

# GOD'S LOYAL LOVE

## Commentary on the Book of Hosea

by Paul G. Apple, February 2025

### GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOYAL LOVE THROUGHOUT THE REPEATED CYCLES OF UNFAITHFULNESS, DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION

**Hosea 14:4** *"I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely.  
For My anger has turned away from them"*

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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# BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

## GENERAL

### **Ray Stedman: Hosea: The Prophet and the Prostitute**

Can you see in this beautiful story all the elements of the eternal triangle? There is the loving God, the faithless human heart, and the deceptive attractiveness of the world.

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**Robert Chisholm Jr.:** Though Hosea's prophecy contains some calls to repentance, he did not expect a positive response. Judgment was inescapable. In implementing the curses, the Lord would cause the nation to experience infertility, military invasion, and exile. Several times Hosea emphasized the justice of God by indicating that His divine punishment fit the crimes perfectly.

However, the Lord would not abandon Israel totally. Despite its severity, each judgment was disciplinary and was intended to turn Israel back to God. Hosea's own reconciliation with his wayward wife illustrated Israel's ultimate restoration.

**Gary Smith:** The life of the prophet Hosea is special because people can identify with him and sense the joy and frustration of this living illustration of God's love. His tender and devastating experiences with his wife, Gomer, explicate the ins and outs of love in a more real way than a thousand definitions. He, like God, irrationally loved someone who was not very lovely (lit., "*a woman of prostitution*," **Hos. 1:2**), stayed committed to that love relationship in spite of great unfaithfulness by his covenant partner, and out of deep love forgave and took back a lover who betrayed him (**3:1-3**). . .

The message of Hosea should open the eyes of readers today not only to the awesome nature of God's love for us, but also to the terrible harm human sinfulness causes to anyone's personal relationship with God. Hosea helps us understand that unfaithfulness to a commitment to love God is like prostitution, not just a minor, insignificant slip that has no consequences. Some people think it is their personal right to express their faith in their own ways; thus, they neither keep their commitments to maintain a relationship with God nor follow his standards of justice and holiness. These are free choices, but they must be labeled acts of rebellion against the love and will of God. God looks at such acts as hypocritical deceit and theological lies—the kind of behavior that characterizes the life of an unfaithful spouse or prostitute. Coldness or an impersonal relationship with God is a sign that there is no love relationship with him.

**G. Campbell Morgan:** The result of the tragedy in his life was that he, Hosea, came to understand the heart of God, and what God suffered when His people sinned. He was admitted, through the mystery of his own tragedy, into an apprehension of what the sin of the nation meant against the heart of God. Hosea has been described as the prophet of the broken heart. The pain and agony of the man's heart is everywhere apparent, but it had become to him an interpretation of the agony of the heart of God. In his own experience he discovered what infidelity means to love;

and so, that the infidelity of Israel roused, not the wrath of God, though He was compelled by it to act in judgment, but the heart-break of God.

**Dale Larsen:** The prophecy of Hosea does not progress logically from beginning to conclusion. Its writing is **circular**, going back and forth between judgment and mercy. We get a sense of God arguing with himself about Israel—not that God has trouble deciding what to do, but he feels the pain of conflict between what he wants for Israel and what he must do because of their sin.

Hosea shares God's conflict when at God's command he marries—and stays married to—the immoral woman Gomer. It is the conflict of anyone who cares deeply about a wayward person. God condemns Israel's sin and knows Israel deserves to be written off; yet he hangs on, unwilling to give up on them. God eventually let Israel be defeated in the Assyrian conquest, but he did not ultimately abandon his people whom he loved. . .

Adultery and prostitution are the ugly pictures Hosea used to describe Israel's spiritual condition. The image of sexual immorality not only symbolized Israel's running after other gods and turning to other nations for protection, it also literally described their acts with temple prostitutes that were part of the fertility rites they had adopted. Hosea grieved over a nation once pledged to God but now unfaithful.

**David Allan Hubbard:** The prophet's experience accounts for the sharpness of his focus. Sins condemned by Amos – abuse of power, exploitation of the poor, presumption of covenant privileges – were prevalent. Hosea makes quick sallies into those territories. Yet he and Amos are as different from each other in emphasis as they are in experiences. The Baal-worship, over which Hosea wept, had dotted the hillsides of Israel while Amos was preaching but was little reflected in his messages. The prophets were not newspaper reporters required to write all sides of the story. Nor were they scholars preparing theses that investigated all angles of their topics. They were messengers, shaped by their calls, their experiences and their reception of Yahweh's word to speak to specific issues in specific ways.

Hosea's marriage, marked as it was by tragedy and recovery beyond the tragedy, both deepened his understanding of divine passion, and narrowed the scope of his message to the single point of Israel's relationship to the covenant Lord. It is that profound pathos, let loose towards Israel in speech after speech, irony after irony, metaphor after metaphor, question after question, which gives the book its fire. It is the fire of this passion and its message that confronts the reader with Israel's Lord.

The relationship signaled in that marriage was Hosea's dominant concern. He saw that relationship inaugurated by Yahweh's grace in Israel's distant past. Jacob, the patriarch, was not always a grateful recipient of it (**ch. 12**). Israel, the people, tasted it in the Exodus (**2:15; 13:4**), the wilderness (**2:15; 9:10**) and the settlement in the land (**2:15**). That grace viewed Israel as special to Yahweh, cared for by him and commissioned to serve him.

Hosea also saw the relationship jeopardized from the beginning by Israel's forgetfulness. Like a geography teacher Hosea took his hearers from place to place reminding them of their penchant

to tax the relationship by their fickleness: ‘*Baal-peor – here you first dallied with Baal*’ (9:10); ‘*Gilgal – here you crowned Saul king and compromised Yahweh’s sovereignty*’ (9:15); ‘*Bethel – here you desecrated Yahweh’s name and Jacob’s memory with the golden calf*’ (10:5–6); ‘*Gibeah – here your unbridled lust stained your history book with the gruesome tale of gang-rape*’ (9:9; 10:9–10).

Despite that sordid past, Hosea saw in his own times the relationship sunk to its lowest point in Israel’s unrepentant history. The cult of the Baals, the instability of the monarchy and the naivety of foreign policies were its three chief expressions. Hosea’s accusations were laced with metaphors that exposed Israel’s rebellion: stubborn calf (4:16), loaf half-baked, yet mouldy (7:8–9), silly dove (7:11), baby too stupid to be born (13:13). And his announcements of judgment were conveyed in pictures of appropriate ferocity: God would be a lion, a leopard, a she-bear (13:7–8).

So sorry was the present that the near future could mean only a relationship severed by invasion and exile. Military intervention, with all the brutality for which the Assyrians were famous, and removal from the land, with all the pain of dislocation and deprivation – these were the necessary means of purging the nation.

Yet in the face of all of this, Hosea has a clear picture of the covenant relationship restored at Israel’s return to Yahweh. Five times in the flow of the book, this reconciliation is intimated (1:10 – 2:1; 2:14–23; 3:1–5; 11:8–11; 14:1–7), conveying the overall intent of the book: the persistent presence of Yahweh’s love despite his people’s endemic waywardness. A new marriage awaits Israel in God’s time and on God’s terms. Because Hosea knew this, he had the courage to rebuild the relationship that Gomer had shattered, and to demonstrate both the reality and the cost of such reconciliation.

### **AUTHORSHIP, BACKGROUND, SETTING, DATE**

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** The lack of biographical data within the text forces us to hypothesize about the origin and occupation of this prophet of God. From the numerous geographical notations in the book (4:15; 5:1; 6:8; 9:15; 10:5, 8, 15; 12:11; 14:5-8), it has been assumed that Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom. The subject matter of Hosea’s illustrations has prompted commentators to suggest that he was either a baker (7:4), a peasant farmer (8:7; 10:13), a priest (5:1), or a son of the prophets (1:2; 4:5; 9:7-8). To reconstruct the character of the prophet from the text would be impossible except that between the lines Hosea reveals his deep-seated love for his brethren. It is significant that rabbinic tradition, perhaps because it noted the unique involvement that Hosea had with his subject matter, classified Hosea as the greatest among his prophetic contemporaries.

**John MacArthur:** The title is derived from the main character and author of the book. The meaning of his name, “*salvation*,” is the same as that of Joshua (cf. **Num. 13:8, 16**) and Jesus (**Matt. 1:21**). Hosea is the first of the 12 Minor Prophets. “Minor” refers to the brevity of the prophecies, as compared to the length of the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Hosea began his ministry to Israel (also called Ephraim, after its largest tribe) during the final days of Jeroboam II, under whose guidance Israel was enjoying both political peace and material prosperity as well as moral corruption and spiritual bankruptcy. Upon Jeroboam II's death (753 B.C.), however, anarchy prevailed and Israel declined rapidly. Until her overthrow by Assyria 20 years later, 4 of Israel's 6 kings were assassinated by their successors. Prophesying during the days surrounding the fall of Samaria, Hosea focuses on Israel's moral waywardness (cf. the book of Amos) and her breach of the covenantal relationship with the Lord, announcing that judgment was imminent.

Circumstances were not much better in the southern kingdom. Usurping the priestly function, Uzziah had been struck with leprosy (**2 Chr. 26:16–21**); Jotham condoned idolatrous practices, opening the way for Ahaz to encourage Baal worship (**2 Chr. 27:1 – 28:4**). Hezekiah's revival served only to slow Judah's acceleration toward a fate similar to that of her northern sister. Weak kings on both sides of the border repeatedly sought out alliances with their heathen neighbors (**7:11**; cf. **2 Kin. 15:19; 16:7**) rather than seeking the Lord's help.

**Gary Smith:** Hosea's ministry in Israel came shortly after the preaching of Amos in Israel (765–760 B.C.) and partially overlapped with Micah's and Isaiah's ministries in Judah. Although the superscription of the book of Hosea lists only one Israelite king, Jeroboam II, the parallel list of Judean kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) demonstrates that Hosea preached during the reign of several kings after Jeroboam II died. This information allows us to posit a ministry extending from about 755 during the final years of Jeroboam II until around 722 B.C., just before the fall of Samaria and the exile of the people of Israel (**2 Kings 17:1–6**). . .

These were difficult political times to be involved in any kind of prophetic ministry. The nation was literally falling apart before Hosea's eyes, and the ruling class did not have the political leaders to provide a stable government. Most people who heard Hosea preach probably did not think his religious analysis of their political problems was a credible evaluation of the nation's situation; thus, most did not turn from their evil ways. . .

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** Hosea and his contemporary Amos were active in the middle of the eighth century B.C. Although Amos was from Judah, both spoke primarily to the northern kingdom, Israel. A few years later Isaiah and Micah would address the southern kingdom, Judah, with a similar message.

Amos probably began his ministry a few years before Hosea and completed his prophecy within the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Hosea began his prophecy in the last years of that king and continued into the turbulent years leading up to the collapse of the northern kingdom. His ministry apparently ended some years before the destruction of Israel's capital, Samaria, in 722 B.C.

**Homer Heater:** We know virtually nothing about Hosea beyond the fact that he was the son of Beerai, that he was married to a woman of questionable repute, and that three children were born to her. The biographical data in chapters two and three is designed to teach about Israel, therefore, little more can be learned about Hosea from that section. . . Whether he is a priest as were other prophets (e.g., Jeremiah) is not stated. Hosea is a later contemporary of Amos. The

only northern king mentioned is Jeroboam II. The last southern king listed is Hezekiah who ruled from 728 to 687. This would mean that Hosea lived far beyond the fall of Samaria in 722 and no doubt spent his later years in Judah.

**Eric J. Tully:** The first verse of the book tells us that Hosea's ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel (**1:1**). King Uzziah reigned from 792– BC, and Hezekiah reigned from –686 BC. Based on this range, and (such as the instability in Israel due to the assassinations of Israelite kings), we can tentatively date Hosea to 755–725 BC, the mid-late eight century BC. Hosea is the only classical, writing prophet in the Old Testament who was a native of the Northern Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Amos was also a prophet to the Northern Kingdom, but he was a native of the southern Kingdom of Judah. All of the other prophets were from Judah and ministered there.

At the beginning of Hosea's ministry, during the reign of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom was politically stable and economically prosperous. Because it was divided from Judah, however, the Israelites were not able to obey God by worshipping and making sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. Jeroboam I, the first king of the Northern Kingdom, had attempted to resolve this problem by creating worship sites at the extreme north of his nation (at Dan) and at the extreme south (at Bethel). He set up calf-idols at these sites in order to represent the gods who delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt (see **1Kgs 12:28–33**). This was a systemic sin for the northern kingdom since God did not recognize these sites as legitimate alternatives to the temple in Jerusalem because they involved syncretism and idolatry.

In addition, the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom had a significant political and economic relationship with Phoenicia, a nation to the north along the Mediterranean coast. Along with trade goods, they imported Phoenician culture and religion, including the most important fertility deity in the region—a Canaanite god called Baal. Baal is mentioned seven times in the book of Hosea.<sup>3</sup> He was thought to have power over lightning, storms, and rain, and therefore could make the land fertile and the crops grow. For subsistence farmers whose entire livelihood depended upon what they could produce on the land, there was a powerful temptation to worship Baal in order to ensure a successful harvest. By serving Baal and other fertility deities, the Israelites attempted to control nature to gain security and wealth for themselves.

The LORD, however, had promised Israel fertility, security, and wealth as blessings resulting from his covenant with them, as well as terrible punishments if they broke his covenant and disobeyed (see **Lev 26** and **Deut 28**). Therefore, the book of Hosea represents a kind of contest between deities. Who will give Israel what she desires? One possible choice is the LORD, the creator of heaven and earth and Israel's covenant partner. A second choice is the fertility deities of the surrounding nations. The people of Israel chose the fertility deities (or tried to add the fertility deities to their worship of the LORD), breaking their exclusive covenant with the LORD and bringing his judgment upon them.

In the latter part of Hosea's ministry, the Northern Kingdom was politically unstable and threatened by the militaries of neighboring nations as well as Assyria, the superpower in the east. Following Jeroboam II, there was a series of kings with short reigns because they kept assassinating each other. Zechariah reigned only six months before he was killed by Shallum.



Shallum reigned one month before he was killed by Menahem. After ten years, Pekahiah came to the throne and was then killed by Pekah, who was in turn killed by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. In 722 BC, just a few years after Hosea's ministry, the Assyrians came and defeated Israel. They destroyed the capital city of Samaria, exiled the population to Assyria, and brought in captives from other nations to inhabit the land. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was no more. Some from Israel, however, escaped to Judah and lived there. Hosea looks forward to God's restoration of his people—Israel and Judah—in the eschatological future when he reconciles them to himself and gives them the fertility and wealth that they had desired so fervently.

**Leon Wood:** By this time there had been peace for many years, and with it had come economic prosperity. The land was again producing abundantly (**2 Chron 26:10**), and many people were becoming wealthy. Luxuries had once more become common. Building activity was flourishing on every hand (**Hos 8:14**), and this led to a widespread feeling of pride (**Amos 3:15; 5:11; Isa 9:10**). Though people are pleased with conditions of this kind, seldom does prosperity lead to behavior that pleases God. This was true at this time in Israel. Social and moral conditions developed that were wrong and degrading. Side by side with wealth, extreme poverty existed. Through dishonest gain and false balances, the strong took advantage of the weak (**Hos 12:7; Isa 5:8; Amos 8:5-6**). Those who had wealth felt free to oppress the orphans and widows, and even to buy and sell the destitute on the public markets (**Amos 8:4, 8**). Justice seemed at a premium, and the courts apparently did little to help.

#### **Lloyd Ogilvie: Religious Background**

**Syncretism** characterized the religious order of the day. The worship of the Canaanite god Baal diluted Israel's worship of Yahweh to a great extent. Baal, meaning "lord" or "husband," was the name commonly given to the Canaanite storm god, Hadad. He was often represented as a bull, the symbol of fertility. The bull images built by Jeroboam I at Dan and Bethel (**1 Kin. 12:28-33**) no doubt provided another occasion for assimilating the worship of Yahweh to the worship of Baal.

Canaanite religion, like most in the ancient world, connected gods and goddesses with **forces in the natural world** and considered that their course could be influenced by the devotion and rituals of worshipers. Religion then takes on a **magical quality** as an attempt to manipulate the gods, which is characteristic of perverted religion in any place and time. Rituals aim to ensure the foundations for life, such as the rain necessary for crops in Palestine and the success of animal and human reproduction.

Along with this was the view that **sexual relations between gods and goddesses** were responsible for some of the initial and continuing processes in nature. Based on this idea and a concept of imitative magic, **sacred prostitution** was a prominent part of the cult. Worshipers would engage in sexual intercourse with cult prostitutes at the shrines, hoping to influence the gods to do likewise and thus ensure continuing fertility.

Religious devotion was hardly lacking in this age. The question was the quality of that devotion. Certainly the acts of Yahweh were celebrated in the cult, but too often these were taken as a sign of unconditional support for the status quo. The covenant obligations were either blurred or understood as completely fulfilled by the rituals (**Amos 5:21-24**).

**H. D. Beeby:** Instead of one God the Canaanites had more like seventy gods. Once El had been the supreme deity, but a celestial palace revolution had replaced El by Baal, and for Hosea Baal symbolized all that was erroneous and corrupt. Most likely the word ba'al originally meant "the one who fructifies"—the one capable of making the other fertile. The husband, the bull, and perhaps the rain were therefore ba'als. The power to fructify carried with it authority, and therefore the word had come to mean "the one with authority," or "lord" or "master." Myths about fertility, used to foster fertility, inevitably engendered cultic techniques which gave prominence to sexual acts designed to operate with the powers of imitative magic. Male and female prostitutes thronged the shrines, making sanctuaries indistinguishable from brothels and holiness indistinguishable from harlotry. The faith of Hosea's fathers had become so debased that in almost every respect it was now the opposite of the great original. So Hosea is called to state the case for the prosecution and eventually to ascend the bench and don the black cap.

### **LITERARY STYLE:**

**A. T. Pierson:** This book is rhythmical; its language metaphorical and laconic. The nation was rotten with private vices and public crimes: lying and perjury, drunkenness and lust, robbery, murder, treason, and regicide. The worship of Jehovah was corrupted with idolatry and profaned by formality. Situated midway between Egypt and Assyria, two factions existed; one favoring alliance with Egypt, the other, with Assyria.

**Gary Smith:** Three of the most distinctive aspects of Hosea's preaching are:

- (1) his creative use of bold imagery to describe the covenant relationship that Israel was destroying by its unfaithfulness;
- (2) his use of emotions to portray God and describe Israel's problems; and
- (3) his distinctive vocabulary and grammatical constructions.

**Robin Routledge:** One significant feature of the book of Hosea is the **frequent use of similes and metaphors** (Wolff 1974: xxiv; Kruger 1988a; Hubbard 1989: 37–38; Eidevall 1996; Macintosh 1997: lxiii; Dearman 2010: 10–13; Stovell 2015). **Chapters 1–3** contain the key metaphor of Israel as Yahweh's adulterous wife; and the metaphor of adultery or prostitution continues into the rest of the book (e.g. **4:13–14; 5:3; 7:4**). **Chapter 11** employs another familial metaphor, with Israel as Yahweh's ungrateful son. Metaphors and similes use a variety of images, including from domestic life, from the animal kingdom, from agriculture and from nature. As well as Israel's husband and father, God is like a lion (**5:14; 13:7**), a leopard (**13:7**) and a bear (**13:8**). Israel is likened to a stubborn heifer (**4:16**), a wild donkey (8:9), a trained heifer (**10:11**) and a senseless dove (**7:11**). The leaders are like a heated oven (**7:4, 6**), and the nation, a part-baked cake (**7:8**). They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind (**8:7**); their love (*hesed*), and the nation itself, is like a transient morning mist (**6:4; 13:3**).

Hosea also makes considerable use of **wordplay** (see Hubbard 1989: 38; Morris 1996; Macintosh 1997: lxiv; Dearman 2010: 13–14). There are several plays on the name Ephraim ('*eprayim*'). As noted above, Ephraim is likened to a heifer (*pārā*, **4:16**) and a wild donkey (*pere*', **8:9**). And Ephraim is also related to fruitfulness (*pārā*', **13:15; pēri, **9:16; 14:8**). As we**



have also seen, **12:3** links the name Jacob (*ya ʾāqōb*) with the verb *ʾāqab* ('to cheat, supplant'). There is, too, **alliteration and assonance**. So, for example, **4:16** includes the phrase *sōrērā sārār yiśrā'ēl* – '(like a) stubborn (heifer) Israel is stubborn'. Similar-sounding words also occur in **9:15**, where Israel's 'leaders' (*šārīm*) are described as 'rebels' (*sōrrērīm*), and in **7:14–15**, where the people have turned against (*sūr*) God, even though God has instructed (*yāsar*) them. Similarly, there is a link between Jezreel (*yizrē'e'l*) and Israel (*yiśrā'ēl*), which look and sound similar (e.g. **1:4–5**).

### **Allen Guenther: Its Beauty and Power**

Hosea is the stuff of artists' daydreams and translators' nightmares. The author compresses ideas into compact, image-filled prophetic pronouncements. Figures of speech tumble over one another, inviting the reader into a complex world of multilevel relationships and meaning. Thoughts cascade in fits and starts. The emotional intensity varies only slightly through recurring cycles of disappointment, anger, and hope, for in Hosea we are encountering a prophet still raw from the wounds of offended love.

Hosea is a master of the diatribe, satirical criticism. He turns the people's words against them with the thrust and parry of an expert swordsman. He quotes their everyday speech; he knows their practices (**4:25; 13:2**), proverbs (**9:7**), prayers (**2:16; 8:2; 11:7**), and pride (**12:8**). Hosea writes as an insider, one intimately familiar with the people's ways of thinking and speaking.

**John Goldingay:** Like all poetry, his work is dense, intense, closely packed, involved, and complex. One way the poetry achieves this denseness is the general omission of some of the little words that facilitate communication in prose. Hosea's poetry is more distinctively characterized by asyndeton, juxtaposing clauses without indicating their interrelationship. Both characteristics require people to listen or read carefully and to keep rethinking the significance of what they have heard or read; Hosea cannot be read quickly. Interwoven with the use of asyndeton is a greater-than-usual inclination to vary the order of words in sentences by not putting the verb first in accordance with the usual Hebrew order, which makes it possible to nuance sentences and add emphasis. . .

A key aspect of poetry's denseness is the use of imagery. . . Metaphors and similes do more than illustrate things that we already know. They enable us to see new things through juxtaposing realities that do not usually come together. . . Further, images presuppose, testify to, and evidence the oneness of the reality that they describe. In a strange way, for the same reason the difference between the two realities means that images also obscure things in the sense of making them more mysterious. Images are confusing. . .

Paronomasia characteristically involves the juxtaposition of words that are similar, though unrelated in etymology and/or meaning. It thereby suggests links between the realities to which they refer or (paradoxically) suggests contrasts between things that perhaps should be related. In a number of examples Hosea's paronomasia involves using words in distinctive ways or using unusual forms of words, another practice that makes it necessary to resist the temptation to suspect the text or conform it to more typical usage (e.g., **2:12 [14]; 5:2; 8:4**). Related to paronomasia is the use of metonymy (e.g., **9:2; 14:5, 6 [6, 7]**) and of irony (e.g., **2:7 [9]; 4:13; 5:3; 8:3; 9:16; 13:2–3; 14:9 [10]**).

The nature of poetry is to explore, to draw attention to things, and to defamiliarize, in order that people may see things in a new way or for the first time. In this sense, its aim is not to persuade people to do something. Yet Hosea's own aim is not simply to get his people to see. It is to drive them to turn back to Yahweh and thus deal with the issues he identifies in their lives.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The imagery is diverse and emotionally charged (cf. **12:10**). On the one hand, Israel is represented by a battery of unflattering metaphors. The nation is an unfaithful wife (**chs. 1–3**), a stubborn heifer (**4:16; 10:11**), evaporating dew (**6:4; 13:3**), fleeting mist and smoke (**6:4; 13:3**), a hot oven (**7:3–7**), a burnt cake (**7:8**), a silly dove (**7:11; 11:11**), a foolish farmer (**8:7**), a useless vessel (**8:8**), a stray donkey (**8:9**), a worthless fruit tree (**9:10, 16**), a bad vine (**10:1**), a hapless twig (**10:7**), a disobedient child (**11:1–4**), and a childless woman (**13:13**). Not all is negative or hopeless, however. Someday Israel will be wooed by the Lord and their marital bonds renewed (**2:14–20**). Then the nation will be a beautiful flower and like a firmly rooted, bountiful tree (**14:5–7**).

Yahweh, too, is characterized in assorted metaphors, each of which reveals a different facet of the profound mystery of his person and character. Some reference judgment: he is a moth that will ruin the nation (**5:12**), a wild animal that devours (**5:14–15; 13:8**), a fowler who traps birds (**7:12**), and a farmer who yokes Israel, his ox (**11:4**). Yet Yahweh is not solely a stern judge: he is a forgiving and romantic husband (**chs. 2–3**), a loving parent (**11:1–4; 14:3–4**), a healing physician (**14:4**), fresh dew (**14:5**), and the source of all blessing (**14:8**).

These metaphors and similes are designed to strike the hearts and imaginations of God's people. Some shock, by exposing the ugliness and depth of sin and straightforwardly compelling repentance; others comfort and encourage the faithful to trust in the goodness of God and persevere through the coming judgment. It is important to emphasize that the overriding pictures of Yahweh and his people point to restoration. The book's final word is not one of an angry deity committed to destroying a sinful nation. Above all else, Yahweh is a caring spouse, a patient parent, and a beneficent doctor, who rejoices in the renewal of his people.

### **INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES:**

**John MacArthur:** That the faithless wife, Gomer, is symbolic of faithless Israel is without doubt; but questions remain. First, some suggest that the marital scenes in **chaps. 1–3** should be taken only as allegory. However, there is nothing in the narrative, presented in simple prose, which would even question its literal occurrence. Much of its impact would be lost if not literal. When non-literal elements within the book are introduced, they are prefaced with “*saw*” (**5:13; 9:10, 13**), the normal Hebrew means of introducing non-literal scenes. Furthermore, there is no account of a prophet ever making himself the subject of an allegory or parable.

Second, what are the moral implications of God's command for Hosea to marry a prostitute? It appears best to see Gomer as chaste at the time of marriage to Hosea, only later having become an immoral woman. The words “*take yourself a wife of harlotry*” are to be understood proleptically, i.e., looking to the future. An immoral woman could not serve as a picture of Israel

coming out of Egypt (2:15; 9:10), who then later wandered away from God (11:1). **Chapter 3** describes Hosea taking back his wife, who had been rejected because of adultery, a rejection that was unjustifiable if Hosea had married a prostitute with full knowledge of her character.

A third question arises concerning the relationship between **chap. 1** and **chap. 3** and whether the woman of **chap. 3** is Gomer or another woman. There are a number of factors which suggest that the woman of **chap. 3** is Gomer. In **1:2**, God's command is to "*Go, take;*" in **3:1**, however, His command is to "*Go again, love,*" suggesting that Hosea's love was to be renewed to the same woman. Furthermore, within the analogy of **chap. 1**, Gomer represents Israel. As God renews His love toward faithless Israel, so Hosea is to renew his love toward faithless Gomer. For **Hos. 3** to denote a different woman would confuse the analogy.

**Homer Heater:** The prophet's marriage has provoked as much debate and discussion as almost any other OT prophetic passage. **H. H. Rowley**, in a definitive article on the issue, opts for an old accepted view: Hosea was divinely instructed to **marry an immoral woman**. The first child, Jezreel, was Hosea's, but some would argue that the other two were not his (this depends on how one interprets **2:4**). She left Hosea and consorted with paramours, but God instructed Hosea to go bring her back to him. She had apparently become enslaved for debt, and he was forced to pay a price to bring her back to him.

Because of the ethical issue of God asking Hosea to marry an immoral woman and then later to take her back after she had committed adultery, some try to avoid the idea that she was an immoral woman when Hosea married her. The problem is not obviated by saying that she was not immoral when Hosea married her since God still told him to marry her knowing that she would later become immoral. We should probably accept the fact that God often asked His prophets to do difficult things such as going naked and barefoot (Isaiah) and eating dung (Ezekiel).

**Gary Smith:** We believe it is best to accept a literal historical interpretation and conclude that Gomer was sexually involved with other men before and after her marriage with Hosea. There is little to support the idea that she was a temple prostitute, that this was all just a dream, or that Hosea married two different women.

## **PURPOSE OF WRITING**

**Chuck Swindoll:** More than any other prophet, Hosea linked his message closely with his personal life. By marrying a woman he knew would eventually betray his trust and by giving his children names that sent messages of judgment on Israel, Hosea's prophetic word flowed out of the life of his family. The cycle of repentance, redemption, and restoration evident in Hosea's prophecy—and even his marriage (**Hosea 1:2; 3:1–3**)—remains intimately connected to our lives. This sequence plays itself out in the lives of real people, reminding us that the Scriptures are far from a mere collection of abstract statements with no relation to real life. No, they work their way into our day-to-day existence, commenting on issues that impact all our actions and relationships.

Structured around **five cycles of judgment and restoration**, the book of Hosea makes clear its repetitious theme: though God will bring judgment on sin, He will always bring His people back to Himself. God's love for Israel, a nation of people more interested in themselves than in God's direction for their lives, shines through clearly against the darkness of their idolatry and injustice (**Hosea 14:4**).

Throughout the book, Hosea pictured the people turning away from the Lord and turning toward other gods (**4:12–13; 8:5–6**). This propensity for idolatry meant that the Israelites lived as if they were not God's people. And though God told them as much through the birth of Hosea's third child, Lo-ammi, He also reminded them that He would ultimately restore their relationship with Him, using the intimate and personal language of "sons" to describe His wayward people (**1:9–10; 11:1**).

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The Book of Hosea has profound implications for our own personal relationship with God. We are confronted with our own false gods, spiritual adultery, and God's judgment for our denial of the covenants of Sinai and Calvary in Christ's blood. We have received *hesed* in full measure in Christ and yet often are unfaithful disciples. As part of the bride of Christ, the church, we have been called to holy living and yet must confess our corporate lack of first love commitment to the Bridegroom. And in our relationships with people we are challenged by the call to love again those who have hurt and misused us.

As individuals and as the church, a study of Hosea is disturbing before it is comforting. We are drawn irresistibly into the book and find ourselves inside the skin of Hosea as he endures the pain of his marriage and realizes the anguish of God. But we will also be forced to identify with Israel and be led into a deeper realization of our own need to return to the Lord.

## **MAJOR THEMES AND THEOLOGY**

**James Mays:** Hosea's theology is a very articulate and specific understanding of Yahweh as God of Israel and Israel as the people of Yahweh. These two foci of his faith belong to the same ellipse; they are inseparably related. Yahweh is known through his acts for Israel and his declaration of his will for them. Israel is defined, identified, and judged in the context of those deeds and instructions. This history of Yahweh's relationship with Israel is the sphere within which the thought of Hosea moves. Unlike Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah he appears to have spoken no oracles about foreign nations. Assyria, and in a secondary way Egypt, come within the horizons of his concern; but they only appear in connection with Yahweh's dealings with Israel. The theology which finds expression in the speech of Hosea is a direct descendant of the all-Israel Yahwist faith of the old tribal league. . .

From the opening verses of **ch. 1** to the concluding oracle in **ch. 14**, the cult and mythology of the god Baal is the foil of most of Hosea's sayings. Through Hosea Yahweh wrestles to win his people free from this other god and from the way of viewing themselves and reality which goes with his cult. In this, Hosea is successor to the great Elijah. In the encounter Hosea is both polemicist and apologist. His condemnation of Israel's commerce with Baal and of any syncretistic modification of Yahwism by the influence of Baalism is unyielding. But he also

adapts the motifs and rubrics of the fertility cult to portray the relation of Yahweh and his people, to diagnose Israel's sin, and to describe the future which God will create. With daring skill he appropriates the language and thought of Canaanite religion while rejecting Baalism itself. By this strategy Hosea achieves a fresh modernism that plunges into the contemporaneity of his audience. . .

The reproaches of Hosea were aimed at two primary targets; in his eyes the failure of Israel was manifested in its cultic and political life. In the first part of the book there is a virtual preoccupation with Israel's involvement with the fertility religion of Canaan. Baal is the great antagonist in the struggle for the soul of Israel. In Jeroboam's kingdom the long process of syncretism had reached a culmination in which the worship and understanding of Yahweh had been Canaanized and there was outright practice of the Baal cult. Baals were adored as deities of the land at state shrines and local high places (2.13, 17; 9.10; 11.2; 13.1). Baal's devotees believed him to be the creator of the land's fertility and divine source of crops, flocks, and children (2.5, 8, 12; 7.14; 9.1f., 11f.). The appropriate ritual of sympathetic magic to ensure the effectiveness of the deity's procreative powers dominated the cult; sexual rites with the use of sacred prostitutes and bacchanalian celebration marked the festivals (4.11–14, 18). Sacrifice was understood as a means of influencing God to procure his material blessings (4.13; 5.6; 8.11, 13; 10.1). The old aniconic purity of Yahwism had been abandoned; images were all over the land (8.4–6; 10.5; 11.2; 13.2; 14.3, 8). In all this apostasy the priests who were responsible for the knowledge of God in Israel bore a particular guilt; their avarice and corruption infected the very sources of faith for the people (4.4–10; 6.9).

The royal court and its policies was the second target of Hosea's reproaches. Israel's leaders were party to the national apostasy; their international stratagems were a substitute for turning to Yahweh. Guilt for the blood of Jezreel was on the head of Jeroboam II (1.4). His successors, who reached the throne by conspiracy and assassination, turned bloodshed into a normal technique of politics (7.3–7). Once on the throne these men saw the monarchy as the source of Israel's strength (7.16; 8.14; 10.13). In the recurrent crises of the period they turned to Egypt and Assyria in an attempt to build national security by clever diplomacy (5.13; 7.8f., 11; 8.9f.; 14.3). All these kings and leaders were the creatures of Israel's sin; Yahweh had no part in their tenure (8.4). Indeed, they were the instruments of his wrath (13.11). The texts do not furnish unambiguous evidence concerning Hosea's attitude toward kingship per se. The reference to Gilgal in 9.15 has been read as an assertion that all Israel's evil started with the inauguration of Saul; but this construction is uncertain. Yet, one gets the impression that Hosea thought Israel's experience with the monarchy was little better than their involvement with Canaanite religion. Israel should have no other saviour but Yahweh (13.4, 10). These kings had come between Yahweh and Israel, corrupted covenant (10.4), entangled the nation in deceptive alliances to evade Yahweh's punishment, created false hopes of independent security. Though 1.10f. is not certain to be from Hosea, it is the one political oracle of salvation in the book; it looks for a reconstitution of the people under a chief along the lines of the tribal league.

### **John Piper: Call Me Husband, Not Baal**

Love God warmly as your husband, don't just serve him as your Lord. . .

If you get your kicks from somewhere else, you commit great harlotry against God. . .

Gomer is going to bear three children, and each one is going to symbolize the judgment

of God which harlotry always begets. The first is named Jezreel to remind the people of the fury of Jehu (a former king of Israel) when he killed Joram and Amaziah and Jezebel and 70 sons of Ahab in the city of Jezreel. Even though Jehu was carrying out the penal purposes of God, he was reckless and impetuous and high-handed in his dealings. When God says in **verse 5** that he will therefore break the bow of Israel, he means that this is still Israel's spirit. She is unfaithful and begets violence and treachery. The first son stands for this sin of Israel.

I see in **Hosea 2:14–23** at least three things God does for us, his rebellious wife, to win us back; and I see one overriding thing that he wants from us. The first thing he does is **woo us tenderly**. **Verse 14:** "*Behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.*" We are all guilty of harlotry. We have loved other lovers more than God. We have gotten our kicks elsewhere. He has been at times an annoying deity. We, like Gomer, were enslaved to a paramour, the world, pleasure, ambition. But God has not cast us off. He promises to take us into the wilderness. He wants to be alone with us. Why? So that he can speak tenderly to us. Literally, the Hebrew says, so that he can speak "to her heart." And when he speaks, he will allure you. He will entice you and woo you. He will say what a lover says to his lady when they walk away from the party into the garden. God wants to talk that way with you. Go with him into the wilderness and listen with your heart. Do not think you are too ugly or too rotten. He knows that his wife is a harlot. That's the meaning of mercy: God is wooing a wife of harlotry.

The second thing God does is **promise her hope and safety**. **Verse 15:** "*And there I will give her vineyards and make the valley of Achor a door of hope.*" The valley of Achor is where Israel was first unfaithful to the Lord in the promised land. Just after Israel entered the land, Achan kept the forbidden booty and caused the defeat at Ai. But now God promises that if his harlot will come home, Achor will no longer be a "*valley of trouble*" (**Joshua 7:26**), but a **door of hope**. She will come home to rich vineyards. **Verse 18** spells out her hope in more detail: "*I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground, and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety.*" If only his estranged wife will come home, she will find a paradise with her husband: he will make a pact even with the animals, lest they do harm; and he will remove all violence and conflict. These are no doubt the words God speaks into the heart of his wife in the lonely place. "It will be so good, so good! Put away your harlotry and come home."

The third thing God does is **renew his wife's betrothal and consummate the marriage again in purity**. **Verses 19, 20:** "*And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.*" Three times: *I will betroth you; I will betroth you; I will betroth you.* "We will go back to the days of our engagement. We will start over. Harlots can start over! We will lay a fresh foundation: righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness. Things will not only be good in the paradise around us. Things will also be right between us. These have always been my ways; but



now they will be mutual." Yes, even a wife of harlotry can experience a new relationship of righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness with her divine husband.

But the most daring statement of all is the last one in **verse 20**: "*And you shall know the Lord.*" To see what this means, recall the peculiar use of the word "know" in the Bible. For example, **Genesis 4:1**, "*Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.*" And **Matthew 1:25**, "*Joseph knew her [Mary] not until she had borne a son.*" In the context of a broken marriage being renewed with the fresh vows of betrothal, must not the words, "*and you shall know the Lord*" (**v. 20**), mean, you shall enjoy an intimacy like that of the purest sexual intercourse. When the wife of harlotry returns to her husband, he will withhold nothing. He will not keep her at a distance. The fellowship and communion and profoundest union he will give to his prodigal wife when she comes home broken and empty.

This is the **gospel story** in the Old Testament. This is the meaning of Christmas interpreted seven centuries before Christ. God comes to woo us tenderly to himself; he promises us fullest hope and safety; he starts over with any who will come, and offers us the most intimate and pleasure-filled relationship possible.

And what must we do to qualify? What does he want from us? **Verse 16**: "*In that day, says the Lord, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Baal.'*" I think the word Baal here has a double meaning. As the next verse shows, it means one of the false gods of Israel's idolatry. So **verse 16** means: "You will no longer include me as one of many gods, or many lovers; you will talk to me as your only true God and husband."

But there is another sense of the word Baal. Fifteen times in the Old Testament it simply means "*husband*," but husband in the sense of owner and lord. The Baals were Israel's hard masters as well as her lovers. In **7:14**, for example, the people gashed themselves to try to get benefits from the Baals (just like the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in **1 Kings 18:28**). When Israel chose a Baal for her "significant other," she chose a cruel and merciless lord. So the other (and I think primary) meaning of **Hosea 2:16** is: "*Relate to me as a loving husband, not as a harsh master or owner. In that day, says the Lord, you will call me 'My husband,' and you will no longer call me 'My Baal.'*"

The good news at the end of 1982 is that God wants you to love him warmly as your husband, not just serve him dutifully as your Lord.

[http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/41/372\\_Call\\_Me\\_Husband\\_Not\\_Baal/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/41/372_Call_Me_Husband_Not_Baal/)

**H. Ronald Vandermeij**: The message of Hosea is simple: the justice of God brings punishment for sin; the love of God brings restoration for repentance. After a personal illustration of God's sovereign plan of redemption in the life of the prophet (**chaps, one-three**), Hosea reveals God's

holiness through an indictment of faithless Israel (**chaps, four-seven**), His justice through an announcement of the penalty for that faithlessness (**chaps, eight-ten**), and His love through a proclamation of the certainty of the promise of national restoration (**chaps, eleven-fourteen**).

**Robin Routledge:** A key part of Hosea's message is to challenge the apostasy, idolatry and syncretistic religious practices of the nation. The people *do not know* (*yāda'*) Yahweh (e.g. **5:4; 11:3**), and offer unacceptable sacrifices (4:13–14; 6:6; 8:13; 9:4; 11:2; 12:11; 13:2). And, though the message is directed primarily at the northern kingdom, Judah does not escape criticism. Israel's priests, who lead the people into sin, face particular condemnation (**4:4–11; 5:1; 6:9; 10:5**). False worship results in a breakdown of right relationships within society and, though not as prominent as in Amos, condemnation of social sins is also a feature of Hosea's prophecy. The people, badly led by the priests, disobey God's law (**4:6; 8:1, 12; 9:17**); there is a lack of righteousness (cf. **2:19; 10:12**) and justice (cf. **2:19; 12:6**); evildoers break into houses or rob in the streets (**6:8–9; 7:1**); there is drunkenness (**7:5**), sexual misconduct (**4:2, 14, 18**), dishonesty (**4:2; 7:3; 10:4, 13; 12:7**), bloodshed and murder (**4:2; 6:9; 12:14**). Related to idolatry is the nation's failure to rely on Yahweh. Hosea condemns the arrogance of those who trust in their own strength (**7:10; 10:13**; see also **8:14; 12:8; 13:6**), turn to other gods (**2:5; 3:1**) or look to Egypt and Assyria for help (**5:13; 7:11; 12:1**; cf. **14:3**). He condemns, too, the people's ingratitude and failure to appreciate the blessings Yahweh has given them (**2:8; 7:15; 11:2–4; 13:5–6**).

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The one to whom Israel is bound is **sovereign over all**. Yahweh is Lord over creation; he alone grants fertility to the nation's crops (e.g., **2:8, 18–22**). He directs the movement of every nation and the superpowers. Yahweh can utilize other peoples for judgment (e.g., **10:6–10, 14–15; 11:6; 13:15–16**), emphasizes the folly of entering into alliances with them (**5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 9:3; 12:1**), and exposes the limited power of empires (**5:13; 14:3**). The politics of Israel should be guided by a unique set of priorities and commitments. Its ruling elites and monarchy are fiercely criticized for their lack of ethics and for policies that manifest rebellion against God and that are, on occasion, associated with a cult that Yahweh abhors (e.g., **5:1–2, 10; 6:11–7:7; 8:4; 13:9–11**). Sharp attacks on the monarchy have led some to wonder whether the prophet is against the very institution of kingship. This is too extreme a view. What is made clear is that the northern kingdom's king and government are illegitimate in God's sight. The hope is that someday Israel will be reunited with Judah under a Davidic king (**1:11; 3:4–5**).

**H. D. Beeby:** The first of these patterns is that of **recapitulation**. Hosea has one basic sermon or set of themes, and these themes appear and reappear throughout the book; the book as a whole has thus been fashioned to make its overall structure conform to these same themes. The clearest statement of the themes is to be found in **Hos. 11**—a good place to begin the study of the book. There in outline is the word of the LORD which came to Hosea. God chose Israel and showered her with grace abounding. Israel's response was rebellion and more sin. This drew from God the just condemnation and the punishment that such rebellion deserves. Unable to learn from her history, Israel is destined to repeat it; she must go back into bondage. But God is God and therefore gracious. God's last word is a word of compassion and restoration. The God who reigns is the God who saves. This basic scheme is never far from us.

## STRUCTURE

**David Malick:** The reason (Judah and especially) Israel are going to be judged by the God of loyal love is because they have not been faithful to the covenant and thus need to repent in order to receive a future restoration to the land

### I. Setting: **1:1**

II. The LORD's loyal love for the idolatrous, northern kingdom of Israel is demonstrated through Hosea's marriage to Gomer **1:2 - 3:5**

III. The LORD directly indicts the nation Israel (and Judah) for their breaking of their covenantal relationship with Him in three specific areas:

- (1) their lack and rejection of the knowledge of the LORD,
- (2) their lack of loyal love, and
- (3) their faithlessness—

in order to reveal the reason for their coming judgment which ultimately will lead to restoration **4:1 - 13:6**

A. In a summary statement the LORD indicts the nation of Israel for their lack of faithfulness, kindness and knowledge of God which results in judgment in the land **4:1-3**

B. The First Indictment: The LORD indicts the nation for a lack of *knowledge* and a rejection of *knowledge* of the LORD so that they will understand the coming affliction which will cause them to turn to Him and be restored **4:4-19**

C. The Second Indictment: The LORD indicts Israel and Judah for having a lack of *loyal love* in order that they might understand the coming purifying judgment and possibly repent to their loyal God who will restore them to the Land **6:4 - 11:11**

D. Third Indictment: The LORD indicts Israel for having a lack of faithfulness so that they will understand their coming judgment and return to Him who will not completely destroy them due to His faithfulness **11:12 - 13:16**

IV. The LORD calls upon the nation to repent and turn to Him for restoration **14:1-8**

V. Conclusion: The reader is exhorted to be wise unto life by understanding who the LORD is and obeying Him rather than being foolish and disobeying Him which would result in death **14:9**

### **Hampton Keathley:**

It is hard to outline the prophetic books because the prophets alternate between listing sins, predicting judgment and then promising restoration, it is hard to pick out the macro structure or "big picture." Hosea is probably the hardest.

In the first three chapters we see Hosea's marriage to the prostitute, Gomer. His marriage to the unfaithful wife is to be an example of God's relationship with the unfaithful nation of Israel. In the first three chapters we alternate between the events in Hosea's message and God's explanation of how those events relate to the nation.

In **4-14**: we see Hosea's message of warning to the nation of Israel. I think you can see a parallel between the three sections describing Hosea's marriage and the major sections in the last part of the book, within these individual sections, we have several “mini” sermons which themselves alternate between **the listing of the sins, the pronouncement of judgment, the call to repentance and the promise of restoration.**

If you keep that in mind as you study the book, it will help keep you from getting lost in the details.

### **J. Sidlow Baxter: THE PROPHET OF PERSEVERING LOVE**

All the trouble in that ten-tribed kingdom of long ago originated in the worship of the two golden calves which king Jeroboam installed at Dan and Bethel. By the time Hosea lived, those calves and the illicit cult which grew up around them had brought the nation to such a moral condition that Divine judgment could be staved off little longer.

**Prologue (i.-iii.)** – the whole story in symbol

#### **I. ISRAEL'S SIN INTOLERABLE: GOD IS HOLY (iv.-vii.)**

- The Fivefold Indictment (iv., v.)
- Israel's Unreal “Return” (vi.)
- Healing Made Impossible (vii.)

#### **II. ISRAEL SHALL BE PUNISHED: GOD IS JUST (viii.-x.)**

- The Trumpet of Judgment (viii)
- These chapters throughout are expressions of wrath to come

#### **III. ISRAEL SHALL BE RESTORED: GOD IS LOVE (xi.-xiv.)**

- Divine Yearning (xi.)
- Yet Israel Must Suffer (xii., etc.)
- The Final victory of Love (xiv.)

