, however, they will be taken captive by Egypt and taken to the city of Memphis where they will eventually be buried.

Memphis: It was one of the most important cities of the world at this time. It was located south of what is now Cairo and stretched some 12 miles along the Nile. It was famous for its burial sites and is where a number of pyramids and the Sphinx is located.

Once the Israelites leave the country the weeds and briars (nettles) will grow covering the silver idols left in the temples. The temples themselves will become overgrown with thorns. The picture is one of total desolation.

*v.9:7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.*

The end of Israel is very near. Hosea's prophecies to Israel are about to become reality and when it begins Israel will know the prophecies were true.

There were many false prophets in Israel telling the people that all was well, inviting them to

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worship the idols in the pagan temples. These men are referred to as fools and madmen by Hosea. The reason for their destruction was because of their many sins and their hatred of the true prophets of God and of God himself.

*v.9:8 The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.*

The watchman of Ephraim was the true prophet of God. He was entrusted with the teaching, correction, and exhortation of the people.

The teachings of the false prophets were like snares of a bird-catcher (fowler). These prophets led the people away from God and developed and nurtured a hatred of God and his prophets within Israel.

*v.9:9 They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.*

The extent of the corruption brought about by the false prophets is compared to a crime involving the men of Gibeah against a Levite woman. (Lev. 19-20) Because of the sin committed against the Levite woman the tribe of Benjamin was almost exterminated.

The example given was an actual event and should serve as a reminder of what God will do to those that sin against him and Israel should have taken heed.

*9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.*

The Lord reflects back on the time when he had chosen Israel to be his people. (Deut. 32:8-10) There was pleasure in what he had found. This pleasure is similar to finding grapes in the desert. He considered Israel to be like the first fruit of a fig tree that bore fruit for the first time.

But even then Israel could not remain faithful to God. They turned to Baal-peor the god of the Moabites. (Num. 25:1-3) Israel vowed loyalty to Baal-peor at which time Moses was commanded to kill all those who had turned. (Num. 25:4) Baal-peor was a god similar to Chemosh to which children were sacrificed in fire. Solomon built an altar to this god and for this, among other sins, lost the kingdom. (1 Kings 11: 7, 11)

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Israel had become just as abominable before God as the gods that it had served.  
(Deut. 7:26, Ps. 115:8)

*v.9:11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.*

Because Israel had continued to follow after many Baals judgment is once again prophesied against them. In this judgment the glory Ephraim had in its future generation would be taken away like a bird flying away.

The losing of glory would begin at birth. Infants born would die. Denying the glory to the parents of the children. Then would come death in the womb, the glory taken prior to birth. Lastly, there would be no conception, no glory at all.

*v.9:12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!*

Not all children will die in the womb or even in infancy, some will survive but will not reach adulthood. For whatever reason, whether it be war, famine or taken away during the captivity the parents will lose their children. (Deut. 28:32, 41)

Israel took pride in their large numbers and were promised that their people would be as the sands of the sea. But there were consequences to disobedience. Being unable to bear children and having them die at birth or be killed at a young age would greatly reduce the population. (Deut. 28:62)

*v.9:13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.*

God had given Ephraim a pleasant place with many advantages (i.e. good location, rich soil) (Ex. 3:8) Ephraim is compared to the city of Tyre which had an ideal location along the Mediterranean Sea. (Is. 23:8)

Israel, however, did not obtain the greatness it could have had if it had not sinned. Instead, the children born during these times would be most likely subject to death by their captors.

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*v.9:14 Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.*

Punishment is clear, but why Hosea asks that it should come is unclear. He either expects child bearing to cease because Israel deserves the punishment or he is asking it so as to spare the children a tragic life should they survive.

*v.9:15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.*

Gilgal was an important city to the Israelites. Three big events took place in this city. First, it was the place where their ancestors camped after crossing the Jordan when first entering Canaan. At this site a memorial was built commemorating the event. (Josh. 4:5-7) Second, Saul was appointed the first king of Israel in the city. (1 Sam. 11:15) Third, Saul was rejected as Israel's king while in this city. (1 Sam. 15: 12, 26)

The first event was taken to extremes by Israel and pilgrimages were being made to the city for the wrong reasons. There are no specific sins mentioned against Gilgal but it had become a center of wickedness where false gods were worshipped. Israelites were told not to go to the city because it held nothing for them. (Amos 4:4; 5:5; Hos. 4:15)

The second event was not even sanctioned by God. Israel wanted a king and although God sent his warning and approved the first king it was against what God wanted for the nation.

The third event was proof that the people could not rule themselves, the king's disobedience required his removal.

Because of their sin they would be driven from the land God had given them. He will no longer show love toward them just as they showed no love toward him. The kings of Israel had not loved him enough to do away with the evil worship of the golden calves. The golden calves had remained as symbols of Israel's evil for approximately 200 - 225 years.

