

Bible Commentary:

HOSEA

By
Dr. Oliver L. Johnson, Jr.



Introduction

Hosea wrote in the middle of the eighth century BC (Before Christ). He gave most of his messages to Israel, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But some of the messages were for Judah, the Southern Kingdom.

The book has many *curses and *blessings, but there are many more *curses than *blessings. If we want to understand this book, we need to understand the ***covenant at Sinai**. The *curses and *blessings of Hosea are connected to this *covenant. Hosea's job was to tell his people that there was danger. God was going to make sure that Israel kept his *covenant. Hosea said that God was going to punish his people. It is the same message that many of the *prophets gave before the *exile. In most of the book, Hosea says that Israel will have death and illness. He also says that another nation will destroy Israel and take them away. When these things have happened, God will be able to *bless Israel again. It is important that we understand what these promises mean. Israel will not be able to avoid God's anger. Israel has broken the *covenant and so the *curses are going to happen soon.

Deut 20-18. 16 But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction,¹ the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

Only a few people in Israel were loyal to God at this time. More people in Judah were loyal to God. Israel was a strong and rich country. The people of Israel were good at fighting wars. Because of this, people from Israel met people from other countries. This meant that Israel knew about other peoples' gods. They forgot the *commandments of Sinai. In the past, there was a group of kings that started with Jehu in 842 BC. This group of kings ended with the death of Jeroboam 2nd (793 - 753 BC). But, after he died, there were six more kings in Israel. It was a difficult time. Other leaders in the country killed these kings. Also, there was a war between Assyria and Israel. In 734 BC, Israel became a much smaller country. This was the beginning of the end for Israel. Then, in 722 BC, Assyria destroyed Israel.

Chapter 1

v1 This is the message of the *Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beerī. This message came when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. This was during the time of Jeroboam, son of Joash, who was king of Israel.

We are talking about 58 years of Hosea's ministry yet it is strange that the bible identifies 4 kings in the Southern Kingdom and just one in the north.

Hosea's wife and children

v2 The *Lord began to speak to Israel through Hosea. The *Lord said to Hosea, 'Go, and marry a *prostitute. I want you to have children by her. The children will be like her. In the same way, my people have left me and have been *guilty of terrible *adultery'. v3 So Hosea married a woman called Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. After this, a child began to grow in her and she gave birth to their first child, a son. v4 The *Lord said to Hosea, "Give him the name of 'Jezreel'. This is because I will soon punish the family of Jehu. I will punish them because of the people that Jehu murdered at Jezreel. Then I will put an end to the nation of Israel. v5 And in the Valley of Jezreel I will at that time completely destroy the armies of Israel".

The name Jezreel means 'God sows'. Perhaps the name was to make people remember an event in the past. This was when Jehu killed the group of Omri kings at Jezreel. The Jehu group of kings ended with the death of Zechariah in 752 BC. This showed that God would bring an end to Israel too. Also, Jehu went far beyond what God had told him to do.

v6 Gomer had a second child - this time it was a daughter. The *Lord said to Hosea, 'Call her Lo-Ruhamah. This is because I will **not** show love to the people of Israel any more. I will not forget their *sins. v7 But I will show love to the people of Judah. I, the *Lord, will save them. I will **not** do it by war. I will not use swords or *bows and arrows. I will not use horses and people who ride horses'.

Why would God show love to Judah? Because they were more true to Him and because of the promise he made to David that his sees would always sit on the throne and that would be Jesus Christ.

How did God save Judah?

v8 After Gomer had looked after Lo-Ruhamah, a child began to grow in Gomer again. She gave birth to a son. v9 Then the *Lord said to Hosea, 'Call him Lo-Ammi. This is because the people of Israel are not my people, and I am not their God'.

The name Lo-Ruhamah means 'Not Pitied' or 'Not Loved'. God will no longer care about the needs of his people even if they depend on God for everything. Israel's enemies will defeat her. But God will have *mercy on Judah

The name Lo-Ammi means 'Not My people'. God says that his *covenant with Israel is over. In the future, he will destroy Israel. Talk about Lo Ammi

It was God who gave these names to Gomer's children. These names will show what will happen to Judah and Israel in the future. God controls the direction of both Judah and Israel.

This is because they are his people. The nation of Israel ended because God gave a *judgement on the people. This was because of their *sin. Hosea explains this again later in the book.

God will make Israel a better place again

v10 In the future, the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand that is next to the sea. You cannot measure the sand or count it. Now God says to Israel, 'You are not my people'. But the day will come when he will say to them, 'You are the children of the living God'! **v11** The people of Judah and the people of Israel will unite again. They will choose for themselves a single leader. Their nation will grow and do well in their land. The day of Jezreel will be a great day.

Why because Jezreel sits in the valley of Megiddo where the battle of Armageddon will be fought and won by Christ.

Chapter 2

* We let off last week talking about Israel being Lo Ammi (not my people), but how interestingly enough would her sister Judah would be placed into the same category. Let's go to the book of Jeremiah and says, **"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. 9 So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. 10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,"** says the Lord. **11 Then the Lord said to me, "Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. 12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the Lord; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the Lord; 'I will not remain angry forever. 13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the Lord your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' says the Lord. 14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the Lord; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. 15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.**

” (Jeremiah 3:8-15).

What is a harlot? A prostitute or promiscuous woman.

How was Judah more unrighteous than Israel? Judah was most to blame, because that after Israel committed idolatry, and was carried captive, she took no warning by it, but fell into the same sin; and in Manasseh's time committed greater idolatries, and more wickedness, than ever Israel did; and more than even the Amorites themselves, and other Heathen nations, had done, 2 Kings 21:6 and though a reformation was made in Josiah's time, it was only feignedly, it was not cordial and hearty; and therefore she is all along here charged with being disloyal and treacherous.

In chapter 1 verse 10, the message changes to a message of hope because of the promise God made to Abraham concerning Israel and this promise is called the Abrahamic Covenant. **Talk about the Abrahamic Covenant.**

Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant and was given to Abraham at the time of his call. God promised Abraham a special partial of land called the promised land, but Israel possesses the land in the future after the great tribulation. God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of his seed.

The *Lord speaks to the people of Israel

Chapter 2:1-7

Say to your brethren, 'My people,' And to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' 2 Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts; 3 Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was born, And make her like a wilderness, And set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst. 4 "I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry. 5 For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.' 6 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, 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.'

***What or who was Israel committing spiritual adultery with? Idols and other gods. As we said last week, Israel was worshipping many gods including the god Molech of whom their forefathers learned from the Ammonites and God warned them in Leviticus 18:21 and said: And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. There was another race of people who sacrificed their children to a fire and they were the Aztecs and the Inca culture and they did this act in order to please their god. The Aztecs were conquered by the Spanish army led by Cortez and the Incas were also conquered by the Spanish army led by Francisco Toledo.**

The God of Israel is the only God to mankind.

***What other gods do Americans worship besides God Almighty?**

***Why would God tell the children of Israel to argue with their mother? The nation of Israel is the mother and the individuals who are Godly in their way of thinking and acting are trying to guide Israel back to worshipping the true God that has guided them all these thousands of years.**

***We see where God says they will run after men they love but will not catch them; also, they would seek these other men who would give them clothing and shelter, oil from trees and wine? These other men are? Other gods**

*Verse 7 also said “Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband (God).

Life was better for me when I was with him.

Life was better then than it is now’.

Talk about the prodigal son

v8 Israel was not willing to believe that I (the *Lord) was the one who gave her grain, wine and oil.

I was the one who gave her plenty of silver and gold.

She used this silver and gold when she wanted to *worship at Baal.

***OK, Baal was a god** and the practice of Baal worship infiltrated Jewish religious life during the time of the Judges (Judges 3:7, ⁷ **And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and *the* Asheroth.**)

This Baal worship became widespread in Israel during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 16:31-33) and also affected Judah (2 Chronicles 28:1-2). The word *baal* means “lord”; the plural is *baalim*. In general, Baal was a fertility god who was believed to enable the earth to produce crops and people to produce children

Vs 9-13 "Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time And My new wine in its season, And will take back My wool and My linen, Given to cover her nakedness.**10** Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, And no one shall deliver her from My hand. **11** I will also cause all her mirth to cease, Her feast days, Her New Moons, 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 wages that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them. **13** I will punish her For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, And went after her lovers; But Me she forgot," says the Lord.

