

HOSEA

Author:

Hosea, the son of Beeri. His name means “salvation” or “save”. All we know about him is what is written in this book. Neither he nor his ministry is mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament.

Date:

The kings mentioned in the first verse reigned 740-700 BC. Hosea and Isaiah prophesied at the same time. See Isa 1:1.

Theme:

The people of Israel had forsaken the true God and had fallen into false worship and idolatry. As a result their personal lives and their national life as a whole had become corrupt. Hosea (and God speaking through Hosea) urged them to repent and turn back to the God they had deserted. He set forth the long-suffering love of God, and depicted Israel as an adulterous wife. Though the behavior of His people brought great grief to God, He did not cease to love them, or to call them back to Himself. The prophet shows that eventually Israel would turn back to God.

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1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

²At the beginning of the word of the LORD to Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take a prostitute as your wife, and have children by a prostitute; for the land has engaged in great prostitution, *departing* from the LORD".

³So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. She conceived and bore him a son.

⁴And the LORD said to him, "Call his name Jezreel; for *in* just a little *while* I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. ⁵And on that day it will come about that I will break the bow

of Israel in the valley of Jezreel".

⁶And she conceived again, and bore a daughter. And God said to him, "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah; for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but will utterly take them away. ⁷But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them through the LORD their God, but will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by battle, by horses, or by horsemen".

⁸Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. ⁹Then God said, "Call his name Lo-Ammi; for you are not my people, and I will not be your God.

¹⁰"Yet the number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And this will happen: in the place where it was said to

1:1 "*The word...came*"—2 Sam 24:11; 1 Kings 16:7; Isa 38:4; Jer 1:2; Ezek 1:3.

"*Hosea*"—the name means "save" or "salvation".

"*Kings of Judah*"—Isa 1:1. Isaiah and Hosea lived and prophesied during the same years.

"*Son of Joash*"—2 Kings 14:23-29.

1:2 "*The LORD to Hosea*"—the prophets of the Bible were living channels through whom the Word of God came. Compare 2 Sam 23:2; Jer 1:9; Matt 22:43; Acts 28:25; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:7; 2 Pet 1:21.

"*Prostitute as your wife*"—a possible meaning is this: God was telling him to marry a woman who He foresaw would later prove unfaithful to Hosea (3:1).

"*Prostitution*"—here the Lord is speaking of spiritual matters; the people of Israel had been unfaithful to God. See Ex 34:15; Lev 17:7; Deut 31:16; Jud 2:17; Jer 2:2, 20; Ezek 16:15-34; 23:2-3. In spiritual matters forsaking God is the vilest thing that people can do.

1:3 Gomer means "perfection", but she proved far from perfect. Perfection is also what God wants for His people (compare Matt 5:48), but Israel as a nation proved as bad as Gomer the individual.

1:4 "*Jezreel*"—a wide valley or plain in the northern part of Palestine south of the hills of Galilee. Hosea was to name his son Jezreel as a sign to Israel. Compare Isa 8:3, 18. The name means "God scatters". God was signifying what He was going to do.

"*Jehu*"—1 Kings 19:16. The account of his rise to power in Israel and the massacre in the valley of Jezreel is in 2 Kings chapters 9 and 10. Jehu was the instrument God used in punishing the house of the wicked King Ahab, but God punished the house of Jehu for their own wickedness. Compare Isa 10:5-6, 12; Jer 51:20-25.

"*Cause...to cease*"—2 Kings 17:1-23. The kingdom of Israel was made up of ten tribes descended from Jacob (Israel). It was different from the kingdom

of Judah—v 7. 1 Kings chapter 12 describes how the division came about.

1:5 Israel's military power was broken in the valley of Jezreel some months before Samaria fell to the Assyrians.

1:6 "*Lo-Ruhamah*"—means "not an obtainer of mercy", "not loved". God had borne patiently with the northern kingdom for two hundred years. He sent them great prophets like Elijah and Elisha. See 2 Kings 17:13. But they refused His love and trampled underfoot all His commands. At last things had reached a state where God would no longer bear it and so He brought their kingdom to an end. Compare Gen 6:3, 6, 7; Prov 1:22-29; Jer 7:13, 25.

1:7 God showed love to Judah for another hundred and twenty years, until they too went the same way as Israel.

"*Not...by bow*"—Ps 33:16-17; Isa 37:36-37; Zech 4:6.

1:9 "*Lo-Ammi*"—means "not my people". Temporarily God was rejecting them because they were rejecting Him. This was according to His word through Moses in Deut 31:16-18. Compare Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68.

1:10 In Rom 9:26 Paul applies this verse in a spiritual sense to the conversion of non-Jewish peoples. This does not mean that he was teaching there could be no literal fulfillment in the nation of Israel. See Rom 11:26-29. Here through Hosea God says that His rejection of Israel was only temporary.

"*Sand*"—Gen 22:17; 32:12.

"*The place*"—the land of Israel. This is where God said that Israel was not His people, so this is where God would call them His sons. This seems to speak of the restoration and transformation of that people descended from Jacob. Compare 2:23; Lev 26:40-45; Isa 11:12; Jer 23:5-6; 30:1-3; 31:27-28; Ezek 37:11-14; Amos 9:14-15.

them, 'You are not my people', *there* it will be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God.' ¹¹Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together, and appoint one head for themselves, and they will come up out of the land; for great *will be* the day of Jezreel.

2 "Say to your brethren, 'Ammi', and to your sisters, 'Ruhamah',
² "Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she *is* not my wife, nor *am* I her husband. But let her put away her prostitution from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts,
³ so that I do not strip her naked, and expose her as on the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.
⁴ And I will not have mercy on her children, for they *are* children of prostitution.
⁵ For their mother has behaved like a prostitute; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers

who give *me* my food and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'
⁶ Therefore, see, I will block your way with thorns, and make a wall so that she cannot find her paths.
⁷ And she will follow her lovers, but she will not catch up with them; and she will seek them, but not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.'
⁸ For she did not know that *it was* I *who* gave her grain and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they used for Baal.
⁹ "Therefore I will return, and take away my grain at its time, and my wine in its season, and will take back my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.
¹⁰ And now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will deliver her from my hand.
¹¹ I will also put a stop to all her

1:11 "Together"— Ezek 37:15-23.

"One head"— 3:5; Jer 30:21; Ezek 37:24-25.

"Day of Jezreel"— the day when God blesses His people in the great valley where He once punished them.

2:1 Compare 1:6,8. This points to a complete reversal of God's dealings with Israel. Ammi means "my people". Ruhamah means "obtainer of mercy".

2:2 "Bring charges against"— this seems a better translation than "plead with".

"Mother"— from here to the end of the chapter God speaks through the prophet about the kingdom of Israel.

"Not my wife"— Israel was unfaithful to God and was like a woman forsaking her husband (1:2). So He was presently rejecting that people as if He were no longer its "husband".

"Let her put away"— repentance was the only hope for them.

2:3 Ezek 16:37; Lev 26:31-33; Deut 28:63.

2:4-5 1:6. The people of the kingdom of Israel, spiritually speaking, were not the children of God. Israel had turned to idols and the people

were "children" of false gods. Morally, ethically and spiritually they were the result of the union of Israel with idolatry.

2:5 "I will go"— Jer 3:1,6; 44:17-18.

2:6 God would make it very difficult for Israel to continue in its idolatrous practices.

2:7 This suggests that Israel would experience great disappointments with the idols and gods it went after, and eventually return to the one true God. Compare Lev 26:40-45.

2:8 Verse 5. The people thought God's good gifts came from the false gods they worshiped.

"Used for Baal"— compare Ezek 16:15-19. Note on "Baal" at Jud 2:11.

2:9-13 God had made Israel prosperous, and He would ruin their prosperity because of their idolatry and many sins.

2:9 "Grain"— "corn" (KJV) was not then a crop in that part of the world.

2:10 "From my hand"— see Heb 10:31. None of the gods Israel worshiped, none of the nations it begged for help would be able to rescue it.

2:11 Their religious feasts had become a mockery.

