

# *The Book of Hosea*

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**(1969 and 1993 Studies)**

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1. Each paragraph preceded by **“Comment”** or **“Q”** (an abbreviation for **“Question”**) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

(Studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1969 and 1993)

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

The name Hosea, which means “salvation” or “Jah is salvation/help,” refers to Jehovah’s ultimate salvation of Israel. Hosea prophesied for approximately 55 years of his life. His ministry began in the latter part of the reign of King Uzziah (also called Azariah), a reign that covered 52 years, and extended through or into the reigns of three other kings of Judah: Jotham (the entire 16 years of his reign), Ahaz (all 16 years that he was king), and Hezekiah (through the forepart of his reign). The second Jeroboam of the ten tribes, who reigned for 41 years, was the contemporary king of Israel for most of the time that Hosea prophesied. In addition, Isaiah and Micah were prophesying during this same time period. Obviously, Hosea began his ministry as a young man and lived a fairly long life.

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

“The *beginning* of the word of the LORD by Hosea.” In the beginning of his ministry, Hosea was told to take “a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms.” Bible scholars have been puzzled by this verse, but it was preparing for a lesson on *spiritual* prostitution, the harlotry of worshipping *idols*.

The instruction was blunt and direct, whereas later chapters furnish a more rounded-out picture. Did God tell Hosea to deliberately go out and marry a known harlot and worshipper of idols? Why would the Lord give such an instruction, especially since it contradicted the moral precepts of Scripture? Actually, the Lord was *prophesying* what would happen with regard to the woman Hosea was going to marry. It was as if God were saying, “Go out and take unto thee a wife. In due time, she will prove to be a harlot and will bear children by other men.” God wanted to illustrate, through Hosea, His relationship to Israel and how the nation went into unfaithfulness. In other words, the union forcibly demonstrated to the public Israel’s unfaithfulness to God.

It will be helpful to begin by considering the three children that would be born (Hos. 1:3,4,6,8,9). Jezreel was the first son. Then came Lo-ruhamah, a daughter, and finally a second son, Lo-ammi. Although all three children were born after Hosea married the woman, he was the father of only the first: Jezreel.

The purpose of this command to Hosea was to show, through the unfaithfulness of his prospective wife and the two illegitimate children to be born in subsequent years, the whoredom of Israel in departing from the Lord. God *foreknew* that Gomer would ultimately be unfaithful.

In other words, Hosea’s relationship to his future wife and her children would be a pantomime of what Israel was doing to the Lord. Of course the people would know when the time came what was happening with regard to Hosea’s wife, so that the prophet would be able to say to them, “Just as Gomer, my wife, has done such and such, so you, as a people, have done to the Lord!” Hosea and his wife would be a prototype or object lesson of Israel’s unfaithfulness to Jehovah; that is, Hosea pictured the Lord. Just as God took the nation of Israel unto Him as a wife at Mount Sinai, so Hosea would marry Gomer. In due time, both “wives” went astray.

When the nation of Israel would be startled about Gomer's unfaithfulness to the *holy* prophet, then he could point out the lesson to them.

The names of the three children are significant, for they are a play on words. Jezreel means "God sows." Lo-ruhamah means "not having obtained mercy," "she who never knew a father's love," "one who did not feel or experience compassion," or—to put it tersely—"the unpitied one." "Lo" is negative. Lo-ammi means "not my people [or kinsmen]," indicating a disowned experience.

The people would have known Hosea was an upright, principled individual. When he married Gomer to show how far astray Israel had gone from God, he had already, *previously*, established his credibility. As time went on, Hosea's actions and words proved he was a pantomime of Israel's history and was not publicly preaching righteousness while secretly committing unrighteousness. The prophet was very strong on moral issues, for he repeatedly castigated Israel.

"The land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD." God was preparing Hosea in advance for the outcome. *Spiritual* harlotry was Israel's sin.

**Comment:** *Natural* harlotry fit well the picture of Israel's forsaking God, for Gomer forsook Hosea for other men later, after the marriage.

**Hosea 1:3** So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

Verse 3 clearly states that the first son was Hosea's. The name of Gomer's father, Diblaim, means "double embrace." Hence the name implies a lineage of unfaithfulness.

At this point, we will discuss the symbolism of the mother and the three children in the type. The daughter, Lo-ruhamah, and the second son, Lo-ammi—the two children of whoredom—represent Israel (the ten tribes) and Judah (the two tribes), respectively. The first son, Jezreel, pictures Israel in the earlier period when the relationship between that nation and God was *pure*.

And what about Gomer, the mother? In a sense, she represents the whole nation of Israel, but the symbolism can be explained a little more accurately. A woman usually represents a covenant, and the child pictures a people born under that covenant. For example, Hagar represents the Law Covenant, and Ishmael, her son, pictures the nation of Israel. Also, Sarah represents the Grace Covenant, and Isaac pictures the Church. Therefore, Gomer represents God's covenanted people Israel; her first son was born during her period of relative faithfulness, when she was yet "one." The division took place later, when Jeroboam and Rehoboam, Solomon's son, divided the nation.

The antitype is also important in the symbolism. Since Israel was the people of God, the antitype would be spiritual Israel, the professed people of God. When the Church started out, it was relatively pure, but later on, as time passed, it became an apostasy. Still later the apostasy was divided into two parts: Catholicism (Israel) and Protestantism (Judah).

Back to the type. Gomer was the mother of all three children, whereas Hosea was the father of only Jezreel. With Gomer representing God's covenanted people Israel, her children represent the people during various periods of her history. In other words, just as Gomer had several children, so Israel had different "children" during the periods of her existence. Stated another way, Gomer, the mother, pictures the *land* of Israel. Her first son, Jezreel, shows that in the earlier period of Israel's history, there was a pure relationship between the nation and God,

and the nation was “one” at that time. Later on there came a period of idolatry, and both of the subsequent “children” went astray, with the ten tribes being more iniquitous.

**Hosea 1:4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.**

When a son was born to Hosea, God told the prophet to call his name Jezreel, “for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.” What is “the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu”? Jehu was a captain in the army of Israel who established himself in power as king through *much violence* (2 Kings 9 and 10). He was responsible for a veritable bloodbath, which included the slaying of King Jehoram of Israel, the death of Jezebel, and the killing of Ahab’s 70 sons. It is true that he performed a judgment of the Lord, but his character in executing the judgment was not in harmony with the Lord. Hence retribution was required ultimately. Because Jehu performed a service for the Lord in utterly overthrowing the house of Ahab, he continued on the throne unto the fourth generation. After that came the end of the Jehu dynasty and still later the end of the northern kingdom.

Jezebel pictures Roman Catholicism, and Jehu represents a ruthless, unprincipled, powerful, organized element within Christendom whom God will use as His instrument of judgment. While the scales of retribution will be activated against the false religious system, the antitypical Jehu will not be excused for his ruthless, brutal acts. Stated another way, the perpetrators of lawlessness and violence are culpable, even though their acts do a judgment work.

Verse 4 is saying that while Jehu’s acts were permitted as a service to the nation of Israel, his violence required retribution. Jehu was identified with the house of Israel, and retribution was required not only of Jehu but also of all those who cooperated with him.

What does the term “blood of Jezreel” mean? Jezreel is the place where eunuchs threw Jezebel out the window and dogs licked up her blood (2 Kings 9:30-37). Even though it was good that Jezebel’s blood was spilled, righteous judgment was required of those who were responsible.

With Jezreel meaning “God sows,” the lesson is that what a nation sows, it will reap. God will bring judgment accordingly. The ten tribes went further and further astray into disobedience and thus were cast out of the land. What the ten tribes sowed in worshipping the calves of Dan and Beth-el received retribution in their being dispersed into other lands by a heathen king. The punishment aspect is shown in God’s saying, “I will *avenge*.”

**Hosea 1:5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.**

“At that day [when I avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu] ... I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” God was saying that He would break the power of the Jehu dynasty in the very place of the original bloodbath. A captain in Israel’s army, Jehu was anointed to be king of Israel by a son of the prophets (through Elisha) while a war was going on in Ramoth-gilead. Following the anointing, Jehu carried out the bloodbath, using as a justification Elijah’s prophecies prior to his decease.

**Hosea 1:6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.**

**Hosea 1:7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD**

**their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.**

As already mentioned, Lo-ruhamah, the illegitimate daughter of Gomer, represents the ten-tribe (northern) kingdom of Israel. She could not represent the two-tribe kingdom of Judah because of the Lord's statement "I will *no more have mercy upon the house of Israel ... But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.*" And the name Lo-ruhamah means "I will no more have mercy," hence "the unpitied one." The ten tribes ceased to have mercy from the Lord and were allowed to go into captivity first, more than a hundred years ahead of Judah.

The ten tribes went astray first; later Judah did the same. And that is just what happened in the antitype. Papacy went into apostasy first and is even called a "harlot" (Nahum 3:4). Moreover, although the ten-tribe kingdom went astray more grievously and earlier, it took the name "Israel," which really represented the whole 12 tribes, and it retained that name as though the two tribes had gone astray and as though the ten tribes had been faithful. Again, that is just what happened in the antitype. Papacy was actually apostate but acted as though it was the true Church, the true Israel of God. The parallel is amazing!

As far as numbers were concerned, the ten-tribe kingdom was far more populous than the two-tribe kingdom. After a while, the ten tribes were called Ephraim because that tribe was exceptionally numerous. Earlier prophecies indicated that Ephraim would be fruitful with seed—and it was. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Church boasts of being the true Church, the faithful Church, and the largest Church. In addition, it has the longest line of succession, claiming to go back to the Apostle Peter. Not only does the Catholic Church pride itself on not being divided like the Protestants, whom it considers relative newcomers, but also it has a far more imposing appearance.

Verses 5 and 7 refer to God's mercy on Judah in delivering the two tribes from King Sennacherib of Assyria in the Valley of Jezreel. God saved Judah but not "by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." Without a battle, the "angel of the LORD" slew 185,000 Assyrians with a plague in *one night* (Isa. 37:36). Judah, under King Hezekiah, did not have to raise a hand. Meanwhile, the ten-tribe kingdom had already gone into captivity. This past deliverance of Judah is one fulfillment of verses 5 and 7.

Another fulfillment of Judah's deliverance will take place at the end of the age when God pleads for His people and fights for them as He did in the past. In delivering the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble, God will save the tents of Judah first in connection with Jerusalem. Even though Zechariah 14:14 says that those of Judah will fight at that time, they will not deliver themselves, for *God will deliver them out of Jacob's Trouble.*

**Hosea 1:8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.**

**Hosea 1:9 Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.**

When Gomer had weaned Lo-ruhamah, which took about three years, she conceived and bore a son, Lo-ammi. Incidentally, when "weaned," a baby, or child, no longer derives nourishment from the mother's breast. As Christians, we are "weaned" when we reach maturity. This *separation* sometimes comes through trial.

During the breast-feeding period, Lo-ruhamah was nurtured at her mother's breast, but then she (the ten tribes) was weaned and taken away into captivity. The experience not only began to teach the ten tribes the condition of separateness from God but also was designed to make them ultimately realize, at some future date, their dependence on God. And after Lo-ruhamah

(the ten tribes) was “weaned” and learning this much-needed lesson, the other son, Lo-ammi (picturing the two-tribe kingdom of Judah), came into the picture. The name of this illegitimate son (“not my people”) referred to Judah’s punishment subsequently.

**Hosea 1:10** Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Verse 10, which is prophetic, will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. It shows returning favor—when all 12 tribes will be united and called “Israel” again. The second and third children (Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi) are comparable to the two sticks that get united in Ezekiel 37:15-17. Just as Israel embraced all 12 tribes originally, so it will do so again. In number, Israel will be like “the sand of the sea” in the Kingdom when the stone grows and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). The dead will be raised, and all who obey will become Israelitish. (Note: Before the stone strikes the image, it represents The Christ. After the stone strikes the image, it represents the Kingdom of God, including Israel.)

More specifically, therefore, verse 10 applies at the *end* of the Millennium, when the “house of Israel” will include the entire world of mankind, that is, the restored human race, who will be called the “people of God.” Figuratively speaking, these billions of people will be “as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered.” At that time, there will be no point in counting the exact number of the population who get life and are “the sons of the *living* God.”

**Comment:** “Ye are the sons of the living God” sounds like Revelation 21:7, where the promise, to be fulfilled at the end of the Kingdom, is put on an individual basis. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

**Reply:** The Book of Revelation shows three overcoming classes: (1) the Little Flock, (2) the Great Company, and (3) the world of mankind. The world will be under the New Covenant, which is an Israelitish covenant. Incidentally, the Apostle Paul quoted Hosea 1:10 and applied it to the Gentiles (that is, the Church class) as those who were not God’s people but became His people (Rom. 9:25,26).

**Hosea 1:11** Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

“Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head.” The two houses of Israel will be united and gathered under one head in the “day [or time] of Jezreel.” The “one head” whom the children of Israel and Judah will appoint in the Kingdom is Jesus. (Of course this appointment is really of God, for He will dictate their government.) “They shall come up out of the land”; that is, the Jews of both houses will come out of the Diaspora.

From another standpoint, if verses 10 and 11 are not considered sequential, the children of Israel and Judah appointed “one head” when they were gathered together as a nation in 1948 with David Ben-Gurion. This regathering back to the land set the stage for Jacob’s Trouble and the great deliverance yet future. *Israel* appointed “one head” in 1948, but *God* will appoint “one head” in the Kingdom

“For great shall be the day of Jezreel.” Jezreel was the name of Gomer’s first son, representing the days of Israel’s relative purity and faithfulness. Hence the name is a play on words showing that again, in the future, Israel will be “one” and pure. Jezreel means “God sows”; that is, *God*

will be instrumental in making Israel “great,” so that their number will be as the sand of the sea. The seed will be sown and prospered by God in the Millennial “day.”

The clause “great shall be the day of Jezreel” refers to God’s rescue of the Holy Remnant by mighty acts of *power*. “Great” will be the magnitude of God’s methods of deliverance.

The Hebrew gives a clearer picture of the meaning of the names Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi. “Lo” means “not.” Hence Lo-ruhamah means “the one *not* pitied,” and Lo-ammi means “*not* my people.” Later the names will be Ruhamah (“the *pitied* one” or “having obtained *mercy*”) and Ammi (“*my people*”). In other words, even though Israel and Judah went astray, God will have mercy on them and restore them. He will change their unfavorable names as children of harlotry to favorable ones.

There are two levels of fulfillment with regard to natural Israel’s rejection: (1) in Hosea’s day with Shalmaneser and (2) on a larger scale when the nation crucified Jesus and their house was left desolate (Matt. 23:38). A great gulf was fixed, and the Jews could not get contact with God. Chapter 1 is the framework for the Book of Hosea.

**Hosea 2:1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.**

In chapter 1, Hosea was told to seek a woman to be his wife. God foreknew that Hosea’s wife would turn out to be a harlot in later life. The Lord intended to use her life and the lives of her three children as object lessons with regard to His dealing with the nation of Israel both in the past and in the future. Gomer was the wife. The first child was Jezreel, a legitimate son. Next came Lo-ruhamah, a daughter, and Lo-ammi, a son, both of whom were illegitimate.

“Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.” Notice that the negative “Lo” was dropped here. This omission suggests a favorable message, one of encouragement. Hosea told Jezreel to speak to his “brother” and his “sister” *singular* (see the Revised Standard Version).

Ammi represented the two tribes (Judah); Ruhamah represented the ten tribes (Israel). Gomer, the mother, represented the *land* of Israel, in which resided these two factions. Originally, the nation was one, as pictured by Jezreel, but in the days after Solomon, the nation was divided. Instead of the 12 tribes continuing as one unified whole, the division was into ten tribes, which retained the name Israel, and the two tribes, called Judah. The two illegitimate children pictured this particular period, which was not as legitimate a condition as that pictured by the first child and true son of Hosea, Jezreel. Jezreel represented the days of God’s original espousal of His people at Sinai.

The first three chapters of the Book of Hosea are introductory or preparatory, showing that an experience had to be created in the prophet’s life so that when he subsequently published his message to the nation, he could do it *with feeling*. How would this happen? When Hosea would see the Lord’s mercy on behalf of Israel and also have in his own life a *personalized* experience along these lines, he could speak with great fervor, realizing the *tenderness* of God in dealing with His people. Hosea’s message would thus have more power and effect. Therefore, it is not until chapter 4 that Hosea began his public message and ministry to the nation: “Hear [hearken to] the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel.” In the first three chapters, Hosea was merely being instructed. In other words, some years had to pass before Hosea could begin his public ministry; all three children had to be born first.

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



Hosea told the two illegitimate children to plead with their mother. Since the two children represented the two divisions of the nation of Israel, “pleading” with their mother signified telling the nation to repent and reform. If the people of Israel got the feeling that they were derelict in their relationship with God, they would be partly on the road to recovery. But the nation at this time did not appreciate Hosea’s message, for they were prospering and thought they were in God’s favor. Later on, Hosea’s message was felt.

It helps to put ourselves in Hosea’s place. His wife was unfaithful, and two children in his household were not his. Consequently, the two children were more or less unwanted, and every time the prophet looked at them, they were an unpleasant reminder of Gomer’s unfaithfulness. Even the names—Lo-ruhamah (“the unpitied one”) and Lo-ammi (“not my people/kinsmen”)—showed that in a sense they were disowned, despite the fact that Hosea tried to be a good father to them. Nevertheless, he was finding it difficult to exercise mercy on his wife and her two children. Later God did *more* for Israel than a man would do for his family under such circumstances. Hosea’s personal experience was preparing him to give his message to Israel with feeling. Without first having this experience in his own life, he would have had trouble delivering the message. However, if Hosea found that he *loved* his wife in spite of her waywardness, as the account seems to suggest later on, then he could understand the approachableness of God with regard to mercy.

“Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight.” The Revised Standard reads, “Plead with your mother ... that she put away her harlotry from her face.” A harlot is prone to be hardened and bold in public; she is not ashamed.

“She is not my wife” indicates that God was married to Israel at one time—or to Jerusalem as a figurehead. (A city can be emblematic of the whole. For example, Washington, DC, represents the United States, and London represents England.) God’s relationship to Israel was different from the relationship of Jesus to the Church, for each member of the Bride class has a *personal* relationship with Jesus. Each of the 144,000 will be given a name known only to Jesus and that individual (Rev. 2:17). God put aside Israel because of unfaithfulness.

**Hosea 2:3** Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

“Lest I strip her naked.” The land was left desolate in 606 BC. (The ten tribes were taken out of the land earlier, and the two tribes were removed in 606 BC.) Jerusalem was stripped “naked” in that the city and the Temple were destroyed.

“And set her as in the day that she was born.” The nation of Israel was “born” when the Passover feature of the Law was given in Egypt prior to the Exodus. (The Law of Moses was not formalized until Mount Sinai.) The Israelites were taken out of Egypt into the Wilderness of Sinai as wandering people. They lived as bedouins, having no Temple or established government.

Hosea was inferentially referring to God’s tender care of Israel in the beginning, as described in Ezekiel 16:3-14. When the Israelites were called out of Egypt, they were “naked.” The swaddling clothes and ornamentation began at Mount Sinai when God entered the Law Covenant with them. Their feet were shod with badgers’ skin during the 40 years in the wilderness. Later the Israelites had kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—and fame at the zenith of their glory. The sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel pictures Israel’s history from the time of infancy up to Solomon, and then from Solomon to 606 BC.

**Hosea 2:4** And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of

whoredoms.

Verse 4 tells that for a while, the two illegitimate children were unwanted by Hosea. Similarly, the nation of Israel was temporarily disowned by the Lord.

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

Who were Israel's "lovers"? Israel consorted with the surrounding nations and their idolatrous religions of Baal, Dagon, the queen of heaven, Molech, etc. The more prominent nations that Israel played up to were Egypt and Assyria. At different times, she allied herself with one or the other. These two nations fought frequently, and Israel was a buffer state between them. Israel entered into military and economic alliances, but the fraternization went even further, for there were intermarriages and then the introduction of heathen religious practices.

How ironic! Israel went after lovers whom she thought gave her milk, oil, wool, and so forth. Instead of attributing the blessings to God, to His munificence, the Israelites thought other gods, nations (Egypt and Assyria), and sources were the benefactors.

**Hosea 2:6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.**

God would give Israel her lovers and disperse the ten tribes throughout other nations. The result was that Israel could not find the "paths" back to God, for barriers prevented her return. Association with other nations alienated her from her former ways, so that she was like a lost sheep. But, nevertheless, Israel would eventually get back to God.

**Hosea 2:7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.**

In what way would Israel follow after her lovers but not overtake them, and seek her lovers but not find them? Egypt and Assyria could not provide security for Israel. For example, when King Nebuchadnezzar came down against Egypt, he defeated the nation twice—both of Pharaoh's "arms" were broken. Egypt was humiliated in battle. From another standpoint, when Israel was dispersed into other nations, the people did not really assimilate.

"Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." Israel's "first husband" was Jehovah. When Israel expresses these sentiments in the future, she will be entreating God for deliverance out of the extremities of Jacob's Trouble.

Jesus took phrases from the Book of Hosea and built parables upon them. Israel's sentiments here sound like the Parable of the Prodigal Son. After squandering all of his inheritance, the prodigal son had to feed on husks of corn. Subsequently he said in effect, "I will return to the Lord." Incidentally, the Apostle Paul frequently borrowed from Isaiah and the minor prophets and then enlarged upon the principles.

God made the Law Covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai and there became "husband" to the nation. That contract will be renewed under the terms of the New (Law) Covenant.

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

Israel was given various luxuries by her lovers; that is, she had a trade relationship with them and got enamored with the different wares and items, such as the horses of Egypt. However, these luxuries were to be stripped from her (verse 9).

Israel did not realize that *God* gave her the grain, wine, etc., but attributed her prosperity to others. Israel falsely interpreted providence, and we can make that same mistake. Since the Adversary also arranges “providence,” we must analyze the circumstances in order to see who is the source—and *pray* with regard to crucial aspects of life.

“I [*God*]” is the emphasis of verse 8. Israel had relations with Baal, a *foreign* god and religion. God spoke strongly in criticizing Israel.

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

In Leviticus 26, Moses said that disobedience would be punished seven times because previous captivities did not produce true repentance. If obedient, Israel would prosper in military endeavors, childbirth, crops, health, long life, etc.

God said He would return and take back the grain, wine, wool, and other goods; that is, Israel experienced *crop failures*. In addition, the Temple was destroyed, and the nation was defeated in battle. God was saying, “You attributed all your success to others, whereas *I* gave it to you. Therefore, I will take back what I gave you.” From a *spiritual* standpoint, Israel’s communion with God would not be as close.

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

**Hosea 2:11** I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

**Hosea 2:12** And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

God caused Israel’s “mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts” in 606 BC, when King Zedekiah was dethroned. At the same time, God also destroyed “her vines and her fig trees” that her lovers had given her. The land was forced to lie desolate for 70 years. During that time, beasts of the field ran roughshod over the groves and ate the fruit that grew of itself. After a while, because the vines were not pruned and trimmed properly, they were overrun with brambles and thorns. The once well-cultivated fields became desolate. In short, all that Israel had would be removed from her. The people would be uprooted and taken captive into foreign lands.

Note: Hosea came on the scene *before* the ten tribes were taken captive. He prophesied of their captivity, and his life ended about the time of that fulfillment. The prophets Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah came on the scene after that.

**Hosea 2:13** And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

Just as God judged natural Israel, stripping her of her unfaithful activities, so there is a spiritual parallel for verse 13. Catholicism purports to be the religion of Christ, the true Church, but the

system followed after other lovers, burned incense, worshipped the queen of heaven, and bedecked its popes with jewels. Ornamentation includes medals and fancy robes and garments. Papacy will be stripped of its trappings.

**Hosea 2:14** Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

Notice the paragraph mark at verse 14. Verses 14-23 are a message of reconciliation to Israel. Although there was a partial fulfillment in the past, the primary fulfillment is in our day. God said, "I will allure her [Israel], and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." The allurement, a *process*, would happen *before* God's full reconciliation and deliverance of Israel. In the "wilderness" condition, Israel will be receptive to the Lord's influence, and God will show His mercy.

When favor began to return to Israel in 1878, the land was a wilderness—and it still is, and will be until the Kingdom is established. In Ezekiel 20:35, God said, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face [in Jacob's Trouble]." Following the "door of hope" (verse 15) in 1878, there has been a process of bringing Israel into the wilderness condition. In this process, certain things still have to happen, as will be seen in subsequent verses.

**Hosea 2:15** And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

"I will give her ... the valley of Achor for a door of hope." In 1878, the first modern Jewish settlement in Palestine was established; it was called Petatikva, or "Door of Hope." Pastor Russell had predicted that this date would be significant for Israel—that there would be some remarkable sign of the Lord's favor beginning to return to Israel. Disraeli, the first and only Jewish prime minister of England, was raised up at just the right time. As a result, the Jews were permitted to purchase real estate in Israel after a period of disfavor lasting 1,845 years. This important step paved the way for their eventual return. God promised to give Israel vineyards, and Israel would "sing there, as in the days of her youth" when she left Egypt. Israel has gotten vineyards.

After Jews returned to Israel, God spoke comfortably to them in the sense mentioned here. The "wilderness" condition of verse 14 does not refer to the Diaspora. Rather, the wilderness is the unfinished land of Israel. The Lord is in the process of bringing the Jews back to the unfinished land, and there He slowly entreats them. This gradual preparatory work is going on now. However, Israel still has to learn some hard lessons. Following these lessons, the Jews will realize why they have been regathered; namely, the Kingdom is to be established in Israel, and Messiah will exercise control from Jerusalem, the future throne of the Lord God.

God was saying that in spite of Israel's waywardness, there would come a day when she would be reconciled to Him, and the Valley of Achor would be a door of hope. The early colonists regarded Petatikva as a foothold in the land. There were all kinds of depressing difficulties (for example, malarial swamps), but this foothold was encouraging to the Jews, who were struggling along.

Still more comfort will be given to the regathered Jews in the future, leading up to the full establishment of the Kingdom. In these last days, Israel will get more enlightenment and react favorably. Pastor Russell really had the keys of hope for the Jews, but they did not fully grasp the fact at that time. As time goes on in these last days, the Holy Remnant will respond favorably and appreciate the increasing enlightenment that the Lord provides. However, the

majority of Jews will continue on obliviously right into Jacob's Trouble.

**Hosea 2:16** And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

In that day (yet future), Israel will call God Ishi ("my Husband") and no longer Baali ("my Master"). They are not yet a devout people worshipping Jehovah. There is much secularism, factionalism, agnosticism, etc. Pastor Russell's ministry was favorable to Israel—even prior to 1878, he prophesied of Israel's regathering. This helped open the door of hope, but still there is not the return to God. Returning to the land of Israel is one thing; returning to God is another. The relationship that once existed between God and Israel will be restored.

**Hosea 2:17** For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Today we do not see other religions in Israel. Although Israel is different from Gentile nations, where many religions have inroads, the people are mostly agnostic, atheistic, money-minded, or something else. Other forms of "worship" in Israel are husband or wife, music, property, money, politics—anything but God. These are all forms of idolatry. As a whole, Israel today is turned off with regard to Christianity and Asian religions.

**Comment:** Israel is about 97 percent secular, nonreligious. The Orthodox are only 3 percent of the people, but they have much political sway.

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

The "covenant" is the future New Covenant. Ezekiel 34:25 reads, "And I will make with them a [new] covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." Isaiah 11:6-9 states, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Verse 18 reminds us of Adam, who was created lord of the earth. Crops prospered under him and animals obeyed. Adam was a king. And so, not only will Israel be restored, but each individual will have his own little domain.

God "will break the bow and the sword and the battle [weapons] out of the earth" when He delivers the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble. Booty and munitions will be converted into agricultural implements.

Israel has been brought back to the land. The next step is for the people to be brought to God. They are still wandering in their wilderness condition in the land. The Holy Remnant will go through a process. Though those of this class exist today, they are not visible. They are groping for God. When God purges Israel, the Holy Remnant will suddenly be exposed.

When Jesus' blood is paid over to Justice after the Church is complete, the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected. This satisfaction of Justice is an important feature of the times (plural) of restitution. (Other features we see now are laborsaving devices, multiple Bible translations in

the languages of earth, etc., but when Justice is satisfied, then dramatic events will follow.) Jesus' blood is called the "blood of sprinkling" (Heb. 12:24). Incidentally, the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are two separate avenues of blessing.

**Hosea 2:19** And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

**Hosea 2:20** I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

God will betroth Israel unto Him *forever*. Not only will the New Covenant be established, but it will remain in effect. When will the New Covenant go into operation—at the beginning of the Kingdom when it is inaugurated or at the end of the Kingdom? The answer is both, for the New Covenant will be a process. At the end of the Kingdom when all of the incorrigible have been destroyed, the New Covenant will remain—but with no need for instruction, correction, punishment, or a Mediator. God was referring to the start of the New Covenant when He said of Israel, "I will change their hearts from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh [that is, make them humble and teachable] and [then] write the Law in their hearts and minds" (Ezek. 11:19 paraphrase). Those who receive the New Covenant deeply will get life.

**Hosea 2:21** And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;

**Hosea 2:22** And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

"In that day," that is, in the Kingdom, even nature will be harmonious in productivity. The Lord will speak to the heavens, and they will distill dew or rain upon the earth. The sun will warm, soften, and prepare the earth to receive the seed that man will sow. Instead of only a small percentage of seed germinating and taking root, the seed will prosper and result in prolific harvests.

As a punishment, the earth has been hard, but the soil will be softened in the Kingdom. Because of Israel's disobedience, God said, "I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass" (Lev. 26:19). Thus it has been a struggle to produce crops. Conditions will be different in the Kingdom. All nature will cooperate so that the earth will yield its increase (Ezek. 34:27). The heavens will provide the right balance of rain and sunshine, and the earth will respond by producing seed abundantly. Mankind will be greatly blessed accordingly.

Verses 21 and 22 are a beautiful way of showing the reversal of one of the "seven times" of punishment: "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power" (Lev. 26:18,19). In verse 21, Hosea showed that the harmonious relationship will be restored. The harsh climatic conditions will be changed, although summer and winter will not cease (Gen. 8:22).

When everyone is healthy, snow will be enjoyable. The variety and change of seasons are good. Each season has its own beauty, but the seasons will be gentle. All will be in harmony: mankind, atmosphere, vegetation, climate, etc. Mankind will have to work in the Kingdom (probably two to three days a week) but not with the sweat of his brow. The earth will be softer.

"They shall hear Jezreel [Israel]." The *united* nation of Israel will prosper from the blessings of nature. First, Israel was Jezreel (one nation), and then came the two illegitimate children (the division of Israel into ten and two tribes). Now, in this Kingdom setting, Israel is back to the Jezreel condition. Just as Ezekiel said, the two sticks will become one staff (Ezek. 37:15-17).

“Jezreel” shows a completely reunited people, the complete return of favor to Israel as *one* nation united.

The heavens will hear the earth; the earth will hear the corn, the wine, and the oil; and the crops will hear Jezreel. Favor will come down from above. *Spiritually*, the blessing comes from The Christ down to the Ancient Worthies, to the nation of Israel, and then to the people. *Materially*, the people will be blessed by the lifting of the curse. Thus there is a twofold application, although the *natural* picture is the stronger one. Later on, some of Hosea’s words will apply to the Church, but not yet because neither the true nor the false Church could be said to have been unfaithful and then restored. The analogy here is approximately 98 percent Israel, the natural picture.

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

Verse 23 is a play on words. The pronoun “her” refers to Israel. The names of Hosea’s children can be substituted as follows. Jezreel means “God sows,” and verse 23 says, “I will sow her.” The one who had not obtained mercy (Lo-ruhamah) will obtain mercy (Ruhamah). And to those who were not God’s people (Lo-ammi), God will say, “Thou art my people” (Ammi). God will reconcile Israel *in spite of* the past history—not because the people are more righteous than those of other nations but for the *fathers’* sake and for *His own* name’s sake.

Jezreel was unfavorable earlier (Hos. 1:4,5); now the name was favorable. God sowed, or distributed, Israel outside the land by dispersing the people, but they will be sown in their land.

**Hosea 3:1** Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

God told Hosea, “Go yet, love a woman [that is, Gomer].” The NIV translation is good: “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin-cakes.” Verse 1 confirms that Hosea was acting out in his own life Israel’s unfaithfulness to Jehovah.