*v.9:16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.*

They have gone into captivity. Their future is compared to a plant. The roots of the plant are dried up and render the plant incapable of bearing fruit. Like the plant Israel will be unable to bring forth sons and daughters and is therefore condemned to die out.

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*v.9:17 My God will cast them away, because they did not harken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.*

The final epilog is given of the nation of Israel. They have been cast away because they would not obey the commandments God had set down before them. As a result they would be scattered throughout the other nations not having their own land.. (Deut. 28: 64-65)

## Additional judgments (Hosea 10:1-4)

*v.10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.*

The analogy of Israel to a plant continues and it is now referred to as an "*empty vine*". The meaning in Hebrew is 'to pour out' or 'overflowing'. Hosea is stating that Israel was blessed by God and had gained overflowing prosperity in the land. However, the blessings of prosperity were not attributed to God, but to themselves.

As Israel continued to prosper they moved farther and farther away from God. The more prosperous they became the more altars and idols they built thus increasing the worship to the pagan gods.

*v.10:2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.*

The word divided as used here takes on two meanings. The people were divided in their worship between God and idols. (1 Kings 18:21; 2 Kings 17:23-33)

The word can also be translated as 'deceitful', that is saying one thing and meaning something else, being insincere. (Ps. 5:9)

God's judgment will find them guilty and as a result he will break down their altars and destroy their idols.

*v.10:3 For now they shall say, we have no king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us?*

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As they go into captivity Israel was forced to admit that without God they had no king. And indeed the last king of Israel was sent to prison by the Assyrians just prior to the siege of Samaria. (2 Kings 17:4)

They were also forced to admit that even if they had a king, what good would it do? The kings were unable to prevent the takeover of the country, only to forestall the inevitable by paying tribute.

*v.10:4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.*

The deceitfulness of Israel made itself manifest with idle words, false promises and false oaths. False promises made to other nations. (2 Kings 17:4) Deceitful practices going on among themselves. (Amos 5:7)

The judgment that will come because of these sins will be deadly just as the poisonous plants growing in the field.

*v.10:5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.*

The "*inhabitants of Samaria*" represent all the people of Israel. With the invasion coming the Israelites fear the golden calf of Bethel will be taken from them by the invaders. Hosea calls Bethel, meaning 'house of God', Bethaven or 'house of vanity'.

The people and the priests that inspired the worship of the calf mourn over the fact that nothing could prevent the calf from being taken. The people should have been mourning in recognition of their sin but instead were mourning because their beautiful golden calf was being taken from them. The "*glory*" being the calf's beauty and the richness of the offerings and ceremony that were given to it.

"*departed from it*" means departing from Israel.

*v.10:6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.*

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The golden calf would be taken as a spoil of war and presented to Jareb the king of Assyria as a gift. This, once again, verifying that Assyria would be the conquerors of Israel.

Ephraim, meaning Israel, would be ashamed because the god they had trusted and put their faith in could not deliver them from their enemy. The god was physically carried away as a prize.

In addition, Israel would be ashamed of how wise it thought its leaders were in setting up the golden calf and maintaining it as their god throughout the centuries. (1 Kings 12:28)

*v. 10:7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.*

Not only would their god be subject to captivity but their king also. Just as the foam on the water is short lived and flows uncontrolled with the current so to is their king. The king, in these final years, was unable to control the future of the nation. The king will eventually disappear just as the foam on the river.

*v. 10:8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, cover us; and to the hills, fall on us.*

Previously referred to as the house of vanity, Bethel is now referred to as merely vanity. Hosea calls the many high places built to the gods as the sin of Israel. These will all be destroyed. The wild vegetation would cover the altars. (v.9:6)

The prospect of going into captivity would be so terrible that the people would rather have death. (Luke 23: 29-30)

*v. 10:9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.*

To show how great their sin was Hosea again refers to the incident in Gibeah. (v.9:9) The sin at that time must have been great, not only by Benjamin, but also on the part of Israel. (Judges 19:21-25) The battles in Gibeah took many lives on both sides. (Judges 20: 19-22; 24-25; 30, 35)

At that time God did not allow Israel to totally destroy Benjamin, the children of iniquity. Yet,

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even with so great a punishment, Israel still did not learn anything. They remained in their sin from that time until the end. They had changed nothing, for centuries they worshipped strange gods from high places God had told them to break down.

All indications are that now they would be overtaken.

*v.10:10 It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.*

The chastening of Israel would come in a similar fashion as that in Gibeah. The nations around them would be gathered together, principally Assyria, and would be used by God to bring an end to the nation.

The judgment is sealed by two transgressions indicated by the binding of two furrows. It is not specifically stated what exactly the two transgressions were but from all that Hosea has written the first is the loss of their love for God (v.4:1, 4:6) The second transgression is that of their loss of love for their fellow man. (v.6:8-9, 7:1)

Another interpretation of furrows is habitations. Some commentators use this interpretation to mean the two nations of Israel and Judah would both be chastised.