- rejoicing, her feast days,
her new moons, and her Sabbaths,
all her appointed feasts.
- ¹² And I will destroy her vines and
her fig trees, of which she has said,
'These *are* my rewards that
my lovers have given me.'
And I will make them a forest,
and the beasts of the field
will eat them.
- ¹³ And I will punish her for the days
of the Baals,
when she burned incense to them,
and adorned herself with her
earrings and her jewels,
and went after her lovers,
and forgot me, says the LORD.
- ¹⁴ "Therefore, see, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak to her heart.
- ¹⁵ And there I will give her vineyards
back to her and the valley of Achor
as a door of hope.
And she will sing there,
as in the days of her youth,
and as on the day when she came up
out of the land of Egypt.
- ¹⁶ "And it shall be on that day,
says the LORD,
that you will call me Ishi,
and will no longer call me Baali.
- ¹⁷ For I will take away the names
of the Baals from her mouth,
- and they will no more be remembered
by their name.
- ¹⁸ And on that day I will make
a covenant for them with the beasts
of the field,
and with the birds of the sky,
and *with* the creeping things
of the ground.
And I will break the bow and
the sword and *abolish* war
from the earth,
and will cause them to
lie down in safety.
- ¹⁹ And I will betroth you
to me forever;
yes, I will betroth you to me
in righteousness,
and in justice, and in loving kindness,
and in mercies.
- ²⁰ I will betroth you to me
in faithfulness;
and you will know the LORD.
- ²¹ "And it will happen on that day
that I will answer,
says the LORD,
I will answer the heavens,
and they will answer the earth,
- ²² And the earth will answer the grain
and the wine and the oil,
and they will answer Jezreel.
- ²³ And I will sow her for myself
in the earth.
And I will have mercy on her

God had appointed them (Leviticus chapter 23), but they had no heart for God when they observed them. Compare Isa 1:12-17. So for a time He would make it impossible to them to observe them.

2:13 God declares repeatedly in His Word that He will punish idolatry – Deut 13:1-8; 27:15; Rev 21:8.

"*Forgot me*" – the very thing about which God often warned them (Deut 6:12; 8:11,14,19).

2:14-23 God here speaks of a time after Israel had suffered its punishment. He says He will bring the people back to Himself. See 1:10—2:1. **2:14** God is saying He will take the nation Israel again as His "wife". That time will be like a new "betrothal" (vs 19,20).

"*Speak to her heart*" – the literal translation of the Hebrew.

2:15 "*Give her*" – restore Israel's prosperity.

"*Achor*" – compare Isa 65:10. Achor was the place where Achan was punished for his sin – Josh 7:25-26. The word means "trouble". But God would transform trouble into blessing when Israel turned back to Him.

"*Sing*" – or possibly "respond".

"*Youth*" – compare Jer 2:2.

"*Egypt*" – 12:9; Ex 12:51; 14:30-31.

2:16 "*Ishi*" – means "my husband" – Isa 54:5.

"*Baali*" – means "my master" or "my Baal".

2:17 Compare Ex 23:13; Ps 16:4. God says He will break Israel free from idolatry and fulfill the righteousness of the law in them.

2:18 In other words, wild beasts will not harm them as they did in the time of their punishment (v 12). Compare Isa 11:6-9.

"*Abolish war*" – Ps 46:9; Isa 2:4; Zech 9:10.

2:19-20 The LORD (Jehovah – Ex 3:14-15) will again take Israel as His "bride". From then on the five qualities He lists in these verses will prevail. Compare Isa 1:27; 54:8.

2:19 "*In righteousness*" – or "with righteousness".

2:20 "*Know*" – compare Jer 24:7; 31:34.

2:21-22 When Israel turns back to God He will make the land and the people fruitful and prosperous again.

2:23 "*In the earth*" – or "in the land" – Jer 23:8; Ezek 36:24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:15. The same Hebrew word means both earth and land.

who had not obtained mercy,
and I will say to *those who were*
not my people,
'You are my people', and
they will say, '*You are my God.*' "

3 Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a friend, but an adulteress. *Show her love* just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love *their raisin cakes*".

²So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and for a homer and a half of barley. ³And I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not engage in prostitution, and you shall not be for *another man*; so I *will also be* for you".

⁴For the children of Israel will remain many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without teraphim*. ⁵Afterward the children of Israel will return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and will show reverence for the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

"*My people*"— 1:8; 2:1. Compare Rom 9:25. See note at Hos 1:10.

"*My God*"— they will take the one true God as their God again and renounce false gods and idols. **3:1** "*Adulteress*"— 1:2. The Lord for a time would not show His love to Israel — 1:6, but His love had not been destroyed (compare Song 8:6-7). We should be very glad that God's love is not as changeable and fleeting as ours can be.

"*Raisin cakes*"— these were offerings the people made for the false god Baal.

3:2 "*Fifteen shekels*"— about 170 grams. It seems from this that Gomer, Hosea's wife, had become a slave. Possibly one of her lovers had sold her into slavery. So Hosea paid in money and grain the total price to buy her back. The value put on a female slave was thirty shekels — Ex 21:7,32.

"*Homer and a half*"— about ten bushels or 330 liters. Gomer's slavery was a picture of the captivity and enslavement of Israel to foreign nations. But God would release them from captivity in due time (Jer 30:8).

3:4 God would remove them from the land of Israel and bring them under foreign rule. They would not be able to worship as they had been doing.

"*Ephod*"— see Ex 25:7. Here the word is used of something connected with idolatry, and not for the purpose God designed.

"*Teraphim*"— household gods.

3:5 This is a clear statement of the future turning of Israel to God (5:15; Isa 10:20).

4 Hear the word of the LORD,
you children of Israel;
for the LORD has a controversy
to bring with the inhabitants
of the land:

"For *there is* no faithfulness,
or mercy,
or knowledge of God in the land,
² *but* swearing, and lying,
and killing, and stealing,
and committing adultery.

They use violence, and bloodshed
follows bloodshed.

³ Therefore the land will mourn,
and everyone who lives in it
will waste away,
along with the beasts of the field
and the birds of the sky;
yes, the fish in the sea will
also be taken away.

⁴ "But let no man strive,
or rebuke another;
for your people *are* like
those who strive with the priest.

⁵ Therefore you will stumble in the day,
and the prophet also will stumble
with you in the night,

"*David*"— see Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25.

"*The latter days*"— Deut 4:30; Isa 2:2; Jer 50:4-5.

4:1 "*Word of the LORD*"— 1:1.

"*Controversy*"— God now brings against the people of the northern kingdom of Israel (v 15) a fuller description of their wrongdoing.

"*No faithfulness*"— Ps 12:1; 18:25-26; 78:8,37.

"*No mercy*"— they were failing in everything God wanted them to be.

"*No knowledge*"— 2:20. They did not know the Lord and did not want to know Him. Compare Rom 1:28.

4:2 "*Swearing*"— the Hebrew means to pronounce a curse on.

"*Use violence...bloodshed*"— when a people lack faithfulness, mercy and the knowledge of God there will be little or no restraints on their sinful nature. They will plunge into the evils God most hates (Prov 6:16-19).

4:3 There are terrible penalties that come on people who live as Israel did. Their whole country would be involved in punishment for their sins.

4:4 All were guilty, people and priests alike, so no one should accuse and condemn anyone else. Compare Rom 2:1-4.

"*Priest*"— note at Ex 28:1.

4:5 "*Prophet also*"— compare Isa 28:7; Jer 2:8,26; 5:13,31; 6:13; Ezek 13:2.

"*Day*", "*night*"— there was no rest from sinning. Sin makes a cruel master, keeping its slaves on the job continually.

- and I will destroy your mother.
⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
 Because you have rejected knowledge,
 I will also reject you,
 so that you will not be a priest for me.
 Since you have forgotten the law of your God,
 I will also forget your children.
⁷ The more they increased,
 the more they sinned against me;
therefore I will change
 their glory into shame.
⁸ They feed on the sin of my people,
 and they set their heart on their evil.
⁹ And it will be,
 ‘Like people, like priest’;
 and I will punish them for their ways,
 and repay them for their deeds.
¹⁰ For they will eat,
 but not have enough.
 They will engage in prostitution,
 but shall not increase;
 because they have stopped
 obeying the LORD.
¹¹ Prostitution and wine
 and new wine take away the heart.
- ¹² My people ask counsel
 from their wooden *idols*,
 and get their answers from their rod
 of divination.
 For the spirit of prostitution has
 caused *them* to go astray,
 and they have given themselves
 to prostitution against their God.
¹³ They sacrifice on the tops
 of the mountains,
 and burn incense on the hills,
 under oaks and poplars
 and terebinths,
 because their shade is good.
 Therefore your daughters engage
 in prostitution
 and your brides commit adultery.
¹⁴ “I will not punish your daughters
 when they engage in prostitution,
 or your brides when they commit
 adultery,
 because *the men* themselves go off
 with harlots and offer sacrifices
 with temple prostitutes.
 So a people without understanding
 fall *into ruin*.
¹⁵ “Though you, Israel, act like

“*Mother*”— the kingdom of Israel.