The expression “sacred raisin-cakes” is superior to the King James “flagons of wine.” Not only were raisin cakes sacrificed to the false gods, but more was implied—pleasurable things. The following wrong principle applies. The Catholic religion is convenient, for one can willfully sin and then go to Confession and receive forgiveness. Thus a Catholic can have one foot in the world and one foot (supposedly) for God. The principle is the same with the worship of other gods or temporal goods, which bring a certain degree of satisfaction. People sin because they get a sense of satisfaction, and few feel real guilt, for they do not realize that sin brings a person down. Repentance becomes increasingly difficult the longer the sin is practiced. In other words, sin is habit-forming.

**Comment:** Those who offered sacred raisin cakes thought they could appease the false gods. They thought they could sin, living as they wanted, and then just offer those cakes.

**Reply:** Yes, they got a benefaction from the cakes. They could be generous within their means yet sin as they pleased. Also, they could eat part of the cakes, and the eating was pleasurable.

**Comment:** According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the Hebrew word translated “wine” is *enab*, which means “grape cakes.” Raisins are dried grapes.

In spite of Gomer's waywardness—even though she was an adulteress and had evidently left the household—Hosea still had feelings for her. However, her unfaithfulness had been so great that he did not go to her until the Lord instructed him to be reconciled to her. Then Hosea obeyed willingly. (His tenderizing experiences had prepared and softened him.) In the analogy, just as Hosea was to seek a reconciliation with Gomer, so God would seek a reconciliation with Israel. Hosea was to go to his wife, who was living in harlotry, and bring her back, and God prepared the way to restore Israel.

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

Hosea purchased back his unfaithful wife from the slavery into which she had been sold. The purchase price of Gomer was 30 shekels in all—15 shekels in silver (money) and the rest in grain. Ezekiel 45:11 shows 1 1/2 homers of barley to be the equivalent of 15 shekels. (One homer equals 10 ephahs or shekels. Therefore, 1 1/2 homers would be 15 shekels.) One ephah was the equivalent of one shekel of silver at the time of Hosea.

Gomer became an adulteress, and the *mixed* price of shekels and homers recognizes that fact. The purchase price of 30 shekels of silver was calculated as follows:

15 shekels = 15 pieces of silver

15 shekels = Since 1 homer equals 10 ephahs or shekels, then 1 1/2 homers equals 15 shekels  
30 shekels

The homer and the ephah are dry measures. The shekel, an amount of money, was what the dry measure was worth. A talent of silver was the equivalent of 3,000 shekels. A talent was both a *weight* and a *value*. A homer was both a *quantity* and a *value*.

After Hosea bought back Gomer, it was necessary, because of her unfaithfulness, to have a period of separation before marital intimacy was resumed (see verse 3). The total value of Gomer's purchase (30 shekels of silver) alludes to the price Judas accepted to betray Jesus.

Barley was known as "harlot's food" (Num. 5:11-31). When a woman was suspected of infidelity, if she was willing to go through the ordeal of a "jealousy offering," it meant that she was professing her innocence. Water was mixed with dust from the floor of the Tabernacle in connection with the curse. The mixing was done in an earthen vessel, and after a fractional part of an ephah of barley meal was offered on the altar, the woman drank the concoction. If the woman was thereby proved innocent, she was exonerated, and her husband was put to shame. Otherwise, the woman would die.

Hosea's giving of the ransom price to purchase back his wife accomplished two things: (1) It "hid" the 30 pieces of silver by dividing the value into shekels and barley. (2) It showed that Gomer was being purchased because she had been unfaithful. In antitype, in spite of Israel's infidelity, God made provision for that nation and the world to be delivered, whereas in the jealousy-offering picture, the guilty party died. In the unfavorable sense, barley implied harlotry. Revelation 6:6 shows that a time would come when Papacy would dole out three measures of barley to one measure of wheat; that is, it would be much cheaper to buy "barley [harlot's] food" than the truth. In time of literal famine, the people bought bulk rather than quality. In the Dark Ages, when there was a famine for the Word of God, adulterated harlot food was much more plentiful than truth.

This purchase occurred antitypically when Jesus paid the price at Calvary. Thirty pieces of silver was the purchase price he gave to restore Israel. In the type, Hosea acted out this price years



earlier with Gomer. She had evidently become a bondservant to some other man; that is, she had sold herself into some other man's possession. Therefore, Hosea could not just go and take her but had to *buy* her back. And so God purchased Israel through the death of Jesus, the corresponding price. To date, Israel is still unaware of this purchase.

Zechariah 11:10-14 is related to Israel and the 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas. When Judas tried to return the money, and the priests and Pharisees refused, he threw the money at their feet. They subsequently used the money to buy a potter's field for burying the poor. Evidently, Judas had thought that Jesus would deliver himself, and then he could keep the money. But instead Jesus was arrested and executed. In other words, Judas had not intended to betray Jesus to *death*, for he thought Jesus would evade the authorities. The potter's field became a "field of *blood*" (Acts 1:19).

The reference in Zechariah 11:10,14 to Beauty and Bands pertains to when Israel was broken asunder in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam. The Zechariah text shows the division, and Ezekiel 37:15-19 shows the reconciliation of the two "sticks."

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

When Hosea purchased Gomer back, she had to be separated, for according to the ritual in the Law, she was unclean. Hosea was not "husband" to her, and neither was anybody else. In other words, in antitype, even though God purchased back Israel through the death of Jesus, He did not immediately show His love and affection for the nation in a "husbandly" way. He took Israel back, as it were, and put the nation in quarantine for many days—that is, for the Gospel Age and the period of the "double." A great gulf has existed, as shown in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The Diaspora is also pictured in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1,2). Israel was in a dry and forlorn condition until rather recently.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, "Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.'" Hosea purchased back Gomer but did not establish full intimacy and act as a husband to her, at least for a period of time. With no man, not even Hosea, being intimate with Gomer for some time, this situation harmonized with the antitype.

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

While in Diaspora, Israel did not have a "sacrifice," for there was no Temple in which to offer sacrifices. Israel was also without a "king" or a "prince." Only in recent years has there been a prime minister (a head) in Israel after a dearth for many years. And the children of Israel were without an "ephod" (a priesthood). In fact, their genealogy records have been lost, so that even if a Temple were built, they could not ascertain who the priesthood would be. In the Kingdom, there will be a different priesthood—from the line of Zadok under a new arrangement. Israel will have a new capital, a new king, a new priesthood—everything *God* has selected.

"Teraphim" were images. They were probably quite large at times like the statue Michal, David's wife, put in the bed to make it appear that David was there when he was actually fleeing from King Saul (1 Sam. 19:12,13). God did not sanction the teraphim; they were a heathen practice incorporated into Israel through association with other nations.

Only the high priest had the Urim and the Thummim, but teraphim were like a branch off them. At times, there were communication gaps, and since the priests were more or less

ceremonial, expediencies were developed. A later example is the crucifix, which was found to be helpful in fighting fallen angels. The crucifix is only an artifact, but one's faith in an artifact can sometimes be useful in combating evil, even though, inherently, it is an idol. (For example, a reprobate might wear a crucifix around his neck.) Icons and images are similar. Sometimes these items are tolerated based on an individual's efforts to lead a proper life, that is, where one does not have sufficient edification to discern the true religion. To some extent, God may help those who ignorantly try to serve Him with such artifacts. Teraphim come under this category.

**Q:** The King James marginal note for "images" is "a standing, or statue, or pillar." What were these in Israel's history?

**A:** When Jacob and others had a hallowed memory, or a memorable experience, they made a pillar of stones, a monument. Looking at the pillar reminded them of the treasured memory. But inherently, the monument was nothing. Because *faith* associated the monument with the memory, the memory could be sanctified. Therefore, God has honored certain methods of worship or reverence that in themselves are a handicap; nevertheless, the person receives a blessing. In the Diaspora, the Israelites were denuded of all these things.

Deeds may be inappropriate, but the spirit behind them can be appreciated. The same is true of a baby, both literally and spiritually. God expects less from an infant—He makes allowances.

**Comment:** Naaman the leper took soil from Israel back to Syria to kneel on when he prayed. Because he was concerned about having to enter the heathen temple, as required by his master, God made an arrangement to get around his problem with conscience.

**Reply:** That is a good example. God winked the eye for Naaman's sake. The spirit behind the act is important.

Verse 4 is saying that Israel would be without its own previous Temple sacrifices and worship, as well as the religious practices of other nations. The Israelites were deprived not only of the ephod, which was legitimate and authentic and of God, but also of teraphim and images. The Jews have been estranged from both God and other religions. Money has been their "god."

The Jews have lost contact with their own religion, for their emphasis is on the Talmud or a mixed religion containing a lot of *man's* precepts. The original Torah is used only as a holy relic. Instead of the Torah being read and studied by the people, only a privileged few know much about it. Back in the type, the Torah was to be read completely every seven years. Everyone was to hear it. And in the meantime, the families were to instruct one another in the Torah.

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

The children of Israel "return" in two senses. First, they return to their land, and subsequently they return to God. They were cast off for a period of time; then they returned to the land. In time, God will work in them a spirit of contrition and eventually anoint them with the eye salve of deliverance.

**Comment:** The NIV translation is nice at the end: "Afterward the Israelites [the Holy Remnant] will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come *trembling* to the LORD and to his *blessings* in the *last days*."

**Reply:** Sensing they have been handpicked for survival, the Holy Remnant will feel personally unworthy. That attitude will bring them to the next step—after being brought to God, they will be brought to Jesus. They will recognize Jesus when they see a vision of the Crucifixion while

fleeing through the split Mount of Olives. They will be overwhelmed to realize that, as a people, they crucified Messiah. Being brought to God and then to Jesus will happen one right after the other, like cause and effect. Their feeling of escaping extermination under miraculous circumstances and then seeing the vision of Jesus will bring *instantaneous* conversion.

An element in Jewry today is wondering whether Jesus is the Messiah. Although more will be needed to convince them, they are afraid to oppose the thought in case it turns out to be true.

**Comment:** They have a “Nicodemus-like” attitude.

**Reply:** Yes, they walk on the fence, which is the course of wisdom.

“David their king” is Messiah, the Beloved. (The name David means “beloved.”) The coupling of returning and seeking (1) Jehovah and (2) David, their king, suggests an instantaneous revelation, which will cause the Holy Remnant to smite their breasts in remorse. Incidentally, verse 5 is another hint, among many, that David may be the first presiding Ancient Worthy installed in office in Jerusalem, that is, the first Prince. David was a type of Messiah.

**Q:** Isn’t Moses held in higher esteem than David?

**A:** Yes, but the promises were made to David—the “sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3). As an individual, Moses was probably more noble, however.

The Ancient Worthies have made their calling and election sure based on faith and obedience, but they will come forth from the grave with traits that need to be refined, changed, and educated. Hence they will be under the New Covenant until the end of the Kingdom. Since they did not have the New Testament, they will have to learn certain principles that are taught in the Gospels and not in the Old Testament.

“The children of Israel ... shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.” As an illustration, Joseph calmed the fears of his brothers when he disclosed his identity—and they had betrayed him. Joseph had a principled love.

**Hosea 4:1** Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

The fourth chapter of Hosea is directed to the ten tribes. Proof that Judah is not included is verse 15: “Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.” God had a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because there was “no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God.” This condition existed in Israel in Hosea’s day, and it is also true today.

“No truth” means no righteousness, no fair play, no justice. In other words, there is no standard of righteousness. Everyone is out for himself, and hypocrisy and ulterior motives are the norm. Demands along all lines are getting more and more unreasonable. The standard of truth is missing in politics and in everyday life—even in the home. This condition will get *much worse* as the trouble comes on the world.

Also, there was no mercy in the land. That was the *prevalent* condition in the prophet’s day. How dreadful! Of the last days, the Bible says that men shall be “without natural affection,” that is without tenderness and compassion (2 Tim. 3:3). Patience, reasonableness, and consideration are lacking. The women are getting hard today, like the men, and the men are losing their masculinity. Imagine a condition so bad that it could be said, “No truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God”! Things are not that bad yet, but trouble is coming. Hosea was

speaking doubly—to Israel in his day and, unwittingly, to the end of the present age.

**Hosea 4:2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.**

Swearing (profanity), lying, killing, stealing, adultery, and bloodshed were the order of the day back in Hosea's time and also today. Murder is becoming more prevalent, yet capital punishment is being abolished. How strange—murderers can kill, but we cannot kill them! Liberal laws do not curb violence. Instead they strengthen the hand of the evildoer because the punishment is lenient and not hard to endure. The laws are being perverted to protect the criminal, whereas they should protect society from the criminal. This strange paradox is the result of erroneously considering education to be the cure-all. That thinking is a fallacy. *Christ* is the cure-all; only he can reform society. Even the *perfect* Law of God given to Moses at Mount Sinai could not reform society and convert Israel. And with us, the truth per se does not “save” us but the truth that *Jesus is the Savior*—the *conversion* to this truth, not the knowledge itself. *Repentance into Christ* is necessary.

“Blood toucheth blood.” “Blood” is *violence*. One act of violence followed another in *continuous* fashion. Violence was not isolated but was continuous and repetitious.

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

Everyone who dwells in the land “shall languish.” Just think what anarchy and trouble the Church will escape! Lot (picturing the Great Company) was not accounted worthy to escape witnessing lust, violence, and evil, for he lived in Sodom at the height of its depravity. We are not yet living in the corresponding time—we merely see symptomatic signs. Lot's “righteous soul” was vexed day after day (2 Pet. 2:7,8). Imagine living in the midst of “Sodom-like” conditions where the men wanted other *men* and rejected Lot's daughters! Today only the righteous element, a small minority, is mourning, whereas the vast majority of the people enjoy the evil conditions, for they do what they want with seeming impunity. Meanwhile, the “land” mourns, the economy is being destroyed, etc.

Hosea was showing that *all* suffered: land, inhabitants, beasts, fowls, fish. Crops were planted, but they did not prosper. Also, the climate was unfavorable. Even the animals were affected—they were sickly. Fish became scarce in the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee. God was frowning on the northern kingdom. Moses had said that the Israelites would prosper if they obeyed and that they would be deprived if they disobeyed. The promises to Israel were along material lines. If the promises are applied to Christians, those more in harmony with God prosper spiritually, and conversely, those who stray suffer spiritually.

How does the “land mourn” today? Crops are poor because few want to work and till the soil. The inhabitants want to oppress others and make them do the menial labor. With less food resulting, the people suffer, and the whole economic structure breaks down.

An *organized* minority can disrupt the whole economy. For example, in a labor strike, a mere handful of men can paralyze an entire industry. Of course in the past, capitalists unmercifully oppressed workers, and if labor unions had not come into existence, conditions would still be that way. But when unprincipled men lead the labor unions, they are just as wrong as the capitalists were previously.

In summary, in Hosea's day, the people generally were suffering because of the prevalent condition of swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, and violence and because there was no

truth, mercy, or knowledge of God. The land was also affected, and so were the beasts, birds, and fish indirectly. For example, there was less food for them. Everything was neglected. Conditions were deplorable in the prophet's day.

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

Verse 4 is a *scathing* denunciation. The Revised Standard is a better translation than the King James: "Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with *you* is my contention, O priest." This verse went to the *root, or heart*, of the problem to show who was *chiefly responsible* for the dreadful conditions: the *priesthood*, the *religious* leaders. Verse 5 seems to support the Revised Standard Version, even though it is interpretive; namely, both priest and prophet would fall. However, the King James gives a good lesson too. If one criticized another in the evil society, it was the pot calling the kettle black, to use a cliché. All strata of society were guilty, and their iniquity cried out for the Assyrian conquest as a judgment.

To the extent the Law was not obeyed and upheld, the whole fabric of society deteriorated. This disobedience had a more devastating effect than isolated acts of violence. The same is true today. The liberalizing and easing of laws (such as making divorces easier to obtain and eliminating capital punishment) lower the standard and have a far-reaching destructive effect. Standards have also been lowered in the religious field, and the responsibility falls on the *leadership*, who have compromised for various unethical reasons, such as personal gain, votes, honor, and money. The *leaders* (political and religious) are the guilty ones. As they lower the standards, the people are dragged down morally. The leaders sit in comfort in their "palaces," away from the trouble, while the people suffer and go down, down, down into the ground. The leadership is responsible today, and the priests, the *religious* leadership, was responsible back in Hosea's day.

When crimes were committed, the people had to go to the priests, and the priests set the punishment and/or penalty in money and goods. The priests found that if they did not preach righteousness as much and evil flourished, more crimes were committed and then more money came in to them. Penalties were lenient, and the people were willing to pay to salve their conscience; then they went back home and resumed life as normal under the evil conditions. The priests prospered under this arrangement, but they *lowered the standard of God* in doing so. Conditions are the same today. Those in authority are responsible.

Therefore, Hosea, in his denunciation of the evil conditions that predominated back there, was saying in effect, "I have a bone to pick with you, O *priests*. As leaders, you are the *chief guilty ones*." Hosea was changing the direction of his wrath to single out the priests.

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

The Revised Standard reads, "You shall stumble by day, the prophet also shall stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother." Both priest and *false* prophet were guilty. (Hosea was probably the only prophet in that part of Israel who was faithful.) The false prophets divined at night under cover of darkness, and they failed to properly advise the people. Either they misdirected the people (such as promising peace when trouble was coming), or they did not provide any direction (such as saying, "That is a mystery you are not supposed to understand"). The prophets were supposed to give light to the stumbling people but kept them in darkness instead; proper instruction was not forthcoming. Moreover, the priests, who officiated in the daytime in a more open capacity with regard to worship and sacrifices, also went astray. Both priest and prophet failed in their respective religious roles.

“I [the LORD] will destroy your mother [Israel, as pictured by Gomer].” What destruction was Hosea alluding to? First, the Assyrians took the ten-tribe (northern) kingdom into captivity. Then, a hundred or so years later, Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon. Subsequently the land lay desolate for 70 years. In 536 BC, some of the Jews returned to Israel, and in AD 135, the Jews were driven out again and scattered among the nations. Hosea was telling the Israelites that the nation would be destroyed by Assyria and Babylon. The people were emptied out of the land of Israel.

Hosea painted dark pictures in some chapters but then at times ended with a message of hope, prophesying that at some future date, there would be reconciliation and forgiveness. Verse 5 is a dark picture.

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

The mention of a “priest” confirms the RSV translation of verse 4. The priests were supposed to teach deportment and morals, whereas prophets prophesied of the future. The priests would be cut off because they “rejected knowledge.”

**Comment:** Verse 6 is a lesson for us. If we do not want to learn something yet have the opportunity, we are held accountable. Verse 1 also decries the lack of knowledge.

**Reply:** Yes. God’s people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge on His Word, principles, laws, etc. To be self-satisfied and feel no need to go further is the Laodicean attitude.

“Thou shalt be no priest to me.” The priest was supposed to be the channel of communication with God, but God would no longer recognize that channel.

**Comment:** We are reminded of the call to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4). There was a time when ministers in Babylon were the proper channel in the sense that Babylon once was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand. But like the priests of Israel, the ministers rejected knowledge, so God has rejected them.

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

The Revised Standard reads, “The more they increased, the more they sinned against me; I [God] will change their glory into shame.” How did the priests’ glory become shame? Priests were supposed to be ministers of God, but they brought shame to the office by being drunk or disorderly or living a dissolute life. The office was supposed to be honorable, but it was not. The priests lost their esteem among the people, even though the people themselves were living in wickedness. On the one hand, they would say, “The priest is one of us. He smokes and drinks and is a regular guy,” and on the other hand, they no longer revered the priest as a man of God. The office of the priest came down to the level of ordinary society.

Ephraim sometimes represents the ten tribes. Moses prophesied that Ephraim would be tens of thousands and Manasseh thousands (Deut. 33:17). As the population increased, the priesthood increased—not only in number but also in iniquity. Therefore, God would change the priests’ glory into shame. It can also be said that the priests exchanged their glory for shame.

We are living at a time when Babylon has been cast off from favor but is not yet destroyed. The message to Laodicea is along this line. The warning is to Christians who feel they are rich, well clothed, and in need of nothing, when in fact, they are poor, naked, miserable, and in need

of eye salve. In other words, there is a spiritual parallel today that is based on conditions in the ten tribes in Hosea's day. Just as back there, present religious leaders do not see the need for correction. For example, homosexuals can marry and bring up children. This lifestyle is unnatural and obnoxious in the Lord's sight, yet many religious leaders consider acceptance of homosexuality to be a magnanimous viewpoint. Living together is also tolerated. The religious leaders have greatly lowered the standard, but instead of feeling shame, they glory in the liberty they are enjoying.

**Comment:** Verse 7 has a New Testament parallel in 1 Corinthians 5. The ecclesia in Corinth gloried in their magnanimous love, whereas they should have mourned.

**Reply:** Yes, the class felt that in showing love and forgiveness to the erring brother, they were developed in love, but it was just the opposite. The Apostle Paul said, "Put away [cast out] from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13).

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

The Revised Standard reads, "They feed on the sin of my people; they are greedy for their iniquity." Hosea was denouncing the *priests*. As the priests prospered, they got more corrupt and derelict in their duty. With material prosperity, they became more lax.

How did the priests "feed on the sin of my [God's] people"? The people gave contributions and payments for their sins, and the priests enjoyed the prosperity. The more the people sinned, the greater the material prosperity of the priests. Hosea manifested *much* courage to denounce the priests in this manner.

The priests "set their heart on their [the people's] iniquity." In other words, instead of rebuking the evil, the priests went along with the iniquity, giving mental assent.

**Comment:** As for the statement "They [the priests] eat up the sin of my people," a present-day example is that many nominal churches are preoccupied with inordinate discussions, panels, etc., that bring in worldly psychology on issues like divorce and homosexuality. The churches actually gain members by feeding on issues that should be treated abruptly with Scripture and not debated over and over again.

**Reply:** With younger people, discussing some of these subjects can put ideas into their heads that would not have been thought of otherwise. Abnormal thoughts and behavior patterns are discussed until they seem normal, and many people like such lively discussions. They prefer excitement to studying God's Word and how to make one's calling and election sure. There is a need for fellowship, but fellowship should not be the primary emphasis and a form of recreation. The real focus should be on the Word.

The antitype for the priests eating up the sins of the Israelites is the Catholic Church, which profits from people's sins. Candles are burned, and masses are said—*for money*. The priest magnanimously forgives sins in this manner. After receiving forgiveness, the sinner goes away, thinking his sin was not so bad after all. Thus he will repeat the sin again and again. From another standpoint, the priests ingratiate themselves with the people just like Eli's sons, who had special forks with special prongs to get extra and choice meat (1 Sam. 2:12-17).

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

"And it shall be like people, like priest" (RSV). The priests had come down to the level of the people. There will come a time when we should speak out just as powerfully as Hosea did. To

do so will require *great* courage and *great* conviction.

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

Hosea was saying that the priests would not prosper because of sin and disobedience. They ate but did not feel they had enough.

“They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase.” This part of verse 10 is a reference to temple harlotry (see verse 14 in the RSV). Because the harlotry was associated with religious beliefs, it was not viewed as such. And money was put in the religious coffers for prostitution services. For satisfying *natural* lusts, spiritual rewards were expected. Verse 10 shows that when Christians depart from the Lord, their senses become blind. Abnormal then appears to be normal; black appears to be white. There is no standard, whereas the standard should be the Word of God. And with the Word, one needs understanding in order to stay on course.

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

Pleasures of the flesh took the heart of the priests away from the God. “New wine” is new doctrine, that is, doctrine not of the Lord but that which is changed to accommodate the thinking of the people. Following the new doctrine took them further away from the Lord. “New wine” in the unfavorable sense, therefore, squared not with God’s Word but with the customs and illegitimate desires of the people.

“Wine” is truth, and spiritually speaking, the mixed cup of a little truth and much error has caused the problem with mystic Babylon. It is *mixed* wine or, as shown in another picture, *mixed* grain—lots of barley and a little wheat (Rev. 6:6).

**Q:** Can the “whoredom and wine and new wine” also be taken literally and thus refer to catering to the desires of flesh, which lead one away from the Lord?

**A:** Yes.

**Hosea 4:12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God.**

The Revised Standard reads, “My people inquire of a thing of wood, and their staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the harlot.” The Israelites were criticized for not inquiring of God. Instead they asked counsel of dumb idols that could not speak (Jer. 2:27). They expected to get true counsel from artifacts made by *human* hands. And harlotry was mixed in with their worship.

“Stocks” (KJV) are statues. The Israelites prayed to statues just as, for example, people do in the Catholic religion by praying to a statue of the Virgin Mary. All nations had this weakness for idols, and Israel did too. The Jews prayed to a statue, and then the priests told the people what to do, thus appearing to provide an answer to prayer.

“Their staff” gave them “oracles”; that is, *divination* was used. This statement shows that Israel practiced the heathen religions of their neighbors. In divination, people look for signs in tea leaves, palm reading, animal entrails, candle wax, etc. The *priests* “read” the signs for the people, using heathen customs.

**Hosea 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills,**



**under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.**

Incense was burned under oaks, poplars, and elms because they were good shade trees. Harlotry and adultery also took place under these trees as part of Israel's religious practices. Just as India, Rome, and other places had vestal virgins, so did Israel. Young women gave themselves over to God (supposedly), and the money they earned for prostitution supported the priesthood. In countries like Burma, these lewd practices still go on in the name of religion.

Israel's priesthood approved the practice of harlotry in the name of religion. Thus the priests were responsible for letting the house of God change into an immoral form of worship.

Idols were among the trees on the hills and mountains, and on the side were houses of ill repute. Daughters of the populace felt that before they married, their virginity should be devoted to idols. Men came unto them and paid money, which was put in the coffers of the false priests. Usually wine was imbibed before the fornication took place. Paths in the woods led to nooks and crannies where intercourse occurred. These practices actually happened in Israel, as revealed in the literal Hebrew, which even names the idols. Depending on the idol, sexual organs of the male or female were worshipped. The King James softens the vileness of the literal Hebrew. These practices were also followed by the Philistines and the Ammonites. Some countries still do these things today; for example, India venerates sexual organs.

Iniquity came to the full with heathen peoples who occupied Canaan (such as the Amorites), so Israel was told to cleanse the land and occupy it (Gen. 15:16). Instead Israel took on some of these immoral practices.

Today most Jews think they are unjustly persecuted. Moreover, they consider the New Testament to be anti-Semitic, but if it is, what about the Old Testament, which is filled with criticism of Israel's past? In Hosea's day, the standard was getting lower and lower—like today. Of this people, God said in Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." The Old Testament strongly rebukes the Jewish people, but most Jews do not go beyond the Pentateuch. And even when Jews read from the prophets, the reading is selective; that is, it is a restricted diet.

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

The statement "they sacrifice with harlots" shows that harlotry became part of the Israelites' religion. The literal Hebrew is even stronger.

The NIV reads, "I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with temple prostitutes—a people without understanding will come to ruin!" In other words, *all* would be punished! Instead of singling out just the women for rebuke, all were guilty. Without a vision, the people perish (Prov. 29:18). To be willingly ignorant is no excuse. All would go into captivity (unless, of course, they were killed first).

**Hosea 4:15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.**

Gilgal and Beth-aven were centers of heathen worship that Jeroboam had purposely set up in the ten-tribe kingdom; that is, they were places of *rival* worship, for Jeroboam did not want the people of Israel to go to Jerusalem for the holy days, such as the Day of Atonement. Therefore,

he established his own holy days, as well as his own centers of worship on the traditional days.

As brethren, we should guard against this wrong principle by purposely planning a convention on a day when another class in the same area is having their convention. It is wrong to “play politics” to keep others from attending a particular convention. The nominal Church used this wrong principle to celebrate Easter instead of calculating the Memorial on the Passover.

Beth-aven, meaning “house of wickedness,” was actually Beth-el (“house of God”). The Lord used a pun to scornfully give Beth-el another name.

**Comment:** Gilgal was associated with Dan, and Beth-aven was associated with Beth-el.

**Reply:** Just as there was a golden calf at Mount Sinai, so there were golden calves in Dan and Beth-el.

The Israelites were not to say, “The LORD liveth.” The people were *disobedient*, yet they commonly used the Lord’s name in conversation as if they were reverent and obedient. As Christians, we should guard against using the Lord’s name too commonly (for example, “The Lord bless you” over and over or being too gushy with regard to the Lord’s name). We should give *thought* as to what we wish His blessing to be upon.

Judah was warned not to incur guilt by going to Gilgal and Beth-el. By going to these rival places of worship in the northern kingdom, Judah might become indoctrinated.

Some feel that a Christian leader should purify the atmosphere and that others should listen only to him, lest they hear bad doctrine. That premise is dangerous, for who can guarantee that the one purifying the atmosphere is speaking the purest truth? In nature, if one lives in too soft an environment without any adverse conditions, the immune system is weak.

The point is that, depending on circumstances, sometimes it is good not to go to other places, and sometimes it is good to go. The people of the ten tribes were apt to reason, “It is too far to go to Jerusalem, so we will go to Dan or Beth-el instead.” That attitude was wrong and disobedient, for God had instructed them to go to *Jerusalem* and to pray towards *Jerusalem*, the appointed place. The people were not to swear, “The LORD liveth [in Dan and Beth-el].” God’s house (Temple) was in *Jerusalem*.

**Hosea 4:16** For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

Israel was likened to a “backsliding heifer.” If a heifer does not want to move, she will stand still or try to go backward while one pulls her forward. The heifer refuses to cooperate, and so did Israel in its stubbornness. This is *powerful* language. The Revised Standard reads, “Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?” No! Lambs are docile and meek, and they follow the shepherd to a pasture. Unlike the heifer that has to be pulled and dragged, the lamb willingly *follows* the shepherd wherever he goes. The NIV ends with a question: “How then can the LORD pasture them like lambs in a meadow?” God could not feed the stubborn heifers. The Israelites should have been lamblike and docile—teachable.

A stubborn heifer needs a thrashing to obey. And so Israel was reluctant to follow God’s leadings. The Apostle Paul pointed out the danger of backsliding into sin. For the Christian, the sliding is subtle and gradual to start with—it is caused by a little negligence. But sin gets a stronger and stronger hold. We are warned not to “draw back unto perdition” (Heb. 10:39). Backsliding is dangerous, for most Christians do not repent out of that condition.

Incidentally, with the media so corrupt today, it is a wonder that the religious leaders do not decry this condition. Religion and morals should be pronounced to reverse the tide. Base conditions will doom the nation to destruction.

**Hosea 4:17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.**

Ephraim is another name for the ten tribes. Ephraim was so enmeshed in sin that “Stay away!” was the warning to Judah. Judah was to have no contact with Israel based on the principle “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev. 22:11). Judgment was coming. If Hosea had tried to browbeat Israel into obedience, that tactic would not have worked. In other words, those of Israel were so set on their wayward course that it would have been impossible for Hosea to change them. Therefore, it was better to leave the ten tribes alone. Their retribution would come; their judgment was *imminent*. In their present attitude of Hosea’s day, Israel could not be reformed.

The lesson or warning to Christians would be, “Do not wallow into false doctrine in an effort to help others.” The motive may or may not be good, but one is to stay away from sinful circumstances. Matthew 15:12,14 gives a lesson along this line. When Jesus’ disciples came to him and said, “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” he responded, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

At the end of the age, the Holy Remnant will be more contrite than the Gentiles. God’s judgment will do a powerful reforming work on the hearts of these Jews, and they will be an example to others.

**Hosea 4:18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.**

This verse is obscure. Various thoughts have been given by the translators, but it is not clear. The NIV reads, “Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution; their rulers dearly love shameful ways.”

**Hosea 4:19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**

Verse 19 hints at coming trouble that would take the ten tribes captive to a foreign land. The wind would lift them up as a people and remove them from the land. They would be swept up and transported. When that would happen, they would have no priest, no king, no pillar, no ephod, etc. The Diaspora storm would come and take them off to other places. The NIV reads, “A whirlwind will sweep them away, and their sacrifices will bring them shame.”

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

Hosea addressed these words to the priests, the people, and the king—that is, to the religious and the civil leaders, as well as to the common people. “Hear ye this ... and hearken”! The prophet would have spoken with thrust and volume—and in a public place so that many could hear and, in turn, tell others. Some commentators think the Sanhedrin was being addressed rather than the house of Israel, the people. However, which one was being addressed does not really matter.

“Judgment is toward you,” or as stated in the RSV, “The judgment *pertains* to you.” This part of verse 1 is a play on words, for in exercising their judgment, the people were found wanting and guilty—priests, judges, people, and king. (Much of the Book of Hosea is a play on words, especially with regard to individuals.) Because the judges misused their prerogative of judgment, retributive judgment would come upon them. In other words, because of their misjudgment, God would judge them.

“Ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.” Both places were in the ten-tribe kingdom. Mizpah was a prominent height, or mountain, like Mount Tabor, the latter being a holy mount in the Galilee region near Nazareth. A “snare,” a type of animal trap, usually consisted of a noose, or lasso, that was concealed in the ground; the noose was triggered when an animal stepped on the mechanism. A “net” was usually spread over a hole to keep animals who fell into the hole from getting out. Both the snare and the net were *hidden* to entrap the unwary. From a spiritual standpoint, both Mizpah and Tabor were known for being religious places; hence the devout were entrapped religiously.

When Jeroboam and Rehoboam split Israel into ten- and two-tribe kingdoms, Jeroboam established religious services to correspond with the usual feast days so that the people of the ten tribes would go to his places, Beth-el and Gilgal, instead of to the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus Beth-el and Gilgal, with their golden calves, became rival centers of worship, and the people were expected to show their loyalty by attending services there rather than in Jerusalem. The two mountains of Mizpah and Tabor were astride the route down to Jerusalem. Spies were put in these strategically located mountains so that any pilgrims from the ten tribes who went down to Jerusalem were spotted and, in addition, waylaid and made objects of vengeance. The priesthood was involved in this evil, for they laid “snares” or “nets” on the two mounts, with the result that the people were spotted and then preyed upon. What depths of degradation some in the ten tribes sunk to in order to prevent the proper religion from being followed! Because of this evil strategy, the priests were guilty in the eyes of the Lord.

Those who went to Beth-el and Gilgal for religious services usually did not escape from the influence. Hence we can see, in antitype, the danger of being entrapped by an evil religious influence or atmosphere. The unwary looked upon Dan and Beth-el as reverencing God.

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

The RSV reads, “And they have made deep the pit of Shittim; but I will chastise all of them.” The “deep pit” continues the thought of “snares” and “nets.”

The “revolvers” were those of the ten-tribe kingdom. They had seceded from the two tribes, from the nation of Israel.

Altars throughout the northern kingdom were so numerous that they were likened to the furrows of a field that is being plowed. Sacrifices were offered at these altars. God’s true prophets warned about the false practices, but the people did not listen to the rebukes.

**Hosea 5:3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.**

Ephraim (Israel) was not hidden from God in that He knew all about their wickedness, even though much of it was done secretly. We are reminded of Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 8:7-12). He was told to dig a hole in the Temple wall, and when he looked in, he saw a secret room and the Sanhedrin with *heathen* idols all over the wall. While outwardly pious before the people, the

Sanhedrin was secretly and inwardly irreverent and idolatrous. Thus the Temple of Solomon was due for judgment. Incidentally, the Sanhedrin interpreted the civil law, like our Supreme Court, and the priests read and taught the religious law.

Ephraim's "whoredom" included incorporating prostitution into religious practices to raise revenue. The people went under the shade of trees, thinking they were having intercourse in secret, but God said, "I know everything that is going on. All your acts are open before me."

**Hosea 5:4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.**

The RSV reads, "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of harlotry is within them, and they know not the LORD." The people, especially the leaders, were getting deeper and deeper into sin. As they became hardened in sin, they strayed further and further from God.

The people would not repent because the sin was so deeply ingrained. Preferring evil to good, they were satisfied in sin and happy in their delusion. It was contentment *without* godliness. Ostensibly they worshipped God, but so evil were their practices that they were far from Him and did not know Him.

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

"The pride of Israel doth testify to his [the Israelites'] face." The "pride of Israel" was their *arrogance and hard-heartedness*, which prevented them from breaking down and repenting. They became hardened in sin, stiff-necked, and arrogant, doing what they wanted and forgetting God. This arrogant attitude predominated, as manifested in their worship of heathen religions and idols and in the malpractices of their priesthood. If the nation would just consider, listen, and look, they would know Hosea was right. Evidence of their guilt was all around.

Israel and Ephraim both represent the ten tribes here. "Ephraim" is used because of the prophecy that he would be fruitful (numerous). Of the ten tribes in the northern kingdom, the Ephraimites far outnumbered all of the other tribes. Similarly in the two-tribe kingdom, Judah was much more populous than Benjamin. In antitype, "Ephraim" pictures Catholicism, which far outnumbers "Judah," or Protestantism. As the apostate Church, Catholicism went astray first, followed by Protestantism later.

Hosea addressed the ten tribes in the name of "Ephraim," the most numerous tribe, but lest the other nine tribes think they were excluded from judgment, the prophet also used the term "Israel." Then Hosea included Judah, for the two tribes would fall later. *All* were guilty, and the various judgments were just a matter of time. Hosea had been emphasizing the evil of the ten tribes, but little by little, he started to include Judah in the condemnation. Verse 5 is prophetic.

In Hosea 4:15, the prophet said, "Let not Judah offend." Here he said, "Judah also shall fall with them." Thus there was a time lapse between the warning and now the statement of judgment to come.

Hosea was laying down certain principles of judgment that would be used by the other minor prophets and in the New Testament. For the most part, he was moralistically rebuking the corruption of *natural* Israel. Here and there a spiritual application was pertinent, but the emphasis was primarily on the natural.

**Hosea 5:6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they**

**shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.**

“They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD” with their sacrifices, but God would not accept them. Verse 6 applied mostly to the ten tribes but also to Judah in a lesser sense.

**Hosea 5:7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.**

“They have begotten strange children.” The inhabitants of the ten tribes intermarried with the surrounding heathen peoples, so the children, born of mixed marriages, were estranged, separated, and not recognized. Children who were the product of a wholly Israelitish marriage would have received blessings that were now forfeited.

“Now shall a month devour them with their portions”; that is, *within a month*, judgment would come. Verse 7 is a play on words. Just as it was the custom of the Israelites to go up at the time of the new moon (every month) and offer “their portions [sacrifices]”—which God did not appreciate because the sacrifices were blemished and the people’s lives did not conform to the sacrifices—so “a month [a new moon—RSV]” would mark the time of judgment. Israel reaped condemnation from the Lord a month from the time Hosea delivered this message. In other words, a *time limit* was set. (Through successive murders, four kings died in the year preceding the captivity of the ten tribes. Then came a period of anarchy just before the captivity.)

Every new moon, that is, every month, there was a festival, and certain sacrifices were offered. The word “portions” (plural) refers to the part of the animal that was offered to the Lord, the part that the priest got, and what the person who brought the offering kept. The prize portion—the breast and the shoulder—went to God and to the priest, and the other portion was eaten by the offerer. The festival was like a social event with a meal that included worship. Through these monthly get-togethers, the people kept their religious worship active and their reverence for the Lord alive. At least that was the intent of the Law, if properly adhered to.

The prophesied judgment came in the days of Hezekiah, which was toward the *end* of Hosea’s ministry. At the time of the ten-tribe captivity, Hezekiah was the king of Judah, and Hoshea was the king of Israel (2 Kings 17:6; 18:1).

**Hosea 5:8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.**

The cornet was to be blown in Gibeah and the trumpet in Ramah, and an alarm was to be sounded at Beth-aven. As explained earlier, Beth-el and Beth-aven were the same place, with “Beth-aven” being a play on words. Beth-el means “house of God,” and Beth-aven signifies “house of idols” or “house of iniquity.” (Similarly, “Babylon” pertains to God, yet it also refers to confusion.)

“After thee, O Benjamin” means “behind thee, O Benjamin.” The trumpet of alarm was blown, and the next thing the people knew, the enemy was behind them. Thus Hosea was saying that the warning would be too late. The trumpets were sounded to call the people to prepare for battle, but the call came too late because the enemy had already surrounded them. Ephraim would be made desolate (verse 9).

King Saul’s headquarters were in Gibeah, even though he was a Benjamite, and Gibeah subsequently became part of the ten tribes. The reference to Benjamin in verse 8 indicates that Israel’s wickedness was much like that of Benjamin years earlier when a concubine was so horribly abused (Judges 19-21). Just as that evil demanded retribution, so did Israel’s current

situation. *Violence would come!* Incidentally, after the captivity of the ten tribes, Samaria was repopulated with “Samaritans,” an alien people who espoused the Hebrew religion.

Since Beth-el, Gibeah, and Ramah were on the border of Benjamin, verse 8 also suggests that the judgment against the ten tribes was moving southward to the two tribes. Benjamin was on the north side of Judah, so the evil influence was filtering down. In other words, “Your judgment will be next, Benjamin.”

**Hosea 5:9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.**

“Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke,” that is, when the Assyrians carried away the ten tribes into captivity. These prophecies of doom were known but were not given much credence. Notice that when the ten tribes were taken into captivity, the land was to be left *desolate*. The two tribes were not to move in and appropriate the land; however, they disobeyed and occupied the land.

**Hosea 5:10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.**

Under the Law, there was a strict penalty against removing boundary lines (Deut. 19:14; 27:17). The people were forbidden to fraudulently enlarge their property holdings by stealing one another’s land. God originally made certain boundaries for the nation, and these were to be maintained. The penalty also applied to individual property lines and boundaries. The “bounds” were not to be altered dishonestly in any way.

Judah was mentioned in verse 10 because the tendency was to move into the territory of the ten tribes and occupy the land following the Assyrian captivity. Instead Judah should have allowed the land to lie desolate until the ten tribes returned. The God-given territory was to be respected and left alone—even though the ten tribes were being punished. By removing the boundaries, Judah capitalized on the misfortune of their *brethren*. This violation was the “last straw,” as it were, and God’s wrath would be poured out “like water” on the two tribes for their disobedience. Because of this infraction, the wrath that was stored up would later break forth like a flood; that is, the same fate would befall Judah at the due time.

In the Holocaust, Jews were forced out of their homes, and Gentiles had no qualms in appropriating their houses and lands. Now the second or third generation has the property, and the Gentiles look back on history with no shame. The land of Christians was similarly appropriated in the Dark Ages. The principle was the same here with Judah. When the ten tribes were taken captive, Judah took advantage of and profited from the situation.

**Hosea 5:11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.**

Possibly verse 11 means that a local commandment—another code of ethics that was contrary to God’s law—was practiced in Hosea’s day. Walking after this *false* set of religious principles, or rules, which was different from the ones given to Moses at Sinai, would bring judgment on the ten tribes. (In antitype, the Catholic Church has its own set of commandments, the canon of the church, which is often contrary to Scripture.) True prophets warned against the evil and disobedience, but the people continued to willfully walk “after the [wrong] commandment.”

**Hosea 5:12 Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.**

The people were willingly oblivious to what was right and were so absorbed in evil practices that when the judgment was coming, they did not realize it was a punishment—at least not until the trouble hit them strongly and personally. Hence the trouble seemed to hit them overnight.

Therefore, God would “be unto Ephraim as a moth.” With a moth, the damage is not apparent for some time. The eggs are laid in secret, and the larvae eat the fabric unobservedly. With the destruction being *secret* and *within*, there is surprise when the holes in the fabric are discovered. The holes seem to suddenly appear, whereas the destruction has been going on for a long time. Stated another way, the condition exists long before the holes are visible.

God would “be unto ... the house of Judah as rottenness.” The same is true of “rottenness.” It comes about gradually, little by little, but the revelation of the rot is *sudden*. Usually the rottenness begins *interiorly*, for the corruption is *secret* and *within*. Then, at some point, the rottenness becomes manifest. Although the rottenness with Judah was slower than the moth with Ephraim, it was a *stored-up* condition in both cases.

The thoughts in the two preceding paragraphs are in harmony with the previous chapter, where the openness of the condition was manifested when a brothel was incorporated into religious worship without twinges of conscience. The encroachment of sin was so gradual that the people did not oppose it as they would have done had the enormity of sin occurred suddenly in the beginning, when they were closer to the Lord. Now the sin was so entrenched that it could not be corrected except by divine help.

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

“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound.” According to the Law, if Israel was obedient, the nation had temporal prosperity: good health, abundant crops, productive livestock, success in warfare, etc. Disobedience brought the opposite: temporal deprivation.

The “sickness” had begun to manifest itself in the nation. The priesthood was corrupt, kings gave wrong judgments, thievery abounded, false balances were rampant, battles were being lost, etc. When those of Ephraim saw that conditions were deteriorating and corruption was great, instead of going to the Lord, they looked to King Jareb of Assyria for help commercially, socially, and religiously. Ephraim thought this alliance would save them and bring a return of prosperity, but it did not. The problem was their departure from the Lord. Assyria was the chief world empire at the time.

Hosea 4:14 said that God would punish the ten tribes for their sins. Ephraim was falling apart. The same thing is happening to the United States, but at present, the government is not connected with religious worship. When religion does become a factor with the church-state arrangement, the people’s eyes will be opened to see the true condition of this nation. That will be the point of no return except by divine help. In summary, then, Ephraim looked to Assyria for help, and God was about to give the ten tribes into Assyrian captivity.

The same principle was illustrated when, for a while, Judah joined forces with the ten tribes. The children of Jehoshaphat and Ahab intermarried, thinking that an “ecumenical movement” would help, that it was time to get together and end the dissension and no longer be separated brethren. Politically, they joined forces to fight the common enemy, the Assyrian. There is a striking analogy. In the near future, Judah and Israel (picturing Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively) will think that both will be strengthened by fighting the common enemy, the antitypical Assyrian, together. However, the union will fail. The city will become divided; the three-part alliance (beast, dragon, and false prophet) will come apart.



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

God would be a lion to Ephraim and a young lion to Judah. When a lion is devouring its prey, who would dare to take the meat out of its mouth? A feeding lion is *very ferocious*.

Despite the ferocity of a lion or any other wild animal that threatened the flock, a shepherd was required to defend the sheep. He had to show his fearlessness by risking his own life. And to prove he was a good shepherd, he could not just report a missing sheep but had to produce a part of the sheep to prove he had tried to defend it against the attacking animal. For this reason, Jesus said, “A good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11 paraphrase). Jesus was referring to more than just his dying on the Cross. He meant that a true shepherd will defend the Lord’s people against errors of practice, doctrine, or judgment and, if necessary, will risk his own reputation in doing so. A false shepherd, on the other hand, will refrain from defending the Lord’s people if such a defense would jeopardize his eldership. Or, being asleep, a false shepherd might be too lazy to even see the danger and the need to defend.

Here in verse 14, Jehovah was the lion. Who would dare to take away the prey (Ephraim and Judah) from Him? God would “tear and ... take away, and none shall rescue” Ephraim and Judah.

Incidentally, David killed a lion with his bare hands when defending the sheep (1 Sam. 17:34,35). He was large in stature, not the little, curly-headed lad that artists draw. Saul was the tallest man in Israel. Therefore, the fact that Saul offered David his armor to fight Goliath proves that David was also tall.

What is the distinction between a lion and a young lion? Again there is a play on words. Hosea is one of the most unusual books of the Bible because it contains so many puns. The prophet spoke of a “young lion” here in verse 14. Genesis 49:9 mentions an “old lion”: “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?” A young lion is bold in connection with the prey. However, when an old lion retreats to his den—and especially if he takes meat—no one would dare to pursue him in there. This distinction points up human characteristics. On the one hand, a young person is brave in battle; he is not worried about dying and does not count the cost. On the other hand, an older person is more sober; he thinks about his responsibilities toward his wife and baby, for example. The idealism and enthusiasm of youth lead to confidence and strength. And so it is with lions. A young lion is bold and fearless in pursuing prey; he will go right into the flock of sheep where the shepherd is. The older lion is more cautious.

There is a play on words with regard to Judah’s being a “lion’s whelp.” The original prophecy spoke of good things for Judah, but Hosea was now prophesying trouble. The original prophecy was that Judah would be like the lion’s whelp and be prominent among the tribes, not only giving birth to Messiah but also being the founder of the Kingdom. Hosea took these same words of honor—words in which Judah had taken pride and satisfaction—and showed that they would boomerang. Instead of Judah’s being the lion’s whelp, God would be the lion’s whelp to Judah. Similar in principle is the Catholic Church’s boast that the gates of hell will not prevail against it, for there will be a *reversal*, and the gates of hell *will prevail* against that system. The former boastful words will have to be swallowed back.

By likening Himself to a lion, God meant that judgment would come *through Assyria*. Visually, it appeared that Assyria was rendering punishment, but God said *He* was doing it as a necessary lesson until the ten tribes came to their senses.

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

The NIV reads, “Then I [God] will go back to my place.” In other words, “Who shall rouse up the old lion when he returns to his den?” God would return to His place until Ephraim and Judah acknowledged their offense and sought His face. He would abandon Ephraim in captivity and not help or rescue them. In captivity, Ephraim could not get to the Temple.

“In their affliction they will seek me early.” When, in their misery, Ephraim and Judah admit their guilt, they will earnestly seek God’s face. That will not happen until Jacob’s Trouble, still future. When those of the Holy Remnant, being of both kingdoms, admit their guilt in Jacob’s Trouble and seek God, He will rescue them.

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

Verses 1-3, a *positive, comforting* message, are the prophetic sentiments of a *faith* element, yet to be fulfilled. The sentiments in natural Israel will be, “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and ... hath smitten [by scattering us in our captivities, especially in the Diaspora].” But “he [God] will heal us [the faith element in natural Israel] ... and ... bind us up.”

Verses 1-3 are like a voice out of nowhere, indicating that at a point far distant from Hosea’s day, Israel (the Holy Remnant) will repent, and the ten-tribe kingdom will be restored to favor with God.

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

“After two days [the fifth and sixth thousand-year days] will he revive us: in the third day [the seventh thousand-year day, the Millennium] he will raise us up.” These are thousand-year days. At Jesus’ First Advent, 4,128 years had elapsed since Adam; that is, it was the fifth “day.” The year 1872 completed the 6,000 years, and we are now in the seventh (or third) “day.”

Verse 2 also expresses the hope of the Church class. From their standpoint, the “tearing apart” of verse 1 would apply in a favorable sense. The Church is consecrated to suffering—if they suffer with Christ, they will reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12). Just as Jesus was bruised and humbled under God’s mighty hand so that he could be exalted, so it is with the Church. The suffering is designed to develop them for future exaltation. With natural Israel, however, the smiting was for *wrongdoing*, for going astray. But in due time, God will forgive them and reinstate them as His special representatives. Thus the two different Israels (natural and spiritual) are intertwined in verses 1-3. The first verse applies more to natural Israel, and the second verse applies more to spiritual Israel.

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

“His [God’s] going forth is prepared [as sure] as the morning.” Every morning the sun comes up at a definite, prearranged time; that is, God has a plan, and there are definite chronological features to that plan. In fact, God’s plan is just as accurate and dependable as the solar clock, which is on time every day. The sun is God’s clock. Just as the sun comes up with regularity each morning, so the Millennial morning *would come—and on time!* The raising up would come after “two days,” in the “third day” (verse 2).

We are already in the third day, but it is still dark because the sun has not yet risen over the horizon. At *dawn*, when the *sun comes up*, the world will know that the Lord is present and establishing his Kingdom.

Spiritually speaking, the time of the early, or “former,” rain was the First Advent, during the apostles’ day. When the apostles were here, there was plenty of light, but after they fell asleep, it became dark little by little. In time came the period known as the *Dark Ages*, and eventually, in the Harvest period at the end of the age, came the time of the “latter” rain. Today we are living in the period of the latter rain, when information on the Bible is available as never before except for the apostles’ day.

With natural Israel, the nation is receiving the “latter” rain in our day. After a long dispersion, favor is returning in a limited sense. The nation has been reestablished with its own elected rulers. Even the restoration of literal rain has begun following a long period of drought.

With natural Israel, the “former rain” refers to their earlier period of favor. Israel had prophets, the Law, the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, etc. The early rain ended with the Diaspora, the great gulf fixed between the Jews and God, as shown in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Now the dry bones (Ezekiel 37) are beginning to come together. Sinews (organizations) are attached to the bones, and flesh has even appeared on the body state of Israel. However, from God’s standpoint, the breath of life has not yet entered Israel. Not until Jacob’s Trouble will that happen—when the nation of Israel will stand on its feet in a real way. When God fights for Israel as He did in days of old, that will be like an awakening from the dead (Zech. 14:3). There will be a *mighty* shaking and a resurrection, as it were, both figuratively and literally (the Ancient Worthies).

Part of verse 3 in the NIV reads, “As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.” This rendering suggests a *time* cycle—like a plan of the ages. Just as the sun sets, there follows a period of darkness until morning, and then morning comes, so after 2,000 years, the Sun of Righteousness will arise at dawn. It is a time cycle with the sun and the rains.

The early, or former, rain came at the First Advent. Jesus died as a sin offering to establish the basis of redemption and restoration. The Ransom at the First Advent had to precede restitution, and once the Ransom was paid, restitution (the fruits of Jesus’ sacrifice) must follow at the Second Advent.

In the natural picture, the early rain was the winter rain, which occurred in the fall of the year. The ground was plowed so that the rain would enter the soil. Seed was planted in the spring with the latter, or spring, rain.

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

Verse 4 is a break in thought. Ephraim (the ten-tribe kingdom, or Catholicism) and Judah (the two-tribe kingdom, or Protestantism) are contrasted. Their “goodness” disappeared like the morning dew. The morning cloud (fog) or dew lasts but a short time before the sun burns it away.

The Lord did much for Ephraim and Judah, but they did not heed the lesson. “What [more] shall I do unto thee?” Their initial favorable beginning deteriorated to such an extent that they had to go into captivity and Diaspora, and up to that time, they were fickle. Their love was like the morning mist and the early dew that disappears. They honored God with their lips, but their honor was not from the heart.

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

God “hewed” Israel and Judah—He mowed or cut them down—“by the prophets.” The prophets issued stern warnings, speaking the words God gave them, but Israel and Judah ignored the warnings. Verse 5 helps us to see how the Church can *orally* give a judgment message; no carnal weapons are needed. The prophets were the Lord’s mouthpieces. When the Israelites did not repent, judgments came on them.

God’s “judgments are as the light that goeth forth”; that is, His judgments are manifested as clear as day. When the Lord exposed the wickedness through the prophets, the people could not deny their unfaithfulness. The necessity for retribution was obvious, and when it came, it woke up the people as to their sad condition.

Verse 5 is like saying to the Holy Remnant that the hopeless condition both the ten- and the two-tribe kingdoms were in necessitated the Lord’s turning His face from Israel for a long period of time so that they would get the lesson. In the past, through the prophets, God warned of the sinful condition, but Ephraim and Judah turned a deaf ear to the need for repentance. God “cut ... [them] in pieces with the prophets” (NIV). It is as if at this end of the age, God is explaining about the warnings given to the ten- and the two-tribe kingdoms before they got so corrupt, and then, when they were in an unfit condition, what the necessary steps of repentance were. Because the warnings were ignored, judgment was necessary. Hewing the nation by the mouth of the prophets sounds like Jeremiah’s ministry.

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

“I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.” God had ordained the animal sacrifices, so there was nothing wrong with them *per se*, but as the Prophet Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). Obedience is required and not empty professions. To offer animals and money *alone*, without heart obedience, is displeasing to God. The animal sacrifices were offered without spirit, and the Israelites even offered sick animals. Perfunctory sacrifice without the right spirit is an abomination to God. Spiritually speaking, we, too, can be guilty of this. Everything has been dedicated to the Lord, but of course we use some of our time and money to provide the necessities of life. However, we should guard against giving the Lord the “sickly” portion of our life. We should be zealous to give *of our best* to the Lord, by rendering service that is as effectual as possible.

On the surface, mercy seems to have nothing to do with animal sacrifice. For the Israelites, sacrifice involved the giving up of their substance to the Lord. It is relatively easy to just make a temporal or “monetary” donation, but “mercy” referred to their love for the Lord. Their *hearts* should have been involved in the sacrifice, for God was to be worshipped in *spirit*, as well as in the letter of the Law. Moreover, dealings with neighbors and family should be based on love and consideration. Those who want mercy from God must be merciful to others and not carry a grudge. As Christians, we must constantly examine our hearts lest we be guilty of natural Israel’s sins.

The “knowledge of God” is contrasted with burnt offerings. For instance, in the Roman Catholic Church, the Mass is considered effective for forgiveness. Some communicants will go from midnight Mass to a tavern across the street, or vice versa. They pay money to light candles and use prayer beads. Repetitious prayers are said to various saints in order to get indulgences. Everything is *mechanical*. Sacrifice is involved in that Catholics take time out to go to church, but generally speaking, their attendance is only a “form of godliness” that does not

affect their lives and lead to true repentance (2 Tim. 3:5). It is more important to have a knowledge of truth and to live by it. Therefore, mercy and knowledge are superior to sacrifice.

**Comment:** Isaiah 1:11-15 is similar to verse 6 here in Hosea. The Israelites were sacrificing to the Lord, but He had no pleasure in the sacrifices. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.”

**Reply:** And Isaiah 1:6 says the people were sick “from the sole of the foot even unto the head,” and they were full of “putrifying sores.” Nevertheless, though their sins were “as scarlet,” God invited them to come and reason together with Him (Isa. 1:18). God desired mercy and not sacrifice *merely*.

In reading Isaiah 1:10-17, many Christians have felt that the Law is dead and gone and that grace in Christ is all that matters now. But the Old Testament is to be studied and its principles imbibed. We are not to concentrate solely on the New Testament and the Christ life, to the exclusion of prophecy, chronology, etc. We should be wary of joining a new arrangement, and we should weigh the long-term effects. Many brethren are currently being misled because they feel a lack along a certain line, but they enter a worse condition. They will get love, love, love, and not the Old Testament and the principles of justice. “The end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5). However, we cannot get *God's* love in our heart without considering the *whole* Word. The Sermon on the Mount and 1 Corinthians 13 are the ideals, but we cannot attain to them without the whole Word. Concentrating only on the Christ life is very deceptive.

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

“But they like Adam [see KJV margin and the NIV] have transgressed the covenant.” The Law Covenant was made with Israel at Mount Sinai, and Adam had a covenant in the Garden of Eden. The Israelites transgressed their original covenant just as Adam had done years earlier. And both Catholics and Protestants have transgressed the Grace Covenant by forsaking their first love and going and marrying the world.

Adam was made perfect and given nice surroundings, food, and the comforts of life, and he was promised life for obedience, yet he fell into sin and reaped death. Israel was treated similarly by God, and Israel similarly sinned. With both Adam and Israel, there was *willful* transgression. Both were unfaithful. Adam's love for Eve was inordinate, and the ten tribes thought more of the fleshly desires than of God despite the prophets' warnings. The prophets also told of penalties to come, but because the penalties were delayed, the people did not give credence to the warnings.

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

“Gilead is a city of ... iniquity, and is polluted with blood.” Gilead was singled out because it was notorious as time went on for idolatrous worship and for waylaying any pilgrims (from mounts Tabor and Mizpah) who tried to return to Jerusalem to worship.

In addition, much earlier, when Jacob left Laban way up north near Haran, Laban chased and overtook him. They made a covenant in Gilead, thus marking it as a holy spot. Later the idolatry of the ten tribes desecrated this spot. Hence Gilead was a center of corruption.

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

The RSV reads, “As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the *priests* are banded together; they murder on the way to Shechem, yea, they commit villainy.” What a *strong* condemnation of the *priests*! Gangs of priests lay in wait for even one man who was trying to get down to Jerusalem to worship properly in the old paths. They were guilty of *premeditated* murder and robbery.

Gilead was on the east side of the Jordan River, and Shechem was the chief city on the west side. The priests watched for travelers going from Shechem to Jerusalem and from Gilead to Jerusalem.

“The company of priests murder in the way by consent.” The phrase “by consent” means the priests were in agreement regarding their evil ways. We are reminded of how the priests *premeditated* and planned Jesus’ murder. He was apprehended at night and rushed through a mock trial to be crucified the next day.

The priests also oppressed widows (by devouring their estates) and orphans. Like robbers, they capitalized on the misfortunes of others, especially in times of bereavement, and showed no mercy.

“They commit lewdness [villainy, shameful crimes—KJV margin].” The priests did monstrous things. In the Lord’s sight, these premeditated sins were far more to be condemned than a slipup on a sacrifice or two, for they involved principles and character. The priests were lax on the *weightier* matters of the Law.

When people were branded as heretics in the Dark Ages, the Roman Catholic Church acquired their possessions. Sometimes the possessions were such a temptation that the church looked for excuses to seize them. They wanted to accuse rich landowners as heretics.

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

Again prostitution was mentioned. Morals are just as low today.

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

The NIV reads, “Also for you, Judah, a harvest [of punishment and judgment] is appointed.” The word “also” proves this harvest would be unfavorable, for it tied in Judah with Israel’s (Ephraim’s) condemnation. It would be a harvest of tares, or the grapes of wrath, as it were. Judah’s turn for judgment was next.

The harvest was set for Judah when God “returned the captivity” of His people. First, the ten tribes were taken captive. Many years later Judah was also taken captive, in the days of Zedekiah in 606 BC. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed at that time, and Judah shared Israel’s earlier fate. Then both were in captivity, and the land lay desolate for 70 years. The thought is, “When I [God] return to take Judah captive as I previously took Israel captive.” As soon as Israel was taken into captivity, Judah occupied the farmlands of the ten tribes. The Lord

condemned this usurpation of property. The people of Judah should have bemoaned what happened to their brethren and learned a lesson instead of trying to profit from their judgment. Therefore, God was saying, "I have already taken Israel away. Now I am coming back [returning] to take you captive, Judah, because you are really no better than they are." Judah felt superior when the ten tribes were taken captive, but they were not. Protestantism acted similarly in the Reformation when Catholicism was condemned. Generally speaking, Protestantism was more godly because of using the Bible, but it deteriorated after leaders such as Luther died. The Protestant denominations were overcome by "flatteries" (Dan. 11:32,34).

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

"When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered." In the antitype, this statement pertains to mystic Babylon. "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed" (Jer. 51:9). The Lord warned nominal spiritual Israel of her responsibilities and waywardness. The nominal system was given opportunity to repent but did not (Rev. 2:21). God will restore natural Israel, however, but not mystic Babylon.

In the context of verse 1, Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria are synonymous. How was Israel's iniquity discovered when God would have healed the ten tribes? God *revealed* the sins to Israel through the Prophet Hosea, but instead of repenting, the inhabitants kept right on with their misdeeds. It is one thing to sin in ignorance, but it is another thing to sin willfully, as Israel did after Hosea revealed the sins. The refusal of the ten tribes to repent showed the depth of the iniquity. Israel was *hardened* in its evil course. Any right-thinking person would have realized Israel's deplorable condition at that point.

Verse 1 shows that the Samaritans were not just brought in after Israel was taken captive, for there was an influx even earlier. Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes, just as Jerusalem was the capital of Judah. In addition, Samaria was a territory or province.

"The thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without." Two thoughts are in counterpoint in this play on words: (1) "in" and "out," and (2) singular ("the thief") and plural ("the troop of robbers"). In other words, the contrast was a single thief within versus a group of robbers without. Of course a "thief" is a "robber," but robbers are brazenly open in their thievery, whereas a thief works quietly and secretly. Thus two types of theft were being contrasted. The brazen robbers without were the people, the public. Conditions were so bad that everywhere one looked, robbery, pillage, and violence were taking place. The whole populace was corrupt with bands of robbers operating. The quiet, surreptitious thief was also at work. The real contrast was between *public sin* and *secret sin*. The play on words expands the thought of "robbery"; for example, a person's name and character can be stolen, as well as his money and other things. *Public sin* was being contrasted with *individual sin*. Everybody was involved in sin.

The NIV correctly starts verse 1 with part of Hosea 6:11. "Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people, whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed."

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

"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness." The people did not care; they did not weigh or consider the consequences.

“Their own doings have beset them about.” The people were entrapped in their evil works. Their sins were so flagrant and open that they could not be denied. The people were hardened in their sins to the extent that they could not retrace their steps without severe judgments.

“They are before my [God’s] face.” The people’s sins were open before the Lord. Like the sins of Sodom and Gomorrha, Ephraim’s sins were so manifest that they intruded themselves into God’s “face”—He had to notice. The sins were mounting up, requiring judgment.

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

The people of Israel made “the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.” The ruling faction of Israel was wicked, as well as the common people. King, princes, and people were all astray. With the top ones being wicked themselves, they liked the prevailing sinful conditions. They felt secure in the evil and did not have to worry about a reform movement.