**Charles Ryrie:** (from Study Bible)

#### **I. The Prodigal Wife, Hosea 1:1 - 3:5**

- A. Her Unfaithfulness, **Hosea 1:1-11**
- B. Her Punishment, **Hosea 2:1-13**
- C. Her Restoration and Israel's, **Hosea 2:14-23**
- D. Her Redemption, **Hosea 3:1-5**

#### **II. The Prodigal People, Hosea 4:1 - 14:9**

- A. The Message of Judgment, **Hosea 4:1 - 10:15**
  - 1. The indictment, **Hosea 4:1-19**

2. The verdict, **Hosea 5:1-15**
3. The plea of Israel, **Hosea 6:1-3**
4. The reply of the Lord, **Hosea 6:4-11**
5. The crimes of Israel, **Hosea 7:1-16**
6. The prophecy of judgment, **Hosea 8:1 - 10:15**
- B. The Message of Restoration, **Hosea 11:1 - 14:9**
  1. God's love for the prodigal people, **Hosea 11:1-11**
  2. God's chastisement of the prodigal people, **Hosea 11:12 - 13:16**
  3. God's restoration of the prodigal people, **Hosea 14:1-9**

**Chuck Swindoll: Overview Bible Chart**

	PERSONAL <i>THE AGONY OF AN UNFAITHFUL SPOUSE</i>		NATIONAL <i>THE TRAGEDY OF AN UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE</i>		
	Hosea 1-3		Hosea 4-14		
	Marriage Children Separation Reunion		Series of sermons declaring the sin of the people and the character of God  Model of the message as Hosea remains true to his wife in spite of her infidelity		
	Adulterous wife, faithful husband		Adulterous nation, faithful God		
	"Go and marry a prostitute." <i>(Hos. 1:2)</i>	"Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover." <i>(Hos. 3:1)</i>	Nation is guilty  God is holy	Nation needs judgment  God is just	Nation has hope  God is love
THEME	God's faithful love toward His unfaithful people				
KEY VERSES	Hosea 2:19-20; 3:1; 11:1-12				
CHRIST IN HOSEA	Christ's being "called out" from hiding in Egypt as a child is pictured in Hosea's record of Israel's Exodus from Egypt ( <i>Hos. 11:1; see Matt. 2:15</i> ). In Hosea's redemption of Gomer from the slave market, Christ is pictured as the loving, faithful Redeemer of sinful humanity.				

Bruce Hurt:

NARRATIVE			S E R M O N S											
PURPOSE: Symbolic Illustration			PURPOSE: Spiritual Restoration											
1:1	2:2	3:1	4:1	5:1	5:15	7:6	8:1	9	10	11	12	13	14	<b>KEY VERSES:</b> 3:1 6:4 10:12 11:3,8 14:4  <b>KEY WORDS:</b> know knowledge hear mercy love return Israel (44) Ephraim (37) Judah (15) I will (of Jehovah, 57)
PERSONAL: adulterous wife and faithful husband			NATIONAL: adulterous people and faithful Lord											
"Marry"	"Plead"	"Love again"	SIN AND GUILT PROMINENT * * * TRANSGRESSION				JUDGMENT PROMINENT * * * VISITATION			HOPE PROMINENT * * * RESTORATION				
MARRIAGE	SEPARATION	REUNION	<i>God is holy</i>				<i>God is just</i>			<i>God is love</i>				



TEXT: Hosea 1:1-9

TITLE: *STORY OF THE PROPHET WHO MARRIED THE PROSTITUTE*

**BIG IDEA:**

**ISRAEL'S CORRUPTION AS PICTURED IN HOSEA'S MARRIAGE TO THE PROSTITUTE AND HER CHILDREN OF HARLOTRY PROVIDES THE BACKDROP FOR GOD'S AMAZING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**David Thompson:** GOD DEMANDS HIS PROPHET MARRY AN IMMORAL HARLOT AND HAVE CHILDREN BY THE HARLOT TO ILLUSTRATE HOW CORRUPT AND IMMORAL HIS OWN FAMILY HAS BECOME IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HIM; AND YET IN THE END GOD WILL BLESS HIS FAMILY BECAUSE HE LOVES HIS FAMILY.

**Trent Butler:** God charged his prophet to enact a drastic prophetic act through his own family. He married a prostitute, representing Israel's unfaithfulness, and named three children unthinkable names to symbolize the place of judgment, the reason for judgment, and the result of judgment. But God pointed to a future where faithfulness and a love relationship would be restored in Hosea's family and in God's relation to Israel.

**Gary Smith:** By setting Israel's sinful behavior in the framework of the vile behavior of a prostitute, Hosea reminds his audience both of the seriousness of sin (it destroys a mutual trusting relationship) and the amazing greatness of God's love.

**David Allan Hubbard:** To grasp the overall message of this first section, we must catch the significance of its **literary structure**. These three chapters are a two-part story (1:2-9; 3:1-5) wrapped around a three-part oracle (1:10 - 2:1; 2:2-13; 2:14-23). This structure produces a literary unit that can be described by the scheme A B1 BB1 A1, where A (1:2-9) is the story, whose point is judgment and A1 (3:1-5) is the story whose point is hope, while B (2:2-13) is the oracle whose announcement is judgment, and the B1 (1:10 - 2:1; 2:14-23) are the oracles whose proclamation is hope.

The envelope or inclusio formed by the two-part story with which the section opens and closes is not only a graceful literary device but an important theological pointer. This structure – in which Gomer's waywardness is described before Israel's sin is denounced, and Yahweh's restoration of Israel to full covenant privileges is promised before Hosea is commanded to demonstrate that restoration – packages the gist of the section: Gomer's betrayal of Hosea may foreshadow Israel's defection from Yahweh, but no human act of forgiveness can take priority over divine forbearance. When it comes to the exercise of grace God is mentor to us all.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** Over the years, as I have preached or taught the Book of Hosea, I have found that it is crucial early on to personalize the dilemma of God in dealing with Israel's unfaithfulness by talking about **the cross in the heart of God**. There was a cross of judgment and forgiveness in God's heart before there was a cross on Calvary. Golgatha revealed God as both the just and the justifier (**Rom. 3:26**).

This becomes very real when we consider honestly God's problem with each of us. He cannot wink at our sin that separates us from Him or our sins that express our rebellion. At the same time, He must find a way to confront us and heal us. The astounding realization is that He persistently chooses to be our God regardless of what we've done or been. Amazing love, indeed. But love that we can never take for granted.

First main section of the book:

## **I. (1:1 – 3:5) ISRAEL'S INFIDELITY ILLUSTRATED BY MARRIAGE OF FAITHFUL PROPHET AND ADULTEROUS WIFE**

**Symbolic Narrative** – rest of book is series of addresses to the people

**H. D. Beebe:** [He argues for keeping **1:2 – 2:1** together as a cohesive unity because:] hope always keeps breaking through. Dire warnings and promised destruction are followed by promises of restoration; fatal sicknesses carry hints of healing; chaos points to new creation; and despair points to hope. The sentence of death is rarely the last word, and the black cap so often donned becomes almost a sign of reprieve.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** When read together, **chs. 1–3** have a basic theme: God's judgment in the historical process will come against a faithless Israel, sometime after which God will initiate a period of restoration. Hosea's marriage and children are rendered through literary devices to illustrate the theme, and the texts are thoroughly shaped with that goal in mind.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, each chapter—at least in English versification—gives a rendering of the same basic theme, moving from judgment to restoration.

## **(:1) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **A. Communication of the Word of God via the Prophet Hosea**

*“The word of the Lord which came to Hosea the son of Beeri,”*

**H. D. Beebe:** The word of the LORD “comes” to Hosea in time, in history, but it is timeless in its application (it “endures forever”). It is a word for all seasons and for all sorts and conditions of people.

**Trent Butler:** The **word of the LORD** appears 438 times in the Hebrew Bible from **Genesis 15:1** to **Malachi 1:1**. This is a distinctive of biblical religion: God constantly lets his people know his message. The problem lies in a people who refuse to accept and obey his message.

**Allen Guenther:** *Dabar* may also imply *affair, matter, business, thing*, as in *the matter (dabar) concerning Uriah (1 Kings 15:5)*. Hence, while God is communicating with

Hosea by means of words, he is not conveying speeches to be regurgitated. God is disclosing his intentions, his business with Israel. In the process of receiving the word of the Lord, the prophet becomes a member of the heavenly council, to whom God reveals his secret plans (**Amos 3:7**; cf. **Jer. 23:18**). Therefore, when Hosea interacts with God or offers a prophecy from his own lips, that word is to be regarded as coming from the counsel of the Lord; it consists of the purposes of God as fully as if he had quoted a first-person speech form Almighty.

Why are these books called Minor Prophets? Brevity ... not importance (cf. Is, Jer, Ez)

Order in the Hebrew bible:

- Prophets of the Assyrian Period (Hosea to Nahum) – pre-exilic
- Prophets of the Babylonian Captivity (Habakkuk and Zephaniah)
- Prophets of the Persian Period (after exile - Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Name = Hoshea = “*salvation*” – same meaning as that of Joshua and Jesus

Prophet to the Northern kingdom of Israel and native of that area (Jonah = only other writing prophet from the North) – **755–710 BC** – long ministry (sometimes called Ephraim)

- contemporaries: Amos (just before Hosea), Micah and Isaiah
- ministry included the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judah
- he has been called the Jeremiah of Israel – intensely sensitive and emotional right before the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria

**Meyer Gruber**: Standard English translations of the Bible (from KJV through NJPS), which reserve the form Hosea for the prophet named in **Hos. 1–2** and the Book that includes **Hos. 2:1**, employ the form *Hoshea* to represent all the other 4 biblical Hosheas.

**David Thompson**: We don't know much about Hosea. Some have said they think he was a baker because he knew how to make bread (**Hosea 7:4**). Some say they think he was a farmer because he knew about sowing and plowing and harvesting crops (**Hosea 8:7; 10:13**).

Some say they think he was a priest because there are references in the book to the priests (**Hos. 4:4; 4:9; 5:1; 6:9**). Some think he was the son of one of the prophets or some professional prophet who had attended a prophet's school (**Hos. 1:2; 4:5; 9:7-8**). The truth is we just can't say for sure.

We do know that his father's name was **Beeri (Hosea 1:1)**. Now we do not know if there is any connection but according to **Genesis 26:34**, Esau married a woman named Judith, who was the daughter of a Hittite named Beeri. It is hard to know if there is an ethnic connection. But one thing we do know is that you do not have to come from some big name Christian family to be greatly used by God. Hosea didn't.

**James Limburg:** Behind these sayings is also a person of **unusual sensitivity**. Because of his own heart-wrenching experiences with his family, Hosea is able to describe the anguish in the heart of God like no other prophet. **Abraham Heschel** said, “Amos dwells on what God has done . . . Hosea dwells on what God has felt for Israel” (*The Prophets*, p. 60). The anguish of God over a faithless people is like that of a husband over a wife who is ungrateful and unfaithful (**2:8, 13**). The pain in the heart of God is like the pain in the heart of a parent who has invested decades in child rearing only to have that child turn out to be a rebel (**11:1–4**).

## **B. Contemporary Kings of Judah and Israel**

### 1. Kings of Judah

*“during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,”*

**Derek Kidner:** It had been at first a time of growing affluence, thanks to the brief respite which these little kingdoms found themselves enjoying while their strongest neighbours happened, for once, to be preoccupied and weak. Damascus, their most recent scourge, had been crippled by Assyria in 802; and then Assyria itself, that grim Mesopotamian war-machine, had begun to falter under threats from without and disunity within.

But with Israel’s wealth had come increasing decadence; and then, halfway through the century, their world began to crumble. At home, the two strong kings, Jeroboam II of Israel and his contemporary, Uzziah of Judah, were at or near the end of their long reigns, while in the distance Assyria had roused itself to a new pitch of terrifying strength and militancy. It was soon to march on Palestine. Within a generation the kingdom of Israel would be extinct.

It was to this generation that Hosea was sent to preach repentance.

### 2. Kings of Israel

*“and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”*

**Jeroboam II** was the king in Israel

**Historical Background: 2 Kings 14-20; 2 Chron. 26-32**

Had reason to be intense and emotional – this was Israel’s last call to repentance; they were already too far gone and too corrupt; judgment was coming

**Religious and cultural conditions** during reign of Jeroboam II

Political peace; material prosperity – but moral and religious corruption; after Jeroboam II, kingdom became chaotic – short reigns of a succession of kings ended by coups and assassinations

Reign of **Tiglathpileser III** – king of Assyria 745-727 BC

**David Thompson:** Actually even though Hosea's life spanned more than one Israelite king, he only mentions one Israelite king (Jeroboam) and four Judean kings.

This actually seems odd because Hosea is ministering to Israel and yet he only mentions one king from Israel, **Jeroboam**, but he mentions four kings from Judah—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He completely eliminates Israel's kings (Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea) (**II Kings 15**). Most believe the reason for this is because Jeroboam was the last good king and those who came after him were worthless kings who led Israel into idolatry and immorality.

**Duane Garrett:** Why did Hosea neglect to mention the rest of the kings of Israel? The reason appears to be twofold.

- First, he regarded Jeroboam II as the last king of Israel with any shred of legitimacy. Those after him were a pack of assassins and ambitious climbers who had no right to the title "king." Hosea's assessment of the kings of Israel appears in texts like **7:1–7**.
- Second, he hoped for better things from Judah. At times he criticized the south as heavily as the north (**5:5, 12**), but he also prayed that they not follow Israel's lead (**4:15**). Most importantly, he looked for salvation and reunification in the line of David (**3:5**).

## **I. (:2-3) SIGNIFICANT MARRIAGE WITH SYMBOLIC MEANING**

*"When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea,"*

### **A. (:2) Shocking Command**

#### 1. Issuing the Command -- Highlighting Israel's Corruption and Apostasy -- Enter into an Immoral Relationship

##### a. Hook Up with a Wife of Harlotry

*"Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry,"*

#### Different views:

- 1) actually marry a prostitute – but nothing seems wrong in the early stages of birth of first son; this would be very strange – would not picture the condition of a redeemed people who subsequently would commit spiritual adultery; question whether the next two children are really his ... you can see the decline in the relationship
- 2) symbolic only; an allegory – does not give the power to the illustration; details of the narrative read like a literal story
- 3) Gomer chaste initially – but God foretelling what her character and actions would be;

**David Thompson:** Frankly after carefully examining this issue in the Hebrew text and in the Greek Septuagint Greek text, I agree with **Gary Smith**, a professor of Hebrew, who has written a commentary on this book, who concludes Hosea was commanded to go and marry a woman who was paid money for sexual favors both before Hosea married

her and after he married her (**Hos. 2:5**) (*Hosea*, p. 46). As he says, “the plain meaning of these words cannot be easily escaped.”

**Lloyd Ogilvie**: The simplest solution to this question and the various alternatives we have cited is to take the text of Hosea as it stands. God told Hosea to take a wife of harlotry, to marry a woman who was involved in some form of prostitution and after marriage returned to her former lifestyle. It is certainly tempting to read into the text that she was a cult prostitute, even though a strong case cannot be proven from the text itself.

Alternate Interpretation:

**G. Campbell Morgan**: The statement distinctly calls here a **woman of whoredom**, but it does not tell us that she was that at the time. It certainly does mean that God knew the possibilities in the heart of Gomer, and that presently they would be manifested in her conduct, and knowing, He commanded Hosea to marry her, knowing also what his experience would do for him in his prophetic work. When Hosea married Gomer, she was not openly a sinning woman, and the children antedated her infidelity. The earlier life of the prophet was in all likelihood one of joy and happiness.

**H. D. Beeby**: Many attempts have been made to justify God’s strange command, to preserve God’s moral reputation and to make things a little easier and more presentable for Hosea. . . . Incomprehensible and unpalatable as it sounds, this is the one marriage that was made in heaven. God commands Hosea to marry the harlot because God’s word requires it and his will demands it.

**Duane Garrett**: We must not think of her as a prostitute in modern terms—a call girl or streetwalker—but should think of her more as an immoral girl who depended on gifts from her lovers.

**Allen Guenther**: Gomer brought no children with her into the marriage. The instructions and description which follow identify the children as born after the marriage.

**James Mays**: The marriage is an act of obedience to Yahweh’s command undertaken to dramatize the divine indictment of Israel. Hosea is to display the predicament of Yahweh in his covenant with Israel by wedding a harlotrous woman!

- b. Have Children of Harlotry  
“*and have children of harlotry;*”

**James Mays**: That the children are **harlotrous** has nothing to do with their own character; nothing is made of them except their naming. Rather they are harlotrous because of their mother. Coming from her womb which has been devoted to the cult of Baal, they are religiously the offspring of harlotry. See ‘*sons of harlotry*’ in **2.4** as a designation of Israelites and the contextual description of their mother, Israel.



## 2. Justifying the Shocking Command

### a. Due to Harlotry

*“for the land commits flagrant harlotry,”*

Picture of shame and disgrace; an ugly image

How important is faithfulness in your marriage?

### b. Due to Apostasy

*“forsaking the LORD.”*

## **B. (:3) Swift Consummation**

### 1. Beginning of Their Marriage

*“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim,”*

**David Thompson:** Now **verse 3** opens with a Hebrew word that says, “*so he went.*” The Hebrew word means he went walking on a journey to where he would find a harlot (Ibid., p. 224). Wherever he was when God told him to do this was not the place where you would find this woman. He would have to go to a place where harlots typically were. Perhaps he had to go to a brothel or perhaps, as some have suggested, he had to go to an idolatrous temple known for idolatry and immorality.

**Robin Routledge:** Some have tried to attach symbolism to the names Gomer and Diblaim, but that seems unlikely. If they were symbolic, we would expect their significance to be explained, as is the case with the names of Gomer’s children. It has also been suggested that Diblaim might be a reference to Gomer’s home town, Diblathaim, in Moab (cf. **Jer. 48:22**). This too seems unlikely. It is better to take these simply as the names of the figures involved.

### 2. Beginning of Their Family

*“and she conceived and bore him a son.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The report of their births should not be passed over as a sad but merely incidental prologue to the actual prophecy; in a real sense, they are the prophecy, and everything else is just exposition.

## **II. (:4-9) SIGNIFICANT CHILDREN WITH SYMBOLIC MEANING**

### **A. (:4-5) Reality of the Judgment -- Son = Jezreel – “God will scatter” –**

#### 1. (:4) Ending the Kingdom of Israel

*“And the LORD said to him, ‘Name him Jezreel;  
for yet a little while,  
and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel,  
and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.’”*

Discipline and exile (**2 Kings 9:7 – 10:28**)

Look at the security we have as the church – nothing can separate us from the love of

God which is in Christ Jesus

“put an end” (:4) – exile of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C.

**Duane Garrett:** [“*Jezreel*”] means “*May God sow*” and thus associates God with the productivity of the land. In this it addresses the fertility cults that figure so heavily in the background of the Book of Hosea. For the prophet no doubt the name contrasts Yahweh, the true giver of life, with the false fertility god Baal. We thus have in this name associations of both death by violence and of a prayer to God, the giver of bountiful harvests.

**David Thompson:** Now Jezreel is a very important geographical place in Israel (**I Kings 18:45-46**). This city served as a winter capital for Israel’s kings. But it is clear from these verses that God had one moment in mind in Jezreel’s history which he refers to as “the bloodshed of Jezreel.”

King Jeroboam represented the last strong king and good king in a dynasty started by Jehu (841- 814 B.C.). In the valley of Jezreel, Jehu, King of Israel (841-814 B.C.), was ordered by God to destroy the house of Ahab (**II Kings 9:7**). Jehu won a great victory totally destroying Israel’s idolatrous enemies.

Jehu ordered Queen Jezebel’s servants to kill her by throwing her out the window. Then Jehu had Ahab’s 30 sons killed and their heads brought to him in Jezreel (**II Kings 9-10**). This was all good.

But Jehu killed King Ahaziah of Judah and 42 of his relatives, which was evil (**II Kings 9:27-28; 10:12-14**). By doing this, Jehu demonstrated a great disloyalty to God by shedding that innocent blood.

Now God warned his people by naming this son Jezreel that the same kind of thing would happen to them. They were disloyal to God and they were pursuing the same kinds of things of immoral idolatry like Ahab and Jezebel.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The monarchy of Hosea’s day will suffer the same fate as that suffered by the house of Ahab and others. It will be eliminated violently by divine judgment.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** According to **1:4**, God will bring (lit. “*visit*” or “*inspect*”) the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Modern translations often render the Hebrew phrase *pāqad ‘al* here and in similar texts as “*punish*” because the action conveyed in the Lord’s visitation is understood to be judgment. This is not wrong, but the rendering misses an important nuance. God’s judgment in the coming historical process is the bringing of a negative effect on the ruling house, based on prior failures related to that dynasty.

**Derek Kidner:** There is a **paradox over Jehu**. Here he is a man of blood, storing up disaster for his dynasty and realm; but in **2 Kings 10:30** he has *‘done well’* in carrying out against the house of Ahab *‘all that was in (God’s) heart’*. The reason is not far to seek; it lies in Jehu himself, a standing example of a human scourge. As God’s executioner he left nothing undone, and it was in that capacity that he collected his reward: the promise of the throne to four generations of his sons. The Old Testament has several instances of this kind of servant, of whom Sennacherib, whom God calls *‘the rod of my anger’* (*‘But he does not so intend, and his mind does not so think’*, **Is. 10:7**), and Nebuchadnezzar *‘my servant’* (**Je. 27:6**) are prime examples. And they were paid their wages – paid in spoil and conquest, described in exactly these terms of *‘wages’* in **Ezekiel 29:18-20**; but paid also with the due requital of their pride and cruelty.

So it was with Jehu – with the difference that he knew of his commission from the Lord. But there was no difference of spirit or method. The events of **2 Kings 10** are a welter of trickery, butchery and hypocrisy, in which the only trace of a religious motive is fanaticism – and even this is suspect in view of Jehu’s charade of sacrificing to Baal (**2 Ki. 10:25**). Self-interest and bloodlust were his dominant springs of conduct, and it was this that made *‘the blood of Jezreel’* an accusing stain.

**James Limburg:** At Jezreel, Jehu had killed the kings of Israel and Judah. There Jezebel had died a cruel death. It was at Jezreel that Jehu displayed the heads of the seven sons of Ahab; he had also engineered the mass extermination of Baal worshipers there (**II Kings 9–10**). Thus the name of the beautiful city and valley was forever linked with violence and mass murder. To name a child *“Jezreel”* might be like naming a child today “Auschwitz” or “Hiroshima.” An **announcement of punishment** indicates the ominous significance of the name: *“and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.”*

## 2. (:5) Eradicating the Military Power of Israel

*“And it will come about on that day,  
that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”*

At city of Jezreel – Jehu slaughtered house of Ahab; scene of much bloodshed

**Trent Butler:** A quick verse summarizes God’s plan. On the day he chooses, he will shatter the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel. The bow represents the nation’s military power. Such power was focused in the king of Israel. God planned to bring an end to Israel’s army and its monarchy. This began when the last king of the Jehu dynasty—King Zechariah—met his death at the hand of Shallum. The Septuagint, the oldest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, locates this in the Valley of Jezreel (**2 Kgs. 15:10**). The completion also came in the Jezreel Valley when Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria defeated Israel’s army and took the territory of the valley (**2 Kgs. 15:29**).

## **B. (:6-7) Reaction to the Judgment -- Daughter = *Lo-ruhamah* – “not pitied” –**

### 1. (:6) Compassion Ends for Northern Kingdom

*“Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter.  
And the LORD said to him, ‘Name her Lo-ruhamah,  
for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel,  
that I should ever forgive them.’”*

No more compassion and forgiveness.

How important for us that *“the Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness”*  
(**Lam 3:22-23**)

**Derek Kidner:** The first child had been Hosea’s own: his wife ‘*bore him a son*’ (**3**). The second and third are not said to have been his: the ‘*him*’ of **verse 3** is missing in **verses 6 and 8**. So the joy of fatherhood was deeply clouded, and the children were living proofs of the invasion of the marriage.

**Duane Garrett:** [Regarding translation problems with the last phrase in the verse] We are thus left with the astonishing possibility that the text means exactly what it says: *“I will completely forgive them.”* How is it possible that Hosea (speaking for God) could in the same breath say, “I will no longer show love to the house of Israel” and “I shall completely forgive them”? It is jolting, but it is not unusual for an author who routinely sets assertions about God’s terrible wrath directly and without transition beside statements of his absolute love.

**Allen Guenther:** The name *Lo-ruhamah* carries two distinct, yet related connotations. The full consequences of covenant disloyalty are about to come crashing down on the Northern kingdom, the house of Israel. *Lo-ruhamah* implies that the covenant curses are descending on Israel in all their fury to drag the nation off into exile [*Covenant*, p 379].

Second, the root *rh* appears in fifth-century Jewish Aramaic marriage contracts from Egypt in connection with the rights of inheritance. The noun there appears to refer to the one designated principal heir. To say that a person is *Lo-ruhamah* is to call her “Disinherited.” Since Israel was promised the land as a gift, when God calls his offspring, *Lo-ruhamah*, he indicates thereby that they will not continue to possess the Lord’s property. The two life settings of the language of compassion and inheritance, then, converge to point toward Israel’s destiny as an exiled people. . .

Translation: *Name her Not-pitied (Lo-ruhamah), because I will no longer continue to love (raham) the house of Israel, though I will forgive them. The house of Judah, however, I will love (raham), and I will rescue them by means of Yahweh their God.*

**James Mays:** It is the nation (house) of Israel which is left without compassion before their God. The announcement of God’s verdict in the interpretation implies that till now Israel has lived in the compassion of God; his feeling for them in the covenant bond has endured all their follies and failures. But now that fatherly indulgence is to be withdrawn. Cf. the similar statement in **2.4**, and the reversal of the name in **2.23**.

**John Schultz:** It is good to pause and imagine what the **emotions of Hosea** must have been when he learned that the wife he had married had become pregnant by another man and what his feelings were toward the child that was not his. And then when God told him to analyze his feelings because those were the sentiments God felt toward the people He loved. What a horrible way of entering into an intimate fellowship with God, or sharing in the sufferings of Christ! Even in a relationship of human beings, such sentiments are rarely shared, and never on such a level. In a way Hosea knew God more intimately than Moses of whom the Scripture states that God spoke to him “*face to face.*” Hosea learned to know God in the most private of all relationships, and he probably wished he had not.

2. (:7) Compassion Extended to Southern Kingdom

*“But I will have compassion on the house of Judah  
and deliver them by the LORD their God,  
and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen.”*

**Trent Butler:** God's nature contains both the holiness that destroys all sin and the love that forgives his people and renews his covenant with them.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** (The first two refer to foot soldiers, the last two to chariots.) The salvation of Yahweh, in other words, will not come by warfare. Even as judgment will come by his direct intervention, so will future blessings.

**Gary Smith:** This child's name reveals that God will end his tender feelings of deep affection (like a mother's deep affection for the fruit of her womb) that are foundational to his covenant relationship with his people. The loving feeling between kinfolk will be missing; God will not pity or care what happens to them. This name represents a dramatic reversal of Israel's self-understanding (they thought they were the children of God) and will be a severe blow to their confidence in God's unfailing commitment to love his people. They will no longer be rescued when they are in trouble, for God's compassionate mercy will no longer be extended to them.

**C. (:8-9) Result of the Judgment -- Son = *Lo-ammi* – “not my people” – “not my kin”**

*“When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.  
And the LORD said, ‘Name him Lo-ammi,  
for you are not My people and I am not your God.’”*

Hosea realizes that this child was not his; God has rejected Israel;  
Think of the privilege of being the people of God – do we take this for granted?

**John MacArthur:** The phrase gives the breaking of the covenant, a kind of divorce formula in contrast to the covenant or marriage formula.

**Rom. 9:25-26** – quoted by Paul in NT

**James Limburg:** There is a terrifying **progression** in the sequence of these names. The first announced a future when Israel would have to live without a king, the second a future without God's compassion, and the third a future without God (cf. Jeremias).

**Trent Butler:** This child preached a sermon to Israel with every step he took. Israel was an illegitimate child of God, just as Not My People was an illegitimate child of Hosea.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The two names, *Lo-ammi* and *Lo-ehyeh*, **both cancel a previous relationship**. This is their symmetry. On the one hand, Israel is no longer God's people, as had been proclaimed in the Sinai/Horeb covenant, predicated on Israel's response to redemption from Egypt: "*If you will keep my covenant (b'riti), then you will be my special possession ... kingdom of priests ... holy nation*" (**Exod. 19:5-6**). On the other hand, God had promised to be with Moses in responding to the cries of his people, instructing Moses to tell the people that I AM had sent him to them (**Exod. 3:14**). The verbal form *'ehyeh*, "*I am*," is a pun on the personal name of God, YHWH, revealed to Moses at the burning bush. As a result of Israel's disobedience God was no longer "*I AM*" for them. The Hebrew *lō'-'ehyeh*, *Not I AM*, cancels the significance of the covenant name YHWH, rendering it null and void with respect to Israel. We might put the reversal language in the context of another polarity, that of presence and absence. Whereas *YHWH* signified his presence with Moses and the Israelites in the revealing of his name, the change to *Not I AM* represents his absence from Israel.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the most difficult thing you have ever been asked to do? Think about your choice and the outcome.
- 2) What type of mixed feelings would Hosea have had towards Gomer and her three children?
- 3) Was Gomer already a prostitute at the time of her marriage to Hosea?
- 4) What causes the Lord's patience and forbearance and compassion to come to an end?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Perhaps it is best to see Hosea's marriage, the naming of the three children, and the acquiring of an adulteress as **public acts to illustrate a prophetic message**, with the offensiveness, indeed the impurity and scandalousness of the report (see below), as integral to the prophetic sign. The Hebrew term *'ot* ("*sign*") is not used

to characterize these actions, but this is their function. At the same time, **Hos. 1–3** does more than simply render these acts in literary form for public consumption. Mother and children are metaphorical symbols for Israel and the land. In metaphorical terms they are the vehicle (source domain) through which to interpret the tenor (target domain) of Israel and the land in dereliction of duty. The goal, therefore, is to render Israel and the land in breach of covenant with YHWH through sign-act and literary symbol, not to provide a simple digest of family history. . .

He married a prostitute, however the term is defined; she bore three children; she and Hosea separated over her adultery; subsequently the two of them reconciled. Such a conclusion answers affirmatively one of the questions. . . : Are Gomer, the immoral mother, and the unnamed adulteress the same woman? . . . The symbolic representation of Israel is better maintained if one spouse represents the corporate identity of the people from adultery to reconciliation.

**Grace Emmerson:** The whole passage is a remarkable interweaving of the public and the private in its proclamation to the nation of the Lord's word by means of the prophet's personal domestic circumstances. It is reasonable to assume that this fourfold symbolic action spanned five or six years since children were customarily weaned at two or three years of age.

**Duane Garrett:** Hosea, having been commanded to marry an immoral woman, took Gomer as his wife. After some time and the birth of three children, she abandoned him for other lovers. Then apparently she fell into destitution. Again at God's direction Hosea went after her and found her, redeemed her (perhaps from slavery), and took her home. Proponents of this view have often regarded it as another example of a prophetic “**speech-act**” in which the prophet does something strange or shocking to carry home his message. Isaiah walked about naked and barefoot for three years as a sign of the coming exile of Egypt and Cush (**Isa 20:3–5**). Ezekiel lay on his side for over a year near a small model of Jerusalem under siege (**Ezek 4–5**); he also was forbidden to mourn when his wife died (**24:15–18**). Jeremiah did not marry (**Jer 16:2**).

While it is true that Hosea's marriage was a speech-act—indeed, it is the most extreme example in the Bible—this alone is not sufficient to explain this astonishing history.

**Deuteronomy 24:1–4** forbids a man to remarry his wife after a divorce if she has married another man in the interim. Although probably not technically in violation of this law, because it does not seem that she had remarried in the interim, Hosea's action of taking Gomer back pushes the envelope. If it was wrong for a man to take back a woman after she had been married to another man, what was Hosea doing taking Gomer back after she had been with countless men?

Surprisingly, however, the very offense of Hosea's action strongly confirms that this is indeed the correct interpretation. God has divorced Israel just as Hosea has divorced Gomer, but in both cases grace triumphs over righteous jealousy and the demands of the law. Like the cross itself, Hosea's action is a stumbling block. A man does not normally



take back a woman who has behaved the way Gomer did. But we must acknowledge this as a revelation of grace through suffering.

Hosea's sad story is important in another equally paradoxical way. One would think that having married an immoral woman, and then having the marriage collapse because of the wife's gross infidelity, would be enough to disqualify anyone from claiming the role of God's spokesman. But the opposite is true. Hosea offers his private tragedies as his credentials for serving as God's spokesman. As we have seen in the introduction to this commentary, Hosea and God echo one another in this book. First one speaks, and then the other. The human serves as advocate for God, but as the two speak, they speak common words from a common experience. Hosea has endured as husband the same treatment God has endured as covenant Lord of Israel. More than any other, Hosea has the right to speak in God's name. He has shared in God's experiences and therefore can speak with God's heart.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The Book of Hosea alternates between severe judgment and tender mercy. Our temptation as communicators is to move quickly to the mercy passages and neglect the disturbing judgment. Our natural inclination is to respond to our listeners who are facing hard times and reach out to them with the mercy of God. In so doing, we may neglect the people whose self-satisfaction may be keeping them from God's best for their lives. Often we say to ourselves, "People already know how bad they are; they need to hear how great is God's grace." We can no longer get away with that simplistic approach to the gospel. You and I are teaching and preaching at a time that matches the spiritual conditions in Israel more than we may want to acknowledge. Our communication of assurance to those who are caught in the syndrome of self-condemnation as a result of the psychological conditioning of childhood or growing years, must be coupled with confrontation with the truth of what God demands of all His people. Persistent self-condemnation and self-complacency are both defenses against the Spirit of God and refusals to be whole. . .

The names God called Hosea to give his children not only reveal God's judgment of Israel in the eighth century B.C. but expose the progressive drift from Him in any age. That results in what Jesus called the **unforgivable sin** (see **Matt. 12:22–37**). It begins with the pride of refusing to accept our own spiritual emptiness and insulate ourselves against admitting our need. Then this pride progresses to the stage where we think we have nothing to confess. Usually we try to justify our handling of failures or inadequacies, or we blame others, life, and circumstances for our failures, or we cover our failures by trying harder to be adequate. Finally, we become **closed to God's Spirit**. We resist claiming Christ as the source of our strength for the challenges and difficulties we encounter in life.

Our first "no" to the Holy Spirit is a traumatic refusal. But after that, it becomes easier to withhold ourselves from intimate fellowship with God. Ultimately, we become self-satisfied and mediocre. We are calloused toward the ministry of the Lord's Spirit.

That is why Jesus called the unforgivable sin the **blasphemy against the Holy Spirit**. This callousness led the Pharisees and scribes in Jesus' day to denigrate His work by saying that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. These legalists were so insensitive to God's goodness and mercy that they were able to insult and defame God.

For us, it's possible to say "no" to God so long that we are no longer capable of saying "yes," much less receive His remedial judgment. That was the condition of the spiritual and moral life of Israel in Hosea's day. Sadly, it is no less true of our own day.

**S. Lewis Johnson:** When we say that Hosea is the **prophet of unconditional love**, we mean that Hosea is a prophet who proclaims that the love of God for his people is without condition. Now, when we say that, we are talking about a particular view of the grace of God. There are, as you know, from your attendance at Believers Chapel, two generally Christian approaches to the love of God. One approach is to the love of God as if the love were conditional, and the other is as if were unconditional. These are reflected in two theologically differing viewpoints. One of them states that the love of God is conditional upon the human response of the human in free will. In other words, the love of God begins by self-movement toward God, not induced by God the Holy Spirit, not brought about by God, but actually brought about in the heart of the individual response in free will.

Now that view is very loudly proclaimed in evangelicalism today; it arguably is the majority view. In the early days of evangelicalism it was not; it was regarded as heretical. But today unfortunately it's the majority view; that's conditional love, love conditioned on the human response of the human being out of his free will. Now the other viewpoint is the viewpoint that the love of God is unconditional. That is, it is brought about that an individual loves God by God. In fact, the Apostle Paul states this, I think, very plainly when in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he talks about the good pleasure of his grace. In other words, God has in his own sovereign, good will worked in our hearts to bring him to himself. The Lord Jesus has said it so plainly, "*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him. No one can come to him except it be given him of the Father.*" **Salvation does not begin in a self-movement. It begins in the activity of the Holy Spirit**, who by his marvelous, divine unconditional grace makes the unwilling willing. So they respond in a decision of the will, but one that is provoked by the grace of God.

So when we say that Hosea is a prophet of unconditional love, to simplify it we mean simply this: **we love him because he first loved us**. Not, we love him because we first loved him, but we love him because he first loved us. The other viewpoint is just the opposite, and we want to stress that, and I think you will see that the Prophet Hosea follows unconditional love and its teaching. We love him because he first loved us.

TEXT: Hosea 1:10-11

TITLE: BLESSINGS OF MESSIANIC RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE FUTURE MESSIANIC RESTORATION OF ETHNIC ISRAEL WILL BE GLORIOUS AND PERMANENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Between **verses 9 and 10** lie volumes of Jewish history that fulfill the judgment of Jezreel. To the anguished cry of the ages God will in that day answer: “*I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, ‘Thou hast chastised me . . . bring me back that I may be restored, for Thou art the LORD my God’*” (**Jer. 31:18**). Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Hosea is permitted to give his countrymen an outline of the events of that restoration, which he terms “*the day of Jezreel.*” Six specific blessings may be seen in these three verses:

1. national increase (**v. 10a**),
2. spiritual awakening (**v. 10b**),
3. national reunion (**v. 11a**),
4. Messianic leadership (**v. 11b**),
5. victory over foes (**v. 11c**),
6. and a complete restoration of the covenant relationship (**2:1**).

**James Mays:** In contrast to the judgment and rejection foretold by the names of Hosea’s children in **1.2–9**, this oracle speaks of a future when Israel’s population shall become too numerous to be counted, their relationship to God be reconstituted, the divided north and south reunite, establish one leader over them, go up from the land – all on the day of Jezreel. The description unfolds in the style of rhythmic narration, telling about the events of time quite different from the present; it evokes a picture which faith can contemplate and anticipate in the terrible contrasts of the present. . . . The salvation promised in the oracle presupposes an Israel in desperate circumstances. The people are reduced in number; the covenant is abrogated; Israel and Judah are divided, without a leader, and denied the security and blessing of the promised land. All of these features correspond to elements in Hosea’s conception of Yahweh’s judgment on Israel; because with Israel’s increase they sinned the more, their growth shall cease (**4.10; 9.12, 16; 14.1**); Yahweh has abrogated the covenant (**1.9; 8.1**); the hostility between Judah and Israel is the cause of divine wrath (**5.8–14**); the blessing of the land will be denied them (**2.9, 12; 4.3**). The events of salvation follow the time of wrath. This picture of hope then offers no easy escape, but rather lifts up the eyes of those who will believe to behold the meaning and purpose of the judgment they suffer.

**David Allan Hubbard:** The **tone changes:** (1) Yahweh, whose commands dominated the signs in **1:2–9**, is no longer the speaker; Hosea’s prophetic voice becomes prominent; and (2) the theme turns positive, with salvation not judgment as the intended message. In the book’s basic structure announcements of judgment and promises of hope

alternate. Here the rhythm is set for the rest of the book, even though the impersonal language, devoid of the *'I wills'* of **2:14–23; 11:9; 14:4–5**, distinguishes this speech from other words of salvation in Hosea.

**Allen Guenther:** **Hosea 1:10-11** assures us that **the purposes of God remain intact**. God is not hamstrung by the unfaithfulness of his people. He can take even a non-people and recreate Israel from its scattered remnants. It is a people's sin that triggers judgment. Cause and effect in this process are readily understood. But what motivates such promises as those found in **verses 10-11**? Nothing of merit within a people is sufficient cause for an act of restoration. The only possible and sufficient cause lies in the character of this Deity: **God is gracious**. The sharp side-by-side presentation of judgment speech and salvation oracle poignantly emphasize God's grace as the wellspring of restoration.

**Grace Emmerson:** The ancient promise given to the patriarchs (e.g., **Gen 32:12**) is restated, and the symbolic names of judgment become **symbols of hope**. The expression "*the living God*" marks the contrast between Yahweh and the lifeless idols of Canaanite religion (cf. **8:5**). Jezreel ("*God sows*") becomes a shout of triumph as Israel, to continue the agricultural metaphor, "*sprouts up*" from the land (cf. **2:23**). The schism which divided north from south at the time of Solomon's death will be healed by the appointment of one leader. There is no compelling reason to deny to Hosea himself this far-sighted hope of reconciliation. The hostility between north and south which continually tore apart the people of God was alien to prophetic aspirations. The emphasis here on a leader appointed by popular acclamation (**1:11**) is explicable in view of the many violent seizures of the throne by palace revolution in Hosea's time.

## **I. NATIONAL INCREASE -- RESTORATION FROM SMALL REMNANT TO GREAT NUMBERS**

*"Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered"*

**Robin Routledge:** indicates a measureless amount (e.g. **Gen. 41:49; Josh. 11:4; Judg. 7:12; 1 Sam. 13:5; 1 Kgs 4:29**). In particular, when linked with the number of Israelites, it recalls God's promises to the patriarchs about the future size of the nation (**Gen. 22:17; 32:12**; cf. **Isa. 10:22; Jer. 33:22**). The expression here is most similar to the promise to Jacob: '*I . . . will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted*' (**Gen. 32:12**). This suggests a further link with the Jacob narrative, and points to the future revival of the nation's fortunes. Despite their present unfaithfulness, and in the face of its current historical improbability, they will become what God intended them to be.

**Duane Garrett:** Having stated that Israel has forfeited their status as the people of God, the text turns around without warning or transition and reaffirms the ancient covenant promise to Abraham (**Gen 22:17**). To recall this promise is to reaffirm their status as God's people. It is pointless to resist Hosea's style as incongruous or his text as in need

of repair. The sin of the people and the faithfulness of God are two realities he simply treats as equally true. The affirmation that they would become as numerous as the sand on the seashore was almost laughable in Hosea's day. **Wolff** observes that in 738 b.c., according to **2 Kgs 15:19–20**, Israel had about sixty thousand free landholders and that the nation was puny compared to the expanding Assyrian Empire. Only faith in God could foresee a reversal of this reality.

## **II. NATIONAL ACCEPTANCE -- RESTORATION FROM REJECTION TO ADOPTION AS SONS**

*“And in the place where it is said to them, you are not My people,  
It will be said to them, You are the sons of the living God”*

**Robin Routledge:** The expression *living God* frequently occurs in contexts which emphasize the reality of Israel's God: acting on behalf of his people (**Josh. 3:10**), challenging those who underestimate his power (**1 Sam. 17:36; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16**) or contrasting him with other gods (**Jer. 10:10**; cf. **Dan. 6:20, 26**). The term may also point to God as the one who brings life to his people (**Mays 1969: 32; Garrett 1997: 72**).

## **III. NATIONAL UNITY -- RESTORATION FROM SCATTERING AND DIVISION TO GATHERING TOGETHER AND UNITY**

*“And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together”*

**Gary Smith:** The second promise relates to the unification of Judah and Israel (**1:11**). This rejuvenated people will be made up of two peoples who will join themselves together as one united nation, thus ending the suspicion and hatred that extended back to the original division of the nations by Jeroboam I (**1 Kings 12**) and even earlier (**2 Sam. 2:3–11; 5:1–5**).

## **IV. NATIONAL SUBMISSION TO MESSIANIC LEADERSHIP -- RESTORATION FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF MULTIPLE PAGAN KINGS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ONE GOOD SHEPHERD**

*“And they will appoint for themselves one leader”*

**Allen Guenther:** Just as David drew together the North and South and welded them into one great nation under God, so the fourth promise marks their reunion under the new Davidic ruler (**Hos. 3:5**). While the term for *head* does not commonly refer to kings, it represents a king in **Psalms 18:43** and **Job 29:25**, and probably here.

**John Goldingay:** “*Head*” is most often a familial term, but in this context it may denote a **head priest** (“chief priest” is more literally “head priest”). While the head priest needs to be an Aaronide, as the king needs to be a Davidide, in neither case is there a rule about (for instance) primogeniture. So within the relevant parameters the two peoples can appoint a head who will lead them when they “*go up*” to a festival “*from*

*the country,*” the entire country: they will now go together to Jerusalem, even if the people continue to use sanctuaries such as Beth-el and Beer-sheba on other occasions. The implicit assurance to Ephraimites that they will be able to revert to their commitment to Jerusalem carries an implicit insistence that they must do so. “*Collect*” with the reinforcing adverb “*together*” also constrains Judahites from thinking that they can write off Ephraim. Neither nation is complete without the other. **It is together that they are the people of Yahweh.** The vision of Judah and Ephraim coming together appears in the vision of a Judahite prophet in **Ezek. 37:15–23** (cf. **48:1–35**; also **Isa. 11:12–13**; **Jer. 3:6–18**; **31:27–34**) as well as in the message of this Ephraimite prophet. The people of God are one.

**Duane Garrett:** Hosea believes the division of the twelve tribes into two nations to be fundamentally perverse. Israel and Judah are **one people** and should be one nation. This, along with his conviction that the house of David must lead the people, accounts for this expansion on the previous mention of Judah in the Lo-Ruhamah oracle. Curiously, Hosea says that the united nation will **appoint a leader** rather than that God would give them a leader. This should not be taken to mean that democracy will replace divine authority; rather, it stresses **unanimous spirit of the redeemed people.** The old conflict between the house of David and the kings of Israel will end. The reunification of the nation under one leader, specifically the Davidic messiah, was to become a major element of the prophetic hope. Ezekiel, in particular, would develop it (**Ezek 37:18–25**).

**John Schultz:** The words “*they will appoint one leader*” can, therefore, only be understood as an acceptance by the Jews of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The way in which this will occur is stated prophetically by Zechariah: “*They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*” The **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown** Commentary observes: “Though appointed by the Father (**Ps 2:6**), Christ is in another sense appointed as their Head by His people, when they accept and embrace Him as such.”

## **V. NATIONAL GLORY -- RESTORATION FROM SHAME AND DISGRACE TO BLESSING AND GLORY**

*“And they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel”*

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** **Andersen and Freedman** propose that *come up out of the land* could mean raised from death, since land can be used as a term for the underworld. They say, “Recognizing Hosea’s capacity for using language with more than one level of meaning, we suggest that the statement, ‘*And they shall come up from the land*’ has two senses, one historical (the Exodus), one eschatological (resurrection). . . . The emphasis on Yahweh as the living God thus continues.”

**James Mays:** The riddle in the picture lies in the sentence ‘*they shall go up from the land*’. In Hosea ‘*the land*’ is consistently the territory of Canaan, the good earth given



to Israel by Yahweh (cf. **2.21f.**; **4.3**), and could hardly denote a place of exile from which Israel shall return, as in **Ezek. 37.21ff.** The locution might mean ‘grow up’ as plants and be a play on the name ‘Jezreel’; in the time when ‘God sows’ Israel into the land again (as in **2.23**) they will grow up like flourishing plants (note **14.5ff.**) and fill the land (so most recently **Rudolph** in KAT). Or the ‘*ālā min-hā’ āreš* could mean ‘gain ascendancy over the land’. In this context the last is the more likely. The picture is **military** in flavour, and such a construction leads directly to the final triumphant shout: ‘*Yea, great is the day of Jezreel!*’

**David Allan Hubbard**: Harder to discern is the precise meaning of *and they shall go up from the land* (v. **11**).

1. First, we can read land to mean **Assyria**, the place of captivity and understand the passage to picture a return from exile there. The word *land* (Heb. ‘*āreš*’) in the singular without a modifying noun, however, is not used in the Old Testament for a foreign nation. *Land*, in our context, almost inevitably means the ‘*promised land*’, given by God as Israel’s home, so long as her covenant loyalty remained strong.
2. Second, we can read the clause *they shall go up* (Heb. ‘*lh*’) *from* as an idiom for **military conquest**, meaning ‘*they shall take possession of*’, as some scholars have done on the basis of **Exodus 1:10.12** But that reading of **Exodus 1:10** has not gained strong support.
3. Third, we can understand ‘*the land*’ as the **Underworld**, the realm of the dead (cf. **Gen. 2:6**; **Job 10:21, 22**; **Ps. 139:15**; **Isa. 44:23**) and interpret the passage as a reference to Israel’s **resurrection** from the death of captivity and judgment (cf. **Ezek. 37:1–14**, where the description of the revival of Israel’s bones is followed immediately by a prophetic sign that promises the reunion of the two kingdoms under David the king, **vv. 15–28**). **Andersen** (p. 209) blends this interpretation (which he finds compatible with **Hos. 5:8 – 6:6**) with a picture of return from exile and finds such a reading in line with ‘Hosea’s capacity for using language with more than one level of meaning’.
4. Fourth, ‘*go up*’ has been translated ‘*spring up*’ (cf. **Deut. 29:23** [**Heb. v. 22**], for this sense of the Heb. ‘*lh*’), like an abundant crop bursting forth from the land. On this reading the clause in **verse 11** reaches back to the mention of Israel’s immeasurable size (v. **10**) and looks forward to God’s bountiful sowing – a time hinted in the mention of Jezreel and made explicit in the ‘*I will sow him for myself in the land*’ of **2:23**.