Other combinations of two transgressions have been mentioned:

- forsaking God and turning to idols
- the two golden calves
- forsaking God and departing from the house of David

*v.10:11 And Ephraim is an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break her clods.*

The ox was used by Israel to do various tasks, to carry out these tasks training was required. One of the tasks was to plow the fields, another was to thresh the corn. For the oxen threshing the corn was an easier task than plowing because it was not to be put under a yoke or muzzled but could walk at its leisure and was free to eat the corn as it desired. (Deut. 25:4)

Israel is pictured here as the ox that was trained by God over a period of time to do the tasks required of it. Some tasks required Israel to be put under the yoke to keep them on

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the correct course while at other times the yoke was not needed. Israel, as the ox, preferred the easier tasks. This is the time when they were blessed by God, they were free and prosperous but now had become accustomed to this lifestyle.

The life they had come to enjoy would come to an end. Because of their sin a yoke would be required. "*Passed over her fair neck*" indicates the putting on of the yoke, "*will make Ephraim to ride*" further indicates that someone will subdue them. Israel will be made a slave to a master, this master will make Israel plow, to work in the fields.

The mention of Jacob refers to the remaining northern tribes other than Ephraim and Judah refers to the southern tribe. Hosea seems to indicate that all Israelites, including Judah, will follow Ephraim into captivity.

*v. 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*

Using the farming example Hosea gives the people advice on how they should be living their lives. They were to sow in righteousness, that is they were to show kindness toward their fellow man. Sowing in righteousness would bring a reward, not a reward because of their deeds but one of grace. (Prov. 11:18, Luke 6:38)

In breaking up fallow ground Hosea is telling them they must change their lives, to remove all of their false beliefs and sins. Their lives were to be stirred up, to turn things over just as the earth is turned over with the plow.

In this renewing of their lives they are to seek after the Lord. They were to seek after the Lord and he would teach them righteousness. (Is. 2:3) They are to be diligent and to anxiously await the coming of the Lord that has been foretold by the prophets. (Luke 2:25-26)

*v. 10:13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.*

After telling them what they should do Hosea now tells them what they did do. Instead of sowing righteousness they sowed wickedness. Instead of reaping mercy they reaped evil.

Their lives were full of lies. They lied against God by their idolatry and by denying that the blessings came from him. Instead they gave credit to false gods. They trusted in their own

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view of what was right and pleasing to gods they themselves devised. They put confidence in the might of their armies and fenced cities to keep them secure.

The end result is that they reaped a life of captivity without God's blessings and without security.

*v. 10:14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.*

A consequence of departing from God was that there would be great divisions and anarchy throughout the land. Instability in leadership resulted in no legitimate successors to the throne. Having a strong army proved to be destabilizing to the nation because most of the kings became kings through military coups.

Also, because of priests being appointed from every rank there was no legitimate priesthood. With individuals vying for power and wealth the nation became corrupt both politically and spiritually.

In the end their fenced cities would fall as Betharbel did to Shalman. Most believe Shalman is Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, but the whereabouts of Betharbel is unknown.

The extent of the atrocities when Betharbel is taken is that children were killed and their mothers cut to pieces.

*v. 10:15 So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.*

The fate of Bethel will be the same as that of Betharbel. The reason once again is given as Israel's failure to turn to God and destroy the golden calf.

Israel's last king, Hoshea, will fall quickly, in the morning of a single day. It is noted that the capital city, Samaria, was not captured for another three years but this was after Hoshea was already imprisoned. (2 Kings 17:4-6)

## The promise (Hosea 11:1-11)

*v. 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

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The love which God had toward Israel is recounted as he looks back at the time he chose to bring them out of Egypt. God had loved them even before he called them out of Egypt. (Ex. 1:12, 20) At that time Israel was as a child, helpless, weak and under Egyptian oppression and did not at this time have the law.

Upon their exodus from Egypt, in the wilderness and eventually in the promised land, they were to receive his blessings and instruction on how to serve him as their God. (Ex. 4:23) Israel at this time was not just made a servant but an actual son to God. (Ex. 4:22) Being a son of God, called out of Egypt, Israel figuratively represents Christ, God's son, when he is called out of Egypt. (Matt. 2:13-15; Num. 24:8) When Christ was called out of Egypt the reality was fulfilled. The act of Israel coming out of Egypt was prophetic.