Earlier Hosea scathingly denounced royalty and the princes. Now he was criticizing the people, telling them that they were strengthening the hands of their leaders. Instead of the people following the course of corrupt leaders, it was the other way around. The masses were so corrupt that they actually encouraged the king into wickedness. All were content with the sinful conditions. The populace liked the liberty to sin. Both the leadership (ecclesiastical and civil) and the populace were responsible in a singular and a collective role. The leadership furthered and hastened the corrupt conditions. Romans 1:32 gives the principle: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” The people not only committed the sins but had pleasure in others who sinned. The spiritual lesson would be that the god of this world, “king” Satan, and the demons, the fallen angels, the “princes,” are happy that they have the public in their control.

The leadership of the ten tribes in their closing days was as follows: Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea. The last king of the ten tribes had the same name as the prophet (Hoshea and Hosea, respectively), and their careers ended about the same time. Pekahiah and Pekah were both slain in intrigue.

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

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

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

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

Verses 4, 6, and 7 are a picture of an oven and how bread is made. Leaven is added in the beginning, and then later the bread is kneaded. The kneading helps to distribute the leaven. In fact, the dough is kept warm so that the leaven will ferment, and as the leaven ferments, it becomes further distributed. These steps take place before the bread is baked in the oven.

The King James and some of the other translations are confused, but the Revised Standard is good for verse 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.” The clause “whose baker



ceases to stir the fire” refers to the following practice. In ancient days, the fire was prepared, and the oven was kept heated. When the bread was put into the oven, the fire was raised to the proper temperature. (Of course the bread was kneaded and leavened before it was put into the oven.) A fire was “stoked” (continually fed) so that it would keep burning until morning. A fire was “banked” so that it would not burn too much fuel. Later, when one wanted the fire to burn hot, he shook out the dead ashes, thus letting in more air, and the fire got going again.

Here in verse 4, the baker ceased from stirring the fire so that it would not burn too much until the bread had been kneaded and was leavened and was ready to go into the oven. In that interim waiting period, he ceased to excite the fire.

Verse 6 shows that the oven represented the heart, or feelings, of the people. The people were burning with two things: (1) desire, or passion, as adulterers and (2) violence. The oven was related to both adultery and violence. For example, a person with a “fiery” temper loses control and thus might commit murder. The oven, representing the condition of the people, was always heated. In other words, these evil desires existed, and they could be flamed higher by certain conditions.

In the type, the “baker” was Satan. “Kneading the dough” pictures his taking advantage of people in their weaknesses. First, he introduces the “leaven” (evil and sinful thoughts and desires). Next he kneads (excites and encourages) the sinful desires, and then he just leaves them alone, for sin will do the rest. The baker (Satan) gets the sins started, and then the sins feed themselves. The people are in *bondage* to sin.

Satan is a coward—he takes advantage of people who cannot see him. He excites the people and gets them in his clutches (such as a drug addict); they are hopelessly ensnared unless One more powerful sets them free. God’s power can break the yoke of sin. Satan sets the stage, introduces the leaven, and then watches as the sinful desire permeates the individual. When the time is right, the Adversary introduces the circumstances to produce the sin. He adds the leaven and then later on puts the bread in the oven. In the meantime, there is a “rest” period during which he more or less leaves the individual alone.

Jesus is an example. Satan waited for the right circumstance to tempt him. It was after Jesus had hungered *for 40 days* that Satan tempted him to turn the stones into bread. Satan could have tempted Jesus sooner, but he waited until he thought Jesus was too weak to resist.

With regard to Christianity, Satan, the thief (verse 1), came in as an angel of light. He thus introduced himself into the nominal people of God in the beginning. He introduced error and then let fallen human nature take its course.

The people’s hearts were like an oven. With the exception of the Christian, who has Jesus as his Savior and Ransomer, mankind is fallen and “shapen in iniquity,” having basic animal desires, as well as desires for prominence, money, position, health, etc. (Psa. 51:5). Thus, in the highest spiritual sense, the thief coming in was Satan himself entering the nominal professed people of God, the nominal Church. Only in response to God’s grace can one *individually* escape this situation.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). One must take a stand early in order to not become contaminated. Going along with the crowd makes it increasingly difficult to extricate oneself, and before long extrication becomes impossible. An analogy is being in a smoke-filled room. The longer one stays in that room, the more the smoke permeates the clothing and even gets into the bloodstream. In the Dark Ages, before the Reformation, very few individuals could survive, compared with the nominal mass.

Sin is contagious. When basic human desires are catered to, and when the leadership teaches along that line, sin becomes more and more deeply ingrained. A Catholic can willfully sin and then enter the Confessional and be absolved by the priest, fully intending to commit the sin over and over in the future. Roman Catholicism is conducive to promoting loose living.

The heart is like an oven in that the flesh is weak. One who gets into a situation that promotes libertine ways is a sitting duck. The Holy Spirit has given a powerful picture here. The Adversary can economize his efforts. Knowing when the damage is done, he can go on to the next victim. We must beware of the ensnarements of evil.

Verse 5 states that the princes made the king “sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.” This king is the same as that mentioned in verse 3—one of the kings of Ephraim. “In the [king’s coronation] day,” a big party was held. Instead of welcoming the king and looking for a change and reform and treating the office with dignity, the “princes” (the other politicians) made sure the same evil conditions would continue. Evidently, the king was weak in character, but the princes encouraged his weakness so that he became hardened in sin. The princes had an orgy on the king’s coronation day and made him feverish with wine, that is, *drunk*. As a result, the king “stretched out his hand with scorners [the princes].” We are reminded of Herodias and Salome. At the right moment, Herodias had Salome dance. Under the influence of wine at his birthday feast, Herod was so impressed that he made a rash public promise in front of the other nobles. Likewise, the “princes” in Hosea’s day got the king to make some rash public statement or commitment with them. Being weak and entrapped, the king went along with their schemes. Later on, the king’s character became like that of the people. As a result, he was happy with the sinful condition of the public.

Let us consider verse 6 again. “They have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.” The heart was burning like an oven *day and night*, but in the daytime, it burned with a *vehement* flame because the people dwelled on evil things at night and committed the actual sins in the daytime. The emphasis is on the spiritual sickness that existed in Israel in Hosea’s day. The people were all like an oven in that they were in harmony with the evil. Satan had a peaceful night’s sleep because the people were already fully under his control.

Verse 7 reads, “They [the people] are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me [God].” The judges and kings were all fallen in character. The duty and honor of the office were lost sight of. Some kings were even murdered. The people, being hardened in sin, had a lot of culpability.

The “judges” can be considered two ways: (1) Israel’s corrupt judges or (2) the righteous judges God raised up. If they were Israel’s judges, the “devouring” means that they became wholly corrupt. If the thought is that righteous judges were raised up, the “devouring” indicates that their warnings and ministries were to no avail.

From another standpoint, Jeroboam was the baker who set the leaven in the dough so that, in time, the whole loaf became leavened. At the end of the ten-tribe kingdom, the loaf was fully leavened, for evil contaminated the whole kingdom from top to bottom. Heathen religious practices brought in fornication and idolatry, and crime was rampant, so that the evil cried out for judgment. The people were compared to an oven heated with illicit desires of every kind. A final severe judgment was due for the ten tribes.

Satan moved King Jeroboam to introduce leaven into religious practices just as later he used Constantine to introduce leaven into the Christian Church. Jeroboam’s “wisdom” was demoniac in setting up rival places of worship with golden calves in Dan and Beth-el to ostensibly worship Jehovah.

We are to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free”; that is, we are to listen to *Jesus* and not necessarily to human leadership (Gal. 5:1). We should always compare what leadership says with God’s Word and obey only what is scriptural. We should not be a convention “social butterfly”—going to many, many conventions and not having the responsibility of a home ecclesia or the continuity of Bible study.

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

Ephraim was not developed. Being “a cake not turned,” he was “cooked” on only one side and was thus a *half-baked* cake. There are two applications: a natural application back in the prophet’s day and a spiritual application in the Gospel Age. Hosea criticized Ephraim, who was like a partially baked cake because of being a *mixed* people, religiously speaking. Mixed marriages with other nations (Gentiles) lowered the people’s commitment to God because they tried to please the heathen religious customs of their respective mate. In a mixed marriage, there is a pulling in two directions; service to the Lord is diluted and compromised. While in this condition of mixed loyalty, the Israelites were stiff-necked and refused to listen to the Lord’s advice. With evil prevailing, *none* of them sought God in earnest.

With regard to the Christian, an extenuating circumstance is if the individual got married *before* consecration and thus became unequally yoked after the fact. The danger is that there will be an *undeveloped* Christian life, a half-baked condition, instead of a thoroughly developed Christian character. Verse 8 is a description of the Great Company class, who have one foot in heaven and one foot in the earth. They try to serve earthly interests and walk the narrow way at the same time, creating a conflict. Those of this class love the Lord, but because they are trying to do two things at once, they lose the prize of the high calling. Because of mixed loyalty, they need chastising tests to shock them into their senses. If the Lord did not intervene and give them this experience, there would be no hope for them in even getting eternal life in the Great Company. With all of his struggles, the Christian never fully overcomes the Canaanite in his heart and mind, but those of the Little Flock are *always struggling*, whereas those of the Great Company give in.

In the Book of Revelation, the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are not listed among the 12 tribes who comprise the Little Flock (Rev. 7:4-8). Ephraim pictures the Great Company, and Dan represents the Second Death class. Being half-baked, Ephraim (the Great Company) is half good, half bad.

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

“Strangers” were the Gentile, or foreign, element with whom the Israelites intermarried. Spiritually speaking, “strangers” are the unconsecrated, the worldly-minded ones, who sap the strength of the Christian, especially when unequally yoked marriages take place *after* consecration. The vitality of the Christian is drained in such a stealthy manner that he (or she) hardly knows it is happening. Everything seems to be going right, but undermining is actually taking place, so that “gray hairs” are appearing, one here and one there. Such a Christian deceives himself. Even when an area of laxity is called to his attention, he considers that to be an exception to the general rule and, therefore, proper for a Christian. “Gray hairs” also indicate that time is running out and death is nearing. The Christian in this condition has passed the days of his youth, as it were, and thus the gray hairs are ominous signs. Time is running out for the mending of his ways—that is, until the Lord’s *judgment* comes.

From another standpoint, “strangers” are a *worldly* element that enters the Church, nominal or true. It is dangerous and infectious for the unconsecrated to mingle with the consecrated.

Especially with the type of mirrors back in Hosea's day, the *few* gray hairs deceived the person, who was unaware he had them. *Longevity* in the evil environment was indicated by the gray hairs. The same is true with spiritual leprosy. With that disease, the gray (or white) hair that came out of the infection or the sore itself was a dangerous symptom. (Since the regular hair color was black, or dark, the gray hair was a danger signal.)

Returning to the Great Company application, "strangers" (the unconsecrated) can weaken or adversely affect the Ephraim class so that they do not make their calling and election sure. Worldly thinking is brought in. Actually, there is some worldly thinking right in the Bible Student movement today. The bulk of the movement will be Great Company. We are to *run* the race as if there is only *one* winner. Hopefully, if we are in an element that is more conducive to following the Scriptures, the percentage of Little Flock will be higher, but there is no guarantee. Hopefully, with good teaching, the percentage of Great Company will be less.

When Jesus comes to take his Bride, "Will he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8 paraphrase). The implied answer is *no*. When the salt is gone from the earth, conditions will really deteriorate (Matt. 5:13).

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

The condemnation was that with all this experience, those of Israel did not repent or confess their sins but persisted in their evil ways, not seeking the Lord. The condition appeared hopeless, but God did (and will) correct them with severe judgments and thus will receive them back to favor.

Pride blocked the Israelites from heeding Scripture. They were not ashamed to disagree with and disobey God and His instructions, and they worshipped Baal so that they would have more liberty in pursuing sin. They did not realize how far they had fallen from holy counsel.

The larger portion of Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51 is literal with regard to Babylon, but mixed into the account are spiritual parts not yet fulfilled. The Book of Revelation verifies the spiritual application.

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

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

Why was Ephraim likened to a "silly dove"? Generally, a dove is a symbol of purity, innocence, peace, gentleness, and guilelessness, but that is not the symbolism here. *Instability* was indicated by Israel's going to Egypt and Assyria and fleeing (see also verse 13). When in danger, Israel made military alliances with Egypt or Assyria instead of looking to God for help. If Egypt threatened Israel, Israel went to Assyria, and vice versa.

The point is that doves are "silly" and "without heart" because they are timid by nature and get flustered when danger threatens. They flutter and become confused, flying here and there. The NIV states that Ephraim was "easily deceived and senseless." The quality of harmlessness and guilelessness makes doves very easy to capture in moments of danger. The fowler can catch them in his net. In fact, the dove will fly right into the net, thinking it is escaping. Doves have no sense because they frighten easily and are fainthearted by nature. Therefore, when Israel went to Egypt or Assyria for help, it was because the people did not trust in the Lord.

They sacrificed to Him, but the sacrifices were *empty*. They did not have enough faith in God to go to Him in their trouble. Instead they sought earthly solace and help. One who has “heart” has *strength of character* and is bold like a lion.

God said He would spread His net and catch Ephraim. Verses 11 and 12 should be connected as follows. “They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.... I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.” When Assyria’s King Pul invaded Israel, Israel called on Egypt for protection. Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser and Sennacherib also invaded. God chastised the ten tribes when they were taken captive from their land to Assyria.

**Comments:** Warnings had gone out through the prophets. God was saying, “The punishments will come just as you have been warned because you did not heed my advice.”

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, the clause “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart” is a reference to the Great Company, just like the description “a cake not turned” in verse 8. With the dove being a bird that is easily deceived and senseless, James 1:8 comes to mind: “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

**Reply:** Yes, the Great Company has tendencies in this direction. Those who have one foot on earth and the other foot in heaven cannot make the Little Flock. To please God, we must have a *single eye* (Luke 11:34).

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

“Destruction unto them!” Here is a clue that the ten tribes had not yet been taken captive. Hoshea was king over Israel when the captivity occurred. Thus Hoshea and Hosea were contemporaries.

“Though I have redeemed them [Israel], yet they have spoken lies against me.” God redeemed Israel when the nation originally came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. He delivered them with a high hand and *great power* from their enemies. But now, instead of remembering this great deliverance, Israel forgot God and went to *earthly* powers for help. In addition, they were addressing God with lies. Verse 14 explains what those lies were.

Israel fled from God both figuratively and literally. One fleeing occurred when the ten tribes forsook God under the leadership of Jeroboam, who set up two golden calves at Beth-el and Dan. (We are reminded of the golden calf made by the Israelites when they left Egypt in the Exodus. The calf then, and the calves here, showed the influence of Egypt.) Jeroboam fled to Egypt during the reign of King Solomon, but when Rehoboam was made king, he returned from Egypt and instituted the two golden calves. He should have been put to death, but the people tolerated him. Those who followed Jeroboam’s practices figuratively left the Lord.

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

Now, when the Israelites saw danger approaching, they started to cry to God—but not with the heart. In the face of imminent danger and corruption, the people *ostensibly* cried to God, but their prayers were not sincere. Outwardly they worshipped God, but they mixed in the worship of heathen gods. They worshipped the calves and committed the sins associated with that worship. Therefore, God would not answer their prayers. They rebelled not by openly denouncing God but by going to the false gods for grain and wine instead of sincerely calling on the Lord for mercy, forgiveness, and deliverance. Leviticus 26 had warned that if the

Israelites departed from God, their crops would suffer, enemies would defeat them, etc. Regarding God and the Law as *too severe*, the Israelites liked the heathen religions, which catered to the flesh by allowing one foot with the false god and the other foot in the world. Such religions of convenience let their followers have the pleasures of the present life and also insurance for the next life.

The Israelites looked to the Lord for help with their lips—they gave lip service—but did not have faith that God would help them. They went through the ritual of prayer, but it was an *empty* gesture, even though they howled with anguish. They had a form of godliness but denied the power (2 Tim. 3:5).

Spiritually speaking, insincere prayers are made on creedal “beds.” For example, the pope prays for world peace and then asks the people for money. Token prayers are uttered to *God* and then followed by, “If we do not do such and such, we are lost.” The churches want to physically get together and unite for strength and peace instead of trusting God and His promises in the Scriptures.

With regard to natural Israel, prayer mats (“beds”) were used. The Israelites put down mats and prostrated themselves like the Arabs, and then they uttered loud prayers to God for His mercy. However, these prayers were just a formality; they were not from the “heart.”

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

How did God bind, chasten, train, warn, instruct, and strengthen the arms of the ten tribes? The prophets gave them the required admonitions. For example, Hosea gave the ten tribes a real tongue-lashing as he pointed out their deterioration, but they turned a deaf ear so that they would not have to go back to the old ways. The prophets reminded the ten tribes of their deviation from the standards in the Law. Ostensibly the people worshipped Jehovah, but they mixed this with Baal worship. The counterpart is the nominal Church.

“Yet do they imagine [plot, plan] mischief against me.” While the ten tribes ostensibly went to Jehovah, they planned contrary to His instructions as given through the Law and the prophets.

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

“They [Israel, the ten tribes] return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow.” Their “return” was meaningless because it was not sincere. Verse 16 shows the danger of ecumenism. Heathenism was *mixed* with true worship.

The ten tribes were like a “deceitful bow,” for they broke their covenant. Instead of the bow being clean and hitting the mark—instead of admitting and recognizing their sinful condition, their utter dependence upon God, and their need for salvation—they only *pretended* to look to God for help. In reality, Israel looked to the world. A crooked bow misses the mark, even if it is aimed straight. And so Israel’s desires were not fulfilled because of their “deceitful” lips. The bow was crooked; that is, the covenant was not in proper order. The ten tribes formalistically returned to the Lord, but they feigned repentance with meaningless words.

A “deceitful bow” misses the target because it is faulty. The tautness of the string affects the accuracy of the arrow. The tighter the string, the greater the accuracy. The mark was God Himself. The Israelites did not return to Him with a full heart.

“Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue [because of their insolent words—NIV]: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.” The faulty bow gave the enemy the advantage. The ten tribes and their leaders would be defeated in battle because of the scorn for their prophets. The king of Assyria took captives back to his homeland and subsequently dispersed them into various lands.

The ten tribes did not heed Hosea’s counsel. Because of the insolence of their tongues and their loud boastfulness, Israel got a humiliating experience in Egypt, as prophesied by Hosea: “This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.” Some of the Jews who saw the Assyrian invasion coming fled into Egypt, where they were given menial positions and ridiculed. At one point, they had to walk without any clothing except for a small loincloth. Thus, despite their previous ornamentation and decorum, they were brought down to a condition of utter slavery.

The Prophet Isaiah warned the Israelites that their fate would be to march in nakedness and humiliation (Isa. 20:2-4). In fact, to dramatize what would happen because of unfaithfulness to God, Isaiah walked all around Israel for a couple of years naked except for a loincloth. He prophesied that the Israelites would be brought down to Egypt and led in a similar manner. And that proved to be the experience of those who fled there. In derision, the Egyptians said, “These are the *great* Israelites!”

Because the ten tribes were widely dispersed from Assyria, they became the “ten *lost* tribes.” Judah, on the other hand, remained in Babylon when taken captive and thus retained identity.

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

“Set the trumpet to thy mouth.” Hosea was instructed to proclaim a *public* message with *force*. If the message was literal, the prophet then gave the proclamation, but the word “trumpet” can be figurative.

“Eagle” should be “vulture,” as translated in the Revised Standard Version. “Set the trumpet to your lips, for a *vulture* is over the house of the LORD [that is, over Israel, the ten tribes, Samaria, Ephraim], because they have broken my [God’s] covenant, and transgressed my law.” Not only is a vulture swift, but it circles and hovers over the potential victim, waiting for the prey to die. In other words, the circling action indicates that death is approaching. Here the vulture was figuratively hovering over the house of Jehovah because doom (death, calamity) was near. Judgment was coming because Israel had broken God’s Law.

A vulture is *nearby* while seeking its prey from overhead. In contrast, the eagle, with its hunger and keen eyesight, spots its prey *afar off* and then comes with great speed and makes one swift glide down to the prey. Verse 1 was a warning of what would happen if Israel did not change course. Death was approaching and near.

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

In their final calamity, Israel would call upon God, crying to Him for deliverance. Only superficially did Israel acknowledge or recognize God; the ten tribes had a form of godliness but denied the power. They needed to *repent* and acknowledge their wrong; then their cry would be sincere.

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

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

“They [Israel] have set up kings, but not by me.” The ten tribes had cast aside Rehoboam to set up Jeroboam in authority. God did not approve this arrangement. “They have made princes, and I knew it not.” Israel also set up princes who were not recognized by God.

Because Israel had cast off the Law Covenant, judgment would come. The “trumpet” (verse 1) was the burden of the message, as follows: (1) Israel “cast off the thing that is good”; that is, because they had cast off the Law, righteousness, and morals, the enemy would pursue them. (2) Israel set up unauthorized kings, starting with Jeroboam. Not one king of the ten tribes got a favorable report. For example, even though Jehu was anointed and performed a work, he went overboard in destroying Jezebel, Ahaziah, Jehoram, the house of Baal, etc. The kings were of the people’s *own* choosing and not of the house of David. (3) Israel made idols of silver and gold. For all of these reasons, the ten tribes would be taken captive to Assyria.

“Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.” The two prominent golden calves that Jeroboam instituted are a reminder of the golden calf the Israelites made when Moses was up in the mount. Aaron’s excuse was, “I put the gold in the fire, and look what came out.” In other words, Aaron had tried a delaying tactic with the people. Wanting to stall them in departing from the Lord, he asked them to donate all their gold (rings, earrings, etc.), never thinking that they actually would. Then Aaron did not have the strength of character to refuse to allow the building of the calf, so he molded the image. Nevertheless, Aaron was a “saint,” so God does overlook certain mistakes at times, even though retribution and suffering follow in one form or another (Psa. 106:16). Miriam got leprosy (Num. 12:10), and Aaron was rebuked before the people and had to ask Moses to pray over him in the sight of the *whole* nation. This experience was humiliating, but evidently, Aaron was faithful in the final analysis (although not to the degree that Moses was).

**Hosea 8:5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?**

“Thy calf” is mentioned in the singular, but there were two calves, one in Dan and the other in Beth-el. One calf was put in the suburbs and the other in the city to make it convenient for both types of people not to go to Jerusalem to worship. Moreover, one calf was in the hilly region, and one was on the coastal plain. The word “calf” was used in the singular to indicate, collectively, “idol worship.”

The ten tribes instituted different places of worship, different practices, and a different priesthood. Papacy did the same thing by supplanting and supplementing the original early Christian days with pagan religious days (for example, Easter, Good Friday, and Christmas). At first, there were two calves in the ten-tribe kingdom, but later there were more. And the people had places of worship on every hill and under every large shade tree that was not on private property. False religious practices with statues and relics were rampant. The Roman Catholic counterpart would be statues of saints and of Mary outside in gardens, on lawns, etc.

“Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off.” The King James translation indicates that the calf god would be ineffective. However, the thought in the Hebrew is that God instructed the ten tribes to break the calf the way Moses broke the golden calf in the wilderness. Such action would have shown repentance, but the ten tribes did not obey.

“Mine anger is kindled against them.” God’s anger was kindled against the two calf idols in Dan and Beth-el.

“How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?” In other words, “How long will it be until Israel is reclaimed or purified?” The ten tribes were almost at the point of no return—of



*incorrigibility*. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their good, and so it would be with the ten tribes because they were so permeated with sin. Other prophets showed that a “refiner’s fire” (very *severe* judgments) would be required.

**Hosea 8:6 For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.**

Verse 6 is a reminder of Aaron’s calf being broken into pieces, ground to powder, mixed with water, and given to the people to drink. Why did the Israelites have to drink such a bitter medicine? The golden calf represented *Papacy*, a *man-made* institution claiming divine authorization (shown by the “gold”). The calf was an image of the bullock used in the Tabernacle sacrifices. (Originally, Baal meant “Lord” and thus was a good word, but as the practices got distorted, Baal took on an evil connotation.) Just as the people had to drink the powdered golden calf in Moses’ day, so Papacy will have to “swallow back,” or retract, its blasphemous claims.

In other words, the prophecy of the “calf of Samaria” being broken to pieces was like history repeating itself. The golden calf in Moses’ day was ground to powder. In Jeremiah’s day, trees were cut down and overlaid with metal to make dumb idols (Jer. 10:1-5). The calves at Dan and Beth-el were cast; they were not cut-down trees. Incidentally, Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes, became Shechem and is now Nablus.

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

The people made *empty* professions and performed *empty* sacrifices. They were nominally active in the Lord’s service, but actually their efforts were a “bag of wind.” The performance did not match the profession. By sowing emptiness, they should not have expected a crop. Since they planted wind instead of seed, nothing of substance would grow. If seed had been planted, it would have multiplied food; for example, one seed could produce a large corn plant with several ears of corn and thousands of kernels. Likewise, if wind was planted, it would *multiply* and come back as a *whirlwind*.

“The strangers shall swallow it up.” Israel did not get a normal yield, but if by some miracle, a small crop grew, it would be taken. In the final analysis then, Israel would get nothing. Battles were frequently timed by the enemy to take place after the grain had been harvested. Then the invading army did not have to worry about a food supply or carry food provisions with them, for they seized the food from the people they conquered. Imagine going to the effort of harvesting the crops and storing them in barns, only to have an enemy come along and take them! God was telling Israel in advance that this would happen to them. The “stranger” (the enemy) would swallow up what they had planted.

**Comment:** We often think of the text “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” meaning equal retribution (Gal. 6:7). But here the analogy was to sow a little seed and get a tremendous plant, tree, or crop. Israel sowed the wind, and now they would reap tremendous trouble.

**Reply:** Sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind refer to the manner in which seed was sown. A man walked the furrows throwing seed to the wind from a waist-tied bag. Some seed blew away, and some fell too concentrated to produce. In other words, some seed was wasted. Those of the ten tribes sowed seed to satisfy *evil* passions and desires: pleasures of the flesh, money, power, riches, etc. Instead of bringing the crop they wanted, the seed became a whirlwind of retribution. They sowed to the wind, and the wind blew it back as a whirlwind of trouble. Hosea 10:13 is similar in principle: “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped

iniquity.” The seeds of illegitimate desires were sown. Hosea was a farmer; hence he used agricultural analogies.

From a *literal* standpoint, the seed that was sown did not produce good crops to assuage the people’s hunger. The seed grew up like a tare. If the stalk had a bud, the bud did not mature. Three conditions occurred: (1) There was no sign of fruitage (grain), (2) the buds did not mature, and (3) any grain produced was taken by the enemy.

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

With verse 8, the picture changed suddenly. Instead of prophesying about the grain being swallowed up, Hosea said that Israel itself would be devoured. The ten tribes were likened to grain. In verse 7, Israel was doing the sowing, and the meager results would be taken from them by the enemy. Now, in verse 8, Hosea likened Israel to the grain: “You are that grain, and the enemy will swallow you up.” And that is just what happened to the ten tribes. Not only did they go into Diaspora, but they were called the “lost” ten tribes—they were “swallowed up.” The identity of the ten tribes is a great mystery, for when they were taken captive, it became impossible with the passage of time to trace their history. The only reason we know about some of the other tribes is that Judah and a handful from the ten tribes returned to Israel in 536 BC after the 70 years’ desolation. Their history, genealogy, and a continuous chronology of the ten tribes are available up until just a few centuries before Christ. Stated another way, verse 8 prophesied past the Diaspora and into the AD centuries, for following the Babylonian captivity from 606 to 536 BC, the tribal identities were still known.

Those who are lost (primarily of the ten tribes) were dispersed into other nations in such a way that their history and genealogy are hard to trace. There is a gap in history during that period. It is the same situation with the Eskimos. We can conjecture how they got to Alaska, but that part of their history is unknown.

“Now shall they [Israel] be among the Gentiles.” In other words, the ten tribes were dispersed into various nations. Israel became a vessel of dishonor—“a vessel wherein is no pleasure.” The ten tribes were not a useless vessel but a low and menial vessel, such as a garbage can. The vessel was inferior, ordinary, and unattractive; it was held in disesteem and was subjected to pogroms. As they had sown to evil desires, so they would be strewn as a people throughout Gentile nations and lose their tribal identities. Families would be broken up and dispersed. Spiritually speaking, Papacy was an inferior system for producing fruitage for the Bride class. Martin Luther was an exception.

“Israel is swallowed up.” Israel had not yet been taken captive to Assyria, but a then future event was stated as past, for the ten tribes had reached the point of needing *stern* treatment. Assyria would swallow up the ten tribes. Prior warnings had come through Assyrian kings Pul, Tiglath-Pileser, and Shalmaneser, but the warnings did not bring repentance. The three kings dealt successive blows, with Shalmaneser finalizing the destruction and taking the ten tribes captive out of Israel.

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

Verse 9 is a break in thought, a new paragraph. Since Hosea was a farmer, many of his illustrations were based on nature, for example, crops, vultures, and here the wild ass. How was Israel’s going up to Assyria like a wild ass? Israel made an alliance with Assyria, a Gentile power, to fight another Gentile power. (Sad to say, the ten tribes even allied themselves with another power to fight against Judah, their own brotherhood, and Judah did the same.) Not

only did the ten tribes go to Assyria for help, but they were like a wild ass in that they refused to be under restraint. The wild ass rebels against restraint and does not like to be told what to do. The animal goes where it pleases. It likes to shun people and go out in the wilderness and just run around. And so Israel, instead of staying in its own pasture with God and looking to Him for advice, ran off to the king of Assyria for help. Just like the wild ass, Israel did not want to be told what to do but went ahead on its *own* advice and in its *own* power and strength instead of seeking the counsel of the Lord.

See Job 39:5-8 and Jeremiah 2:24. God made the wild ass with qualities and provisions of independence. It inhabits a higher steppe, or plateau, and scorns city traffic. Here in verse 9, Hosea emphasized the wild ass's desire not to be inhibited in any sense, showing that Israel wanted no restraints from doing evil. God created the wild ass with certain characteristics, and Job described its habitat and manner of life, not treating the negative aspect.

“Ephraim hath hired lovers.” The thought of the rebellious wild ass continues. Israel not only showed a lack of judgment in going to the king of Assyria for help but also desired the fellowship of others. Israel looked for new pleasures in foreign lands. Most prostitutes get paid for their work, but Israel was even worse. Contrary to nature, Israel went out and paid the one she had an illicit relationship with; that is, Israel *bought* her lovers. This is *powerful* language! Imagine the prophet saying these bold things to the ten tribes! And he was addressing the honored representatives (the king, the priesthood, etc.)—he even used a trumpet (see verse 1). What a tongue-lashing Hosea gave them, using powerful illustrations! The people understood the analogy about the wild ass. Hosea was a truly courageous prophet. Incidentally, Assyria was not satisfied with the pay, or tribute, and swallowed up the ten tribes.

The ten tribes went to Assyria earlier for help. They fraternized with Assyria and Egypt. When King Ahaz of the ten tribes went to Damascus, Syria, he liked an ornate altar there, so he had a replica made for Israel and then took the Lord's altar for his personal use (2 Kings 16:10-16). The Lord's architecture is simple; man's architecture is ornate. Ahaz was a very evil king.

“A wild ass alone by himself.” Israel, the “wild ass,” was alone without the Lord. Israel broke out of the pasture provided by the Lord and the restraints of the Law Covenant. Israel viewed independence from the Lord as liberty, but it was license to sin. The wild ass loves to be independent and does not want to be governed. In addition, the animal is known for its lust. The burning lust of Israel was hot like an oven (Hos. 7:6,7), so God would give the ten tribes an oven that would burn them up (destroy them).

Jeremiah 2:23-25 in the NIV shows the wild passion. “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals’? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are ... a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving—in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry.”

Israel got increasingly hardened in sin. Repentance became less and less likely as the people went down the road of independence. True liberty is being yoked to Christ, whereas *man's* independence is license to sin. True liberty is freedom from sin as we try to control the appetites of fallen flesh.

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

Hosea used *sarcasm* to refer to a *future* gathering and reconciliation. He was saying in effect, “Though I *will* gather you in the future, you first will have a *little* trouble.” The prophet used the expression “sorrow a little,” but the trouble was *great*. The “king of princes” (the mighty

king) was the king of Assyria.

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

Instead of going to Jerusalem, those of the ten tribes sacrificed at unauthorized altars. Moreover, the sacrifices were to be done according to God's instructions, but those instructions were not followed. These sins were bad enough, but they opened the door to *other* sins as well. Being careless with sacrifices set a precedent for more evil.