As different as each of these interpretations is from the others, all of them convey the same general sense: the **glory of the united people**, kindled in their splendid past, will blaze even brighter when the judgment is over and the full work of God’s restoration is underway. The climactic character of that restoration is celebrated in the exclamation with which **verse 11** closes, ‘*How great is the day, O Jezreel.*’



**Allen Guenther:** Or could this promise be referring to the reconquest of surrounding nations and the reestablishment of the larger Davidic empire? That empire included Edom, Moab, Ammon, Amalek, Syria, and part of Philistia (**2 Sam. 8**).

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** In sum, the greatness of the “*day of Jezreel*” will be the glories of the time of national renewal. In accordance with the ancient promises, Israel will increase in number in the land, enjoy once again its relationship with God, live under the rule of a future Davidic king, and flourish by Yahweh’s hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why must these promises refer to ethnic Israel with future fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom?
- 2) How do these verses reinforce the principle that God is able to do what seemingly looks impossible?
- 3) What blessings and privileges are associated with being sons of God?
- 4) What hope is there for people who sense that they are far off from God and presently not connected to His love and grace?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**James Mays:** This, then, is the fascinating picture held up before the eyes of expiring Israel to lead their vision beyond the debacle which their own failure had created. Beyond judgment, the promise to the fathers shall once again work in the body of the people to multiply them with a vitality which demonstrates that they are sons of the God who lives! As one people with one head they shall again possess the land. It is not said in so many words that Yahweh will be the one who is active in all this. But the events are so patently a resumption of the old normative history of Israel’s beginnings in which Yahweh was the one at work as to leave no doubt. What once was through him, will be again. The narrative concentrates on the events themselves because in them Yahweh is manifest. To anticipate them in faith is in fact to await the personal act of Israel’s God in the midst of his people

**John Goldingay:** Typical of prophetic promises, these promises take up Yahweh’s fundamental and historic undertakings and reaffirm them in this new situation. They indicate that **God will never finally cast off his people**. Yahweh does not change the name of Jezreel, and he cannot get away from the fact that it means “*God sows*”;

perhaps from the beginning the names that Hosea is given for his children “carry the seed of their reversal.” Certainly for people hearing the Hosea scroll read out a couple of centuries later, they would do so. “They serve as markers pointing at the irrevocable character of the relation of these children (/Israel) to their father (/YHWH).”

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** Has the fulfillment of this vision of the future already taken place? All agree that there was a measure of fulfillment in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, when many in exile returned to Palestine. Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophetic books Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi describe the experiences and expectations, as well as the frustrations, of the returnees. It is clear that they looked ahead to something grander than what they had in the land under Persian rule (**Hag 2; Zec 14**). Were these promises then fulfilled with the coming of Jesus, the Son of David, and the establishment of the Christian church? New Testament authors relate this section of Hosea to the incorporation of the Gentiles into the new people of God (**Ro 9:25–26; 1Pe 2:10**).

Evangelical theological systems differ in their interpretation of these passages. Is the language of the prophet being utilized analogically to explain the breadth of God’s people and as a type to reveal the workings of his grace, or do these verses claim that the geopolitical promises to Israel find their final realization in Jesus and in the church as the new Israel? **Is there still a national future for believing ethnic Israel?** The answers to these questions depend on whether the reader interprets these verses within an amillennial or a premillennial framework. While the former does not believe that these OT promises still await a literal fulfillment (although some amillennialists do relate them to the new heavens and earth of **Rev 21–22**), many premillennialists (especially dispensationalist premillennialists) do.

**H. D. Beeby:** These verses may come from a “*day of small things*”; on the other hand they may have been spoken in the midst of some of the disasters promised in **Hos. 1:2–9**. All evidence of God’s presence is absent from them, yet the words radiate joy and hope. They express a confidence so strong that they can describe what amounts to a **great reversal** of all that has been previously uttered. They look to a future relationship with God which goes beyond all Israel had even known, for Israel is to be more than just “*my people*”; they are to be “*sons of the living God*,” enjoying an **ideal unity** under a “*head*” whom they have chosen for themselves rather than under a king whom they have merely inherited. Again the promise made to the patriarchs of Israel, that they shall be “*like the sand of the sea*,” is to be fulfilled. This is more than just reversal or restoration. This utterance looks forward to the **messianic age**.

**David Thompson:** Now right after God has given this gloomy assessment against His family, He predicts a **glorious future** for His family. It is very clear from these verses that God will always bless Israel even though she is His messed up family:

Blessing #1 - God will bless His family numerically . **1:10a**

God made this promise to Abraham that His family would be innumerable (**Gen. 22:17; 32:12**)

Blessing #2 - God will bless His family reputationally . **1:10b**

People from all over the world will one day testify that Israel is the nation of the “*living God*.”

Blessing #3 - God will bless His family in a unified nationality . **1:11a**

What a day when God has His entire family together, both north and south.

Blessing #4 - God will bless His family with one leader politically . **1:11b**

Both Israel and Judah will have one king, no more divided kingdom.

Blessing #5 - God will bless His family in land geographically . **1:11c**

All of the Promised Land will one day belong to Israel, including the very place known as Armageddon (**Rev. 16:13-16**).

Now the big question is why would God eventually do so much for a people who have totally turned their backs on Him? Why would God do such wonderful things for Israel when she has been idolatrous and immoral? The answer is **because of His love**. As sinful as His family is, He still loves His family.

Listen; no matter how much you have messed up, you can have a covenant relationship with God. No matter what your sin or background, believe on the Lord and you will be loved forever.

**Mark Perkins:** There is an Israel past and an Israel future. The past Israel existed from the first Passover, ca. 1440 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The future Israel is the Israel of the tribulation and the millennium. When Hosea speaks of the **restoration of Israel**, he looks forward to the **millennium, and the rule of Jesus Christ**.

Therefore, the following interpretations apply to the last two verses:

1. The nation of Israel will be reunited with that of Judah.
2. Their population will grow by a great amount (a sign of prosperity).
3. They will obtain a new name, "*the sons of the living God*", which will reflect their fantastic relationship with Him, and his activities on their behalf.
4. They will have one leader in Jesus Christ, the greatest political leader of all time.
5. They will ascend above the earth, which is a reference to the quality of life and excellence in production that Israel will have during the millennium. It will far exceed anything before in human history. It will include brilliance in all areas of life.

This prophecy of the millennium is pertinent to the faithful of Hosea's day. It was imperative for the faithful to understand that they might not see vindication in their own time, but that there would be eternal vindication for them, and that in spite of their being witnesses to the final destruction of their nation, it had no reflection on their spiritual lives.

TEXT: Hosea 2:1-13

TITLE: RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM OF ISRAEL AND ITS TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES

**BIG IDEA:**

**FORSAKING GOD CREATES A VACUUM FILLED BY SYNCRETISTIC WORSHIP THAT HAS SHAMEFUL AND DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**H. D. Beeby:** In Israel's state of rebellion as depicted here all the great biblical sins are comprehended and all the virtues excluded. Here are lust, apostasy, disobedience, errors of mind, distorted emotions, perverted instincts. Here are harlotry of body, mind, and soul. Here are materialism, idolatry, faithlessness, thanklessness—a life wholly and totally misdirected and willfully disoriented. Excluded from Israel's life are all the virtues that God speaks of in **vv. 19–20**: righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness, and knowledge of the LORD. The vignette of the prostitute who does not just stand and solicit, but who actively pursues her lovers omits nothing. Before the sin of the crucifixion there is no more full and fearsome description of mankind's turning away from God than this.

The evils and errors envisioned are not only moral, mental, emotional, political, and religious; there is a deep **theological falsity** hinted at which is to occupy the writer later in the chapter. In **ch. 1** the harlotry protested against belongs largely within the doctrine of redemption. Israel is castigated because she has rebelled against the God of the Covenant, the God who has revealed himself in her history and has continued to be active redemptively in that history. The errors in the present chapter also begin in the context of the Covenant (i.e., within "redemption"), but in **v. 5** we have clearly entered into the area of "creation." Israel's apostasy is now closely linked with creation and the promise of nature, and her breaking of God's covenant of salvation is tied to the simple but disastrous fact that she does not know who is in charge of the heavens and the earth.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The bulk of **chapter 2 (vv. 2–23; MT 25)** is comprised of two sections or panels, with the portrayal of Hosea's family in promiscuous infidelity in its first part (**vv. 2–13**), and its promised future restoration in its second part (**vv. 14–23**). These two panels are fundamentally a rehearsal of **1:2 – 2:1** (MT 3), which also portrays in two panels the family in infidelity and in restoration. . .

**Verses 2–13** contain the indictment of faithless Gomer (= Israel) by an angry and anguished Hosea (= YHWH), using the children to address their mother with his words. He describes a scenario based on her past and continuing infidelities and her seeming inability to comprehend the perilousness of her situation. Judgment will come upon her for her adulteries with her lovers (= Canaanite deities).

**John Goldingay:** This adroit and sustained piece of rhetoric, the most elaborate in the scroll, is a reprise of **1:2b – 2:1** [3] in the form of prophecy rather than story. Yahweh

confronts Ephraim about its whoring, warns it of the action he intends to take, but promises that he will then take further action to reestablish their relationship. . .

Western readers also have to be aware of another way in which assumptions about marriage in their culture are different from those in a traditional culture. Marriage in a traditional culture is an **economic and work arrangement** (though not solely that), but its patriarchalizing can lead to a skewing of this aspect as the man gains authority over the woman and controls the family's economy. Marriage breakdown thus has significant implications for the practical position of a wife.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** With that brief introduction about the historical and contemporary problem of **syncretism**, we are able to appreciate the **severity of God's judgment** of Israel's spiritual adultery in **Hosea 2:2–13**. Israel's primary relationship with God was at stake. If the passage seems harsh, we need only remember the depths of defection and degradation to which Israel had fallen. God's patience had been tried; His exasperation was acute. But He will not go back on His marriage vows to be Israel's God and to keep them as His bride/people. Again, the judgment is meant to lead to the **desired reconciliation** described in **verses 14–23**. . .

In preaching and teaching this section, I have often found it effective to begin at the end, with the poignant verse, “*Then she forgot Me’ says the LORD*” (**Hos. 2:13**). That provides an excellent focus for four major points on contemporary syncretism:

- (1) How Israel forgot God as a result of losing the conviction that God is the source, sustainer, and sovereign of all;
- (2) how we can forget God today in our worship of false gods;
- (3) how God jogs us with judgment because He will not tolerate other gods before Him; and,
- (4) how to keep a vivid awareness that God is our ultimate strength and hope through consistent repentance and daily renewal.

## **(:1) TRANSITION – ANTICIPATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL RENEWAL**

**Duane Garrett:** This verse looks both backward and forward. It is optimistic in tone and concludes the reversal of the three names. Just as Jezreel would become a name of salvation, so Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi would be transformed into “*My loved one*” (*rûḥāmā*) and “*My people*” (*‘āmmî*). On the other hand, it also looks ahead to the next verse in that it begins with an imperative and directly addresses Hosea's children. The transitional, Janus-nature of this verse binds what precedes to what follows. It is impossible to sever **chap. 2** [Hb. 2:3–25] from the Lo-Ammi oracle.

### **A. Confession of Israel as God's People**

“*Say to your brothers, ‘Ammi, ’*”

**J. Andrew Dearman:** *Ammi* (My People) reverses the judgment portrayed in the name of the second son, and *Ruhamah* (Mercy) is the emphatic reversal of the daughter's name.

YHWH intends to save, and the voice of siblings crying out “*mercy*” is an emphatic affirmation that YHWH intends to overcome his people’s failures.

**James Mays:** The imperatives of the attached verse call upon Israel to reverse the symbolic names of judgment (‘*Unpitied*’ in **1.6** and ‘*Not-my-people*’ in **1.9**) so that they became **confessions that salvation will occur**. In the light of what will happen on the day of Jezreel, the beleaguered folk can call one another (note the plural ‘*sisters*’ and ‘*brothers*’) the people of Yahweh to whom he will show his compassion. The eschatological renewal (**2.23**) must be anticipated in the very speech of the people who are to know one another in terms of what they yet shall be.

## **B. Confession of Israel as Pitied and Loved by God (Shown Mercy)**

*“and to your sisters, ‘Ruhamah.’”*

**H. D. Beeby:** Perhaps **v. 1** provided the transfer from Hosea’s children to the children of Israel, for clearly we have moved from the particular harlotry spoken of in **ch. 1** to the **national harlotry**.

**John Goldingay:** The imperative and the suffixes are plural. Hosea and/or Yahweh are bidding Ephraimite men to take on their lips the words that Yahweh had previously outlawed, “*my people*” (picking up the second promise). They are also bidding Ephraimite women to take on the other outlawed expression, “*shown compassion*.”

## **I. (:2-5) DIVINE ACCUSATION OF INFIDELITY LEADING TO SEVERE JUDGMENT**

### **A. (:2a) Point of Contention**

*“Contend with your mother, contend,  
For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband;”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The verb *rib*, translated as *Contend* here, typically refers to contentions and struggles that surface in the public arena, where the issue of right and wrong is to be adjudicated in one way or another, rather than to private disagreements and rebukes. When employed as a noun it can mean “quarrel” or “struggle” (**Gen. 13:7**) and refer also to a legal dispute or something akin to a lawsuit (**Exod. 23:2–3, 6; Deut. 17:8; 21:5**). As a verb it can even depict a physical struggle, perhaps based on a disagreement (**Exod. 21:18**), or an argument based on a dispute (**Num. 20:3**; cf. **Hos. 4:4**). Both noun and verb are associated with representing the cause of widows who otherwise lack protectors and advocates (**Isa. 1:17, 23**). In the prophets God contends with the failures of his people by charging or indicting them with wrongdoing (**Isa. 3:13; Jer. 2:9; Mic. 6:1–2**). It is thus a term that fits with the **prophetic task**. Elsewhere Hosea preserves similar usage (**4:1; 12:2** [MT 3]).

What the children do in contending with their mother is to charge her with a breach of family integrity, namely infidelity to her husband, their father. Why the children are employed in this role is not known. Perhaps it is part of a shaming mechanism, whereby

members of a family represent its honor and the offender is humiliated by those closest to him or her. They represent “Israel” indicting Israel, and so the shaming mechanism may be a twice-wounding. It is also the case that the children represent the unfaithfulness with which their mother is charged, and there is something to be said for self-interest. Her condemnation would adversely affect them just as her restoration would impinge on their own restoration. . .

The goal of the children’s contention is that Gomer put away the signs of her infidelity. Both harlotry and adultery describe her activities, which are symbolized with her **countenance** and **between her breasts**. The language of *putting things away* has suggested to some that jewelry, clothing, perfume, or something tangible is in mind (cf. **2:13**). In the harlotry motif elsewhere, there are references to the “*forehead of a harlot*” (**Jer. 3:3**) and to details of physical appearance intended to attract lovers (**Jer. 4:30**). Perhaps jewelry or ornaments depicted fertility rituals and devotion to the cults of the Baals, or cultural markers in dress and appearance denoted a harlot. Apart from more explicit evidence, it is probably better to see the phrase as metaphorical, commanding Gomer to put aside all things that prompt or feed her infidelities.

**Duane Garrett:** The word is at most quasi judicial here. Hosea is not calling upon the children to testify against their mother in a trial; rather, they are to repudiate her behavior. Not every accusation is a courtroom accusation, even metaphorically; people often accuse one another of misdeeds outside courts of law. Thus *ribû* here means to “find fault with,” to “contend against,” or to “denounce.” In saying that the children must denounce their mother, Hosea is not calling on them to testify formally. He is saying that they must set themselves apart from their mother lest they suffer the same fate she does.

“*For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband*” explains why they must denounce their mother. The Israelites believed that they were God's people solely because they were Israelites. God was in covenant with this nation, and their identity as Israelites assured them of their special place before God. Now God declares that the bond between himself and their “mother” is void. Israelites can become God's people only by renouncing Israel! The identity in which they trusted had become the greatest impediment between them and God. This is as great a blow to their religious underpinnings as is John the Baptist's claim that God could raise up children of Abraham from the stones (**Matt 3:9**).

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The words “*she is not my wife, and I am not her husband*” echo the doubly negative statement of **1:9**. Do they represent a legal divorce proceeding? This scenario is doubtful. There is no imaginary court scene, no call to witnesses, and no challenge to respond to the charges. The fact that Yahweh warns Israel in the next verse of potential punishment, later judges her, and then woos her reveals that the marriage relationship is still in place. This situation is a far cry from the most severe sentence for adultery in the law: death by stoning (**Dt 22:22–24**).



**Robin Routledge:** *Rebuke* translates the imperative of the Hebrew verb *rib*, which, like the corresponding noun, may suggest a judicial setting. However, though the statement is similar to some found in the Ancient Near East in connection with formal divorce proceedings, there is little evidence that this was used in Israel (**Mays** 1969: 37–38; **Macintosh** 1997: 41; **Kelle** 2005: 54–55; **Dearman** 2010: 109–11024). Also, because the intention of the accusation here appears to be to **open the way for reconciliation**, an actual divorce seems unlikely. However, echoing the name of Gomer’s third child, Lo-Ammi, this does signal a significant breakdown in the marriage and in the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people.

**Jeremy Thomas:** [Role of sex in the institution of marriage and how that relates to idolatry] Marriage is a relationship created by God between one man and one woman. When God did that He made man with a role and He made woman with a role, two distinct roles. Male and female have distinct functions in the plan of God and so together they complement one another. This is why one man + one man won’t work, two men don’t complement, they have the same roles and there’s no complement. So, if you distort marriage that way you’ll be lopsided. Now the way God designed man: He made him first, He made him the leader, He made man the initiator in the relationship. The woman He took out of the man. He made her the follower, He made her the **responder** in the relationship. And when these two roles are handled correctly it’s a beautiful thing. But in the fallen world here’s the problem. The woman is the responder. If she marries her man but she goes negative to her husband then a vacuum is created. She doesn’t cease to be who she is, she’s still made to respond and what will happen is she’ll begin to respond to other men. Now that’s what’s happened here. In the marriage of Hosea his wife Gomer has gone negative toward him, she’s left the house, but she can’t be something she’s not. She’s still a woman and she’s still designed to respond to a man and so she begins to respond to other men. In the analog with the nation Israel the nation had gone negative toward God but they can’t be something they are not, they cannot become non-man, they are still designed to worship and so they begin to worship Baal. That’s the link between sex and idolatry; they both play off the original design at creation. A woman was made to respond to a man and man was made to worship.

So, **verse 2** communicates a very graphic picture of what was going on. Gomer was responding to a man in sexual intercourse but it was the wrong man. By parallel the nation Israel was worshipping a god, but it was the **wrong God**. And they should stop this.

<https://storage.sermonaudio.com/com-sermonaudio-text/1018212132281.pdf?ts=1634681808>

#### **B. (:2b-3a) Plea for Reform Reinforced by Strong Warning**

*“And let her put away her harlotry from her face,  
And her adultery from between her breasts,  
Lest I strip her naked  
And expose her as on the day when she was born.”*

**Allen Guenther:** Apparently the unfaithful wife bejeweled herself with a nose ring (before her face) and a necklace or pendant (between her breasts) before committing adultery. Were these a prostitute's symbols (cf. **Jer. 4:30; Ezek. 23:40**) or were they distinctive jewelry used in the worship of Baal? We lack the data to decide.

**Duane Garrett:** "*Face*" suggests intent and personality, and "*breasts*" by metonymy represents the body with particular emphasis on sexuality. In short, the woman is called upon to turn her whole person away from lewd and faithless behavior. She must abandon her old ways and everything that went along with them. . .

"*As on the day she was born*" connotes not just nakedness but also helplessness (cf. **Ezek 16:4–5**). The denuded land is incapable of supporting life and is deserted by those who once dwelt there. God will leave the people to their fate, and the land will revert to wilderness.

**James Mays:** The use of marriage as an analogy for the covenant provides a concentrated emphasis on the personal dimension, on the relation itself, which transcends the cultic and legal. This husband is not preoccupied with his legal rights to separation or the punishment of his guilty wife. He wants her back. He demands that the wife strip from herself the embellishments of her unfaithfulness as a sign that she forswears her desertion. Let her take off her '*harlot-marks*' and '*adultery-signs*'. '*Harlot-marks*' and '*adultery-signs*' (abstract plurals in Hebrew) are probably pejorative names for jewelry worn in the Baal cult (cf. **v. 13**). The wife's adultery is in fact the cult of Baal. The wife can put it away from her, if she only will!

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The "stripping" that Yahweh will perform is **agricultural**: the land will be laid waste from lack of water, one of the curses for failure to obey the covenantal obligations (**Lev 26:19–20; Dt 28:22–24**). **Uncovering** is a metaphor for arid barrenness, not the imitation of a hypothetical, abusive cultural practice.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The stripping of Gomer is likely a metaphor for the humiliating punishment that Israel will suffer in the historical process rather than her literally being forced naked from the home.

**Jeremy Thomas: Spiritual Significance of Being Clothed vs. Being Stripped Naked**  
There are some hints at why we wear clothes. Originally God made man naked. It says God made them naked and they were not ashamed. It wasn't a problem at all. After the Fall something happened and they became aware of their nakedness. And their nakedness bothered them to the point they went and made clothes; they took fig leaves and covered up. Now, no animal did that. Animals run around naked all the time and never have a problem with it. So obviously there's a difference there between man and animals. And the Bible points out that the reason man is ashamed is because of his sin. When man sinned it affected the way he looked at the human body. Now it was something he was ashamed of. We don't know what the body looked like before the Fall, but it did look different. The Fall brought about physical changes to the human body. We don't know all that changed but we do know that when they looked at the

body they were ashamed of it. It probably was more because of what sin did to distort the way they saw the body. But whatever all the factors were now there was shame whereas before there was not. And they wanted to cover up so they made designer clothes. Now that's physical clothing to cover physical nakedness but the Fall affected spiritually too and there was a spiritual nakedness now due to the sin problem. So there's a deeper problem being shown to us in why man wanted clothes. Man has a sin problem and he's trying to cover that up, he's embarrassed. Remember that the spiritual always finds it's analog in the physical. So when we talk about physical circumcision, for example, there's a spiritual parallel in the need for a circumcised heart. Always the spiritual mirrors the physical. It's part of the way God built into creation revelation of spiritual truths. You may not see them at first but when you do you say, aha, I always knew there was something to that. So man is also embarrassed spiritually in analog to the physical embarrassment and he wants to cover that up. So the clothing he puts on are good works - if I do enough good works God will look down at me and say, I accept you. It's always about man clothing himself. But just as Adam and Eve couldn't clothe their physical bodies properly so they couldn't clothe their spiritual bodies properly. And so the spiritual truth is that because we're sinners we need spiritual clothing and that spiritual clothing can't be supplied by us, it's got to be supplied by God. It's the clothing of God's perfect righteousness. **Clothing is a theological statement that man is in need of righteousness.** And so what is God saying about Israel? I'm going to strip you naked, I'm going to expose you, that is, I'm going to show the world your spiritually destitute, I'm going to make you a mockery before the nations. I've protected you so far, I've sheltered you; I've blessed you but no more. I'm going to strip you of all that. And the way I'm going to do that is v 4; I'm going to remove all blessing.

### C. (:3b) Punishment Promised

*"I will also make her like a wilderness,  
Make her like desert land,  
And slay her with thirst."*

**David Thompson:** **Dying of thirst** is a horrible way to die. When water goes out of your body the cells in the body shrink. Your tongue swells, typically your kidneys shut down first. Your brain cells do not operate normally. You become very confused and ultimately you slip into a coma and die. It is a horrible way to die. God says to His own family members, if you do not turn to Me and start being faithful to Me, this is what I will permit to happen to you.

**Gary Smith:** This call for change is accompanied by a threat that God will bring shame on the nation and dry up the land so that there is no fertility (2:3). Like a dishonored husband who uncovers the nakedness of his wife, God will humiliate his people and turn their fertile farmlands into bare deserts, which produce nothing. This is another way of predicting the coming humiliation of Israel through the exile of the nation. God warns of a divine curse on the land and the removal of life-giving rain. Since Baal was the god of rain and fertility, this would be a clear sign of his powerlessness and the extreme consequences of unfaithful prostitution with other gods.

#### D. (:4-5) Prostitution Involves Shameful Behavior and Perverted Perspective

*“Also, I will have no compassion on her children,  
Because they are children of harlotry.  
For their mother has played the harlot;  
She who conceived them has acted shamefully.  
For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,  
Who give me my bread and my water,  
My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Just in case the individuals to whom these words were addressed, “*the children of harlotry*” thought they would escape the punishment for the corporate nation, the Lord straightened them out (v. 4). Because they were *children of harlotry*, the corrupt tendencies of the nation had infected every individual to the extent that each one had endorsed and enjoyed the sinful practices of his mother. Hosea’s generation was deaf to the pleadings of Jehovah. Through years of degeneration, the people had trained themselves to respond only on a physical level. A sensual religion devoid of spirituality was all they could understand. Truly, there was no knowledge of God in the land (4:1).

**David Thompson:** As one commentator said, her prostitution brought her tremendous “agricultural prosperity.” Her lovers paid her well. Gomer was a prostitute because of what it got her. But what she didn’t realize is what this would ultimately get her is the judgment of God.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The *lovers* are those who gave her life-sustaining commodities, those things that a cultivated land blessed by the divine world can produce for its inhabitants. This implies that the “*lovers*” here are the Baals of the Canaanite world.

**Duane Garrett:** Once again we face the questions about the paternity of Hosea’s children; here suspicions arise from the assertion that their mother “*conceived them in disgrace*.” Again we do not know; the verse only tells us that she was in the status of disgrace when she conceived the children, and the Israelite people are again the focus of the message. However, we should not miss the rhetorical effect of these accumulated doubts over the paternity of Hosea’s family. Just as neighbors must have asked themselves if these children could possibly be Hosea’s, so Hosea sowed doubt about Israel’s spiritual paternity—Is Yahweh really our God, or are we the children of Baal?

**John Goldingay:** “*Lovers*” suggests **promiscuity** (several partners) rather than simply one sexual relationship outside marriage. The plural also links with the implicit allegory. The lovers are the entities whom the children’s mother believed were givers of her everyday physical needs, bread and water, wool and flax (for making linen), olive oil and drink (in the context, “drink” will carry the same connotations as the word does in English). Yahweh is the giver of the crops. He “plainly shows that the whole order of nature . . . is in his hand.” If he does not make things grow, people have nothing to eat.

**David Allan Hubbard:** The participial style with which she chants the lists of gifts virtually makes her words a **hymn to the Baals** (a close parallel in a hymn to Yahweh is **Ps. 136:25**: ‘*he who gives [is giving] bread to all flesh*’). Graspingly, she has claimed all this beneficence as her own, with the Hebrew suffix my attached to every noun. A two-fold error this: credit to the wrong giver; possessiveness by a selfish recipient. Part of the threatened judgment will be God’s correction of the double error, when he takes back what is ever and rightly his (**vv. 8–9**).

## **II. (:6-8) DIVINE CONSEQUENCES OF SYNCRETISTIC WORSHIP**

**Duane Garrett: Structure of this section:**

A Sin = going after lovers for agricultural bounty (**2:5b**)

B Punishment = walling her in (2:6–7a)

C Anticipated redemption = she will seek her husband (**2:7b**)

A’ Sin = refusal to acknowledge Yahweh as source of bounty and fertility (**2:8**)

B’’ Punishment = she will be destitute (**2:9–12**)

A’’ Summary of sin = devotion to Baal and to decadence (**2:13**)

C’ Redemption = Yahweh will draw her back and restore her  
(**2:14–23**)

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** **Verses 6-8** summarize God’s initiation of the process of punishment, the isolation of Israel from her illicit lovers.

### **A. (:6) Opposition and Frustration**

*“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns,  
And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.”*

**Trent Butler:** “*Therefore*”, when used by the prophets, should always catch our attention. God’s pronouncement of judgment, his declaration of guilt and its consequences, generally follow “*therefore*.”

**Jason Van Bommel:** Why does God use the word “*therefore*” and not the word “*but*” here in **Hosea 2**? Because the Lord is telling Israel why He is being harsh to them. He wants them to know the reason for His discipline. He takes away what is precious to them so He can fill their emptiness with Himself. He wants to break them of their love for the Baals so He can replace that love with His own love.

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/112618013313497>

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** This pericope is the first of three “*therefore*” passages. The punishment is described as Yahweh’s obstructing wayward Israel from going where it should not go—that is, on the well-worn paths leading to other gods.

**Jeremy Thomas:** When you see the word **thorns** you should immediately think of the curse upon nature in **Gen 3**. Thorns in Scripture are always associated with the curse of sin and its effects on nature. There were certain deleterious effects we know because of sin on both man and nature. And one of the effects on the plant kingdom was thorns.

Thorns weren't originally produced by plants. We don't know all the mechanics of how the change took place, but obviously some genetic manipulation was involved such that whatever the plant originally produced it no longer produces. And now in place of its original produce we have thorns. Thorns are a reminder that the kind of production we had before the Fall we no longer enjoy. So after the Fall there are plants that produce thorns and that's a reminder of inefficiency, lost produce, the world we live in now is not the original world. So when he says I will hedge up her way with thorns He's saying **I will now let sin's effect upon nature run its course**. Israel has enjoyed agricultural blessing, economic blessing, land blessing and now God is saying I'm going to take that away, I'm going to remove My hand of grace and I'm going to let the effects of sin on nature run their course.

**H. D. Beeby:** Israel is to be severely **restricted**; hedges, walls, and other limitations will imprison her. Her frantic, obsessive religiosity with all its attendant dangers is to be given no opportunity to find satisfaction. Against her will she will be compelled to live prudently and soberly.

**Duane Garrett:** The imagery here implies entrapment and frustration.

**B. (:7a) Desperation and Futility**

*“And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them;  
And she will seek them, but will not find them.”*

**David Allan Hubbard:** The judgment (introduced by *therefore*; cf. **vv. 9, 14; 13:3**) appropriate to Israel's lustful chase is to **cut her off from her lovers** – a case of judgment by frustration (cf. **5:6**). Its purposes are positive and gracious, no matter how vexing it may have seemed to Israel:

- (1) it sought to protect her from her wanton urges which could only produce further harm for her and her children (**v. 6**); and
- (2) it was aimed so to thwart her heated pursuits of the Baals that she would change her mind and return to Yahweh (**v. 7**).

The enforced chastity, described in the thorn bushes and stone walls (cf. the firm hand that God has to keep on *'the stubborn heifer'* of **4:16**) that block the paths to the shrines and cut her off from the Baals, anticipates the period of discipline and sexual continence in the second part of action V (**3:3–4**). Yahweh's assertiveness in confining Israel and personally seeing to her discipline is seen in the *'Behold I'* with which the first clause begins and in the fact that he is the subject of the wall-building as well.

**Jeremy Thomas:** Now there's a problem we see right off. Why is the woman chasing after her lovers? If the woman was created to do the responding why is she doing the initiating? She's not supposed to go after men. The man is to go after the woman. So we see role reversal. This woman is chasing after all her lovers because she thinks they provide all her needs. Now transfer to the nation Israel. Who are they chasing? They're chasing Baal because they think Baal provides all their needs. . .



When the sin nature gets stuck in idolatry it's misplaced its allegiance, it's responding toward the wrong object and it thinks that to get satisfied I've got to have this object and I've just got to have it and if I don't have it I'm just going to die. That's the way the sin nature works: it just feeds and feeds and feeds off these idols and so here you can see her, and this is the second thing, she's pursuing them but she can't get satisfaction. It's all in the piel stem, very intensive search, all I can liken it to is when you've lost something that is extremely valuable and you start getting frantic, that's the picture of this woman and the nation Israel. It's a picture of desperation, she's coming apart at the seams because she thinks my lovers provided all my needs and now I can't find them. And your sin nature will always react like this when it gets cut off from what you think is providing all your needs. This is the picture of every one of us when we have **misplaced our allegiance**.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The restriction of the wife's movement has one goal in mind: to bring her to her senses so that she **returns** to her husband (**Hos. 2:7b**). This expresses a hope, not an accomplished fact or even a certain outcome.

Here Hosea introduces the term *return*, which is sometimes translated "repent" and which plays a prominent role in the book. The people are called to return to Yahweh and are rebuked for their failure to return (i.e., renounce their disobedience and seek to follow Yahweh's word again; **Hos. 6:1; 7:10, 16; 11:5; 14:1**). Because of Israel's failure to return, Yahweh will return in judgment (**2:9**), threatening the people with a return to captivity in Egypt (**8:13; 9:3**; cf. **11:5**). But beyond the discipline of judgment, there is hope that Israel will return (**3:5**).

### **C. (:7b-8) Expedient Decisions Based on Perverted Thinking**

*"Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband,  
For it was better for me then than now!'"*

*For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and  
the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal."*

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** **Hos. 2:8** is poignant with irony. Israel failed to acknowledge Yahweh as the true source of sustenance and instead used Yahweh's gifts for Baal worship. This irony is true of apostasy in any age or circumstance—we use the very gifts of God as tools of resistance against Him.

**David Thompson:** What Gomer did not realize is that God was the One who gives all good things to His people. His people don't have to pursue sin to get them; they need to pursue Him to get them.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Gomer's pursuit of her lovers will not bear the success she desires; therefore, she considers another option to attain security for herself: a return to a previous husband. In interpreting v. 7, we are better off concentrating from the outset on the relationship between Israel and God rather than seeking clues to the sequence of events in the marriage of Gomer and Hosea. The prophet confronts Israel through the symbolic depiction of a wayward spouse who now finds that she has very limited



options. What she thought was a better arrangement, namely dependence upon her lovers, has proven illusory. There are no overt indications of remorse or repentance, only that a return to her first husband would be better. Such reasoning may also imply that Israel believed that her first husband (YHWH) had previously done a substandard job of supporting his own. Perhaps Israel's move into polytheism (and the related field of international diplomacy?) was based on the logic of safety in numbers or hedging one's bets. . .

Israel is in a bad way. After seeking security through polytheism and international deals, a return to YHWH and covenant fidelity seems like a quick fix. Once a marriage or covenant had been violated, however, there were no means to restore it from the violator's side. Indeed, it would be an exceptional move from the side of the one offended to restore the prior relationship. It is, nevertheless, part of the fundamental message of the book as a whole that such matters can be healed from the side of the offended, if that party is YHWH. But it will be a painful process all the way around.

**Grace Emmerson:** Cut off from her lovers and their gifts, the woman in her desperation will be driven back to her "*first husband*," albeit in **self-interest**, not repentance.

**Allen Guenther:** Marriage documents from other Near Eastern cultures describe the husband's obligations toward his wife to consist of generous provisions of *grain, oil, and wool* (cf. **2:8**). The addition of *water (drink)* and *flax (linen)* suggest luxury (**2:5**). *Linen* is not everyday cloth. The provision of *water* constitutes a luxury in that the wife does not need to share the daily toil of drawing and carrying water from the local well. The *oil* mentioned here is identified in the marriage documents as cosmetic oil, not cooking oil. Gomer and Israel claim that Baal has truly blessed them. . .

Reconciliation between estranged marriage partners is always appropriate. No legal barrier stands in the way of reconciliation since Gomer has not married the baals; they have been *her lovers*.

**James Mays:** The blessings of agricultural life are viewed as the continuation of Yahweh's action in history on Israel's behalf. It is from this theology that the profound conflict between the 'lovers who gave' and 'Yahweh who gives' derives. Israel's turning to the Baals as the source of the land's produce was not merely a matter of divided loyalty. It was a denial of the whole Yahwist theology and the frustration of the contemporaneity of Yahweh's ongoing history with his people – a failure to acknowledge Yahweh himself.

**Jeremy Thomas:** One of the signs you want to look for, just a sign of good spiritual health is the **thankfulness barometer**. Are you thankful for your life? If you're thankful to God everything's probably alright, but if you're having real trouble being thankful that's a sign something is wrong. One of the first things to go in spiritual difficulty is thankfulness.

### III. (:9-12) DETAILED PUNISHMENTS

#### A. (:9a) Removal of Grain and Wine

*“Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time  
And My new wine in its season.”*

**Robin Routledge:** Because Israel has not acknowledged Yahweh’s provision, he will take it back (v. 9), in order to make the nation’s dependence on him clear. *I will take back* reads, literally, ‘*I will return [šûb] and take*’. This again plays on the word *šûb*. Yahweh’s ‘return’ in judgment is intended to bring about Israel’s ‘return’ in repentance. The repeated *my* emphasizes the divine source, and the reference to *my wool* and *my linen* contrasts with 2:5, where the same expressions are linked with gifts from Israel’s lovers. These were intended to cover Israel’s nakedness; withdrawing them will expose the nation to public shame (v. 10; cf. 2:3).

#### B. (:9b) Removal of Wool and Flax – Leaving Israel Exposed

*“I will also take away My wool and My flax Given to cover her nakedness.”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Nakedness is much more titillating than shameful in modern society, hence the popularity of revealing clothes and the appeal of nudity in pornography. Nakedness could have its erotic side in antiquity as well, but in Semitic society public displays of it were considered shameful (as is still the case in Orthodox Judaism and Islamic society). God’s judgment on Israel will expose the people shamefully to observers.

#### C. (:10a) Naked Exposure

*“And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers,”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The noun *něbālâ* refers to something foolish, which may be sexual in nature (Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Judg. 19:23; 2 Sam. 13:12), but the term is not limited to that. Translations that render *nablût* as “*lewdness*” do so because of the context, and perhaps because of the verb *uncover* (*gālâ*). In any case, Gomer’s exposure is a public one with shameful consequences, indeed, life-threatening ones.

**Duane Garrett:** The most telling detail is the nature of the exposure in **Hos 2:10** and **Ezek 16:37–39**. Yahweh does something that no injured husband would do—he arranges for **a private showing of his naked wife before her lovers**, before the very men who made him a cuckold! Clearly, the imagery has moved out of the realm of actual Israelite customs for dealing with an adulteress and into an artificial, parabolic world in which metaphors are molded to suit the prophet's message. The “*lovers*” are the foreign nations and their gods, and the exposure of the woman is the **abandonment of Israel to foreign domination**. The irony in the image is that one willingly strips naked in order to commit adultery. Israel once voluntarily committed adultery through reliance on foreign powers and their gods, but now she would be forcibly stripped by these same powers in conquest.

**D. (:10b) No Hope of Rescue**

*“And no one will rescue her out of My hand.”*

**E. (:11) No More Celebrations and Feasts**

*“I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths, And all her festal assemblies.”*

**Trent Butler:** Worshippers of God as well as Baal celebrated agricultural festivals, thanking the god for the fertile crops and seeking to ensure that the plentiful harvest would be repeated. Israel linked these celebrations to God's great saving actions in their history, particularly the deliverance from Egypt. The Canaanite Baal worshippers linked everything to mystical rituals filled with explicit sexual activities. Israel had begun celebrating the Lord's worship times in rituals borrowed from the Canaanites. He would put a stop to this (**Isa. 1:13**).

The Lord listed the specific times of celebrations when Israel expressed their joy. The hag (yearly festivals) designated the three annual Jewish festivals (Passover, Weeks or Firstfruits, and Booths or Tabernacles) for which God required Israel to undertake a pilgrimage to the central sanctuary (**Deut. 16:16**). Each festival was tied to a particular harvest time: Passover for the spring barley harvest, Weeks for the summer wheat harvest, and Booths for the fall grape harvest. Israel assumed they would celebrate these festivals forever. God called a halt when celebration developed into sexual homage to Baal rather than memory of the Lord's great acts in Israel's history. . .

God summarized his joy-stoppage order: it will affect **all her appointed feasts**. The term referred to any agreed-upon time (**Ps. 75:2**), but it came to designate specifically Israel's times of festival observance and national assemblies (**Lev. 23:2**). God thus puts an end to Israel's chief worship occasions. **He preferred no worship to false worship.**

**David Allan Hubbard:** All these God-given occasions were co-opted by Israel **for her** (note the repetition of the pronouns) **pagan purposes**. The agricultural character of the pilgrimage feasts made them readily adaptable to the fertility cult whose purpose was to assure regularity of harvest and abundance of produce. The new moon and sabbath, which had counterparts in other Middle Eastern religions, may well have become corrupted by the astrological practices of Israel's neighbours as well as by the sexual rites against which Hosea inveighs.

**F. (:12) Destruction of Vines and Fig Trees**

*“And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them.”*

**Jeremy Thomas:** The vines and fig trees were not your run of the mill crops. Run of the mill agriculture was sow one season reaping the next. Vine and fig tree groves take years of development; they take a tremendous amount of capital investment up front and then you have to wait years to harvest the produce. What this is saying is I'm not

going to take your vines and fig trees while they're under development, I'm going to wait till their in production and then I'm going to wipe them out. And you're going to watch in horror as all your capital disappears overnight.

**John Goldingay:** Vine and fig tree are key **fruit sources** (the olive is the third). The vine means wine; the fig is the chief source of sweetness. The collocation of these two also recalls the image of an ideal secure and happy life as sitting under one's vine and fig tree. Wasting them restates the warning about turning the town into a wilderness in v. 3 [5].

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Cultic practices associated with fertility had as their goal the increase of crops and flocks. The Canaanite deities, the Baals, were considered the masters of the fertility cycle, and in Israel's mind had provided them with needed produce. In **2:12** the produce of the land is represented more specifically as the payment from Gomer's lovers. Here the metaphor in the foreground is not marriage and covenant, but prostitution and payment. The term rendered *payment* ('*etnâ*) is unique, but it is almost certainly a variant of the term '*etnan*, which is specifically the hire of a prostitute and is also used in **Hos. 9:1**. Perhaps the variant form here in **2:12** is for assonance with the other words in context ending in -â.

The judgment is that the inhabited and cultivated land will become forest and the habitation of wild animals. This reversion of inhabited land to forest and wild animals is an image shared with other prophets and the curses of covenant disobedience in Leviticus (**26:6, 22**). Micah, for example, envisions Jerusalem as a heap of ruins and the Temple Mount a forest (**3:12**; cf. **Jer. 26:18**). Amos depicts the roar of a lion in the forest as the announcement that the animal has found prey (**3:4**). In the postjudgment reconciliation, land and animals are brought back into harmony with the larger environment and the human community (**Hos. 2:18**).

**David Thompson:**

Punishment #1 - God will take back His grain . **2:9a**

Punishment #2 - God will take back His new wine . **2:9b**

Punishment #3 - God will take away His wool and flax . **2:9c**

Now these were commodities that the people needed to live and survive. These things were critical to their economy. God could take them back in a couple of ways. He could allow someone to come to dominate them who would take these things away from them or He could withhold rain so that these things could not flourish.

Punishment #4 - God will completely expose her. **2:9d-10a**

In fact, all of her lovers would see that the hand of God was completely against her.

This idea of completely uncovering her pictures four things:

- 1) Coming captivity in which the people would be stripped of everything;
- 2) Coming destitution in which the people are left with nothing;

- 3) Coming humiliation;
- 4) Public disgrace. God would do this to His own family.

Punishment #5 - God will make it so that no one can rescue her. **2:10b**

When God permits someone to be rescued out of sin, He is the one who permitted the rescue. Most people want to credit man, but the credit goes to God.

Punishment #6 - God will put an end to all of her gaiety and religious ceremonies. **2:11**

Do not miss what is said here, there are people who are deep in sin who go to some church and totally enjoy it. They are happy, backslapping people who never are convicted about anything. God says, "I'll put an end to that." "I'll stop them dead in their tracks."

Punishment #7 - God will destroy the vines and fig trees given to her for immoral payment. **2:12**

Israel believed that by practicing her religious stuff she was guaranteeing herself great prosperity and rewards. God says, "I'll stop it all and destroy it all. I will destroy your agriculture and I will permit the beasts of the field to devour everything."

#### **IV. (:13) DAMNING INDICTMENT SUMMARIZED**

##### **A. Syncretistic Idolatry**

*"And I will punish her for the days of the Baals  
When she used to offer sacrifices to them"*

**Duane Garrett:** The idea is that Yahweh will turn his back on Israel just as she has turned her back on him. Yahweh, the jilted husband, will jilt desperate Israel when they call to him. It is in this sense that they will experience the "*days of the Baals*," which the text has here defined as the time when she turns from her husband to flirt with paramours.

##### **B. Splashy Adornment**

*"And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry,"*

**David Allan Hubbard:** The use of ornamenting (cf. the bride in Isa. **61:10**) jewelry seems to connect **verse 13** with **verse 5**. Here Israel is pictured preening herself with her ring, probably of gold (**Gen. 24:22; Judg. 8:24–26**) and worn in either the nose (**Gen. 24:47; Isa. 3:21**) or ears (**Gen. 35:4; Exod. 32:2–3**, where the form is plural), and her jewelry (a similar Heb. word is used with erotic connotations in **Song 7:2**), which may have resembled the bands worn by the goddesses Ishtar and Anat which draped their torsos so as to emphasize the breasts and the pubic area (see **Andersen**, pp. 260–262 for a detailed description).

##### **C. Spiritual Harlotry**

*"And follow her lovers,"*

## D. Shameful Apostasy

*“so that she forgot Me, declares the LORD.”*

**H. D. Beeby:** In Hebrew “remembering” and “knowing” are life commitments. They describe activities, a movement—from an attitude, a disposition, a judgment—to action, to a behavior pattern. “To know” (this is very important when studying Hosea) is the same verb as “to have sex with,” that is, to relate to another not only with the mind but with the whole person: to identify with, to become at one with. When Hosea speaks of Israel’s forgetting Yahweh in v. 13, the meaning is not far removed from **divorce** or **apostasy**.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** **Forgetting** has the sense of not bringing into conscious thought and thus not allowing something to shape a response.

**David Allan Hubbard:** **To forget God** is to act as though he had never made himself known, never redeemed his people in the exodus, never provided for them in the land, or laid his gracious and constraining claims upon them.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How has syncretism crept into modern day Christian worship and experience?
- 2) What tempted Israel to pursue syncretistic worship?
- 3) How shameful and devastating are the consequences of sin – as pictured in the analogy of being stripped naked and of being laid waste as a desert land?
- 4) When do we forget to give God the credit for all blessings and to express our thanksgiving to Him?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Jeremy Thomas:** [In Chaps. 1-3 of Hosea] we said the **theme** can be summarized this way, God establishes a historic parallel between His relationship with Israel and Hosea’s relationship with his wife. We said God puts his prophets in **peculiar positions** and this is one of the most peculiar. Hosea is commanded to marry a prostitute, Gomer, as a real life example of what it was like for God to be married to the spiritual prostitute Israel. This man is going to suffer publicly because of the whoring of his wife. And this is an illustration of what God suffers because of Israel’s spiritual whoring. This is one of the very explicit ways God communicated to the nation Israel; He drew people into real life situations that mirrored the situations He was dealing with. . .