In verses 9-13 God is acting like a judge. He will take away her riches. There will be no grain and no wine. Israel will have no clothes. This happened after 748 BC. There was war between Assyria and Israel and things became Very difficult.

God was angry because Israel’s holidays became days of Baal (verse 11). God wanted people to rest on the *Sabbath. But this, too, became a holiday for eating (see Amos 8:5).

***Do you think our special holidays of Christmas and Easter are becoming like that where it has become all about commercialism instead of worshipping Christ for being born into this world to save mankind? i.e. People are more inclined to say Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas? Moreover, the Easter Bunny seems more popular during Easter when we celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **The same thing Israel was doing in the Old Testament seems to be going on right her at home. Unfortunately, America has turned away from God, worshipping other people, worshipping other things, pornography is rampant, fornication is now the rule verses the exception and many seem to reject our government when the bible tells us that we are to obey the government because God ordained Government to bridle our**

sins and lust and to function as an orderly society, but that too is in jeopardy. Ref. Romans 13:1-7

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. **2** Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. **3** For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. **4** For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. **5** Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. **6** This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. **7** Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

***Tell class to turn to 1 Peter 2:13-15**

The *Lord's love for his people

Vs 14-23

v14 So I (the *Lord) will say words of love to her. I will lead her into the desert and speak kind words to her. **v15** There I will give her back the *grapes that she had. I will give her Trouble Valley as a door of hope. Then she will return to me. It will be like the time that she came out of the land of Egypt. **v16** Then, in the future, she will call me her husband. She will **not** call me her Baal any more. **v17** I will never let her speak the name of Baal again. Then people will not use the Baal's names again. **v18** At that time, I and the people of Israel will make a new *covenant. I will also do this with the animals of the field and the birds of the sky. I will do it with the animals that move along the ground. I will also break Israel's *bows and swords. There will be no more war. I will remove the things that men use to make war. My people will be able to live in safety.

v19 I (the *Lord) will make you my wife for all time. I will be true and fair. I will always love you and show *mercy. I will make you mine until the end of time. **v20** I will make you into a wife that does not leave me. Then you will know the *Lord in a true way.

v21 At that time I will answer the *prayers of my people Israel. I will speak to the sky. Then rain will fall on the earth. **v22** The ground will give back grain, wine and *oil. They will have an answer for Jezreel. **v23** I will plant many seeds on her land. To Lo-Ruhamah, I will show *mercy. To Lo-Ammi, I will say, 'You are my people'. And they will say to me, 'You are my God'.

Again, Hosea says what the judge is going to do. But this time it is a message of love. The desert was the place where God and Israel 'married' (Mt Sinai). This was where Israel needed God. God will use kind words. These are the words that a husband uses before he marries a wife. God is saying that in the future after the great tribulation period is over, Israel will never speak nor worship false gods. Notice how God says he will make a new covenant with Israel and with the animal kingdom as well. This new covenant would consist of nothing but mercy and blessings and the animal kingdom would adhere to it: Let's go to Isaiah 11:6: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,

The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.

Verse 19 shows where God is showing how the new marriage is going to be. The new marriage will be fair and true. God will have *mercy on Israel. It will be for all time. In Israel, a man paid money to the father of his future wife or a dowry (see 2 Samuel 3:14). Jesus Christ has done the same thing with His shed blood at the cross. He will be the husband and father. God himself will bring the rain. Baal will not bring it. The rain will give Israel everything that the people need.

We see where God promises three things:

- Israel will be true to God alone (verse 17).**
- God will continue to be true to Israel (verse 20).**
- The land will have much fruit (verses 18, 21, 22).**

***Also notice in verse 18 where God says He will remove the things that man uses to make war against his brother. Isaiah 2:4 says, “And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.**

Chapter 3

Hosea’s Second symbolic Marriage

v1 Then the *Lord said to me again, ‘Go and show your love to your wife again. You must love her although another man loves her. You must love her although she is a woman of *adultery. And you must continue to love her. You must love her in the same way that the *Lord loves the people of Israel. But they continue to *worship other gods. And they like to offer special fruitcakes to these gods’. **v2** So I bought the woman with 15 pieces of silver and nine amounts of *barley. **v3** Then I told her, ‘You must stay at home with me for a long time. You must not be like a *prostitute. You must not be too friendly with another man. And I will live with you’. **v4** In the same way, the people of Israel will continue for a long time without a king or leader. They will not have *sacrifices, or special stones to help them to remember God. They will not have any *ephods or gods in their homes. **v5** In the time to come the people of Israel will come back. Then they will look up to the *Lord their God and David their king. They will come with great respect to the *Lord and will receive his *blessings.

The word ‘love’ can mean different things in the *Hebrew (verse 1). It includes a love from God which is called Agape love; what is Agape love?. It is an unconditional and selfless type of love; this love loves a person even though he or she deserves not to be loved; this love is the one possessed by God himself and is demonstrated at the cross of Christ.

John 15:33 says greater love has no man than this; then to lay down his life for a friend.

The 'fruit' was given to Baal as a *sacrifice. This was when the people took their crops in. Hosea did not return to Gomer because he loved her. He returned to her because God sent him. Hosea began to love her again in the same way that he loved her before.

Gomer had probably become a slave and Hosea was buying her back (verse 2). But God does not buy back the same old Israel. He wants a new Israel. Hosea does not give much money for Gomer. But he now owns her. Hosea tells her that she must stay with him for a long time. She must not become a *prostitute again. Hosea wants to keep his wife safe. But he also wants to change her into something that is better. Notice that Hosea says, "you must not be too friendly with other men."

Why do you think he said that?

In verse 4 Hosea starts to speak to Israel. Israel will have no king. The country of Assyria, will rule Israel. The 'stone' (vs 4) was a place where Israel made *sacrifices. These *sacrifices were made to other gods. *Ephods were special clothes that a *priest wore. This was part of a *sacrifice that God liked. When Jesus died on the cross, He became the ultimate sacrifice for us. The name 'David' means that there will be only one leader in the future. He will be like the future king ruling as Christ co-regent. Let's read Jeremiah 30:9: Israel will "serve the Lord their God, and THEY SHALL SERVE David their king, whom I will raise up for them ..." Notice that David will be resurrected and will be their King! But the Messiah will also be their King reigning FOR DAVID! This is a both/and, not an either/or! The Messiah is not "representing" David, He is separate from David, but both will be Kings! This is a co-regency, a co-reigning, with both ruling during the Millennium. This was common during Kingdom periods in ancient days.

Ezekiel 34:23-24: **I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24 I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.**

Jeremiah 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

Chapter 4

The *Lord accuses Israel

v1 People of Israel, listen to the *Lord's message!

The *Lord will argue against the people that live in this country.

People in this country do not really know God.

They are not true to him.

They are not loyal to him.

v2 They swear, lie and kill.

They rob and are *guilty of *adultery.

There is no limit to what they do.

There is one murder after another.

v3 So the people cry.

Everything that lives is slowly dying.

All the animals and birds, and even the fish, are dying.

v4 No person should argue or say that another person is wrong.

The people are like people who bring the law against a *priest.

v5 You fall over during the day and night.

And the *prophets fall with you.

And I will destroy your mother, Israel.

v6 You are destroying my people because they do not know me.

You have refused to learn.

So I will refuse to let you be a *priest for me.

You have forgotten the law of your God, so I will forget your children.

The *Lord accuses the *priests

v7 ‘The more of you *priests that there are, the more you *sin against me.

You have exchanged your honour for me for things of shame.

v8 The *priests feed on the *sins of my people.

The *priests really enjoy their wicked ways.

v9 So the *priests are not different from the people.

I will punish both of them for their ways.

They will suffer for the wrong things that they did. I will make sure that they suffer.

v10 You people will eat your part of the *sacrifices, but you will still be hungry.

You will live like *prostitutes, but you will not have babies.

This is because you have turned away from me to follow other gods’.

A second part of the book of Hosea identifies three important *sins:

·There is no truth.

·People are not loyal to God.

·There is no knowledge of God.

The main idea from Hosea tells the people this. Everything that he says comes from God. The message is for everyone who lives ‘in this country’. God is taking his people to ‘court’. The people will have to give an answer for their *sins.