*v. 11:2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.*

After the first call out of Egypt God called Israel many more times. He sent to them judges, kings and prophets who called to Israel to remove the idols of their various gods and return to worshipping the Lord. Continually the Israelites returned to their worship of Baalim (multiple Baal deities) and worshipping in high places. (2 Kings 17:13-16)

Paraphrased the verse would read "*As the prophets called Israel, so Israel went from the prophets. Israel sacrificed unto Baalim ...*"

*v. 11:3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.*

As Israel rebelled against God he still helped and supported them. He took them, as it were, by the arm and guided them from a band of people leaving Egypt to become a great nation. Through all this Israel continually rebelled because they could not see or understand this guiding hand of God. (Deut. 1:31-32; 32:10-12)

*v. 11:4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.*

The way in which God guided them was not as beasts of the field but with human kindness. The motivation was that he had love for them. God was not putting a burden onto them but was there to take the burden off of them. The yoke was placed on the jaws of the ox to constrain him, God was there to lift the yoke off to make it easier. He provided for their physical needs by providing food

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*v. 11:5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.*

In the preceding verses God is making his case against Israel. He has explained everything he had done to make Israel his own and in the process makes it clear why he has the right to make the final judgment against the nation.

The verdict is in and the judgment made, Israel would go into captivity. Although some had probably gone to Egypt and were attempting to make a pact with Egypt the vast majority would go into captivity in Assyria (v.9:6)

There would be no further king in Israel, their king would be the Assyrian ruler. The reason, once again, is that they failed to obey God and return to him. (2 Kings 17:13-18)

*v. 11:6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.*

Apart from going into captivity the fenced cities which Israel built to protect them would fall in battle.

The '*branches*' or extensions of power not centered in the cities would also be destroyed. This would most likely be armies encamped outside the city or smaller villages located in the outskirts.

The leaders considered themselves to be wise men but their wisdom would only lead them to destruction. (v.10:6; Ps. 5:10; Job 5:13; Job 18:7)

The wisdom of Hoshea on attempting to get out from under the rule of the Assyrians is a prime example of man's wisdom. He had hoped that entering into a pact with Egypt would give him a powerful ally but ended up being the cause of his downfall.

*v. 11:7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.*

All during this period in their history the prophets are calling for the people to recognize God and return to worshipping him instead of the false gods they had set up. Not only would they not return but they were driven to hang onto their gods no matter what happened

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*v. 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.*

Two attributes of God's are seemingly in conflict. God is both infinitely just and infinitely merciful. Because Israel has departed from him he has every right to utterly destroy them, the justice they have reaped upon themselves. On the other hand his mercy is calling for him to give them a reprieve.

The punishment due Israel was the same that was given to the two cities Admah and Zeboim which were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. (Deut. 29:23) God is grieved because of their sin and as he contemplates the would be destruction of Israel compassion is kindled within him.

*v. 11:9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.*

The decision by God is to spare Israel from total destruction. He lets his mercy override the call for justice. It is not that justice will disappear but the fierceness of that justice will be toned down by his loving mercy.

The reason for this is that he is God and not man. He is holy and tempers his justice with love not letting anger or bitterness govern his decision which man is so prone to do.

"*I will not enter into the city*" is used to indicate that God will not bring total judgment down onto Israel as with Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim.

*v. 11:10 They shall walk after the Lord: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.*

Not only would God not destroy them all he now says that there will be a remnant which will return to following him. The call of God for his people is characterized by the roar of a lion. God's roar is a call to repentance, for man to leave behind sin and come to a knowledge of his saving grace. Acknowledging God as the creator and that an individual can do nothing right in his sight should make his children tremble just as much as the preaching of judgment.

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*v. 11:11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord.*

The remnant of God's people will return to Israel from the lands to which they were scattered. Some had fled to Egypt expecting to escape captivity but were made captive there. (v.9:6) Those taken captive to Assyria will also return to their land. Placing them in their houses is the promise to give back the land that God allowed the Assyrians and Babylonians to take.

## Exhortation (Hosea 11:12 - 12:6)

*v. 11:12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth God, and is faithful with the saints.*

After giving hope of future restoration Hosea reverts back to the message of why Israel will not have this happen in the near future. Nothing Ephraim (i.e. Israel) was doing was done with truth. Whenever they attempted to approach God it was without the truth. They had setup their idols, primarily the golden calf, and worshipped them professing to be worshipping God. In professing the idols to be God, or representing God, they were in fact denying God. Their prayers and sacrifices were all one big lie.

In doing all the wrong things they sought to deceive God but in reality they were only deceiving themselves. Israel had left the rule of God and was relying on its own wisdom and appointed its own kings and priests.

In contrast to this Judah was still ruled by the kings in the line of David and still had priests appointed from the line of Aaron and the tribe of Levi according to the plan of God.

The word '*saints*' means 'most holy', which identifies God. Judah, being obedient to God's rule makes them faithful to God.

*v. 12:1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.*

Ephraim, (Israel) in leaving God in favor of idol worship, fed upon something which could not be satisfying. The wind denotes emptiness and no pleasure could be gained by striving for what is empty. (V.8:7)

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The east wind in Palestine is known as a destructive wind, it brings burning heat, and is destructive to plants. (Jonah 4:8) The east wind would therefore represent evil or vain hopes. One who would follow such a wind would meet with destruction.