God is not a robot, God is a person who responds to history in a very personal way and Hosea is going to show us what it's like for God to have to put up with a people in rebellion against His authority. And therefore, what Hosea goes through being married to a woman who is out prostituting herself mirrors what God goes through every time you and I sin. You and I become spiritual prostitutes and the way God feels about that is parallel to what a man would feel like knowing his wife is out whoring with another man. This is a principle the Lord is teaching at this point through Hosea so we see how psychologically terrorizing sin is. Sin causes tremendous emotional turmoil. Very few of us can even imagine the seriousness of sin and what the Lord faces every time we rebel. But once you do you start to realize the magnanimity of His grace in putting up with us. The point of the analogy tonight is to give us a glimpse what this man had to face with how God feels about our sin.

<https://storage.sermonaudio.com/com-sermonaudio-text/1018212132281.pdf?ts=1634681808>

**John Goldingay:** Yahweh is the one God, and he does not have a consort. Yet he inspires Hosea to picture him as like a husband in relation to his people, who are like his wife.

God thus takes risks in the way he inspires his servants to communicate. There is the general **risk involved in using metaphor**. Any single metaphor is bound to be narrow and can be seriously misleading; so God uses a variety of images and metaphors to do justice to “the complexity and richness of the divine-human relationship.” It is important to maintain this **diversity of metaphors** in order to realize the potentials in the richness of human experience.

### **Lloyd Ogilvie: Development of Syncretism**

When the Israelites settled among the Canaanite people, they were inexperienced farmers. So they learned from the Canaanites. In adopting the Canaanite way of life, they observed that the people depended on their gods, particularly Baal, for the life-giving rains, produce of the earth, and reproduction in the herds. “What harm could be done by worshiping Baal along with Yahweh to ensure success and prosperity?” Israel wondered. So they, too, erected Baal shrines in their fields. (Remember that Gideon’s father had them, and Gideon was called to tear them down as his first act of obedience to the Lord God.) Gradually the people of Israel were enticed into deeper mysteries of the sensual fertility cult with the hope that they could manipulate the gods for productivity. As the years went by, they depended more and more on Baal and less and less on Yahweh. The worship of the Canaanite gods along with Yahweh became firmly entrenched. Elijah did battle with this syncretism in his famous contest with the priests of Baal (**1 Kin. 17–18**) and in his confrontation of Jezebel, who was a devotee of Baal worship. The problem of syncretism continued throughout Israel’s history; Jeremiah took great pains to establish Yahweh’s supremacy over the false gods to bring rain (**Jer. 10:11–16; 14:22; cf. 44:17–19**). **Psalms 104, 147, and 148**, among others, celebrate Yahweh’s sovereignty over the natural world.

**Robin Routledge:** A key indictment is that the people have failed to recognize that what they have comes from Yahweh. He is their provider, but they have not acknowledged him (v. 8); they have forgotten him (v. 13) and, instead, give credit to Baal. As a result, Yahweh will take it all back! But his action is educative, not vindictive. This is a judgment oracle and there is no reference to Yahweh's love for his wayward bride – that will come later. However, removing his provision is intended to emphasize the people's dependence on him and bring them to a place where, like the prodigal son in Jesus' parable, they come to their senses and realize that they were better off at home – in this case, with their first 'husband' (v. 7).

Yahweh's willingness to wait for his bride to return highlights his patience. Sin has serious consequences, including the breakdown of relationship with God. But that breakdown is not final, and the possibility of return and reconciliation remains open. Yahweh's commitment to restoring the relationship is evident in what follows.

### **Matthew Black: The Empty Promises of Idols**

#### **I. The Price of Idolary (2:2-5a)**

You Could Lose Your Family (2:2)

You Could Lose Your Money (2:3)

You Could Lose Your Children (2:4)

You Could Lose Your Dignity (2:5a)

#### **II. The Power of Idolatry (2:5b-13)**

The Promise of Idols is Powerful (2:5b)

God's Love is More Powerful than Idols (2:6-7)

God, not idols, is the source of all our blessing (2:8)

Idols have the power to destroy your life (2:9-13)

#### **III. The Pathway Out of Idolatry (2:14-23)**

TEXT: Hosea 2:14-23

TITLE: RESTORATION AND RENEWAL OF THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS WILL RESTORE AND RENEW HIS COVENANT RELATIONSHIP TO ISRAEL IN THE END TIMES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Robin Routledge:** These verses emphasize Yahweh's commitment to winning back and restoring his wayward bride. In the previous sections, *Therefore* focuses on judgment. However, this passage begins with a different emphasis. Those who are alienated from God because of sin are not able, by themselves, to bring about the changes needed to put things right. However, **God is committed to restoring the relationship**, and so we see another consequence of sin: God's direct intervention to do what is necessary to make that restoration possible. We see the ultimate demonstration of that in the coming of Christ and in the cross.

Israel has lost sight of God and his provision and so has forfeited the blessings of being in relationship with him. That state, though, is not permanent. God's desire is to give back what has been lost. That includes physical well-being, renewed understanding of God and a reaffirmation of their status as his people, in a renewed covenant bond that will last forever. To do that, Yahweh will bring them back to where the relationship began and will offer a new start, with all its initial promise. As part of that renewed relationship, he will provide everything necessary to ensure its permanence. That includes bestowing qualities that are crucial to the relationship but which have hitherto been lacking. This amounts to the **spiritual renewal** of the people (cf. **Ezek. 36:26–28**).

This new relationship is noted in the New Testament. On the eve of the crucifixion, Jesus announced a '*new covenant in my blood*' (**Luke 22:20**). And, as noted on **1:10 – 2:1**, the scope has been widened beyond Israel (cf. **Rom. 9:25–26; 1 Pet. 2:10**). As a result of divine grace, the hope of future restoration and of a new relationship with God is available to all people.

**H. D. Beeby:** The crescendo of accusation and of threatened punishment prepares us for the third "*therefore*," but when it comes we are equally **unprepared** for what follows. Two previous "*therefores*" succeeded by two announcements of punishment have built up into an **expectation of further promised punishments**. The rhetorical device is effective. But as we proceed, expectations are shattered and in stunned silence we listen incredulously to what is said; for the "*therefore*" opens, not into diatribe and disaster, but into **grace abounding**. This grace is grace alone, wholly unconditional, so that whatever change takes place in Israel is the result of God's grace and is not its prerequisite. The change is in fact in God, and it is indeed startling! It is true that the threats of punishment in previous verses have had overtones of re-education and hoped

for reformation, and of course there is the same pattern of reversal in **ch. 1**. Nevertheless when we hear the words “*I will allure ...*” in **v. 14** we are expected to be wholly unprepared for what follows. We have been prepared to be unprepared, prepared by the “*therefores,*” prepared by the incessant “*I will, I will*” (**vv. 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13**), where each time the “*I will*” is followed by threats of disaster. Now in **v. 14**, after the third “*therefore,*” comes the expected future tense, only this time it is a future about life and not of death. But, as before, the punishment has been wholly of God’s deciding, since the reconciliation and restored covenant depend entirely upon the will and character of God.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The passage is book-ended by the reference to two valleys—Achor and Jezreel—both filled with anguishing memories of Israel’s past failures, moving metaphors of disobedience. God excavates the memories of both and expunges them with forgiveness and the promise of a new covenant and His betrothal of Israel as His bride forever. . .

The passage is filled with reversals of previous judgments, providential care, and covenant faithfulness—all parts of a new song of hope for our valley.

**James Mays:** The themes and metaphors formulated in **ch. 1** and in **2.2–15** reappear: the allegory of Israel as wife and Yahweh as husband, the analogy of covenant and marriage, the problem of the Baals, the fertility of the land, and the symbolic names of the children. . . There is a successive transition from one subject and metaphor to another: the end of any relation to the Baals (**vv. 16f.**), peace with nature and safety from enemies (**v. 18**), the betrothal of God and his bride (**vv. 19f.**), revival of the land’s fertility (**vv. 21f.**), reversal of the symbolic names of judgment (**v. 23**). The material is punctuated three times by the eschatological formula ‘*it will occur in that day*’ (**vv. 16, 18, 21**), and twice with the oracle formula ‘*a saying of Yahweh*’ (**vv. 16, 21**). There is a rapid change in the personal pronouns referring to Israel: ‘*you*’ (second fem. sing.) in **v. 16**, ‘*her*’ in **v. 17**, ‘*them*’ in **v. 18**, ‘*you*’ again in **vv. 19f.**, and ‘*her*’ in **v. 23**. . . [Goal = ] to furnish a complete picture of the way in which Yahweh will lead Israel from her sin through judgment to a new beginning.

**David Thompson:** NO MATTER HOW UNFAITHFUL GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN, IN THE END THEY WILL BE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND EXPERIENCE THE FULL BLESSINGS OF GOD BECAUSE GOD WILL SOVEREIGNLY CAUSE THIS TO HAPPEN BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE.

In view of the fact that God’s people were unfaithful, immoral and adulterous and not interested in obeying Him, God still promises that He will sovereignly bring her back to a right relationship with Him and bless her in the future. If ever there is a text that teaches the eternal security of the property of God, it is this one. There are eight future blessings described here:

FUTURE BLESSING #1 – God will allure His faithless harlot wife to the wilderness and speak kindly to her. **2:14**

FUTURE BLESSING #2 – God will bless her and give her the land and Israel will sing. **2:15**

FUTURE BLESSING #3 – God will be called by Israel Ishi not Baali. **2:16**

FUTURE BLESSING #4 – God will remove the name of all false religions. **2:17**

FUTURE BLESSING #5 – God will establish a peace covenant with animals and people. **2:18**

FUTURE BLESSING #6 – God will betroth Himself to Israel forever. **2:19-20**

FUTURE BLESSING #7 – God will use His heavens to bless Israel on earth. **2:21-22**

FUTURE BLESSING #8 – God Himself will put Israel into her land . **2:23**

**Duane Garrett:** The structure of this text is a parallel structure within an inclusio, as follows:

- A: Reversal: Wooing in the wilderness (**2:14–15**)
  - B: A new marriage covenant (**2:16–17**)
    - C: Return to Eden (**2:18**)
  - B': A new marriage covenant (**2:19–20**)
    - C': Return to Eden (**2:21–23a**)
- A': Reversal: The names of the children are changed (**2:23bc**).

By such structuring, Hosea not only unifies this text but brings about **redemption of both the mother and her children**. The mother, Israel, experiences the tender love of Yahweh and is reunited to him in an eternal covenant, whereas the children experience the security of a new Eden and have their accursed names turned into names of blessing.

## **I. (:14-20) RENEWAL OF MARRIAGE COMMITMENT**

### **A. (:14) Loving Allurement of the Wayward Bride**

#### 1. Romantic Seduction

*“Therefore, behold, I will allure her,”*

**Gary Smith:** The third “*therefore*” (**2:14**) describes a dramatic new step in God’s tactics to win back his wife, Israel. Using sexual terminology, God will “*allure*” (romantically entice) Israel back to himself, a jarring and unexpected divine method of persuasion. He will speak the tender love language that the people understand, for he deeply cares for this wife who rejected him. The picture Hosea presents involves an encounter between the couple out in the desert, where they will be alone; it will be a place where they can **start over**.

**James Mays:** ‘*Entice*’ means to persuade irresistibly, to overwhelm the resistance and will of another. The verb is used for the seduction of a virgin (**Ex. 22.16**) and for the divine constraint which holds a prophet powerless (**Jer. 20.7**). Like a lover who plots to be alone with his beloved, Yahweh will take the woman into the wilderness.

**Jeremy Thomas:** But, **v 14**, note, it can’t be a total destruction. This verse denies a total extermination. The **discipline** goes far but not to extinction. And so here’s the shift. **V 13** fuming judgment, **v 14** burning love. And so we shift from the historical defeat to **future restoration** and we’ve launched forward in time and we’re looking at prophecy or eschatology; everything here’s in the future from **vv 14-23**.

## 2. Romantic Setting

“*Bring her into the wilderness,*”

**James Mays:** ‘*Wilderness*’ is more than a place; it is a time and situation in which the pristine relation between God and people was untarnished and Israel depended utterly on Yahweh (cf. **13.4f.**). Hosea is not the advocate of a nomadic ideal with a simple nostalgia for life away from the agricultural civilization of Palestine. As a place, the wilderness is bare and threatening (**v. 3**) but as an epoch in the history of God and Israel it represents a **point of new beginning** (cf. **Jer. 2.1–3**). In the wilderness Yahweh will ‘*make love*’ to Israel; the expression is literally ‘*speak to her heart*’, and we can feel its proper context in the speech of courtship by looking at its use in the talk of a man to a woman whose love he seeks (**Gen. 34.3; Ruth 2.13; Judg. 19.3**). Measured against Yahwism’s studied aversion for speaking of God in any sexual terms, the picture is astonishing. Yet precisely at this point the allegory is not to be taken lightly. For it is in this daring kind of portrayal that the **passion of God** becomes visible – a passion that does not hesitate at any condescension or hold back from any act for the sake of the beloved elect.

**David Allan Hubbard:** Intertwined with the **love language** are the **reminiscences of the exodus**: the wilderness is the site of Yahweh’s wooing, as far removed from the tree-shaded shrines of the Baals (cf. **4:13**) as it was from the brickworks of Egypt. Promises in the desert, of wedding gifts, will be repeated and transform the scenes of Joshua’s conquest of Canaan: new vineyards, blessed by Yahweh not Baal, will teem with grapes. And the Valley of Achor (‘trouble’), plagued for half a millennium by the memory of Achan’s disobedience to the command to put everything in Ai to the ban (**Josh. 7:26**), will be gifted to Israel with a new name, a new beginning: ‘*a portal* (spacious door opening) *of hope*’ (cf. **Jer. 31:17; Lam. 3:29**). For Hosea, God’s memories of the wilderness are poignant (**9:10; 13:5**). The exodus (literally ‘*her coming up*’; cf. ‘*they shall go up*’ in **1:11**) is mentioned last because it embraces the other two historical references, the wilderness wandering and the possession of Canaan, and epitomizes the divine love for Israel that was celebrated in those events.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** It is the intimacy and ardor of the covenant initiation and the subsequent dependence upon God that are in the foreground of the wilderness simile.



### 3. Romantic Speech

*“And speak kindly to her.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Credit for this change in the position of the harlot wife belongs to the corrective force of Israel’s punishment, which has stripped away all the tantalizing allurements of the world and placed Israel in a position of isolation where she can hear only God’s voice. It is fitting that the place for that change to occur is the wilderness, where God first spoke to Israel (cf. **Ezek. 20:33-38**).

**Grace Emmerson:** His is the initiative, Israel’s the response (cf. **Jer 2:2**). Her story with Yahweh will have a new beginning. Israel had reached a point of no return, hence the profound insight that only by divine grace, such as Israel experienced at the time of the exodus, can the relationship be restored.

**Jeremy Thomas:** Listen up guys. speak kindly to her in the Hebrew says this, *“speak upon her heart,”* in other words He’s going to engrave something upon her heart. Now obviously it has to do with her deepest needs which is what you need to answer to men with your wife. With the nation Israel what are her deepest needs? What’s God going to engrave upon her heart? Turn to **Jer 31:31** for the answer.

#### **B. (:15) Liberated Appreciation for Restored Blessings**

##### 1. Reversal of Fortunes

*“Then I will give her her vineyards from there,  
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Having the features of a “second honeymoon,” the scene in the fifteenth verse pictures a reenactment of that first entrance into the promised land. The Lord gives Israel *“her vineyards [symbolic of renewed peace and prosperity] from there,”* that is, from the east coming over the Jordan River. With Israel’s sin fully judged in advance, the Valley of Achor, the site of troubling for Israel when she first entered the land (**Josh. 7**), would now be a *“door of hope”* (see also **Isa. 65:10**). The joyousness of this return to the land will provoke Israel to sing the Song of Moses once again, as she did when the Lord brought her through the Red Sea (**Exod. 15:1-21**). It is interesting to note that the Song of Moses also will be sung in the Tribulation by those who overcome the Beast (**Rev. 15:2-3**).

**Robin Routledge:** Having brought Israel back into the desert, to where the relationship began, Yahweh will give back the vineyards that were among the blessings associated with the occupation of Canaan (cf. **Deut. 6:11**), but which had previously been laid waste (**2:12**; cf. **Deut. 28:30, 39**). The people have associated these signs of prosperity with the Baals, but Yahweh will sever that relationship (**2:6-7**; cf. **v. 17**), so that Israel will recognize the true source of blessings.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The **Valley of Achor** was seared into Israel’s national mind as a dark page in her history. And the people who heard Hosea’s prophecy knew exactly what the

Valley of Achor meant. For them it meant a terrible failure. And it is in that context that they would have heard God's analysis of their own period. They were responsible for their eighth-century Valley of Achor because of their corruption, idolatry, and rejection of God.

But in spite of all that she had done in forgetting God, He was now saying that He would transform Israel's repetition of Achan's sin into a door of hope.

**Trent Butler:** God will restore the vineyards he had originally turned into thickets (v. 12). The dark blot on Joshua's conquest record was the **Valley of Achor**, which separated the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (**Josh. 15:7**). There Joshua had to execute an Israelite family and bury them after they disobeyed God's rules for warfare (**Josh. 7:24–26**). Hosea joins Isaiah (**Isa. 65:10**) in promising a future for sinful Israel. The valley called "*trouble*" (**Josh. 7:25–26**) would now be called **hope**. **God had a new day and a new plan for God's people.**

## 2. Response of a Liberated Heart

*“And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,  
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”*

**Jeremy Thomas:** I don't know why they translate this *sing*, I do understand why, but it's not sing. It's the same word used down in **verse 21-22** one, two, three, four, five times, "*respond*," see that word. It's the same word here. The nation Israel is going to respond to God. That's the role of the woman, the woman is the responder and she will respond, but this time to her right man, this time to the one who really loves her, the one who has seduced her victoriously. The love of God wins her to Himself.

## **C. (:16-17) Loyal Allegiance to the One True God**

### 1. (:16) Conversion to Loyal Intimacy Rather than Syncretistic Servanthood

*“And it will come about **in that day**,’ declares the LORD,  
‘That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali.’”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** **Verse 16** is significant for its introduction of the words "*in that day*," one of the Old Testament technical terms for the **day of the Lord**, in which Israel suffers the Tribulation, the Messiah returns to defeat the enemies of Jerusalem, and the Millennial Kingdom is established (see **Zech. 14:4-21**). Because all Israel will be saved at that time (**Rom. 11:25-26**), the Lord declares that Israel will call Him Ishi ("*my husband*") rather than Baali ("*my master, my owner, my lord*"). This declaration by the Lord will mean an end to the deadly syncretism by which Israel had combined the biblical regulations for worship with the heathen Canaanite practices.

**Gary Smith:** The second half of this oracle is structured around three "*in that day*" promises, which refer to events at some unknown time in the future (**2:16, 18, 21**). One is immediately struck with the total transformation of the relationship between God and his covenant people. They will relate to one another and the world around them in a

new way. Harmony, love, and the renewal of God's covenant relationship will characterize this era.

**Grace Emmerson:** Israel had been guilty, not of blatantly substituting Baal for Yahweh, but of undiscerning syncretism which failed to recognize the incomparability of Yahweh who, out of sheer grace, rescued them from Egypt and brought them into covenant relationship with himself. A cosmic covenant embracing the natural world and humanity is envisaged (v. 18). Free from danger, Israel will indeed "*lie down in safety.*" At last they will **know the LORD**.

## 2. (:17) Cancellation of All Idolatry

*"For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,  
So that they will be mentioned by their names no more."*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** With Baal no longer the master of Israel, the Lord vows in **verse 17** that Israel will completely forget her fall into idolatry. As if they were undesirable words on a blackboard slate, the Lord will erase the names of the Baals from the minds and hearts of His chosen people.

**Robin Routledge:** In the coming era of salvation, though, all mention of Baal will be removed, and with it the possibility of worshipping anyone other than Yahweh. In the new, restored relationship, Yahweh will have no rival.

## **II. (:18) RENEWAL OF COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

### **A. Covenant of Peace and Security with the Animal Kingdom**

*"In that day I will also make a covenant for them  
With the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the sky,  
And the creeping things of the ground."*

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** What is announced is that the nation will be the beneficiary of a **new reality**, where they will not suffer attacks from wild animals or enemies. Each of these dimensions is comprised of three items, suggesting completeness. The language about creation follows the order of **Genesis 1:30**. A rehabilitated relationship with nature is part of the hope of the messianic age (**Isa 11:6–9; Eze 34:25**), as is the elimination of warfare (e.g., **Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3–4**). Thus, this promise represents a reversal of the threats of **2:12** and **1:4–5** (cf. v.7), respectively (cf. **Lev 26:14–33; Dt 28:25–26, 49–57**).

**Trent Butler:** God will restore the peace of original creation. Instruments and conduct of war will disappear, along with the names of Baal. Man and beast can lie down securely with no one to fear. The threat and punishment of **Hosea 2:12** will no longer endure. This is God's description of the life he plans for his people.

## B. Covenant of Peace and Security with Surrounding Nations

*“And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land,  
And will make them lie down in safety.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Until the Prince of Peace conquers a world in rebellion to His authority, even the most valiant human endeavors to bring a “just and lasting peace” to the Middle East will be foiled (cf. **Jer. 6:4; 8:11, 15; Ezek. 13:10, 16; Dan. 8:25**).

**David Allen Hubbard:** Two specific threats of judgment are reversed here, with all the certainty of a divine covenant. The result is **complete security**:

- (1) no danger to person or crop is to be feared from wild animals, foraging birds, or poisonous reptiles (cf. **2:12**, which promised such devastation to vineyards; cf. also **Amos 5:19**); and
- (2) no military invasion will be tolerated, since the instruments of war – bow, sword and other weapons (so war, Heb. *milhāmā*, must mean here; cf. **1:7; Ps. 76:3; Isa. 3:25; 21:15**) – will be broken and removed from Israel’s land.

## C. (:19-20) Covenant of Marriage Permanency and Intimate Knowledge

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Directing His attention once again to His bride, the Lord in **verses 19-20** removes the separation that had been caused by Israel’s adultery. In an act of gracious forgiveness, the Lord betroths Himself to Israel once again. By employing the term betroth (Hebrew, *aras*; literally, “*to woo a virgin*”), God reveals to Israel that He has not only forgiven the past, but has forgotten it also. The indissolubility of this marriage bond is guaranteed by each of these divine characteristics: His eternality (“*forever*”); His imputed righteousness (“*in righteousness and in justice*”); His covenant-keeping love (*chesed*, “*lovingkindness*”); His tender mercy (*ruhamah*, “*compassion*”); and His unquestionable “faithfulness.” When the people of Israel have received the full impact of God’s dealings with them, they will “*know the Lord*.”

**H. D. Beeby:** This Groom knows he can expect nothing from the bride. Realistically and honestly she is not asked to make any vows; we have retreated from the conditional covenant of Sinai to something more like the covenants with Abraham and David. Only the Groom promises, but what promises they are! Not only are they unconditional and anchored firmly in the unchanging nature of God, but they are weighted with some of the greatest themes in Scripture, themes that belong to the very essence of God.

### 1. (:19a) Marriage Should Be Forever

*“And I will betroth you to Me forever;”*

**Robin Routledge:** Betrothal indicates a legally binding commitment to marriage, and between the betrothal and consummation of the relationship the bride would belong to her intended husband (**Deut. 22:23–24**). This does not require that Yahweh had previously divorced Israel. Rather, it continues the idea of taking things back to where the relationship began and offering a new start. . .

Before and after the list of bridal gifts are statements of divine intent: I will betroth you to me for ever [lě'ôlām] . . . and you will acknowledge [yāda'] the Lord. Yahweh is committed to his people and offers these gifts to ensure that the renewed relationship will not fail as it did before. It will, too, be marked by a renewed knowledge of God. The term yāda' ('to know') is significant for the prophecy.<sup>54</sup> Here, it contrasts with Israel's failure to acknowledge Yahweh as the source of blessings (2:8; cf. 11:3) and with the indictment that Israel has forgotten Yahweh (2:13). Elsewhere, yāda' refers to sexual intimacy (e.g. Gen. 4:1), and while that is not appropriate here, it indicates the depth of the relationship. This is not increased knowledge about Yahweh, necessary as that is, but knowledge of him.

**Derek Kidner:** **Betrothal** also goes further than the courtship of **verse 14**, speaking of a step that was even more decisive in Israelite custom than engagement is with us. It involved handing over the bride-price to the girl's father, whose acceptance of it finalized the matter. David's betrothal to Saul's daughter, at the barbarous price demanded of him, is described in **2 Samuel 3:14** in terms which, in Hebrew, show that the five qualities listed here, ranging from 'righteousness' to 'faithfulness', are thought of as the bride-price which God, the suitor, brings with Him. The metaphor, of course, is imperfect, like the ransom metaphor of **Mark 10:45**, since there is no 'father of the bride' to receive the gift. But even in literal betrothals such a present could be passed to the bride herself to be her dowry, and certainly she is the beneficiary here.

So the promise overflows with generosity. It is all of grace, and it clothes the New Covenant in wedding garb. It makes three things very plain:

- the permanence of this union (**19a**),
- the intimacy of it (**20b**),
- and the fact that it owes everything to God.

## 2. (:19b-20a) Marriage Should Be Based on God's Enduring Attributes

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The text provides a moving basis for an entire sermon or class on the theme of the **nature of God as the basis of hope**. The key words offer a natural progression: righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, mercy, and faithfulness. All these qualities of God are the basis of our hope.

### a. (:19b) His Righteousness and Justice

*"Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,"*

**Robin Routledge:** **Righteousness** is associated with right action within a relationship. Here, it points to what is expected of both Israel and Yahweh as part of their mutual covenant commitment. It includes legal and ethical integrity and upholding the cause of the weak in society. In accordance with this, Yahweh acts in righteousness to vindicate Israel when they are oppressed by more powerful enemies, and so the term is also associated with salvation (e.g. **Isa. 45:8; 51:5**). **Justice** is closely linked with righteousness. Yahweh loves righteousness (*šēdāqā*) and justice (**Ps. 33:5**); they form the foundation of his throne (**Pss 89:14; 97:2**) and fill Zion (**Isa. 33:5**). Justice involves

punishing the guilty, and where the term appears in Hosea it is frequently in the context of judgment (**5:1, 11; 6:5**). It also includes ensuring fairness and impartiality (e.g. **Deut. 16:18–20**) and, like righteousness, is associated with defending those who are too weak to defend themselves (e.g. **Exod. 23:6; Deut. 10:18; Ps. 72:2; Isa. 1:17**).

b. (:19c) His Lovingkindness and Compassion  
*“In lovingkindness and in compassion,”*

**Derek Kidner:** The third facet, **steadfast love** (Heb. *hesed*), might be less clumsily called ‘devotion’ or ‘true love’. The older versions called it either ‘mercy’ or, beautifully, ‘lovingkindness’; but an essential part of it is the tacit recognition of an existing bond between the parties it embraces. It implies **the love and loyalty which partners in marriage or in covenant owe to one another**; so it has a special relevance to what Hosea had been denied by Gomer. God names it in **6:6** as the thing He most desires to see in us. For God’s people it sets a standard of mutual kindness and concern among themselves; but it goes further, for in **6:4** it means the love and constancy they owe to God and have so far failed to give Him. As God’s bridal gift, then, while it is first and foremost His devoted love towards His partner, we may see it also as the very response He intends to create in her.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The Bible celebrates Yahweh’s **lovingkindness**. He acts kindly to maintain the relationship established by His covenants. He will remain steadfast and immovable to “*hold fast My covenant*” (**Is. 56:4, 6**). Yahweh keeps His covenant with His reliable love (**Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 1 Kin. 8:23; Ps. 89:28; 106:45**).

You will remember the deeper meaning of **mercy** from our discussion of the term in **chapter 1** of Hosea. We noted there that the word derives from the word *womb* and thus denoted parental love or sympathy, particularly for one who is weaker or in need. As with “*lovingkindness*,” mercy is demonstrated in Yahweh’s actions. He forgives individuals or the nation (**Deut. 13:17; Ps. 40:11; 51:1; 103:4**), delivers from enemies (**Ps. 25:6; 79:8; Is. 30:18**), and gives provision in the wilderness (**Is. 49:10**).

**David Allen Hubbard:** **Steadfast love** and **mercy** form the second pair. Steadfast love rings with the tones of covenant loyalty, describing both the attitude and the behaviour of the Lord who made a pledge to his people in full free-dom. The Hebrew *hesed* may connote God’s guidance and protection (**Exod. 15:13**), and the motive for his rescue (**Ps. 6:4**), or forgiveness (**Ps. 25:7**) or covenant-keeping (**Deut. 7:9, 12; Mic. 7:20**). Mercy glows with tenderness and compassion, especially as it shows itself to the weak, the needy, the oppressed.

c. (:20a) His Faithfulness  
*“And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.”*

**John MacArthur:** Repeated 3 times, the term emphasizes the intensity of God’s restoring love for the nation. In that day, Israel will no longer be thought of as a prostitute. Israel brings nothing to the marriage; God makes all the promises and



provides all the dowry. These verses are recited by every orthodox Jew as he places the phylacteries on his hand and forehead.

**Robin Routledge:** **Faithfulness** has at its heart truthfulness and reliability (e.g. **Deut. 32:4; 2 Kgs 12:15; Isa. 59:4**). God and his promises are dependable, and he looks for the same faithfulness from his people (cf. **4:1**). Faithfulness is also associated with righteousness (e.g. **1 Sam. 26:23; Pss 96:13; 143:1; Isa. 11:5**) and justice (e.g. **Isa. 1:21; Jer. 5:1**).

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The word “*faithfulness*” communicates Yahweh’s constancy in character and deed toward His beloved Israel. It is set in direct contrast to the unfaithfulness of the wife/Israel in Hosea’s prophecy.

**Derek Kidner:** Finally, **faithfulness** (Heb. *’emûnâ*). Of all qualities, this is the one most clearly lacking in a partner who has quitted. Other faults may put a marriage under strain; this one is decisive. God, of course, had been faithful all along, under endless provocation; therefore once again the betrothal gift must be not only what He Himself displays but what He will implant and cultivate within His partner.

**Allen Guenther:** **Faithfulness** characterizes a person of integrity. It is observed by others as consistency, trustworthiness, and firmness. These qualities surpass material goods as the greatest gifts of God. When relationships of this type prevailed in Israel, the nation enjoyed an inner cohesion and strength and preserved the essence of the covenant.

3. (:20b) Marriage Should Be Sustained by Intimate Knowledge  
“*Then you will know the LORD.*”

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** **Knowing Yahweh** includes the recapitulation of His nature in our character. A sure sign we “know” the Lord is that we express righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, mercy, and faithfulness to Him and in our relationships with others. That begins with personal acknowledgment of Yahweh’s rule over all and devotion to Him without rival as He has revealed Himself to be (**Hos. 2:8, 13; 13:4; Jer. 10:25**). His sovereignty becomes profoundly personal in the “Thou-I” personal relationship He graciously initiates with us. . .

The Beatitudes give us a challenging inventory of the extent to which our personal experience of the attributes of God have been reproduced in our character and relationships. He describes the qualities of the blessed—the truly joyous—those who know that they have been cherished and called to know God.

### **III. (:21-23) RENEWAL OF CREATION DESIGN**

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** “*Jezreel*” no longer will carry the ominous overtones of the prophet’s firstborn son (**1:3–5**), but instead the hopeful connotations of the promises of

**1:10 – 2:1 (2:1–3).** The nation will be “*planted*” (*zr* , the root for “*Jezreel*”) back in the land. The agricultural and marital reversals are expressed by negating the impact of the meaning of the names of **ch. 1**. “*No-Compassion*” will experience divine care, and “*Not-My-People*” will be welcomed anew as the chosen ones of God. The nation, in turn, will call Yahweh “*my God*.”

**A. (:21-22) Renewal of Design of Earth’s Fertility**

*“And it will come about **in that day** that I will respond,’ declares the LORD.  
‘I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,  
And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine, and to the oil,  
And they will respond to Jezreel.”*

**James Mays:** Yahweh will initiate the process by which the blessings of a fertile land come again to his people.

**Duane Garrett:** “*Respond*” conveys two ideas.

- It is first of all a **positive answer to a call for help**. The people are in a desolate land and call for help, the land calls to the heavens for rain, and the heavens look to God for direction. In short, “*respond*” conveys the idea that the prayers of the people will be answered.
- Second, “*respond*” emphasizes the **power of the word of God**, the same power that acted in creation (**Gen 1**). In contrast to Baal, Yahweh does not go through some elaborate conflict with death in order to secure a harvest for his people, nor does he need to be rescued by his consort. **He simply speaks the word.**

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** When Israel knows the Lord in the fullest sense of know, then the Lord will respond with all the blessings that had been promised so long ago to Abraham (see **Gen. 12:1-3; 17:2-16**). God’s response here means that the **cycle of life** is set into motion once again. The divine response to the heavens produces rain upon the earth; the response to the fertilized earth produces the staple products necessary for sustaining life (**Deut. 11:14**); and those staple products—the grain, the new wine, and the oil—in turn respond to Jezreel, the people whom God has sown into the land forever.

**Gary Smith:** The final “*in that day*” promises (**2:21–23**) describe the effects of this new relationship on life in this world. Once God’s people know and love him (**2:15, 20**), he can respond to their love by restoring the natural bounty and beauty of the created universe. Thus, God in his magnificent power, not Baal, will reinvigorate the heavens above so that the sky will function as it was originally designed and give rain to the ground (**2:21**). God will also empower the earth to be fertile (Baal will not do this) by responding to the rain in the way it was designed. As a result, grain, grapes, and olive oil will be produced in abundance.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** Again, Yahweh clearly declares His supremacy as the source and sustainer of life. Jezreel, representing the nation, has obviously cried out for nourishment in the time of drought and agricultural privation predicted in **Hosea 2:9**.

The valley of Jezreel, before an image of rebellion, will live up to the true meaning of the name, “*God sows.*” **Verses 21–22** are Yahweh’s reaffirmation that He is creator and the sovereign over the interdependent aspects of the natural world for the production of the material needs of His people. They all belong to Him: the heavens with the sun and nourishing rain, the earth with its nutrients to enable germination and growth of the seed, and the plentiful harvest of grain, grapes, and oil. “*My Father is the husbandman,*” Jesus had to remind Israel again in His day (**John 15:1**).

## **B. (:23) Renewal of Design of Covenant Commitment between the Lord and His People**

### 1. Return of God’s People to Possess the Promised Land

*“And I will sow her for Myself in the land.”*

**Jeremy Thomas:** That’s a pun on the word **Jezreel**, and this is another truth, one of those little truths that come from one little Hebrew word, but this is one of those truths that again, applies to the Christian life. Jezreel from *Yzr* which means “*to sow, to scatter*” and *el* which means “*God.*” So Jezreel means “*God sows or scatters.*” Now if I said I was going to scatter you that would be a cursing. I’d be sending you into exile and we’ve seen that meaning before in **Hos 1:4**. What was the name of that first son? Jezreel, meaning God scatters. And that’s a prophecy of the military defeat and scattering that occurred to the nation Israel in 721BC. But if I said I’m going to sow you that would be a blessing because it means I’m going to plant you in the field such that you’ll take root and flourish.

**Gary Smith:** God will even be the One who will plant the seeds (Jezreel meaning “*God sows*”), so there will be no doubt about the abundant results in the future (**2:22**). But the sowing of God will not be limited to just planting crops; he will also “*plant*” his people in their promised land (**2:23**). Like a good farmer, the Lord will lovingly care for his land and those who were once “*unloved.*” These will now be proudly identified as “*my people*” rather than “*not my people.*” Through his miraculous love his people will gladly say, “*You are my God.*” These confessions of commitment almost sound like the “I take you as my wife/husband” of the marriage covenant ceremony. They demonstrate that God’s beautiful plan for this world will be accomplished through his grace in spite of the present rebelliousness and unfaithfulness of his people.

### 2. Response of the Husband = the Lord – the Changing of the Names of the Children

#### a. Compassion

*“I will also have compassion on her  
who had not obtained compassion,”*

#### b. Belonging

*“And I will say to those who were not My people,  
'You are My people!'"*

**Allen Guenther:** Both God’s naming and renaming of persons are important. They signal ownership, dominion, or the identification of the true nature of the one being named. Israel has become a new people; the Lord is their God.

3. Reciprocal Response of the Bride = Israel  
*“And they will say, 'Thou art my God!'”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Thus what began as a charge of infidelity, with resulting separation and punishment, is brought around to the renewal of the relationship between Gomer/Israel and Hosea/YHWH, and extending from the marriage to the fertility and the security of the land. Whatever details we can take about Gomer, Hosea, and the children from this portrayal, all are in service to the larger theme of depicting the transformed relationship YHWH will have with his household Israel. A time of restoration, renewal, and transformation is predicted and depicted. Israel, YHWH’s human household, is set in a cosmic arena that also has responded to YHWH’s restorative word. And none of this is predicated initially on Israel coming to its collective senses, but on God’s resolve to overcome their failures and to transform them.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What can you learn about **improving your own marriage relationship** from this analogy of the human relationship to God’s marriage covenant with His people?
- 2) How does God bring His **attributes** of righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassion and faithfulness to bear on transforming His bride into Christlikeness?
- 3) Is it our priority to truly **know the Lord** in an intimate and loyal fashion?
- 4) How does this passage support the doctrine of the **eternal security** of believers?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Anthony Petterson:** As in **chapter 1**, here God announces that after he has punished his people for their idolatry, he will save them and restore his relationship with them. God will again lead them into the wilderness, like he did after the exodus (**2:14-15**). The Valley of Achor (“*Valley of Trouble*”) refers back to Achan’s sin that brought judgment on Israel as they took possession of the promised land (**Jos 7**). As the people turn from their idolatry and turn to the Lord, God promises to turn the Valley of Trouble into a symbol of hope (**Hos 2:15**). God will make a covenant with animal life and banish warfare so that God’s people might live safely in the land (**v. 18**). It will be a return to the pre-fall garden paradise (see the hope of new creation in **Isa 65:25**). God will

renew the marriage relationship in accordance with his character (**Hos 2:19-20**). His faithfulness is an expression of his dependability, in contrast to the unfaithfulness of Israel and Gomer. Through God's action, his people will acknowledge him (**2:20**). God will also open a floodgate for blessings to flow. Fertility and agricultural abundance will be restored to the land so that his people might flourish (**vv. 21-22**). As in the end of **chapter 1**, the judgment laden names of Gomer's children are reversed to blessing, and the people are promised a new covenant relationship with the Lord (cf. **Jer 30:22**).

**Allen Guenther: Restoration to favor leads to restoration of the promises.** The curses have matured into judgments which exiled Israel from the land of plenty. God's word of promise will restore the land to Israel. It will release the flow of milk and honey, the abundance of olive trees and vineyards (cf. **Exod. 3:8, 17; Josh. 24:13**), as witnessed by the twelve spies when they traversed the country (**Num. 13:23-28**). Unfortunately, that initial promise was received only through the pain brought on by disobedience and defeat. Achan and his family were stoned in the Valley of Achor, meaning trouble (**Josh. 7:24-26**). The future fulfillment of the promise will restore Israel without such an experience of trouble. The Valley of Achor will open the door into the Judean foothills. Jubilation in victory over their enemies will replace the despair of defeat. Trouble will turn into hope; the restoration will exceed their wildest dreams and their most glorious past experiences.

#### **Duane Garrett: Excursus: The Ideal of the Wilderness**

Yahweh threatens to turn Israel into a wilderness (**Hos 2:3**) but then promises to allure Israel into the wilderness and there win her love (**2:14**). In this, the text of Hosea draws together two theological concepts that are founded on the idea of wilderness. Ancient Israel sat precariously at the edge of a great desert, and this neighboring, hostile world so impressed itself on the minds of the inhabitants that the prophets and other biblical writers repeatedly returned to the ideal of wilderness in order to present the great themes of the Bible.

The basic and most obvious fact about the desert is that it is **hostile to human and most other forms of life**. It represents, in a sense, the lifeless chaos that existed prior to God's creative work (**Gen 1:2**). **Job 38:26-27** speaks of the wilderness as a "*desert wasteland*" and a place "*where no man lives.*" For this reason the desert could toughen a person while at the same time making him to be an outcast. Ishmael was a man of the wilderness; he was both adept at survival and lived apart from all ordinary people (**Gen 16:7-12; 21:14-21**). For the average person wilderness was something to avoid. The Israelites of the exodus complained that they would have preferred to have died in Egypt than to suffer in the wilderness (**Exod 14:12**; see also **Prov 21:19**). **The wilderness stands in contrast to the city, the place of human habitation.**

For this reason the wilderness is the **place of punishment**, and the archetype for this ideal is the forty years of wandering Israel suffered as punishment for lack of obedience (**Num 32:13**). **Ezekiel 29:5** (here speaking against Egypt) portrays abandonment in the wilderness in terms that bring out what a fearful place it was: "*I will leave you in the*

*desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and not be gathered or picked up. I will give you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air.”*

Frequently the prophets used the image of reversion to wilderness to describe God's rejection of a city. **Isaiah 27:10** is typical: “*The fortified city stands desolate, an abandoned settlement, forsaken like the desert; there the calves graze, there they lie down; they strip its branches bare.*” Jeremiah's vision of Yahweh's wrath was similar: “*I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger*” (**Jer 4:26**). **Joel 2:3**, speaking of the northern army, has a similar theme: “*Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them*” (see also **Isa 14:17; 33:9; 64:10; Jer 22:6; 50:12; 51:43; and Mal 1:3**).

By contrast the prophets promise that **God will fructify the wilderness in the eschatological salvation**. **Isaiah 32:14–17** gives the most complete statement of this aspect of Israel's hope. . .

None of this implies that the Old Testament uniformly treats the wilderness as evil. One could more accurately say that it portrays the desert as **harsh and dangerous**. The wilderness **forces the individual to rely upon God**, and the Bible often attributes survival in the wilderness to his grace. The archetype here is the feeding of the nation with manna (**Exod 16:11–16**), when Yahweh miraculously sustained Israel in the wilderness. One sees reflections of this throughout the Old Testament. An example is **Jer 2:6**: “*They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that no one passes through, where no one lives?’*” (see also **Deut 8:15–16**). **Hosea 13:5** alludes to this tradition. In fact, so great was Yahweh's ability to protect his people from the rigors of the wilderness that even their clothes did not wear out (**Deut 29:5**). When Jesus fed the four thousand in the wilderness (**Matt 15:33–34**), he demonstrated that he possessed the power of the God of the exodus.

Because God is able to sustain his people in the wilderness, it is also a **place of sanctuary in times of danger**. David retreated to the wilderness when pursued by his enemies (e.g., **1 Sam 23:14**). Elijah was sustained by ravens at the Wadi Kerith (**1 Kgs 17:4–6**). **Psalm 55:6–8** reflects this longing for the security of the wilderness. . .

As a place of refuge it is also a place where **one learns complete reliance on God**. The wilderness is therefore also the place of testing, repentance, and spiritual growth. **Deuteronomy 8:2** declares that God left Israel in the wilderness for forty years “*in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments.*” Thus the time of Israel's punishment was redeemed in that it became a time of cleansing and renewal, and **Jer 2:2** remembers it not as a time of apostasy but of special devotion to Yahweh. John the Baptist, fulfilling **Isa 40:3**, preached the message of repentance from the wilderness (**Matt 3:1–3**). Jesus, moreover, had to confront temptation in the wilderness as the final act of preparation

for his ministry (**Matt 4**), perhaps because it was there he especially confronted the weakness of what it means to be human. Paul also appears to have spent time in the wilderness prior to his missionary work (**Gal 1:17**).

The wilderness is therefore the **place for encountering God**, albeit that encounter might involve wrestling with the devil as well. Jacob, alone in the night on the other side of the Jordan, wrestled with the Angel of the Lord (**Gen 32:24–31**). It was there that Moses saw his great vision at the burning bush (**Exod 3**) and there that Israel met God and received the Torah (**Exod 19–20**). In the wilderness Elijah had his greatest encounter with the word of God (**1 Kgs 19:10–18**). Hosea draws upon this idea in **2:14**, where God promises to come to his people in the wilderness. . .

The wilderness is therefore a threat to life and is the opposite of the subdued land, the city. It can represent rejection by God, and the eternal peace of God will mean an end to wilderness. But it is also the place of abandoning the world, wealth, and pretense and of depending entirely upon God for life. It is thus the place of grace and the training ground of spirituality. It is no surprise that Christians through the centuries have sought out the desert as the place to learn discipleship and to meet God. Israel, separated from Baal, the nations, and the material allurements of the city, can find herself again in the wilderness.

#### **Jason Van Bommel: How Much Does the Lord Love His People?**

The depth of God's love is measured not just in how much good He is committed to doing for us, but also in how much we utterly don't deserve such goodness and in how much it cost Him to be so good to us. We deserve to be named No Mercy and Not My People. We deserve to be cut off and thrown away for what we have done. Yet God gave His Son in our place, the highest and best price, the most unbelievably costly sacrifice, to clear the way for His goodness and His love to win the day in the end.

**Jeremy Thomas:** We've seen, in summary, that at the middle of the Tribulation the Lord will start to seduce His wife Israel. She has been unfaithful but He will have forgiven her for all her prostitutions and He'll start to seduce her. The first thing He'll do is take her away into the wilderness so they can be alone. For one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Second, He'll engrave His word on her heart. And third, He'll bring her back into the land, He'll complete the conquest and give her peace and security in the land. Then she'll respond to Him showing His seduction was successful and when she affectionately regards YHWH as her husband He'll remove all idolatry from her. The right man and the right woman will be together forever in love. And this is, therefore, another passage on premillennialism, premillennialism being the picture that Christ comes back and restores Israel's kingdom on earth. . .

Now the question is **when** is this [New Covenant] fulfilled. We know it was scheduled to be fulfilled in the 1st century on the **Day of Pentecost**. . . Jesus is the Firstfruits of the resurrection and therefore the guarantee that more would be resurrected on the Feast of Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost came fifty days later. And so obviously when the Day of Pentecost arrives in **Acts 2**, everything was happening right on schedule. The



Feast of Passover has been literally fulfilled in Jesus' death, the Feast of Firstfruits has been literally fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection and now in **Acts 2** the Holy Spirit arrives right on schedule for the resurrection of the Jewish nation. **Problem: the nation Israel is still in rebellion.** So it's as if God's plan is trucking along at 90 miles per hour and the whole thing comes to a halt in **Acts 2**. The Spirit arrives right on schedule and the New Covenant could be fulfilled and **Joel 2** come to pass but the nation is not ready, they have rejected their Messiah, Jesus. So what **Joel 2** prophecies would happen doesn't happen. **Joel 2** says the sun would be darkened, the moon turned to blood and there would be cosmic disturbances. And yet none of that happened in **Acts 2**. The thing that happened in **Acts 2** was **tongues** and Joel doesn't even talk about tongues. Isaiah talks about tongues and tongues were a **sign of judgment on the nation**. When they heard the Hebrew truths in the Gentile languages which is what they heard, they should have known uh oh, we're in trouble. Because Isaiah said when you hear that you better know that the fifth degree of discipline is on the horizon, you're going to be disciplined severely. Tongues was never a sign of blessing, it was always a sign of cursing. And that's why Peter makes such a passionate appeal to his country in **Acts 2** and **3**: oh, Israel, if you would receive Jesus the Nazarene as your Messiah, if you'll repent and return to Him then your kingdom will come and all this disaster predicted by the prophet Isaiah will be avoided. But the nation said, no, we don't want Jesus to rule over us, we want Caesar to rule over us. And boy did they ever get Caesar in AD70. The armies of Rome crushed them and sent them in exile to the four corners of the globe.