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

How different the people were from David, who loved God's Law and meditated on it day and night!

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

"They sacrifice flesh ... and eat it." Generally speaking, when an animal was sacrificed, only a token portion (choice parts such as the shoulder and the breast) was given to the priesthood. All the rest was retained and eaten by the individual. Of the parts given to the priesthood, a portion was burned, and the rest, considered a tithe, was eaten. There was nothing wrong with the eating, but its purpose was religious in nature. Although the Israelites sacrificed flesh according to the Law, the *improper* motive underlying the sacrifice made it unacceptable as a peace offering. Part of the animal was sacrificed to the Lord, and the part that was eaten, the peace offering, was supposed to provide fellowship. In other words, the purpose for the peace offering was fellowship. How did the Lord "eat" His part? By consuming the fat or meat in the fire, He figuratively and invisibly "ate" His portion. When, in the peace offering, the individual ate the remainder of the animal, the representation was a covenant of fellowship. Note: Hosea was not saying it was wrong for the people to eat flesh. Rather, the sin was in eating flesh with a *wrong motive and/or spirit* and then thinking the Lord accepted the offering.

The ten tribes liked foreign heathen worship rather than the sacrifices ordered by God. Sin (pleasures of the flesh) was incorporated into their religious practices while they ostensibly worshipped God. Unabashed promiscuity was practiced instead of nice, clean family fellowship. The people did not reject God outright, but they rejected Him by disobedience such as failing to go to Jerusalem. The counterpart is Catholicism, for the ten tribes represent Papacy. Ostensibly its worshippers believe in Christ, but the "mother" is really a harlot (Rev. 17:5).

"They shall return to Egypt." This clause is a play on words. The ten tribes were carried away to Assyria, where they dwelled by a certain river. After a while, no more was recorded about the ten tribes, for they became "lost," dispersed. Then in Jeremiah's day, some in Judah were taken to Egypt. The vinedressers that King Nebuchadnezzar left in Israel made an alliance with Egypt and fled there. In anger, Nebuchadnezzar sent his captain of the guard to Egypt to dispatch the rebellious ones and greatly humiliate them. There is a play on words here. Originally, the nation of Israel was in Egypt, and God delivered them by miracles and signs at the time of the Exodus. Later He brought them into their land and fenced them about (protected them), but they were disobedient. Now Hosea prophesied that they would be returned to Egypt; that is, while God once delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they would return to an "Egypt" condition. Just as Moses broke the golden calf into powder and made the Israelites drink it, so the calf of Samaria (verse 5), made by man and worshipped as a god, would be broken in pieces. Thus this play on words referred back to the beginning when Moses was alive. As captives in Assyria and in their dispersion into Gentile lands, the ten tribes

would return to the “Egypt” *condition*; that is, they were put back as slaves under oppressive taskmasters and unpleasant experiences like those they had formerly endured in Egypt.

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

“Israel ... buildeth temples.” Spiritually speaking, the Roman Catholic Church builds churches, but from God’s standpoint, the edifices are not “ordained.” Solomon and Zerubbabel built temples, but they were instructed to do so by God. The sin in Hosea’s day was that instead of recognizing the Temple at Jerusalem as the center of worship, the ten tribes went around and *multiplied* places of worship. Similarly, while Rome is the center of Catholicism, each locality has its own church, priests, bishop, etc.

The Law stipulated that three times a year the males were to go to Jerusalem for feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). These trips entailed effort and sacrifice. If any male was sick, he was permitted to go a month later. Even Jesus went to Jerusalem for these three feasts. However, Jeroboam added two new unauthorized places for religious worship, that is, Dan and Beth-el. His attitude was, “You can worship at Dan or Beth-el and do not have to go to Jerusalem on the feast days.” As time went on and Jeroboam grew more powerful, about five places of worship were appointed in the ten tribes. The multiple places detracted from the importance of Jerusalem as a religious center.

Similarly, Catholicism has downgraded the Jewish religion. Christianity actually has its roots in Judaism, but nominal churchianity does not like to admit the Jewish heritage. (Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets were all Jews.) Therefore, in time, other cities were given prominence: Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Rome. After a while, Rome was given the preeminence. The “divide and conquer” tactic was used.

The mention of Judah in verse 14 shows that Hosea’s criticism also applied to the two tribes. “Judah hath multiplied fenced cities.” Those of Judah trusted in their own defenses and not in God. Verse 14 was a side comment, for Hosea’s main theme was the ten tribes.

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

Israel had a measure of joy from following improper pursuits like those of the surrounding pagan nations. Therefore, the prophet’s message was, “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God.”

“Thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor [threshing floor].” There was an association between harlotry and the threshing floor and reward. A form of barter was used. In connection with gathering grain at the threshing floor, those in Israel practiced harlotry on the side; that is, they bartered, or exchanged, sexual intercourse to procure grain. A mixture of peoples was in the land at this time, and they bargained with the enemy, for it was the *enemy’s* threshing floor. In short, women from the ten tribes engaged in sex to get grain from the enemy to take back home. The *literal* translation of some of these Scriptures shows that Israel’s *depth of depravity* was approaching that of Sodom and Gomorrah. The “reward” was harlotry, and grain from the “cornfloor” was the payment.

The burden of Hosea’s message was to the ten-tribe kingdom of natural Israel, although the two tribes were referred to at times. In addition, the Book of Hosea contains lessons and overtones with regard to *spiritual* Israel. There are lessons as to why nominal spiritual Israel went astray, as well as warnings to true spiritual Israel of what *not* to do.

What is the allegory about Israel's playing the harlot upon the "cornfloor"? The "corn" was the kernel, or seed, of the grain. In ancient times, a threshing floor was used to separate the chaff from the kernel. The grain was beaten so that the wind would blow the chaff away and leave the kernels. At such a site, a lot of loose grain lay around. The poor could pick up grain from the surplus by begging. Moreover, harlots often accepted grain instead of money for their labors. God said Israel had departed from Him and loved this reward.

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

**Comment:** As stated in God's Law, obedience brought prosperity, and disobedience brought privation.

**Reply:** Yes. Israel failed to draw the proper lesson that crop failures were an evidence of God's disfavor. When crops were poor, the Israelites went to alien sources to supply this lack instead of going to God in repentance. Thus they went to the threshing floors of others.

At the threshing floor, the final product (grain) was obtained. At the winepress, the final product (wine) was obtained. For disobedience, God caused Israel's crops to be meager. Because the Israelites went to the enemy for food, God had a judgment in reservation; namely, the ten tribes would lose not only crops and produce but also the land. Captivity would come.

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

"They [the ten tribes] shall not dwell in the LORD'S land [Israel]." The ten tribes would be taken out of the land and into exile in Assyria because of disobedience. God was saying, "You did not get the lesson, so I will have to remove you from the land and send you into captivity."

"Ephraim shall return to Egypt." Natural Israel's departing from God and associating with foreigners was like the Christian's going back into the world and associating with the unconsecrated, who are pictured here as Egypt and Assyria. Israel originally came out of Egypt, the "furnace of affliction," through miraculous intervention by God, and now a return to that condition was threatened (Isa. 48:10).

In the natural picture, a minority of Israelites escaped the sudden invasion of Assyria and fled to Egypt. The majority were captured and either killed or taken to Assyria. In their extremity, however, *all of the Israelites* in the ten tribes were reminded of their former condition of bondage as slaves in Egypt, an alien land.

Israel "shall eat unclean things in Assyria." In dispersion, Ephraim not only would literally eat unclean food but also would imbibe heathen doctrines. Similarly, when Christianity went astray, it incorporated pagan customs and doctrines of the East, such as eternal torture. The implication to the ten tribes was that they would be taken into captivity by Assyria and would there eat unclean food.

Thus the *double* threat was Egypt and Assyria. God had delivered the nation from Egypt years earlier, but some of the Jews would return there, and others would go into exile in Assyria. The ten tribes were taken into captivity in Assyria, and Judah went into captivity in Egypt. When King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 606 BC, he left a *small* number of vinedressers there to keep the land from going fallow, and he put a governor, Gedaliah, in charge. After the king returned to Babylon, a rebellious element among the vinedressers murdered Gedaliah, intending to break the yoke of Babylonian bondage. As a

result, Nebuchadnezzar sent his army down to Egypt and made a *thorough* riddance of the land. Even those who fled to Egypt were searched out and humiliated. Jeremiah, who was among those who fled, had buried a brick in Egypt and prophesied that on that very spot of ground, the king of Babylon would set up his pavilion, or throne. Jeremiah said, further, that the rebels from Israel would have to pass in front of the king's throne as he judged them for death or captivity. That is exactly what happened in due time.

In verses 1-3, Hosea was prophesying that the bulk of the ten tribes would be taken as captives to Assyria, and some would flee to Egypt, where they would be ferreted out and punished. This was the literal, or natural, lesson. In addition, there is the spiritual lesson of the professed Church of Christ going astray into Papacy and the ways of the world. Paganism came into the Church and defiled it. In antitype, the more numerous ten-tribe kingdom pictures Catholicism; the two-tribe kingdom represents Protestantism.

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

“They shall not offer wine [drink] offerings to the LORD.” In captivity, even if Israel wanted to observe holidays (feasts), they would not be able to do so in their accustomed manner. In the meantime, prior to captivity, they were offering sacrifices that were not acceptable to God. This present unacceptable sacrificing would turn into “the bread of *mourners*” in captivity, for any observance or sacrificing done then would be pathetic compared to previous opportunities with the great Temple in Jerusalem. The sacrificing done in captivity would be a forceful reminder of their previous glory, as well as their then current plight. Even today, while rejoicing in their return to Israel, Jews who zealously desire to return to the old ways have a “thorn” to contend with, for the Mosque of Omar stands where Ezekiel's Temple is to be built.

There is another aspect to the “bread of mourners.” Under the Law, if a close relative died, anyone related to him or her was temporarily defiled. Those not related to the deceased tried to get the body onto a coat or other garment, using sticks lest they touch the body; then they rolled up the dead body like a rug and carried it with the sleeves of the garment. Following the death was a period of mourning in memory of the deceased. If the mourning was sincere, there was no delight from food. Here the “bread of mourning” meant that the ten tribes would eat the bread as captives. In the enemy's land, they would be eating the enemy's food because they did not have their own crops.

Hosea prophesied to the ten tribes just before the Assyrian siege. Thus he was saying, “Now you are trying to offer bread and wine to Jehovah, but the offerings are not being done on His altar.” Instead of going down to Jerusalem, the people used *unauthorized* altars in Jehovah's name and did not reform. In the antitype, it would be like people going to church, but as soon as the service is over, they resume their sinful activities. Were the Israelites' prayers sincere and acceptable to God? No! As a result of their wayward course and lack of contrition of heart, they would be removed from their environment and taken to Assyria, the land of the enemy.

Spiritual Israel went astray right after the apostles fell asleep. Tares sown in the wheat field prospered rapidly and outnumbered the wheat after a while. Spiritual Ephraim was a fruitful field. Catholicism prospered in money and numbers but not according to the Lord's ways.

Sometimes the Lord's providence puts us in an unfavorable situation. If so, we should think soberly about the situation and negate the deleterious effects of that environment. Seeing that God's providence placed us in that situation (and not our own willfulness), we should pray to be preserved and protected.

**Hosea 9:5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?**

In other words, “How will you observe a feast day in captivity with no Temple, no high priest, etc.?” Spiritually speaking, Christians in the nominal Church down through the Gospel Age who really wanted to follow the Lord were distressed about being among a nominal, Babylonish element. The godly few, a *minority*, wanted to please the Lord but were frustrated and hence were “mourners in Zion,” getting no real spiritual food. They looked back longingly to the days of Jesus’ First Advent, when he was among the disciples, giving long discourses. Reminiscing was mournful to them.

The “solemn day,” the “day of *the* feast,” was the Day of Atonement. Verse 5 refers to captivity in Assyria when the ten tribes would come to their senses, realizing that the altars of Dan and Beth-el were never acceptable to God. Then they would long to go to Jerusalem to worship on the “solemn day,” but they would not be able to return to the old paths. However, in spite of these lessons, only a *minority* went back to Israel when Cyrus issued his decree in 536 BC, allowing any Jews who desired to return and build the Temple.

The NIV uses the plural: “your appointed feasts” and “the festival days of the LORD.” The plural signifies that when the three feast days would come (Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles), those of the ten tribes would not be able to attend because of being in captivity.

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

“For, lo, they are gone because of destruction [spoil]: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them.” Memphis, the capital of Ancient Egypt, is a city near the Great Pyramid. There were three kingdoms in Egypt: Ancient (Memphis was the capital), Middle (Thebes was the capital), and the more recent (Cairo is the capital).

The enemy stripped the dead bodies and took the cream of the populace into captivity in Assyria. Some escapees fled to Egypt, where they died and were buried near the Great Pyramid at Memphis (Sakkara). The Step Pyramid is there and also *many* buried bodies. In fact, many tombs in Egypt contain Jewish bodies. (Ephraim was very populous compared with Judah.) Memphis was once the most prominent city of Egypt, that is, earlier, before Thebes and Abydos. Those of the ten tribes who fled to Egypt lived and died there, and those of Judah who later fled to Egypt were pursued by King Nebuchadnezzar and subjected to judgment.

“The pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.” “Nettles” are troublesome weeds with prickly things that stick to clothing when one walks through the fields. Not only are nettles unproductive, but also they are damaging and irritating. The NIV, a better translation, reads, “Their treasures of silver will be overtaken by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents.”

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

“Days of visitation [judgment]” and “days of recompence [retribution]” would come, and “Israel shall know it.” The prophets *repeatedly* warned Israel, but the people *continued* in their sins, so judgment was due. Israel would know when the day of judgment and captivity would come because it would be a historical fact that fulfilled prophecy. The land would be taken away from them; it would be pulled out from under their feet like a rug, and they would be emptied into a foreign land.



“The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad.” The NIV has the proper thought: “Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac.” Israel viewed Hosea as a “fool” and a “mad” man. The same attitude applied to previous prophets of the Lord. The *true* prophet was regarded as a fool, a dangerous madman, and one who spoke falsehood. Considering the prophets to be dreamers and fanatics, the people refused to listen to their counsel. But the judgment and trouble predicted by Hosea were coming to pass.

“The *multitude* of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.” The people were so hardened in sin—their iniquity was multitudinous—that instead of righteousness appealing to their consciences, evil and unrighteousness were the attraction. When they were reminded of their sins previously, they cried out and admitted, “Yes, we have done wrong,” but now they refused to listen to “mad” Hosea. Conditions were deplorable—righteousness was *greatly hated*. The people had more of an affinity for violence, error, and sin. They were so sin-sick and filled with hatred for Hosea that they did not esteem him a prophet. Verse 7 shows that it cost Hosea something to be a prophet.

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

The following translation from the RSV is better, for the King James contradicts itself: “The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim, the people of my God, yet a fowler’s snare is on all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.” The Prophet Hosea, the “watchman of Ephraim,” was faithful and was with God. However, instead of recognizing Hosea’s faithfulness, the people continually tried to put a trap in front of him. They should have honored the office of prophet and appreciated his warnings, but they continually found fault and set a snare for him. They hated what he and his God stood for. A “snare” is like a lasso that catches the foot of the prey. Traps were laid for Hosea as for Jesus later—and for other prophets too.

The NIV is also helpful: “The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God.” Hosea probably gave his message in Beth-el, where the people congregated—just as Jeremiah delivered messages in the Temple. Hosea declared that the people were sin-sick, but they thought he was mad. Hosea delivered the message with God’s help; that is, Jehovah had put on Hosea’s heart and tongue to be obedient and to declare this unpopular message to Israel that they were sin-sick, but they thought he was crazy.

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

“They [the ten tribes] have *deeply corrupted themselves*, as in the days of Gibeah.” The term “days of Gibeah” is a reference to Judges 19, which tells of a dead concubine who was cut into 12 pieces by her husband to emphasize the tremendous sin and depravity that had been committed. The background is as follows. A priest who lived a little north of Gibeah married a woman who became unfaithful. She went to her hometown of Bethlehem and played the harlot. Finally the priest got lonesome and went down there to get her. Her father, happy to see him, wanted the priest to stay awhile and have food. Eventually the priest departed with his concubine wife. At sunset, they reached Jerusalem, but not wanting to lodge there, the priest said they would continue on to Gibeah. At Gibeah, they found no place to lodge. Then an old man who came in from working in the field took pity on them and offered hospitality. Meanwhile, evil “sons of Belial” knocked on the old man’s door and demanded the priest for homosexual purposes. The old man refused and offered his daughter and the priest’s concubine instead to satisfy their passion. The evil men took the concubine and abused her all

night long until she died on the threshold of the old man's house in the morning. The priest took her dead body home, cut it up into 12 pieces, and sent a piece to each of the 12 tribes to underscore the dreadful sin that had been committed by the Benjamites. When representatives from the 12 tribes went to Benjamin to get the sons of Belial and punish them, the Benjamites were so hardened in sin that they would not deliver the perpetrators. A series of battles ensued with the other tribes fighting successively against Benjamin until almost all of the Benjamites had been killed.

What was Hosea's point in verse 9? He was saying that the whole northern kingdom was getting as depraved as that little town of Gibeah. What an indictment!

**Comment:** The touching part is that the next morning, when the priest opened the door, he found his concubine dead with her hand on the threshold reaching toward him. She had been unfaithful to him and was now signifying her repentance.

**Reply:** She recognized the incident as retribution and wanted to go back to the initial relationship. The only way she could show her desire in her dying moment was to reach out her hand for mercy and forgiveness. That must have touched the priest's heart, for he wanted vengeance on Benjamin.

The practice of cutting a corpse into pieces had been done earlier under Shem. This practice is not recorded in the Bible, but knowing how Nimrod had been cut into pieces, the priest now acted likewise. The other tribes of the nation of Israel were stirred up to think that such a thing could happen in their midst. The Lord was consulted, and the instruction was, "Go up and slay the Benjamites." The other tribes were defeated twice, but the third time Benjamin was so decimated that if 600 men had not been spared, there would have been no more tribe of Benjamin.

The sins of the ten tribes were likened to those of Gibeah, for when the people went to worship, they committed lewd sexual acts. "Therefore he [God] will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins." In Rome too, sexuality and abnormal practices became rampant, and those conditions are now happening in the United States. Pending judgment is coming.

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

Verses 9 and 10 refer to three situations: (1) the days of Gibeah, (2) grapes in the wilderness and the first-ripe figs, and (3) Baal-peor. The first comparison is unfavorable, the second one is favorable, and the third is unfavorable.

"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness"; that is, Israel's beginning was pleasant to the Lord. "I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time." The reference is to the more desirable crop of figs, so again the comparison is favorable. (There are two primary crops of figs each year, the first crop being the sweeter one.) When did God think of Israel in this light? In the beginning, He gave Israel all the blessings and every opportunity, but we will work backward, starting with Baal-peor.

"But they went to Baal-peor [a heathen god], and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved [lusted]." The allusion is to the Prophet Balaam, whose cursing became a prophetic blessing to Israel. (For example, "there shall come a Star out of Jacob"—Num. 24:17. This was not only a prophecy of the coming Messiah but also an allusion to the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem.) This event took place just prior to Israel's entrance into the Holy Land. King Balak was angry, for he had summoned Balaam to

curse Israel, but each time a blessing came out instead. However, Balaam did cause damage to Israel, for he advised King Balak to have his young women seduce the Israelite men into sexual intercourse and the worship of heathen gods. The worship of Baal-peor entailed some especially abominable practices, and as a result, 24,000 Israelites were slain (Num. 25:9). Thus, in the final analysis, Balaam did effectively curse Israel.

If we go back even further in Israel's history to the days when the Israelites were in Egypt, they cried for a deliverer for quite a long time. God sent Moses, whom they followed through the Red Sea. On the opposite shore, they all rejoiced. The Israelites were on a spiritual high as Moses and Miriam excited the nation into song and praise for the miraculous deliverance. Subsequently, however, the Israelites murmured in the wilderness, so God had ten plagues come on the ones who were worthy of dying. Of all those over a certain age, only Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter the Promised Land because of the spies' unfavorable report and the reaction of the people. For 38 more years after the Tabernacle was completed, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness as a judgment, and eventually the younger generation entered the Promised Land. In other words, the younger generation had a greater appreciation for and memory of the miracle of crossing the Red Sea than the older generation, and God watched over them like a nurse, wrapping them with swaddling clothes, as it were, and protecting them in the wilderness in various ways. Thus, with natural Israel, there was a period of weaning for the relatively younger generation and of perishing for the older element except for Caleb and Joshua (and the two priests, Eleazar and Ithamar, whose ages are not known). Incidentally, the sins with Baal-peor separated even some of the younger Israelites, but up to that time, the younger generation was a pleasure to the Lord. Nevertheless, the "holy remnant" of that day was large. Those who were enticed with the counsel of Balaam were weeded out, so that the Israelites who went into the Promised Land with Joshua were the more obedient ones. In fact, their obedience in following his orders in the multiple circuitings of Jericho was remarkable, for they were not allowed to speak the entire time until the trumpets were blown.

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

The RSV is a better translation: "Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy, no conception!" However, these three processes are in reverse order. The thought is that there would be no conception, no pregnancy, and no birth.

The Book of Hosea contains much repetition with many short, cryptic statements sprinkled throughout, suggesting that the statements were made on different occasions. Similarly, we, as Christians, have a habit of thought in witnessing, and although our witnessing may vary a little from person to person, certain general themes and statements keep repeating. It appears that Hosea spoke to one group on one occasion and to another group on another occasion. The choppy way the book is presented seems to indicate it is a summation of several sermons he gave that were inspired of God.

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

The RSV reads, "Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left." In other words, there would be a complete loss with no inhabitants left in the land, for they would be taken into captivity. This statement was a manifestation by God that He was departing from the ten tribes, at least temporarily, so that they would get the lesson.

Successful people who have power, wealth, and all temporal goods often want to perpetuate their money and glory. Consequently, they build a monument, establish a fund, or do something else to keep their memory alive. In verse 12, the Lord was saying that no posterity

would be left in the land to proclaim or continue Israel's glory.

And what was Ephraim's glory? God had dealt with the ten tribes. He had brought them out of Egypt; established them in Israel, the land of milk and honey; given them prophets and the Law; helped them to multiply and conquer their enemies; and so forth. When the people did not listen to the prophets, they began to decline until all of their former glory came to naught. When the ten-tribe kingdom was taken into captivity, nothing was left of that glory. God departed from them—temporarily.

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

How was Ephraim “planted in a pleasant place” like the city of Tyre? Ephraim was compared with Tyre, a prosperous commercial maritime city. Both cities were strategically located for commerce and mercantile professions and were made rich with the transport of goods. Being on the seacoast in an ideal place with a good harbor, Tyre was pleasantly situated from the standpoint of commerce, which made the city wealthy. Ephraim was similarly favorably situated, for the northern kingdom occupied the most *fruitful* portion of the land and was very productive agriculturally.

Spiritually speaking, the Church was favorably situated in the beginning under the Lord's blessing, but as time went on, it wove itself into the councils of the wealthy of earth, worldly-minded people. The Church should have kept separate from the world and from evil. For example, Jesus did not get contaminated in going to the Pharisees, for he gave a lesson and left. Later on, the Church dwelled in the “Pharisees' house,” as it were. The nominal Church thus departed from the Lord.

“Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer [the Assyrian king].” Evil waxed worse and worse, with each generation getting more corrupt. Therefore, Ephraim was bringing the children to judgment and retribution. Because the people did not heed the voice of the Lord, they would be bereaved of children and punished. Ephraim's children would be given over to the murderer, or the “slaughter” (RSV) of the Assyrian host, who would take them into captivity. Stated another way, the king of Assyria would be the Lord's slaughter weapon. Hence this generation of children was being reared only to be slaughtered. Spiritually, Revelation 2:22,23 gives the same principle. Papacy will be cast into great tribulation, and her children, the Protestant systems, will be “killed,” or destroyed. The coming trouble will cause these systems to go into extinction.

With regard to the ten tribes, the parents were taken into captivity in a foreign land, for the most part, and deprived of all luxuries to live a hard life as a subject people. However, their children who were of military age did the fighting and were slain in the battle with Assyria. Thus the parents saw their own flesh and blood destroyed and then were taken into captivity.

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

The end of verse 14 is similar to verses 11 and 13 in that the fruitage of the womb would not prosper. The “miscarrying womb” and the “dry breasts” suggested a very dark picture for the next generation.

The sense of verse 14 is as follows. Through Hosea, God said, “Give them [the ten tribes].” Hosea replied, “O LORD: what wilt thou give [them]?” God answered through Hosea, “Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.” In other words, Hosea spontaneously interjected, or interrupted with, a question much as the Apostle John enthusiastically interjected his

personality in the Book of Revelation.

**Comment:** The prophets spoke mechanically as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Although Hosea both spoke the words the Lord gave him and interjected his own thoughts, the change was apparent to the people who were listening. *Mechanical* speaking was different from Hosea's *spontaneous* speaking. When a prophet was mechanically moved, it was obvious the words came from the Lord.

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

“All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them.” The thought is, “Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them.” Gilgal, which is mentioned three times in the Book of Hosea, had a bad background of idol worship (Hos. 4:15; 9:15; 12:11).

**Q:** In a general way, does this scenario of Ephraim's experiences represent the tribulation that will befall the Great Company, for instance, the reference to a “miscarrying womb and dry breasts”? The “little sister” in Song of Solomon is described as having “no breasts” (Song 8:8).

**A:** Yes, and this observation will become more apparent later.

Through Hosea, God was addressing the ten tribes. “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” (RSV). In other words, “This is it! Because you have gone too far, it is necessary for you to go into captivity and for destruction to be visited upon the land.”

For “all their princes are revolters,” the NIV has “all their leaders are rebellious.” The last five kings of Israel were particularly evil, with one assassination after another. In addition, all the contemporary leaders of the ten tribes were rebellious. As each king was assassinated and another king took his place, conditions just got worse.

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

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

The offspring would be cut off in death, and the parents would end up as “wanderers among the nations,” being scattered into other lands. Even if Ephraim bore children, they would be slain by the enemy. The theme that God would slay the children through impending judgment was repeated again and again (verses 13, 14, and 16). Hosea did not give a long sermon but spoke in fits and spurts on different occasions.

Verse 17 is a reminder of the condemnation that came upon Cain. A mark was put on him, and he was sent out from a favorable condition into the wilderness as a wanderer. And that has been the condition of the Jews—they would just get settled in one place when persecution, or a pogrom, would arise, causing them to go to another place. Judah had the same experience except that the two tribes remained together more as a unit, whereas the ten tribes were “lost” and their history could not be traced. The Bible tells more about Judah—where the two tribes were taken captive; how they were brought back, right up to Jesus' day; and then how they were scattered in Diaspora. Except for a very small number of Jews of the ten tribes who returned to Israel with those of Judah in 536 BC, the history of the ten tribes has been lost. In fact, the last part of verse 17, “they shall be wanderers among the nations,” gave rise to the

common expression “the lost tribes of Israel,” referring to the ten-tribe kingdom.

The two-tribe kingdom was brought to a particular place, whereas most of the ten tribes were dispersed into Europe from Assyria. The British-Israelite theory is fundamentally incorrect with regard to God’s coming favor, but it is correct in identifying that Jewry was dispersed into Germany, Italy, Spain, and England.

Although the focus of attention was on the northern kingdom, the reference to Ephraim’s root being dried up and the bearing of no fruit is a reminder of Jesus’ cursing the fig tree (all of Israel) because it had no fruit. Hence the nation was rejected in AD 33 and destroyed in 69-70. Most of the Book of Hosea rebukes the ten tribes—and repetitiously. Judah is mentioned infrequently.

**Comment:** Taken by themselves, certain strong statements in verses 15 and 17 seem to imply that Israel has lost God’s favor forever; namely “for there I hated them,” “I will love them no more,” and “God will cast them away.” However, the Book of Hosea goes on and teaches repentance and restoration of favor. For example, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him” (Hos. 14:4).

**Reply:** Yes, the book teaches redemption and favor coming back to the Jews. Their experiences produced in them a yearning and a desire to return to the Lord.

Not only the ten tribes but also the ten toes and the ten horns pertain to Christendom. Thus, in the broad sense, these verses in Hosea can also apply to Christendom.

**Q:** How does chapter 9 give lessons with regard to Christendom?

**A:** One of Israel’s problems was incorporating sexuality into their religious practices. The people did not see the incompatibility of worshipping God while catering to the flesh. They trusted in their own fruitfulness, wealth, numbers, etc. Catholicism has boasted for centuries of being the true Church, the vast numbers of communicants being considered one proof. One can sin, go to the Confessional, leave there planning to commit the same sin again, go back to the Confessional, etc., in a continuing cycle. The Catholic Church published a list of payments to be made to the church, according to the sin, in order to receive forgiveness. Catholicism became a religion of convenience in which one could have one foot on the earth and one foot in heaven. By following church regulations, communicants have “insurance,” but they are departing from the real God and the real and only Mediator, Jesus Christ. In the type, the northern kingdom was weaned away from Jerusalem to false worship, yet they ostensibly worshipped Jehovah. Similarly, Catholicism has taught that the Bible is God’s Word, but that Word is supplemented with Catholicism’s own catechism. Moreover, the interpretation of the Bible came from the priesthood, not from individual independent study.

The two places of rival worship, Dan and Beth-el, represent Roman Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox Church. Then, as the ten tribes prospered, the number of altars increased. In addition to Dan and Beth-el, altars were built on almost every hill, providing diversity, which represents Protestantism. The Catholic Church is one and is strongly centralized, whereas Protestantism has many altars, making many divisions in Christendom.

From another standpoint, a deception is putting too much confidence in human leaders and teachers, and not realizing that the fundamental relationship is between God, Christ, and the individual. Nothing should come in between, no matter how much truth a teacher might have. We should appreciate one’s leadership only in relationship to his understanding of God’s Word and not allow anything to take away from our individual, personal relationship with God and Jesus. We should look forward to seeing the Heavenly Father and His Son, not other human

beings. Otherwise, nominalism creeps in and interrupts the close communion with the Lord.

Wealth, popularity, and power are very dangerous for the Christian. As one prospers with money and influence, the tendency is to get involved in something that takes us away from the simplicity in Christ that should be ours and should be maintained at all times.

The next chapter, Hosea 10, deals with lawsuits. Like today, there was a multiplicity of lawsuits. In our day, they are a sign of the end of the age.

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

Other translations are better for this verse, since the King James seems to contradict in regard to an empty vine bringing forth fruit. The RSV reads, “Israel is a luxuriant vine.” The NIV has, “Israel was a spreading vine.” However, the King James can be explained as follows. Israel was an empty vine from the standpoint that when some vines produce an overabundance of fruit, the fruit just drops off, leaving an empty vine. The fruit gets overripe and falls off. From another perspective, Israel had a lot of fruit but not the right kind, for the ten tribes brought forth fruit *unto themselves*. Israel’s being likened to a vine reminds us of the “vine of the earth” with its bad fruit (Rev. 14:18,19). Mark 12:1-9 calls Israel a *vineyard*: “A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it.”

Israel “hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly [handsome] images.” The context shows that Israel’s chief fault was a spiritual decline. As the Israelites prospered materially, altars and images to heathen gods proliferated as a reflection of that prosperity; that is, the increase of temporal prosperity was used to increase altars and to make statues and graven images to worship. The multiplicity of altars distracted from the true altar at Jerusalem. Some altars were *ostensibly* to Jehovah, but many were not. Israel became empty spiritually in proportion to its becoming full of this world’s goods.

This same tendency exists in Christian life. Material prosperity and riches can be quite a snare to the Christian. Riches can change the heart and habit of living, and time is employed in other channels. Thus God’s professed people—both natural and spiritual Israel—are subject to the temptation of wealth.

**Comment:** Instead of “images,” the Companion Bible has “pillars,” which refers to phallic symbols in the groves.

**Comment:** The King James margin has “statues” or “standing images.” The NIV has “sacred stones,” which conveys the idea of an upright image.

**Reply:** Yes. The “image of the beast” in the Book of Revelation can be considered the “*statue of the beast*,” which gives a little clearer perception because it hearkens back to Babylon and the three-dimensional statue of Bel that was set up on the Plain of Dura.

**Comment:** Some of these images were similar in concept to totem poles, which are both a pillar and a statue.

**Reply:** Yes. Totem poles, which were usually made of wood, are associated with American Indians, but the same thing was done with stone. Thus some of these things were universally practiced by heathen nations, but each nation had its own type of artistry and emphasis on the gods and statues that represented it.