The sins, lies and false worship were continually on the increase. (v.4:2) As sin is increased so to is desolation. It is like a cause and effect relationship. One lie leads to another, then another and so on. In Israel's case worship of false gods led to greater false worship.

Israel, seeking to escape God's judgment, first pays tribute to Assyria. (2 Kings 17:3) Eventually deciding the deal was no longer advantageous Israel breaks the covenant with Assyria and courts Egypt. (v.5:13, 7:11; 2 Kings 17:4)

Olive oil was one of the chief exports of Israel and was probably used as payment for Egyptian support. The support they expect would not be coming. (Is. 30:6-7)

*v. 12:2 The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.*

Judah had previously been faithful but has now shown signs of following Israel into false worship. (2 Kings 16:1-4) Judah is being reprimanded and although not in as harsh a manner as Israel they should be aware that all Israel (Jacob) will receive punishment if they do not return to him.

*v. 12:3-4 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Ye he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;*

The Israelites as descendants of Jacob are encouraged to follow in his footsteps. Three incidents in Jacob's life are given as examples to Israel. The first is where Jacob grabs the foot of his brother Esau as they came out of their mothers womb. (Gen. 25:24-26) This act signified Jacob's desire to be given the blessing of the firstborn. Question - If there will recompense for their actions (v.12:2) what recompense would there be for striving to be the firstborn of God?

The second incident is when Jacob wrestled with an angel. (Gen. 32:24-26) This event came about when Jacob went to reconcile with his brother Esau. (Gen. 32) Just prior to meeting Esau, Jacob sends all his possessions as gifts to appease what he perceives as anger in his brother. Left alone an angel appears and Jacob wrestles with him all night.

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Through his faith he had received strength from God and refused to be beaten by the angel. Jacob would not quit until he had received a blessing. He wept and prayed for the blessing and the angel credits him with having power (influence, relationship) with God. Jacob's name is changed to Israel meaning wrestler with God or prince of God. (Gen. 32:27-28)

The intention here is to impress upon the descendants of Jacob that they too could have blessings from God if only they would strive for God's favor instead of trying to go it on their own. (v.12:1)

The third event is when God appeared to Jacob at Bethel. (Gen. 35:9-12) At this time God is confirming the promise given to Jacob years earlier. (Gen. 28:10-14) The use of the word '*us*' indicates that the promise is still in effect since the promise was given to Jacob and his seed. Israel at that time was the seed of Jacob by genealogy, we are his seed by faith. (Rom. 4:16-18; 23-24)

*v. 12:5 Even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial.*

The promise given to Jacob was sure because it was given by God. God identified himself to Moses as Jehovah, the God of the patriarchs of Israel. (Ex. 3:13-15) Here he is identified as the '*Lord of hosts*', that is, the one who has command of all the forces in the universe, both visible and invisible, being omnipotent.

A memorial is something to remind one of a person or event. The Lord is a memorial in and of himself. The meaning of his name expresses his nature and character. (Ps. 135:13)

*v. 12:6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.*

The people are exhorted to repent. This repentance is to be expressed in a show of mercy and love toward their fellow man.

They are to give up their idols and have constant trust and love for God. Not occasionally but continually.

*v. 12:7 He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.*

Hosea calls Israel a merchant. The word in Hebrew meant Canaanite. The Canaanites and Phoenicians at this time were the great merchants of the world. The merchants had a

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reputation of being cheaters and deceiving those they traded with by using fraudulent weights. The implication is that Israel had become no better than the Canaanites who occupied the land before them, a land which was taken away from them. (Amos 9:7)

Goods were delivered by means of weights and measures. The scales were in the hands of the merchants. By using false weights and measures the '*balance of deceit*' was in their hands.

Oppression is a result of deceit. In deceiving others they are taking advantage of them. This is done either out of another's ignorance or out of necessity. Not only were they taking advantage of the people they were taking pleasure in doing it.

*v. 12:8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.*

Israel did not see this deceit in business as being wrong. The justification that they were not doing anything wrong was that they had '*become rich*'. They were making a good living and they were prosperous. How could this come about if they were doing wrong. (Matt. 5:45) "Ephraim argues, the success of my labors proves that I'm not guilty of any wrongdoing" Jamison, Fausset and Brown.

The riches' and substance they worked so hard to obtain were really not what they should have been striving for, their values were all messed up. They were actually striving for something that had no substance. (Prov. 23:5)

*v. 12:9 And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.*

In striving for substance Israel had gone on their own way and must be reminded that it was God who had brought them prosperity. From the time they left Egypt until they reached the promised land they wandered in the desert and lived in tents. The feast of the tabernacles was a time to remember this and even more. The feast was to remind them of the care and protection God gave them in the wilderness. This seemed to have been forgotten by the Israelites. (Lev 23:42-43)

The Lord states that this type of life will return. The people will lose their cities and houses and return to living in tents as they did when they left Egypt. Although their 40 years in the desert was a punishment it was also a time in which God made himself

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known to them and instructed them in the law. Returning to this lifestyle can be looked at as God placing them back into this same type of situation. There will once again be hope for those who will listen and learn.