TEXT: Hosea 3:1-5

TITLE: LOYAL LOVE DEMONSTRATED IN RENEWAL OF HOSEA'S MARRIAGE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE INEXPLICABLE LOVE OF GOD PERSISTS IN RECOVERING HIS PEOPLE INTO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Gary Smith:** This short narrative describes God's plans for restoring the relationship between Hosea and his wife (3:1–3) and between himself and his people (3:4–5). In contrast to **chapter 1**, which is a third-person account about Hosea's family, this story is told in the first-person singular. The unnamed "woman" in 3:1–3 is most likely Gomer, and the restoration mentioned here happens after **chapter 1**. These events are a symbolic lesson to Hosea's audience that **God's marvelous love will surely bring about a restoration of his covenant relationship with his people. . .**

God loved his people when they were few in number (**Deut. 7:7–8**), and he graciously gave them the land of Israel in spite of their stubbornness (9:4–6). His acts of love were regulated by his choices (7:7), his promises (7:8; 9:5), and his faithfulness to his covenant (7:9). God did not base his love on Israel's goodness or acceptance of a few religious ceremonies. Rather, it was a spontaneous force that has no justification or rationale; it is an **inexplicable mystery** whereby God relates his grace, compassion, and commitment to people. **First John 4:16** simply summarizes this point by saying that "*God is love.*"

God's love is seen in **the way he acts toward people**. In this case he does not deal with Israel based on justice, but on the basis of undeserved love. His love is not blind, however; he knows when his people do not love him, and he makes every attempt to restore the love relationship between himself and his people. One method in the process of restoration is for people to humble themselves, confess their sins, and seek God's face for forgiveness (**2 Chron. 7:14**). God can also draw his people back to himself through chastening (**Amos 4:6–13**) or severe punishment (**Ezek. 5–7**). In Hosea, God encourages restoration by removing those stumbling blocks (evil kings and priests) that have caused his people not to love him with all their heart.

The final way in which God's love will be demonstrated is through the granting of the nation's great messianic hopes and dreams (**Hos. 3:5**). The king from the line of David will reign in the last days (**2 Sam. 7**), and God will pour out his covenant blessings with abundance. This picture adds to the wonderful eschatological picture already presented in **Hos. 1:10–11** and **2:16–23**.

**Grace Emmerson:** Whereas the first symbolic action [**chap. 1**] represented Israel's unfaithfulness, this second symbolic act represents the **persistence of Yahweh's love** in the face of rejection. . . Whereas the symbolic acts of **ch. 1** signified the ultimate

rupture of the covenant relationship (1:9), the present chapter offers the prospect of a return to the LORD and to his goodness.

**Trent Butler:** In spite of much scholarly debate on the relationships between **chapter 1** and **chapter 3**, the best solution is to see God calling on his prophet to **restore his marriage to an unfaithful wife**. Gomer must be brought back into the prophet's house even though she was loved by Hosea's neighbor or companion (NIV *another*). Hosea must accept back into his arms his adulterous wife. Only in this way could the prophet demonstrate how the LORD loves the Israelites. Israel must see that their sins were as rotten in God's eyes as Gomer's adultery was in Hosea's. In fact, Israel's spiritual adultery with other gods was worse than Gomer's physical adultery.

**H. D. Beeby:** I have already said that I consider **ch. 3** continuous with **ch. 1**. This effectively rules out the theory that the happenings of **3:1–3** are to be identified with **ch. 1** and that this is the original marriage as Hosea once told it. Yet the question remains open as to whether the woman of **ch. 3** is Gomer or a second harlot. Certainty is impossible, but I assume the woman to be Gomer, because in the parallel marriage of God and Israel remains the continuing factor. The introduction into Hosea's story of a second female makes little sense.

**David Thompson:** IN THE END, GOD WILL GO GET HIS IDOLATROUS, IMMORAL AND WAYWARD FAMILY AND BRING THEM BACK TO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM BECAUSE HE LOVES THEM.

One of the things that we clearly see from this text is that even though we don't deserve God's love and even though we cannot earn God's love and even though we do not merit God's love, when we are in a covenant relationship with God, He loves us anyway.

**Duane Garrett: GOMER'S RESTORATION (3:1–5)**

Yahweh's Command (3:1)

Hosea's Response (3:2–3)

Explanation: Punishment and Reversal (3:4–5)

**Allen Guenther:**

I. Love Breaks Deadlocks, **3:1-3**

**3:1** Go, Remarry Your Ex

**3:2-3** Taking the Initiative

II. What Else Shall We Expect? **3:4-5**

**3:4** Restoring Trust Takes Time

**3:5** The Result Is Worth It All

## I. (:1-2) SHOCKING PERSISTENCE OF GOD'S LOVE

**H. D. Beeby:** What is quite certain in **3:1** is that the same Hebrew root for “love” is used four times. This is the earliest reference in the OT to the love of God; moreover, the love that is called for from Hosea is a reflection of the love God has for Israel. In fact God’s love dominates the chapter.

### A. (:1a) The Command to Hosea to Love Gomer Despite Adultery – God’s Persistent Love Overcomes Spiritual Adultery

*“Then the LORD said to me,  
‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, ’”*

Picture of buying slave out of market place – cf. redemption.

Need to reflect on the amazing love that God has for His people; loyal love;

How can people say in light of this that God has completely cast away His people the Jewish nation because of their apostasy? Replaced by the church when it comes to OT promises? This book of Hosea is A powerful refutation and support of the dispensational position

**Jeremy Thomas:** The original Hebrew says this, “*Go again, love a woman continually loved by a friend,*” and the friend is Hosea and this uncovers a tremendous revelation of the love of Hosea for Gomer and by parallel God’s love for believers. The words *loved by a friend* are in the participial form and the participial form in the Hebrew means **continuous action**. They show you that Hosea was one of the greatest husbands ever to walk the planet. Because despite what has happened in the marriage, despite the fact she’s gone negative volition to him and exchanged him for other men, Hosea still loves her. This is why he was one of the most phenomenal men of history. If you want an expert on marriage it’s Hosea. He’s constantly loving his wife even though she’s not responding to him. She was constantly being loved, it’s very strong in the Hebrew that though they were physically separated Hosea loved her the whole time she was committing adultery. And the adulteress there is also in the participial form, constant action. So you have two participles and they’re put together with a tremendous conjunction of contrast between the two. On one hand that woman is constantly committing adultery after adultery after adultery and Hosea is loving her, loving her, loving her and now though they’ve been apart for years he’s to go finally and retrieve her, bring her back to himself. Hosea is going to illustrate the boundless love of God for his people Israel.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** Now try to imagine the consternation and utter astonishment Hosea must have felt when Yahweh commanded, “Go again, love this woman.” The very idea sent shock waves through the prophet’s heart. On the personal level, it meant vulnerability to be hurt again; on a religious level it meant the reversal of his justified condemnation of one who had become an anathema of all he believed as a prophet of Israel. How could Hosea do it?

**Duane Garrett:** We still have to ask, however, why Hosea describes Gomer in anonymous terms, not to defend our conclusion that this woman is Gomer but as a simple matter of exegesis. The answer seems to be that she has forfeited her identity through her adultery. She can no longer claim the title “*wife of Hosea*” just as Israel can no longer claim the title “*people of God*.” Israel in apostasy is not Israel. By analogy adultery does not enhance a person's identity; it destroys it. . .

The command “*love a woman*,” in contrast to “*take a wife*” (1:2), implies that the woman he is to love already is his wife. She has forfeited her right to his love, but he is to give it anyway, just as Yahweh will again show love to Israel. Also, the phrase “*loved by another*” does not mean that some other man is in love with her; it simply means that she has had sexual encounters with other men.

**David Allen Hubbard:** Apparently her promiscuity has focused at this point on one person, called in **verse 1** by the Hebrew word usually translated ‘*friend*’ (*rēa*‘; cf. **Song 5:16**, ‘*lover*’; **Jer. 3:1**, ‘*paramours*’; **Jer. 3:20**, ‘*husband*’).

**Derek Kidner:** It had been no isolated lapse but a desertion which added a continuing insult to the injury. The love that was asked of him would be heroic – but that was the point, for it was to be God’s love in miniature.

**B. (:1b) The Analogy Relating to God and Israel -- Man’s Faithlessness Cannot Exterminate the Persistent Love of God**

*“even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel,  
though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.”*

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** **Raisin cakes** were associated with some religious rituals (cf. **Jer 7:18; 44:19**), so the syncretism of Israel is reiterated.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The context of **Hos. 3:1** implies idolatry, as if such cakes illustrate the turning to other deities opposed by the prophet. There is scattered evidence for baked goods as religious symbols, which would support this interpretation for **Hos. 3:1**. For example, Jeremiah’s critique of his contemporaries includes reference to baked goods of a certain type (shape?) intended to honor the goddess known as the Queen of Heaven. Some interpreters have also suggested that the cakes were understood in the culture of the day to be an aphrodisiac.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Like the woman Gomer, Israel had not returned that love, but had instead devoted herself to other gods and to “*raisin cakes*.” Raisin cakes, sweetmeats made of pressed grapes, were symbolic of Israel’s rebellion against the simplicity of her faith. Raisin cakes were an integral part of the ceremony in many Canaanite cultic festivals, including the ritual that honored the “*queen of heaven*” (**Jer. 7:18; 44:19**). Truly, the exchange of God’s way for the allurements of pagan customs grieved the heart of the Almighty in Hosea’s day, just as it did when the church of the Middle Ages submerged the truth of the gospel under a multitude of pagan doctrines.

(Especially note the similarity of the cult of Mary to the ancient “*queen of heaven*” concept.)

**David Thompson:** How many times have we sold out our commitment to God for raisin cakes? **Dr. S. Lewis Johnson** said there is “hardly any one of us who could not look at our lives right now and find a half a dozen things which would classify as raisin cakes” (**Hosea 3:1-5**, p. 10).

We sell out for trivial and frivolous things that in eternity will mean nothing. Some people go after money, fame, pleasure or sports. Many will sell out worship for a birthday party. We don’t get too many to even come to Sunday night services. What is the reason, or what is the raisin cake?

Scripture asks the question, *what shall a man exchange for his soul?* Suppose you literally went after the world and got it. What actually would you have? Absolutely nothing! Because when a soul leaves this world it will immediately realize I sold out my life for raisin cakes.

### **C. (:2) The Execution of the Command – God Will Pay Whatever Price Is Necessary to Maintain His Persistent Love**

*“So I bought her for myself  
for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.”*

**Trent Butler:** The amount Hosea paid for Gomer raises some problems. A shekel was a measure of weight equal perhaps to four-tenths of an ounce or 11.5 grams. A homer was about six bushels or 220 liters of grain, while a letheck was apparently one-half of a homer. This price was not excessive. A slave cost thirty shekels (**Exod. 21:32**). The bride price when Deuteronomy was written was fifty shekels (**Deut. 22:29**). Hosea may have had to scrape the money together. Perhaps unable to secure enough cash, he had to include payment-in-kind with grain. The important thing was the prophet's attitude in this transaction. He obeyed God without question.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** A cancelling of her indebtedness appears to be the point, whatever the combined silver equivalent of Hosea’s purchase. One cannot tell from such a brief description, however, if what Hosea did was to purchase Gomer herself or to pay in full a debt she owed that had otherwise constricted her activities. Readers would do well not to forget the parallel with Gomer’s initial acquisition by Hosea. It would have required gifts on his part to her family in order to facilitate his taking of her in marriage.

**Allen Guenther:** Has she sold herself into slavery because she was no longer sufficiently attractive to her lovers? Possibly. In that case, however, to refer to her as *beloved by another* (singular) and *practicing adultery* would be inappropriate. The strongest possibility is that she has become a **kept woman**. If so, she is neither formally a slave, nor is she any longer practicing prostitution. Her lover provides for her keep – her bed and board – in exchange for sexual favors.



The verb *buy* (*karah*) reinforces the idea that Hosea is purchasing the rights to her sexual favors. She is not a wife, and yet she could become his wife, if he so chose. After Hosea has purchased the rights to her sexual activity, he immediately serves notice that she will not be asked to serve in the role she has come to love – neither for Hosea nor for any other man (**3:3**). . .

This platonic relationship works an emotional hardship on both, but especially on Hosea; he is waiting for Gomer to have a change of heart. Meanwhile, his acts toward her spring from purest love. Such love waits for the spouse's inner renewal, for a rekindling of the deep bonds of affection they once experienced. It refuses to place demands on the other for personal gratification. The marriage bond is fully restored only when love produces repentance and love in return.

## **II. (:3-4) SANCTIFICATION PROCESS OF GOD'S LOVE**

### **A. (:3) The Mutual Commitment to Sex Deprivation Commanded by Hosea – The Sanctification Process Requires Commitment over Time**

*“Then I said to her, ‘You shall stay with me for many days.  
You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man;  
so I will also be toward you.’”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** In context, therefore, the sense would be: *“You shall refrain from sexual activities outside our marriage, and I also will refrain from intimate relations with you”* (cf. NRSV). This rendering assumes a carryover (indicated by gam) of the negative particles from the previous clauses. Another possibility, however, is to see the last phrase simply as an affirmation that Hosea alone will live with her (so NIV: *“And I will live with you”*). In **3:4** comes a list of things that Israel will be forced to do without in the (near?) future. Since Gomer represents Israel, **3:4** lends contextual support for the view that a period of **sexual abstinence** and **moral purification** is indicated for her in **3:3**. Hosea's abstinence is a continuation of the prophetic symbolic act initiated with his marriage. As the following verse indicates, Israel shall live for some time without the normal sociopolitical and religious institutions for a state. This is a period of its purification, a road to be taken along the way to restoration.

**H. D. Beeby:** Hosea now orders a form of house arrest which will keep her out of temptation's way. Virtue will have to be forced upon her. No sexual relationships will be permitted her, not even with Hosea. If she is to be denied intimacy, then he will share with her in the deprivation. Their relationship must be mutual, because this is deprivation with a purpose, the purpose mentioned at 2:7. The two husbands (Hosea/God) are each seeking a change of heart in their beloved. . .

The shell of marriage is there indeed but not the essence, which is love along with its physical manifestation. The form awaits the content, and that in turn awaits the loving response of the woman. The kept woman must first become a loving bride.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The purpose is to chasten Gomer, but with the ultimate purpose of stabilizing the household and renewing their relationship, even as God promised he would do with Israel.

**Duane Garrett:** The goal of Hosea is the resumption of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. If Gomer only lives in the home of Hosea as something of a guest (or a prisoner) and never enjoys the full status of wife (which includes sexual relations), then the covenant between Hosea and Gomer is never truly mended. The verse should be translated, “*And I said to her, ‘Many days you shall remain with me, and you shall neither prostitute yourself nor be with any man, and then I shall be yours.’*”

**James Mays:** Just as Yahweh will bar the way to Israel’s trysting with the gods of Canaan (2.6), Hosea keeps the woman apart from every man – and waits. ‘*Many days*’, an indefinite period, however long, he waits for the act that alone can complete the symbolism, the return of his love by the woman. He will not go in to her because more than anything he wants her to come to him. The pathos and power of God’s love is embodied in these strange tactics (cf. 2.7, 14f.) – a love that imprisons to set free, destroys false love for the sake of true, punishes in order to redeem.

#### **B. (:4) The Analogy Relating to God and Israel’s Deprivation – The Sanctification Process Purifies Us from Unholy Dependencies**

**Syncretistic** nature of Israel’s approach to governance and religion is represented here in this picture of deprivation on multiple fronts. There are three couplets with the first item in each couplet related to God’s revealed order (though still corrupted by His unfaithful people) and the second item related to some idolatrous aspect of national and religious life.

##### 1. Deprivation Relating to Political Governance and Military Dependency = Syncretistic Monarchical Leadership

*“For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince,”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The lack of a king or prince means military defeat for Israel (and perhaps exile) and the transfer of political sovereignty to someone else.

##### 2. Deprivation Relating to Religious Worship = Syncretistic Aids to Approaching God

*“without sacrifice or sacred pillar,”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** **Standing stones** are unacceptably syncretistic according to Deuteronomy (7:5; 12:3; 16:22). They were employed by the Canaanite population of the land and should be destroyed rather than adopted in the worship of YHWH. That Deuteronomy has such a polemic against them strongly suggests that they were popular also in certain Israelite circles. Indeed, their employment in Israel is assumed in **Hos.**

**10:1–2**, where there is a polemic against the multiplication of altars and standing stones as examples of guilt before the Lord. They are, moreover, associated with the ancestral period in a more neutral way, particularly with Jacob. He erected a standing stone at an evening stopover where God had revealed himself, renaming the place Bethel (**Gen. 28:10–22**). The function of the pillar is not made clear; it might represent the ladder, the connection that Jacob had seen between heaven and earth, or commemorate a theophany (pedestal for an invisible deity?), or represent Jacob on holy ground while he is away. He also set up a pillar at the grave of Rachel (**Gen. 35:20**) and to commemorate an agreement with his father-in-law (**Gen. 31:45–6**), both of which may have had a different function from the stone erected at Bethel. Moses erected twelve stones as part of the covenant ratification procedure at Mt. Sinai (**Exod. 24:3–8**). Joshua erected a memorial stone as part of a covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem (**Josh. 24:22–27**). There is no suggestion in the Genesis account that Jacob’s act at Bethel (or that of Moses and Joshua) is unacceptable. Nevertheless, as with developments in any number of religious practices, standing stones became a snare in the cult of YHWH. The general expression in **3:4** does not indicate whether the pillars in question were part of the (baalized?) Yahwistic cult or represented other deities.

3. Deprivation Relating to Divination and Guidance = Syncretistic Methods to Discern the Divine Will and Gain His Favor  
“and without ephod or household idols.”

**H. D. Beeby:** Thus Israel is to be deprived in the secular and spiritual areas of life, and to be robbed of assurance about both past and future.

**Allen Guenther:** Together, *ephod and teraphim* represent guidance in everyday affairs of life. In exile, these means of searching for direction will be removed until Israel again longs for God and seeks for him in acceptable ways.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Whereas the ephod was a proper means of asking about the future, the household idols (Hebrew, *teraphim*) were a means of divination of an entirely pagan origin (see **Ezek. 21:21; Zech. 10:2**). As was the case with their ecclesiastical privileges, Israel had ignored the divinely appointed means of divination and had sought out that which was forbidden by God.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The phrase *ephod and teraphim* suggests that the two implements go together. They are, furthermore, to be associated with **divination** or cultic means of ascertaining the will of the deity. In the Israelite cult, an ephod was part of a garment or a pouch that could be carried by cultic functionaries seeking to discern the will of the Lord (**1 Sam. 23:6**). The high priest wore an ephod to carry out his sacred tasks. It is associated with inscribed stones and the Urim and Thummim (**Exod. 28:1–43; cf. 1 Sam. 2:28**). Teraphim are implements, perhaps statues or another type of representative figure, associated with “divination” (*qesem*; **1 Sam. 15:23; Ezek. 21:21; Zech. 10:2**). They too can be a part of priestly paraphernalia and are mentioned together with an ephod at a shrine in the hill country of Ephraim (**Judg. 17:5; 18:14–20**). Teraphim are part of the corrupt cultic paraphernalia in the Jerusalem temple that Josiah later

removed (2 Kgs. 23:24). It is their role in concert with the ephod that Hosea has in mind.

**Duane Garrett:** By metonymy absence of ephod and sacrifice implies absence of priests and temple worship. Although most of the items on this list are not intrinsically evil, probably all are to be understood as corrupted through participation in idolatry.

**John Goldingay:** Hosea is portraying “a society in disorder,” one “deprived of everything crucial for meaningful political-religious survival.”

### III. (:5) SALVATION PURPOSE OF GOD’S LOVE

**H. D. Beeby:** The days of waiting will end, and then the reason for the waiting and the nature of the waiting will become clearer. The word “*afterward*” in v. 5, therefore, introduces a **great turning point**, for here is the longed for **climax**. That climax centers on three verbs: “*return*,” “*seek*,” “*come in fear*.” It is the climax of Israel’s response and corresponds in part to 1:11 and to the last phrase of 2:23.

#### A. Return

*“Afterward the sons of Israel will return”*

**James Mays:** ‘*Afterwards*’! In this one adverb is the sign that in the history which Yahweh makes there is **hope**. When his action fills and determines time, then time becomes pregnant with the birth of a new day and a new life. The deprivation of judgment opens the way to a second beginning. This ‘*afterwards*’ is a pivotal point in Hosea’s ‘eschatology’ toward which the punishment of God always moves – the time of return (2.7), of the answer (2.15), of the ‘*my husband*’ (2.16), of the true confession (2.23). The turning point comes when the wife/people move toward Yahweh; their act is the wonderful event of the new time. And yet, it is not so much a matter of their working out their salvation, as accepting as grace the inexorable refusal of Yahweh to let them do aught else but move toward him. They would not seek him, if he had not already found them; **their act is really an expression of his action.**

**Trent Butler:** God's **probationary period** for Israel has a purpose: it will lead Israel to return and seek the LORD. The word *return* points in several directions.

- It can mean turn away from idols and to God.
- It can mean repent from sin and serve God.
- It can mean return from exile and live in the homeland again.

The prophet hints at all these meanings.

**Duane Garrett:** In this text Israel plays the part of the prodigal son. She returns in fear and yet is received in love. By analogy the destitute Gomer might have viewed her purchase by Hosea with terror. Would he now extract revenge on her as his slave? But Yahweh had commanded Hosea to love her, and Hosea gave her dignity, a new start, and an opportunity to regain her status as the prophet's wife. Israel is to “*return to*” and

“seek” (two words that connote **repentance**) Yahweh. In fear they call on him to restore the blessing they have squandered.

**David Allen Hubbard:** Where *return* and *seek* occur together, they reinforce each other – to return with the full desire for fellowship with God on his terms (cf. **7:10**). In the present context, where the returning and seeking follow a time of intense political and spiritual deprivation, return may carry with it not only the idea of repentance but of **return home from exile**.

## **B. Seek**

*“and seek the LORD their God  
and David their king;”*

**Trent Butler:** “*Seek the LORD*” can refer to

- seeking the Lord's direction (**2 Sam. 21:1**)
- or to praying for his favor (**Zech. 8:21–22**)
- or to trusting and obeying the Lord (**Prov. 28:5**).

God's probation means the people of Israel will confine their seeking to one God. Returning in repentance to him, they will worship him alone.

**Duane Garrett:** The prophecy that they would seek “*David their king*” is **messianic**. The phrase does not mean simply that the Israelites would again submit to the Davidic monarchy and so undo Jeroboam's rebellion. Had that been the point, we would expect the text to say that they would return to the “*house of David*.” Instead we see “*David their king*” set alongside of Yahweh as the one to whom the people return in pious fear. This “*David*” cannot be the historical king, who was long dead, but is the messianic king for whom he is a figure. As **D. A. Hubbard** states, returning to David implies the reunion of the two kingdoms (**1:11**), an end to dynastic chaos (**8:4**), and an end to seeking protection through alliances with pagan states (**7:11**). Unity and security can come to Israel only when they seek God and his Christ. . .

The eschatological fulfillment of all this is in the “*last days*.” This phrase is better translated “*at the end of the days*.” The “*end*” (*’aḥārît*) is the **time of fulfillment**, when the final outcome of God's program is realized. The word creates a distance between the age of fulfillment and the age of the prophet himself and is often associated with hope. It implies that the people of God must live in expectation of redemption and vindication.

**Allen Guenther:** To *seek God* means to approach him in worship, to passionately long for his presence in one's life, and to live out his righteousness (cf. **Matt. 6:33**).

## **C. Come in Fear**

*“and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness  
in the last days.”*

**Trent Butler:** Such return to God will be an emotional affair. Israel will come trembling—with trepidation, dread, and fear. They knew they did not deserve to approach his presence. They were fully aware of their repeated sins that deserved punishment. Still, they will return to God seeking grace and hope. And they will find his blessings in the *last days*.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The final clause of **3:5** indicates that Israel will tremble or be in awe (*pāḥad*) before the Lord. It is difficult to find a precise equivalent in English to a verb that runs the gamut from “fear” to “be awestruck,” and can be used to describe both the positive and negative aspects of such feelings. One aid in interpretation comes in the addition of *and his goodness (tôb)*. Israel will present themselves *to the Lord and his goodness*, which suggests at least a positive apprehension on Israel’s part of God’s disposition toward them. **Jeremiah 33:9** offers some parallels in perspective and vocabulary. Speaking of joy and praise that Jerusalem’s future restoration will bring to the Lord among the nations, the prophet states that they “*will be in awe (pāḥad) and tremble (rāgaz) concerning all the goodness (tôb) and all the peace that I am doing for her.*” . . .

Hosea’s call to the people to return to YHWH is based on his conviction that YHWH’s forgiveness and goodness work in tandem, and that YHWH has defined for the people what is good in accord with his integrity.

**Robin Routledge:** The **positive nature** of the return is further indicated by the reference to Yahweh’s blessings (*tûb*). This refers to the abundance of Yahweh’s provision (e.g. **Jer. 2:7**). In **Jeremiah 31:12** the term is linked with ‘*the grain, the new wine and the olive oil*’, the very things forfeited by Israel because of the people’s failure to recognize their true source (**Hos. 2:8**). In the coming days, those blessings will be restored. The term may also refer to God’s own character (cf. **Exod. 33:19; Pss 25:7; 145:7**), and so may point beyond the restoration of material blessings to the renewal of all aspects of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people.

**Allen Guenther:** The end result is deep reverence for God and a willingness to receive *his goodness* as his bounties. The history of Israel’s unfaithfulness has centered in their forgetting the Lord, claiming his promises as unchangeable, and even crediting his gifts to Baal. When Israel repents, they will reencounter God in all his majesty. Their casual attitudes will melt away in awe before his presence. When they receive goodness from the Lord, they will accept it with gratitude as gift.

These restorative events shall occur in the *latter days*. That term is typically prophetic and refers elsewhere to the period of restoration (**Deut. 4:30**, RSV; **Isa. 2:2**). In the end, the Lord achieves his original design, in spite of the waywardness of his people.

\* \* \* \* \*



## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does God use discipline and deprivation to accomplish His purposes?
- 2) Why can we trust God to work out His perfect plan to overcome our sin and restore us to a place of blessing?
- 3) Are we quick to obey God even when His directions don't make logical sense to us?
- 4) How can a commitment to persistent love strengthen our marriage bonds?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Anthony Petterson:** Hosea reports how God called him to pursue his adulterous wife and so portray the Lord's love for the Israelites – a covenantal and sacrificial love that is vitally committed to the relationship. This is despite Israel's idolatry and love for everything other than God, including, somewhat sarcastically, raisin cakes! . . . Hosea implores Gomer to remain faithful to him, and he promises he will be faithful to her, even forgoing marital intimacy for a time (v. 3). The purpose of the abstinence is that Gomer might fully return to the relationship. In the same way, the Israelites will undergo exile as God's punishment, having forfeited the privileges and benefits of the intimacy of the covenant relationship. God will remove key elements of their national life and worship that had become corrupt (3:4). Yet restoration will follow judgment, just as Moses promised in Deuteronomy 4:29-31 and 30:1-6. The nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms after Solomon's reign because of his idolatry (1 Ki 11:1-10), but it will unite again under a new Davidic king (cf. Hos 1:11). The Davidic king who pursues and redeems God's unfaithful people and restores God's blessing is Jesus.

**John Goldingay:** The love that Hosea then portrays God as manifesting and the love that God looks for is a love that can be commanded. It denotes **action** at least as much as **emotion**. Given that God is talking about love between a man and a woman, it might be odd if it had no emotional element. But at least as significant an aspect to God's love for human beings is that it is effective, not just affective. God is committed to his people. At least as significant an aspect to the love God seeks from his people is for it to be effective, not just affective. God is not very interested in people telling him that they love him (people in the Bible hardly ever tell God that they love him). He is interested in their acting in a way that denotes commitment to him. Because he has bought them, they are bound to honor him with their bodies.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** But much as we try to personalize the message, we dare not miss that Gomer was a type of Israel and that God's reconciling love was for His wayward people. And the Incarnation **Hosea 3** foreshadows is of an atonement that was cosmic, a once, never-to-be-repeated reconciliation of the world in time, on time, and for all time. It is beneath the cross that we move through an exposition of the verses of this



spectacular chapter about God's unbroken love from His broken heart. We never really know how much a person loves us until we know how much he is willing to suffer for us; it is the suffering that measures the love. It is this quality of suffering love that is the focus of Hosea **chapter 3**.

**Robin Routledge:** These verses indicate Yahweh's willingness to restore an unfaithful people. This is motivated by love, and it is significant that Yahweh's love for Israel prompts Hosea to show his love to Gomer. While it is likely that Hosea's unhappy marital situation gave an insight into Yahweh's feelings about unfaithful Israel, the renewal of the relationship is wholly the result of God's initiative. Hosea seems to have been prepared to allow his relationship with Gomer to end. Yahweh, though, will not allow the same with regard to Israel. His is a love that will not let his people go.

Restoration, though, involves a period of discipline. This appears to parallel the privations of **chapter 2**. Significantly, however, in **chapter 3**, discipline is directly related to divine love. If their relationship with Yahweh is to be renewed, the people need to turn away from the things that hinder that relationship and turn back to him. Yahweh's restorative love opens the way for that to take place.

Future hope here is linked with a coming Davidic king. This might have appeared subversive for a northern prophet, though prophets were no strangers to political controversy. The people probably expected this hope to be fulfilled within the normal royal succession. In time, though, that gave way to the eschatological hope of a coming Messiah, who was associated with the kingdom of God. Christians see the fulfilment of this expectation in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom hope is extended beyond Israel and Judah to encompass the whole world.

TEXT: Hosea 4:1-3

TITLE: SUMMARY OF GOD'S CASE AGAINST ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S CASE AGAINST ISRAEL EXPOSES HER MORAL FAILURES DERIVED FROM NOT KNOWING GOD -- LEADING TO COSMIC CONSEQUENCES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Allen Guenther:** The book of Hosea divides naturally into two parts. **Chapter four** begins the second part. Here the personal family experiences of Hosea recede into the background and the nation of Israel takes center stage. . . The rest of the book will unpack these three compact verses.

OUTLINE

**The Case: God Versus North Israel, 4:1a-b**

**4:1a** Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

**4:1b** The Case Described: Heirs Claim Squatter's Right

**The Charges, 4:1c-2**

**4:1c** Found Missing: Variations on a Theme

No Integrity: Jezreel

No Family Affection: Lo-ruhamah

No Knowledge of God: Lo-ammi

**4:2** A Litany of Evil: Violations of the Law

Cursing: Atheism in Action

Deception: Destroying Trust

Murder: Premeditated Violence

Theft: Threat to Livelihood

Adultery: Violations of Family Intimacy

The Snowball Effect

**The Whole World Cries with Them, 4:3**

**Gary Smith:** Hosea begins by calling the Israelites to attention (**4:1a**), announcing that God has a covenant lawsuit against his people (**4:1b**), and revealing the reasons for this dispute (**4:1c**). His complaint is that the people exhibit no true faithfulness to him, no steadfast covenant love toward him or others, and no acknowledgment of him as their divine overlord. These three elements have disrupted God's relationship with his covenant people.

**James Mays:** This oracle stands at the beginning of the second major section of the book, which in contrast to **chs. 1-3** is wholly composed of an arrangement of sayings.

The collector must have found it an ideal introduction to the sequence with its opening summons to the Israelites to hear Yahweh's word and its comprehensive statement of Israel's guilt and of the punishment to come upon the entire land with all its creatures. In spite of its brevity the oracle is virtually a paradigm of Hosea's message of judgment. The oracle begins with a proclamation formula (elsewhere in Hosea only in **5.1**) which identifies the words as Yahweh's message to Israel (**v. 1a**). The following sentence (**v. 1b α**) defines the subject of the herald's proclamation; he is there to make an announcement concerning the legal suit which Yahweh has against the residents of the land. Appropriately the saying itself is formulated in the idiom of speech in the court, an example of the 'court speech' in which the prophets on occasion clothed their announcements of judgment. Though the saying is introduced as the '*word of Yahweh*', the saying never shifts to the style of the divine speech; this may be due to the subject matter or more probably the prophet reports the business of the divine court without resort to the style. The prophet cites the complaint (*rīb*), the substance of Yahweh's case, first in negatives using normative concepts for the conduct expected of Israel (**v. 1bβ**) and then positively (**v. 2**) by itemizing a series of crimes against the divine law. The result is the most comprehensive picture possible of the sins of omission and commission, a portrayal of a population living in flagrant contradiction of their Lord. The announcement of punishment (**v. 3**) states the sentence of the divine court.

**David Allen Hubbard:** This is clearly a **new section**:

- (1) marked by a call to attention – '*Hear the word of Yahweh*' (cf. **5:1; Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1**);
- (2) addressed to Israel, who had been discussed as they in **3:4–5**;
- (3) phrased in poetry not prose; and
- (4) directed to the present sins of the people not to future rescue.

It is a comprehensive judgment speech indicting sin in sweeping terms (**vv. 1–2**) and announcing a judgment of cosmic scope (**v. 3**). The formal opening, the use of controversy (Heb. *rīb*; cf. on **2:2**), and the legal tone of the indictment have been interpreted as the framework of a covenant lawsuit (**Wolff**, p. 66). Since a number of ingredients are lacking – a summons to witnesses (cf. **Mic. 6:3–5**), questions and answers about divine requirements (cf. **Mic. 6:6–8**) – it is more likely that the literary form compresses an argument or quarrel between Yahweh and the people rather than a scene of formal legal charges.

**John Goldingay: Neat Structure**

- Exhortation to listen (**4:1a**)
- The reason (kî): Yahweh has an argument to set out (**4:1bα**)
- The content of the argument (kî) (**4:1bβ–2**):
  - negative (**v. 1bβ**)
  - and positive (**v. 2**)
- The consequences that will follow ('al-kēn, **4:3**)

**(:1a) SOLEMN SUMMONS – PAY ATTENTION**

*"Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel,"*

**Robin Routledge:** The term *rib* sometimes points to a legal charge brought by God against the people because of their failure to meet their covenant obligations. That seems to be the case here too, though this oracle does not follow the general pattern of covenant lawsuits.

## **I. (:1b) COMPELING CASE AGAINST ISRAEL**

*“For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land,”*

**J. Andrew Dearman:** 4:1–3 is an accusation and a dispute using terminology that reflects formal means of accusation and contains a summary of the evidence for the charge. . . The case is against the *inhabitants of the land*, which for readers of the book will bring to mind the charge in 1:2 that *“the land commits harlotry against YHWH.”* The addressees in 4:1 make explicit what was implicit in that earlier verse: the personified land represents the people of Israel. The inhabitants are also the descendants (lit. children) of Israel. Their identity is that of a covenant people, bound to YHWH by promise and by historical intervention.

**Trent Butler:** Once these inhabitants of the land had been Canaanites whom God had told Israel to destroy (**Josh. 9:4**). Now the inhabitants were Israelites whom God had now begun to destroy.

God had good reason. He could not find the characteristics that were supposed to mark Israel off as God's people who were unlike the peoples of the land.

**Jeremy Thomas:** Now why does he refer to them as the *inhabitants of the land*? Because **it's His land**. It's not Israel's land. Really it's God's land and Israel is His tenant in the land. But ultimately it's His land and they've been bad tenants. So he says this just to remind them, hey guys, it's My land. I let you live in it. I gave you blessing in it. I gave you agriculture, I gave you nutrients, I gave you produce, I gave you rains, I gave you blessing. And what have you done to Me? How have you thanked Me? It's My land. And in the Hebrew there's an article in front of the word land which means it emphasizes not just land, but *“the land,”* **the land of the covenant**, that's the issue. You are inhabiting My land.

**D. A. Carson:** The language used here implies that God has entered into an argument or quarrel with Israel. Perhaps we should think of a lawsuit, such as was carried out at the gates of the city. We can imagine Hosea approaching the elders sitting for judgment, and announcing that God himself has a **dispute** to bring.

## **II. (:1b-2) COMPREHENSIVE CHARGES**

**Jeremy Thomas:** So what's God pointing out right at the start of the case? No stability

in the nation, no loyal love, no intimacy with God. In other words, it's all vertical stuff missing. It isn't social problems in the community, its **theological problems** in the community. These people have first and foremost a theological problem. After that we get into the social problems. Always think this way. Train yourself to think this way. You can talk all day about the social problems, so and so can't straighten his behavior out, but ultimately the social problems stem from theological problems. So therefore if you're going to solve a behavior problem you have to get into theological discussion. See, everyone recognizes the social problem, so and so is misbehaving and they need to adjust to societal norms so we send them to the local psychiatrist, the local AA, pop a pill. It's always a gimmick and the solution is to straighten out your theology. Something is screwed up deep in the heart of people that no gimmick can repair. Of course, we're religiously neutral so it couldn't be a theological issue. And right there you've already admitted it is. There is no neutrality. If you say God's not related to the problem then you've said in effect God doesn't exist and that my friend is a theological statement. And until you solve the theological tension in your soul you're never going to fix in any permanent way the social problem.

#### **A. (:1b) Sins of Omission – Lacking Virtues – Theological Issues**

##### 1. No Firm Commitment / Integrity / Faithfulness -- Jezreel

*“Because there is no faithfulness”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** In terms of that which had been omitted, the prophet laments that Israel had not cultivated within herself the three blessings that spoke of her unique covenant relationship to the Lord: faithfulness, kindness, and the knowledge of God. **Faithfulness**, which comes from a root word that means “to confirm, to sustain, to support” (Hebrew, *emeth*; literally, “truth”), was nowhere to be found because the people of Israel had not sustained or supported the covenant with God—a pattern that spilled over into their relationships with their fellow men (7:1, 2, 11; 10:13; 11:12). **Kindness** (Hebrew, *chesed*; often translated “lovingkindness, mercy, kindness, and loyalty”) is that special Hebrew term for **God's covenant love**, which was first manifested to Israel in her redemption from Egypt (Exod. 15: 13). This covenant love will again be operative when God draws the whole house of Israel back to Himself (2:19; 10:12; 12:6; Jer. 31:1-3; cf. Psalms 17:7; 25:6; 69:16; 103:4; Isa. 63:7; Jer. 9:24; 16:5; 32:18).

**Gary Smith:** The quality of “*faithfulness*” (‘*emet*’) or truth describes a firmness in the people's commitment (their yes cannot be a half-hearted or unresolved decision), a reliability in their responsibilities (they do not waver back and forth, but have integrity), and an honesty about what they say (there is no deception, but the people have made a lasting choice). People who have this quality will be true and faithful to what they know and will give themselves to it completely. If the Israelites are untrustworthy, uncommitted, deceptive, and undecided about their devotion to God, how can God maintain a relationship with them?

**Allen Guenther:** When ‘*emet*’ is absent, people are cavalier with the truth in casual conversation, as well as when under oath (Jer. 9:5; Isa. 48:1). Its opposite is deceit,

lies, providing false witness, perverting justice, and fickleness. People without *'emet* cannot be trusted; they lack essential integrity. Deep down they are fractured with fissures spreading throughout their being. This absence of *'emet*, signified by the name Jezreel, dominates the prophecies of **Hosea 11:12 – 14:8**.

## 2. No Covenant Love – Lo-Ruhamah “or kindness”

**Gary Smith:** The quality of “*steadfast covenant love*” (*hesed*) demonstrates a loving and compassionate attitude devoted to maintaining an existing relationship. Such people keep their obligations to their partners based on their care for them. They are loyal to the relationship, for *hesed* “is the ‘essence’ of the covenantal relationship.” They express their emotional heart connection to the one they love both by their actions and their words. Their love is deep and consistent. If the Israelites do not maintain a love relationship with God, how can their covenant relationship continue in any kind of meaningful way?

**James Mays:** *Hesed* denotes the attitude and activity which founds and maintains a relation; the relation can be one given by birth or the social order, or created by arrangement. A man shows *hesed* when he is concerned and responsive to do in a given relation what another can rightfully expect according to the norms of that relationship. In Hosea the sphere of *hesed* is the covenant with Yahweh.

## 3. No Knowledge of God – Lo-Ammi “Or knowledge of God in the land.”

**Gary Smith:** The concept of “*knowing God*” has both an objective aspect (truthful information about who he is) and a subjective aspect (a personal relationship with God that acknowledges him as the sovereign power over one’s life and excludes any acknowledgment of Baal as deity). This characteristic is especially important because some of the people were worshiping multiple gods and confusing God with Baal (**2:16**). They have not made the effort to really know God. Part of the reason for this ignorance and confusion was the general acceptance of Canaanite religious beliefs in Israelite culture, plus a lack of clear priestly teaching about God from the Torah (**4:6**).

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** What does it mean to **know God** and live with a knowledge of Him? It involves both **intimacy** and **integrity**. The **intimacy** of the Thou-I relationship we were created to experience with God requires the opening of our innermost being to Him just as He has revealed His innermost nature to us. The word intimacy means “proceeding from within, inward, internal.” In the Hebrew, the word for “knowledge,” as we have seen in our exposition of **Hosea 2:20**, has the same root as “to know.” It also is used for the physical and spiritual oneness of a husband and wife. Knowledge of God is more than ideas about Him. Knowledge of God involves the total inner person: intellect, emotion, and will. God knows all about what is going on inside us—we cannot hide from Him. The beginning of our knowledge of God, our relationship with Him, is when we know that we are known. So the psalmist says, “*O LORD, You have searched me*”

*and known me” (Ps. 139:1).* The psalmist yields his inner being to God when he realizes he is known by Him, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).* Both our understanding and awareness of God are met in response to our being known absolutely and thoroughly by Him.

God has revealed Himself throughout history and sublimely in Jesus Christ. But until we yield our inner self to Him, we do not experience an intimate union with Him.

Knowledge of God also calls forth our **integrity**. The word means wholeness—undivided, unimpaired—completeness. Integrity is congruity of behavior, consistency between what we believe and what we do. Intimacy with God, knowing Him as He has revealed Himself, must be inseparably intertwined with His character and commandments. He has chosen to be our God and elected us to be His people. Knowing Him therefore requires integrity, congruity of a life of faithfulness. Obedience is the secret of a growing knowledge of God.

**James Mays:** The lack of the knowledge of God is **Israel’s cardinal deficiency (4.2)**; it is what Yahweh demands rather than sacrifice (**6.6**); in spite of the people’s claims and resolutions (**6.3; 8.2**) its reality is completely missing in their present life. Neither pious confession nor enthusiastic cult result in the knowledge of God. What is required is the knowledge that Yahweh as he was revealed in the Exodus is their only God (**13.4**), that his healing help saw them through the history of their beginnings (**12.3**), and that it is Yahweh who gives them the good things of the land (**2.8**).

**Allen Guenther:** The theme of **Hosea 4:4 – 6:3** centers on the danger of not knowing God and warns Israel against pursuing that course of life.

**S. Lewis Johnson:** The difficulty ultimately lies in the **doctrine**. When there is no knowledge of God, then we may expect dishonesty and we may expect all of the other kinds of things that characterize a people who do not know the lovingkindness of God. So honesty and love are the **products of the knowledge of God**.

Now in the details, one who knows the Ten Commandments immediately recognizes that what Hosea is doing is charging the Nation Israel with the breaking of the commandments that have to do with the **relationship of man to man**, the second table of the law. There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery – they’ve broken the sixth, the seventh, the eighth and the ninth commandments, and the results even touch the lower creation.

## **B. (:2) Sins of Commission – Multiplying Vices – Social Issues**

### 1. Transgressing God’s Laws

*“There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing, and adultery.”*

**Gary Smith:** They are breaking their covenant with God by doing what was prohibited in the Ten Commandments (**Ex. 20:2–17**), which summarize the covenant



requirements. The people curse (take God's name in vain), lie, murder, steal, commit adultery, and break all the boundaries laid out to regulate their covenant relationship with God. Some may be surprised that Hosea brings up these types of issues rather than the worship of false gods, but to Hosea the prophet, religious faith and social action are mirrors of one another. One can argue all day about whether a person really believes or loves God; it is easier to decide the issue without argument by simply pointing to the way God's people are living. Faith and love are revealed by behavior.

**David Allen Hubbard:** If virtues are lacking, vices are present, each of which is expressed in terms plucked verbatim from Israel's law codes:

- (1) **swearing** (Heb. *'lh*) breaks the commands against unworthy uses of the divine name (**Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11**) by damning others and attaching Yahweh's name to the curse (cf. **10:4; Exod. 21:17, 20; Judg. 17:2**);
- (2) **lying** (Heb. *khš*) violates the personal and legal rights of others, especially when it entails false witness in legal deliberations, financial transactions, or religious vows (**7:3; 10:13; 12:1; Lev. 19:11; cf. Exod. 23:1–3, 6–9**);
- (3) **killing** (Heb. *rsh*) is murder, the taking of human life without due process of law (**6:9; Exod. 20:13; Deut. 27:24**);
- (4) **stealing** (Heb. *gnb*) originally implied kidnapping and was expanded to include crimes of appropriating the valuable possessions of another (**Exod. 20:15, 17; Lev. 9:11**; note the death penalty for it in **Exod. 21:16**); and
- (5) **committing adultery** (Heb. *n'p*; see on **1:2; 2:2; 3:1**) caps the list as the expression of Israel's spiritual and physical promiscuity (cf. **4:13–14; 7:4; Exod. 20:14; Lev. 20:10**).

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Three of the transgressions (murder, theft, adultery) are terms also used in the Decalogue, but the accusations in **4:2** are not limited to its strictures. The first five transgressions are those that ruin human community and are an affront to the God of Israel. All five of them reappear elsewhere in Hosea. **Swearing** (*'ālōh*) is probably used in the context of swearing an oath in the form of a curse or imprecation. In that regard, it may be similar to the third commandment of the Decalogue, which forbids the use of the Lord's name "*in vain.*" **Isaiah 24:6** uses the term as a noun in the context of imprecation or curse (whatever its origin) with negative consequences for the land: "*a curse ('ālā) consumes the land; those who inhabit her are guilty.*" Much of the vocabulary in **Isa. 24:6** is also contained in **Hos. 4:2–3**, including the connection between curse, guilty inhabitants of the land, and the debilitating circumstances for the land. The connection reflects Hosea's holistic mode of thinking and its implication that negative acts influence communities as a whole.

**Lying** (*kaḥēš*) is also more broadly deceitfulness. Possibly the term approximates what is forbidden in the ninth commandment, false testimony (**Exod. 20:16**). Lying is not only deceit, but can be part of defrauding and condemning another person.

**Murder** (*rāšōaḥ*) is the unsanctioned taking of human life; the term is used in the Decalogue with similar meaning. Context determines its specificity. The repeated use of the term bloodshed (*dāmîm*), at the end of the verse would seem to indicate the gravity

and perceived frequency of this crime and the one that follows it. Hosea attributes it to a priestly band in **6:9**.

**Theft** (*gānōb*) is also used in the Decalogue. It can be used in case law, where it describes kidnapping a person and stealing possessions (**Exod. 21:16–17**). No guilt is attached to the homeowner who strikes and kills a thief breaking into his property (**Exod. 22:2** [MT 1]). The image of the “*thief who breaks in*” is used in **Hos. 7:1**.

**Adultery** (*nā`ōp*) is a term that Hosea can use elsewhere in a metaphorical sense, referring to the faithlessness of the people toward God. In the Decalogue it is used in its legal and covenantal sense to describe the breaking of the marriage vow wherein a man has sexual relations with a woman married to another man. For a married woman to have sexual relations with a man other than her husband is also considered adultery. The violation of marriage appears to be the charge in **4:2**, as it occurs in the context of other social transgressions.

The verb associated with the list of vices indicates that they *break forth* (*pāraṣ*) in debilitating influence. The term can indicate vigorous and aggressive acts (**Exod. 19:22, 24; 2 Sam. 5:20**) and is also associated more specifically with violence and theft. In noun form it represents a robber or thief (**Jer. 7:11; Ezek. 7:22**). In **Ezek. 18:10** a violent person (*pārîṣ*) is one who sheds blood. Hence the last clause of the verse follows naturally from the description of a societal outbreak of vices.