“According to the *goodness* of his land they [the ten tribes] have made goodly images [and statues].” This deflection of the true worship of Jehovah reminds us of the condition of Sodom and Gomorrha—pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness—which gave rise to all kinds of seeds or end products of perversity (Ezek. 16:49). From the subsoil of pride and fullness of bread grew sodomy and homosexuality, for example.

**Comment:** Today the term “Gay *Pride*” is used.

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

The Israelites’ hearts became “divided” in that they were double-minded between the Lord and heathen gods. God broke down the altars and spoiled the images when the ten-tribe kingdom was taken into captivity. Israel’s cities were destroyed, and the people were humiliated. Altars, statues, and images were disfigured and desecrated. Ornamentation was broken off the altars, and the images were beheaded and/or shorn of their arms.

**Comment:** For part of verse 2, the NIV reads, “Now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones.”

**Reply:** That is a good rendering.

With regard to the heart being divided, the Apostle James wrote, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). The Israelites got caught up in prosperity and had one foot in their “heaven” and one foot on earth.

**Comment:** Elijah asked, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

Ephraim is a type of the Great Company. The sin in the world, in Christendom, can creep into our own lives if we are not careful and do not keep our consecration fresh. By devotion and perseverance, we can avoid that dangerous condition. For example, the world uses the doctrine of love to cover everything, and it is license for the dirt and filth that pervade the world. We must develop God’s *principled* love as set forth in *His Word*; this is a *schooled* love. We must be careful of catchy phrases.

The type of the Levites versus the priests pictures the divided condition of the consecrated. The Levites could not attain the full enjoyment of the priesthood because they were dealing with the public. The danger is compromise. Pictured by the Levites in the finalized sense, the Great Company class compromise and are double-minded. Serving both the public and God, the Levites loved the Lord but in a divided sense. The Apostle Paul said, “This *one* thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). In this age, the *high calling* should have the priority in our witness activities.

Incidentally, in the later history of the ten-tribe kingdom, there were various enemy incursions into Israel, and sometimes even into Judah. The first Assyrian king to enter Israel was Pul. The next Assyrian king who was mentioned was Tiglath-pileser, who may have been the same individual but from another standpoint. Just as in Egypt, a Pharaoh named Tutankhamen is abbreviated as King Tut, so the syllable “pil” could be Pul. It is interesting to note that “*eser*” was part of the name of King Shalmaneser. In time, Nebuchadnezzar became the king of Babylon, and his name is also spelled Nebuchadne~~zar~~*eser*. The Assyrian Empire merged into the Babylonian Empire, and some of the names were carried over into the new arrangement. While the Book of Daniel tells of five universal empires, there were at least seven, but two of them preceded the Babylonian Empire and the other empires shown in the image of Daniel 2.



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

The ten tribes had a puppet king, who was only a figurehead. He was neither revered nor respected, and the people did what they wanted. However, because the people did not fear Jehovah, a real king would not have done them any good anyway. If they did not fear God, why should they fear man? The NIV reads, “Then they will say, ‘We have no king, because we did not revere the LORD. But even if we had a king, what could he do for us?’”

In studying the chronology of the northern kingdom, we can equate which king of Israel was contemporaneous with a particular king of Judah. However, there was a period of anarchy before the ten tribes were taken into captivity, and Hosea was referring to this interim time gap, which occurred before the reign of King Hoshea, the last king of the ten tribes. The succession of kings and events was Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, period of anarchy with no clear king, Hoshea (for 9 years), and Assyrian captivity. Conditions more or less stabilized during Hoshea’s reign. Hosea was now writing about ten years before the ten tribes were taken into captivity.

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

“They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant.” The people had sworn they would obey the Law Covenant (“All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”), but they were unfaithful (Exod. 19:8). Breaking covenants became *characteristic* of them, for as time went on, they broke other “covenants” (plural—see the RSV). The New Testament uses the word “trucebreakers” (2 Tim. 3:3).

What is another time the ten tribes swore falsely in making a covenant? While outwardly a tributary to the Assyrian Empire, Israel clandestinely made a covenant with Egypt to come and rescue them from this mighty power. Having sworn an oath to the king of Assyria in God’s name, Israel dealt falsely with both the king of Assyria and God in making the second covenant—even though Assyria imposed a heavy yoke of tribute on Israel. Every wealthy person had to pay 50 shekels, which was a *huge* tax considering that a healthy man’s life in the slave market cost only 30 shekels.

According to the Law of Moses, any oath that was sworn in the name of the Lord had to be kept. Otherwise, the party or parties were held accountable.

**Comment:** For a person to falsely take the name of Christ is a serious responsibility.

**Reply:** The principle is, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exod. 20:7). Guilt is incurred in proportion to the amount of light a person has.

“Thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.” Furrows were used for planting seed. Then the seed was covered up with dirt. However, the crop that came forth was hemlock, a poisonous plant. In verse 4, judgment was associated with hemlock. A common practice was to give a condemned person the choice of being publicly disgraced and executed or entering a private chamber to commit suicide with a hemlock potion. The philosopher Socrates took hemlock to commit suicide in his shame and disgrace. Thus hemlock was a plant of judgment and death.

In the covenant with Assyria, God held the ten tribes responsible. The king of Assyria was so insulted when he realized what had been done under the table with Egypt that he made

preparations, gathered his forces together, and destroyed all the major cities of the ten tribes and replaced them with the Samaritans. In addition, he destroyed the altars. These events took place about 130 years before Judah's captivity in 606 BC. Those taken captive of the ten tribes were scattered abroad. They were dispersed by being sold as slaves in Europe.

**Comment:** Part of verse 4 reads as follows in the NIV: "Therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field."

**Reply:** This description, which sounds like conditions in society today, was the result of too much license. License is confused with liberty. Based on the Word of God, there needs to be a dividing line between right and wrong.

Amos 6:12 states, "For ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." Hemlock, an evergreen, grows slowly. Accordingly, the judgments were ten years away, but they were coming. Pronouncement of the verdict is one thing; execution of the judgment is another.

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

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

"The people ... shall mourn ... and the priests ... for the glory thereof ... is departed" from Samaria. Ephraim was shamed when the *prime object* of their worship, a "calf-idol" (see NIV), was taken to Assyria and given as a "present"—that is, as tribute—to the king. Originally, two calves were erected, one at Beth-el and the other at Dan, and now one of the calves would be taken into captivity. Hosea changed Beth-el to Beth-aven, a derogatory name meaning "house of iniquity." Similarly, Babel at one time signified "gateway to God," but it was changed phonetically to mean "confusion."

The people of Samaria feared when that which represented their god (the calf idol) was taken into captivity. As an ominous sign that their own captivity (or slaying) and the destruction of their homes were next, the idol was broken in pieces and melted down to separate the valuable metals. Then the gold and silver were taken to Assyria as tribute money. The experience was humiliating; Ephraim was disgraced because of the treatment of its supposed god. The shame was comparable to that experienced by the nation of Israel when the Ark of the Covenant, the *chief article* of furniture and the *primary symbol* of their worship, was captured by the Philistines.

The calf was venerated, and sacrificial rites attended its worship. When the calf was taken to Assyria, the (false) glory departed from Israel's religious services. As the capital of the ten tribes, Samaria was a synonym for Ephraim and the northern kingdom of Israel.

"Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel." A Delphic oracle may have been associated with the calf idol. Whether or not that was the case, the counsel was *false*. By following that counsel, the ten tribes were disgraced by Assyria. (The leadership had felt it was better for the idol to be taken than for Ephraim to be invaded and made desolate. However, the invasion and desolation came anyway.)

Jareb was probably an individual (see Hosea 5:13). Jareb may have been either the abbreviated name of an Assyrian monarch or his birth name, which differed from his throne name. Shalmaneser was on the scene when most of the ten-tribe despoliation took place.

**Comment:** Verse 5 sounds like Revelation 18:10,11, “Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!... And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her.”

**Reply:** Yes, the kings of the earth will mourn when they see Babylon’s fall, for they will know their fall is next. The fall of the ten tribes, with their object of veneration being despoiled, was like the future fall of Papacy and Christendom. Temporarily, the people of the ten tribes were left behind—but what would happen next? In connection with the Time of Trouble, there has been a failure to distinguish *which* “trouble” is being referred to. Trouble will first come on the true Church, whose persecution and demise will precede the fall of Babylon. Thus the judgment of the true Church will take place before the judgment of the false Church. Trouble will also be experienced by the Great Company, Israel, and the world.

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

Foam can be skimmed off the surface of water and removed. Foam is made of air, so when the bubbles fracture, nothing is left. Samaria’s “king” would be cut off like foam upon the water. The present tense “is” in the King James seems to refer to the anarchistic interregnum, during which there were multiple assassinations until Hoshea reigned and established order for nine years before Ephraim was carried off to Assyria. If future tense is correct, as in the NIV and the RSV, verse 7 referred to the coming Assyrian captivity.

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

“The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars.” As already stated, Aven means “wickedness.” In the coming trouble, Israel’s altars, the “high places [plural]” of *wickedness*, were broken, disfigured, and mutilated but left relatively intact. The altars were overgrown with weeds (thorns and thistles) while the ten tribes were in captivity. Ephraim’s former glory was destroyed.

“And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.” This portion of verse 8 almost sounds as if the people wanted a landslide to demolish and cover them over, but the thought is, “*Hide us!*” In the trouble, which the people realized was a judgment from God, they did not want to be destroyed in their shame. Rather, they wanted to be shielded and hidden behind the barrier of mountains or hills. From another perspective, the people desired protection from the enemy. They wanted to be hidden quickly and to remain undiscovered.

The antitype pertains to the great Time of Trouble. The altars of Christendom will be destroyed when Babylon falls. Conditions will be similar to those of the 1917 Russian Revolution, when large cathedrals were entered, and statues and relics were cut open to show they consisted of papier-mâché instead of the arm or leg bone of this or that saint. In other words, the limbs had been fabricated. Books published at the time revealed these things, but today there is silence. We are being brainwashed and intentionally left in ignorance. Only in the large city libraries, such as New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC, are these old books still available. It was also revealed that many “miracles” were tricks. No wonder the Russian people became atheists! They associated *false* Christianity with the Bible and wanted nothing to do with it. They lost all respect for the Bible and considered it to be part of the opiate or scheme to delude the people.

Revelation 6:15,16, which refers to the time of the French Revolution under the Sixth Seal, is similar: “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and

hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Isaiah 2:19 reads, “And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” The usual explanation for both Isaiah 2:19 and the antitypical similar portion here in Hosea is that insurance companies, banking institutions, trusts, etc., will fail in the Great Time of Trouble, and in panic, the people will plead for protection. As troubles get worse at the end of the age, the people will become desperate for some sure form of security.

In Hosea’s day, the people’s cry for mountains to fall on them was like saying, “If the people knew the enemy was coming into the land, they would go to the natural, literal mountains or hills and look for caves to hide in instead of hiding in a building, a fabricated structure, which the enemy would enter for plunder, violence, and rapine.” In the antitype, the people of Christendom will look to earthly governments to protect them from the approaching trouble. Seeing hard times coming, they will seek ways to tide them over.

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

Here again Hosea referred to Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin, in which was great iniquity with regard to homosexuality, degradation, and unwillingness to change (Judges 19 and 20). To recap: The men of Gibeah abused a concubine to death. As a result, her master cut up her body into 12 pieces and sent a piece to each of the tribes as an object lesson. Subsequently the other tribes went to battle against Benjamin and, after being repelled, eventually nearly decimated the entire tribe.

**Comment:** The NIV refers to the defeat of Benjamin with a question: “Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?”

Today also, conditions are getting progressively worse—until the final future battle, the real Time of Trouble, gets rid of the evil. When anarchy comes, people will be concerned with survival, and not with fancied wrongs, for example. *God* will bring order. When the stone smites, it will *replace* the image.

The reason the other tribes were not successful initially in defeating Benjamin is that the Lord was giving a generalized prophetic picture. The end of the ten-tribe kingdom is typical of the end of the ten toes of the image and the ten horns of the beast. The end time of the northern kingdom, including the period of anarchy, is a picture of conditions in Christendom at the end of the age. Hosea reestablished order, but that order was ephemeral; it did not last, and utter destruction followed.

**Q:** What does the clause “there they stood” mean?

**A:** Not all the people of Benjamin were sympathetic to homosexuality, but when the other tribes gathered together and asked these Benjamites to get rid of the gross sinners, they refused.

Gibeah was a city north of Jerusalem and part of the ten tribes at the time of Hosea’s writing. The boundary line of the northern kingdom came very close to Jerusalem. The entire city was like Sodom and Gomorrah, but that was not true of every other part of Benjamin. However, the rest of the populace of Benjamin erred in defending the rights of the inhabitants of Gibeah.

**Q:** Please explain again the wording “the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.”

**A:** This experience was prophetic. At first, the ten tribes did not overtake the “children of iniquity” in the battle fought in Gibeah, but subsequently they were so successful that a method was devised for repopulating the tribe of Benjamin lest it perish. Women were needed for purposes of procreation, so at a certain festival, the surviving men of Benjamin captured daughters of Shiloh and took them as wives.

Hosea gave the example of Gibeah to show the depth of iniquity in the ten tribes. Isaiah used the same principle in saying that Israel was sick from the top of the head to the sole of the foot and then calling the nation “Sodom” and “Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:6,10); that is, those historic examples of iniquity were analogous to conditions in Israel.

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

Hosea frequently used agricultural expressions. Verse 10 has “when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.”

**Comment:** The KJV margin has two alternate translations: “when I shall bind them for their two *transgressions*,” and “when I shall bind them in their two *habitations*.”

**Reply:** The “two furrows [transgressions or habitations]” can be considered from different standpoints. (1) There were *two* kingdoms, Israel and Judah, the northern and the southern kingdoms, respectively. The “hemlock,” or poisonous weed, was growing in the fields of both Israel and Judah (see verse 4). (2) There was *double* iniquity. The NIV reads, “Nations will be gathered against them to put them in bonds for their double sin.” (3) Dan and Beth-el, the *two* places of worship, acted as seedbeds for all kinds of iniquity and confusion based on idolatry. Plowing makes a trench for the seed. Then the dirt mound on each side of the trench is used to cover the seed. The crop that grew in Ephraim was the idolatrous calf worship, which the people liked. Similarly in Christendom, the people like the doctrine of the Mass and the use of Confessionals, for they can sin willfully and then be mechanically forgiven. They feel that liberty for the flesh and having a good time more than compensate for their monetary contributions to the Catholic Church. This religion is very convenient, for one can serve God and mammon at the same time. When carried to an extreme, mammon ends up being the devil. That type of doctrine does not help people fight the desires of the flesh for lust, influence, power, etc. To please the Lord, a person must believe *into* Christ, progress in trying to develop a Christlike character, and be faithful unto death.

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

**Comment:** The NIV has, “Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh; so I will put a yoke on her fair neck. I will drive Ephraim, Judah must plow, and Jacob must break up the ground.”

**Comment:** Threshing was pleasurable to the heifer because she could eat while she worked, but God wanted more discipline from the ten tribes.

A “heifer” is a cow that has not had a calf and given milk. A heifer likes to “tread out the corn” because (1) she can eat some of the corn and (2) a young animal is full of spirit and energy that have to be expended. Ephraim was a trained heifer that loved to tread, or thresh; therefore, her fair neck was spared from a yoke. Threshing was much easier than plowing and more rewarding too, for the animal could eat while threshing. And there was greater liberty, such as not having a yoke, which usually did not fit and was painful and uncomfortable.

**Q:** Why did Hosea say, “Jacob shall break his clods”?

**A:** The term “Jacob” referred to all 12 tribes, the entire nation. In other words, judgment was coming, and Judah and Ephraim would both have to plow. Hosea dealt mainly with the ten tribes, but occasionally, as here, he brought Judah into the picture. Both Ephraim and Judah would be put under a real “yoke” of servitude and hard experiences in captivity, although Ephraim’s captivity would occur first.

The purpose of agriculture is to bring forth plentiful crops and good fruit through honest labor. However, with Ephraim and Judah, what normally would be a blessing in the outcome was reaping poor crops and evil fruit, and the nation would suffer the consequences. The coming experience in captivity would eventually work for their good, lest they become incorrigible.

The Law was a yoke to those who were conscientious, but because Israel was wayward, another yoke had to be substituted, one that would force compliance. Obedience to the Law depended on voluntary cooperation, and without Jesus, trying to obey the letter of the Law was a serious yoke for those who had a tender conscience. At one time, all Israel was given the proper training to obey the Law, but the people were careless and negligent, so now a yoke of captivity was needed. Through hard experiences, God would bring them back to Him. He had granted them instruction and liberty of choice, but they did not properly use the liberty. Now would come the rod of discipline.

Hosea’s agricultural background shows here. Plowing merely turned over the soil. Then the clods had to be broken up, or harrowed. The coming discipline and judgment would break the “clods,” that is, the hard-heartedness of the people.

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

The purpose of spiritual agriculture is to bring forth proper character fruit to God. In natural agriculture, the object is to bring forth literal fruit through honest labor. An honest day’s work brings an honest reward. Verse 12 has this thought too: “Sow ... righteousness, reap ... [the fruitage of] mercy.” But Israel bore fruits of unrighteousness, so God would give them an experience in captivity that would work for their good.

Hosea was planting seed thoughts if the Israelites wanted to get back into God’s favor: “Sow ... righteousness.” The door was open to them if they thoroughly reversed their ways. These thoughts, though not heeded at the time, would help them in captivity. Those rightly exercised would say, “We should have listened to Hosea instead of ridiculing him.”

Again Hosea was using agricultural terms. In other words, “Repent and change from the ground up. If you conscientiously sow good seed, you will get a harvest of joy and good fruitage instead of the whirlwind you are now reaping.” Plowing is mentioned in verse 11, as well as breaking up the clods. Verse 12 continues in the same vein but from an opposite standpoint. Through Hosea, God told Israel that if they reversed their iniquitous behavior, His goodness would shower down upon them.

God was counseling a deep, sincere repentance and change of heart condition. Breaking up fallow ground was deep plowing—more than just on the surface. Big clumps (clods) of dirt were overturned. The Israelites went through the motions of calling on the Lord and seeking His blessing, but their conduct was contrary. They saw a need to give token recognition to the Lord, but their return to Him was superficial and ceremonial. Now they were living at a time when the enemy was ominous on the horizon, so they needed to plow deeper and search their hearts so that there would be a change in thinking and behavior.

“Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you”; that is, repent from your hard hearts. Every year—continually—the ground had to be plowed. If the plowing was ignored, the ground would again get hard and not bear fruit. God was telling the Israelites to repent, to stir themselves up to receive the seed and the rain of His blessing—whether that blessing was truth and instruction or whether it was favor and mercy (both spiritually and materially).

Hosea was saying that after the coming judgment on Israel, there would still be hope of future recognition and righteousness. The trouble was inevitable because of their iniquity, but hopefully in captivity, the Israelites would meditate on his words, as well as those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets, and get the lesson and *repent*. There is also an application down here at this end of the age. Those in Babylon who recognize that the same conditions exist in the churches are urged to *come out* to receive instruction in righteousness and to get blessings.

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

Hosea gave the Israelites a tongue-lashing: “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.” The people in the prophet’s day would have understood his forceful language. He added, “Ye have eaten the fruit of lies.” In other words, “You have reaped what you sowed. You sowed iniquity, and you reaped injustice. You sowed lies, and now you are getting the fruitage.” Hosea showed cause and effect: because they had plowed wickedness, they reaped iniquity. The “fruit of lies” was a reference to the false worship of calf idols. Israel’s priests gave false counsel from the false idols, and the people preferred this evil worship to the counsel in Deuteronomy. Kissing the calf idols was an especially evil, repugnant practice, for it was not just kissing the noses (Hos. 13:2).

All of the religious evils could be traced back to Jeroboam’s institution of calf idols at Dan and Beth-el. Setting up the false altars was strategic ingenuity, for their convenient proximity made the people of the ten tribes think twice about going to Jerusalem. The evil grew steadily worse. Now, just before the judgment, Israel was at the height of iniquity. The same principle of moral deterioration can be seen in the history of the United States. This country was settled by people fleeing political and religious persecution. They sacrificed a lot to come here and then lived a simple life, appreciating freedom of conscience and worship. The framers of the Constitution were very noble, but as the country grew and prospered, it degenerated into iniquity. History repeats itself.

Like Isaiah, Hosea preached during the days of Hezekiah. Hosea’s ministry extended a long time but stopped about six years before the Assyrian captivity, when he ceased his ministry, died, or was put in a position where he could no longer write. That time was now nearing, for the ten-tribe kingdom was in its last days. Despite a strong judgment message, Hosea gave a *hope of recovery*. He uttered key seed thoughts that were very constructive. If the people wanted to get back into God’s favor, they would have to thoroughly reverse their ways. However, they were steeped in iniquity and would not change. Not until taken into captivity did they realize they should have listened to Hosea instead of cursing and ridiculing him.

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

“Therefore shall a tumult [the roar of battle—NIV] arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled.” In other words, the Assyrians would come suddenly, and the

people would panic, knowing the reputation of the enemy for fierceness. Though Ephraim and Manasseh had many people, their organization fell apart in panic, and their fortresses were taken.

“All thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman [violently] spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon [with—RSV and NIV] her children.” Pregnant women were killed; also, children were killed with their mothers. Hosea 13:16 elaborates by saying, “Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child [those who were pregnant] shall be ripped up.” No compassion was shown for women and children. What a dreadful judgment! Similarly, the Chaldeans, a “bitter and hasty” people, were known for their cruelty and ruthlessness (Hab. 1:6).

The thought of Beth-arbel is “house of God’s court.” Shalman was Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king who despoiled the northern kingdom. His son, Sargon, performed a mopping-up operation (2 Kings 17:3; Isa. 20:1).

Reuben, Gad, and one half of Manasseh were captured first, being a precursor to what would happen to the main part of Israel on the west side of the Jordan River. The two and a half tribes were captured suddenly and violently.

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

The NIV reads, “Thus will it happen to you, O Bethel, because your wickedness is great. When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.” The expressions “day dawns” and “in a morning” show that the attack would come *suddenly*, as soon as dawn came. The coming destruction would be *quick and violent*.

The reference to Beth-el indicated that the false worship of the ten tribes would not help them in the coming battle. The false counsel and god could not deliver them from the king of Assyria. As a result, Hoshea, the king of Israel, was cut off, and the people were taken captive to Assyria and widely dispersed. When Judah was defeated subsequently, the two tribes were not dispersed. Thus more favor was shown to those of Judah under the covenant of David, so it was easier for them to return under Cyrus to rebuild the Temple in 536 BC.

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

Hosea likened Israel to a child at the time the nation came out of Egypt and the Law Covenant was made with them in Sinai. In one sense, Hosea likened this event to the birth of the nation. From another standpoint, the birth occurred with the death of Jacob. Previously, in the Patriarchal Age, God dealt with individuals.

In Egypt, Israel was like a son in the womb. In that sense, the nation was not born until the Exodus, when God called the Israelites out of Egypt (the womb). Following that experience, a contract was made with them at Mount Sinai, thus formalizing the prerecognition of their being the children of Jacob.

Another picture likened Israel to a newborn babe. God severed the umbilical cord in the Wilderness of Sinai. He treated the Israelites as a mother eagle treats her eaglets. He bathed, nursed, and nurtured them until they matured as a nation. Ezekiel 16:4-6 similarly likened their birth to an infant who was thrown on the ground and abandoned until God took that child and swaddled, nursed, nurtured, and taught him various things.

Matthew 2:15 quotes the last part of verse 1: “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” God called



Jesus out of Egypt after Joseph and Mary had taken him there to flee from the wrath of Herod. Many Old Testament Scriptures that are quoted in the New Testament are only secondary applications of the actual picture, and that is the case with Matthew 2:15. Hosea 11:1 refers primarily to Ephraim and the nation of Israel, who were called out of Egypt in the Exodus. With regard to Jesus, some Old Testament prophecies were a primary fulfillment in him, and others were secondary. Thus Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament often indicate that we should go back to where they were originally given, for buried in them is a picture of Messiah. Jesus was sent into Egypt so that he could be called back out of Egypt. The coming out of Egypt pictures the called-out ones (the *ecclesia*) of the Gospel Age. Thus Jesus, the Church, and Israel were *all* called out of Egypt either literally or symbolically.

Israel was a “child” at the time of the Exodus. “Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Exod. 4:22). Israel was God’s firstborn in the sense that this was the first *nation* He dealt with. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). Before that time, God dealt with individuals—the patriarchs such as Abraham and Noah. The nation came into being at the time of Jacob’s death with his 12 sons. Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel,” and his 12 sons and posterity were the “children of Israel.” Hence Jacob’s new name was passed on to his progeny. The next prominent personality God dealt with was Joseph.

**Comment:** Please explain again the relationship of verse 1 to Matthew 2:15, which applies to Jesus, whereas in the context here in Hosea, the application is to Israel.

**Reply:** Moses, a type of Jesus, led the Israelites out of Egypt as deliverer. Jesus was also called out of Egypt, and he will be the Deliverer of the world. In compassion and mercy, God recognized the Israelites in Egypt and led them out through Moses into the Wilderness of Sinai. God could have utterly turned His back on Israel but, instead, showed compassion. Jesus will do the same for those in “Egypt” (the world).

From another standpoint, the Israelites *cried* unto God for help from bondage, and He heard them. Prior to becoming Christians, we were under bondage to sin and death. All down the Gospel Age, many Christians have cried out and then been blessed with the truth. The point is that if one repents, redemption is possible—and salvation.

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

“As they [the prophets] called them [Israel], so they [Israel] went from them [the prophets].” The RSV translates verse 2 as follows: “The more I [God] called them [Israel], the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols.” This verse was the burden of Hosea, and he kept emphasizing it; namely, the more God favored Israel and the more they prospered, the deeper they got into sin and alienation from Him. The “father” (God) did everything possible for the child (Israel), but when the child grew up to maturity, he forgot his father. God worked *great* wonders to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage and taught the Israelites how to walk and have faith by instructing them with visual images (the Tabernacle, the cloud, manna, water springing forth from dry ground, their shoes not wearing out, etc.). It was as if God got down on His knees and used a rattle to get the child’s attention, but the child did not remember the time and effort expended on his behalf. God was merciful and compassionate (verse 4), yet at the slightest provocation, the Israelites were off worshipping idols and false gods.

The RSV seems to be the preferred translation, for even though the literal Hebrew is “they,” the context straightens out the first pronoun. The Septuagint also uses the pronoun “I.” However, if the King James is used, the first use of the pronoun “they” would refer to Moses, Joshua, and the prophets whom God raised up to bring Israel into alignment. Baalim (plural)

signifies “false lords.” “Graven images” were idols, usually statues (as opposed to just pictures). Incense was burned unto the statues as a *sacrifice*. *Tabernacle Shadows* explains that a sacrifice made the incense acceptable. The powdered incense was burned to produce a smoke, or gas, that gave off an aroma, and the fragrance, or aroma, lingered as a smoke after the incense was burned. The ingredients of the incense represented praise, sacrifice, etc., particularly as manifested in Jesus’ perfect humanity when exposed to the trials of life.

Thus the incense represented a *sacrifice*. It is not the prayer, but the vehicle *carrying* the prayer, that makes it acceptable to God. Revelation 8:3, which reads, “There was given unto him [Jesus] much incense, that he should offer it *with* the prayers of all saints,” shows that the incense is not the prayer but the *sacrifice* involved. The sacrifice makes the prayer effectual. However, here in verse 2, the incense of Israel symbolized an *unholy* sacrifice made to heathen gods. The incense was supposed to lift up the devotion and prayer to the false gods for their acceptance.

With regard to the true God, Psalm 141:2 says, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice,” or paraphrased, “Let my prayer rise before thee as the sweet incense of the morning and evening sacrifice.” The incense carries the prayers up to God.

The burning of incense to false gods was a copy, or counterfeit, of incense being offered to Jehovah. A great deal was known about God’s plan in early ages that is not recorded in Holy Writ. For example, much knowledge was known through the Great Pyramid long before the Bible was written. The true meaning of the Great Pyramid was understood way back there in a rudimentary sense, and right away Satan started to counterfeit and substitute an opposite picture.

At the time Israel was learning to walk, the people sacrificed to Baalim instead of growing up the proper way. Of those who originally departed from Egypt, only two entered the Promised Land—two out of 2 million people! (Of course only those 20 years and older were subject to this prohibition because such were considered fully responsible—Num. 14:29.) The children entered the Promised Land but not the fathers. God led the Israelites in the wilderness for 38 more years until all of the older generation had died except Joshua and Caleb.

These verses are *emotional*, and Hosea was very involved in the message. He fluctuated back and forth between encouragement and discouragement.

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

Although God did not specifically call Israel a babe in this context but used the terms “child” and “son” (verse 1), the allusion was to a babe, for He taught them how to walk. The RSV reads, “Yet it was I [God] who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.” As Ephraim toddled along on wobbly knees, the Lord guided them as a father helps a son so that there would be no damage.

“But they [Israel] knew not that I healed them.” When a child learns to walk, the parent holds the arms to guide a straight path and to prevent the child from falling. God taught helpless Israel how to walk, but His instruction, guidance, and care were not appreciated and thus were forgotten. However, Israel was responsible for remembering, for the record was in the Pentateuch.

The Lord did something else that was tender when Israel was helpless and vulnerable to outside influences; namely, He was an “eagle” to the nation. He bore them up on wings and repeatedly caught them as they fell in learning to fly (Deut. 32:11,12). In places, God likened

Himself to either a mother nurse or a father depending on the perspective.

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

“I [God] drew them [Israel] with cords of a man, with bands of love.” The “cords of a man” were the “bands of love.” Therefore, this “man” was like a considerate *father*. Hosea was emotional. He was a sensitive farmer—sensitive to the simple, wholesome values of life.

**Comment:** With regard to the “cords,” Ezekiel 16:4,5 is good in the NIV. “On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloth. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.”

**Reply:** Yes, we were referring to that Scripture. When Israel was born as an infant and exposed on the wilderness floor, none of the other nations came to the rescue. The Israelites were helpless, so God alone dealt with and rescued them from all their foes. We sing a hymn about being rescued from all our foes and ask God to draw us with the cords of love—“and thus He bound me to Him!”

Why was a “man” synonymous with “love” here in verse 4? (Usually we think of a woman as being more loving.) This would be a *perfect* man, for a man in perfection is symbolic of mercy, compassion, and love. Stated another way, a man’s *face* represents love. And a man’s face is emblematic of one of the four attributes of God—love (Ezek. 1:10). Also, man was created in God’s image, and “God is *love*” (1 John 4:8). As God is masculine and man is His image, so God’s likeness would be love. This thought harmonizes with God’s attributes, where man represents the element of love.

For verse 4, the RSV has, “I [God] led them [Israel] with cords of compassion, 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.” God took off Israel’s “yoke” under the taskmasters in Egypt and gave “meat” (meal, that is, food) to them.

The high and lofty One dwells with the contrite, which Israel was initially (Isa. 57:15). The nation was desirable in Egypt, and so is an individual before consecration, when he is humble and defenseless and recognizes his need for help.

At the beginning of the Exodus, it appears that *all* of the Israelite families had the blood of a lamb on their doors, for the account records no disobedience. God had compassion on them and brought them out of bondage into freedom—the freedom of Sinai. They needed much help at that time. Solomon was similarly humble and pleasing to God at the beginning of his reign. Later he went astray as he prospered—and so did Israel.

When God heard the cry of the Israelites in Egyptian bondage, He stooped down, removed their yoke, fed them with miraculous manna, and led them as a toddler to grow up under His special influence in the Wilderness of Sinai. Later, at the end of the 40 years, the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land. When they came to the land of Esau (Edom) for a shortcut, Moses promised that the Israelites would go through quietly and not take any cattle, but the answer of the Edomites was no. Thus the Israelites had to take the desert road in the burning heat to circumvent Edom and go up to Moabite territory. However, the Moabites were also unsympathetic, and King Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites. No one helped or watched out for this untrained newborn nation. Only God had compassion, without which the Israelites would have been destroyed.

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

“He shall not return into the land of Egypt.” What is the thought here?

**Comment:** Hosea 8:13 states the *opposite*: Israel “shall return to Egypt.” For Hosea 11:5, the RSV has, “They shall return to the land of Egypt,” and the NIV uses the question form: “Will they not return to Egypt?”