4:6 Lack of knowledge of God and His ways is a great destroyer of people – Prov 1:29-32; 10:21; Isa 1:3; Eph 4:18-19.

“*Rejected knowledge*”— He speaks now to the priests and says their lack of knowledge of God was deliberate. They did not know God and His ways because they did not wish to know.

“*Forgotten the law*”— they failed in their most important task (Deut 31:9-13; 2 Chron 17:8-9; Ezra 7:10).

“*Forget your children*”— they ignored what was most important to God; He would ignore what was most important to them. Compare Ps 18:25-26; Gal 6:7.

4:7 Compare Ps 106:20; Rom 1:23.

4:8 When people sinned they brought sacrifices to the priests to offer. The priests ate those offerings – Lev 6:24-29. The more the people sinned the more sacrifices they brought and the more the priests could take for themselves. They were not the last of the priests or religious leaders to make use of people’s sins for selfish reasons. It goes on to this day.

4:9 People will become like their religious teachers and leaders and they will be punished like them.

“*Repay*”— Deut 32:35; 1 Kings 2:32,44; Ps 28:4; Prov 24:12.

4:10 “*Enough*”— Lev 26:26; Micah 6:14.

“*Prostitution*”— He probably meant both literal

and figurative prostitution, sexual sins and the sin of forsaking the true God for idols (v 13). These two sins sometimes go together.

4:11 “*Wine*”— 7:5,14; Prov 20:1; 23:31.

4:12 “*Ask counsel from...idol*”— compare 2 Kings 1:2-4; 2 Chron 25:15; Isa 19:3; 44:14-20; Ezek 21:21.

“*Spirit of prostitution*”— 5:4. This means a mind to leave the true God and run after gods and idols.

4:13 “*Hills*”— 10:8; Deut 12:2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; Jer 2:20.

4:14 The daughters and daughters-in-law learned their evil behavior from the men and so the men were more guilty than they.

“*Temple prostitutes*”— women connected with idol temples and shrines who engaged in sexual sins with the men who came to worship.

“*Without understanding*”— v 6. Ruin will be the result to any people anywhere who refuse the knowledge of the true God.

4:15 Notice the distinction between the northern kingdom and the southern. Gilgal and Beth Aven were places where the northern kingdom had places of idol worship.

“Beth Aven”— means “house of wickedness”. Here it is used to indicate Bethel (which means “house of God” – Gen 28:19). The people of Israel had changed the “house of God” into a place of evil practices. Compare Matt 21:12-13.

a prostitute,
let not Judah offend.
So do not come to Gilgal,
nor go up to Beth-Aven,
nor swear, 'As the LORD lives.'
16 For Israel is as stubborn
as a rebellious heifer.
How can the LORD pasture them
like a lamb in a large field?
17 Ephraim is joined to idols;
let him alone.
18 Their drink is sour;
they give themselves to prostitution
continually;
her rulers love shamefully,
saying, 'Give!'
19 The wind wraps her up in its wings,
and they will be put to shame
because of their sacrifices.

5 "Hear this,
O priests! Pay attention,
house of Israel! Give ear,
O royal house!
For judgment is against you,
because you have been

a snare at Mizpah,
and a net spread on Tabor.
2 And the rebels are deep in slaughter,
though *I have rebuked them all.*
3 I know Ephraim, *and*
Israel is not hidden from me;
for now, O Ephraim,
you engage in prostitution,
and Israel is defiled.
4 "They will not employ
their deeds to turn to their God,
for the spirit of prostitution
is among them,
and they do not know the LORD.
5 And the pride of Israel testifies
against him.
Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble
in their wickedness.
Judah also stumbles with them.
6 They will go with their flocks
and with their herds to seek
the LORD,
but they will not find *him.*
He has withdrawn himself
from them.
7 They have dealt treacherously

"As the LORD lives"— taking an oath in the name of Jehovah God. The people of Israel did this hypocritically – they were devoted to idols.

4:16 "*Stubborn*"— compare Deut 9:7; 1 Sam 15:23; Ps 78:8; 81:12; Isa 1:5; Jer 5:23; 7:24.

"*Heifer*"— the nation was like a young rebellious cow.

"*Lamb*"— God cannot treat people like His young sheep when they are like cattle which refuse to accept training.

4:17 "*Ephraim*"— is here used for the whole northern kingdom of Israel— see Isa 7:2,5,8,9,17; 11:13; Jer 7:15.

"*Leave him alone*"— that kingdom was so determined to ignore God and worship idols that nothing could be done for it (1:4-6; Prov 29:1).

4:18 They did not need to drink in order to abandon themselves to sin.

4:19 "*Wind*"— compare 8:7; 13:15; Ps 1:4; Prov 1:27; Isa 40:24.

"*Shame*"— Isa 1:29. By worshiping idols they thought they would have prosperity and peace. Instead they would be ruined and destroyed – vs 6,14.

5:1 Political leaders, religious leaders and people were all guilty.

"*Snare...net*"— literal snares were to catch birds and animals, but here the words are used figuratively. They were catching people for their own selfish purposes and oppressing the poor and helpless. Mizpah was a town, Tabor a hill

in Israel.

5:2 God's rebukes are often ignored by those who are determined to go on their own way.

5:3 "*I know*"— Ps 33:13-15; 94:9; Prov 5:21; Jer 16:17; 23:24; Amos 5:12; Heb 4:13.

"*Ephraim*"— note at 4:17.

"*Prostitution*"— 1:2; 2:2; 4:10-12.

5:4 "*To turn*"— they had hardened their hearts so much with their sins that they had no desire to repent. Compare Heb 3:13.

"*Spirit of prostitution*"— 4:11.

"*Not know*"— 4:6; Jer 4:22.

5:5 "*Pride*"— those who are the most spiritually ignorant are often the most arrogant, and they who have least of which to be proud are often the most proud.

"*Judah*"— the southern kingdom was being affected by the idolatry and corruption of the northern kingdom.

5:6 "*Seek*"— 1 Chron 16:10-11; 2 Chron 7:14; Ps 27:8; 119:2; Jer 29:13; Matt 7:7. Seeking God from proper motives is the best thing anyone can do. But Israel was not seeking God from right motives. They continued in their idolatry and corruption but wanted God's blessing on top of it. So He would have nothing to do with them. Compare Isa 58:1-4. The Bible tells us how we must seek God if we would find Him – Isa 55:6-7; Jam 4:8-10.

5:7 1:2; 2:4. As long as they were determined to continue in their sins their seeking God was in vain.

against the LORD;
for they have begotten alien children.
Now a New Moon *festival*
will devour them with their
portions.
8 “Blow the horn in Gibeah,
and the trumpet in Ramah!
Cry out loudly at Beth-Aven,
‘Behind you, O Benjamin!’
9 Ephraim will be desolate
in the day of rebuke.
Among the tribes of Israel
I make known what is sure.
10 The princes of Judah are like
those who remove boundary
stones, *therefore* I will
pour out my wrath on them
like water.
11 Ephraim is oppressed and
broken in judgment,
because he willingly followed
human orders.
12 *Therefore* I *will be* to Ephraim
like a moth,
and to the house of Judah like rot.
13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah saw his wound,
then Ephraim went to the Assyrian,

and sent a *message* to King Jareb.
But he could not cure you,
or heal you of your wound.
14 For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim,
and like a young lion to the house
of Judah.
I *myself* will tear *them* and go away.
I will take *them* away,
and no one will rescue *them*.
15 I will go away *and* return
to my place, until they acknowledge
their offense, and seek my face.
In their affliction they will seek me
earnestly”.

6 “Come, and let us return
to the LORD;
for he has torn us,
but he will heal us. He has struck us,
but he will bind up our *wounds*.
2 After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
and we will live in his sight.
3 Then we will know the LORD,
if we press on to know him.
His coming is as certain as the
morning,
and he will come to us like the rain,

“*New Moon*”— Isa 1:14. In spite of their attempts to worship God, judgment and destruction were coming.

5:8 War was about to come on the northern kingdom.

“*Beth Aven*”— note at 4:15.