The first of these *sins is that the people are not ‘true’. The people do not know God. This is something that is important to Hosea.

In verse 2, to ‘swear’ can also mean a *covenant between two people where they use God’s name. ‘Lying’ means people who are not being true with each other. This could be about business. Life will slowly come to an end (verses 3 and 4). God will not let anything live. The second word for ‘die’ can also mean a woman who cannot have any children. God (verse 4) does not have one *priest that he is thinking of. He is thinking of all the *priests and *prophets in Israel. The word ‘falling’ perhaps means that they cannot see. They are weak. They ‘fall’ against each other (see Deuteronomy 28:28-29). The *priests can only blame themselves for this. Israel used to know God in a way that was part of the *covenant. But the *priests did not want to know God. They forgot him. So God will not accept them as *priests.

God will forget the *priest's children too. In the book of Hosea, the word 'forget' is the opposite of 'know'. It can also mean 'not obey'.

The Christian believer is his own priest.

1 Peter 2:9 ESV But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The church is this chosen entity who belong to Jesus Christ

The *priests became rich when Jeroboam 2nd was king (verse 7). They gave help to the rich people and leaders. The *priests did not try to correct them. The *priests, too, were earning money at the *sacrifices (verse 8). The *priest could have a part of the animal *sacrifice (Leviticus 7:28-38). But it is probable that the *priests forgave people too easily. The *priests did this if the people gave them money. So the *priests lived from the people's *sins This is what the word 'eating' means. But the food will not be enough.

*A similar situation happens today with preachers who refuse to teach any Old Testament theology yet insist on teaching a theology that's all about prosperity called the prosperity gospel. Many preachers teach and preach to itchy ears instead of teaching the bible cover to cover.

v11 'My people drink wine, both old and new. So, they cannot understand anything.

v12 My people are asking a piece of wood for help.

They think that those sticks will tell them what they want to know!

Why?

Because they have run after those false gods like *prostitutes.

The people left their gods and are now not true to their God.

v13 They make *sacrifices on the tops of the mountains.

They burn *incense on the hills.

They do this under many different kinds of trees.

The shade under those trees is so nice!

So your daughters become like *prostitutes and your daughters-in-law run after other men.

v14 Yet I will not punish them for this.

This is because the men, too, go to be with *prostitutes.

They go and offer *sacrifices with the *temple *prostitutes.

So, these stupid people will destroy themselves'.

God cannot show his people the right way if they are drunk with wine. It makes them stupid (verse 11). The 'wood means an *idol. Perhaps it means a way of finding out what God wants about something. The sticks of wood would fall in a certain way (Ezekiel 21:21). There is a spirit of *prostitution. This means that another power has made the people not true to God.

The 'tops of the mountains' (verse 13) and 'hills' were places where the *priests put *altars. These were small and simple things. Perhaps there were a few trees and a kind of *idol. Perhaps they made some of the *sacrifices to God. But they made some *sacrifices to other gods. This was the same as not being true to their husbands or wives. It is possible that 'daughters' means women. Hosea does not mean that the women were *prostitutes. It is a

way of saying that they, too, *worshipped other gods. But there were *temple *prostitutes. The men offered their *sacrifices and then had sex with women in the makeshift temple. All these things meant that the people understood very little.

The *sins that bring down Israel

v15 ‘Israel, you live like a *prostitute. But do not let Judah also become *guilty. Do not *worship at Gilgal or Beth Aven. Do not make promises there in the name of the *Lord. Do not say, “As the *Lord lives”.’ **v16** Israel is like a young cow that does not go where someone tells it to go. It is not possible to feed my people. I want to take them, like young sheep, to a field where there is much grass. **v17** The people of *Ephraim have become friends with *idols. Let the people go their own way! **v18** After they have drunk wine, they are happy to be with *prostitutes. They do not care about their shame. **v19** A strong wind will take them away. Now they cannot think any more. Their *sacrifices will bring shame on them.

Hosea’s message is sometimes the same as the message of Amos (Amos 5:5). They both do not want Israel to *worship at Gilgal or Beth Aven. Gilgal was an important place for the people of Israel. They camped there after they crossed the river Jordan (Joshua 4:19). Beth Aven means ‘House of Trouble’. It is Hosea’s name for Bethel, which means ‘House of God’. Amos 5:5 says that, ‘... Bethel will come to trouble’. Bethel was an important place in Israel for *worship of gods. God wanted Israel to make promises that they would keep. But, at Bethel, the people did not keep their promises. Israel refuses to obey God. Cows are animals that want to go their own way. Young sheep will follow if you lead them. This shows that Israel does not want to be a part of the *covenant any more. So, God will let them go their own way. Other *prophets have said the same thing (Isaiah 45:20; "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.

Jeremiah 2:28). Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah

Ephraim in vs 17 was the dominant tribe in the Northern Kingdom.

Chapter 5

The *Lord is angry with *priests

v1 ‘Listen to this, you *priests! Be careful how you listen, people of Israel! Listen, you that belong to the family of kings! I have decided what to do with you. You have tried to catch people at Mizpah. You were like a net on the ground at Tabor. **v2** The leaders were killing many people. So, I will need to punish them. **v3** I know what *Ephraim is like. She cannot hide from me. She lives like a *prostitute and she is not clean. **v4** The people of Israel have done bad things. This stops them from returning to their God. They are like *prostitutes. They do not know the *Lord. **v5** The people of Israel are very proud. This pride shows I am right to speak badly about them. Their *sins make them fall. But Judah will fall with them. **v6** They take their sheep and cows to offer as *sacrifices to the *Lord. But it does them no good. They cannot find the *Lord because he has left them. **v7** They have not been true to the *Lord. Their children do not belong to him. They have times when they enjoy themselves at the New Moon. But the Moon will eat them and their fields’.

God has come as a judge. No one can be free from what he has to say. There were two places called Mizpah in Israel. One was in Gilead, east of the river Jordan. The other place was Mizpah of Benjamin. The word 'catch' means that the leaders tried to take people away from God. They are most to blame. They have not been true to God. Tabor is a mountain where the people offered their sacrifices to other gods.

Verse 2 probably means that children were dying through sacrifice in the fire to the god Molech. Ezekiel 16:20-21 ESV

And you took your sons and your daughters whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them?

The idea of Israel as a *prostitute is not new (verse 3). We see it in Hosea 6:10 too. The words 'not clean' mean that Israel has *guilt. The job of the *priests was to know the difference between clean and dirty things. They failed in this job. It was like a *prostitute going into the *temple to do her work.

The people keep themselves away from God (verse 4). They might say that they want to know God. But they do bad things. This shows that they want to turn away from him. They have been their own judge (verse 5). They have not wanted to remember the law of Moses. They are too proud to do this. Hosea says that Judah is like Israel. Judah can fall in the same way as Israel. The *sacrifices of Israel did not follow the right laws. This was because the people did not do them in the proper way. The people of Israel thought that many *sacrifices were important (see 2 Kings 3:27). They did not care about the quality. The people will try to find God but God has 'left' them. In 1 Samuel 15:24-29, Saul said that he *sinned when he did not destroy everything in war. Perhaps he was not sorry with all his heart. But Samuel told Saul that it was better to obey God than to offer *sacrifices. It is a good example of God leaving a person. Israel will lose its land (verse 7). This is what God has decided.

War between Judah and Israel

v8 Blow the *horn in Gibeah!

Blow the *trumpet in Ramah!

Raise the war cry at Bethaven!

Go into war, men of Benjamin!

v9 The day is coming when I am going to punish you.

There will be nothing left of *Ephraim.

People of Israel, you can be sure that this will happen.

v10 The leaders of Judah are like people who rob.

They have robbed land from Israel. So, I (God) will not be pleased with them in any way. It will be like a time when water covers the earth.

v11 *Ephraim is having a difficult time because of the attacks. Other countries have come as judges. This is because she wanted help from *idols.

v12 I (God) will destroy *Ephraim.

Like a *moth that destroys a piece of cloth.

I will destroy Judah,

like water destroys a piece of wood.

v13 *Ephraim saw that he was sick; Judah saw that he was hurt.

So, they went to Assyria for help.

They told their problems to the great king.

But that king cannot bring you health.