**Reply:** Both the RSV and the NIV are accurate, but the question form seems to be the better rendering. Here is a paradox like the one in regard to King Zedekiah, who would go to Babylon but not see it. In his case, the fulfillment was that he was taken to Babylon *blind!* In verse 5, Hosea was speaking of *Ephraim*. The preponderant number of survivors would be taken captive to Assyria, but a few fled to Egypt. Up to that time, the Lord sent prophets to the ten tribes, but they had deaf ears—they “refused to return” to God. In the Assyrian captivity, they would be made to hearken.

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

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

“The sword shall abide ... and shall consume ... and devour them [the cities of Ephraim], because of *their* counsels.” In other words, idol worship and the false prophets of Baal led them further and further from the counsel of “*the most High*” God. What foolishness! When people are drunk with the environment they find themselves in, they lose their sense of balance and reason.

“My people are bent [determined, prone] to backsliding from me: [even] though they [the contemporaneous prophets] called them [the ten tribes] to the most High, none at all would exalt him [God].” Isaiah and Hosea were two of these prophets.

With regard to spiritual “backsliding,” the ten tribes are sometimes likened to the Great Company, who backslide to a certain extent. Hence they need a personal experience in the Time of Trouble to draw them to repentance, to cause them to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and to enable them to be closer to their Lord and Maker. This cleansing experience *during* the great tribulation will take place after the true Church is taken home. Just as the Great Company will come to their senses in the great tribulation, so the ten tribes came to their senses in captivity.

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

Verse 8 is a radical change, or turnabout, but it continues on the same subject. God was speaking and repeatedly asking, “How shall I...?” Admah and Zeboim are two cities that were utterly destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. All four cities are still under the Dead Sea. Incidentally, Zoar, the place where Lot fled, is the only city in the plain area that was spared.

“Mine heart is turned within me.” A conflict of emotions was being expressed. Character demanded that a certain action be taken, but emotions wanted to do something else. Principles caused an internal churning as to what to do, as to what the right decision was. Love and

compassion said one thing, but justice and principle said another.

God was saying to Israel, “You demonstrate your unworthiness and lack of appreciation for what I have done for you in taking you out of Egypt. Your whole history is one of backsliding, and you ignore the prophets when they call you to repent, yet my desire is to *save the sinner if he will respond*.” Here was the lesson of the prodigal son.

“My repentings are kindled together.” The RSV has, “My compassion grows warm and tender.” The NIV reads, “All my compassion is aroused.” God’s emotions were in turmoil and churning indecision.

**Comment:** Many times God gave a stern judgment of Israel, and in the next breath, He was like a loving Father, who would not forget Israel.

**Reply:** God is moved with feelings; He is not a stoic God. As Revelation 4:3 shows, He is hard and strict (diamond quality) on the one hand, and He is compassionate and loving (the sard stone) on the other hand. Thus there is a conflict between justice and love. For Israel’s good, justice came first, for justice is the foundation of God’s throne. Therefore, at least momentarily, Israel had reached the point of no return to favor. God had had their rebellion up to the neck, as it were, so harsh judgment was necessary, but in the dispersion, He would exercise compassion and show mercy to those who came to their senses and repented. As stated elsewhere in Scripture, God would have a little sanctuary for the ten tribes, for in their midst would be a place where those in the right disposition would be fed lest they be extinguished.

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

The statement “I am God, and not man” pertains to God’s love. As imperfect human beings, we are apt to say “good riddance” and demand vengeance when we get disgusted with someone. But God had made a promise, or covenant, of the sure mercies of David, so there were extenuating circumstances. If He were too hasty, He would forget the promise, but unlike us, *God keeps His promises!* He remembers—not because of Israel’s goodness but for the fathers’ sakes (Rom. 11:28).

More than 200 years later, at the end of the Babylonian captivity in 536 BC, the return to favor was to *all* Israel, not to individuals, for in the latter case, confession and repentance would have been required. However, only a few of the ten tribes came back, and only about 50,000 of Judah returned to the Promised Land. The ten tribes had more difficulty because of their wide dispersion, but even with the two tribes, only a minority came back. Those who returned had faith in the promise that the Messiah would come out of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

“I will not enter into the city.” For this last clause, the RSV has, “I will not come to destroy.” Man would be more apt to seek vengeance and destroy and give up Ephraim as a lost cause.

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

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

“They [Israel] *shall* walk after the LORD.” There is a change here. The preceding verses gave a thumbnail history of Israel, but verses 10 and 11 are a prophecy not yet fulfilled.

“He [God] shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.” Jehovah will roar in judgment, and subsequently the “children” will come trembling “from the west [and southwest],” that is, from Europe and the United States. This is a *specific* prophecy of the Lord’s roaring in the Day of Vengeance, the Time of Trouble. After the trouble, there will be a great influx of Jews back to the Holy Land; that is, a *second* regathering will take place. A nucleus is being regathered back to Israel at the present time, *before* the Time of Trouble, but another regathering will occur *after* the Time of Trouble. Thus there are *two* regatherings at the end of the age. Verse 10 deals primarily with the Jews of the United States, showing a return to Israel just after the end of the Time of Trouble.

In fact, at that time, the Gentiles will ship the surviving Jews back, bag and baggage, in every way, shape, and form. The Gentiles will want to get rid of the Jews because of the holiness of the latter, based on God’s miraculous and spectacular deliverance of Israel out of Jacob’s Trouble. Moreover, the Jews will be ashamed. Now many do not return to Israel because of family, employment, trouble with the Arabs, and other reasons; they send money instead. But when God causes Israel’s awesome deliverance in the near future—the Six-Day War was as nothing in comparison—the Jews in other lands will want to return out of shame. The Gentiles will say, “You, a Jew! What are you doing here?” The Jews will catch the spirit and think, “Yes, we belong in Israel.” The Gentiles will furnish their transportation back. Thus when God roars in the Time of Trouble, the Jews will subsequently come back “*trembling*.”

“They [the Jews after the trouble] shall tremble [come trembling] as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria.” When a very unusual storm is coming, the birds get excited and flutter around, and a dove is particularly delicate and sensitive. The trembling will be a result of God’s previous judgments, which the Jews will see and hear about. As a consequence of the terrific deliverance, they will return to Israel a humbled people, being a little shaky because of not living up to being Jews. Today, generally speaking, they are interested in making money and are no better and no worse than the Gentiles. All are children of Adam and bent on their own ways, following the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then, *all of a sudden*, God will work *great wonders* in the Holy Land to effect a deliverance. Although the Jews in other lands will feel duty-bound to return, they will be scared to do so because they will realize they have not been living up to their obligations as Jews. It will be *their* God calling, the *God of Israel*, who will then be known as the *true* God. Thus the Jews will return, but with uncertainty.

In *wrath*, God will roar against Israel’s enemies, who will want to exterminate the nation. God’s exercise of power and wrath will put reverential fear into the hearts of the delivered Jews. The revelation of God in a position of authority will be like Joseph’s revealing his identity to his brethren. Joseph had to comfort them because their past iniquities came to mind. And God will similarly console the Holy Remnant a little while after Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** Joel 3:16 is a good cross-reference: “The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

Some prophecy should be understood in advance—like the prophecies of the Flood. Noah acted on the preknowledge—that preknowledge had an effect on his life. And prophecy helps and *forewarns* the Church. *After* prophecy is fulfilled, it becomes a testimony for the world of mankind of God’s foreknowledge and also a testimony *against* the unconsecrated for not heeding the Scriptures. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD” is a *disparaging* testimony, a *condemnation*, as can be seen by studying the context, yet the JW’s have taken this statement as a slogan (Isa. 43:10,12).

“I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.” The Jews will be resettled in their homeland whether or not they like it. In the Kingdom, their duty is to go back to their land, which is their

proper place. Currently only a nucleus is being regathered, but all Jews who survive the Time of Trouble will be shipped back to Israel. “Assyria” represents communistic and/or Muslim nations; “Egypt” pictures the world in general. Originally, the communist movement was primarily a *Jewish* movement. Then Trotsky was murdered. Early communist sympathizers in the United States were almost all Jews.

The NIV reads, “I will settle them in their homes.” God will settle the Holy Remnant in His own way in the homes He will make for them, for when the Kingdom is established, the contemporary generation of Jews will go back to Israel first. The Jews who come forth from the tomb throughout the Kingdom will comprise the second phase of the regathering that takes place after Jacob’s Trouble, for they will come forth in the various lands where they lived previously. As they go back to Israel, God will settle them as He did the Holy Remnant—in His way in the homes that He will make for them, for each man will have his own vine and fig tree. Ezekiel gave the land divisions, which are different from those in the Book of Joshua. In other words, God will settle the Jews in their *new* homes, where they will be *secure*.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 28:25,26 talks of the *true* safety after Jacob’s Trouble (as opposed to the false confidence in the near future, prior to Jacob’s Trouble, in fulfillment of Psalm 83). “Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God.”

**Comment:** The Prophet Jeremiah told that in the future, Israel will be pastoral and agrarian.

**Reply:** Shepherds, flocks, and natural homegrown foods will prevail. People will know, help, and socialize with their neighbors.

Before considering verse 12, we will again read verse 1 of this chapter: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Here this verse clearly applies to Israel, but the New Testament applies it to Jesus. What is the relationship of these two thoughts to each other? Why does Holy Writ go back to the Book of Hosea to call attention to this deliverance from Egypt when God called *Israel* His son, yet in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit gave verse 1 a personalized application to Jesus? Both are true, but why was this done?

**Comment:** Moses, who led the deliverance, was a type of Jesus, who will lead the deliverance of the world.

**Reply:** God, in His mercy, recognized the children of Israel in Egypt and called them out and then dealt with them in the wilderness. In His compassion, He did not condemn and utterly turn His back on the Israelites but sent Moses as a deliverer. In the New Testament, Jesus will do the same for “Egypt,” the world of mankind in the antitype.

Moreover, the Israelites cried unto Jehovah for deliverance and help when they were burdened under the taskmasters in Egypt. He heard them when they were in bondage. Similarly, those who become Christians were formerly under the bondage of sin, death, and slavery to the vices in their frame as children of Adam. Many of the Lord’s people all down the Gospel Age have been in a similar situation where He answered their cries by giving them the truth. How wonderful that if one repents, there is the possibility of redemption and salvation instead of being cast off forever with no hope! We think Hosea entered Israel’s situation with empathy, even though the more he tried to help them, the further they went from him. As God’s spokesman, he had nothing but criticism in earlier chapters and told the people all their

inconsistencies, but they needed a *hope* that they could make a change. Otherwise, none would even try. Everything would become darkness, and they would just plunge deeper into sin. Thus, after several chapters of real condemnation, Hosea was introducing *mercy*.

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

Verse 12 reads as follows in the RSV: “Ephraim has encompassed me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah is still known by God, and is faithful to the Holy One.” The last clause harmonizes with Hosea 1:7 and 4:15. Judah was spoken of more favorably than the ten tribes. Their apostasy was not comparable to that of the ten tribes at the time of the Assyrian captivity, but 130-plus years later Judah was corrupt and was thus taken captive by the king of Babylon, the successor to the Assyrian kingdom. In other words, verse 12 was a criticism against the ten tribes, who had passed the point of no return, but God had not rejected Judah at this time.

Spiritually speaking, how did Ephraim “compass” God with lies? Catholicism went astray first, yet if we examine the conduct and doctrine of some of the Reformers, not everything was favorable by any means. However, in comparison to Catholicism, Protestantism adhered more closely to the Lord and His standard, the Bible. Of course today Protestantism has gone downhill considerably.

Why was Ephraim, the ten tribes, labeled “unfaithful,” and Judah, the two tribes, called “faithful.” Three stages of history were being discussed: (1) The early phase was when Israel was born. Both the ten tribes and the two tribes were taken out of Egypt, but Hosea was concentrating on the Ephraim segment and their wayward characteristics. (2) Then came a big time jump to the future—to how God will lead and deliver the Holy Remnant. (3) Now Hosea was coming back to *his* day.

The first part of the Book of Hosea was primarily the history of Israel prior to Hosea’s day and up to his lifetime. Then there was a jump in time to the future. Now the account comes back to Hosea’s day and tells that the two-tribe kingdom of Judah was more or less faithful at that time, whereas the ten-tribe kingdom of Ephraim was derelict and deserved to be taken into captivity. Being ripe for captivity, the latter were taken away shortly thereafter. Subsequently, however, Judah also went astray, as Hosea had prophesied earlier. Judah was just as guilty as Israel and would manifest these traits a little later.

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

“Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind [the detrimental counsel of the false prophets].” Just as the east wind in the Middle East is dry, scorching, empty, and barren, so there was no verdure, or value, in such counsel. A “windbag” talks all the time but has no substance.

**Comment:** The ten tribes pursued fantasies, false goals. Hosea 13:15 states that “the [east] wind of the LORD” would come, rising from the wilderness, to destroy the Israelites. The very sins they were committing would come back on their heads as retribution.

**Reply:** To follow “after the east wind” indicated a course that would lead to destruction because the east wind was famous for its heat and dry *desolation*. From a spiritual standpoint, Ephraim was following a path that led farther and farther from God and His promises.



**Comment:** Ephraim sowed the wind and would, therefore, reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7).

**Reply:** According to the Mosaic Law, if the Israelites were obedient, they would prosper. When the ten tribes initially did not follow the commandments of the Lord, they enjoyed catering to their flesh, but as they became more and more wanton, they saw that their paths were leading to destruction. By that time, however, it was hard for them to reverse direction and return to the Lord. Hosea had tried to show that they had to take that stand. Repentance is hard for fallen flesh, but it is a necessary precursor to healing a situation.

Ephraim “daily increaseth [multiplies] lies and desolation [violence]”; that is, both political and religious leadership gave damaging counsel. Conditions were getting worse and worse, and the entire society of Ephraim was corrupt. Conditions are similar today. One by one Satan is destroying the principles of the Bible, the approval of homosexuality being one example. Not only those who committed the act but also those who were sympathetic to the practice were to be put to death. Another example pertains to the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” which means “Thou shalt not *murder*.” Generally speaking, the Bible sanctions the death penalty for willfully taking the life of another human being. Still another example of deteriorating conditions today is the granting of divorce on almost any grounds.

“They do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.” What was the basis of Ephraim’s treaty with Assyria and sending olive oil (produce) to Egypt? Ephraim practiced subterfuge. They made a covenant with hostile and powerful Assyria, using God’s name to seal it, and then, out of fear, negotiated under cover with Egypt at the same time in case the covenant with Assyria did not protect them. Stated another way, Ephraim curried favor with Egypt, feeling that with Egypt, they might be able to withstand Assyria, the world empire of that day. However, the ten tribes were talking out of two sides of their mouth. Instead of playing politics, Ephraim should have gone to the Lord and trusted Him. *Worldly* alliances were not the answer back there, and they are not the answer for Israel today.

**Comment:** There is a clear parallel with the antitype, Papacy, for that system practices double-tongued diplomacy. Papacy, the leopard, is skilled at currying favor with both sides (Rev. 13:2).

**Reply:** The prefix *di* means “two.” Hence *diplomacy* is being *two*-tongued.

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

God also had “a controversy with Judah,” and He would “punish Jacob according to his ways.” What is the thought? Jacob was the “father” of both Ephraim (the ten tribes) and Judah (the two tribes). He was a direct father with his son Judah and a grandfather (through Joseph) of Ephraim. Hence “Jacob” referred to all 12 tribes. It was just a matter of time until Judah would become as steeped in sin as Ephraim and thus require judgment. Therefore, the Lord was not exonerating Judah, even though He did not inflict punishment on them at that time. He had a controversy with Judah but not of the enormity that He had with the ten-tribe kingdom.

**Hosea 12:3** He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

At the time of birth, Esau came out of the womb first, but Jacob grabbed his brother’s heel. This event marked the beginning of a striving condition that existed between them.

“By his [Jacob’s] strength he had power with God.” Jacob’s persistence in desiring the spiritual blessing paid off, for Esau eventually sold his birthright as a firstborn.

Jacob's history was one of struggle (1) in the womb, (2) at Beth-el, and (3) subsequently. Stated another way, God had three major dealings with Jacob: (1) at his birth, (2) at Beth-el, and (3) in Egypt, where the children of Israel were born as a nation. Antipathy developed between the ten tribes and the two tribes, and at one time, they actually warred against each other. When Judah was defeated, God made it known that Ephraim had to stop, and the king of the ten tribes went home. This war occurred well after Solomon's day—perhaps 200 or 300 years later.

The name Jacob indicates “supplanter,” and Jacob did supplant Esau. Esau got the natural blessing, and Jacob received the spiritual blessing. Accordingly, Esau pictures natural Israel, and Jacob represents the spiritual class, who supplanted the promises originally offered to natural Israel. Both got a blessing in the type but each of a different order.

**Hosea 12:4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us;**

“Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed.” Jacob strove (wrestled) with the angel; he “wept, and made supplication” (Gen. 32:24). The *weeping* is a detail that was not recorded in the Genesis account. In other words, Jacob prevailed because he beseeched God with repentance. Hosea was suggesting that the ten-tribe kingdom also needed to repent; they should make supplication unto God with tears.

The lesson was directed to both the ten and the two tribes. After Jacob wrestled with the angel, his name was changed to Israel because he prevailed with the mighty One, *El*, that is, “Isra-el.” (Incidentally, the struggle was mock wrestling, for an angel could easily overpower a man.) Toward the end of his life, Jacob went down to Joseph in Egypt. After Jacob's death, his children were called the “children of Israel,” that is, the children (literally) of Jacob. In this sense, “Jacob” includes all 12 tribes.

**Comment:** Some translations have a period in verse 4, indicating there are two separate thoughts: (1) wrestling with the angel and (2) the vision of Jacob's ladder, after which the place was named Beth-el.

**Reply:** Beth-el is where Jeroboam made one of the two golden calves. Beth-el, meaning “house of God,” was a holy place, but it was subsequently defiled by the calf idol. Therefore, Hosea was saying, “This holy spot where God showed favor to Jacob and his progeny is a historic memorial, but it has been desecrated by calf worship.

**Hosea 12:5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.**

“The LORD God of hosts ... is his memorial.” Jacob wrestled with the angel at the place where God was; i.e., Jacob met God there. When he prevailed, the place was like a memorial, but false calf worship obliterated the holy precedent, the memory of the holy meeting place with God.

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

Hosea gave advice to the ten-tribe kingdom: “Turn ... to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.” While Jacob was the parent of the whole nation (all 12 tribes), the advice, or warning, was slanted to Ephraim. Proof is that Ephraim was mentioned in subsequent verses, and not Judah.

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

Ephraim was “a merchant,” that is, a Canaanite. If one gets too engrossed in acquiring money,

he alienates himself from God. The “balances of deceit” were in Ephraim’s hands. False, uneven weights were used by the merchants: a heavier weight on the scale for one who was buying, and a lighter weight on the scale for one who was selling. Or the fulcrum of the scale was changed to favor the merchant in the transaction.

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

The consciences were so seared that the people of Ephraim did not feel they were sinning. They justified their crooked practices as business. The ten tribes prospered mightily as a merchant nation because of greed and false practices and then viewed their riches as God’s favor.

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

The people were dwelling in houses. In fact, the homes and gardens in the ancient capital of Samaria were elaborate and ornamented. God was saying that He would strip the luxury and riches from the people. When the Israelites left Egypt, they could not take much with them, and they dwelled in tents for 40 years while they wandered in the Wilderness of Sinai. In captivity, the ten tribes would have to return to that type of living; that is, the survivors would live in tents in impoverished conditions. The “solemn feast” was a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jews dwelled in booths.

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

God called attention to His watch-care at the time He took the Israelites out of Egypt. By providing food, shelter (the cloud), water, etc., for them in the wilderness, He both “fathered” and “mothered” them.

When Israel became a nation, and even when the nation split into ten and two tribes, God favored them with prophets. The prophets used different techniques: (1) *Direct communication* was one method (“Thus saith the LORD God”). (2) *Pantomime* was used with Ezekiel and other prophets. For example, for a couple of years, Isaiah had to walk through towns with his buttocks exposed to illustrate the great humiliation that was coming to the ten tribes. (3) *Parables* were a third technique. God tried everything to help the people, but they did not listen. He told what their fate would be if they did not repent, but they ignored His advice.

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

“Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity.” Gilead, which was east of the Jordan River, was captured in Hosea’s day prior to the writing of this chapter. The two and a half tribes, a part of the ten-tribe kingdom, had already been taken into captivity by Tiglath-pileser.

“They sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal.” Gilgal, which was near Jericho on the west side of the Jordan, means “wheel,” that is, a “whirring wheel.”

“Yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.” Instead of realizing that the capture of the two and a half tribes was a warning that the tribes on the west side of Jordan would also go into captivity if false worship was not put out of the land, the rest of Ephraim *increased* their idolatry. Rather than have calf worship in just two places, Dan and Beth-el, each area now had a local deity—much like Egypt. Idols were multiplied as prosperity increased. Not only were the local deities in conformity with the national pagan religion of calf worship, but also they had

their own altars and priests.

In the antitype, we are reminded of Protestantism and Catholicism because for many years, the only church that existed was the Catholic Church. In time, it became divided into two: the eastern Greek and the western Roman Catholic churches. But following the Reformation, there was a multiplication of Protestant sects and churchianity. Thus the history of natural Israel is figurative of spiritual Israel.

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

Verse 12 is a change of venue. Jacob fled into Syria to get away from his brother Esau. Jacob served Laban for Rachel, wanting her for a wife, but Laban gave him Leah instead. He had to serve an extra seven years for Rachel, keeping sheep and probably other flocks as well.

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

“By a prophet [Moses],” God brought Israel out of Egypt. “By a prophet,” Ephraim was preserved; this portion of verse 13 seems to apply to Joshua. Of course Moses preserved the nation (1) when he stood between God on the one hand and Aaron and Miriam on the other hand after the latter had spoken against him, (2) when God was angry with the Israelites in connection with the golden calf incident, and (3) when Korah rebelled. However, the words “and by” seem to imply a different prophet, another personality, namely, Joshua, who did some marvelous things and kept the nation in line. Trouble came after Joshua died, that is, during the Period of the Judges, when there was rebellion and a lack of leadership.

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

Ephraim provoked God to anger with “bitter provocation” (see RSV), which left bloodguilt on Ephraim. The bloodguilt was not excused but remained. We are reminded of the words of the multitude to Pilate regarding Jesus: “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). Hosea continued, “And his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.” Retribution would come.

In summary, most of chapter 12 pertained to the ten tribes, for Hosea was primarily a prophet to the northern kingdom. It took about 130 more years for judgment to come on Judah. (Of course the Prophet Isaiah was contemporaneous with Hosea.) The lesson of the chapter is that there existed almost an inherent genetic weakness in Jacob’s progeny. By their not strictly adhering to God’s counsel, the weakness eventually pulled them down, and judgment was required to give them an opportunity to learn the lesson in captivity. Since Jacob the Syrian was the father of the 12 tribes, and since all had been in Egypt and then were in the wilderness for 40 years, all 12 tribes needed the same lesson sooner or later.

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

Prior to the Baal calf worship—that is, before Jeroboam came on the scene and divided the nation—Israel was powerful as a people. For a while after the division, the northern kingdom was considered very powerful, not only because it consisted of ten tribes versus the two tribes of Judah, but also because the ten tribes were more prosperous commercially and in other ways and had the favor of God. But as soon as they allowed Baal worship to supplant their true worship at Jerusalem, the ten tribes began to slide downhill from the standpoint of God’s appreciation.

What is the antitype? Before the rise of Papacy, the Church was desirable as a woman espoused to Christ. She had the sun shining on her, a 12-star crown adorning her head, and the moon under her feet (Rev. 12:1). She appeared as “a great wonder in heaven” in the Ephesus (“desirable”) period. But then, as time progressed into the Smyrna period of the Church, this same fair woman was found to be pregnant and in labor, for in her was the Nicolaitan element. The fledgling man-child who was born quickly changed to the false Michael, a powerful being. In fact, he was so powerful that the woman had to flee into the wilderness (Rev. 12:14). When this proud, exalted Nicolaitan clerical element emerged, a division occurred, and the situation rapidly went from bad to worse.

**Comment:** The clause “When Ephraim spake trembling” is better in other translations, such as the RSV: “When Ephraim spoke, men trembled.”

**Reply:** Proof that the latter translation is the correct thought is the wording in the next clause: “he [Ephraim] exalted himself in Israel.” There were 12 tribes, but when decisions were made in councils, Ephraim carried the greater weight and wielded a larger influence because it was the most numerous tribe. Numerically speaking, and according to prophecy, Ephraim overwhelmed the other tribes. For that reason, the ten-tribe kingdom was called “Ephraim” after a while, even though there were nine other tribes. The same is true in the Catholic church system. There are other Catholic churches (Greek, Russian, English Anglican, and Armenian), but the Roman Catholic system predominates. Thus nominal Israel pictures primarily Papacy.

Not only was Ephraim the leader of the ten tribes, but also the spirit of that tribe pervaded the other nine tribes. Judah was given more honor, but Ephraim was more numerous. And Ephraim broke away from Judah. The situation was not that Jeroboam just came along and influenced everyone else. No, Ephraim already had the wrong spirit, being jealous of Judah, so when the right man stepped forward to lead, the division occurred.

“When he [Ephraim] offended in Baal, he died.” The RSV has, “But he incurred guilt through Baal and died”; that is, Ephraim became guilty of Baal worship and died, having passed the point of no return as far as evading judgment and going into captivity. How did Ephraim die? Eventually the ten tribes were dispersed so thoroughly that those of Ephraim, as well as those of the other nine tribes, could not be individually traced back. Ephraim died spiritually or figuratively in the Lord’s sight. Today we would say, “They signed their death warrant.”

Ephraim exalted itself over others by *pressure*, and Papacy used the same tactic. Papacy overawed others and claimed to be God’s representative, making others tremble. The little horn exalted itself above its fellows (Dan. 7:8). With its big eyes and mouth, Papacy spoke blasphemies against the God of heaven, against the Lord’s true people, and against the true Temple, causing others to tremble. As soon as that condition was reached, however, the death warrant was signed for that system. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). It is just a matter of time until Papacy goes into destruction—death.

Ephraim “offended in Baal”; that is, Ephraim took part in heathen worship. It was blasphemous for Ephraim to divert the religion of the ten-tribe kingdom away from the capital city of Jerusalem (the Temple) and to install golden calf idols and institute Baal altars. To even think of doing such things showed *pride* and *presumptuousness*.

Setting up rival places of worship in Beth-el and Dan distracted from the true worship in Jerusalem and the Temple. In the antitype, Roman Catholicism distracted from Jesus by putting a priesthood in between the believer and Jesus. Intimate association with Jesus is precious to the Christian. Thus Papacy is guilty of diversion from Christ.

Baal means “Lord,” but the religion was false. Similarly, Catholics worship God *in name* and are Christians *in name*. The problem was not the name but the perversion of worship. “Baal” was instituted through a whole new framework of laws and references in connection with worship. The people thought they were worshipping the same Lord, but instead the Trinity caused confusion between God, Jesus, and Mary.

Chapter 13, and much of the Book of Hosea, can be studied on this higher plane. We begin to see why God used Ephraim to depict Papacy. By appreciating and understanding the *natural* picture, we grasp the *spiritual* picture more forcefully, clearly, and strikingly. “When Ephraim [the Catholic Church] spoke [in its heyday], men [even kings] trembled.” Catholicism was fruitful in numbers. The attitude was, “Where are those *heretic* Protestants? They are but a handful. Look at our numbers, antiquity, material possessions such as land and buildings, and wealth and prosperity (fruitfulness).” All of these were considered a sign of the Lord’s favor and blessing. Both natural and spiritual Ephraim made the same basic claims.

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

How did the making of images pertain to Ephraim’s previous denunciation by the Lord for sinning and offending? The people *multiplied* the religion by making *more* places of worship. Instead of having *one* Jerusalem, the ten tribes started with *two* places: Dan and Beth-el. But as time went on, the altars were multiplied until they were like dung in the field. When the farmer went into the field to plow, he had to watch out for the dung, which was so prevalent he could step in it. The altars of Baal multiplied and multiplied.

The same thing happened with Papacy. Originally in the nominal system, there were several places (Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, etc.). After a while, there was just Rome, but Rome spread and spread until it was called the “holy catholic (*universal*) church.” Being so numerous, extensive, and influential, the Roman Catholic Church boasts of being all over the earth. And the system has established “images” everywhere—huge cathedrals, choirs, vestments, incense, idols, etc.

In the antitype, the expression “molten images of their silver” refers to smaller images that the common people can afford, whereas gold images are for the wealthy. In the type, there was a multiplicity of idols and images made of silver, and they were kissed obscenely. In the antitype, there are coins of the pope and numerous medals of the Virgin Mary and the “saints.” It is obnoxious enough to have images of the Lord, but the sin is increased by bringing in lesser dignitaries. Medallions are worn as charms, or amulets, supposedly to ward off evil or to bring prosperity of one kind or another. Also, pieces of cloth are used as sacred scapulas.

The craftsmen made “idols according to their *own* understanding.” The skillfully crafted molten images and idols were a product of *human* reasoning or intelligence, not the Lord’s.

“They [those of Ephraim] say of them [the images], Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.” In the Lord’s arrangement, the animal was slain, but Ephraim’s practice was *backward*. Instead of slaying the animal and presenting (sacrificing) it to the Lord, the people revered it! Normally under the Lord’s arrangement, men *sacrificed* calves or other animals—which in the antitype represent either giving one’s heart in consecration or Jesus’ death—but instead the Israelites *worshipped* the calf! “Kissing” refers to Ephraim’s perverted worship. The antitype would be kissing the pope’s toe or ring or an object of veneration.

**Comment:** The toes and nose of the statue of Saint Peter at the Vatican have been worn down by many people kissing them over the years. In leprosy, the nose flattens and sinks in, and the

toes recede until the foot is a stub. Since leprosy is a picture of sin, it is fitting that Papacy's sinful statue looks leprosy.

In Egypt, bulls were buried in *full* honor with gold horns and precious jewels around the neck. In other words, because the Egyptians *worshipped* the bull, they gave it a glorious funeral. When Jeroboam brought calf worship from Egypt to Israel, Satanic worship changed holy thinking into something completely unholy and gross along sexual lines, especially with regard to kissing the calves.

And even earlier, when the Israelites left Egypt, they brought along the seed of error and made a golden calf. Then they said to the calf, "Lead us. We do not know what happened to Moses when he went up into the mount." Imagine, they wanted the calf, a product of their *own* hands, to lead them! The incident was like making a statue of the Virgin Mary, a product of *human* hands. The statue is set up on a pedestal, and then the people go to the statue and bow down, burn candles, say prayers, and ask the statue for advice. Catholics claim they do not worship statues, but in practice, that is exactly what they do. The practice of calf worship was literally done in the ten-tribe kingdom, and it is spiritually done in Catholicism. The latter puts others ahead of Christ and changes God's laws and customs. Erroneous doctrine is bad enough, but having literal physical replicas and idols is gross sin.

"The men that sacrifice" were primarily the priests, who were supposed to sacrifice calves in death, but instead they were "kissing" the calves by worshipping them. The priests were the representatives before the people. It was sinful for individuals to worship calves, but when the nation did this through its priesthood, the practice was abominable. As a general principle, the higher the level of sin, the greater the guilt that is incurred.

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

The "floor" was the threshing floor. Hosea gave four pictures in this verse: (1) evaporation of the morning cloud (or mist), (2) the passing away of the early dew, (3) the disappearance of the chaff in a whirlwind, and (4) smoke rising up out of a chimney and vanishing. The prophet was saying that Ephraim and its adherents would all dissipate and disappear into nothingness—and in the antitype, so will Papacy. With smoke, the big, pompous display is just a lot of hot air. The same is true of the morning dew. The ground looks wet and saturated, but after the sun is up for a little while, everything is dry. The morning cloud, or mist, floats away, and it does not take much wind to blow chaff away. At the threshing floor, when chaff is forked up into the air, it blows away in the wind.

To the ten tribes, Hosea was speaking of both destiny and dispersion. In captivity, Ephraim would be dispersed and scattered abroad. In Diaspora, they would be strewn to the wind as the sower scatters seed. (*Spora* means "seed"; hence *Diaspora* was the scattering of seed.) The strong ten tribes would be brought to naught, just as the dew and the morning mist disappear. The dispersion would make coming back to Israel and retracing their steps that much more difficult.