“*Benjamin*”— this area was a part of the southern kingdom. It would join with other people against Israel.

5:9 “*Sure*”— Isa 46:10; Zech 1:6. When God speaks of judgment on sinful people it is no idle threat.

5:10 “*Judah*”— evidently the southern kingdom had taken part of Israel’s territory. The Bible forbids moving boundary stones – Deut 19:14; Prov 22:28. Judah’s leaders would pay the penalty for breaking God’s command.

5:12 God had decided to destroy both Israel and Judah.

5:13 Both Israel and Judah had been defeated by foreign armies and left like a wounded body. Compare Isa 1:5-7. Note on Assyria at 2 Kings 15:19.

5:14 This is why the king of Assyria was not able to help Israel. God was against Israel and had decreed its destruction – v 9. If God is against us who can be for us?

“*Tear them*”— God would use foreign armies to tear them, so it was as if He were doing it. Compare Isa 10:5-7; 13:4; Jer 25:9.

5:15 God would leave Israel as He said He would

– 1:6,9; Josh 24:20; 2 Kings 21:14.

“*Until*”— He would not forsake them forever, but would wait for true repentance. Compare Isa 54:7; Rom 11:11,25-27. God says a time would come when Israel and Judah would seek Him in a proper way. Compare vs 6,7.

6:1-3 These words seem to indicate the repentance and faith that would come to Israel and Judah sometime after God tore them to pieces and withdrew from them (5:14-15). Hosea is putting these words into the mouths of a future generation of people. They could not have spoken these words at the time Hosea was writing because God had not yet torn them to pieces. But eventually that nation would understand that God had torn them in justice and would heal them in mercy, that He tore them just so they would turn to Him for mercy.
6:2 “*Two days... third day*”— a comparatively brief time. But see 2 Pet 3:8.

“*Revive...raise*”— compare 2:14-23; Isa 44:26; 49:6,8; 57:18; 61:4; Jer 15:19; 16:15; 30:17-18; Ezek 37:11-14.

6:3 “*Know*”— 2:20.

“*Press on*”— compare Phil 3:10-12.

“*He will come*”— words indicating faith. Rains came to the land of Israel in winter and spring and brought life to the land. God would come and rain blessings again on His people. Compare 10:12; Ps 72:6; Isa 44:3; 45:8; Ezek 34:26.

like the latter *and* former
rain to the earth”.

4 “O Ephraim, what shall
I do with you?
O Judah, what shall I do
with you?
For your goodness *is* like a
morning cloud,
and it goes away like
the early dew.

5 Therefore I have cut *them* down
by the prophets,
I have slain them by the words
of my mouth.
And judgments on you *are like*
light going forth.

6 For I delight in mercy,
and not sacrifice,
and the knowledge of God
more than burnt offerings.

7 But like men they have transgressed
the covenant.
There they have dealt treacherously
against me.

8 Gilead *is* a city of evildoers,
and is defiled with blood.

9 And as bands of robbers lie
in wait for a man,
so the company of priests
commit murder on the
way to Shechem;
they commit shameful deeds.

10 I have seen a horrible thing
in the house of Israel.

There is the prostitution of Ephraim,
Israel is defiled.

11 Also, O Judah,
there is a harvest appointed for you,
when I bring back my people from
captivity.

7 “When I would have healed Israel,
then the guilt of Ephraim was
uncovered,
and the wickedness of Samaria;
for they practice deceit.
The thief comes in,
and the band of robbers
plunders outside.

2 And they do not consider
in their hearts *that* I remember
all their wickedness.
Now their own deeds
have surrounded them;
they are before my face.

3 “They make the king glad
with their wickedness,
and *please* the princes
with their lies.

4 They *are* all adulterers,
like an oven heated by the baker,
who stops stirring up
the fire after kneading
the dough until it is leavened.

5 On the king’s *special* day
the princes become inflamed
with bottles of wine.
He stretches out his hand

6:4 “*T*”– God speaks again. At the same time Hosea wrote neither Israel nor Judah was for a complete turning to God. What little devotion they had to Him was very brief.

6:5 God pronounced judgment on them through His prophets, and once pronounced its coming was absolutely certain. The words of His mouth were spoken through His prophets and they signified destruction for the people. Compare Jer 23:29.

6:6 Here is the reason why God punished His people. They were content with the outer forms of their religion and rejected its heart. Compare Ps 50:7-23; Isa 1:11-17; Matt 23:23-24. See also Matt 9:13 and 12:7 where Jesus quoted these words.

6:7 “*Like men*”– this could be translated “like Adam”. The Hebrew word for Adam and man is the same.

6:8 “*Gilead*”– 12:11. A place belonging to Israel east of the Jordan River.

6:9 “*Priests*”– not only did they fail in their most important task (4:6), they trampled God’s law

under their feet and became utterly vile.

6:10 4:10,12,18; 5:3-4.

6:11 “*Bring...from captivity*”– this could be translated “restore the well-being of” – the Hebrew means either.

7:1 God did not want to punish His people. He much preferred to heal and bless them (compare Matt 23:37. See note at Jer 48:31-39). But He could not justly do so. The great Judge of the universe must uphold justice and righteousness and punish those who break His laws.

“*Samaria*”– 8:5-6.

7:2 “*I remember*”– 8:13; Jer 14:10; 44:21-22. Compare Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17.

“*Before my face*”– 5:3; Ps 90:8.

7:3 4:2; Micah 7:3. Only wicked rulers take delight in the wickedness of their people.

7:4-7 These verses describe the condition among the people that delighted their rulers – adultery, drunkenness and uncontrollable passions. Verse 13 gives the result. All this in the midst of a people God chose to be His holy people and a special treasure!

with scoffers.
 6 For they prepare their heart
 like an oven,
 while they lie in wait.
 Their baker sleeps all night;
 in the morning it burns
 like a blazing fire.
 7 They are all as hot as an oven,
 and they have devoured their
 judges.
 All their kings have fallen.
There is none among them
 who calls out to me.
 8 “Ephraim has mixed himself
 among the peoples.
 Ephraim is a cake not turned over.
 9 Foreigners have devoured
 his strength,
 and he does not know *it*. Yes,
 gray hairs are here and there on
 him,
 but he does not know *it*.
 10 And the pride of Israel testifies
 against him.
 And they do not return
 to the LORD their God,
 or seek him, in spite of all this.
 11 “And Ephraim has become
 like a silly dove without heart.
 They call out to Egypt,
 they go to Assyria.
 12 When they go, I will spread
 my net on them.

I will bring them down like
 the birds of the sky.
 I will punish them,
 as their congregation has heard.
 13 Woe to them! For they have
 strayed from me.
 Destruction to them!
 Because they have transgressed
 against me.
 Though I redeemed them,
 they have spoken lies against me.
 14 And they have not cried out
 to me with their heart,
 when they wailed on their beds.
 They gather together for grain and
 new wine,
but they rebel against me.
 15 Though I trained *and* strengthened
 their arms,
 they plot evil against me.
 16 They return, *but not*
 to the Most High.
 They are like a deceitful bow.
 Their princes will fall by the sword
 because of the insolence
 of their tongue.
This is why they will be
 mocked in the land of Egypt.

8 “Put the trumpet
 to your mouth!
The enemy is coming like
 an eagle against the house

7:5 “*Scoffers*”— Ps 1:1; Prov 1:22; 21:24; 2 Pet 3:3. They who live evil lives will mock at the things of God.

7:7 “*Their judges*”— or “their leaders” or “their rulers”. The history of the northern kingdom of Israel was full of intrigues and assassinations of rulers. Some kings lasted only a year or two, some only a few months, one only seven days. In the 200 years of the existence of that kingdom not one of its kings was a good man who tried to serve God.

7:8 “*Mixed*”— Israel was the exact opposite of what God wanted them to be (v 11; Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:1-6). Compare 2 Cor 6:14-18.

“*Not turned*”— burned on one side, raw on the other; unfit for the purpose it was made.

7:9 Alliances with foreign countries cost them dearly both economically and spiritually. And Israel was getting old and enfeebled and still remained in ignorance of it.

7:10 “*Pride*”— 5:5.

“*Seek*”— they sought God half-heartedly and from wrong motives (v 14; 5:6-7).

7:11 “*Silly*”— Isa 1:3; Jer 5:21. Instead of seeking

help from the Almighty they sought it from various military alliances. Note on Assyria at 2 Kings 15:19.