He cannot stop you suffering.

v14 I will attack the people of *Ephraim like a lion.

I will attack the people of Judah like a young lion.

I, the *Lord, will break them into pieces.

I will carry them away.

And no person will be able to rescue them.

v15 I will go back to my place,

Until the people can see their *guilt.

Until they come looking for me.

Perhaps they will try to find me when they are really suffering.

Tiglath-Pileser III

Rezin Syria

Pekah Israel

Hoshea kills Pekah

In verse 10, Hosea speaks against Judah. He says that they have moved special stones. These stones showed the place where Israel and Judah's land met. Moving these stones was against the law (Deuteronomy 19:14). Judah has broken the *covenant too. Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian king, also took land from Israel (verse 11). Assyria has become a judge. Israel has not trusted God enough. She wanted to get help from Damascus against Assyria. But to get help from other nations was against the *covenant (Deuteronomy 28:7). "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

God speaks in pictures to bring his message to Israel and Judah (verse 12). It is not Tiglath-Pileser who brings terrible things to Israel. It is God. God uses the picture of a sick person (verse 13). Both Israel and Judah were sick. Both countries were looking to other countries for help. God did not like this. Judah asked Assyria for help after the Syro-Israel attack in 734 BC. Hoshea, a young king of Israel, wanted to make an agreement with Tiglath-Pileser 3rd. But other countries will not be able to help Israel. God himself will attack Judah and Israel like a lion. God is the real danger (verse 14). He is their real enemy. He used other nations to be their judge. The lion will go back to his place. God, too, will leave his people (verse 15). He will leave them when they are in 'pain'. The 'suffering' and '*guilt' are connected to each other. They are part of the same problem. This is a *covenant *curse. Perhaps then the people will try to find God again.

Chapter 6

Israel and Judah Are Unrepentant

1 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. **2** After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. **3** Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring

rains that water the earth." **4**What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. **5** Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. **6** For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. **7** But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. **8** Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood. **9** As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests band together; they murder on the way to Shechem; they commit villainy. **10** In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled. **11** For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed, when I restore the fortunes of my people.

Many Christians know about Hosea 6:1-6. These verses are full of hope. The first three verses are like a song. Hosea has told Israel that God is going to leave them for a long time (5:15). But here, he tells them that God will bring them health. God needed to punish them. But he now chooses to change his direction. God does not say how he will bring them health. Israel's hope is on God's *covenant. Hosea knows that God will not completely leave Israel. God may bring Israel health in the future. But Israel knows that this future time will come.

The two or three days (verse 2) mean a time that God has decided on. He has fixed a time. It will be like a dead person coming back to life.

Ref. Ezekiel 37:1-6 The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2**He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. **3**He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." **4**Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. **5**Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. **6**I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

There is a promise that God will help his people. But Israel must try to 'know' God. God is a person that Israel can be certain of. We can be sure that the sun will come up every day. We can be sure that it will rain. In the same way, it will always be possible to know God.

Deuteronomy 32:2 says that the way that God teaches is like rain. He rules the weather too and we can learn from him. God is like a parent who has a child. But the child does not obey.

In verse 4, there is a **change** in who is speaking. In the first three verses of this chapter, it is the *priests who are speaking. They say that they want to go back to God. But they do not say that they have done anything wrong. They just want God to be good to them. So, God asks them what he should do (verse 4). He has tried everything. When the people of Israel were rich, they forgot him. When they were poor, they turned to other gods. They do not want to follow God's *covenant completely (verse 4). God does not enjoy punishing his people.

The 'words' (verse 5) are the *covenants. In Deuteronomy 33:9 the 'word' and the '*covenant' mean the same thing. In the same way, 'cut in pieces' means God's *curses. It means, too, that God needed to kill some of the *Israelites.

God does not say that he wants to forget the system of *sacrifices (verse 6). The people thought that *worship meant *sacrifices. They thought that they had to make these *sacrifices often. But God knows that the people are not really thinking about him when they offer

*sacrifices. God wanted much more than this. He wanted them to be loyal. (The *Hebrew word is 'hesed'). They were breaking God's *covenant when they were not loyal to each other. He wanted them to 'know Him. But the people wanted to do the least that they could do. Their *sacrifices were too easy.

In verse 7, the word '*covenant' appears for only the second time in the book of Hosea. God made a covenant with Adam called the Edenic covenant. Which said Adam May eat from any tree in the Garden save 1 and was rooted in innocence, which Adam broke. He made another covenant with Adam called the Adamic covenant which pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve as a result from the fall, yet was rooted in grace through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Gilead (verse 8) might be the city of Ramoth-Gilead. It is possible that Hosea was thinking of murders that had happened at Gilead. Perhaps he was thinking of 2 Kings 15:25. 25 Then Pekah the son of Remaliah, an officer of his, conspired against him and killed him in Samaria, in the citadel of the king's house, along with Argob and Arieah; and with him were fifty men of Gilead. He killed him and reigned in his place. Talking about Hoshea

Shechem (verse 9) was an important city. The meaning, however, is that the *priests were guilty of murder because they led people away from God.

How is that happening today?

Verse 10 shows that Israel's *prostitution is clear for everyone to see. But verse 11a finishes with a warning. There is a harvest for Judah. God will bring his *judgement against her through the Babylonian captivity.

Israel is like a hot oven

Chapter 7

When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria; for they deal falsely; the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside. **2** But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face. **3** By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. **4** They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. **5** On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers. **6** For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. **7** All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.

A new part of the book of Hosea begins here. God wants to *bless Israel in the future. He wants them to be rich. This message is for both Israel and Judah. But Hosea also continues to write about the *sins of Israel. God wanted to be good to Israel. But he could not be good when people robbed from houses (verse 1). And there are many other *sins. People do not think that these *sins matter. God does not say that he wants judges to take more people to the courts. He wants people to really mean their *sacrifices.

God is watching everything that goes on (verse 2). He sees everything. He remembers things for thousands of years (Psalm 105:8). When he looks at the people of Israel, he sees their *sins. He does not see people. It is probable that this is what verse 2 means. Hosea does not say which king he is thinking of (verse 3). Perhaps it was Hoshea, the son of Elah (732-723

BC). Hoshea and his leaders did not want to know about God's rule. They took power in a wicked way.

In verses 4-7, Hosea uses a picture of a baker to say several things. Perhaps the picture means that the baker went to sleep. This was when his oven was too hot. Then the bread burnt. Bakers made bread in large ovens. They were round. They had a large door on the top of them. The bakers made a fire inside them. They shut the door. The bread then cooked for a long time. The leaders of Israel were like this bread. They did not care when the people's *sins were very 'hot'. These *sins were destroying people but the leaders did not care. God did not want this. The leaders were hot because they drank too much wine (verse 5). The wine that they drank made them do silly things. They wanted to engage in intimate friendships with people who did not believe in God. The leaders never stopped thinking about evil things (verse 6). In the night, the oven became cool. But in the morning, someone made sure that the oven became hot again. The leaders of Israel were like the oven. It is only at night that they stopped thinking of evil things. The leaders have killed other leaders (verse 7). They came to power because they have killed kings. There was only one king, Menahem, that the leaders did not kill 2 kings 15:17. This was after the death of Jeroboam 2nd. Israel was burning in its anger. There was nothing to stop it.

Israel does not know that people will destroy her

8Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. **9** Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not. **10** The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this. **11** Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. **12**As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens; I will discipline them according to the report made to their congregation. **13** Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me. **14** They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me. **15** Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against me. **16** They return, but not upward; they are like a treacherous bow; their princes shall fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

In these verses, Hosea uses more pictures to say things. He continues to use the picture of an oven (verse 8). The people are like bread. They are burnt on one side. This is the side that looks to other countries for help. The other side is not cooked. This is the side that should look to God for help. At this time, Assyria became more powerful. So, Israel needed other countries to help her. Israel went to Egypt, Syria-Damascus and Philistia. Israel hoped that these countries would help to defend her. She did not want to hope in God. In 732 BC, Hoshea, after he had killed Pekah, travelled to Egypt, Philistia and then to Aram-Damascus. He tried to get their help. He then put his hope in Assyria. Then, after a few years, he changed and went back to Egypt. This is what 'mixing' means (verse 9). The bread became flat (verse 8). It was not strong. War had made Israel become old (verse 9). She had to pay too much money to other countries. She was now poor. She would die soon.