The expression **bloodshed follows bloodshed** (lit. “*bloodshed touches bloodshed*”) characterizes societal dissolution as a result of the vices listed previously. Thus it may include various acts of violence and theft, including murder.

## 2. Escalating Violence

*“They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.”*

**Lloyd Ogilvie**: There is a mounting intensity as Hosea lists the charges. Without a knowledge of God, they break all restraint. Literally this means “they break out” or they break through,” with the idea of restraint or boundaries implied. The commandments of God defined boundaries or restraints against destructive tendencies of sinful humans. When the commandments were rejected (no knowledge of God), there was no longer any restraint. This causes “*bloodshed after bloodshed*” (**Hos. 4:2**).

**Allen Guenther**: The indictments leveled against the people of the land consist of charges representing a rapid escalation of evil. The glue that holds society together is dissolving. Violence of one kind produces violence of another kind until the nation teeters at the brink of anarchy (cf. **Amos 3:9-10**).

**Thomas Constable**: Violent crimes were so common that they seemed to follow one another without interruption.

**John Schultz:** The Hebrew in vs. 2 is rather graphic in its description. It reads literally: *“By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery they break out and blood touches blood.”* The Hebrew word, rendered by the NIV *“they break all bounds”* is *parats*, which means, *“to break out,”* literally or figuratively. It suggests that crime had reached **epidemic proportions**.

### **III. (:3) COSMIC CONSEQUENCES**

*“Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes  
Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky;  
And also the fish of the sea disappear.”*

**Robin Routledge:** Human sin affects the stability of the created order and may allow chaos to return. A similar idea may lie behind the reference in **Romans 8:19–22** to a frustrated and groaning creation.

**James Mays:** The catastrophe is not merely a drought, though partially pictured by drought-vocabulary, but a terrible diminution of life-forces which tends to a total absence of life. It is the effect of the divine curse and in this case for breach of covenant. See the juxtaposition of covenant breaking and such disaster in **Isa. 24.4ff.; 33.8–9**. The land is polluted by the crime of its inhabitants and will share the curse. No creature will escape. When the people of God break covenant, the whole creation suffers the consequences of their sin (**Gen. 8.21**; cf. **Rom. 8.19ff.**).

**David Allen Hubbard:** The annihilation of the animal kingdom is pictured in language that outstrips the flood story, where at least representatives of each species were preserved (**Gen. 6:18–22**). Hosea’s holocaust resembles closely Zephaniah’s (**1:2–3**) and echoes **Genesis 1:30** in such a way that the appointed judgment for Israel’s sin is nothing less than the ‘reversal of creation’. Thus, Yahweh’s restoration, promised in **2:15–23**, must include a renewed covenant with the entire animal kingdom (v. 18).

**J. Andrew Dearman:** After a summary of the evidence is listed, God’s case against the land and its inhabitants results in the dissolution of both the human and animal societies who inhabit the land. Indeed, the land itself is depicted as ill, just as the human community is rotten. This is Hosea’s holistic analysis at work. The three categories of animals, birds, and fish here in **4:3** are those listed in **Ps. 8:7–8** (MT 8–9), a psalm that celebrates the exalted place of humankind in God’s good creation. The environment depicted in **Hos. 4:3** is the withering, physically weak and depleted land of Israel. If bloodshed is the lot of the human community, then weakness and loss infect the land’s nonhuman inhabitants as well. This is tantamount to the reversal of creation and its good order, undone by human fallibility and culpability. Whereas the human community (and most certainly Israel) is designated collectively as God’s stewards, intended to bring order and rule in a good creation, human failure permeates creation with disorder and debilitation.

**Verse 3** employs a verbal word pair to describe the disorder and weakness of the land and its inhabitants. They are the verbs *'ābal* (“*mourn*”) and *'āmal* (“*waste away*”), used together in eight other contexts. Just as the land can be personified as harlotrous, so she can be depicted as mourning, weak, and sad. She is the matrix of life for the people and animals, and even when she is not, the fish of the sea are nevertheless similarly affected. In the holistic thinking of Hosea, the people and land (plants and animals) live in a symbiotic relationship. When YHWH and Israel live in a restored covenant relationship, as depicted at the conclusion of **ch. 2**, then the health and vitality of the land are everywhere apparent. The current failures of Israel, however, function like disease or a stain to produce an environmental debilitation. Such is the predicament of YHWH’s people and land (his household) in **4:1–3**. It is a salutary reminder to readers that **failures have consequences** and that they cannot be compartmentalized and kept from permeating aspects of corporate existence.

**Richard Patterson:** After cataloguing the prevailing crimes of Israelite society, Hosea warns his hearers of the **dire consequences** of their conduct (v.3). Because they have committed spiritual adultery by their devotion to Baal, the Canaanite storm god who supposedly brought them the much needed rain for their crops (a violation of the first commandment), God will demonstrate to them just who it is that is in command of the natural world. Have they forgotten the demonstration of God’s authority through the ministry of Elijah (**1 Kings 17-18**)? They will soon understand that Baal is powerless. Land is here personified as a mourner who has witnessed the perishing of those who depended on it. Indeed, all life will suffer—men, animals, birds, and water creatures. As **Sweeney** points out, “By employing such language, Hosea conveys the necessary inter-relationship between human actions and the state of the natural world, i.e. the role of humans to maintain the world of creation (cf. **Gen 1:26**). If human beings fail to maintain the proper order of their lives, **the entire world of creation suffers.**”

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does a knowledge of God promote holiness in moral conduct?
- 2) Why do we maintain that moral righteousness is derived from orthodox theology?
- 3) What fuels the escalation of the cycle of violence?
- 4) What is the relationship between man’s sin and the condition of the environment?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Anthony Petterson:** A new section of the book begins. The Lord takes up his case against the people and priests, acting as prosecutor and judge. The heart of the case is

that God and his ways have been forgotten (v. 1). The people's relationship with the Lord has broken down such that the people no longer reflect his faithful and loving character. Instead, they disobey the fundamental requirements of the covenant (represented in the Ten Commandments: cf. **Ex 20; Dt 5**), leading to a cycle of violence and retribution. In addition, the land and its creatures suffer on account of human sin (cf. **Ro 8:22**).

**Derek Kidner:** Scripture in general has two things to say about such **rampant wickedness**. On the one hand it may question the boundaries we draw between serious and light offences, and between actions and attitudes, seeing for example (to go through this list) an inconsiderate word as little better than a curse (**Pr. 27:14**), insincerity as nothing but a lie (**Jn. 8:55**), hatred as murder (**1 Jn. 3:15**), meanness as theft (**Mal. 3:8ff.**), and lustful imaginings as mental adultery (**Mt. 5:28**). From its embryonic to its adult form, so to speak, a sin may change its names and its ability to hurt, but not its nature. That is one emphasis. The other is the one implicit here: that there is such a thing as monstrous and scarlet sin; that it is the business of teachers and rulers to restrain it (as the rest of the chapter and of the book will emphasize); and that the '*rank growth of wickedness*' – to borrow a phrase from **James 1:21** – can reach a point where it is beyond all remedy. In Hosea that point is very near, and judgment must fall; but the punishment may yet produce a change of heart – a hope that runs through the book from the early chapters on the healing of the marriage to the final prospect of a blissful reunion in **chapter 14**.

**H. D. Beeby:** Our present age with its concern over the exploitation of natural resources and its care for the environment and for the preservation of existing species of beasts, birds, and fishes is well able to hear some of what Hosea is saying in **Hos. 4:3**. We know how human sin and greed go hand in hand with "*taking away*" (v. 3d) many of God's creatures. In fact, the link between morality and ecology we can forge with little difficulty. But part of the Church's mission is to announce that this link is dependent on the greater link: the link of faith in the covenant God. As in **Gen. 3** the trouble begins in the religious realm, so that in consequence nature is made to suffer. Can the Church not learn to say once more what Hosea is saying here, that often it is not that people perish because nature strikes but that nature is stricken because people are perishing through disobedience?

TEXT: Hosea 4:4-19

TITLE: REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD LEADS TO JUDGMENT

**BIG IDEA:**

**CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS PROVOKE JUDGMENT FOR THE REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Overall, **4:4–19** elaborates on the charge against the people in **4:1–3**, with the **priesthood** initially a major focus of attention (cf. **5:1**). The **spirit of harlotry** mentioned in **v. 12** is Hosea's characterization of the priesthood and the people in this section. The addressees are a priest (**4:4–6**), the priesthood (**4:7–10**), and the people (**4:11–19**).

**Duane Garrett:** Three times in this passage, in **4:6, 8, 12**, Hosea alludes to the name Lo-Ammi (“*not my people*”). In **v. 6** he declares that “*my people*” (*‘ammî*) perish for lack of sound teaching from the priests. In **v. 8** he declares that the priests feed upon the sins of “*my people*” (*‘ammî*). In **vv. 11–12** he asserts that the religious life of “*my people*” (*‘ammî*) consists in the most primitive form of superstition. But in **v. 4** he asserts that “*your people*” (that is, the priests’ people) can rightly blame the priests for their condition. The overall meaning is clear; the ordinary men and women of Israel, who should have been the pious people of God, had lost that status due to the greed and negligence of the priesthood. Instead, they had become the priests’ people.

**David Malick:** The LORD indicts the people of the nation for having no knowledge of Him since they will not listen to His teaching and are given over to idolatry **4:4-19**

- a. The nation has rejected knowledge, and forgotten the Law and will thus be rejected and forgotten by the LORD **4:4-6**
- b. The people sin against one another and direct one another into more sin, therefore they will be judged **4:7-10**
- c. The people of Israel are without understanding in that they are given over to idolatry **4:11-14**
- d. The people of Israel are warned not to go to holy cities and pollute them with their idolatry, but to remain alone unto their own judgment **4:15-19**

**Allen Guenther:** Outline

**Indictment 1: Rejecting the Source of Knowledge, 4:4-6**

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>4:4-5</b>  | I Wasn't Told        |
| <b>4:6a</b>   | I Don't Want to Know |
| <b>4:6b-e</b> | I Don't Remember     |

**Indictment 2: Perverting the Knowledge of God, 4:7-12a**

- |              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| <b>4:7-8</b> | For Personal Gain       |
| <b>4:9</b>   | Priest and people Alike |

4:10-12a For Personal Pleasure

**Indictment 3: Consorting with Lovers, 4:12b-19**

4:12b-13a Prostitution by Choice  
4:13b-14 Double Standards  
4:15 Divine Counsel to Judah  
4:16-17 Divine Appraisal of Israel  
4:18-19 Partners in Shame

Five Accusing word pairs jolt the reader to attention:

<i>Let no one contend . . .</i>	<i>my contention / contending</i>
<i>You shall stumble . . .</i>	<i>the prophet shall stumble</i>
<i>I will destroy . . .</i>	<i>My people are destroyed</i>
<i>Because you have rejected . . .</i>	<i>I reject you from</i>
<i>Since you have forgotten . . .</i>	<i>I will forget</i>

A question and a protest seem to lie behind all three oracles in chapter four: “We are the covenant people, and do you say that we don’t know God? That’s not possible. We are doing exactly as the priests instruct us.”

**I. (:4-6) REJECTING GOD’S WORD LEADS TO JUDGMENT ON BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

**Grace Emmerson:** Whether the accusation is directed against an individual priest (vv. 4–6 are in the singular) or priests in general is unclear. The seriousness of the accusation and its far-reaching consequences (v. 6) suggest the latter, as do the plural verbs of vv. 7–8. There is no escape from Yahweh’s judgment.

**ChatGPT:** Israel’s sin is not merely personal but institutional. The priests, the leaders, and the people are all complicit in abandoning God’s standards.

In this context, the leaders (priests) failed to uphold God’s law, and Israel rejected correction, leading to a collapse in spiritual discernment and accountability.

**A. (:4-5) Religious Leadership Actually Provoke Judgment**

1. (:4a) Rationalizations and Excuses Lack Moral Standing

*“Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof;”*

2. (:4b) Rejection of Counsel by the Priest Due to Stubbornness

*“For your people are like those who contend with the priest.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** The fourth verse suggests that a contention had arisen as to who was at fault for the people’s present predicament.



**H. D. Beeby:** Without hesitation Hosea points the accusing finger at the priest. If the fruits of the Covenant are missing, then the blame must be laid at the door of the Covenant-keeper par excellence, namely, the priest. Israel, the kingdom of priests (**Exod. 19:6**), can be priests to the world and to nature only if they themselves are properly priested. Unfortunately these keepers of the Covenant were following too closely in the footsteps of Aaron their “*father*” (**Exod. 32**). He had led Israel into idolatry rather than ensuring they remained faithful to the conditions of the Covenant.

3. (:5a) Rejection of Direction from the Prophets as Well Leading to Mutual Stumbling

*“So you will stumble by day,  
And the prophet also will stumble with you by night;”*

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** Unlike God, who has the authority and every justification to question his people, they have no moral basis to argue with anyone or to complain. In terms of its character, Israel is **stubborn**. The people are like “*those who contend with a priest*,” meaning that they are unwilling to heed a true word that might come from Yahweh’s representatives (cf. **Dt 17:12–13; Am 2:11–12**). So the people stumble in their sin (cf. **5:5; 14:1, 9**), and in this stumbling they are joined by the very religious leaders, the prophets, who were to have been their guides and models (cf., e.g., **Isa 3:2; 28:7; Jer 2:26; 23:9–40; Mic 3:5–8**).

**David Allen Hubbard:** **Stumble** (v. 5) is a favourite word in Hosea to describe the disasters that beset those who do not walk in God’s ways. The wayward fall on their faces so hard that it is impossible to get up without outside help (cf. **5:5; 14:1, 9**). The timing – priest by day and prophet by night – is not designated so much to distinguish between the falls as to indicate that either may stumble at any time, whether night (when one might expect it) or day (when one would ordinarily feel safe). The expression may be a **merism** in which contrasts of time are listed so as to cover the whole range of possibilities.

**Robin Routledge:** The metaphor of **stumbling** (*kāšal*) indicates failure to walk the right path. Elsewhere in Hosea, the people stumble because of sin (**5:5; 14:1, 9**). Here, that is traced back to priests and prophets: religious leaders who have collaborated in their support of corrupt cultic institutions, and so have failed to instruct the people in the ways of Yahweh. The nrsv reflects the mt: ‘*You shall stumble by day; the prophet also shall stumble with you by night*’, indicating the **continual failure** of those who should be providing spiritual leadership.

4. (:5b) Reality of Certain Destruction of Israel’s Institutions

*“And I will destroy your mother.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The “*mother*” is again the representation of institutional Israel, the entity that corrupts the ordinary people, the “*children*,” and that empowers the hierarchy. Destroying the “*mother*” refers to the overthrow of the power and prerogatives of the

religious leadership. In short, assertions that the clergy stumbles and that God is destroying their mother both imply destruction of Israel's institutions.

**Robin Routledge:** The action of corrupt leaders will result in the ruin of the nation. This is further linked to a lack of knowledge, which is a frequent theme in the book. In this context it refers to the knowledge of God (cf. **4:1; 6:6**) and continues the indictment of the priests, whose responsibility it was to instruct the people (cf. **Deut. 33:10; Mal. 2:6–7**).

## **B. (:6) Reason for Judgment = Lack of Knowledge Due to Rejecting God's Word**

### 1. Judgment on the People

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*

**James Mays:** The cause of that destruction is the lack of ‘*the knowledge*’ (cf. the culminating charge of Yahweh’s *rīb* in **4.1**). ‘*The knowledge*’ is an abbreviated form of the expression ‘*the knowledge of God/Yahweh*’. Its content is clearly indicated by the parallelism with *tōrā* in this verse and the list of crimes against the law in **4.2**; ‘*knowledge*’ is learning and obeying the will of the covenant God in devotion and faithfulness; it is response to the unity of Yahweh’s saving act and binding requirement such as is expressed in ‘*I am Yahweh your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me ...*’ (**Ex. 20.2ff.**). The lack of such knowledge had led to the loss of any reality in the role of being the covenant people. In Hosea’s view of Israel’s priesthood, the primary function of the office was to maintain and pass on the *tōrat ’elōhēkā*, instruction concerning the covenant God. *Tōrā* means both the act of instruction and the content of what is passed on.

### 2. Judgment on the Priesthood

#### a. For Rejecting Knowledge

*“Because you have rejected knowledge,  
I also will reject you from being My priest.”*

**James Mays:** Their sin determines their punishment; what the priests have done to Yahweh, he will do to them. They reject his revelation; he rejects their priesthood. The father in office and the sons who would inherit the office (**I Sam. 2.27ff.**) are stripped of their ordination by the word of a lone prophet standing outside the organization of the official religion of the kingdom!

**Gary Smith:** God’s response is to reciprocate by **rejecting the priests (4:6)**. He will ignore their children, just as the priests have ignored his words. There is a certain level of justice in God’s action. You get what you deserve. God will repay each one for his or her deeds in an appropriate manner (**4:9**). He cannot bless the families of those priests who have purposely deserted him. The priests are doubly accountable because they have prevented the people from hearing about the personal relationship God wants to have with his people (**4:10**). The priests have even gotten involved with the drinking and prostitution going on at these temples. God will not reward these priests with any

blessings, but instead will send a curse. Yes, both the priests and the people will be punished severely by God (4:9).

b. For Forgetting the Law of God

*“Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.”*

**Trent Butler:** God's punishment is directed first of all toward the priests. God rejects the priests who are supposed to teach the people his word, because the priests have *forgotten* (NIV *ignored*) the law of your God. Parents were responsible to teach God's Torah to the people (**Deut. 33:10**). Priests had the professional responsibility to teach Torah (**Ezek.7:26**). But God's people were not learning the truth from home or temple. So the God who remembers (**Lev. 26:42,45**) became the God who forgets. The priesthood was a family profession—children inherited the position from their fathers—but God would put a stop to that.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** To **forget something** means to fail to bring something to conscious focus or to ignore its significance, so that it no longer guides a person to the proper response. Correspondingly, if one **remembers**, then the matter is brought to mind in such a way that a proper response then ensues.

**David Allen Hubbard:** The magnitude of the priestly sin of omission, the failure to teach the law, is seen in its staggering consequences: the collapse of the priesthood (**vv. 4, 6c, e**) and the destruction of the nation (**vv. 5c–6a**). And the preciousness of the law to Yahweh is underscored by its comparison to the children of the priest (**v. 6d, e**).

## **II. (:7-10) RELIGIOUS CORRUPTION PERVERTS GLORY INTO SHAME**

**Anthony Petterson:** The sacrificial system was God's gracious gift to deal with sin, and the priesthood had an honored status in overseeing it. But the priests perverted the sacrifices into something that served their own greed and so were a disgrace (see Eli's sons in **1Sa 2:12-17**). Both people and priests will be punished (**Hos 4:9**). God will hand them over to their sin, and they will not experience his covenant blessings (**4:10**).

### **A. (:7-8) Greedy Desires Lead to Compounding Corruption and Ultimate Shame**

#### 1. (:7a) Compounding the Sin = Their Decline

*“The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me,”*

**Grace Emerson:** The accusation here concerns not neglect of duty but abuse of privilege. The priests were entitled to a share in certain sacrifices (**Lev 6:26; 7:28–36**), but their **greed** had encouraged the proliferation of sacrifice to their own advantage. Yet the people, too, were not free of responsibility; *“people and priest will fare alike”* (**4:9, REB**), experiencing not fertility but futility.

**Duane Garrett:** “*The more the priests increased*” apparently refers to the fact that during a time of prosperity the number of people free to enter a religious vocation increases. Israel experienced such prosperity under Jeroboam II, and no doubt many considered the increased numbers of priests, their increased power, and the increased interest in formal worship to be signs of spiritual vitality. To the contrary, Hosea retorts, the more religious leadership the nation had, the worse they became.

**David Allen Hubbard:** The increase described in **verse 7** seems to be the numerical growth of the priesthood. Growth in numbers was matched by growth in sinfulness, since all priests were caught up in the sin of rejecting the law (**v. 6**). This multiplication of iniquity in the nation is evidently in proportion to the multiplication of the prosperity of the land in the reign of Jeroboam II. Instead of multiplying her devotion to God, Israel multiplies her self-reliant endeavours and, even worse, her dependence upon the Baals

2. (:7b) Changing Glory into Shame = Their Destiny  
*“I will change their glory into shame.”*

3. (:8) Corrupting Both the People and the Priesthood = Their Desires  
*“They feed on the sin of My people,  
And direct their desire toward their iniquity.”*

**Trent Butler:** Apparently God changes his target here, and again, as in Hosea 4:6, he condemns the priests. They were encouraging Israel to bring sacrifices to the temple and were eating the priestly portions (**Lev. 7:28–38**). . .

The priests have sold their soul to do anything to cause Israel to bring more sinful offerings so the priests are getting richer and fatter. “*Soul*” here refers to the basic identity of the person and what he strives for in achieving such identity. The priests no longer gain identity from serving God. They set their aim on food and fortune.

**Duane Garrett:** [Hosea] regards the whole system of sacrifice as corrupted and of having lost its original intent. Instead of being a means of confession and grace, it had become a means of permissiveness for the people and of gluttony for the priests. In addition, the “*wickedness*” of the laity only increases the power of the religious professionals because the people's guilt gives the leaders a means of manipulation. Finally, the wickedness of their religion may also have included the practice of **sacred prostitution**. Decadent religious authority leads ironically to cheap grace and immorality as well as to domineering by a clergy that knows how to play upon the fear and superstition of a poorly instructed people.

**James Mays:** What is meant by saying that the priests make a living (lit. ‘*eat*’) off the guilt of Israel is seen from texts like **8.11, 13; 5.6**. The sacrifices offered on the many altars of the nation are sin in Yahweh’s sight (cf. **Amos 4.4f.**); Yahweh rejects them because this cult of killing, burning, eating cattle has become the people’s way of manipulating him, and has taken the place of devotion to him and knowledge of his

revelation (6.6). Worship by sacrifice has become in fact rupture of the covenant. What Yahweh rejects, the people love and the priests encourage. Since the officiating priest received a portion of the sacrificed animal, they had a vested interest in a prolific cult. Their profit has become the true goal of their vocation, and they have turned the institution of worship into a service to the clergy. What do they care about the old orthodoxy of Israel as the people of Yahweh, when religion abounds and priests prosper? The bizarre result is **a priest who officiates over sinning instead of nurturing true faith.**

**David Thompson:** These leaders pursue their iniquity at the expense of God's people. They make their living off of God's people and feed off of it. They were taking the offerings and the money and they just continued pursuing their own pagan lifestyle.

**Wolff:** The criticism of the cultic sacrifices is aimed at the selfish interests of the priests who in the sacrifices seek their own private gain. As in **verse 6a**, Yahweh, in the form of the messenger speech, again sympathetically takes the side of Israel, calling them anew "*My people!*" With their sacrificial cult, the priests do not serve the people of God with the divine gifts entrusted to them; instead, at the people's expense they store up their own profit and advantage.

**Robin Routledge:** Instead of helping them overcome sin, the priests revel in the people's failure. This may be because it served to increase the significance and status of the cult. There may also be a deliberate play on words. The first word for sin, *ḥaṭṭā't*, may also refer to the '*sin offering*' (**Andersen and Freedman** 1980: 342), which was offered to make atonement for some sins. As part of the ritual, the priests ate some of the sacrifice (e.g. **Lev. 6:24–29; 10:17–20**). Thus, the more the people sinned, the better the priests ate (cf. **1 Sam. 2:12–17**). This further reflects Hosea's view that the priesthood is intentionally **self-serving**.

## **B. (:9-10) Gloomy Destiny of Punishment and Futility for Religious Corruption**

### **1. (:9) Punishment of Both People and Priests**

*“And it will be, like people, like priest;  
So I will punish them for their ways, And repay them for their deeds.”*

**Trent Butler:** The priests sin and even cause the people to sin. God will dedicate his anointed priests to destruction. They will pay the price for their sinful ways and deeds. No profession or religious activity protects sinful people from God's punishment for sin.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The enigmatic proverbial saying "*like people, like priest*" communicates that the priests exhibit the same character as the nation and will endure a similar fate (**v.9**). This verse anticipates the attention that will be given to the religious leaders in the next chapter.

**Derek Kidner:** It is a saying about **judgment**: a warning that there will be no exemptions. No privilege will shelter this supposed élite. There is a strikingly similar prophecy in **Isaiah 24:1-3**, speaking of the end time, where the same Hebrew phrase,

*'like people, like priest'*, heads a list ('as with the slave, so with his master', and so on) which demonstrates the **equal exposure** of us all to the day of God.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The idiom, *like people, like priest*, is a blunt reminder that people emulate their leaders. The Hebrew idiom can also be interpreted that priest and people will be judged. The construction does not indicate by itself who is being compared to whom. However, in the context, the focus is on the guilt of the priests who have misled God's people. The tragedy was that the people were willing to be led in the wrong direction. But without a consistent teaching of the Law, there was no objective standard by which they could discern right from wrong.

2. (:10) Promise of Futility for Their Apostasy

*"And they will eat, but not have enough;  
They will play the harlot, but not increase,  
Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD."*

**Robin Routledge:** Because the priests have deserted Yahweh, their sinful pursuits will lead only to **frustration**.

**Derek Kidner:** The terms of the coming judgment, as initially announced in **verse 10**, are distinctly appropriate. Food and sex have been these priests' obsession: food and sex will fail them, the one by shortage, the other by sterility – for it is a theme of Scripture and a fact of life that things material are precarious, and things merely sensual frustrating. Our Lord captured both these limitations in a single aphorism: *'Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again'* (**Jn. 4:13**). Of course, to *'play the harlot'* is a metaphor here for flirting with false gods; but it had a special aptness in view of the ritual fornication that was part of the attraction of these rivals, as **verse 14b** reminds us.

**Trent Butler:** The adulterous generation (**Hos. 4:2**) will continue their immoral ways of worship, but sexual relationships at the worship center will not lead God to fulfill his promise to multiply the population. God had promised to multiply or *"spread out"* his people (**Gen. 28:14**). He had fulfilled that promise in difficult times (**Exod. 1:12**), but he would cut off that promise in the time of greatest prosperity because the people and the priests had abandoned their devotion to God.

**Duane Garrett:** The end of **v. 10** can be translated, *"For they have abandoned keeping faith with Yahweh."* In short, this summarizes all the misdeeds of the priesthood in a single line: they are **apostate**. Their failure to give sound teaching, their greed, and their promotion of sin are all at root rejection of God.

**III. (:11-14) RUINATION ATTRIBUTED TO HARLOTRY, WINE AND ILLEGITIMATE WORSHIP – ALL ROOTED IN A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING**



**Gary Smith:** The second charge explains how ignoring God's revelation is affecting the worship celebrations of the people. What is going on at the temples is astonishing: prostitution, drunkenness, idol worship, divination, and all the perversions that go with them. These activities do not help the people reflect on life's values, draw out rational conclusions about right and wrong, or please God. Instead, they *"take away the understanding of my people."* These activities dull the mind so much that it is impossible for them truly to know Israel's God.

These practices describe the passionate sexuality of the Baal cult (some think such sexual activity will magically encourage Baal to give them fertility) and have nothing to do with maintaining a covenant relationship with Israel's true God. These practices lead people astray into unfaithful acts against God (4:12). Without proper teaching from Israel's priests, the population of Israel is filled with the *"spirit of prostitution"* and is blindly led away into a sensuous and selfish worldview that promotes debauchery rather than godliness.

Such worship does not take place at the temple of God, but at syncretistic Baalistic high places scattered throughout the countryside (Hos. 4:13; elsewhere these are mentioned in 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; Jer. 2:20). Here the people give their sacrifices to God/Baal (they apparently think these are two different names for the same god), enjoy the shade of the trees around these temples, and get involved with the sexual rites practiced at these outdoor places of worship. No doubt many who do this think they are reverencing God, being totally ignorant of what he actually requires in the Torah.

This paragraph ends with God's decision not to cast the primary blame on the young women (daughters and daughters-in-law) who are involved or who submit themselves to this sexual cultic activity at the Baal temples (Hos. 4:14). Instead, God will punish the men (probably older) who set up, promote, and probably demand this perverse sexual activity. These sexual relations with cult prostitutes are designed to stimulate the fertility gods so that they will send fertility and blessing to the participants, but Hosea concludes that they only leave the people *"without understanding"* and in *"ruin."* Of course, this is not just a sexual perversity, for it is all done in the name of and for the honor of the Canaanite gods.

#### **A. (:11) Lack of Understanding Due to Prostitution and Drinking**

*"Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away the understanding."*

**Grace Emmerson:** This section begins and ends with proverbial sayings on the causes and dangers respectively of **lack of understanding**; the latter, *"a people so devoid of understanding comes to grief"* (REB), is enlivened with alliteration (*'am lo' yabin yillabet*). The theme of what follows is not drunkenness per se but the resultant insensitivity which delights in promiscuity. The designation of Israel as *"my people"* (4:12) highlights the irony of Israel's search for guidance from a wooden idol. Metaphorical and nonmetaphorical uses of "promiscuity" are interwoven. Unfaithfulness to Yahweh, their covenant God, issues in sexual impurity.



**Anthony Petterson:** A key contribution to their sinful abandoning of the Lord and giving themselves to promiscuity was their excessive alcohol consumption; they lost their ability to think rationally (v. 11).

**Trent Butler:** God summarizes the people's new identity. Prostitution and drinking occupy their thoughts. They enjoyed Baal worship because it brought great physical pleasure. Israel sold out their history and their nation and its future for a good time in the here and now. The people have rejected knowledge. Now their indulgences dull their mental capacities so they can no longer receive knowledge.

## **B. (:12-13) Illegitimate Worship Associated with Harlotry**

**David Allen Hubbard:** Within the envelope [the parallel proverbial sayings of v. 11 and v. 14e] are three illustrations of Israel's dementedness.

- First, they seek revelation from wooden objects (v. 12). Wood could be a pillar (perhaps with phallic significance) or a sacred tree (cf. v. 13); staff might be smaller pieces of wood to be cast like dice and lots, or a larger rod to be spun and dropped to convey a message by the direction in which it landed – an act of rhabdomancy. In any case magic and even idolatry were involved and drew divine ire (**Deut. 18:1–14**), for they needed to inquire (Heb. *š'ʿl*; cf. **Judg. 1:1; 2 Sam. 2:1; Ezek. 21:26**) of God who alone knew the future, who alone could give oracles (Heb. *ngd*). Such acts were rejections of true prophecy (cf. **9:7** for its explication).
- Second, the Israelites are so engrossed in idolatry that they are under the sway, not of Yahweh whom they have left (Heb. preposition *mittaḥat* means 'from under the authority of' and is equivalent to *mē'āḥārēy*, literally 'from [following] after' in **1:2**), but of a spirit whose character causes them to wander wildly into acts of harlotry (v. 12c– d). Spirit comes close to describing demonic power and indicates how virtually inescapable Israel's harlotry with the Baals had become (cf. **4:19; 5:4**). Harlotry dots this section of the book and links it tightly to the theme verse (**1:2**) and the descriptions of Gomer/Israel as harlot in **2:2–13; 3:1–2** (cf. **4:10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18; 5:3, 4**).

Their two prime activities were slaying and eating sacrifices (Heb. *zbḥ* is always used negatively by Hosea to signify the activities of the corrupt cult; cf. **4:14; 8:13; 11:2; 12:12; 13:2**) and burning incense and other offerings (on Heb. *qtr*, see **2:13; 11:2**). The places for these exercises were the elevated sites that seemed closer to the heavens and were shaded by trees which Israel deemed sacred. . .

- Third, one of the rude results (note the *therefore* of v. 13e) of the priests' infidelity to God was the **promiscuous sexual conduct of their own daughters and daughters-in-law** (the Heb. *kallâ*, 'bride', can describe both 'daughter' and 'daughter-in-law' who have preserved their virginity until the time of marriage;

cf. Wolff, pp. 86–87).<sup>9</sup> The lascivious cult had caught them in its clutches, and, under the welcome shade of the trees just described, they engaged in illicit intercourse..

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The theme of stubbornness and straying is consistent throughout **Hosea 4:12–19**. The “*spirit of harlotry*” leads God’s people astray. It is as if an overwhelming force of evil came upon the people from beyond them, and they were prompted to stray.

1. (:12) Substituting Idols for God

*“My people consult their wooden idol,  
and their diviner’s wand informs them;  
For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray,  
And they have played the harlot, departing from their God.”*

**Anthony Petterson:** vv. 12-14 – The people have forsaken the Lord and turned to idols. They seek to determine the future in ways that the law prohibits (cf. **Dt 18:9-13**), and they engage in the sacrificial rituals of foreign nations. This is consistent with the people’s worship of Baal (**Hos 2:8, 13, 16-17**). The people also give themselves to sexual immorality (**4:13**). The men bear greater culpability in this, presumably because of the responsibility they have been given, from creation, to lead their wives (v. 14).

2. (:13) Sacrificing on the High Places

*“They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains  
And burn incense on the hills, Under oak, poplar, and terebinth,  
Because their shade is pleasant.  
Therefore your daughters play the harlot,  
And your brides commit adultery.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The closing of the poem, that the shade is “*good*” where they worship, is not an accidental comment but implies that the cults were in some ways truly appealing to the average person. In order to appreciate fully the lament concerning their going to hills and shade trees to offer sacrifices, we need to understand how this activity could be attractive. The “sacrifices” were not simply for the gods but were eaten by human participants. In a beautiful setting in the hills and under trees, the people could experience something that combined a picnic with “sacred mysteries.” Also in these mountain shrines they enjoyed freedom from the restraints of the strict morality imposed by orthodox Yahwism (thus Josiah found it necessary to close down all rural shrines, **2 Kgs 23:8–9**). This, combined with a belief that these gods and their rites had the power to insure good crops and healthy births in their flocks and herds, made for a religion as irresistible as it was corrupting. The real tragedy, however, was not merely that these rites led to various kinds of immorality; it was that people went to the shrines and consulted trees and stones with a sense of piety and reverence.

C. (:14a) Liability for Harlotry Assigned to the Men

*“I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot  
Or your brides when they commit adultery,*

*For the men themselves go apart with harlots  
And offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes;”*

**David Thompson:** God says I won't even punish the daughters or the brides because it is the men and the false leaders who are promoting all of this. God's people were being ruined because the male leadership refused to lead the people into the pure, true, right ways of God.

This is interesting to me because in our social world, generally speaking, men's sins are treated more leniently than a woman's sin. But it doesn't work that way in God's world. God will hold the men accountable and specifically He will hold the male leadership accountable

#### **D. (:14b) Lack of Understanding Leads to Ruin**

*“So the people without understanding are ruined.”*

**James Mays:** The final line (v. 14b) returns to the proverbial idiom. In style and vocabulary the line is a general Wisdom saying (cf. **Prov. 10.8, 10**). But this observation, which uttered independently would sound like a calm, dispassionate analysis of the way life works, in this context takes on the quality of **a lament over inevitable doom**. A saying of the wise becomes an announcement of doom. The proverb completes the logic of the oracle:

- harlotry takes away the mind (v. 11),
- the nation is caught up by a spirit of harlotry (vv. 12–14a),
- the resulting lack of understanding will lead to ruin (14b).

**Robin Routledge:** The priests' failure results in a widespread **lack of understanding**. The term *bîn* may apply to discernment generally, though probably refers here to the understanding of who God is and what he requires (cf. **14:9**; see also e.g. **Isa. 6:9–10; 43:10; 56:11; Jer. 4:22**). This is closely related to the failure to acknowledge him (**2:8; 4:1, 6**). The result of the people's lack of understanding is ruin (cf. **4:6**). The priests have failed to show true leadership; that, though, is no excuse, and the whole people face divine judgment.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Reflecting on the results of the spirit of harlotry on His people, the Lord sighs: *“So the people without understanding are ruined”* (v. 14). *Ruined*, literally, *“thrown down”* (Hebrew, *labat*), is a word found elsewhere only in **Proverbs 10:8, 10**, where it describes the inevitable end of a fool who rejects God's commandments. In light of the scene that has been pictured in these verses, Israel has been *“ruined”* through her own folly.

#### **IV. (:15-19) REMEDY FOR JUDAH REQUIRES RENOUNCING THE SHAMEFUL CORRUPTION OF ISRAEL**

**James Mays:** The general subject of Israel's cult as harlotry, the central theme of vv. 4–10 and 11–14, continues. There are clear connections with the particular emphases of the two foregoing passages. An irrational hardening of mind has fallen on Israel. Drunkenness and sex dominate their worship. They are captive to a spirit which drives them toward their fall.

**Gary Smith:** They are out of control and hopelessly determined to do whatever they want to do. The essential reasons for this hopeless situation are:  
(1) The people are spellbound by the idols that join with other forms of Baalism (4:17);  
(2) they deeply love the wine and the sexual prostitution at their temples (4:18); and  
(3) they are bound up by the adulterous spirit of their day (4:19).

#### **A. (:15-17) Shepherding Counsel**

##### 1. (:15) Warning to Judah

*“Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Do not let Judah become guilty;  
Also do not go to Gilgal, Or go up to Beth-aven,  
And take the oath: ‘As the LORD lives!’”*

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The hope is that Israel's example will be an object lesson for Judah, so that the people might not repeat Israel's corruption and avoid similar punishment. . .

What is made plain here is that proclaiming the correct name of God is not the only requirement for worship to be acceptable; more important is the content given that name. If the people believe in and praise a Yahweh of their own creation, whether he is confused with ba'al or is shaped by the reigning nationalistic ideology, he cannot be the true God and worship cannot be authentic. In sum, the religious world of ancient Israel is complex. One must appreciate that syncretism necessarily corrupts faith and distorts their understanding of the person and work of Yahweh.

**David Thompson:** Gilgal and Beth-aven were two pagan cult sites. In fact, the name “Bethel” means “House of God” and the name “Beth-aven” means “House of Wickedness.” God did not want them going to these false places of evil worship and taking oaths like Israel.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** At these sanctuaries the people swear, “*As Yahweh lives,*” and then enter the sanctuary to become part of the cultic worship. The name of Yahweh was used with syncretistic deceit when the people knew very well that Baal was worshiped there (**Jer. 4:2; 5:2**).

##### 2. (:16-17) Waywardness of Israel Due to Stubbornness

*“Since Israel is stubborn Like a stubborn heifer,  
Can the LORD now pasture them Like a lamb in a large field?  
Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The fundamental charge in these verses is that Israel is incorrigible in its evil ways. This is shown (1) in the simile of the stubborn heifer, (2) in their unbreakable attachment to idols, and (3) in their habitual debauchery of drunkenness and promiscuity. A stubborn heifer was a cow that refused to go where her owner led (cf. **Jer 31:18**). The stubbornness of the people made it impossible for God to give them peace and prosperity. The line “*Ephraim is joined to idols*” (which implies that Israel has formed a political alliance with idols) could instead be rendered, “*Ephraim is spellbound of idols.*” The latter interpretation implies that Israel is bewitched by idols, and it is preferable. Following such an interpretation, “*Leave him alone!*” implies that the nation is in a trance from which no one may arouse them.

**James Mays:** The cult of Israel’s shrines is to be avoided because those who assemble in them are stubbornly committed to their folly. Like a **balky cow** which always bucks and plunges in the direction opposite to that in which she is pushed, Israel perversely resists every attempt of Yahweh to guide them. For a similar metaphor, cf. Jeremiah’s ‘*untrained calf*’ (**Jer. 31.18**). Hardening of mind and spirit has set in. Yahweh can no longer shepherd his people, leading them to the pleasant and verdant places where pasture is abundant.

**David Allen Hubbard:** However much God would like to shepherd Israel with his wisdom, it seems he must, because of her continual intransigence, treat her as those dumb animals which will not respond to their master. . .

**Ephraim** (v. 17), one of Hosea’s favourite designations for Israel, is used here for the first time. Technically, it describes both the most influential tribe in the Northern Kingdom (cf. **Josh. 16:5–10** for the land originally allotted to the descendants of this son of Joseph in **Gen. 48:1–7**) and the hill territory that it occupied, which may have been Hosea’s home. Used by itself or in clear parallelism with Israel, it seems to stand for the whole northern people (cf. **11:1, 3, 8, 9; 12:8**)

#### **B. (:18-19) Shameful Conduct Drives Them to Shameful Judgment**

*“Their liquor gone, They play the harlot continually;  
Their rulers dearly love shame.  
The wind wraps them in its wings,  
And they will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The NIV translation of v. **18a** implies that the people continued to engage in promiscuity, even when sober and not under the inhibition-removing effects of alcohol. This probably is not correct; the line seems to mean, “*When their liquor runs out, they engage prostitutes,*” meaning that they drink all they can and then turn to sex.

**Trent Butler:** God seeks to stop sin so its contagious nature will not infect Judah as it has Israel. Hosea prays that his own people in the nation of Judah will not follow the example of their northern kinsmen. Surely, God will have a remnant of his people who will be faithful and not fall into the Canaanite trap. Gilgal was Israel's first place of worship after Joshua brought the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the

promised land (**Josh. 5:9–10**). But it was no longer a place holy to the Lord. Neither was Bethel, sarcastically spelled Beth Aven (“*house of disaster or of injustice*”), in spite of its many connections with the patriarchs (**Gen. 28:19**). These were not the places God had chosen for his people to worship.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** A “*wind*” (*rûah*; GK 8120) confines Israel. This word is the same one translated “*spirit*” in **v.12**, but in contrast to those deeply controlling and destructive impulses that are driving the nation, here it denotes the **unstoppable force of divine judgment** (cf. **13:15**). The people’s misdirected sacrifices (**4:13**; cf. **2:11, 13**) cannot secure bounty or protection; they bring only shame and suffering. These offerings will be exposed as useless before the sovereign person of Yahweh, his holy demands, and his powerful actions in history.

**John Goldingay:** The chapter closes (**vv. 18b–19**) with a tricolon whose reference to “*its shields*” (that is, the people who are supposed to be the protectors of the city) begins the transition to the next section, with its challenge to the **Ephraimite leadership**. These shields have behaved as if they are emotionally attached to shame or slighting (cf. **v. 7**). The implication of their behavior is that it’s going to take them to this fate. It’s as if they have been bewitched. The whoring spirit that has led the people astray (**v. 12**), to which Hosea will refer again in **5:4**, has bound them up in its wings. He is playing with the fact that *rûah* also denotes the wind, which (as it were) has wings (**Pss. 18:10 [11]; 104:3**) that enable it to carry someone away. They will carry the shields to the shame that properly issues from their offering sacrifices to these other deities. They will not merely be ashamed but also shamed.

**Robin Routledge:** The people are in the grip of false worship and must bear the shameful consequences of their idolatrous sacrifices. Wind may also be an instrument of divine judgment (e.g. **13:15**), which, when linked to Israel being swept away, may suggest exile (**Ben Zvi** 2005: 107–108; cf. **Macintosh** 1997: 173–174). The people’s sin, which now controls them, will carry them ultimately to destruction.

**Duane Garrett:** The thrust of this passage is therefore that Judah should not follow Israel into apostasy and promiscuity. The people of Judah should abandon religious shrines and practices of Israel because they had become hopelessly defiled by paganism. The Israelites were like a stubborn cow in their apostasy—entranced by idols, debauched, in love with their cults, but destined to be swept away as by a storm and to be sadly disappointed by the failure of their gods.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do religious leaders serve themselves rather than faithfully shepherd and instruct God’s people?

- 2) Why was there so much prostitution and illicit sex associated with the worship of pagan gods?
- 3) What am I doing to promote the accurate and full knowledge of the Lord that leads to righteous conduct and acceptable worship?
- 4) How can we learn valuable lessons from the spiritual adultery and illegitimate worship of others?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**David Allen Hubbard:** In this section the focus narrows from the people as a whole, with whom Yahweh has sharp controversy, to the **priests** – especially the **high priest** – who regulate the cult and interpret its terms to the people (cf. **4:4, 6, 9; 5:1** for specific references to the priests). The crimes mentioned here are entirely fitting to this sacerdotal context:

- (1) failure to teach the law (**4:6**);
- (2) use of the cult to feed their own appetites (**4:7–10**);
- (3) practice of forms of divination (**4:12**);
- (4) offering of sacrifices at the high-places (**4:13a**);
- (5) participation in ritual orgies of sex (**4:13b–14**);
- (6) encouragement of drunken lewdness in connection with idol worship (**4:17–19**);
- (7) false trust in the sacrifices at the shrines (**5:6**); and
- (8) bearing of bastard children as the fruit of the pagan orgies (**5:7**).

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** In the twenty-first century, we have our own set of **idols** that we stubbornly stray toward for worship. Money, security, pleasure, people, careers, and possessions are still idols that demand our loyalty. Again, our idols can be anything or anyone that threatens to occupy the throne of our hearts. God-substitutes can be very demanding of our time and money.

And our **stubbornness** is expressed in the most subtle ways. We juggle our idols while at the same time expressing our commitment to God. We set our priorities for our personal goals, our images, our families, and our future plans; then we not only ask God to bless them, but to help us achieve them. We try to keep the Lord in the idol-polishing and maintenance business!

But our stubborn self is the most dangerous diminutive god. While we say we are Christians, attend church, pray our prayers, and become involved in a few good works, **we still control our lives**. We only need God for Him to accomplish our predetermined plans and purposes.



**Gary Smith: The centrality of the Word of God for spiritual leaders.** When a people fail to follow God, it is always instructive to ask why. What did they do to displease God? Why did they miss the mark of doing what God requires? How can we learn from this incident so that we do not make the same mistakes (**1 Cor. 10:11**)?

In **Hos. 4:4–10** Hosea explains one of the main reasons why the people in Israel were rejected by God. It was fundamentally a problem of **not knowing God as their covenant Lord**. If one were to ask why this had happened, the answer is clear. Israel's problem arose because the priests (and to some extent the prophets) were **not teaching God's words of wisdom from the Torah** (the five books of Moses). Although this might not be the reason for God's rejection of every group of people throughout history (some know God's words but do not follow them), several basic principles are established that serve as a warning to all spiritual leaders.

Of all the roles a pastor or any other spiritual leader has, the undergirding role is to help people know God (**4:6**). Israel's experience demonstrates that any acknowledgment of God as Lord is nearly impossible if spiritual leaders ignore God's revelation in the Bible. A leader will then tend to substitute some other "good" human cause that is culturally attractive but not nearly as important as the glorification of God (**4:7**). Jesus knew that the giving of charity and praying to God were "good" things, but he condemned the Pharisees who did not exhibit the more important characteristic of righteousness (**Matt. 6:1–7**). Eventually these "small" things lead to a perversion that destroys the true faith and involves people in things that God rejects (**Hos. 4:10**).

The powerfully persuasive warning throughout **4:4–10** is that God will destroy those teachers and preachers who reject him and lead his people astray. God's disapproval of false prophets who give dreams and false messages in his name is reported in **Jeremiah 5:12–13; 14:14–15; 23:9–40**. Jesus condemns the hypocritical Jewish teachers of his day in **Matthew 23**, and James warns about the serious responsibility of teachers (**James 3:1**). As **Proverbs 29:18** says, where there is no revelation from God, the people perish.

**The perversion of worship.** The results of bad teaching nearly always show up in the way people worship God (**Hos. 4:11–14**). If God is not presented as Redeemer, no one will come to him for forgiveness. If God is not seen as the Sovereign King of the universe, people will not honor and revere him as divine Lord, but will treat him as a casual buddy. If no one knows what God hates and is ignorant of what pleases him, it is not surprising if people do things that are contrary to his revealed will.

When people do not know God, they tend to do whatever seems culturally or socially acceptable. In Hosea's day that meant following the socially acceptable practices at the Baal temples. How could people go so wrong as to accept excessive drinking, idol worship, prostitution, and sacrifices to gods other than Israel's God? The simple explanation is that everyone around them was doing it; it was the cultural norm. If this principle is carried over to worship in churches today, the question we should be asking is: To what extent have our cultural norms determined what we do at church? What

music, activities, messages, and methods do we use that do not glorify God but are done anyway since they seem so right? . . .