7:12 God knows how to deal with people who behave like that. Compare 5:13-14.

7:13 “*Woe*”— 9:12; Isa 3:9,11; 5:8,11,18,20,21,22. “*I redeemed them*”— note on redeem at Ps 78:35.

God had often freed them from their troubles and their enemies, but this is how they repaid him.

7:14 “*Heart*”— they wept over their sufferings and troubles; they pitied themselves, but they would not heartily seek God. Compare Deut 4:29; 2 Chron 6:37-38; Jer 29:13.

7:15 Israel was His people. All they had come from Him. He had done them good, but see what He got in return. This is the way with the people of this world. They want God’s blessings and complain bitterly if they don’t get them, but they will do only evil in return for all His good.

7:16 “*Deceitful bow*”— they will be useless in the decisive battles to come.

8:1 “*Trumpet*”— to sound a warning.

“*Eagle*”— the Assyrian army.

of the LORD,
 because they have transgressed
 my covenant,
 and rebelled against my law.
² Israel will cry out to me,
 'My God, we know you.'
³ Israel has rejected *what is good*.
 The enemy will pursue him.
⁴ They have set up kings,
 but not by me.
 They have made princes,
 but I did not acknowledge *it*.
 With their silver and their gold
 they have made idols for
 themselves,
 with the result that
 they will be cut off.
⁵ Your calf, O Samaria,
 is rejected. My anger burns
 against them.
 How long *will it be* before they
 attain to innocence?
⁶ For this also *is* from Israel;
 the workman made it,
 therefore it *is* not God.
 That calf of Samaria will be
 broken in pieces.
⁷ "For they have sown the wind,
 and they will reap the whirlwind.
 The stalk has no bud;
 it will never produce meal.

"Covenant"— Ex 19:5.

"Rebelled"— 7:13.

8:2 Their cry would not be sincere and accompanied with repentance (5:6-7).

8:3 "Good"— God's covenant, His law and His way.

8:4 "Kings"— 7:7; 2 Kings 15:8-30. They chose the rulers they wanted without taking into account what God wanted.

"Cut off"— observe the cause of the destruction coming on them — idolatry. Compare Ex 20:3-5; Lev 26:30-33; Deut 27:15.

8:5 "Calf"— 10:5. See 1 Kings 12:28-33. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom and here represents the whole nation.

"Anger"— Lev 26:28; Num 25:3; Deut 4:25; 11:16-17. Few things that go on in the world make God as angry as idolatry does.

8:6 "Workman"— Isa 40:20; 41:22-24; 44:9-20.

"Not God"— there is no connection whatever between any idol and the one true God. He will not accept any worship offered to an idol.

8:7 "Sown...reap"— Job 4:8; Prov 22:8; Gal 6:7-8.

"Foreigners"— Assyrians.

8:8 "Among the Gentiles"— 7:8. Gentiles means non-Jewish nations. Israel lost its character of being a separate people for God and became

Even if it did produce *meal*
 foreigners would swallow it up.
⁸ Israel is swallowed up.
 Now they will be among the
 Gentiles like a vessel in which
 no *one takes* pleasure.
⁹ For they have gone up to Assyria,
 a wild donkey alone by itself.
 Ephraim has hired lovers.
¹⁰ Yes, though they hire *them*
 among the nations,
 now I will gather them,
 and they will begin to diminish
 because of the burden
 of the king of princes.
¹¹ "Because Ephraim has made
 many altars for sin,
 they have become for him altars
 for sinning.
¹² I wrote for him the great things
 of my law,
 but they were considered
 something alien.
¹³ They sacrifice flesh as the sacrifices
 for my offerings, and eat *it*;
 but the LORD does not accept them.
 Now he will remember
 their wickedness,
 and punish their sins.
 They will return to Egypt.
¹⁴ For Israel has forgotten his Maker,

like others. So God could take no pleasure in them.

8:9 Compare 2 Kings 15:19; 17:3.

8:10 They were willing to pay anyone who would promise to help them.

"Begin to diminish"— the translation of the KJV here — "shall sorrow a little" — is possible, but very unlikely.

8:11 They built altars to false gods, not to the one true God, so all their worship at those places was in defiance of God, and sinful.

8:12 "I wrote"— God says the writings of Moses came from Him. Moses was His pen. Compare 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21.

"Alien"— Israel had become so corrupted that their own law seemed strange to them.

8:13 Verse 2. Even when they offered sacrifices to God rather than to idols, they were lacking in sincerity and their worship was not acceptable. Compare Isa 1:11-17.

"Remember"— 7:2; 9:9.

"Egypt"— 7:11,16; 9:3,6. The Assyrians took most of the people away (2 Kings 17:3-6), but some of them escaped to Egypt (9:6).

8:14 "Forgotten"— see 2:13.

and built temples;
and Judah has multiplied
fortified cities.
But I will send a fire on his cities,
and it will devour *its* palaces”.

9 Do not rejoice, O Israel,
with joy like *other* people,
for you have gone away
from your God and engaged
in prostitution.
You have loved a *prostitute’s*
pay at every threshing floor.

2 The threshing floor
and the winepress will not
feed them,
and the new wine will fail her.

3 They will not live
in the LORD’s land,
but Ephraim will return to Egypt,
and they will eat unclean things
in Assyria.

4 They will not offer wine
offerings to the LORD,
nor will they be pleasing to him.
Their sacrifices *will be* for them
like the bread of mourners.
All who eat it will be defiled;
for their bread will be
for their lives.
It will not come into the house
of the LORD.

5 What will you do

on the appointed day,
and on the day of the feast
of the LORD?

6 For, see, they are going
because of destruction.
Egypt will gather them up,
Memphis will bury them.
Nettles will possess their treasures
of silver,
thorns *will be* in their tents.

7 The days of punishment are coming,
the days of retribution are coming.
Let Israel know.
The prophet *is considered* a fool,
the inspired man insane,
because of your many evil deeds,
and great hostility.

8 The watchman of Ephraim
is with my God,
a prophet; yet a bird catcher’s
snare *is* in all his ways,
and hostility in the house
of his God.

9 They have deeply corrupted
themselves,
as in the days of Gibeah.
Therefore he will remember
their iniquity,
he will punish their sins.

10 “I found Israel like grapes
in the wilderness.
I saw your fathers as the firstfruit
of the fig tree in its first season.

“*Maker*”— ignoring the Creator and turning to idols is a common sin among men (Rom 1:21-25,28). Since Israel had God’s law their guilt in this was even worse than that of other peoples.

“*Temples*”— forgetting the Creator and building temples to false gods is also a common practice among men.

9:1 “*Rejoice*”— with God’s judgment hanging over them it was folly to be rejoicing.

“*Prostitution*”— this is a recurring theme of this book (1:2; 2:2; 3:1; 4:1,10,12,15; 5:3-4).

9:2 2:9,12; 4:10.

9:3 The land of Israel is “the LORD’s land”. He will choose who should live there and who not.

“*Egypt*”— 8:13.

“*Unclean*”— see Leviticus chapter 11.

“*Assyria*”— 2 Kings 17:3-6.

9:4 “*Bread of mourners...defiled*”— Num 19:14; Deut 26:14; Jer 16:7.

“*House*”— there was only one temple of the LORD and that was in Jerusalem. And they would not be going there.

9:6 “*Egypt*”— 8:13. Memphis was the capital of

northern Egypt.

“*Nettles...thorns*”— 2:12; 5:9; 10:8.

9:7 “*Inspired man*”— the same as a prophet. Note at Gen 20:7; 2 Pet 1:21. Israel considered God’s spokesmen as fools and crazy people. Compare 2 Kings 9:11; Jer 29:26-27; Acts 26:24; 1 Cor 4:10.

“*Hostility*”— Lev 26:21,23,27 . Compare Rom 8:7; Jam 4:4; Ps 51:4.

9:8 “*Watchmen*”— Isa 56:10; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:2-8. Observe that the watchman is a prophet “with God”. God is the supreme “watchman”.

“*Ephraim*”— note at 4:17. “A snare” and “hostility” were what faced all the faithful prophets who warned the people. This is abundantly clear in the history of Jeremiah.

9:9 “*Gibeah*”— see Judges chapters 19–21. That was one of the most corrupt times in Israel’s history.

“*Remember*”— 7:2; 8:13; 13:12.

“*Punish*”— God is not keen to punish, but He does so when His justice demands it (Ex 34:6-7).