Verse 10 is like 5:5a: 'The people of Israel are very proud'. They ask, 'Who needs God? Why should we go to him?' Israel wants to stay away from God's *covenant. God thinks Israel is like a *dove (verse 11). *Doves are stupid birds. They do not fly away from danger. It was

easy for other countries to use their power against Israel. Egypt and Assyria could not help Israel.

Hosea continues to use the *dove picture in verse 12. God will catch the *doves in his net. This means that he will bring his *judgement. As Israel flies to other nations, God will catch them. They were wrong to look for help from other countries. Also, they changed the countries that they looked to. God needs to punish them. Then he will take them to a prison.

The people of Israel have said false things about God (verse 13). They have made promises to God through their *covenants. But they have not kept the promises for a long time.

It is probable that the 'beds' (verse 14) were part of a meal. The meal was part of a *sacrifice when the *Israelites rested near the *altar (see Isaiah 57:7; Amos 2:8). This was when the people cried and cut themselves.

Israel is like a child that a parent cannot punish (verse 15). The laws said that a child like this should die. Israel was breaking the laws. The people were making *sacrifices at Bethel and *sacrifices to Baal. These were the 'false gods' (verse 16) and they were making Israel weak. The *bow is not strong. It will not send arrows very far. It has very little use. So, other nations will be able to attack Israel easily. Egypt will not be able to help Israel. Egypt will enjoy seeing Israel so weak.

Chapter 8

God is angry with Israel because she prays to *idols

1 Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law. **2** To me they cry, "My God, we--Israel--know you." **3** Israel has spurned the good; the enemy shall pursue him. **4** They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction. **5** I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? **6** For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it; it is not God. The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces. **7** For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it. **8** Israel is swallowed up; already they are among the nations as a useless vessel. **9** For they have gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey wandering alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. **10** Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up. And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute. **11** Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning. **12** Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing. **13** As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt. **14** For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; so I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour her strongholds.

A new part of the book of Hosea begins here. The chapter is about how God wants to forget Israel. Hosea describes Israel's *sin. Then, at the end of the chapter, Hosea describes God's *judgement. God is going to kill Israel (verse 1). He will do this in war (verse 3). Deuteronomy 28:49 says, 'God will bring a nation against you from far away, like an *eagle...' In 5:14, God is like a young lion that also wants to kill. There is a good reason why God wants to do this. Israel has broken God's *covenant and God's laws.

Israel says that she ‘calls out’ to God (verse 2). She says that she wants God’s help. They needed food. They wanted God to look after them. They thought that God would always be able to help them. But Israel has shown that they did not want God. They should know that Assyria would win the war because of this.

Hosea now describes Israel’s *sins. They wanted to choose their kings. But it is God alone who chooses kings (verse 4). It is God who gives kings to countries (see 1 Kings 19:15-16). It was a big mistake when Israel decided to choose her own kings.

The other big *sin of Israel was that she made *idols. But the *Israelites will destroy themselves with these *idols. God does not want to know about the ‘gold *bull’ of *Samaria. King Jeroboam 1st built this *bull (1 Kings 12:26-30). He was trying to copy the *bull that Aaron had built (Exodus 32). Some people say that this animal was not an *idol. They say that the animal was not trying to copy a god. The people that made the animal made it into something else. But Exodus 32:4 says that people looked at it as if it was a god. After many years, people forgot that the animal was not a god. It slowly became one.

Because of this, God is ‘angry’ with Israel (verse 5). We do not know what the *idol looked like. Perhaps it was a person with the head of a *bull. Perhaps it was a young *bull. It is probable that the *idol was wooden. But a person cannot see God. Hosea says that this *idol of a cow or *bull is really nothing (verse 6). God will destroy this *bull easily. The people were breaking the *commandment in Exodus 20:4-6.

Hosea then uses another picture (verse 7). The ‘wind’ and the ‘very strong wind’ are Israel’s enemies. It is like the *curse of Deuteronomy 28:38, ‘You will sow much seed in the field. But there will be very little harvest’. The *Israelites will receive what they deserve. The phrase about the wind might have another meaning. Perhaps Hosea means that the people are behaving without any purpose. They do not know which way to go (see Job 7:7). The ‘very strong wind’ comes and makes this worse. God will make sure that their wheat will not produce anything. The enemy (Assyria) will get what Israel has worked for. Lamentations 2:5 says, ‘God is like an enemy; he has eaten Israel’. Israel will stop being anything. Nobody will be able to use her (verse 8).

In 732 BC, Hoshea, when he became king, went to Assyria for help. He wanted to stop Tiglath-Pileser 3rd from ruling Israel (verse 9). But Israel is like an animal. She does not know where she is going. She is alone (see Job 24:5) and lost. But God will find her and then he will punish her.

Verse 10 is describing the time when a foreign nation will control Israel. Israel will have to pay large taxes. (This happened when Hoshea was king of Israel.) They will not be free.

God hated the *altars in the North (verse 11). There were too many. The *covenant said that there should only be one *altar. It was Jeroboam 1st who built all these *altars (1 Kings 12:26-33). He wanted to stop people going to Jerusalem. But then it became easy for people to *worship in wrong ways. The *altars became places where people ate and drank too much. They became a place to *sin.

The people also did not want to know about the law (verse 12). The *priests and the *prophets did not tell the people about the law. So, the people did not think that the law was important.

The people made *sacrifices but the people were not clean to God (verse 13). They were not sorry for their *sin. So, God would send them back to Egypt. This does not mean that God will actually send them to Egypt. It means that they will go into *exile somewhere. Israel wanted to put their hope in ‘houses for kings’. But God is going to burn these places. He will send an army to destroy Israel’s hopes.

Chapter 9

Hosea tells Israel that God will punish her

The Lord Will Punish Israel

1 Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God. You have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors. **2** Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. **3** They shall not remain in the land of the LORD, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. **4** They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the LORD, and their sacrifices shall not please him. It shall be like mourners' bread to them; all who eat of it shall be defiled; for their bread shall be for their hunger only; it shall not come to the house of the LORD. **5** What will you do on the day of the appointed festival, and on the day of the feast of the LORD? **6** For behold, they are going away from destruction; but Egypt shall gather them; Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their precious things of silver; thorns shall be in their tents. **7** The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred. **8** The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim with my God; yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. **9** They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity; he will punish their sins.

It is Hosea who now has a message for Israel. In chapter 8, it was God who had the message. But the two things are almost the same. It is probable that Hosea gave this message in 730 - 720 BC. Assyria now ruled over much of Israel. Israel (the *prostitute) loves to receive money. It is probable that this means grain (see Deuteronomy 23:18). Israel was happy at these special times. But it was happy for the wrong reasons. Israel thought that God was Baal. They thought that God should *bless the grain in the same way. Also, *prostitutes visited the floors where people worked with the grain. This was where men stayed at night so that nobody would rob anything. But Hosea says that soon Israel will have very little food (verse 2). This period of little food may come in different ways. Hosea is clear that Israel is going into *exile (verse 3). The people thought that they were going to have the land for a long time. They were very wrong! Other countries were going to rule them.

When this happens the people will not be able to have their *sacrifices (verse 4). The wine was something that the *priests offered on the *altar. When people died, their family ate special bread. This showed that they were sad. They could not bring this bread into God's house. When they are in *exile they will not be able to eat this bread. The 'special days' were probably in the autumn (the period after the summer). This was when they brought in the plants from the fields.

It is not possible to run away from *exile (verse 6). It is certain that Egypt will win in any war. Memphis was where they buried many people. Weeds will grow over these places. Their money will not help them. The people are so full of *sins that they think terrible things about Hosea and other *prophets. They think that he is a fool whom people cannot be serious about. People also thought that Jeremiah was crazy (Jeremiah 29:26). But it is God whom they think terrible things about.

Hosea is like someone who watches out for the enemy (verse 8). But the people themselves could not see the enemy. The time to punish Israel has now come (verse 9). Gibeah was a place where wicked *sins took place (Judges 19-22, As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him."

). God remembered these *sins. In the same way, he will remember Israel's *sins. He will punish the people of Israel by sending them to Assyria.