**Dealing with stubborn rebellion.** The final paragraph (**4:15–19**) warns what can happen to any person or group who rejects God. Once a sinful perception of reality is viewed as normative and acceptable, it is difficult to bring about change. Stubborn persistence based on what people believe to be the truth can so blind our eyes that it is almost impossible to see the light. If my parents did it this way, if this is denominational policy, if this is what makes me comfortable, if this is something I think is okay, then it is hard to conceive of this action as a bad thing that God hates. When these perspectives become the keys to judging the normativity of anything, one has already lost the battle. It becomes a waste of time to lead people in a different way, for there is no ultimate authority (**4:16**).

The frightening fact is that some people can become so drawn into false religious beliefs that God seems to give up on them (cf. **4:17** with **Rom. 1:18–32**). In such cases about all one can do is to warn other individuals about not being involved with these sorts of people (**Hos. 4:15**) and to encourage friends to stay away from the places of deception. Eventually a time may come where thoroughly deceived people must be left to their perverse ways until the shame of their ways finally catches up to them (**4:18–19**).

TEXT: Hosea 5:1-15

TITLE: *INEVITABILITY OF JUDGMENT*

**BIG IDEA:**

**JUDGMENT IS INEVITABLE BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S HARLOTRY AND GOD'S HOLY WRATH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Derek Kidner:** For several chapters now the picture will be building up by fragments, coming at the subject from all kinds of angles. By its very disjointedness the style suits the chaotic situation it addresses. Here and there in this chapter some belated stirrings of national alarm will be detected; but what action it will lead to is quite another matter. How deep or shallow is the change of mood will be the question particularly faced in **chapter 6**. Meanwhile God's exposure of His people and of what must happen to them continues in a hail of strong and lively metaphors. . .

There is no pretence here that reconciliation can be easy, or penitence a mere gesture of apology. The whole book is, from one angle, a study of what it means to turn back to God. So in this passage the nation is confronted with two unconsidered facts:

- the stranglehold of its own habits,
- and the hiddenness of God for worshippers who are insincere.

**David Malick:** The LORD indicts the leaders of Israel and Judah for their evil leadership which has led the people into the deep sin of idolatry and no knowledge of the LORD (**5:1-15**)

a. The LORD sees that the spiritual and political leaders of Israel have led the people on both sides of the Jordan and Judah into the sin of idolatry without knowledge of the LORD which will result in judgment **5:1-7**

b. The LORD will bring about judgment in Israel and in Judah for their political crimes (in going to Assyria) against Him **5:8-15**

**Trent Butler:** God's sinful people neither know nor seek to worship him, so they must face destruction and isolation from him until they are willing to admit their guilt and turn back to worship him.

**(:1a) ALERT! TARGETED JUDGMENT**

*"Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king!  
For the judgment applies to you,"*

**Gary Smith:** The threefold summons to "*hear . . . pay attention . . . listen*" (**5:1**) indicates that an important statement is to follow.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** “*Hear*,” “*Give heed*,” and “*Listen*” are the imperative **watchwords** by which the prophet hopes to alert the priests, the people (“*house of Israel*”), and the politicians (“*house of the king*”) that the judgment of captivity applies to them. The definite article in Hebrew is prefixed to the word *judgment* (Hebrew, *mishpat*), which makes it all the more certain that the judgment about to fall upon Israel is that which was promised if the covenant was broken (**Lev. 28:14-46; Deut. 28:15-68**). Hosea’s main target of attack is once again the **leadership** (specifically the priests), who have been guilty of ensnaring and netting the people in sin.

**Biblehub.com:** The **priests** in ancient Israel were responsible for leading the people in worship and maintaining the spiritual health of the nation. This call to the priests indicates their failure in their duties, as they were expected to be the mediators between God and the people. The rebuke suggests a corruption or negligence in their spiritual leadership, which is a recurring theme in the prophetic books (e.g., **Malachi 2:1-9**).

The “*house of Israel*” refers to the northern kingdom, which had separated from Judah after Solomon’s reign. This phrase emphasizes the collective responsibility of the nation, highlighting that the entire community is implicated in the wrongdoing. The prophets often addressed the nation as a whole to call them back to covenant faithfulness (e.g., **Amos 3:1**).

The **royal house** refers to the monarchy, likely the ruling dynasty of the northern kingdom. This call to the royal house underscores the accountability of the leaders, who were expected to govern according to God’s laws. The failure of the kings to lead righteously often led the nation into idolatry and injustice (e.g., **1 Kings 16:30-33**).

The **judgment** mentioned here is a divine pronouncement of impending punishment due to the nation’s sins. The prophets frequently delivered messages of judgment as a means to call the people to repentance. This judgment is not arbitrary but is a response to specific covenant violations (e.g., **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**).

**Allen Guenther:** Each command addresses a separate defendant. They have all been charged with unfaithfulness in the preceding accusation oracles. Priests, people, and royal house: the categories represent the cross section of Israelite society: the religious establishment, the population as a whole, and the king, army, and political and administrative branches of government.

## **I. (:1b-7) JUDGMENT IS INEVITABLE BECAUSE OF ISRAEL’S HARLOTRY**

**Gary Smith:** **Verses 1–7** explain why God holds Israel’s leaders accountable for the nation’s promiscuous acts. . . Continuing his judicial imagery from the courtroom, Hosea describes how God as judge will bring his verdict of “guilty” on the leaders of Israel (political and spiritual, see **v. 1**) because the people do not have a personal knowledge of God. This verdict includes an announcement of war (**vv. 8–11**) and a final

series of bold images of God's judgment on his people. Within these judgments on Israel, Hosea indicates that God will also destroy the nation of Judah (vv. **5b, 10, 12b, 13, 14**).

**A. (:1b-2) Deep Depravity**

*“For you have been a snare at Mizpah,  
And a net spread out on Tabor.  
And the revolvers have gone deep in depravity,  
But I will chastise all of them.”*

**Allen Guenther:** Guilty! All three groups are guilty as charged.

Priests! You were a trap at Mizpah.

People! A net is spread out on Mt. Tabor.

Ruling class! Rebels are deep in slaughter.

**Lloyd Ogilvie:** The towns mentioned were sites of the syncretistic or Canaanite cult worship. Mizpah is probably the Mizpah of Benjamin, nine miles north of Jerusalem. Excavations there have uncovered numerous Astarte statuettes from the eighth century B.C., showing that the fertility cult was active there. Tabor is a mountain on the northeastern edge of the Jezreel Valley, and was another cult site. Shittim is alluded to in verse two. The point is that cult worship had spread across the land.

**Biblehub.com:** **Mizpah** was a significant location in Israel's history, often associated with gatherings for national decision-making or worship (e.g., **1 Samuel 7:5-6**). The reference to a "*snare*" suggests that the leaders have turned a place of potential spiritual renewal into one of entrapment, possibly through idolatry or false worship practices.

**Mount Tabor** is another significant site, known for its strategic location and its role in Israel's military history (e.g., **Judges 4:6**). The imagery of a "*net*" implies deception and entrapment, indicating that the leaders have ensnared the people in sin, leading them away from true worship. This metaphor highlights the leaders' culpability in leading the nation astray.

**The rebels are deep in slaughter** -- This phrase indicates a profound level of rebellion and sin among the people. The term "*rebels*" refers to those who have turned away from God's commandments, often associated with idolatry and moral corruption. The word "*deep*" suggests that their actions are not superficial but entrenched and pervasive. In the historical context of Hosea, Israel was engaged in alliances with foreign nations and worship of their gods, leading to spiritual and physical violence. The "*slaughter*" can be understood both literally, as in acts of violence and bloodshed, and metaphorically, representing the spiritual death resulting from their apostasy. This echoes the warnings found in **Deuteronomy 28**, where disobedience to God leads to curses, including violence and destruction.

**but I will chastise them all** -- Here, God declares His intention to discipline the people. The word "*chastise*" implies correction and punishment with the aim of bringing about

repentance and restoration. This reflects God's justice and mercy, as He does not abandon His people but seeks to correct them. The use of "all" indicates that no one is exempt from this divine discipline, emphasizing the comprehensive nature of God's judgment. This is consistent with the theme of divine retribution found throughout the prophetic books, such as in **Amos 3:2**, where God states that He will punish Israel for their iniquities.

**David Allen Hubbard:** Andersen's translation (p. 380) follows NIV: '*The rebels* (Heb. *šwt*, 'to wander' or 'revolt'; cf. **Job 1:7; 2:2; Num. 5:12**) are deep in '*slaughter*', and his interpretation, with considerable cogency, sees the crime as nothing less than child-sacrifice, on the basis of the use of '*slaughter*' in **Isaiah 57:5** and **Ezekiel 16:21; 23:39**; cf. **Genesis 22:10** – Abraham and Isaac!

**James Mays:** Using three images from the techniques of hunting, Yahweh scornfully accuses his ministers of making a quarry of others instead of being their protectors and benefactors. The **trap** (*pah*) was a device made of two spring nets which when triggered came together to catch birds (cf. **Amos 3.5**). The **net** (*rešet*) was placed along paths or in the forest to entangle its quarry. The **pit** was a covered hole which gave way when an animal walked on it. The offices of religion and government were established to save and protect the people, but these leaders have instead been like snares that catch and imprison.

**Robin Routledge:** The main emphasis appears to be that the nation's leaders, who should be guarding and protecting the people, are preying on them.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Although God's holiness is vindicated in Ephraim's day of rebuke, His love and mercy are again seen (cf. **5:2**) in the word *rebuke* (Hebrew, *tokechah*; literally, "reproof, correction"), which signifies discipline with the goal of **restoration**.

## **B. (:3-4) Defiling Deeds**

**H. D. Beeby:** The **knowledge of God**, in two senses, binds these verses together and further emphasizes the links with **ch. 4**. The verses begin with God's knowledge of his people (an obvious assumption underlying **5:1–2**), and they end with Israel's loss of the knowledge of God. Two kinds of knowledge of God are the bread of this sandwich, and what lies between? The meat of the sandwich is a description of Israel and its leaders without the knowledge of God—an Israel playing the harlot, defiled, and unable to repent and return to God. The description also includes a positive reason why Israel cannot know the God of Israel. It is because the people have changed their God for an idol—the spirit of harlotry. This new god is not only an external deity demanding obedience, but it has become internalized and taken full control. The expulsive power of a new knowledge has driven out the knowledge of God, leaving falsehood to rule.

**David Allen Hubbard:** These verses are framed by another envelope pattern: *I* (Yahweh; cf. **v. 2**) *know* [you], *Ephraim* (see below for vocative) in **verse 3a** is both paralleled by

and contrasted with and *they know not Yahweh* in **verse 4c**. The ignorance and rejection which mark Israel's and Ephraim's (again the east and west districts of the kingdom) relations to God are more than matched by Yahweh's full acquaintance with their harlotry/idolatry.

### 1. Exposure of Sin Causing Defilement

*"I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me;  
For now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot,  
Israel has defiled itself."*

**Biblehub.com**: The **defilement** of Israel signifies moral and spiritual corruption. This defilement results from their idolatrous practices and abandonment of God's laws. **Leviticus 18:24-30** warns against defilement through idolatry and immorality, highlighting the consequences of such actions. The defilement also foreshadows the eventual judgment and exile that Israel would face due to their persistent unfaithfulness.

**Allen Guenther**: The Lord's verdict comes from his total knowledge of his people. Motives, attitudes, and actions alike have come under his scrutiny. The past and the present are an open book before him. The secret sins of individuals as well as families, social groups, and nation cannot be concealed.

**Trent Butler**: The citizens of Israel thought they could live any way they pleased and not be found out. God had to remind them of the extent of his knowledge. He knew everything they did and said and thought and planned. Nothing escaped him. They could not hide. Ephraim has engaged in prostitution in the fertility cults of Baal. Thus Israel is corrupt or defiled, no longer pure and clean, and no longer eligible to enter the holy place where God is worshipped (**2 Chr. 23:19**).

### 2. Estrangement from God

*"Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God."*

**Biblehub.com**: This phrase highlights the concept of sin as a **barrier to reconciliation** with God. In the context of Hosea, Israel's actions, particularly idolatry and social injustice, have created a separation from God. The deeds refer to the persistent sinful behaviors that have become habitual, making repentance difficult. This echoes the biblical principle found in **Isaiah 59:2**, where iniquities create a separation between people and God. The historical context of Hosea involves a time of moral and spiritual decline in Israel, where the worship of Baal and other Canaanite deities was prevalent, leading to a departure from the covenant relationship with Yahweh.

**Robin Routledge**: It is significant here that, while earlier the priests were indicted for leading the people astray, the people are, nevertheless, held accountable for their own actions.

### 3. Exchange of Covenant Relationship for Idolatry

*"For a spirit of harlotry is within them,*



*And they do not know the LORD.”*

**Biblehub.com:** In the Hebrew context, "to know" implies an intimate, covenantal relationship, not merely intellectual awareness. Israel's failure to know the LORD indicates a breakdown in their covenant relationship, characterized by disobedience and ignorance of God's laws and character. This is a recurring theme in the prophetic literature, where knowing God is equated with living in accordance with His will (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**). Theologically, this points to the necessity of a heart transformation, as seen in the New Covenant promise of **Jeremiah 31:33-34**, where God writes His law on the hearts of His people, enabling them to truly know Him.

**James Mays:** This uncleanness of Israel is a far more radical contamination than any cultic disqualification that can be corrected by ritual purification or atonement. Israel's defilement involves a paralysis of soul. They are held prisoner in the grip of the deeds of their past. These 'deeds' (**4.9; 7.2; 9.15; 12.2**) are the fateful blunders during Israel's history in the land (cf. **6.7ff.; 9.1 off.**) which have shaped their character so totally that they are surrounded by these deeds like an insurmountable wall (**7.2**). A spirit of harlotry (cf. **4.12**) is at work among the people; they are possessed by a charisma that comes from Baal and his cult. As a result they do not know Yahweh nor can they return to him.

**Duane Garrett:** The Bible holds two truths in tension: first, that repentance is always a possibility, and second, that corruption can so enslave a soul that repentance becomes a practical impossibility. This verse focuses on the latter truth. As **Wolff** comments, "Total apostasy takes away freedom." Long years of training in paganism had had its effect; the nation had become unable to return to Yahweh. The point that they no longer knew God looks back to the original indictment on the nation, that it lacked the knowledge of God (**4:1**). We should note that Hosea uses a number of catchwords to link v. 4 to v. 3. God knows about them (v. 3), but they do not know him (v. 4); Ephraim led them into prostitution (v. 3), and a spirit of prostitution now filled their hearts (v. 4); they were unclean (v. 3), and thus they could not enter God's presence (v. 4).

### **C. (:5-7) Desperate Downfall**

#### **Matthew Black: The Result of Bad Leadership**

- A People who don't know the Lord (**5:4b**)
- A People enslaved sin (**5:5**)
- A People without Fellowship with God (**5:6**)
- A People without Faith in God (**5:7a**)
- A People without a Future in God (**5:7b**)

#### 1. (:5) Impact of Pride

*“Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him,  
And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;  
Judah also has stumbled with them.”*

**Gary Smith:** **Pride** can lead to a hardened rebellion that refuses to change because it means an admission of guilt. Apparently all the people can talk about are their famous forefathers, the past wars they won, the glories of their cities, and all the good things of life. They are blind to the depravity of their present situation and do not want to face reality. They do not want to admit they have made mistakes or that the nation is in trouble. This pride is found in both Israel and Judah, and it will lead to their downfall.

**Biblehub.com:** **Israel's arrogance testifies against them** --The phrase highlights the pride and self-reliance of Israel, which is a recurring theme in the prophetic books. **Arrogance** here refers to Israel's refusal to acknowledge their dependence on God, choosing instead to trust in their own strength and alliances with foreign nations. This pride is seen as a witness against them, as it leads to their downfall. In biblical context, pride is often condemned (**Proverbs 16:18**), and Israel's arrogance is contrasted with the humility God desires (**Micah 6:8**). The testimony against them is not just from God but from their own actions, which reveal their unfaithfulness.

**David Allen Hubbard:** The beginning charge (the **pride** of Israel, **v. 5**) is self-reliance, failure to depend on God utterly. The concluding charge (**v. 7**) sums up their **spiritual treason** (cf. **6:7**), evidenced in the alien children, religiously and literally bastards, produced by the illicit unions that Hosea flailed in **4:13–14**. In between, the focus is on the **futility of the cult** and its myriads of sacrifices which are symbolized in the two words *flocks* (i.e. small cattle like sheep and goats) and *herds* (i.e. large cattle like cows and oxen). **Judgment by frustration** is what was prescribed for Gomer/Israel in **2:7**, and here it does not produce a penitent return. The frustration turns calamitous in the closing clause (**v. 7c**), when God will devastate *their fields* (which should be read as sole object of the verb) and thus put the Baals to shame in their impotence and strip Israel of the crops that clothed and fed her (cf. **2:9, 12**).

**Jason Van Bommel:** Israel was not just idolatrous, but they were proud of their idolatry. They had glorious high places at Mizpah and Tabor. These places were abominations to God, scenes of spiritual adultery by God's beloved people, but the real problem was Israel's pride in these places. Far from being ashamed of their sin, they promoted it and profited from it. They were proud.

2. (:6) Impotency of Religious Ritual -- Impossibility of Recovery  
*"They will go with their flocks and herds To seek the LORD,  
but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them."*

**Biblehub.com:** **They go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD** -- In ancient Israel, sacrifices were a central part of worship, and flocks and herds were often used as offerings to God. This phrase indicates that the people are attempting to seek God through ritualistic means, bringing their animals as sacrifices. However, their actions are superficial, lacking genuine repentance or heartfelt devotion. This reflects a broader theme in the Old Testament where God desires obedience and a contrite heart over mere ritual (**1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 51:16-17**). The Israelites' reliance on external rituals

without true faith mirrors the practices condemned by prophets like Isaiah (**Isaiah 1:11-15**).

**Robin Routledge:** Generally, seeking '*the Lord*' is something positive (e.g. **Deut. 4:29; Zeph. 2:3; Zech. 8:20–23**) and may indicate repentance (cf. **3:5; 5:15; Isa. 55:6–7; Jer. 50:4**). Here, though, it appears to suggest **reliance on ritual** which, without a right attitude, proves fruitless. It may also reflect arrogance in taking Yahweh for granted and supposing that he will be available when they choose to seek him (**Glenny 2013: 104**). But though they seek him, they will not find him, because Yahweh has withdrawn himself from them (cf. **5:15**).

**H. D. Beeby: Why has God withdrawn?** It was not caprice or spite, or loss of love or interest. It was the inevitable act of God. It was the withdrawal demanded by love. The love that had chosen freely and given freedom to the chosen one could never do less than honor that freedom. Israel the partner in covenant had broken the covenant; Israel the wife had been unfaithful (**v. 7a, b**); Israel the known was unknowing. It was Israel who had first withdrawn from God, and God's withdrawing was the inevitable response. God's absence was a deprivation and a punishment; it was both educational and designed to bring a change in Israel's attitude. Yet these are still not the profoundest reasons for God's locked door. They do not justify the word "inevitable"; rather, they are secondary to something far more fundamental. The true cause of God's absence was that love cannot coerce, and God loved Israel. Creators can coerce, partners can enforce, kings can command and educationalists overrule, but lovers knock on locked doors and then go away (**Cant. 5:2ff.**). It is the seducer or rapist who stays. A withdrawn Israel, in the nature of things, learns of a withdrawn God, but God's withdrawing is not primarily vengeful nor a simple tit for tat. It is the work of suffering love.

### 3. (:7) Inversion of Expectation

*"They have dealt treacherously against the LORD,  
For they have borne illegitimate children.  
Now the new moon will devour them with their land."*

**Biblehub.com: for they have borne illegitimate children** -- The "*illegitimate children*" symbolize the fruit of Israel's idolatry. In a literal sense, this could refer to children born from unions with pagan nations, but metaphorically, it represents the spiritual offspring of their unfaithfulness—corrupt practices and beliefs. This imagery is consistent with Hosea's earlier use of family metaphors, such as Gomer's unfaithfulness and the names of Hosea's children (**Hosea 1:2-9**). The concept of illegitimacy underscores the impurity and unacceptability of their actions before God.

The **New Moon** was a time of celebration and worship in Israel (**Numbers 10:10, 28:11-15**). However, here it is turned into a time of judgment. The phrase suggests that what was meant to be a time of renewal and blessing will instead bring destruction. This **inversion of expectation** serves as a warning of impending judgment due to their unfaithfulness. The "*devour*" imagery indicates total consumption, leaving nothing

behind, which aligns with the prophetic warnings of exile and devastation (**Amos 8:5-10**). The mention of "*their land*" emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the judgment, affecting both the people and the land they inhabit, fulfilling the covenant curses outlined in **Deuteronomy 28**.

**Robin Routledge**: This may refer to children born as a result of the promiscuity associated with the cult. The primary reference, though, as with the equivalent expression '*children of whoredom*' (**1:2**, nrsv), appears to be to a generation which, because of the failure of its spiritual leaders, is also unfaithful to Yahweh (**Glenny 2013: 105**). The consequence of this endemic infidelity is the devouring of Israel's fields (cf. **2:9, 12**).

**M. Daniel Carroll R.**: The **blindness of Israel** is reflected in its **arrogance**, which causes it—and Judah—to "*stumble*" (cf. **4:5; 14:1, 9**) in its sin and precipitates its downfall (**v.5**). Though the nation might believe that pilgrimages to the holy sites will gain favor before Yahweh and exhibit their faithfulness, in actuality they have betrayed him (**v.7**). Their improper celebrations (such as the New Moon festivals; cf. **2:13**) are the reason for their judgment.

## **II. (:8-14) JUDGMENT IS INEVITABLE BECAUSE OF GOD'S HOLY WRATH**

**Robin Routledge**: A key theme in these verses is the judgment on both nations because of their hostility to one another. The conflict between Israel and Judah, in both the Syro-Ephraimite war and numerous border incidents over a long period, threatens the unity of the people. Yahweh's desire is for one people that can stand as a witness to the nations, but that is undermined by continuing rivalry and infighting.

**Lloyd Ogilvie**: The judgment of God on both Ephraim and Judah begins with a border war between the two nations, continues with an appeal for help from Assyria, and culminates with the fall of Ephraim to the dangerous ally. We see Yahweh as the Lord of all nations. Even though they did not recognize Him, He worked out measures of His judgment through their battles with each other. Eventually their self-seeking alliances backfired. The reality of divine justice is executed through the realities of military and political conflict between the nations.

**James Mays**: Now suddenly the focus shifts to the political scene with both Israel and Judah on the stage. It is now generally recognized that the events referred to in **5.8–14** belong to the history of **Syrian-Ephraimite war**. It was throughout a venture of tragic folly with grievous consequences for the brother nations of Judah and Israel. In immediate danger of invasion by the Assyrian, Tiglath-pileser, Israel's king Pekah (737–732) joined forces with Rezin of Aram to face their common foe. These two allies were unsuccessful in persuading King Ahaz of Judah to join their coalition. Anxious for Judean assistance and fearful of an unaligned power on their southern borders, the two kings attacked Judah and invested Jerusalem. Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser whose

approach brought an end to the attack on Judah. In 733 Israel was overwhelmed, a large segment of the population was deported, and all her territory except for the central hill country of Ephraim and Benjamin was incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system. Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea (732–724) who assumed the throne of Israel and became a vassal of Tiglath-pileser to save what was left of the nation. The references to contemporary events in **5.8 – 6.6** fit the situation in Israel during the time after the Assyrian attack had begun, just before and after 733. The sayings are addressed to both the northern and southern kingdoms, with the former called Ephraim throughout.

**Allen Guenther:** The scene now shifts to God as the Lord of history. Three historical judgments are identified.

- The first is set within the covenant community.
- The second depicts the covenant people and the nation in which they have come to trust for their deliverance. The Lord will expose the futility of all other saviors.
- The third pictures God carrying his people off into exile.

#### **A. (:8-9) Call to Arms – Alerting to Serious Threat**

*“Blow the horn in Gibeah, The trumpet in Ramah.  
Sound an alarm at Beth-aven: ‘Behind you, Benjamin!’  
Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke;  
Among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure.”*

**Biblehub.com: Blow the ram’s horn in Gibeah** -- The blowing of the ram's horn, or shofar, was a call to alert and assemble the people, often used in times of war or significant religious events. Gibeah, a city in the territory of Benjamin, holds historical significance as the location of King Saul's residence (**1 Samuel 10:26**). The call to blow the horn here signifies an urgent warning, possibly of impending judgment or invasion, reflecting the broader theme of Hosea's prophecy against Israel's unfaithfulness.

**the trumpet in Ramah** -- Ramah, another city in Benjamin, was a strategic location often associated with significant biblical events, such as the burial place of Rachel (**Jeremiah 31:15**). The use of the trumpet, a different instrument from the shofar, emphasizes the seriousness of the situation. This dual sounding of instruments in two key locations underscores the widespread nature of the threat and the need for immediate attention and action.

**raise the battle cry in Beth-aven** -- Beth-aven, meaning "*house of wickedness*," is a derogatory name for Bethel, a center of idolatrous worship in the Northern Kingdom (**Hosea 4:15**). The call to raise a battle cry here highlights the spiritual corruption and impending divine judgment. This location, once a place of worship, had become synonymous with Israel's apostasy, drawing a parallel to the spiritual battle against idolatry.

**Lead on, O Benjamin!** -- Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, is called to lead, possibly due to its geographical proximity to the conflict or its historical role in Israel's military endeavors (**Judges 20:14-16**). This call to action may also symbolize a broader call to repentance and leadership in returning to covenant faithfulness. The tribe's involvement in this prophetic message serves as a reminder of the collective responsibility of all Israel in the face of divine judgment.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** This section begins with a **trumpet blast** to prepare for war. The scene is of a watchman on a tower alerting his people of an approaching army (e.g., **Jdg 3:27; 1Sa 13:3; Eze 33:3-6; Am 2:2**). The three places—Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel (for Beth-Aven as Bethel, see comment on **4:15**)—were located within the territory of Benjamin, for many years a disputed border area between the northern and southern kingdoms. Some commentators believe that there is a directional progression in the geographical locations of these towns that suggests a line of attack, coming from Judah. Such a raid may have taken place as a counteroffensive soon after the Syro-Ephraimite War in order to take advantage of Israel's vulnerability. If such were the case, Judah would be trying to take advantage of Israel's subjugation to the Assyrians as a vassal to the empire. While this scenario is a possibility, no record exists of such a foray. In addition, it is difficult to know whether this shout to arms is defensive and geared to rally these towns to brace themselves for an attack or, alternatively, is designed to encourage troops to press forward.

**Trent Butler:** **The call to arms is doomed to failure.** God has decreed punishment for the Northern Kingdom. The punishment will come on God's day of reckoning or day of punishment and rebuke. Before anyone can protest, God underlines the finality of the sentence. It will not be commuted. God has made known to the tribes of Israel what is trustworthy and certain.

### **B. (:10) Corruption Leads to Outpoured Divine Wrath**

*“The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary;  
On them I will pour out My wrath like water.”*

**Biblehub.com:** **like those who move boundary stones** -- Moving boundary stones was a serious offense in ancient Israel, as these stones marked property lines and were essential for maintaining order and fairness in land ownership. **Deuteronomy 19:14** and **Proverbs 22:28** emphasize the importance of respecting these boundaries. This metaphor suggests that the leaders of Judah were guilty of corruption and injustice, akin to stealing land and violating the rights of others. It reflects a broader theme of moral decay and disregard for God's laws.

**I will pour out My fury upon them like water** -- The imagery of pouring out fury like water conveys the idea of an overwhelming and unstoppable judgment. Water, when unleashed, can be both destructive and cleansing, symbolizing God's righteous anger and the inevitable consequences of sin. This phrase underscores the certainty and intensity of divine retribution. Similar expressions of God's wrath can be found in other



prophetic books, such as **Isaiah 5:24-25** and **Jeremiah 7:20**, where God's judgment is depicted as a consuming force.

**Derek Kidner:** Of the two threats to a people, aggression and corruption, the second is the more ominous, and in these chapters its signs are everywhere. Aggression, for all its terrors, can unite and purge, but corruption only divides and demoralizes.

**John Goldingay:** The action against Judah will involve **fury** like an overwhelming flash flood pouring out (the word for “*fury*” recalls another verb meaning “*overflow*”). Yahweh will personally bring it about. God may use one party within the people of God to bring trouble to another, but the one he uses will then find itself under chastisement even though used by God in this way, if its own aim in the action taken was its own advance. The principle that applies outside the people of God (e.g., to one of the great empires) also applies within it.

### C. (:11-14) Crushed by God’s Judgment

#### 1. (:11-12) Metaphor of God Destroying His People Like a Moth

*“Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,  
Because he was determined to follow man's command.  
Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim,  
And like rotteness to the house of Judah.”*

**Biblehub.com:** The phrase “**crushed in judgment**” indicates a severe and decisive punishment from God. This judgment is not arbitrary but a response to the persistent sin and rebellion of the people. The imagery of being “**crushed**” suggests total defeat and humiliation, reflecting the seriousness of their transgressions. This judgment aligns with the covenantal curses outlined in **Deuteronomy 28**, where disobedience leads to destruction and exile.

**Biblehub.com:** **So I am like a moth to Ephraim** -- In biblical symbolism, a moth represents destruction and decay, often in a slow and subtle manner. Here, God compares Himself to a moth, indicating a gradual but inevitable judgment upon Ephraim, which is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel. This imagery suggests that the consequences of their idolatry and unfaithfulness will eat away at their strength and prosperity. The moth's destructive nature is not immediate but persistent, reflecting how Israel's spiritual decay will lead to its downfall. This metaphor aligns with the broader theme of Hosea, where God warns Israel of the consequences of their covenant unfaithfulness. The use of “*Ephraim*” highlights the leading tribe of the northern kingdom, emphasizing the widespread nature of the sin and its impact.

**and like decay to the house of Judah** -- The term “*decay*” here is often associated with rot or corrosion, indicating a destructive process that weakens and undermines. By comparing Himself to decay, God warns the southern kingdom of Judah of a similar fate as Ephraim, though the process may differ in form. This serves as a prophetic warning that Judah is not immune to judgment despite its proximity to the temple in Jerusalem and its Davidic lineage. The imagery of decay suggests a deeper, internal



corruption that will lead to Judah's eventual downfall if they do not repent. This phrase connects to the broader biblical narrative where both Israel and Judah face consequences for their disobedience, as seen in the eventual Babylonian exile. The mention of both kingdoms underscores the comprehensive nature of God's judgment and the call for repentance across the entire nation.

**Gary Smith:** Hosea ends this section with several astonishing metaphors of God's future dealings with both of the guilty parties: Israel and Judah. He makes the shocking claim that God, their loving covenant partner, will be like "*pus*" in an open wound (NIV's "*moth*") and a "*rot*" to these people (5:12). These daring comparisons suggest that Israel and Judah will be like an injured soldier whose wounds are festering with terrible infection. Instead of cleaning, caring for, or healing these wounds of war so that his people can get better, God will be infecting them with more misery. Hosea is jarring his audience awake by showing that **God will fight against them** rather than for them if they continue with these war plans.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** These **diverse metaphors** underscore the difference between the absolute sovereignty of God over against his people's failings and fate. The weight of this disparity is felt not only by the presence of the personal pronoun with the finite verb in v.14b, something not necessary in Hebrew, but also by its repetition (lit., "*I, even I, will tear*"). Another contrast is drawn between Yahweh and the most powerful human ruler at that time, the "*great king*," the king of Assyria. (In 2Ki 18:19 [par. Isa 36:13] he is called the "*great king*" [*hammelek haggādōl*], but that construction is not the same as the one here.) Though mighty, he cannot cure his vassals' wounds, which Yahweh has inflicted (v.13).

**Trent Butler:** Looking back on the Syro-Ephraimitic conflict between Israel and Judah, God condemned both parties—Judah for taking northern territory and Israel for false political alliances and false worship. Thus God became the enemy of both the northern and southern nations. He was like an *'ash* to Ephraim. The term can refer to any decaying material and may intend to point to the decay in the human body represented by pus oozing from an infection. God will be like *raqab* to the people of Judah. This is another term for something rotten or decaying.

The references to sickness and sores in the following verse may point in the direction of infection or a red, rotten-looking wound in a person's body. God is no longer the faithful keeper of the covenant protecting his people. He is the agent of rot and ruin, infecting his people with sickness and horrible wounds.

## 2. (:13) Futility of Seeking Deliverance from Assyria

*"When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his wound,  
Then Ephraim went to Assyria And sent to King Jareb.  
But he is unable to heal you, Or to cure you of your wound."*

**Biblehub.com:** **But he cannot cure you or heal your wound** -- The prophet Hosea emphasizes the futility of seeking salvation from human powers. Despite Assyria's

might, it cannot provide the spiritual healing that Israel and Judah need. This statement underscores the biblical theme that true healing and restoration come only from God (**Jeremiah 17:5-6**). It serves as a prophetic warning that reliance on worldly powers leads to disappointment and further judgment, as seen in the eventual Assyrian conquest of Israel (**2 Kings 17:6**). This also foreshadows the ultimate healing and redemption found in Jesus Christ, who is the true source of spiritual restoration (**Isaiah 53:5**).

**Gary Smith:** Rather than depending on the unseen powerful God of heaven and earth, who controls all the military forces on the earth (**Dan. 2:21; 4:17, 34-35**), God's people have all too often turned to man-made powerless gods and human armies for their security. They failed to realize that their military problems were caused by their own sinfulness and that God would heal their land and protect them from foreign dangers if they humbled themselves, confessed their sins, and turned from their evil ways (**2 Chron. 7:14**). The crossing of the Red Sea (**Ex. 15**), Gideon's defeat of the Midianites with three hundred men (**Judg. 7**), and David's defeat of Goliath (**1 Sam. 17**) all demonstrate that battles are won by the Lord, not by the military strength of a nation's army.

### 3. (:14) Metaphor of God Tearing Apart His People Like a Lion

*“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away,  
I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver.”*

**Biblehub.com:** **For I am like a lion to Ephraim** -- In this phrase, God compares Himself to a lion, a symbol of strength and ferocity. Ephraim, representing the northern kingdom of Israel, is warned of impending judgment. The lion imagery signifies God's power and the inevitability of His judgment. In biblical context, lions are often used to depict God's might and authority (**Amos 3:8**). The northern kingdom's idolatry and alliances with foreign nations led to their downfall, as prophesied by Hosea.

**and like a young lion to the house of Judah** -- Here, the focus shifts to Judah, the southern kingdom. The "*young lion*" suggests a more immediate and vigorous threat. While Judah had periods of faithfulness, they too fell into sin. This warning serves as a reminder of God's impartiality in judgment. The lion imagery is consistent with other prophetic warnings (**Jeremiah 25:38**), emphasizing the seriousness of their spiritual state.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Judah also will experience this tearing to pieces, but perhaps in a more gentle manner (see **2 Kings 18:13-16; 19:1-7**), because "*a young lion*" (Hebrew, *kephir*) is known more for his roar than for his savagery (**Job 4:10; Psalm 104:21; Isa. 31:4; Zech. 11:3**).

**Trent Butler:** God had a strategy against his people. He would become a ravaging, hungry lion on the prowl. He would attack Ephraim and Judah, tearing their carcasses to pieces, satisfying his own hunger to punish these rebellious peoples. He would leave

pieces of the carcass in the field for vultures and other scavengers to eat. He would then carry the carcasses away and hide them where no one could find them or rescue them. This is a veiled reference to exile for the two nations.

**H. D. Beeby:** The loving, redeeming God is now likened to lions at their fiercest—when they are young and hungry. It is God and none other who kills and rends, apparently without compunction or compassion, because after the slaughter he leaves the bloody scene, presumably to digest at leisure. The lion simile is appropriate to describe how Assyria walked the imperial path, but it is surely an astounding way to speak of the God who in **ch. 11** speaks of Israel as his son. Ours not to reason why, or to explain. It is the Scriptures (in their entirety) which witness to our justification. We cannot and should not attempt to justify the source of all that enables us to be justified. We shall be content to remark on a paradox so often found in both Old and New Testaments, namely, that it is often those who most stress one pole of God's activity who are most likely to be aware of and underline the other pole. It is done with no sense of contradiction, and even the tension is rarely discussed. The gentle Jesus, meek and mild, who nevertheless can speak of the agonies of hell as no other does, is prefigured in the words of many of his forerunners. It is almost as though the goodness of God cannot be seen without his severity, as though he cannot be known as savior unless he has been feared as enemy. Hosea is one of many who prepared us for the day when God's own Son cried "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*" before he was able confidently to commit his soul into his Father's hands.

### **(:15) TRANSITION – ONLY REMEDY IS REPENTANCE AND SEEKING GOD**

*"I will go away and return to My place  
Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face;  
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."*

**James Mays:** Verse 15 stands apart from vv. 10–14 and 6.1–3; it does not continue directly the foregoing description of Yahweh's punishment nor does it belong to the following song. Yahweh's action is no longer the visitation of his wrath to destroy, but a strategy to bring his people back to him. Yet v. 15 is an **indispensable transition**. It prepares for the song of penitence by portraying Yahweh as the God who waits for the response of his people. And the song is clearly composed as a response to the judgment described in vv. 10–14 (see the comment on 6.1–3). What the announcement of Yahweh's withdrawal does in effect is to interpret Yahweh's wrath in such a way that the experience of punishment becomes an invitation to penitence. It introduces a constant theme of Hosea that God in his anger against his people's sin ultimately seeks their **reconciliation**.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** The image of the lion extends through the final two verses of the chapter. This text makes the important point that the goal of divine judgment is to effect a profound change in the heart of God's people. What Yahweh desires is that they come to him and admit their sin and guilt, so that their seeking might be genuine (cf. 3:5;

contrast 5:6). Tragically, it will be out of their suffering that they will come to him earnestly.

**H. D. Beeby:** The final verse (5:15) is a comment on the awful news preceding it and a preparation for what is to follow in ch. 6. God's "going away" and "carrying off" are shown not to be the whole story. They are scenes in a drama which need the later acts for clarification. The "going away" is real, but it is only disciplinary; it is **chastisement** with a saving purpose. In the same way, just as God goes away only because the people had gone from him, so his return is dependent on their turning once more to him. The brutality received at the hands of Judah or Assyria is a "godly" brutality; it is designed to bring confession of guilt, a change of heart, and a renewal of the covenant as the lost sheep return to the fold.

**Biblehub.com:** **they will earnestly seek Me** -- The earnest seeking of God implies a sincere and wholehearted pursuit, often born out of desperation and need. This reflects a transformation from superficial religiosity to genuine devotion. The prophetic literature frequently calls for such earnestness, as seen in **Jeremiah 29:13**, where God promises to be found by those who seek Him with all their heart. This seeking is a precursor to restoration and renewal, pointing to the hope of redemption through repentance.

**Duane Garrett:** Continuing the metaphor of the lion, Yahweh declares that he will turn back and go to his "place," that is, his "lair." After Yahweh has destroyed the nations, he will await Israel's repentance. This, of course, turns the metaphor of the lion in an unnatural direction; a lion, after it has devoured its prey, cannot return to its den and offer a new chance at life to its prey. Hosea, however, is not bound by convention. More than that, in the language of Hosea, "Israel" and "Judah" refer more to the political and religious institutions of those nations than to the people. With the corrupt governments and priesthods overthrown, a possibility of return now presents itself. It is noteworthy that in this verse he has abandoned the motif of Ephraim and Judah as collective entities. After the conquest these will no longer exist. When the verse says: "*until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me*" (emphasis added), the plural verbs do not refer to institutional Ephraim and Judah but to the people of these former states. **After the conquests the distinction between the two kingdoms will have no significance.** Once again it will simply be the children of Israel who return to God. Put another way, killing Israel is the means of offering salvation to the Israelites.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How are God's people impacted by corrupt and unfaithful leaders?
- 2) What makes religious rituals ineffectual?
- 3) What causes God to withdraw from His people?

4) When God turns against His people and proves to be a destructive force (cf. metaphors of moth and lion), what remedy remains?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**David Thompson:** GOD'S PEOPLE CAN GET INTO SUCH DEEP SIN THAT THEY NO LONGER WILL RECOGNIZE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SIN AND RETURN TO GOD EVEN AFTER GOD ALLOWS THEM TO KEEP LOSING ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET THEM TO RETURN TO HIM.

PART #1 – The leaders are responsible for God's people plunging deep into sin. **5:1-7**

This book of Hosea clearly teaches that God will hold political and religious leadership highly accountable and responsible so it had better be pointing people in the true, pure ways of God. Leaders can be a blessing to people or they can be a snare to people.

PART #2 – God warns His own people what He will do to them because they have plunged deep into sin. **5:8-11**

Listen, when God's people drift away from God, God can and will cause every area of life to fall apart. God can cause His own people to collapse mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. When God decides to send His chastising judgment against His own people because they refuse to face their sin, their entire world will fall apart.

PART #3 – God warns what His relationship will be like with His people because they are in sin. **5:12-15**

Metaphor #1 - He would be to His own people like a moth . **5:12-13**

Metaphor #2 - He would be to His own people like a lion . **5:14**

**Jeremy Thomas:** In **Hos 5:1-7** we saw the tremendous depths of depravity the northern kingdom had fallen into. They were not dealing with one or two sins, they were dealing with a whole passel of sins. They had violated hundreds of very specific laws God had given them and for more details of this you can read **2 Kings 17**. In fact, I encourage you to read that chapter as reinforcement of what we've been covering in **Hos 4-5**. Now, of the laws they had violated they had first violated laws governing their vertical relationship with God, that is the theological sin that the nation was involved in. Always the theological sin is what gets going first and if you observe the Ten Commandments you will see that the first three commandments govern the vertical, the theological and the last seven commandments govern the horizontal, the social. And this structure of the Ten Commandments, the very order of the commandments is teaching us something. And the thing it is teaching us is that the root problems, the deep, deep problem in humanity is not the social sins that disturb people; the abortion, the murder, the

homosexuality and so forth. While those things are problems, they are not the root of the problem; they are the fruits of a much deeper problem. And the much deeper problem is the theological sin that people are committing in the mentality of their soul and this eventually breaks out in the social chaos that we observe in society. But the origin of it all is theological rebellion against the Creator God and then it cascades down through the six stages we've repeated over and over. And by this point in the northern kingdom's history they had passed through all six stages, they were in the last stage which is when God says, I've had it, I withdraw My protection, **I turn you over to destruction.** . .

They turn to King Jareb, literally, the word *yareb* means "*great king*," it's not necessarily a man's name, this was probably a little nickname the Ephraimites had for the Assyrian King at the time, Tiglath-Pileser III. They call him, quote, "*great king*," so you can see how they elevated him; he's the big guy on the block, therefore we'll turn to him for help, and so they try to make an international treaty with Assyria. Maybe Assyria can give us security.

This is another characteristic of how we respond in **deep carnality**. When we have failed to take in the content of the word of God and we've decayed into deep, deep carnality, life keeps going and then somewhere along the way we get in a jam and then we can't trust the Lord. We can't trust that the Lord provides all our needs; we can't appropriate the promise to cast our cares upon Him for He cares for us, and we can't believe that God works all things together for good. And since we can't believe there's only one thing left to do and that is to **resort to a human gimmick**. It's always this way and the pet gimmick of all the OT kings that couldn't believe God's word was to **make international treaties**. We'll get protection from a Gentile kingdom. Now you want to talk about apostasy. Never do you ever see a great saint of Scripture depending on or receiving from the world system, never. You see the world system offer supplies, help, offers to solve the believer's problems but the great believers always insist, absolutely insist, I will receive no such help from the world. Why? What's the principle they're trying to illustrate? That **the Lord supplies all my needs**. They all recognized that to depend upon the world was to abandon the Lord. . . And so another mark of a believer in deep carnality is that he actually turns to the world to get supplies, he tries to prop himself up with the world. It's a mark of apostasy. And both the northern and southern kingdom at various times turned to the king of Assyria for help. It's a sign of deep apostasy when a believer or a church or Christian organization can't trust the Lord. You will always see them go on a gimmick campaign to raise money, something that solicits and violates the grace principle. And strikingly, what does the end of the verse say? They're going to go to the great king of Assyria to get propped up and what does the verse say? It's not going to work. **Gimmicks don't work**. That's why they're called gimmicks. . .

**Vs. 15** -- So this is the **theology of abandonment**. Now the abandonment will continue until the nation Israel does two things. We know its going to be a long time before they do these two things and we know they haven't done them yet; we know these two things are still in the future which makes them the subject of prophecy. **Verse 15**

stretches all the way to the Millennium. It starts when the northern kingdom went into Exile in 721BC to Assyria and the southern kingdom went into Exile to Babylon in 586BC. It ends at the Millennium. Now the key date is 586BC - this is when God finally abandoned them and what it's describing is the **departure of the Shekinah Glory**, the departure we studied last Sunday in **Ezek 8 and 10**. The particular route that Shekinah took in 586BC where he went east, west to the midst of the city and then east to the Mt of Olives is the same exact route Christ took in the NT, a deliberate parallel. And **verse 15** is describing that departure I will go away and return to My place, so that covers the whole period from the Exile of 586BC until the restoration in the future Millennium. Now this period is characterized by Gentile imperialism. The Gentile kingdoms are given, during this time period, the right to rule the world which is why Jesus called this period **the times of the Gentiles**. In **Dan 2** and **Dan 7** describes four successive Gentile kingdoms that will rule this period.

Now at the close of this period of Gentile dominion the nation of Israel will do two things according to the verse. The first thing is they must **acknowledge their guilt**. What guilt? The guilt is that which arises due to a specific sin they've committed. It's the rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus. He came to them, He offered Himself to them and they rejected Him. And so the first thing the nation Israel must do is they must acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. They rejected Him but eventually they must acknowledge Him. **Zech 12** and other passages prophesy that they will do this. We don't mean individual Jews admitting this; individual Jews have always been admitting this. What we mean is national Israel admitting this, the whole nation will recognize that Jesus is their Messiah and they will admit their guilt of rejecting Him.

Now, the second thing is the nation, as a whole, **must seek God's face**. What's this seeking of the face? It means they're seeking God's presence, they want Shekinah back in their presence; that's what it means to seek the visible face or presence of God, and Shekinah's return is described in **Ezekiel 40-46**. The Scriptures sketch that Shekinah will return. He departed in 586BC and His presence will return only after they acknowledge their guilt of rejecting their Messiah and want Him to return.

**Jason Van Bommel:** Have you ever seen someone you love trapped in a downward spiral of self-destruction? If you have, you know it's one of most frustrating and difficult things to watch. This is the situation the Lord is in here in Hosea. He is watching His beloved Israel spiral out of control. We need to pay close attention to the pattern of Israel's sin spiral, because the same pattern can begin to manifest itself in our lives, if we're not diligent.

So, **what does a sin spiral like Israel's look like?** Israel is "*determined to go after filth*." That is, Israel is determined to believe the lying promises of their idols and do what they know is wrong and unfaithful because they think it will pay off in the end. We are "*determined to go after filth*" whenever we willfully choose sin, which is always unfaithfulness to God.



In His love, when God sees His people "*determined to go after filth*," He responds with **discipline**. For Israel, God allowed them to be "crushed in judgment," breaking them so that they might turn to Him. Very often in our lives, God allows us to suffer the consequences of our sin, so we will see the emptiness of the promises of our idols. In a similar way, this is what God does to Israel. Their idols promised them prosperity and fertility, so God makes sure they suffer sickness and loss instead. They need to see how wrong they are to trust in idols.

Sadly, they don't see it. And so, the sin spiral deepens. Instead of seeking the Lord in humility, Israel seeks a worldly solution to their problems: Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound.