9:10 “*I found Israel*”— God speaks of the beginnings of the people of Israel as a nation when they came out of Egypt. He was delighted to have them as His people.

But they went to Baal-Peor,
and dedicated themselves to
that shameful thing,
and they became as abominable as
what they loved.

¹¹ As for Ephraim,
their glory will fly away
like a bird, without birth,
without pregnancy,
and without conception.

¹² Though they bring up
their children,
yet I will bereave them *until*
no man is left;
yes, and woe to them when
I depart from them!

¹³ I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre,
planted in a pleasant place.
But Ephraim will bring out
his children to the murderer”.

¹⁴ Give them, O LORD;
what will you give?
Give them a miscarrying womb
and dry breasts.

¹⁵ “All their wickedness *appeared*
in Gilgal;
so I hated them there.
Because of the evil of their deeds
I will drive them out of my house.
I will love them no more.
All their princes are rebels.

¹⁶ Ephraim is stricken;
their root is dried up.
They will bear no fruit.

Yes, even though they bear
children,
I will slay the loved ones
of their womb”.

¹⁷ My God will reject them
because they did not listen
to him,
and they will become wanderers
among the nations.

10 Israel became an empty vine.
He brought forth fruit
for himself.
As his fruit multiplied,
he increased *the number*
of altars.
As the prosperity
of his land *increased*
they adorned his sacred pillars.

² Their heart is divided.
Now they must bear their guilt.
He will break down their altars,
he will ruin their sacred pillars.

³ For now they will say,
“We have no king,
because we did not fear the LORD.
What then could a king
do for us?”

⁴ They speak words,
swearing falsely while making
a covenant.
So judgment springs up like
poisonous weeds in the furrows
of the field.

“Baal-Peor”— see Num 25:1-5. They gave themselves up to worship a “shameful” and “abominable” image. Note on Baal at Jud 2:11. Loving an immoral god they became immoral themselves – not an uncommon thing in our own day.

9:11 Israel would decrease in numbers and power and prosperity.

9:12 “When I depart from them”— 5:15. This is the greatest disaster possible to any people.

9:13 “Tyre”— see Ezek 27:1-25.

“Murderer”— because of its sins Israel would face the slaughter of its children and be responsible for it.

9:14 God has been speaking. Now Hosea speaks. Note on such prayers at Ps 35:8.

9:15 God speaks again.

“Gilgal”— 4:15 – a place of idol worship.

“I hated them”— this is just what God said would happen if Israel forsook Him and worshiped false gods (Lev 26:30). Note on “hate” at Mal 1:3. Compare Ps 5:5; 45:7; Prov 6:16.

“Love them no more”— 1:6.

9:16 “No fruit”— 10:1; Jude 12.

9:17 Again Hosea speaks.

“Reject”— 2 Kings 17:15,20; Jer 6:30.

“Wanderers”— this has been true during much of the history of the Jews.

10:1 “Vine”— Isa 5:1-7.

“For himself”— instead of for God Who planted the nation in the land.

“Altars ... sacred pillars”— not to God but to false gods (4:7; 8:11; 12:11; 1 Kings 12:33; 14:23; 16:32).

10:2 “Divided”— Jam 1:8.

“Guilt”— 13:16; Ex 34:7.

“Break down”— v 8. The Lord would cause others to do this and so it was the same as His doing it.

10:3 They would speak so, after the kingdom was destroyed and their king was in prison – 2 Kings 17:4-6.

10:4 4:1-2; 7:1. This is the way deceitful hearts (v 2) express themselves. Let us resolve to keep away from such poison. See 1 Cor 6:1-8.

⁵ The inhabitants of Samaria
will fear for the calf *idols*
of Beth-Aven;
yes, its people will mourn over it,
and its priests,
who have rejoiced over it
for its splendour,
because it has *now* departed
from it.

⁶ And *the idol* will be carried
to Assyria as a present
for King Jareb.
Ephraim will be humiliated,
and Israel will be ashamed
of his own counsel.

⁷ As for Samaria, her king will be
cut off like a stick on the water.

⁸ And the high places of Aven,
the sin of Israel,
will be destroyed.
The thorn and the thistle
will come up on their altars,
and they will say to the mountains,
“Cover us!” And to the hills,
“Fall on us”.

⁹ “O Israel, you have sinned
from the days of Gibeah.

There they stood. *Then* the battle
in Gibeah against the children
of wickedness did not overtake
them.

¹⁰ *When it is* my desire
I will punish them;
and peoples will be gathered
against them,
when they are to be bound
for their two transgressions.

¹¹ And Ephraim *is* like a trained
heifer *that* loves to thresh
the grain,
but I will put *a yoke* on her fair neck.
I will drive Ephraim;
Judah will plow,
and Jacob will break up his clods”.

¹² Sow for yourselves
in righteousness, reap in mercy.
Break up your fallow ground.
For *it is* time to seek
the LORD, until he comes
and rains righteousness on you.

¹³ You have plowed wickedness,
you have reaped evil.
You have eaten the fruit of lies,
because you trusted in your way,

10:5 “*Samaria...calf idols*”— 8:5. The people were worshipping a god which could do nothing to defend itself. The idol with all its splendor was powerless and was taken captive along with the people of Israel.

“*Beth Aven*”— note at 4:15.

10:6 “*Humiliated... ashamed*”— their weakness and folly and the powerlessness of their gods would be exposed. Note on Assyria at 2 Kings 15:19.

10:7 2 Kings 17:4-6.

10:8 “*High places*”— 4:13.

“*Aven*”— 4:15. This could be translated as “wickedness”, the meaning of the Hebrew word. Their high places were places of wickedness because there Israel forsook God and worshiped idols.

“*The sin of Israel*”— 1 Kings 12:30; 13:33-34; 16:26.

“*Fall on us*”— the danger and suffering caused by invading Assyrians would be so great that the people would prefer to have a mountain fall on them and end their misery. Compare Luke 23:30; Rev 6:16.

10:9 See 9:9. God is speaking here.

10:10 “*When it is my desire*”— God has a proper time for everything, and we should not think that because judgment does not come for a long time it will not come at all. Compare 2 Pet 3:4-9.

“*Two transgressions*”— perhaps the two calf idols, one at Dan and one at Bethel. Or perhaps

the double sin described in Jer 2:13. The KJV translation of the last sentence of this verse is very doubtful.

10:11 “*Ephraim*”— and “*Jacob*” signify the kingdom of Israel. Judah means the southern kingdom. Both would eventually go into captivity and work for their captors.

10:12 “*Sow...reap*”— God’s law of sowing and reaping is always at work. See 8:7; Job 4:8; Ps 126:5-6; Prov 11:18; 22:8; Eccl 11:6; Gal 6:7. Israel had been “sowing” evil and would reap punishment. They should “sow” right actions and “reap” God’s loving blessings.

“*Fallow ground*”— Jer 4:3. He means the “unplowed” hard condition of their hearts.

“*Seek the LORD*”— Deut 4:29; Ps 9:10; 22:26; 34:10; 69:32; Jer 29:13; Matt 7:7-8. This is the only way to break up hard hearts and to sow righteousness. We need His power and wisdom to accomplish any spiritual work.

“*Rains righteousness*”— Isa 45:8. This is the kind of rain we need— God’s blessing which will make us behave righteously and justly. And we should seek God until He gives us this kind of “rain”.

10:13 Israel had been sowing the wrong sort of “seed” and it resulted in great trouble.

“*Lies*”— v 2; 4:2; 7:13. Those who tell lies and listen to lies will have to endure the results of that kind of behaviour.

“*Your way*”— Isa 53:6.

in your many mighty men.
¹⁴ Therefore a tumult will arise
 among your people,
 and all your fortresses will be
 plundered,
 as Shalman spoiled Beth Arbel
 on the day of battle;
 the mother was dashed in pieces
 on *her* children.
¹⁵ Thus it will be done to you,
 Bethel, because of your great
 wickedness.
 In *one* morning the king of Israel
 will be completely cut off.