Israel destroys herself by her *worship of *idols

10 Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved. **11** Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird-- no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! **12** Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left. Woe to them when I depart from them! **13** Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow; but Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. **14** Give them, O LORD-- what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. **15** Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. **16** Ephraim is stricken; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. **17** My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.

A new part of the book of Hosea now begins. God is speaking. He talks about the past. He is talking to someone else about Israel. He thinks that he might be travelling (verse 10). He finds *grapes when he needed to drink. This did not happen very often. But it was like finding Israel. Israel is special. *Figs that came early were also very special (see Isaiah 28:4). But then Israel came to Baal-Peor (Numbers 25:1-5). Things went wrong here. Men from Israel had sex with women from Moab and from Midian and Midianite women. This was part of the *sacrifice to other gods. The men hoped that they would have better crops. But God said that it was like *worship of Baal. It broke the *covenant.

For a time, Israel was great (verse 11). She won many wars. But these good times cannot stay with Israel. She will be sick. The people will not be able to have children. There will be a *curse on their bodies (Deuteronomy 28:18). Even if there are children, God will stay away from them (verse 12). He does not say how they will die. But Israel can be sure that this will happen.

Verse 13 is also about death. One of the *curses was about parents who loved their children. These parents will kill and eat their own children (Leviticus 26:29). This verse may mean that something, perhaps an enemy, will kill the people's children.

Verse 14 is like verse 11. But it is Hosea who is speaking. It is a *prayer. Hosea *prays for something that God wants. Hosea knows that God wants it. In the past, God wanted the '*blessings of breasts' (Genesis 49:25). These were much more happy words. But these *blessings will end.

In verse 15, God speaks again. The *sin at Baal-Peor happened in the past. But the *sin at Gilgal was happening now. Gilgal was across the Jordan River from Baal-Peor. It was an important place where people *worshipped other gods. Amos also said bad things about Gilgal (Amos 4:4; 5:5). God was very angry with Gilgal. He wanted to stop the things that happened there. It was a place where kings sometimes went. Saul started to be king there (1 Samuel 11:15). It was also where Saul broke the *covenant (1 Samuel 15:21-23). God's house is Israel. The leaders of Israel have helped the country to *sin. God's *covenant says that the people cannot stay in the land if they *sin (Leviticus 26:32-35).

Verse 16 continues the idea of death. Israel used to have much fruit (Genesis 41:52). But now Israel will have no fruit. God is now plain about who will kill Israel's children (Israel's fruit). It is God himself. There will be no mistake. God will make sure that these things happen.

Verse 17 is about the *exile. God will take the people away from their own country. This is because they have not listened to him. In the past, they knew who they were. But now they will be without a home. They will be like Cain (Genesis 4:12).

Chapter 10

The riches of Israel lead to her *worship of *idols

1 Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. **2** Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars and destroy their pillars. **3** For now they will say: "We have no king, for we do not fear the LORD; and a king--what could he do for us?" **4** They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants; so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. **5** The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the calf of Beth-aven. Its people mourn for it, and so do its idolatrous priests--those who rejoiced over it and over its glory-- for it has departed from them. **6** The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol. **7** Samaria's king shall perish like a twig on the face of the waters. **8** The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall grow up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, "Cover us," and to the hills, "Fall on us." **9** From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel; there they have continued. Shall not the war against the unjust overtake them in Gibeah? **10** When I please, I will discipline them, and nations shall be gathered against them when they are bound up for their double iniquity. **11** Ephraim was a trained calf that loved to thresh, and I spared her fair neck; but I will put Ephraim to the yoke; Judah must plow; Jacob must harrow for himself. **12** Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. **13** You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, **14** therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. **15** Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.

God gave Israel many things but she did not use them in the correct way. She made many *altars. And she made them pretty. They also had special stones that they thought would bring them *blessings of food. But this was against the law (Deuteronomy 12:1-14; Exodus 23:24). The people only wanted to live for themselves. They thought that God was pleased with their *worship. But their *altars and stones were now a way to different gods. They were not being loyal to God (verse 2). Someone needed to tell them how wrong they were. In Deuteronomy 29:18, God said, 'Make sure of this. There must be no man or woman ... whose heart turns away from God...to *worship the gods of those countries'. So God says that he will break these *altars. It will be like a war. Amos 3:14 says that the *altars will 'fall to the ground'. There will be no *altars after God has finished.

Hosea says that the time of kings will have to end (verse 3). Kings joined in the *worship of other gods. They will not be able to stop the *exile of Israel. God will punish Israel through the loss of their king. In 1 Samuel 8, the people asked for a king. But soon the king will not

be able to do anything for Israel. The kings talked a lot (verse 4). But it did not mean anything. The kings made agreements with other countries. These agreements meant that Israel would pay tax to a foreign country. This would protect Israel from other countries in return. But this did not help Israel. The king needed to help people when they disagreed in the courts. But the kings accepted money from people. This was wrong. It is not only the king that does these things. Other people do them too.

Verse 5 says that people *worshipped at Bethaven (see 8:5). They *worshipped a gold *bull. Perhaps it was Amos who gave Bethaven this name (Amos 5:5). Bethaven means 'house of evil things'. Other people gave this name to Bethel. The name meant bad things. It was because they did not *worship God but did evil things. But God did not want these things (Exodus 20:4-5). It was against the law. The people's crying will be like people who are crying about dead people. Their *idol will also go into *exile. The power of the *idol will also go. Verse 6 continues the thoughts of verse 5. Assyria will take the *idol away. They will do this when they win the war. If only Israel was not so stupid. If only they could understand what God wanted (Deuteronomy 32:28, 29). But Israel has decided not to obey God.

*Samaria is another way of saying Israel (verse 7). Hosea means other cities also. Assyria destroyed *Samaria in 722 BC. No one built the city again. The king will not be able to do anything about this. He will have no help. The enemy put Hoshea in prison in 723 BC (2 Kings 17:4). Israel had taken land from the people of Canaan in war. These were the 'high places'. Sometimes they were on hills with trees. There were hundreds of these places (1 Kings 14:23). But weeds will grow on these places. This is a way of saying that nothing will live there. Isaiah 32:13 has the same idea. Terrible things will happen to Israel. People will want to run away from this. But when they cannot do this, they will want to die. They preferred death to life in *exile.

Israel will pay for her *sin

9 From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel; there they have continued. Shall not the war against the unjust overtake them in Gibeah?**10** When I please, I will discipline them, and nations shall be gathered against them when they are bound up for their double iniquity. **11** Ephraim was a trained calf that loved to thresh, and I spared her fair neck; but I will put Ephraim to the yoke; Judah must plow; Jacob must harrow for himself. **12** Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. **13** You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, **14** therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. **15** Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.

In verse 9, Hosea writes again about what he said in 9:9. There were some terrible *sins at the 'time of Gibeah'. It was where some wicked men tried to have sex with another man. They then had sex with a woman. Israel wanted to bring these men for *judgement. But the leaders of the men refused to do this (see Judges 19-21). Israel was not able to rise above these *sins. They stayed in these *sins. War then came to the people of Gibeah. In the same way, war will come to the people of Israel now. Everyone in the North will be part of it. God is getting ready to make sure that Israel pays for her *sins (verse 10). He is preparing other

countries so that they can attack Israel. It will be like the time when people came together against Benjamin (Judges 20:11, 14). At that time, the people wanted to make sure that they kept the *covenant. It was important to keep God's law. Israel must now be in pain twice for her *sins (see Isaiah 40:2). Leviticus 26:18 says that God will punish Israel for her *sins 'seven times over'.

A new part of this chapter begins in verse 11. Hosea uses words in a special way to describe Israel. She is like a young cow. Her work was quite easy. The picture is of a cow that is pulling a special tool over corn. This tool separates the corn from the grain that the farmer does not want. The cow prefers pulling a plough. Because she can eat the corn whenever she wants (see Deuteronomy 25:4). Israel was like this in her early years. But God had something else for Israel. He wanted her to break up the ground. They should do this work together. Her 'field' was to obey God. The word 'Jacob' means both Israel and Judah. God is telling Israel again about one of the first people that he chose to follow him. Jacob obeyed God.