*v. 12:10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.*

In giving reasons why such action is necessary God says that knowledge of him was freely available. He had given the prophets to the people as teachers. He used different methods to communicate his word to them including, among other ways, visions. The visions were multiplied or increased as necessary to help guide his people. The prophets used parables (similitudes) in their ministry as a toll for understanding.

*v. 12:11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.*

A rhetorical question is asked as to whether or not there is sin in Gilead. Gilead represents the country on the east side of the Jordan River and Gilgal represents the west side. Both cities are being rebuked for their sinful practices. Hosea again points out the vanity in Gilead where innocent blood was shed (v.6:8) The city of Rammoth-gilead was intended to be a city of refuge where justice was sought. The rebuke of Gilgal is specifically for sacrifices of oxen to false gods. (v.9:15)

The altars on which their sacrifices were made are compared to piles of stones in the fields. To a farmer stones in the field were worthless and had to be cleared away to make the land suitable to cultivate. The conclusion drawn here is that before the people could return to God and be of useful service the altars to the pagan gods must be cleared from the land.

*v. 12:12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.*

Once again the example of Jacob is brought to their attention. After Jacob had been given the birthright he fled to his uncle Laban in Syria. There he was a servant to Laban tending the sheep for 14 years to gain the Rachel, Laban's daughter, for his wife. (Gen. 29:16-30)

In contrast to Jacob, who served as a servant, Israel was too proud and forgot the Lord. Jacob's years tending sheep could be called a punishment but God preserved him and finally gained God's blessing. (Gen. 31:3-9)

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*v. 12:13 And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.*

God used a prophet to guide Israel out of Egypt. Moses was similar to Jacob because he became God's servant and tended God's flock and they crossed the wilderness. Through Moses God proved to be the ultimate provider of all Israel's needs and was the true God worthy of their worship and sacrifices.

*v. 12:14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.*

Seeing all that God had done for them, Israel, by failing to recognize him as the true God has angered God '*most bitterly*'. Because of this the guilt will not be taken away. The blood Israel took of the prophets will be left on Israel and he will avenge this in the same manner. (Deut. 28:36-37)

## Ephraim's Fall (Hosea 13)

*v. 13:1 When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.*

Hosea begins by contrasting two periods in the life of Ephraim. In the early days of the nation the tribe of Ephraim asserted itself as a leader of the people. When they spoke the other tribes listened with respect. Ephraim however lost this respect when it turned first to calf worship setup by Jeroboam I and further when Baal was introduced under King Ahab. (1 Kings 16:31)

Because of it's sin in turning to Baal, Israel died spiritually. (1 Kings 19:18) Now spiritually dead the nation will also die.

*v. 13:2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.*

Under Ahab things were bad but even then the people were following a single false god now they were fashioning many gods. The sin was growing worse and worse, the number of false gods and idols were growing. The idols being made were becoming more ornate and expensive. Idols of every shape and size abounded, limited only by the imagination of their

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creators and the skill of the craftsmen. The making of idols was expressly forbidden by God. (Lev. 19:4; Ex. 20:4-5)

Kissing was a act of homage. It was a sign of high honor and a symbol of worship. (1 Kings 19:18)

*v. 13:3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.*

As a result of the continuing false worship the nation of Israel would fade away. Four symbols are given to show the vanishing of the nation. The first two at first seem pleasant but have no substance. The morning cloud (fog) and the dew provide some good but eventually are burned up by the sun at the day goes on. The other two are worthless from the beginning. The chaff is what is left behind and blown off the threshing floor while smoke only rises and dissipates.

Such will be the result of those who put their faith and confidence in what is not lasting.

*v. 13:4 Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.*

Regardless of what they believed God to be or the number of idols they could make the Lord was the same God of their past, unchanged. The same God who delivered them from Egypt. There are no other gods. There are no competitors. (Deut. 32:30; Is. 44:8; Is. 45:21-22)

If Israel was to know a god it must be the Lord. It is not enough just to recognize God, but to know that salvation can only come through him. This must not be shared with anything be it a person, deity, or object. (Acts 4:12)

*v. 13:5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.*

The reminder is given them that God was with them throughout the wilderness journey. He did not forsake them even though they would have forsaken him. (Deut. 8:2-4)

*v. 13:6 According to their pasture, so were they filled, they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.*

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God had provided for Israel's every need while in the wilderness. He then brought them into the promised land which provided them with even more bounty. (Deut 8:7-10) In every way their desires were met, but, the people failed to heed the warning. (Deut. 8:11-16)

"Pastured" is a word denoting pleasure or a pleasant place. (Ez. 34:14) The people had received everything "according to their pasture". They were satisfied with what they had,

thought they had gotten it themselves and did not pursue the Lord any longer. (Deut. 8:17-20; John 6:26-27)

"It is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity" Barnes.