11 “When Israel was a child,
 I loved him,
 and called my son out of Egypt.
² *But the more* they called
them, the more they
 went away from them.
 They sacrificed to the Baals,
 and burned incense to carved
 images.
³ And I taught Ephraim to walk,
 taking them by their arms;
 but they did not know
 that I healed them.
⁴ I drew them with human cords,
 with bands of love.
 And I was for them like those

who take off the yoke
 from their jaws,
 and I bent down and fed them.
⁵ “Will he not return
 to the land of Egypt?
 And the Assyrian will be his king,
 because they refused
 to return *to me*.
⁶ And the sword will whirl
 over his cities,
 and will make an end of his branches,
 and destroy *them*,
 because of their own plans.
⁷ And my people are bent
 on backsliding from me.
 Though they called them
 to the Most High,
 none at all would exalt *him*.
⁸ “How can I give you up,
 Ephraim? *How* can I
 give you up, Israel?
 How can I make you like Admah?
 How can I deal with you
 like Zeboim?
 My heart turns over within me,
 my compassions are kindled.
⁹ I will not execute the fierceness
 of my anger.
 I will not destroy Ephraim again,
 for I *am* God, and not man;
 the Holy One in your midst.

“*Mighty men*” – instead of seeking God they put their confidence in human beings.

10:14 We know nothing about Shalman’s attack on Beth Arbel. This is the only place in the Bible where these names appear.

10:15 “*Bethel*” – this is the town where one of the calf idols (v 5) was located (1 Kings 12:28-29). It became a center for idolatry and it would have to pay the price for that sin.

11:1 Here God is speaking again. He is the one who loved Israel and called them out of Egypt – 9:10; Deut 4:37; 7:7-8.

“*Called my son*” – Ex 4:22-23; Deut 32:6; Isa 1:2-4; 64:8. Matthew applies these words to the Lord Jesus in Matt 2:15.

11:2 “*They*” – refers to God’s spokesmen the prophets through whom God called the people.

“*Went away from them*” – to turn away from the message of the prophets was the same as turning away from God – v 7; Jer 7:13; Isa 1:4; 2 Kings 17:13-14.

“*Baals*” – 2:8, 13.

11:3 Like a father God taught Israel how to behave.

“*Healed*” – Ex 15:26.

11:4 Jer 31:3. In tender love God lifted the yoke of slavery in Egypt from them and fed them in

the wilderness – Ex 2:23; 13:3; 16:13-18; Deut 7:8; Ps 78:25.

11:5 “*Refuse to return*” – v 7; Job 36:10; Jer 5:3; Ezek 18:30, 32.

11:6 13:16.

11:7 “*Bent*” – they were not unknowingly displeasing God, but were very determined and stubborn in their wickedness, though He called them again and again (v 2).

“*Most High*” – 7:16.

11:8-11 Now God says He will not make a full end of Israel. He would punish the people but not completely destroy them. Israel would not become like Admah and Zeboim (cities near Sodom destroyed with Sodom – Gen 19:24-25; Deut 29:23; Jer 49:18). After sending Israel into exile He would gather them again – v 11.

11:8 “*How*” – God’s great love for Israel would not permit Him to cast them off forever.

“*Compassions*” – 2:19; Deut 30:3; 32:36; Ps 103:13; 116:5; 119:156; 145:9; Isa 14:1; Jam 5:11.

11:9 “*Anger*” – notes at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

“*Not man*” – Num 23:19. Men may think God is like them (Ps 50:21), but He is not (Isa 55:8-9).

“*Holy One*” – note at Lev 20:7.

And I will not enter the city.
¹⁰ They will follow the LORD.
 He will roar like a lion.
 When he roars, the children
 will come trembling
 from the west.
¹¹ They will come trembling like
 a bird from Egypt,
 and like a dove from the land
 of Assyria;
 and I will settle them in their houses,
 says the LORD".
¹² Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,
 and the house of Israel with deceit.
 And Judah still wanders restlessly
 against God,
 and against the faithful holy ones.

12 Ephraim feeds on the wind,
 and follows the east wind.
 Daily he multiplies lies and
 violence.
 And they make a covenant
 with the Assyrians,
 and oil is carried into Egypt.
² The LORD also *brings* a charge
 against Judah,
 and will punish Jacob according
 to his ways;
 according to his deeds
 he will repay him.

³ In the womb he took
 his brother by the heel,
 and with his strength
 he struggled with God.
⁴ Yes, he struggled with the angel,
 and prevailed. He wept,
 and pleaded with him.
 He found him at Bethel,
 and there he spoke with us,
⁵ that is, the LORD God of hosts;
 the LORD *is* his memorial *name*.
⁶ Therefore turn to your God.
 Maintain mercy and justice,
 and wait on your God
 continually.
⁷ A merchant *with* the balances
 of deceit in his hand loves
 to oppress;
⁸ And Ephraim says,
 "Surely I have become rich,
 I have found wealth for myself.
In all my labours
 they will find no evil in me
 that *can be called* sin".
⁹ "But I, *who am* the LORD
 your God since the land of Egypt,
 will make you live in tents again,
 as in the days of the appointed
 feast.
¹⁰ I have also spoken by the prophets,
 and I have multiplied visions,

11:10 "*Like a lion*" – not against them as in 5:14, but as their Redeemer calling them home.

11:11 Amos 9:14-15.

11:12 Hosea now speaks again, and shows that if God shows compassion to Israel it will not be because they deserve it.

"*Lies...deceit*" – 4:1-2; 10:2,4 .

The last sentence of this verse is somewhat obscure and difficult, but the translation of the KJV here –

"But Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints" - is very doubtful. For in Hosea Judah is not revealed as faithful – see 5:5,10,12,14; 6:4; 8:14; 12:2. Also the root meaning of the word translated "ruleth" in the KJV is to wander restlessly, to roam. The word translated "with" in the KJV also means against or near.

12:1 This speaks of Israel's useless attempts to find a military ally – 5:13; 7:11; 8:9. Note on Assyria at 2 Kings 15:19.

12:2 "*Judah*" – 5:5,12-14; 6:4,11; 10:11; 11:12.

"*Jacob*" – the people of Israel. They had behaved in accordance with the meaning of the name Jacob (Gen 25:26; 27:36).

12:4 "*Angel*" – Gen 32:22-28.

"*Bethel*" – Gen 28:12-19; 35:1-15.

12:5 "*LORD*" – Jehovah. Note at Ex 3:14.

12:6 Jacob had been a deceiver, but he later turned to God with his whole heart. This is what his descendants now needed to do.

"*Justice*" – Isa 1:16-17; Amos 5:15,24; Micah 6:8.

"*Wait*" – Ps 5:3; 27:14; 33:20; 37:7,34; 123:2.

They (and all God's people always) should look to God for His help and favor rather than trying to find help from men.

12:7-8 Ways in which the people of Israel revealed their deceitfulness. They deceived others and themselves, and thought their deceitfulness would never be discovered.

12:8 "*Rich*" – compare Rev 3:17.

"*Iniquity...sin*" – sometimes those who are most wicked have the least consciousness of their wickedness, and can even boast that they are good. See Jer 17:9; Luke 18:10-14.

12:9 "*Egypt*" – 11:1.

"*Tents again*" – 2:14-15. The people of Israel lived in tents in the desert after they came out of Egypt – Ex 33:8; Num 1:52-53.

12:10 "*I have also spoken*" – 1:1. Note on prophets at Gen 20:7.

"*Visions*" – note at Gen 15:1.

and given parables through
the prophets”.

¹¹ *Is there* wickedness in Gilead?
Surely they are worthless.
They sacrifice bulls in Gilgal; yes,
their altars *are* like heaps of stones
in a plowed field.

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

¹³ And by a prophet the LORD
brought Israel out of Egypt,
and by a prophet he was preserved.

¹⁴ Ephraim provoked *him*
to anger most bitterly.
Therefore his Lord will leave
his bloodguilt on him,
and bring back his scorn onto him.

13 When Ephraim spoke,
trembling,
he exalted himself in Israel;
but when he offended
through Baal, he died.

² And now they sin more
and more, and have made
for themselves cast metal images
with their silver,
and idols according to their
own understanding,
all of it the work of the craftsmen.
They say of them,
“Let the men who sacrifice kiss

the calves”.

³ Therefore they will be like
the morning cloud,
and like the early dew
that passes away,
like the chaff *that* is driven
by the whirlwind out
of the threshing floor,
and like the smoke out of
the chimney.

⁴ “Yet I *am* the LORD
your God since the land of Egypt,
and you shall know
no God but me;
for *there is no* saviour except me.

⁵ I knew you in the wilderness,
in the land of great drought.

⁶ When their pasture was rich,
they became satisfied.
They were satisfied,
and their heart was exalted,
therefore they forgot me.