Verse 12 is a famous verse. Many people have written songs about it. God looks back at Israel's past but he also looks to the future. God wants Israel to be true to him. This is what he really wanted in his *covenant. He wanted people to know him in the best way, like Jacob. The *Hebrew word for 'true love' is 'hesed' which means a love that never stops. This can be a love for another person or for God. The same thought is in 2:19 and 6:6. God wants Israel to look for him. He does not want *prayers that do not mean anything. When Israel does this, he can *bless her. But Israel has not done any of this (verse 13). Instead, Israel has eaten very bad things. She has done the opposite of the things in verse 12. She has put her hope in her army. Deuteronomy 28:52 says that Israel's walls 'will fall down'. Israel's hope in her walls is so silly.

Israel is going to hear the sounds of war (verse 14). She will be afraid. Her walls are strong (Deuteronomy 28:52) but they will not help Israel. We do not know about the events at Betharbel. We also do not know about Shalman. But terrible things happened in war in those days. Armies did not listen to what people said about what they did (see Amos 1:13). The Assyrians took King Hoshea in war (verse 15). They put him in prison (2 Kings 17:4). Everything that Hosea said would happen came true.

Chapter 11

Israel has forgotten the *Lord

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. **2** The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.**3** Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. **4** I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. **5** They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. **6** The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. **7** My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

In chapter 11, God looks to the past in Israel's life. In verse 1, God remembers what has happened to Israel when she was a child. God spoke to Moses when he began his journey to Egypt. God said, 'Israel is my first son ... let my son go' (Exodus 4:22-23). It is when Israel became free. There are other places in the *Old Testament where God describes himself as a father (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 3:19). The word 'call' in verse 1 can mean different things in the

*OT. It can mean that God wanted to bring the people of Israel together. The life of Jesus did this completely.

But Israel did not want to listen to God's call (verse 2). She showed this by her *worship of the Baals and of other false gods. Israel chose new *idols. They broke the first rule of the *covenant. This was, 'You will have no other gods but me' (Exodus 20:3).

In verse 3, there is a beautiful picture of a father. Israel was like a small child whom God helped to walk. It was God who did this. Israel could not see that. When the people of Israel grew up, they did not want to live like true sons.

In verse 4, the picture changes a little. It is not clear what the verse means. Perhaps the verse means that God is like a farmer. He wants to be sure that his animals are well. He wants to be sure that they have enough food. This is the same way that God fed Israel in the desert (Exodus 16).

But in verse 5 the idea changes. Hosea tells Israel about *exile again. The word 'Egypt' means the enemy. Assyria is the country that will take them into *exile. Israel will not be a nation on its own. In 5:13 and 10:6 Hosea called the king of Assyria a 'great king'. Soon this king will make sure that Israel cannot choose where she lives. Israel did not thank God for what he had done for her. This was her *sin.

Assyria will win against Israel in a war (verse 6). The people of Israel will not be safe. The walls of their cities will come down. The sword of the enemy will become the sword of God. He uses the sword to keep his *covenant. The people will find it difficult to live without God. They will not want to turn away from him (verse 7). Then they will want to come back to God. But he will not listen. It will be too late.

The *Lord does not want to destroy Israel

8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. **9** I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. **10** They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; **11** they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD. **12** Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

In verse 8 there is a change in ideas. Again, there is hope for Israel. In *exile, Israel will turn back to God. God is a God of *mercy. He does not want to punish Israel too much. He could never let other nations win against Israel. Admah and Zeboiim were cities that were near Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:19). God destroyed Admah and Zeboiim when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25). This was when he was very angry. But God says that he will change his mind.

There is not a man anywhere who is completely true (verse 9). But God is not like this. He will be true to the love that he has shown to Israel in the past. This is the only place in Hosea where we see the word '*holy'. We see the word 26 times in Isaiah. God is different from men. He acts in different ways. This is not a promise for the people who are living with Hosea. It is a promise for the children of these people. God's 'anger' is the right attitude for

him to show. This is when the people have done wrong things. But, because he loved them, he wanted them to *repent. Then he could forgive them.

In the future, Israel will return to God (verse 10). Then they will be able to return from *exile. God himself will tell everyone when this moment comes. He will make sure that everyone hears. Perhaps the lion means that God is calling people to hear his *judgement (Amos 1:2, Joel 3:16). The west means the islands of the sea. It also means the land near the sea.

Israel will hurry home (verse 11). Birds can travel fast. Hosea uses the picture of a bird in a good way. (In 7:11 the *dove meant that Israel was silly.) The people will 'fly' back to their homes. Nothing will stop them. The promise of 2:25 will happen - 'I will plant many seeds in the land'. But Israel's true return will only happen because of Christ. He begins and finishes the new *covenant.

Verse 12 shows that while Israel was engaged in such debauchery, Judah under King Hezekiah was walking according to God's ways and He would bless them as a result. However, after Hezekiah's death, a new king would emerge and his name was Manassah who was the most evil king next to Ahaz.

Chapter 12

Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

The Lord's Indictment of Israel and Judah

2 The LORD has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. **3** In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. **4** He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us-- **5** the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name: **6** "So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God." **7** A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. **8** Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin." **9** I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. **10** I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables. **11** If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing: in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field. **12** Jacob fled to the land of Aram; there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep. **13** By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded. **14** Ephraim has given bitter provocation; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.

God is sad because Israel says false things (11:12). Israel is like an army that surrounds a city. Her 'swords' are false. We have the same idea in Psalm 118:18. The writer thinks that other bad countries are all round him.

The *Hebrew language is not clear in 11:12b. Perhaps it means that Judah, too, was false with God. Judah had true *priests. She had true kings too. But she also went against God. But the *Hebrew language might mean the opposite of this. God has an interest in all the people of God.

God promised to keep Israel safe (verse 1). But Israel looked to other countries so that she could be safe. The *Hebrew language uses the word 'wind'. This means something that has

no value (see Ecclesiastes 1:6, 14). Israel looked to Assyria and Egypt. The *olive oil was a gift to Egypt. But these plans did not mean anything.

God wants to bring both Israel and Judah to a court (verse 2). Then God will hear about the bad things that the two countries have done. Here Hosea goes back to the time of Genesis. Israel is now not like the country that it used to be at that time. But God has plans to *bless Israel too.

God remembers three important moments in *Jacob's life (verse 3).

·His birth.

·God speaking at Bethel.

·The struggle at Peniel.

*Jacob was the *ancestor of Israel. The story of Jacob's name comes from Genesis 25:21-26. God told people about Jacob before Jacob was born. God said what would happen when Jacob was inside his mother. Jacob's struggle with God was another important part of Israel's past (Genesis 32:22-31). This story shows that Israel could still receive a *blessing from God. They only needed to call to him. God gave Jacob another name - Israel. But God's name is more important. The things that he wants for Israel are much more important, too.

In Genesis, the story says that Jacob fought with a man (verse 4). But it is clear that it was an *angel. It does not say that Jacob cried in the Genesis story. We learn this here. Genesis 35:1-10 tells us how Jacob met God at Bethel. God tells Jacob about the change of name again. Bethel was a place where Israel *worshipped *idols.

Hosea wants to bring the story of Jacob and Israel together (verse 5). The new name for Jacob was part of a new plan for Israel. God was the God of both Jacob and Israel. Israel is nothing without God.

This is why Hosea tells Israel to return to God (verse 6). Israel has a great God. They can follow him. The *Hebrew word for love is 'hesed'. This is a way to love that Israel can hold onto. Hosea says that there is hope for Israel. God has decided what he is going to do with Israel.

But it continues to be important to obey God. It will help Israel. The *Hebrew word for 'business people' is Canaan (verse 7). The people of Canaan were often false in their ways. Hosea says that Israel is worse than Canaan. The business people wanted people to get less than they should. Amos says the same thing (Amos 8:4-6). Israel was not fair to poor people. Israel puts her hope in her money (verse 8). God told Israel that she should not be proud about her money (Deuteronomy 8:17-19). But it was not possible to pay money to God to take away their *guilt. Their money has no worth. It is not enough to make God happy. Israel did not become powerful on her own (verse 9). God began the history of Israel. God will take away their homes and they will have no money again. God is speaking a word of *judgement. The 'special days' might include a meal called the Meal of Huts (see Leviticus 23:39). This meal was a time for the people to remember their journey in the desert.