*v. 13:7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:*

Again Hosea brings the warning of a coming judgment. The people were proud of their wealth but were about to become the prey of their enemies. Like a leopard their enemies would lie, watch and wait until they had the opportunity to strike.

*v. 13:8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.*

To those that have forsaken him God will be to them as a mother bear who has just lost her cubs. It is said that nothing is more fierce.

The savageness of God's judgment is compared to the tearing of one's heart. The caul is the membrane that surrounds the heart (pericardium).

*v. 13:9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*

The punishment which is forthcoming is no one's fault but their own. By separating themselves from God they have caused their own destruction. In contrast to this only God can bring salvation.

*v. 13:10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?*

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Israel could only be saved if they would once again allow God to be their king. In choosing to have a king over them they rejected God. Israel further rejected the king that God provided (Rehoboam) in favor of one they desired (Jeroboam). (1 Sam. 8:19-20)

The conventional wisdom of man says that to be strong you must have mighty armies. A look at the strong nations around them confirmed this in their minds. These nations and armies were all led by a king, so therefore we must have the same thing to be great.

Now that they have a king, where was he when the cities came under attack. The judges are those who are the king's council and those who manage the affairs of state along with the king. What were any of them to do when it came time to go into battle? The simple fact was that no battle could be won without the help of God. It was always God's intervention in history that was the difference between victory or defeat.

*v. 13:11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.*

The people wanted a king and although it was against what God wanted for them he turned them over to their desires. (1 Sam. 8:7)

Simply to have a king was not wrong, expecting him to replace God was. The first kings were given by God, but as time went on the people began to pick their own king. The choices they made led them away from God. Finally, because of their increasing disobedience God had to put a stop to their government.

*v. 13:12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.*

The sins committed by Israel would not be forgotten. They would be stored up until the day of judgment arrives at which time the sins that were hidden would be made known. (Ps. 50:21, Rom. 2:5-6)

*v. 13:13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.*

Two illustrations are given to Israel and are to show its actions toward God during its history. The first is of a mother at the time of giving birth. Just prior to going into labor everything is fine. But a labor begins there is suffering as she attempts to bring forth life.

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The same has been true of Israel. Time and again God brought punishment on them in an effort to have them born again in him.

By contrast the action of the people is pictured by the child about to be born. The birth canal is open and waiting for the child to pass through. The child, being unwise, does not take the opportunity by "breaking forth". The warning to the child is that it should not stay in the canal too long or else it puts the life of the mother as well as itself in jeopardy.

Just as the child, God has given Israel many opportunities to be born of him. Foolishly Israel has always balked at the chance. The nation and its people now face death as a result.

*v. 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Israel has been sentenced to destruction, this was clear and would not change. God however promises a rescue from eternal destruction. The promise that he would redeem them from death implies that he would pay a price for them to avoid this death.

The payment implied would be paid by God himself. He will be the plague to death. he would be the destruction of the grave. (1 John 2:2; 4:10) Isaiah, a prophet at the same time as Hosea, was preaching the same message. (Is. 25:8)

At this time the full plan of God was not fully understood but was gradually unfolding to those of the Old Testament and was completed with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:55-57)

The promise of victory over death will not be withdrawn or revoked. Repentance of the promise will be hidden, that is, God will not reconsider or decide differently concerning this promise. (Rom. 11:29)

*v. 13:15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.*

The promise having been made Hosea reiterates the temporal punishment that is yet to come.

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The tribe of Ephraim was the most blessed of the nation. Its name means 'to be fruitful'. (Gen. 41:52, 48:19-20)

Because of its sin they would be destroyed. Literally the east wind would come and dry up the water in the springs and fountains. Figuratively the east wind was the Assyrians.

They would come from the east and destroy their cities and take the treasures stored in them.

These events were not of chance, God is in control of all the events and it is according to his will that these things will take place.

*v. 13:16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.*

Destruction would come to the capital city of Samaria for her rejection of God. (2 Kings 18:12) In their conquest of the city the Assyrians would kill the infant children cutting them to pieces and pregnant women would have their children cut from the womb.

## Israel's future (Hosea 14)

*v. 14:1-2 O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

The nation of Israel is gone but the people still remain. The promise of an escape from death has been given. It is up to the people as to whether or not they will change and accept the promise.

The reason they are in captivity is that they had sinned against God. It was by their own choice that they followed after false God's and lived immoral lifestyles instead of heeding the words of the prophets God sent.