⁷ Therefore I will be to them
like a lion.
I will watch like a leopard
by the wayside.

⁸ I will meet them like a bear robbed
of her cubs, and will tear
the flesh from their heart,
and there I will devour them
like a lion.
A wild beast will tear them apart.

⁹ “O Israel, you have destroyed
yourself,

“Parables”— 2 Sam 12:1-4; Ps 78:2; Isa 5:1-7; Ezek 17:2; 24:3.

“Through the prophets”— Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21.

12:11 “Gilead”— 6:8-9.

“Gilgal”— 4:15; 9:15.

12:12 Gen 28:2,5; 29:20-28; 30:31; 31:41. Jacob fled to Aram (Syria). His descendants would be taken there as captives (Syria became part of the Assyrian empire).

12:13 “Prophet”— Moses (Num 12:6-8; Deut 18:15; 34:10). God used Moses to care for Israel.

12:14 Ephraim signifies Israel. Their guilt was so great that God could no longer overlook it — 1:6.

“Bloodguilt”— 1:4; 4:2; 5:2; 6:8.

13:1 In this verse “Ephraim” means one of the twelve tribes and “Israel” means all the twelve tribes.

“Trembling”— for a time Ephraim was one of the most powerful of the tribes. Joshua, Moses’ successor, and Jeroboam, the founder of the northern kingdom, were from this tribe.

“Baal”— 2:8,13,17; 11:2.

“Died”— because of idolatry true spiritual life died out in Ephraim (compare Prov 14:12; Rom 6:23). The tribe lost also its power and prosperity.

13:2 “More and more”— sin not forsaken always leads to more sin.

“Craftsmen”— 8:6.

13:3 Israel would soon disappear from the land — 9:17; 10:7; 11:5.

13:4 11:1; 12:9; Ex 20:2-3; Isa 43:11; 45:21-22.

13:5 11:3-4; 12:13.

13:6 Deut 6:11-12; 8:10-14; 11:15-16; 31:20; 32:15,18 . It is very possible to set one’s heart on the things God gives, to think we deserve them and so get puffed up, and then to forget the One who gave them.

13:7-8 5:14. Compare Lam 3:10-11.

13:9 9:7. What real help is there for those who reject their true Helper? But this is something we see on every hand. People oppose the one true God and then wonder that their lives are filled with trouble and there seems no help for them anywhere.

but your help *is* in me.
¹⁰ I will be your king.
 Where *is any other* to save you
 in all your cities?
 And *where are* your judges
 to whom you said,
 ‘Give me a king and princes?’
¹¹ I gave you a king in my anger,
 and took *him* away in my wrath.
¹² The wickedness of Ephraim
 is bound up.
 His sin *is* stored up.
¹³ Pains as a woman in childbirth
 will come on him.
 He *is* an unwise son,
 for he should not stay
 long in *the place where*
 children are born.
¹⁴ “I will ransom them from the power
 of the grave;
 I will redeem them from death.
 O death,
 I will be your plagues! O grave,
 I will be your destruction!
 Compassion will be hidden
 from my eyes.
¹⁵ Though he is fruitful among
 his brethren,
 an east wind will come.
 The wind of the LORD will come up
 from the desert,

and his spring will become dry,
 and his fountain will dry up.
 It will plunder the treasury
 of every valuable article.
¹⁶ Samaria will become desolate,
 for she has rebelled against
 her God.
 They will fall by the sword.
 Their infants will be dashed
 in pieces,
 and their pregnant women
 will be ripped up”.

14 O Israel, return to the LORD
 your God,
 for you have stumbled
 by your wickedness.
² Take with you words,
 and turn to the LORD. Say to him,
 “Take away all guilt,
 and receive us graciously,
 that we may offer the *praise*
 of our lips *like the sacrifice*
 of calves.
³ Assyria will not save us.
 We will not ride on horses,
 nor will we any longer say to
 the work of our hands,
 ‘*You are our gods*’, for in you
 the fatherless finds mercy”.
⁴ “I will heal their backsliding,

13:10-11 3:4; 10:7; 1 Sam 8:4-9,19,20; 13:14;
 15:10-11,28; 1 Kings 11:29-31; 14:10.

13:12 7:2; 8:13; 9:9.

“*Stored up*”– compare Rom 2:5.

13:13 Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 4:31; 13:21;
 Matt 24:8.

13:14 In the midst of warnings and disaster
 God gives this great promise to Israel (compare
 1:10-11; 2:14-23).

“*Ransom*”– means to pay a price for the purpose
 of rescue. See note on redeem at Ps 78:35.

“*Grave*”– the word in Hebrew is “Sheol”. See
 note at Gen 37:35.

“*From death*”– v 1.

“*Destruction*”– see 1 Cor 15:55.

13:15 The redemption God promises in v 14 was
 in the future. God would first punish the nation
 as He said He would.

“*East wind*”– the Assyrian army which God
 would send on Israel.

13:16 7:1,13; 8:5-6; 10:5,7,14; 11:6-7.

14:1 “*Return*”– 10:12; 12:6.

“*Stumbled by your wickedness*”– this is one of the
 principal themes of Hosea. Misery and destruction
 came on Israel for one reason only – their sins.
 This is a message for all people anywhere in any

era. Compare Num 32:23; Rom 6:23.

14:2 Hosea by God’s Spirit is so eager for their
 repentance he gives them the very words they
 should say.

“*Take away*”– or “forgive”. Ex 34:9;
 1 Kings 8:46-51; Ps 25:11; Jer 31:34; Dan 9:19;
 Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:9.

“*Praise of our lips*”– literally “the calves of our
 lips”. The Septuagint has “the fruit of our lips”
 – compare Heb 13:15.

14:3 They should realize that their trust must
 not be in men, or in false gods or idols, and turn
 to the true Helper of needy men (compare 13:9).

“*Mercy*”– 2:19; 11:8.

14:4-8 God speaks these words through Hosea.
 When Israel turns to God and prays according
 to the words of vs 2, 3, God will hear them and
 restore them. See Lev 26:40-45; Deut 4:29-31.
 Verses 5-7 give a beautiful poetic picture of
 this restoration. Compare Isa 27:3-6; 32:15-18;
 35:1-2.

14:4 “*Backsliding*”– going away from God to
 pursue one’s own way – 11:7; Ps 58:3; Prov 1:32;
 Isa 53:6. Healing of this terrible characteristic
 of going astray is what we all need. The only
 hope for healing is in God (Isa 29:24; Jer 31:33).

I will love them freely.
 For my anger has turned away
 from him.
⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel.
 He will grow like the lily,
 and thrust out his roots
 like a cedar of Lebanon.
⁶ His branches will spread,
 and his beauty will be like
 the olive tree,
 and his fragrance like
 a cedar of Lebanon.
⁷ Those who dwell under his shade
 will return.
 They will come alive like the grain,
 and grow like the vine;

their renown will be like
 the wine of Lebanon.
⁸ Ephraim *will* say, 'What have
 I to do any more with idols?'
 I have heard *him*,
 and observed him.
 I *am* like a green fir tree.
 Your fruit comes from me".
⁹ Who is wise? He will understand
 these *things*. *Who* is discerning?
 He will know them.
 For the ways of the LORD
 are right,
 and the just will walk in them,
 but the transgressors will fall
 in them.

"Love"— 2:19,23; 3:1; 10:12; 11:4; Jer 31:3; Isa 54:6-8; Micah 7:18-20; Zeph 3:17; 1 John 4:8. After their repentance, after their sins are taken away and their waywardness healed, there will be no longer any obstacle to God's fully expressing His love to them.

"Anger has turned away"— sin is the reason for His anger, and when sin is taken away and forgiven there is no longer cause for anger. Note on God's anger at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11; John 3:36; Rom 1:18.

14:5 "Dew"— Gen 27:28. This speaks of God's blessing, new every morning.

14:8 "What have I to do any more with idols?"— v 3. A question they should have asked long before.

"From me"— God is the one who is the source of all fruitfulness. This is especially true of spiritual fruitfulness — John 15:4-5; Gal 5:22-23.

14:9 Ps 107:43.

"Understand"— Dan 12:10; Prov 4:5,7; 9:10.

"Ways of the LORD"— Ps 37:34; Prov 8:32; 23:26; Matt 7:13-14.

"Right"— Ps 111:7-8; Zeph 3:5. Every individual either walks in God's ways or stumbles because of a rebellious heart — 4:5; 5:5