God told the people again and again about many things (verse 10). These were things that he wanted them to do. Moses was a very important *prophet. He was a guide for all other *prophets. God used many different ways to speak. He made sure that people heard through *visions and *parables. It was the work of *prophets to repeat the messages from God.

In verse 11, Hosea is perhaps thinking of a murder in Gilead (see 6:8). The city of Gilead was a place where many terrible things happened. It is possible that Assyria had destroyed Gilead at this time. That is why the city would not be worth anything. Gilgal was another place where bad things happened. There was *worship of *idols in Gilead and Gilgal.

Jacob ran away from Esau (verse 12). The story is in Genesis 28. Jacob received a wife as a payment for his work. His work was keeping sheep. In the same way, Moses looked after the people of Israel (verse 13). Moses kept these people after they left Egypt. Hosea says that the people have left the person who looked after them (God). God now brings his *judgement (verse 14). Israel has chosen not to listen to God. So, God needs to punish Israel. There is no way that God can forget Israel's *guilt. God must now pay back to Israel because they broke the *covenant.

Chapter 13

The Lord's Relentless Judgment on Israel

1 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died. **2** And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, "Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!" **3** Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. **4** But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. **5** It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; **6** but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me. **7** So I am to them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. **8** I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open.

The end is near for Israel (verse 1). *Ephraim became a powerful group in earlier times. There were strong leaders from this group. Joshua was one of them. But *Ephraim became full of *guilt. *Sin and death go together (Romans 6:23). God will use death as a way to punish Israel.

Jeroboam 1st made young cows of gold in Bethel and Dan (verse 2). Then he said, 'Here are your gods' (1 Kings 12:28). But it was the *Israelites who made the *idols. The people *worshipped the things that they made. Verse 2b is not clear. The people kiss the animals. Perhaps Hosea is saying that the people are very silly. The verse may also mean that they are offering *sacrifices of people.

Hosea gives pictures of what the people are like (verse 3). These are things that do not stay for long. Israel will go quickly. God will make sure that the world will forget Israel (Deuteronomy 32:26). She will not be a nation any more.

God begins to speak again (verse 4). He says that he does not change. The people cannot know these other gods. It is impossible. He tells them again about the Sinai *covenant. It is God himself whom the people must know. The other gods are not there.

It was in the *desert that God remembered his *covenant (verse 5). He gave the people what they needed (Exodus 16). It was God who fed them. Israel was like a child. She needed a father to stay alive. God gave them everything that they needed in the desert (verse 6). But they forgot him. This was not a surprise. God said that this would happen (Deuteronomy 8:14). There are other places in Deuteronomy like this (6:11-14; 11:15-16). There was always a danger that the people would become proud.

Hosea now uses another picture (verses 7-8). God will be like an animal. God said earlier that he would 'send animals against you' (Leviticus 26:22). There are other places where God uses the same picture. He uses animals as pictures of *judgement (Isaiah 5:29-30; 7:18; 56:9). God will surprise Israel when he attacks her. It will be a strong attack. Assyria will be like these animals. Perhaps Assyria will be ready to attack Israel soon. This attack by animals will hurt her. It will kill people too. Israel has broken the *covenant and God will be very angry.

No one can stop God from being angry with Israel.

9 He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper. **10** Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers-- those of whom you said, "Give me a king and princes"? **11** I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. **12** The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. **13** The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb. **14** Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes. **15** Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the LORD, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. **16** Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.

God wants to destroy Israel very much (verse 9). Jeremiah 4:7 describes an animal as 'something that destroys nations'. This was Babylon. Here it is God himself who destroys. God tells the people again that no one else can help them. The *Israelites hoped that someone would come to help them. They wanted help against Assyria. Perhaps Hosea is writing in about 725 BC (verse 10). Shalmaneser 5th (of Assyria) put Hoshea, the king, in prison at this time (2 Kings 17:4). The Assyrians probably also took the king's family and the important leaders. After this, Israel had no leaders to help her.

In the time of Samuel, the people asked for a king (1 Samuel 8:5, 20). They chose Jeroboam 1st (verse 11). They preferred him to Rehoboam. But God has never looked at the kings of Israel in a kind way. There were 20 of them. But God thought that they were all very bad. And now it was a time to end this. God remembers *sins if people are not sorry (verse 12). He counts *sins. He remembers *sins for many years. God now needs to pay back to Israel for these *sins.

Hosea now gives us a picture of a child that is not born (verse 13). The child is not clever because it is not ready to come into the world. The child will die. Perhaps, if Israel becomes like a child, God will *bless Israel again.

Verse 14 is not clear. Hosea says that there is no hope for Israel. The verse is about *judgement. God closes his eyes to what will happen to Israel. Hosea says that God will punish Israel. The grave is the place where dead people go. Soon it will have many people from Israel.

Hosea uses another picture of a plant (verse 15). Perhaps the east wind is Assyria. Assyrian armies will take away everything that Israel has. Deuteronomy 28:12 says that the sky will open for Israel. God will send the rain for Israel's fields. But Assyria will make sure that Israel has no food.

*Samaria was the important city of Israel (verse 16). It was where Hoshea, the king, lived. This is why Assyria wanted to attack it. They will show no *mercy. 2 Kings 15:16 and Amos 1:13 are other verses which show how armies attack people. They took babies that were inside women. They tore them out. The pain of Israel was to begin.

Chapter 14

God calls to Israel to return to him

1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. **2** Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. **3** Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy

The ideas of the last chapter of Hosea are like the ideas we have seen already. Hosea tells the people to *repent (verse 1). Perhaps he is thinking of the people when they will be in *exile. There they will have more time to think about their *sins. Israel has fallen and the time of *exile has begun. Israel needs to find the right words to say (verse 2). In the past, an *Israelite had to bring a *sacrifice to God for *sin. This was part of the system of *sacrifices. But *sacrifices have no value if someone does not *repent. Instead, they must mean what they say. They must say and do the right things. God will forgive their *sin. Then he can forget it.

The *prayer where the people *repent continues in verse 3. The people understand that there is no hope in Assyria, horses or *idols. Instead, they will want to put their hope in God's *covenant. They used to get their horses from Egypt. They needed horses to fight. They made their *idols themselves. Israel will want to *repent in a true way. They will want to stop these *sins. We remember the story of Hosea's children in the last line of this verse (see 1:6).

Promise of new life

4 I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. **5** I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; **6** his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. **7** They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. **8** O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit. **9** Whoever is wise, let him

understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

God himself speaks in verse 4. He makes promises to Israel. They will not need to be afraid of God. They will not need to think about God's anger. Isaiah 54:6-8 gives another picture that is like this. Israel is like a wife coming back to her husband. Israel cannot buy God's love. Instead of anger, God will bring Israel many more *blessings. These *blessings will come with water and plants (verse 5). God told Joseph that this *dew would come from the sky (Deuteronomy 33:13). Water is a picture of new life in much of the *OT. The new Israel will be pretty, like the flowers (see Matthew 6:28, 29). There was always enough water on Lebanon's hills. The trees were able to grow well. Israel, too, will be able to be strong in the *Lord. The *olive tree was a good place for shade (verse 6). It was also good for fruit. Lebanon was a good place to smell trees. Ezekiel, too, uses the picture of new growth on a tree to mean a new start for Israel (Ezekiel 17:22). God will *bless Israel through the land. In the future, it will be God who protects Israel (verse 7). God will provide shade for Israel. Then Israel can be safe. Many of the psalms use the same picture of shade (Psalms 17:8; 91:1). Israel herself is like a tree. Other people will find shelter in her shade. Hosea uses the picture of Lebanon again. Its wine was good. In the past, Israel tried very hard to get these *blessings. He will give them even greater *blessings instead.

Again, God asks Israel to throw away her *idols (verse 8). Perhaps if she does not, God will not *bless them. All good things come from God. He is like a tree - a tree of life. The people of Israel can be free through him. He always has enough to give.

Hosea finishes his book by writing about a wise person (verse 9). The ways of God are right. A silly person would not listen. There will be trouble for people who do not obey. But a clever person will keep the laws of the *Lord (Psalm 18:22). He will choose the right way. Israel's true return will only happen in Christ. We see this return in four different ways:

- When Cyrus let the *Jews return to Israel.
- In the birth of Christ.
- In the growth of the church.
- In the Second Coming of Christ.

This will be the final time that all these things will happen. This is what 'in Christ' means.