Now that they knew the promise how could they attain it? What did they have to do to gain the victory over death and the grave? The first thing is to return to the Lord. To acknowledge that he is the only God and that only through him could death be conquered.

Second, they were not to bring material offerings but to bring words. They are to lift their

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voices in prayer and praise toward God. They are to admit their sin and ask for forgiveness. This is not to be a outward show but truly from the heart.

Third, they are to humble themselves and ask God to receive the petitions with favor and grace. To be pleased that they have called on him to replace the evil in their lives with goodness.

Under the law in the Old Testament an animal sacrifice was to be offered for sin and thanksgiving. In captivity the people had no animals to offer. In place of the burnt offering they would ask God in prayer to take away sin and give thanks. The old system was on its way out to be replaced by the sacrifice of Christ. The eventual replacement to the old law would allow for the sacrifices to God through Christ who would replace the high priest of the temple. (Heb. 13:15-16)

*v. 14:3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

In turning to God for forgiveness three major sins must be confessed and not committed again. The first is their trust in man. In times of trial they turned to the nations around them for help instead of God. They would marry outside of their nation to create alliances which they felt would make them stronger. The Assyrians are specifically mentioned but Solomon and Ahab each married non-Israelites and other kings paid for mercenaries. This warning was given by Hosea before. (v.5:13, 7:11)

The second sin was thinking that their own might could save them. The horse is a symbol of strength and was used in war. The kings were warned not to depend on strength by 'multiplying their horses'. (Deut. 17:16) They also built many fenced cities to prevent being overtaken if invaded. They were instead to put their trust in the Lord. (Ps. 20:7; Ps. 33:17)

The third sin to remove was their reliance on idols. They were to promise not to build and worship idols in place of God. It was totally ridiculous to think that something made by their hands could become great enough to be worshipped.

Israel, in their sin was separated from God, they were fatherless. In renouncing their sin they were to rely totally on God's mercy. (Ps. 10:14) God promises to be a father to those who call on him. (Ps. 103:13)

# Hosea

*v. 14:4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.*

For the true penitent sinner God will change their life completely. Israel over its history continually backslid into idolatry and false worship. To those who would accept him he would prevent them from falling into this practice again.

God of his own free will accepts those who turn to him. Not because he is obligated to or because anyone is deserving of acceptance but because of his own good pleasure. (Ps. 147:11, Rom. 3:24)

Even though God's anger is just he will turn from it. His anger is not just put aside but totally forgotten.

*v. 14:5-6 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.*

Once accepted by the people the love of the Lord will show itself in many blessings. The dew, used to describe the short duration of the nation without God (v.13:3), is used here to depict that God's love is refreshing. The dew comes in the morning to refresh nature. God's love coming to the people daily would be refreshing to them.

The lily is a plant that grows quickly and abundantly. The growth and blossoming of the lily is used to picture the prosperity which can result from God's love. The cedar is used in conjunction with the lily. The cedar has strong and deep roots and is not easily moved. The stronger the roots the farther the branches can spread. As the knowledge of God grows in the individual the more it will spread to others. (Ps. 92:12-13)

*v. 14:7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*

As the nation is restored and grows in the Lord those who live under its shadow will return to him. They will be as the new corn. The old corn dies and leaves behind many seeds and will grow again with an even better yield. Likewise the vine when properly pruned will bring forth even more fruit. Israel was compared to a vine without fruit when they were in their sin. (v.10:1)

# Hosea

Now with the love of God made manifest in them they can be compared with the corn and a well cared for vine which eventually will increase and become complete. When complete fragrant aroma will be a pleasing life toward God..

*v. 14:8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.*

Ephraim answers God's call by renouncing its sin and recognizing that worshipping idols was futile. They come to the knowledge that they should not continue in this fruitless venture when the Lord could give them so much.

Now that Ephraim has finally accepted him, God acknowledges their confession and accepts it. In accepting Ephraim God now observes them or looks on them with grace and mercy. This is different then when they were in sin and he hid his face from them and observed them waiting to destroy them. (v.13:7; Ez. 39:23)

Israel is compared to a green fir tree, tall and majestic. The evergreen tree however does not bring forth fruit, therefore, God will be the provider of the fruit. Man by himself cannot do anything good. All good is found and provided by God. (John 15:5)

*v. 14:9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

In summing up all that has been spoken Hosea wants to know who would like to be wise enough to understand all that has been said. Those who desire to know the answers are the ones who will have wisdom. (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 2:2-6) Those with wisdom understand the ways of God.

A prudent person is one who puts wisdom into practice. It is one who is careful and thoughtful in what he does. Since there can be no fault found in anything that God does a wise and prudent person will know and understand this and live his life accordingly.

To those who do not have the knowledge or understanding of God cannot do anything but sin because they do not know what is right and cannot be obedient. (1 Cor. 1:18, 30)