How often do we suffer consequences for our sin and turn to worldly solutions instead of to the Lord? It's exactly the wrong thing to do, and yet we do it again and again, don't we?

### **Robert Rayburn: The Point of No Return Where Repentance Seems No Longer Possible**

1. It is always a theoretical possibility that one might believe and repent on one's deathbed and be saved. But, in fact, this almost never happens. It is very rare that older people are won to Christ under any circumstances, much less in the pain and confusion and self-preoccupation of one's deathbed.

2. **Augustine** said that there is one case of deathbed repentance recorded in Scripture—the thief on the cross in Luke—that no one may despair it is never too late—but only one that no one should presume. And it is worth pointing out that we do not know the spiritual background of that thief; whether he was a man who all his life had known the Word of God and had often been summoned to believe in God and keep his commandments. Perhaps, but I suspect it is more likely, that he was an irreligious man who knew very little of God and of God's salvation until he saw it in Jesus' face and heard it in his words as our Savior hung on the cross.

3. The puritan **Thomas Brooks** put it this way: Though true repentance be never too late; late repentance is seldom true.'

4. The fact is, however possible in theory it may be for practiced unbelievers to repent late in their lives, repentance is God's gift and God, ordinarily, does not give it to those who have spent their lives spurning his offers of mercy and especially not to those who have lived in the church but time after time have not believed in Christ or repented of sin when summoned and invited to do so.

Is this not precisely the warning Hosea gives us in the text we have read? Who can help those calling for salvation now that the judgment has begun to fall? Only the Lord God can help; but there is the misery; he will not. Time was when he would but they would not; now they would, but he will not.

Now, I want simply to apply this solemn fact—that there is in the spiritual world and life a point of no return—to you, and that in four particulars.

I. First, in view of this truth, surely it is a grave error not to fear sin and its grip upon our lives.

II. Second, in view of the truth that it is possible to pass the point of no return, it is surely important and wise for us to make a practice of nipping sin in the bud in our lives; of giving sin no quarter and no entrance into our hearts.

III. Then, in the third place, this fact, that it is possible in the spiritual world to pass the point of no return, ought to keep us from ever taking our salvation for granted—and rather keep us always protecting, always building, always cultivating the salvation which God has begun in us.

IV. Finally, this fact that there is such a point of no return in the spiritual life ought to make some of you to stop right now with your procrastination.

TEXT: Hosea 6:1-3

TITLE: CALL TO RETURN TO THE LORD

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PATH TO RESTORATION INVOLVES REPENTANCE AND RENEWAL**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Derek Kidner:** There are at least two ways of taking this. One is that God is first portraying in **5:15 – 6:3** the deep conversion that He is working for and will at last evoke – that total change of heart which will irradiate the closing chapter of the book. Then in **verses 4ff.** He turns to the sad spectacle of Israel as she is at present, incapable of any such response. On this view (or on the view that **verses 1-3** are Hosea's own plea to Israel – see below) no fault can be found with the sentiments of these verses. In themselves they are a perfect expression of humility, faith and serious intent. The trouble is that Israel is at present in no state to speak or even think along such lines. Religion, for her, is not knowing God, still less 'pressing on to know him'. It is merely placating Him with sacrifice, as **verse 6** implies.

A more common view is that the fine words of **verses 1-3** are Israel's own, but facile and presumptuous, as if to say with Catherine the Great, 'Le bon Dieu pardonnera; c'est son métier' – The good Lord will pardon; that's his trade' – making light of both the desperate state of the nation ('*after two days he will revive us*') and the high demands of pressing on to know the Lord. Against this one might point out that this speech is introduced in **5:15** as something spoken out of deep distress, and that the second word for 'seek' in that verse is especially urgent ('*seek earnestly*': cf. NEB, NIV). Yet a similar passage in the Psalms reveals how false such earnestness can be:

*When he slew them, they sought for him;  
they repented and sought God earnestly (sic). . . .  
But they flattered him with their mouths;  
they lied to him with their tongues.  
Their heart was not steadfast toward him  
(Ps. 78:34, 36-37).*

Either view, then, is possible, and either way it emerges that Israel has no conception of the faithful love that God is looking for. But to me it is the **former view** that carries conviction, if only because the divine protest in **verse 6** makes no contact – except by way of agreement! – with anything in **verses 1-3**. It also allows us to read these verses as the eloquent and rich example of a serious approach to God which they appear to be. They are restored to us as words not only for study but for actual use.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** The question is whether **6:1-3** is the speech of the people that the Lord longs to hear while waiting in his place (**5:15**), and is thus composed by Hosea to

represent true repentance (if only Israel would embrace it!); or whether **6:1–3** is something that Israel is proposing but in an inadequate way.

**Duane Garrett:** Hosea here identifies himself with the people and calls on them to join him in returning to Yahweh. The placement of **6:1–3**, a call to repent, immediately after Yahweh's declaration that he would retire to his place and await a positive response from the people cannot be accidental. Nevertheless, scholars often treat this text as a secondary addition, or at least as a **spurious repentance** on the part of Israel. Some argue that this text is a citation of a liturgy given by the wayward religious leadership, which Hosea or a redactor has inserted in order to illustrate their artificial piety and their arrogant presumption that Yahweh would save them. So interpreted **6:1–3** is ironic; it is not a true call to repentance. The justification for such a reading is that Yahweh's response in **6:4** indicates exasperation with the transitory piety of Israel and Judah. In that response, however, Yahweh specifically chides the people for hollow cultic ceremony and for a want of true repentance (**6:6**). **Verses 1–3**, however, are entirely in keeping with what God desires: the verses recognize that God has punished the people (**v. 1**) and express a desire for them to attain to the knowledge of God. One could only read **6:1–3** as false piety if it expressed the things **6:4ff.** condemns, specifically, **a desire to appease God through ritual**. In fact, the desiderata of **6:1–3** and **6:4–6** are exactly the same. Therefore **6:4** should not be read as a rejection of **6:1–3** but as **despair over whether the people would ever heed the call of 6:1–3**.

**Terence Fretheim:** The language is exquisite, the religious practice thoughtful, the theology apt, the repentance explicit, the recognition of appropriate divine judgment evident, and the quest for knowledge of the Lord in tune with Hosea's most basic concerns. Moreover, creation is related to God and not Baal, there are no signs of apostate worship, and their hope in God is voiced clearly. Indeed, the people do what **3:5** anticipates they will do.

**James Mays:** These three verses make up a distinct unit. It has long since been recognized that the piece is liturgical in form and is to be identified as a **song of penitence**. Such songs were used in times of national crisis when the people were assembled for fasting, lament, petition, and sacrifice to avert the wrath of God. The song is composed of two elements: a twofold summons to return to Yahweh and to acknowledge his lordship (**vv. 1a α, 3a α**), followed by assertions of confidence that Yahweh will save.

**Jeremy Thomas:** Now watch because **Hos 6:1-3** is this principle applied to the nation Israel. The chapter division at this point is unfortunate because this connects directly with **verse 15**. **Verse 15** said that when they sunk to their all time low and they were at the end of their rope they would acknowledge their guilt, they would seek His presence and it would be an earnest search. **Verses 1-3** is the nation doing those three things. When did the nation do this? Answer: they haven't done it yet. So **verses 1-3 describe a future response of the nation Israel to their God**.

Alternate View:

**H. D. Beeby:** I propose to take the six verses as continuous and, therefore, to accept that the first three express a superficial repentance. . . . What we must note is proximity of the passage to the traditional text in vv. 4–6 and the total absence of any historical reference which might incline us to divide the verses into two distinct halves. In fact the evidence is rather against such a division, as there seems to be a correspondence in verse form yet in contrast to their contents. . . . the six verses describe Israel’s “return” as a sham, or at least as an inadequate confession; that is why the return is followed by God’s exposure of its hollow triviality and then his giving of his own definition of what is demanded of his people.

**Trent Butler:** God promised his blessings to a people who returned to him with their whole heart (**Deut. 30:9–10**). Such repentance meant turning to God and away from all idols and false worship (**1 Sam. 7:3**). Repentance was a matter of the heart, not of traditional mourning rituals (**Joel 2:13**). But such repentance seldom happened in Israel's history (**2 Kgs. 23:25**). Hosea pictured a people who went through the proper community worship ritual and said the right words but had the wrong emphasis. . . .

Israel makes the pursuit too easy. God's appearance to a people pursuing him is as sure as tomorrow's sunrise or like the rains that come in the rainy seasons of the year to water the crops. God is gracious. God is forgiving. God wants an intimate relationship in which his people truly know him, but God cannot be reduced to a law of nature that always repeats itself no matter what the people do. Repentance and knowledge of God depend on a much deeper understanding and expectation of God.

**I. (:1-2) REPENTANCE -- RETURN TO THE LORD WHO HEALS AND GIVES NEW LIFE**

**A. (:1a) Exhortation – Return to the Lord in Repentance**

*“Come, let us return to the LORD.”*

**Duane Garrett:** Every time the word “*return*” is used with Israel as the subject and Yahweh as the one to whom return is made, it indicates a **true repentance** and not a pseudoreturn. In fact, returning to Yahweh is a major theme of the book. The structure of this short song develops a basic theme of the Bible, that repentance necessarily precedes reception of divine favor.

**Derek Kidner:** [The word “*return*”] embraces both repentance and conversion, crowned with reconciliation. The word is as strong as it is simple.

**B. (:1b-2) Motivation – The Lord Heals and Resurrects**

1. (:1b) The Lord Heals

a. Healing Viewed from the Lion Motif

*“For He has torn us, but He will heal us;”*

b. Healing Viewed from the Disease Motif

*“He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.”*

**Allen Guenther:** Their hope for recovery rests in the Lord. They appeal to no one else. Inasmuch as he has punished, in his time he will also restore their fortunes and bind up their wounds. God can be trusted to respond to heartfelt sorrow over sin. God’s people have become aware that **he is the only Deliverer**.

Alternate View:

**David Allen Hubbard: Song of Feeble Penitence**

Yet none of this is enough. The crucial requirement of ‘*admitting their guilt*’ (v. 15) has been omitted. They have faced their woundedness (v. 2; cf. 5:12–13) but not their waywardness. Healing is sought, even resurrection, but no specific sin is mentioned. This absence of repentance and failure to confess sins by name contrast sharply with Hosea’s closing song of penitence (14:1–3). And God’s complaint (vv. 4–5) seems to indicate his **dismissal of the song as inadequate**, whereas Israel’s final song is followed by Yahweh’s promise of love and healing and then by his own love song (14:4–7).

2. (:2) The Lord Resurrects

*“He will revive us after two days;*

*He will raise us up on the third day That we may live before Him.”*

**Duane Garrett:** It is clear that in its original context this passage describes the restoration of Israel, the people of God; and for many interpreters this is proof enough that the resurrection of Christ is not in view here. Such interpretation, however, understands messianic prophecy too narrowly as simple, direct predictions by the prophets of what the Messiah would do. In fact, the prophets almost never prophesied in that manner. Instead, **they couched prophecy in typological patterns** in which the works of God proceed along identifiable themes. Furthermore, Christ in his life and ministry embodied Israel or recapitulated the sojourn of Israel. Thus, for example, Christ’s forty days in the wilderness paralleled Israel’s forty years of wandering, and his giving of his Torah on a mountain (**Matt 5–7**) paralleled the Sinai experience.

Another great event in Israel’s history was its restoration after captivity, an event that was almost a bringing of the nation back from the dead. Ezekiel develops this concept in his dry bones vision (**Ezek 37:1–14**). From this we can conclude that Christ’s resurrection, in addition to its profound soteriological aspects, was **a typological embodiment of the “resurrection” of Israel in its restoration**. We should add that this is not artificially reading New Testament history into the Old Testament (as in allegorization) because it **follows the established pattern of the parallel between the history of Israel and the life of Christ**. Furthermore, as so often happens in texts of this kind, the details of the passage work themselves out in different ways. The “*two days*” are for Israel metaphorical for a relatively short captivity but have a literal fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ. Similarly, the raising to life is literal in the case of Christ, but in the case of Israel it is a metaphor for restoration.

**Derek Kidner:** Nothing short of **resurrection** is fit to describe such need and such salvation; and while the mention of the third day would sound to Hosea's hearers as the mere equivalent of '*very soon*', the prophet may have spoken more significantly than he knew; for it is only in Christ's resurrection that His people are effectively raised up, as both Paul and Peter teach us. And when Paul finds, apparently, not only the resurrection but even '*the third day*' to be '*in accordance, with the scriptures*' (**1 Cor. 15:4**), it is at least possible – though one should put it no higher – that this passage as well as '*the sign of Jonah*' was in his mind.

**Robin Routledge:** Links with the New Testament are primarily **typological**, presenting correspondences between the narratives of God's people in the Old Testament and Christ, the ideal Israel (**Garrett** 1997: 159). Such correspondences are generally noted **in retrospect**. The Old Testament sets out patterns of divine activity which are recognized and reapplied by later writers, and that appears to be the significance of '*according to the Scriptures*'. However, in their original context, they are **not predictive**.

Alternate View:

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** Another interpretive issue in this pericope is whether v.2 might be a prediction of or a typological allusion to the resurrection wrought by Jesus the Messiah. Might this be the reference behind the assertion in **1 Corinthians 15:4** that Christ arose on the third day "*according to the Scriptures*" (**Lk 24:7**)?

Three observations are apropos. To begin with, the concept of coming to life as a picture of national renewal appears elsewhere in the OT—importantly within this very book (**13:14**), but most famously in the vision of the dry bones in **Ezekiel 37:1–14** (cf. **Dt 30:17–20**; **Am 5:1–6**). The hope of individual resurrection was not unknown, though existing perhaps in rudimentary form (esp. **Da 12:2**), but this verse is speaking corporately and not of particular pious individuals (cf. **P. S. Johnston**, *Shades of Sheol: Death and the Afterlife in the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002], 221–27). The expectation is for Israel to be made whole again after the attack of the divine lion.

Second, from the available evidence it seems that **6:2** did not become a proof text for resurrection until **Tertullian** (ca. 155–230 AD; cf. **Wolff**, 118).

Third, in the context the numerical sequence itself—"two/three"—is revealing. It is a way of **expressing a short period of time**. The n/n+1 combination (here n = 2) indicates a vague period of time (GKC §134s), while the numbers "two" and "three" themselves signify a short span (e.g., **Isa 7:21**; **17:6**; **2Ki 20:5, 8**). In other words, **this sinful people presume that a favorable verdict from God will come in quick order**—another sign that they appreciate neither the seriousness of their transgressions nor the uselessness of their religious activities. This blind audacity is confirmed in v.3. Israel takes for granted that its darkness will turn into light and that divine blessings will come as refreshing rains. Quite a bold denial of the drought foretold in **2:3**! [taking the position that v.1-3 are an inadequate, shallow confession]



## II. (:3) RENEWAL -- PURSUE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD BECAUSE WE CAN COUNT ON HIS BLESSING

### A. Exhortation – Pursue the Deepening Knowledge of the Lord

*“So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.”*

### B. Motivation – Two Images of Certain Renewal and Blessing

**Gary Smith:** Hosea motivates any doubters with the promise of the **reliability of God (6:3)**. His appearance is not only 100 percent sure—like the positive experience of sunlight (a contrast to darkness) and rain (a contrast to drought). These comparisons are probably chosen because everyone knows that the sun and rain **can be counted on** and because these physical elements bring new life to dying plants. This hope also contrasts God’s withdrawal from the nation (**5:6, 15**) with his gracious coming (**6:3**).

#### 1. Imagery of the Dawn Bringing Light after Darkness with Regularity and Certainty

*“His going forth is as certain as the dawn;”*

Duane Garrett: The surface meaning is moderately clear; we can count on Yahweh to come (and save us) just as surely as we can count on the rising of the sun. Through the metaphor, however, Yahweh's advent is portrayed as a time of joy, like the dawn after a dark night. This language is not accidental. Rather, it is a reversal of the punishment in the second oracle, the devouring of the land by the new moon (**5:7**). As described there, the operating metaphor is the darkness that consumes the land during the new moon; dawn is an obvious reversal of the image.

#### 2. Imagery of the Refreshing Spring Rain

*“And He will come to us like the rain,  
Like the spring rain watering the earth.”*

**Duane Garrett:** The final reversal is the coming of rain. We have already suggested that the unusual phrase *“the wind shall bind her in her wings,”* in **4:19**, might refer to drought, but in any case **4:3** has already described drought and **2:9** (Hb. **2:11**) describes the effects of drought. Thus the return to Yahweh reverses all the afflictions that had come upon the people. **The terrors of the lion, disease, darkness, and drought disappear in healing, bandaging, dawn, and seasonal rains.**

**Jeremy Thomas:** Finally, once the nation is restored to true fellowship then she’ll be blessed, then she’ll have her land, then she’ll have her agricultural abundance, then she’ll have economic prosperity, then she’ll have Shekinah’s presence in the Millennial Temple, then she’ll have her Messiah sitting on the throne of David, all the blessings promised to her will be hers.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Who do you think is the speaker in these verses?
- 2) What is the connection between these verses and **5:15**?
- 3) How has the Lord healed the brokenness in your life?
- 4) What is our strategy for pursuing a deeper knowledge of the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Anthony Petterson:** This short passage anticipates the repentance and restoration of a future generation beyond the destructive judgment of the exile. After God has torn and wounded his people, he will heal, bind up, revive and restore his people after they return to him. In a short period of time, God will resurrect his people from the realm of death to live in his presence. This reverses the punishment described at the end of **chapter 5**. With the people's return to the Lord, he will return to them, bringing refreshment (cf. **Zec. 1:3; Mal 3:7**). As Israel's representative, Jesus bore God's judgment on the cross and was raised on the third day so that we can live in the Lord's presence, knowing him and experiencing his many blessings.

**S. Lewis Johnson:** I think it is better to look at these verses as if the prophet speaks, but he's giving the words that God wants people to say to him, the words that he wishes that this generation of Israel would utter to him. . .

*"So let us press on to know the Lord."* In the Hebrew text that's a very strong word. It means **to pursue**. Let us press on to know the Lord. In other words, more than national survival, it isn't enough that Israel shall come to the knowledge of the Lord God in one great experience when the nation is converted as in a day. No. There is much more to the life of God than that. . .

It's like **marriage**. In fact, Hosea's whole book is built around the idea that to know God is to enter into a marriage relationship with him. And the relationship between Gomer, Hosea's wife, and Hosea, is designed to picture the relationship between Israel and the Lord God. And all of us who have been married know that when we have entered into marriage, there is a sense in which we really come to know that person. But, ah, the years that follow, **that knowledge increases**, and it should increase. It should grow. It should expand. So that those who've been married a long time, they really know one another.

And when you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the beginning of life. That's the beginning of the knowledge of God. The ultimate aim of man is to know God, for to

know him is to enjoy him, to love him. And also to love him perseveringly, too. So, it's like a marriage. And he says, let's know him; let's press on to know him.

**Allen Guenther:** **Hosea 4:4 – 6:3** has centered on the theme of “*knowing God*.” We now draw the strands of this theme into a larger whole. The “*knowledge of God*” is pictured in Hosea as information and interpretation, experience, and acknowledgment.

### **I. Information and Interpretation**

The truth of God and the truth about God are part of the same self-disclosure. . . Israel stands accused of blindness which leads to distortion and eventually to the deliberate suppression of the truth. The end result is that sin so obscures the knowledge of the true God that it renders people incapable of recognizing the acts of God and interpreting them as such.

### **II. Experience**

The intimacy of the sex act, the affirmations of love and care which are a natural part of lovemaking, the openness which it promotes – all these are part of the immediacy of knowing God. To know him is not an act of pure reason. It consists of experiencing him in the intimacy of committed love.

### **III. Acknowledgment**

Concretely, such acknowledgment may be expressed by admitting to his presence and being open to hear God speak and then to obey his instruction (**Gen. 22:12; Jer. 24:7**). Sacrifices and worship are ways of acknowledging God (**Isa. 19:21**), as is the act of developing skill in doing good (**Jer. 4:22; 9:3, 6**).

### **C. H. Spurgeon: On pursuing the knowledge of God –**

It has been said by someone that the proper study of mankind is man. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God . . . The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compare and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and we go our way with the thought, “Behold, I am wise.”

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

TEXT: Hosea 6:4-11a

TITLE: *DIVINE FRUSTRATION OVER LACK OF LOYALTY*

**BIG IDEA:**

**RELIGIOUS RITUALS CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF LOYAL LOVE AND TREACHEROUS ACTS OF REBELLION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**John Schultz:** Again, God's inner conflict is expressed in the question: "*What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah?*" It is as if God says to His children: "You be the judge. What would you do in my place?" In view of the coming judgment, nothing is spiritually so healthy for us as to look at our lives from God's perspective, supposing that we can do that without bias. The **Adam Clarke's** Commentary observes: "Speaking after the manner of men, the justice and mercy of God seem puzzled how to act toward them. When justice was about to destroy them for their iniquity, it was prevented by their repentance and contrition; when mercy was about to pour upon them as penitents its choicest blessings, it was prevented by their fickleness and relapse! These things induce the just and merciful God to exclaim, 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?' The only thing that could be done in such a case was that which God did." . . .

As in the previous chapter, Judah is included in the text. It is as if God raises a warning finger at the southern kingdom to let them know that what is going to happen in the north will happen to them also if they do not repent.

**Richard Patterson:** Hosea continues his complaints concerning Israel's infidelity by posing the Lord's rhetorical question concerning His people: just what was the Lord to do with such an inconsistently faithful people as His Israel and Judah? (**6:4**). Indeed, their fidelity to God's person and standards was as fleeting as the quickly disappearing morning mist or dew. As these appear briefly only to vanish with the rising sun, so God's people have shown brief flashes of spiritual progress and then have shortly afterwards resorted to their own selfish ways. Even worse now, they attempt to blend the worship of Yahweh with respect for foreign deities.

The Lord expects no answer to His question, nor is He looking for information from His hearers. The rhetorical question is couched in human phraseology in order to make the Lord's people understand His great concern for them. Much as a parent is so disappointed with his child's conduct that he almost throws up his hands in despair, so a loving God warns His people that His seeming tardiness in withholding their deserved punishment is nearing an end. Through His prophets God has repeatedly warned His people of the dangers of apostasy, compromise, and infidelity. They have often enough conveyed messages of judgment (e.g., **Joel 1**). Hosea has previously represented Israel as a stubborn heifer (**4:16**). Now as an animal destined to be sacrificed is slain and cut into pieces, so the words spoken through the Lord's prophets will surely be fulfilled.

The imagery, though extreme (but cf. **5:14**), is reminiscent of the psalmist's complaint in **Psalm 44:11**, "You handed us over like sheep to be eaten." Yet as **Stuart** points out, "These words reflect the curses of the Mosaic Covenant through catchword connections with **Deut 33** and **32**... . The punishment of being 'killed' (*grh*) is a covenant judgment (**Amos 4:10; 9:1, 4**), though the notion of killing is expressed via other vocabulary in **Deut 28** and **32**." Indeed, covenant Israel stands in the line of long covenant breakers and thus God's people should expect the penalties associated with covenant violation to be imposed upon them.

## **I. (:4-6) COVENANT LOYALTY LACKING**

### **A. (:4) Frustration with Transient Loyalty**

*"What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
For your loyalty is like a morning cloud,  
And like the dew which goes away early."*

**Gary Smith:** God's response to Hosea's invitation begins with a **lament of disappointment**. It is not that he does not know what to do; it is that he does not really want to do what he has to do. Somewhat like frustrated parents who are at their wits end on how to raise a deviant son, God wonders what he can do to bring about a real change in his people's hearts. The internal struggle suggests that he loves Israel and Judah dearly and does not want to punish them. But when they do not respond appropriately, what can he do? He has warned them, chastened them to wake them up, and promised hope if they repent. **What more can he do?**

God's dissatisfaction with the devotion of his people is based on the **fleeting nature** of their covenant love for him (**6:4b**). Like dew, it disappears as quickly as a vapor. Commitments mean nothing; their consistency never lasts; they are positive one day and negative the next. They say they will seek God and worship him, but soon they are inquiring of Baal and depending on military power instead of on God. They do not seem to know what loyalty means.

**Duane Garrett:** Here, for the first time, we see clearly the attitude behind the sudden, often inexplicable shifts between harsh, unmerciful judgment and complete pardon in the Book of Hosea: it is the frustration of Yahweh that arises from his unwavering love and from their constant wavering and outright apostasy.

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Israel's chronic ailment, disloyalty, was easy to diagnose but so difficult to remedy because of her strong resistance as a patient. A dizzying cyclical pattern of **loyalty – disloyalty – punishment** had become ingrained in Israel's character since the time of the judges (e.g., **Judg. 4:1-24**). Now, however, the malignancy of disloyalty had spread throughout the nation, causing the temporary remedies to become obsolete. Drastic action was a necessity.

As metaphors of Israel's loyalty, the Lord chose the morning cloud and the dew, figures expressing something that has beauty but no substance. The people who have no inner substance need the life of God infused into them.

**Robin Routledge:** Verse 4 begins with two rhetorical questions indicating Yahweh's frustration with Ephraim and Judah, given all he has done for them. Love here translates *hesed*, which is the proper response of the people to Yahweh, and to one another, on the basis of their covenant relationship. This, though, is as **transient** as morning mist or as dew that evaporates quickly in the heat of the day. This suggests that the people may have made some effort, but it was fleeting and has come to nothing.

**John Goldingay:** While Yahweh may then be referring to morning mist, his point is stronger if he is speaking of the **morning cloud** in Israel's highlands that can look as if it promises rain but whose appearance is deceptive more often than not. **Dew** plays a key role in the dry summer months in bringing crops to fruition, but it soon disappears, too. Israel's commitment has been similar to both, as its story from the beginning shows.

#### **B. (:5) Faithfulness of God's Judgments via the Prophets**

*"Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets;  
I have slain them by the words of My mouth;  
And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth."*

**Gary Smith:** Because God's people do not consistently maintain their covenant relationship with him, he has sent prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and others to declare in no uncertain terms what punishments God will send (6:5). These prophets declared God's intention to slay them for their sins if they did not love God with all their hearts.

**David Allen Hubbard:** Therefore (v. 5) serves to explain the judgments that have already been inflicted (the first two verbs are past tense) through God's agents, the prophets, who have faithfully and forcefully conveyed the destructive words of Yahweh's mouth. The link between the prophets and their Lord is so intimate that their utterances of judgment constitute the very acts of 'hewing' or 'hacking' and 'slaying' that Israel's sin warranted.

**James Mays:** In this struggle through the prophets against Israel's empty religiosity, the will of the covenant Lord has been set forth with the clarity of the sun whose rising dispels all darkness. Perhaps the metaphor '*like light*' is again a response to the song and its comparison of Yahweh's coming to help to the certainty of the dawn. Israel clamours for help but ignores the revelation through the prophets. . .

*"light that goes forth"* -- The clause obviously plays off *his going forth is sure as the dawn* in **verse 3**. The tone is ironic: in her feeble song of penitence Israel had banked on the dependability of God's healing; 'what is really as **dependable** as daybreak', Yahweh countered, 'is my judgment.'

**Allen Guenther:** The subject of the concluding clause of **6:5** is **light**, lightning, or illumination. It reads, *Illumination went out in the form of your judgments*. So the judgments throw light on Israel's sin. God first warns of the consequences of disobedience, then he explains the reasons for the judgments. Both types of prophetic messages are common, and both hold lip mirrors whereby the nation may recognize its condition and return to the Lord.

The contrast between the prophetic word and how Israel responds to the judgments (**6:6**) explains Israel's failure to understand their covenant Lord. The prophets have urged Israel toward holy living. The people respond by increasing their sacrifices. The response misses the mark.

**Trent Butler:** God has used his prophets, like Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah, to cut down his people like a stonecutter would cut to pieces a massive rock. The prophetic words that came directly from God's mouth were the divine weapon of execution, killing his people.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** Just as light pierces the darkness, so divine judgment has come forth in Israel's history.

**Biblehub.com:** **and My judgments go forth like lightning.**

**Lightning** is a symbol of suddenness and power, illustrating the swift and unavoidable nature of God's judgments. In the ancient Near East, lightning was often associated with divine presence and action, as seen in the theophany at Mount Sinai (**Exodus 19:16**). This imagery conveys the idea that God's judgments are both inevitable and righteous, striking with precision and authority. The comparison to lightning also emphasizes the clarity and visibility of God's actions, leaving no doubt about His sovereignty and justice. This phrase connects to other scriptural references where God's judgment is depicted as swift and decisive, such as in the prophetic books and Revelation.

### **C. (:6) Focus on Loyalty Rather than Ritual**

*“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,  
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”*

**Robin Routledge:** This does not denigrate sacrifice, and the wider prophetic vision of the future includes animal sacrifices (e.g. **Jer. 33:18; Ezek. 40:38–43; 46; Zech. 14:21; Mal. 1:11**). However, Yahweh does not desire cultic observance which seeks to manipulate rather than respond properly to him, and *hesed* and the knowledge of God emphasize the importance of relationship with him. Sacrifices offered with the right inner attitude remain important, and will do so until Christ's death makes them unnecessary (**Routledge** 2009).

**James Mays:** The knowledge of God is the unqualified response to Yahweh as he was revealed in the Exodus and wilderness and the obedience which hears and obeys his



instruction. It is, therefore, a knowing which becomes a state of being. Yahweh wants community with Israel through loyalty and love instead of sacrificial meals. He desires the service of faith and obedience, not the adulation of burning altars. In his election of Israel Yahweh had not meant to found one more religion of ritual by which men might manage the divine; he had intended to become absolute Lord of all life. In the eighth century, sacrifice was the essential religious act; Hosea's hearers probably could not conceive of religion apart from sacrifice. The declaration rejecting sacrifice must have sounded radical and nihilistic. But Hosea does not think of the principle as revolutionary. In **I Sam. 15.22** a pronouncement quite similar in form and vocabulary is attributed to Samuel; this prophetic radicalism against the cult also appears in **Amos 5.21 ff.; Isa. 1.12–17; Micah 6.6–8; Pss. 51.16f.; 40.6**. It is characteristic of the form of these declarations that they oppose normative terms understood as covenantal values to acts of sacrifice.

**Duane Garrett:** This is one of the great texts of the prophets—Jesus used it to expose the hypocrisy of his opponents (**Matt 9:13; 12:7**). Here, again, the two great desiderata of Hosea, love and the knowledge of God, reappear. We should not fail to notice that the polemics against prostitution, violence, and corruption, although not unimportant, are secondary. Hosea is not a religious reactionary who simply desires to stamp out social sins and impose religious duty on people. To the contrary, he desires that his reader acquire the loving and compassionate heart that comes from a transformational life with God. In Hosea's context the shrines and rituals of Israel had become impediments to true spirituality, and Hosea called upon the people to denounce them. This does not mean that Hosea regarded sacrifice or ritual worship as intrinsically bad, and it should not prompt us to suppose that the path to spirituality is to overthrow all liturgy and formal worship. In modern language one might appropriately rephrase this verse as, “I desire devotion and not hymn-singing, service and not sermons,” without thereby concluding that hymns and sermons were evil.

**J. Andrew Dearman:** It is the lack of love and knowledge of God among the people that is tragic, not the presence of burnt offerings and other sacrifices. Hosea offers here a critique of sacrificial ritual when it is not rooted in a covenantal ethos and where it is seen as a means of inducing a deity to act. In this way of speaking, Hosea joins other prophets and voices that see sacrifice and the public cultus as divinely given gifts to be used with gratitude, not as ritual coercion.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** To believe in and follow Yahweh is to submit to his sovereign will in all of life. Fully acceptable worship values this comprehensive view of God and recognizes that rituals separated from complete obedience are intolerable. If worship does not generate virtuous living and just societal structures, it makes a mockery of Yahweh and is nothing but self-serving piety (also see **Isa 1:10 – 2:5; Jer 7:1–11; Am 5:4–27; Mic 6:1–8**).

## II. (:7-11) CATALOG OF NATIONWIDE TREACHERY

**J. L. Mays**: **6:7-10** is a sort of miniature guidebook to the **geography of sin in Israel**; going from one place to another it catalogues the famous crimes of various localities as an indictment of the whole nation.

**David Allen Hubbard**: Do they describe three separate crimes, one at each site mentioned (so **Wolff**, pp. 121–122), or a series of episodes in one connected event that touched all three places (so **Andersen**, pp. 435–436)?

**H. D. Beeby**: Everywhere—Adam, Gilead, Shechem, etc., etc.—the story was the same: transgression, faithlessness, evil, bloodshed, robbery, murder, villainy. And who were largely to blame? The priests who themselves were another gracious gift and who were supposed to be the preservers of the Covenant. God gives; Israel either throws his gift away or turns it into a weapon to be used against God, just as they had done with the gift of sacrifice!

Hosea’s hearers would have understood the geographical references. Almost certainly the prophet is reminding them of contemporary events which were of sufficient magnitude or near enough in time to make further elaboration unnecessary. . .

We must read these place names, therefore, without too much regard to their history and even their geography. They are representative of the whole land and of the whole people of Israel. They have become symbols that speak of universal disobedience. In these places and everywhere else, says the prophet, Israel’s response to God’s desire for love and knowledge (**Hos. 6:6**) has been to do exactly the opposite. It was left to a later Christian writer to coin the phrase “**total depravity**”; these and other verses demonstrate that its content was known only too well to Hosea.

### A. (:7-9) Tracking Transgressions in Key Cities

#### 1. (:7) City of Adam

*“But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;  
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij**: The context of **verses 8-9**, where towns are mentioned, strongly suggests that **Adam** is the name of a town. Identified in Scripture as the site where the waters of the Jordan divided (**Josh. 3:16**), Adam had fallen like the rest of Israel in transgressing the covenant.

**Robin Routledge**: If, as seems likely, the **place** is the focus, there may have been a contemporary incident at Adam that we are unaware of. One suggestion is that Adam was linked with the **rebellion of Pekah**, which had the support of men from Gilead (v. 7; cf. **2 Kgs 15:25**). On this view, insurrection spread from Adam to Shechem (v. 9), and eventually to Samaria, where it resulted in the assassination of Pekahiah (**Macintosh** 1997: 238; **Dearman** 2010: 197–198; see also **J. Day** 1986a: 6).

Sin is described in various ways. **Breaking the covenant (v. 7)** is paralleled with **being unfaithful** (*bāgad*). The term means ‘to act treacherously’. It is also associated with marital unfaithfulness (**5:7**; cf. **Jer. 3:20; 9:2**), and so links to the reference to prostitution in **verse 10** and may reflect the corruption within the priesthood.

**James Mays**: Apparently the incident at Adam involved some breach of a specific requirement of the covenant. The second measure interprets the crucial importance of the incident; any breach of covenant is a betrayal of Yahweh, violates the integrity of the personal relation between God and people.

2. (:8) City of Gilead

*“Gilead is a city of wrongdoers,  
Tracked with bloody footprints.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij**: **Gilead** is singled out in the next verse as a city where murder reigned and covenant obligations were ignored.

**Allen Guenther**: The priests located at Gilead have refined the art of cursing one’s enemies, bringing hexes on people, and practicing sorcery for pay (here counted as robbery). They commit murder by casting spells on fellow Israelites. Thus the priests at Gilead, experts in sorcery, earned additional income by moonlighting. Their clients’ opponents in litigation or spirit included the faithful who went to worship at Shechem. This text, then, exposes the enormity of Israel’s religious perversions, the effects they have on the community, and the conflicting activities of priests within the cult of the Northern Kingdom.

**Duane Garrett**: The Hebrew of the last part of this verse is unusual. It means, as in the NIV, “*stained with footprints of blood.*” The choice of such a peculiar word and image must be deliberate, and the reason is in the fact that the root of the word for “*footprints*” is also the root of the name “*Jacob.*” Another curiosity of this verse is that it describes the inhabitants of Gilead as “*doers of wickedness,*” using the word *’āwen*, the same word that is used for the wordplay for **Bethel**, “*Beth Aven.*” Bethel was the place where Jacob as he fled Esau in Canaan, met God (**Gen 28:11–22**). Gilead, therefore, as the place where he was caught by Laban as he returned to Canaan, and as the region where he met the angel of God while preparing to face Esau, corresponds to Bethel as the end of Jacob's flight corresponds to its beginning. It is evident, therefore, that **Hosea is working the story of Jacob into his prophecy**; he will return to this story in **12:2–4**. The point here appears to be that the Israelites have taken on the worst characteristics of Jacob—selfishness and cunning—without having his redeeming experiences—encounters with God. They had no knowledge or experience of God comparable to Jacob's, who had a vision at Bethel and was renamed Israel in the region of Gilead. His descendants, instead of being transformed into Israel, into people of God, remained Jacob, a name that Hosea has transformed into the grim phrase, “*stained with footprints of blood.*”

**Biblehub.com:** **Gilead**, a region east of the Jordan River, was known for its balm, a healing ointment, yet here it is described as a place of wickedness. This contrast highlights the moral decay present in a place associated with healing. Historically, Gilead was part of the territory given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The reference to "*evildoers*" suggests rampant sin and corruption, possibly linked to idolatry and injustice, which were common issues addressed by the prophets. This phrase underscores the theme of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, a central message in Hosea.

### 3. (:9) City of Shechem

*“And as raiders wait for a man,  
So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem;  
Surely they have committed crime.”*

**H. Ronald Vandermeij:** Unlike the people of Gilead, the citizens of **Shechem** are not condemned, but rather a band of murdering priests is condemned, a group that had been terrorizing those trying to enter Shechem.

**James Mays:** Why would priests murder folk who were on the way to Shechem? It was one Israelite city against which Hosea directed no polemic. The ancient site had been a cultic centre associated with the Mosaic covenant tradition from the time of the conquest (**Deut. 27; Josh. 8.3off.; 24**). Perhaps after the establishment of Jeroboam's state cult it continued to be a threatening competitor to the official shrines at Bethel and Dan, a hotbed of religious dissent against the state's cultic programme. Did the priests of the state cult go to the length of plotting for pilgrims to Shechem to be waylaid (**BK**)?

**J. Andrew Dearman:** For all of their obscurity to modern readers, the comparisons to Israel's folly in **Hos. 6:7–9** suggest political treachery with religious motivations, violence, and murder with the collusion of priests. It is a picture of the society coming apart. And one of the intriguing factors is the reference to Adam and Gilead. These places (and perhaps also the mention of Shechem) may represent a type of sectionalism, regional tensions, or geographic specificity to the dissolution of Israel.

**Duane Garrett:** The most notorious incident involving Shechem, however, was the slaughter of its inhabitants by Simeon and Levi in retaliation for the rape of Dinah (**Gen 34**). In this verse Hosea describes the priests as a gang of thugs who lie in wait for unsuspecting victims. This is a metaphor of ambush, and it cannot be accidental that Hosea alludes to a place where Levi, father of the priesthood, was guilty of treachery and mass murder. Furthermore, the assertion that the priests "*carry out a wicked plan*" appropriately describes the deceit of Simeon and Levi at Shechem (**Gen 34:13**).

Hosea has therefore once again used a threefold pattern involving places in Israel, but this time with a peculiar twist. Each place recalls the worst characteristics of one of the patriarchs. At Adam they broke faith with God as did Adam; at Gilead the people,

unlike Jacob, are entirely without grace; and at Shechem the sons of Levi renew the history of treacherous slaughter.

## **B. (:10-11a) Tracking Transgressions in Both the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah**

### 1. (:10) House of Israel

*“In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;  
Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself.”*

**James Mays:** The final item in the catalogue deals with the entire house of Israel instead of a particular place. Its inclusiveness indicates that the specific charges in the foregoing lines were but illustrations of a guilt which belonged to the **whole nation**.

### 2. (:11a) House of Judah

*“Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you,*

**Robin Routledge:** *Harvest* (v. 11a) appears in the context of **judgment in Jeremiah 51:33** and **Joel 3:13**. Most link this with judgment on Judah.

**Allen Guenther:** Lest Judah interpret the sins committed at Gilead as unique to the North, God includes the Southern Kingdom in the threat of judgment. *Harvest* may mean what is to be harvested, or the time of the harvest. Both may be intended. Their sins will be harvested by God on the day of judgment when the true nature of Judah's rebellion will be unveiled. *Harvest* occurs when the crop is ripe. That time is in God's hands. When he announces that the nation is ripe for judgment, it will receive its full “reward.”

**James Mays:** The will of Yahweh to rescue and bless his people is undiminished; he is faithful to his promise in the covenant. In spite of their sin he looks on Israel as ‘*my people*’, the folk whom his election has raised up to be ‘*my son*’ (11.1). ‘*To change the fortune*’ (*šūb šebūt*) is a figure of speech (literally, ‘*turn the turning*’) which means a return to an original starting point, a *restitutio in integrum*. It may have a background in the festival of New Year as the term for the expected change when God would take away the barrenness of the land and bring back its fertility with the seasonal rains. Generally in the OT the phrase is used in a historical rather than a natural frame of reference to speak of God's shift from the work of anger to the blessing of grace (e.g. **Lam. 2.14; Job 42.10**).

**H. D. Beeby:** The sentence about Judah (v. 11a) provides a different kind of ending. First, it is a **warning against complacency**. If Judah has sown the same seed as Ephraim (and they had) then they could expect the same harvest, sooner or later, as their northern counterpart. Disaster falling on Ephraim must be seen not as something to rejoice in, but as the shadow of a further disaster—the one that will come on Judah. Second, v. 11a forms a **conclusion meant for all succeeding readers and not only for contemporary Judah**. Obviously in the first place it was uttered as a warning to Judah; perhaps it was written by a Judean scribe anxious to draw the moral clearly even

though a touch pedantically and didactically. But whoever the author, he has made it quite clear that the words of Hosea possess unchanged value and were not uttered only for their own day. In later ages in differing contexts, although with very differing harmonies, they would sound the same tune. Thus the word to ancient Judah is still emphatically a word about our complacency and our apostasy, even about our harvest if we do not return.

**M. Daniel Carroll R.:** Hosea constantly has both nations in view, and this line is parallel in intent to the statement at **5:5**. “*Harvest*” is used elsewhere as a description of a time of divine reckoning (**Isa 18:5; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13; cf. Hos 10:13**).

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do we substitute religious ritual and a desire to manipulate God for heartfelt reality and genuine loyalty and true knowledge?
- 2) In what way can God’s Word be destructive towards people today?
- 3) What type of judgment has God reserved for religious leaders who breed corruption and apostasy?
- 4) What more can God do to promote faithfulness and covenant love?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Anthony Petterson:** If Israel’s relationship with the Lord is to work, it requires a steadfast loyalty to God. Yet the loyalty of Ephraim and Judah is like mist and dew that quickly vanishes. This covenant unfaithfulness has been the object of prophetic attack, with God striking his people with the covenant curses (**Lev 26:14-45**). God desires relationship and covenant loyalty more than sacrifices, a key Old Testament theme (**1Sa 15:22-23; Mic 6:6-8**). Adam in **Hosea 6:7** could refer to the first human or to a place on the Jordan River (cf. **Jos 3:16**). Ephraim and Judah have violated the national covenant (cf. **Hos 8:1**). This is seen especially in the towns of Adam and Gilead, and also on the road to Shechem, where priests terrorize like a mob of murderous gangsters. Ephraim’s promiscuity could refer to the people’s idolatry, to actual sexual activity outside of marriage, or to both. Israel’s defilement is contagious, and Judah also will be judged (**6:10-11**).

### **Jeremy Thomas: The Nation’s Failure to Learn Loyalty**

You will see God Himself desperate to get His people to respond to His love. God is in a marriage with the nation Israel and He is the perfect husband and He has initiated with her continually. He has given Himself to her continually. He has showered her with His

love and with His grace and yet she has not responded to His advances; she has gone negative volition to her right God and she has responded to other gods. You see in Hosea the tremendous personality of God in ways you never see in any other OT book. By way of parallel God is very involved and very interested in our lives as NT believers. He pursues you, He comes after you, He loves you and He wants you to respond to Him. He doesn't just sit back and say, oh well, believer so and so doesn't want to respond to Me. God is very concerned that you respond to Him. So concerned that He will discipline you, often very severely. God's discipline always comes out of His love. Therefore if you are experiencing God's discipline you are experiencing God's love and it shows He cares enough about you to expend His time and energy on getting you in shape for your eternal destiny. So watch for God's reaction to the people of Israel. . .

The **biblical idea of law** is that you violated a Person's character. You're attacking God. Law is not just a piece of paper. And until you realize that every time you break the law of Christ you're attacking the Person of Christ you'll never get what law is really all about. Law is about revelation of God's character. The Law expresses who He is. And that's why it says in **v 7, you have dealt treacherously against Me**. It doesn't say you dealt treacherously against a piece of paper. It says you dealt treacherously against Me. Me is a person. And that's the point of biblical law, always behind the law is the Lawgiver, and when we violate the law it's a violation of the Person behind the law. . .

And now we come to the results in **vv 8-11**. We've looked at the general principle, the principle being that the nation Israel failed to learn loyalty to God, they had seven centuries to learn it, and they didn't learn it. Now we see the results of not learning it

**Jason Van Bommel:** Here in Hosea 6, we get some insight from the Lord's perspective on toxic religion and what God desires instead. Here in these verses, we see that corrupt and vile religion is fickle (**v. 4**), formalist (**v. 6**), and financially driven (**v. 9**).

**David Thompson:** **God describes what He actually sees . 6:7-10**

God does not see loyalty or commitment to His Word. Instead, He sees eight horrible acts:

**Horrible Act #1** - God's people have transgressed the covenant. **6:7a**

What this statement means is that God's people didn't obey God's Word; they did just the opposite like Adam. They didn't pay any attention to the Word of God.

**Horrible Act #2** - God's people have dealt treacherously against God. **6:7b**

The word "*treacherous*" is interesting because what it means is that these people were frauds who intentionally clothed themselves to look like they were right with God when, in fact, they were not.



**Horrible Act #3** - God's people were tolerating corrupt cities. **6:8a**

God singles out specific places like Gilead, which apparently were known for evil crimes.

**Horrible Act #4** - God's people had bloody footprints. **6:8b**

They were going to worship services having committed horrible crimes.

**Horrible Act #5** - God's priests were committing murders . **6:9**

What they did was connected to Shechem? Truth is we don't know. But it is very clear that these priests were not interested in pursuing knowledge of the Word of God. They were doing evil things. The religious leaders were ruthless. They were lurking men not seeking to get people the knowledge of God, but seeking to destroy them for personal gain. If we turn back the clock to the Reformation, we can see a literal illustration of this very evil. Priests of the Roman Church were lurking in an attempt to kill Martin Luther. But God's sovereign, protective hand was on Luther and they did not succeed.

**Horrible Act #6** - God's people did horrible things. **6:10a**

The word "*horrible*" describes something extremely bad. God does not tell us what it is, but if God classifies it as horrible, it must be something very depraved beyond the norm

**Horrible Act #7** - God's people did immoral things. **6:10b**

Immoral sex has always been a problem around some of God's people. These people are heading for the judgment of God.

**Horrible Act #8** - God's people defiled themselves. **6:10c**

This word "*defile*" means God's people were doing things God classified as unclean and impure. God's people were a sinful mess. Now we would expect at this point to read a text in which God would say, "I will blast My people." "I will damn My people." "I will destroy My people." But look at the next theme.

**THEME #5** – God describes what He will eventually do to His people. **6:11**

Look carefully at the end of **verse 11**. You read this verse and you say, you have got to be kidding me. God will restore the fortunes of His people. His people have done evil and perverse things and God says I will "*restore the fortunes of My people.*"

Now we must ask why in the world would God do that? Because God's people are God's family and He still loves His family.

What an amazing God. I do not know how far you have wandered away from God. I do not know all of the perverse sin that is in your life. What I do know is that if you, as a prodigal, will turn back to God, He will restore His blessings on you because He loves you. That is the message of Hosea 6.

Come back to God and go after the knowledge of God and God's blessings will be yours.

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