**Q:** Does the chaff on the threshing floor tie in with the stone smiting the image?

**A:** In a secondary sense, yes. There is a double picture here of the captivity of the ten-tribe kingdom and the destruction of Christendom. The chaff of the threshing floor is *in part* the same as Daniel 2:35. However, the Daniel reference is more comprehensive, for it includes the destruction of the *civil* as well as the religious powers.

**Q:** Do the terms “*morning cloud [mist]*” and “*early dew that passeth away*” show that the fall of Christendom will take place in the Millennial *morning*?

**A:** Yes, that observation is a good one, and the Hosea text can be used as a proof that the Millennium begins before the destruction of Christendom takes place. The Millennial *morning* has begun, but it is still dark *prior to* the dawn. Christendom will be destroyed in the *forepart* of the 1,000-year Millennial day, in the “morning” period.

**Q:** Does the *whirlwind’s* driving away the chaff indicate that Christendom will fall during anarchy?

**A:** Yes, Christendom will be smashed as a potter’s vessel, and a wind will blow the fragments away so that they will be found no more. Chaff is refuse. God will build His Kingdom *on* the ruins (and not *of* the ruins) of the present kingdoms.

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

Verse 4 sums up verses 1-3. God constantly reminded Ephraim of Egypt. The lesson was that God’s grace would enter the picture, even though it was everywhere apparent that Ephraim was worthy of destruction. The sin was *enormous*, yet God was determined to be gracious. It is true that He would punish them, but in the final analysis, Ephraim will know no God but Him.

Verse 4 states the First Commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). How many obeyed that commandment? The fact that few obeyed seemed to be an evidence of God’s weakness, but the day is coming when the commandment will be *enforced*. Every knee will have to bow and recognize God as supreme. No other Savior is “beside” (equal to or ahead of) God. Therefore, the world’s hope is in God, in His making every knee to bow. “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour” (Isa. 43:11). Hosea and Isaiah were contemporaries, and Isaiah’s statement was similar to Hosea’s here in verse 4.

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

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

Instead of “in the wilderness, in the land of great drought,” the NIV has “in the desert, in the land of burning heat.” “I [God] did know thee in the wilderness.” Israel forgot that in this land of death, dearth, and drought, God fed and kept them. “They were filled,” but their hearts became exalted. God cared for Israel in the barren land of Sinai by providing manna, quail, water, the cloud, shoes that did not wear out, etc., but as time went on, the care was taken for granted. The Israelites “*forgot his [great] works, and his wonders,*” as well as His watch-care (Psa. 78:11).

Verses 5 and 6 are true of the Christian too, especially in the Laodicean period when the attitude of many is, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have *need of nothing*” (Rev. 3:17). In times of actual need, when one depends on the Lord for day-to-day leadings, and when important decisions have to be made in the midst of great sufferings and struggle, the individual is generally stronger spiritually than when everything is going along smoothly. Frequently the Lord is more or less forgotten in times of tranquillity and prosperity. Even the world calls on the Lord in times of great trouble, but they forget Him later on. A Christian should keep reminding himself all the time in order to maintain his relationship with, and his appreciation of, the Lord.



**Comment:** Proverbs 30:8,9 reads, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 8:11-20 is pertinent, as follows:

“Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

“Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

“And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

“Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

“Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

“And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

“And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

“As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.”

Bringing forth water out of flint has an antitype. In the *natural* picture, hard stone that man could not rupture encompassed the water. With ease, God opened up the flint and provided water for Israel. In the *spiritual* picture, flint-like experiences (hard times) befall the Christian. No matter how great the intensity of the trouble, a blessing will ensue under God’s tutelage if the person is rightly exercised.

“According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.” The RSV has, “But when they had fed to the full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me.” The NIV reads, “When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.” Verse 6 gives cause and effect.

From another standpoint, the “pasture” was Canaan. It was like being out in a barren land looking for a water hole and green pasture for sheep and then finding them. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years and then found “pasture” when they entered the Promised

Land. But as time went on and they prospered temporally, they forgot the Lord. (Incidentally, back there the land supported a much larger population than Israel does today. There were many trees, and rainfall was more plentiful.) Sodom and Gomorrah are another example. Two of their sins were pride and fullness of bread. Part of the problem was having plenty. Since the people's hearts were not right, fullness of bread led to pride. Riches are a subtle danger.

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

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

“I [God] will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet [attack] them [the ten tribes] as a [she] bear.” A mother bear with her cubs is aggressive and dangerous, especially if she is bereaved of her cubs. A leopard is stealthy and ready to pounce. These characteristics and behavior patterns are meaningful to those who have witnessed them. We only read about them, but suppose we actually saw a bear attack a sheep or a lion attack a flock. The gory, vicious methods of these animals would be impressive.

When lions and leopards stalk their prey, they usually hide under foliage to observe and then spring out suddenly as the victim comes by. The surprise element of speed, a roar, etc., shocks the prey. Here God likened Himself to being a spectator (a leopard or a lion) observing Israel's behavior and practices. Subsequently He would meet the ten tribes as a bear in attack.

“I ... will rend the caul of their [the ten tribes'] heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.” The implication in verses 7 and 8 is that all these wild animals have one trait when they attack humans; namely, they go for the exposed part of the body. Usually they try to rip open the chest cavity. The leopard may jump for the throat, but it wants to get into the chest cavity because then the victim is a goner. In devouring its prey, the lion gouges out the chest cavity and goes after the heart first; the sight is gruesome and bloody. These wild animals want to “rend the caul of their [victim's] heart.”

The Lord was telling Israel that they needed punishment and that the punishment would be *terrible*. In other words, the punishment would fit the crime. Israel had so many opportunities and blessings, yet the people sinned more and more. Hence this type of vengeance was to come. The Assyrian invader into northern Israel viciously took babies from mothers and bashed their heads against walls. To make sure nobody would be left, pregnant women were not just killed, but their bellies were ripped open and the offspring in them destroyed. There are cases where a mother was murdered and still brought forth a child, for even in death, labor can occur. Then someone else took the baby and raised it. Therefore, the enemy took vicious precautions to make sure no one would survive in the homeland. This is what happened to Israel when the Assyrians came down and took the ten-tribe kingdom into captivity.

God is capable of fierce anger, but He is also loving. (One who loves righteousness perfectly also hates iniquity perfectly.) God regulates the disposition of His attributes so that they work in harmony. Here He saw the necessity for judgment to come on Ephraim. He would vent His anger by meeting them as a mother bear with cubs. Good results would eventually come.

The word “caul” is usually associated with the sacrifice of the “caul [fat] above the liver” on the Brazen Altar in the days of the Tabernacle of Moses (Lev. 8:16). Why would God “rend the caul of their heart”? Too much fat around the heart causes a serious heart condition. The morals of the nation were so bad that the people were insensitive to the degree of evil. The “heart” is the seat of emotions, compassion, and mercy. The people were getting more and more steeped in evil. Because they did not consider and were insensitive to their behavior toward both God and

fellow man, violent action was necessary.

**Comment:** The fatty caul was associated with zeal when it was burned on the altar. Here the zeal was directed to evil and immoral practices and strange gods. God would tear out the caul (the fat) to remove the improper affection.

**Reply:** It is impossible to love properly without a corresponding proper hatred of evil. The intensity of emotion should be *hatred* of evil, as well as *love* of good.

The ten tribes had to go into captivity and suffer under the Assyrian power in order to bring them to their senses. Hosea gave advice as to what they should do, but they paid no attention until they were in captivity. Thus the ten tribes would be disciplined *harshly* but for their *good*.

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

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

“O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself”; that is, their *sins* required judgment. “But in me is thine help.” In spite of His anger, God would help the ten tribes if they truly repented. Accordingly, He said, “I will be thy king.”

“Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?” With regard to the people in Hosea’s day, God was asking, “Are you satisfied with the kings and princes who were given to you because in the days of Samuel, you wanted to be like other nations?” The answer was no, for the leaders were not saving the people out of their dilemma. Hence God was offering to step in and be Israel’s King and Judge.

Israel’s ego would be deflated by the captivity. Previously they were prosperous and mighty men of valor, but humiliation was coming. Imagine the memory of the survivors! They would recall their former glory, the staggering and cruel defeat, and then the humiliating captivity. To realize their experiences were judgments and punishments for departing from the Lord, they needed *shock* treatment. Otherwise, they would think the captivity was an ordinary occurrence and not grasp the lesson. In fact, that is why the Jews can remember their atrocities—because of the viciousness of the wrath against them.

When the Israelites came back from captivity in 536 BC, they no longer had any idols. In other words, they were *monotheists*, believing in the *one* God. The United States has all kinds of religions, Christian and heathen, but the Jews are either believers or nonbelievers. As a people, they worship either the *one* Lord God or the god of wealth.

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

As far as the *whole* nation was concerned, Jehovah gave Saul to Israel as the first king and took away Zedekiah, the last king, in His anger. (Of course earlier, at the time of the Assyrian captivity, God took away Hoshea, the last king of the ten-tribe kingdom.) With regard to Saul, God told Samuel, “The people rejected *me*, not you” (1 Sam. 8:7 paraphrase). As God in anger took away Saul for his disobedience, so the implication here was that the same thing would happen to the ten tribes. Ephraim’s polity would cease.

Initially, Saul was humble, as evidenced by his hiding (1 Sam. 10:22). In fact, the Lord complimented Saul for his humility. Because of his large stature, he was regarded as a natural leader, but he lacked the bearing of a leader. Later on, Saul changed—and not for the good—even consulting a witch for advice instead of the Lord. Therefore, he was taken away in wrath.

The implication was that the same thing would happen to the ten-tribe kingdom. It had to go into captivity; its polity had to cease. In God's sight, the ten tribes were already dead, but they had to be removed from their homeland into Assyrian captivity.

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

In what sense was Ephraim's sin "hid"? From one standpoint, the sin was hidden because Ephraim had no conscience. The iniquity was "bound up" in that it was *not discerned*. The NIV brings out another aspect: "The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record." An *accumulation* of guilt was being described. The various transgressions were stockpiling, almost like sheaves, for future judgment. The Lord did not stop the evil immediately, but neither did He wink the eye at it. The evil was kept on record to be taken care of in due time.

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

The NIV has, "Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he does not come to the opening of the womb." What is the thought of this obscure verse?

**Comment:** Ephraim had already received strong warnings from the prophets and some judgments but was not getting the point.

**Reply:** Despite periods of famine, crop disease, an invasion by Tiglath-pileser that affected the two and a half tribes, etc., Ephraim did not come to the opening of the womb. With all these *providential* troubles, Ephraim was not coming to its senses. God was teaching the people the need for repentance and His salvation, but they ignored the lessons. Consequently, drastic action would be needed.

In other words, the trouble that came on Ephraim was like the pains of a travailing woman. The birth of retribution was not far off, and the analogy was to an advanced stage of childbirth in which the birth is imminent and labor is intense.

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

**Comment:** The RSV renders verse 14 in question form as follows: "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 destruction? Compassion is hid from my eyes."

The Apostle Paul used part of verse 14 in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, a familiar text, from an entirely different standpoint. In regard to the Church, he showed God's power of redemption from oblivion in the grave by means of a resurrection. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Certainly Paul's concept was much grander than Hosea's, but the hope of resurrection is in both the Old and the New Testament. What was Hosea saying in the context of verse 14?

**Comment:** God had just made severe statements with regard to the necessity for judgment. He concluded by saying, "I will not be compassionate at this time." The judgment was needed, and He would not change His mind.

**Reply:** The question form of verse 14, which is superior, suggests a latent potentiality; namely, God had the power to redeem the ten tribes from the grave, but He would not do so at that time. Would they die as a nation? Yes, death was necessary. It was necessary that the ten-tribe kingdom would perish in its homeland and that only a remnant of the people would be taken into captivity to bring them to their senses. Therefore, God would not exercise His redemptive power at that time.

In the New Testament, Paul went back to verse 14, which was in question form, and reasoned that God has the capability to bring to pass something from nothing. If He so desires, He can be the plagues of death; that is, He can *destroy* death. Paul was saying in effect that God will exercise this prerogative in a beneficial way in the future. In the next chapter, Hosea also showed that God has the power of redemption.

Notice the ending of verse 14: “Repentance [compassion—RSV] shall be hid from mine eyes.” The translators did not know whether to put verse 14 in a statement or a question form, but as already stated, the latter is the correct thought. “Shall I ransom them from the power of the grave?” The fact verse 14 ends up with the statement “repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (or “I will not be compassionate”) shows that a question was *temporarily* being answered in the negative; that is, God would allow Ephraim to be *violently destroyed*—as with the lion, the leopard, and the bear. He would not be merciful in warding off the retribution, for the die was cast. Because the ten tribes did not reform, they had to undergo this experience, but *after* going into the grave and being destroyed, God would recover Ephraim. It was like saying, “No, I will not ransom you now. I will not deliver you from this retribution, for you need to experience it.” However, the Book of Hosea must be read as a whole. Despite the several chapters of thunder, there are strong words of encouragement for Ephraim’s restoration and recovery.

“Shall I ransom them [Ephraim] from the power of the grave?” The answer was temporarily no, but in the *final* sense, it was yes. In 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, the Apostle Paul used verse 14 in the *final* sense and applied it to the Christian. In other words, Paul read into this prophecy of Hosea the *ultimate destruction of death* with plagues. Just as Egypt and Pharaoh were destroyed by plagues, so death will be destroyed eventually. However, Hosea’s actual words indicated a temporary delay. “Shall I [God] ransom them from the grave? Not now but *later*. Temporarily compassion is hidden from my eyes, but not forever.”

**Q:** Please explain the “death” aspect again.

**A:** As a people, the ten tribes were as good as dead. They would have to go into the grave. But Paul was implying that forgiveness, mercy, and compassion would come in due time.

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

Verse 15 supplements the previous verses in that God would not exercise compassion at that time, for the stern judgment was necessary. There is a play on Ephraim’s name, which means “fruitful.” “Though he [Ephraim] be *ephraim* among his brethren, an east wind shall come ... from the wilderness.” A wind from the east would dry up the ten tribes’ spring and fountain and destroy all the treasures of “pleasant vessels.” The pronoun “he” in the last clause should be “it” (see RSV); that is, an east wind (Assyria) would spoil Ephraim’s pleasant vessels. Just as the hot, dry natural east wind dries up everything in its season, so this figurative east wind would destroy the land of Ephraim.

This literal “east wind,” sometimes called the sirocco, blows from the east. Therefore, the

*figurative* “east wind” would be from Assyria. The king of Assyria (Shalmaneser and his son Sargon) would come into the land of the northern kingdom and despoil it.

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

As the capital, Samaria was a synonym for Ephraim. We similarly use “Washington” to mean the United States. Ephraim, the ten tribes, and Samaria were all synonymous.

Verse 16 also applies to the nominal spiritual house of Israel by showing the coming complete destruction of Christendom—a *complete demolition* of the nominal religion to be replaced by the true religion. A remarkable parallelism exists between the ten tribes and Christendom.

“They [the people of the ten tribes] shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.” Chapter 13 ends with violence, but the next chapter shows recovery. This judgment message was difficult to receive, but if God did not warn and prophesy in advance, the people would not see the viciousness as *God’s* wrath, that is, as a punishment, or discipline, from God for their good.

**Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.**

Verse 1 is a summation of chapter 14. On the whole, Hosea gave a scathing message with strong language, but now came a change.

While Hosea primarily addressed his words to the ten-tribe kingdom, they were also appropriate for Judah. The substance was, “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God,” the implication being that a cessation of false worship of heathen gods, plus repentance and steps in the proper direction to the true God, would have to precede forgiveness. From the days of Jeroboam through the time Hosea uttered these words, the ten tribes had worshipped idols. Hence the prophet said, “Your sins have been your downfall!” (NIV). The RSV has, “You have stumbled because of your iniquity.”

When was Israel to return to the Lord? Preceding chapters intimated that the coming judgment was inescapable because the people’s sins were too great. But the implication was that after Israel’s punishment, the people would return to the Lord, and He would hearken to their prayer. They *would return*—but not right away.

**Hosea 14:2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.**

The NIV has, “Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.’” Hosea entered into the prayer by bringing himself down to the level of those he was advising. Not only was he telling the Israelites how to pray and what steps to take, but he included himself. Like the Apostle Paul, he had been doing a great service for the Lord, yet he brought himself down to the level of the others. “Let *us*” was Paul’s attitude. Jesus similarly brought himself into the Lord’s Prayer, even though he was perfect: “Forgive *us* our trespasses.”

“Say unto him [the LORD].” Hosea took the Israelites by the hand like a child, as it were, telling them the steps of repentance. Then he gave the words to be spoken: “Take away all [our] iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.” The “calves [fruit] of our lips” are called the “sacrifices of bulls” in different translations. This praise was to be heartfelt, not mere lip service. The fruitage would be more like a spontaneous, heartfelt

rendering of praise with the “calves of ... [the] lips.” The implication was that the former service to the false idols was a very puerile, foolish, low type of service, and that if the Lord would be gracious unto them, they would render not merely praise but *acceptable* and *more mature* praise, that is, *obedience* according to *God’s* instructions. It would also be a recognition, or present acknowledgment, of (1) former immaturity and foolishness and (2) a desire not only to return to the Lord but also to make progress in pleasing Him to show appreciation for the forgiveness and grace received.

**Q:** The Hebrew has “bulls.” How does that word differ from the thought of “calves”?

**A:** The word “bulls” indicates *maturity*.

**Comment:** We are to give God the best and the highest devotion possible. A bullock back there was the best that could be offered.

**Reply:** Yes, maturity would be the best that we could offer at a given time. However, progress is required. As we are consecrated longer, our “best” should get better. We are to render to God the highest, the best, the noblest, and the purest praise *from the heart*.

When we first give our heart to the Lord, we make certain statements and sometimes do not realize how much those words really mean. As we go along and become aware of our shortcomings and weaknesses, we begin to realize that we have said some boastful things, but as we progress in following the Lord, we also seem to progress in the understanding of our weaknesses and our unworthiness from a technical standpoint. However, God makes allowances for our imperfections as long as we plead the robe of Christ’s righteousness and keep striving to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Thus we do make statements and take certain things for granted, especially in the first year of our consecration.

As a personal note, in our enthusiasm when we first consecrated, we were ready to die right away, not realizing that the calling is very high indeed and that the Lord has to instruct us. We were afraid the Kingdom would be established quickly, and we wanted to be ready right away. Of course if we were like Stephen and had his qualifications, we could make rapid progress, but there are not many Stephens.

“Take away all [our] iniquity” is like saying, “Forgive us our trespasses.” “Receive us graciously” is asking for mercy and restoration to a proper standing in God’s favor based on forgiveness. From a Christian perspective, some promise the Lord at the time of consecration that if forgiveness and mercy are extended, they will dedicate their lives from that moment forward. They promise that for the rest of their lives, to the best of their ability, they will serve God *if* He will restore them.

**Comment:** “Bullocks” represent the best heartfelt praise we are capable of at a given moment. However, the forgiveness of sins and repentance have to precede being able to acceptably give this praise and thanks to God with our lips.

**Reply:** Notice that it is “the calves [*plural*] of our lips.” Just as the calves of the legs are double (a person has two legs), so the “calves” of the lips are double, with upper and lower lips. Therefore, the expression “calves of our lips” referred to the enunciation, or expression, of repentance that the Lord was looking for.

There were different types of offerings such as sin, trespass, and burnt. With many of these sacrifices, only a *portion* was offered, such as the legs, the shoulder, or the breast. Thus the expression “calves of our lips” was a play on words where a part represented the whole. For instance, a “sail” can represent the whole vessel. From this standpoint, the pair of “calves,” or

the *two lips*, was the portion of the animal that was donated to the Lord.

In literal sacrifices, the animal was disposed of variously. Sometimes a portion was offered to God, and part was given to the priests. Sometimes the people ate a portion. Psalm 50:14 reads, “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.” Hebrews 13:15 is even more pertinent: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the *fruit of our lips* giving thanks to [confessing] his name.”

**Q:** When will God “take away *all* iniquity” from Israel? Does the emphasis on the forgiveness of *all* iniquity pertain to the heart sentiments of the Holy Remnant?

**A:** Yes in principle, but here the context was Hosea’s day. Nevertheless, the words are timeless. It is always in order to desire that all iniquity be taken away. As Christians, we trust that the Lord will take away all our iniquity on a daily basis. However, we are trying to get rid of our faults, and sometimes we find that the faults seem to be multiplying as we make this endeavor.

With regard to the Holy Remnant, when they see certain things happen, that will beget in them an enlightenment of the proper path. God will make Israel pass under the rod so that rebellious Jews will not enter into the New Covenant when it is inaugurated. He will refine Israel at the end of the age not only as a nation but also as *individuals*. Those who are not right-hearted will be screened out so that only the Holy Remnant will remain. At that time, all 12 tribes—the nation as a whole—will be cleansed.

Of course, if the picture is followed through, Christendom is to be cleansed too at the end of the age in connection with another judgment. Nominal Christians will be humiliated and exposed as misrepresenting God by worshipping the pope, images, creeds, etc. When the systems are all dashed to pieces, the people will see who the true Lord is. That humiliation and shame will be great. This judgment will occur *just a little before* Israel gets its last attack. Israel’s salvation will be at the *very end of the age*, as far as the *public* exhibition and the inauguration of the Kingdom are concerned. When these events take place, it will be *known* that it is the Lord’s Kingdom. No one will have to quote pages from a book and argue the fact because it will be *very manifest*. Israel’s deliverance will be a cardinal feature, coupled with the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies.

In other words, as brought out especially in the last two chapters of the Book of Hosea, there is a secondary picture of the people of Christendom returning to the true God and casting away their idols. The people will return on an *individual* basis and will have to recognize the Lord’s new arrangement. He will restore Israel to its rightful place as leaders and teachers of the nations, but He will not restore Christendom to the position it once enjoyed. However, the same will be true with the *unfaithful* leaders of Israel, who will be thrust out and others seated in their stead in the Kingdom. The people at large will be reconciled, and God’s specially chosen leaders—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.—will be given the earthly positions of authority. The scribes, Pharisees, and other Jewish religious leaders will have no part in the Kingdom proper, for they will be subjects rather than leaders and rulers. The correspondence between the ten tribes and Christendom is remarkable.

“Turn to the LORD [with words].” Previously the Israelites perfunctorily brought a sacrifice, but in the Kingdom, they will have to repent. In past times, they were industrious in fulfilling the symbol—they offered to the Lord the legs and parts of *lame* animals, observing the letter of the Law in a *perfunctory* sense—but in the new arrangement, they will be expected to give their hearts to the Lord with expressions of repentance and humble confessions of guilt. The Jews will have to confess their sins in prayer with true, heartfelt contrition and reformation. They must realize the wrong they have done and then confess their *need* for mercy and forgiveness. Instead of mechanical sacrifices, the people will bring to the Lord *heartfelt* words wrung from



*penitent* hearts, and He will answer such prayers and be ready and eager to bless them. And that is what the Holy Remnant will do at the end of the present age. These Jews will separate themselves from their families and mourn for Jesus as for an only son (Zech. 12:10-12). They will acknowledge their wrongs to the Lord, and He will pour upon them the “spirit of grace and supplications” and bless them. Note, however, that *public and individual* acknowledgment of guilt must *precede* the outpouring of blessing following Jacob’s Trouble.

Losing Jerusalem once more in Jacob’s Trouble will help the Jews to realize their *own* weakness. After they have secured the city and thought, “At last we have achieved our objective and peace with our enemies,” to then lose the city again will indeed be a crushing blow. All down the Gospel Age, the Jews have been at the Wailing Wall either literally or figuratively, but to finally regain the wall and Jerusalem only to lose them again a few years later will be like losing the Ark of the Covenant in the past (1 Sam. 4:1-7:1). The Jews will feel that God’s providence has forsaken them, but then He will save them as He did “in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). This will be the *real salvation!*

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

Verse 3 is a continuation of the prayer of verse 2. With “Asshur” being Assyria, what is the implication of “Asshur shall not save us”? Treaties with Assyria did not help Israel. Down through history, Israel was often confederate with Egypt or Assyria, playing one superpower against the other in an effort to escape injury. Egypt and Assyria were enemies, yet Israel sought military power from them. However, Israel, then and now, should trust God, not the arm of flesh for military protection and economic help. Here “Asshur” was singled out because at the time Hosea was speaking, Israel was trying to be confederate with Assyria, but the alliance was for naught, for Assyria turned against Israel and took the ten tribes into captivity.

“We will not ride upon horses.” Hosea was referring to literal warhorses back in his day. In a battle, the side with the most horses had a better chance to win, for foot soldiers could be trampled. To feel more secure, Israel made pacts with other nations that could supply them with horses. In truth, however, the real danger was Israel’s spiritual deterioration. If spiritually sound, the nation would not have needed horses. Solomon was specifically told (through the Law) not to multiply horses, but he disobeyed by importing horses from Egypt (Deut. 17:16).

In Scripture, doctrines are sometimes represented by horses. The Pastor used the term “hobbyhorses” to indicate taking a certain subject (for example, chronology, Revelation, or *Tabernacle Shadows*) and being exclusively interested in it—like a child rocking *back and forth* on a hobbyhorse. This tendency can be a lack of development. For instance, in the nominal system, Baptists made a hobby of water baptism, and Adventists made a hobby of keeping the sabbath holy, considering infractions a cardinal sin. The Pastor sarcastically criticized “hobbies” of systems and individuals as preventing sufficient development.

Of course in the antitype, the “horses” are Christendom’s doctrines. The Bible contains precious promises, but the systems sometimes substitute *man-made* assurances, such as promises of support in an organization. A cardinal may back up a bishop, for example. Religious leaders curry favor and look to other *men* and *their* assurances for safety. Instead they should rely on the *Lord* and *His* promises.

“Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.” Idols and altars to false gods proliferated in the ten-tribe kingdom. Christendom has done the same thing in principle by having churches all over. In both cases, the “altars” were (and are) presumably to the Lord, but the worship was (and is) invented according to *man’s* own choosing. With regard to Israel, the books of Exodus and Leviticus have precise requirements on how to serve, who

can serve, under what conditions, etc., yet the people chose their own priesthood, designed their own altars, etc. Presumably they were doing this to the Lord, but actually they borrowed heathen practices that they liked—using a little of this false religion and a little of that false religion. Finally the original religion of the Lord got so corrupted that it was no longer recognizable. The only thing left was the word “Baal” (meaning Lord), and after a while, that word became such a stench that it was not used in a religious sense. Other words were henceforth used for “Lord.” Christendom is guilty of the same practices. Statues to the various saints and relics are all works of the hands, and so are cathedrals, organs, and choirs.

“For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.” Prophetically speaking, *repentant* Israel is doing the talking. Therefore, this repentance will occur in the *future*. The time will come when Israel will see that the path they have been pursuing is fruitless. That will be a time of decision making—a proper decision to *return to the Lord*. Those looking into the future and seeing how dark the clouds are—with no way out as conditions get worse and worse—will look upward if they are rightly exercised and properly motivated.

When the Jews returned to Israel in 536 BC, there was a *partial* repentance, but the yet future repentance, described here, will be much more far-reaching and thorough. It was as though Hosea was transported down the stream of time to the end of the age and could hear the words of the repentant Holy Remnant.

It is interesting that those who returned from captivity in 536 BC were subsequently stricter in their religious practices. They were less prone to follow other religions and make statues. As a whole, either they worshipped “Hebrew style,” or they worshipped the dollar. Today some of the Jews are beginning to retrogress and go into the art and sculpture field again. However, the Hasidic element is so strong in Israel that the government is forced to do certain things, such as strictly observe the Sabbath.

With regard to the word “fatherless,” Israel severed itself from God through disobedience and the worship of false idols and hence was in a “fatherless” condition. Even today Israel gets little examples of a “fatherless” feeling when crises occur and they realize that the Gentiles have only *selfish* motives in befriending the nation. The Gentiles try to befriend both Arab and Jew and thus are not consistent in policies or statements. Israel does not find many true friends among the nations. Thus Israel will be “fatherless” at the end of the age and have *no one* to look to but the Lord. Everyone else will have deserted them.

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

Verses 4 and 5 are God’s response to Israel’s prayer of repentance. “I [God] will heal their [Israel’s] backsliding” by *forgiving* them. The Book of Hosea ends on a happy and optimistic note. “I [God] will love them freely,” that is, with unmerited kindness.

**Comment:** If Israel sincerely repented, God would extend free grace to them.

**Reply:** Yes, if they would heed His instruction, God would “love them freely.” His love is conditional upon the prayer of repentance being offered. Then the path of progress for restoration would be greatly enhanced and His anger would cease.

**Hosea 14:5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.**

In verses 5-7, a number of encouraging symbols were taken from nature: dew, lily, roots, branches, olive tree, corn, vine, and wine. Dew refreshes with gentleness (as opposed to a

torrential downpour). God will be as “dew” to Israel, and the result of falling dew will be prosperity in various ways. In the previous chapter, God roared like a lion and tore Israel like wild beasts, and “dew” was negative, indicating that which was ephemeral and temporary. But in the future, He will be like dew to Israel in a good sense, for the nation will flourish. “Dew” indicates refreshment, gentle truth, nurturing, renewal, hope, and that which fosters prosperity. God will be as dew in restoring Israel.

The (Easter) “lily,” known for its beauty, is a symbol of resurrection. A lily creates an atmosphere that is *pure and wholesome*. To *grow* as a lily indicates *profusion* along with purity and resurrection. Israel will “grow as the lily,” that is, blossom in purity.

Israel will “cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” The cedars of Lebanon were known for their longevity, height, grandeur, fragrance that repels some insects, preservative qualities, and deep and sturdy roots. Accordingly, Israel will send down deep *roots* in the Kingdom and will grow and enlarge as Gentiles come into the Jewish stock. In another picture, the “stone” that smites the image will grow and fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). As Israel prospers in its relationship to God under the New Covenant, Gentiles will come into that arrangement. Kingdom blessings will flow from Israel. The nation will not only grow but also be secure from all violence and uprootings. As its roots spread, it will not be plucked up anymore (Jer. 24:6).

**Hosea 14:6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.**

“His branches shall spread.” Israel’s influence in the world will be felt as its authority reaches out into *all* nations. The Ancient Worthies, who are predominantly Jewish, will influence not only Israel but also the whole world. Israel will “branch out” into other nations, as it were.

Israel’s “beauty shall be as the olive tree.” Profusion and fruitage are indicated. Olive trees have their own type of beauty. Their form (their varying shapes) and their conformity to the terrain make them unusual and beautiful. An olive tree is also a symbol of *usefulness*, for the olive is used for light, oil, and food and as an unguent for medicinal purposes. The olive tree is practical and long-lived.

Israel’s “smell [shall be] as Lebanon.” Cedars have the fragrance of pine. In fact, a cedar forest has a delightful aroma that penetrates one’s whole system. In the Lebanese mountains, a traveler could smell the cedars right away. The fragrance of the cedars of Lebanon represents a wholesomeness that is conducive to life and happiness. Accordingly, the *environment* will be uplifting and wholesome in the Kingdom, and those who want to serve the Lord will find conditions helpful to that end. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa. 110:3); those who want to serve the Lord but are weak according to the flesh will prosper.

Walking among the redwoods in Sequoia National Park in California gives an ethereal, out-of-this-world feeling. Not only is the silence impressive, but we were detached from all worldly thinking and filled with noble thoughts. Thus Israel’s growth, prosperity, and influence for good will extend outward to all peoples. The fragrance will be far-reaching so that other nations will say, “Come, let us go up to the God of Jacob” (Isa. 2:3 paraphrase). The pleasing fragrance, or communication, will induce others to follow the Lord.

Verses 5 and 6 emphasize the *growth* of the lily, the *root* of the cedar, the *fragrance* of Lebanon, and the *visual beauty* of the olive tree.

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

“They that dwell under his [God’s] shadow shall return.” First, Jews (the Holy Remnant of Israel) who pass the test of going “under the rod” will “return” to favor under covenant relationship (Ezek. 20:37). The class who look to the Lord in Israel’s day of trouble and *abide* under God’s protective care will be favored. Just to return physically to Israel now and settle there is not enough, for that action in itself would not constitute dwelling under God’s shadow. The Kingdom will start with those who develop and gain *faith and trust in the Lord*, especially in the day of Jacob’s Trouble.

Subsequently, in the more embracing sense, the Gentile nations who dwell under Israel’s shadow will return to God; that is, the other nations will become Israelitish when they come in under the New Covenant. They will have to become Israelite proselytes.

“They shall revive as the corn.” Corn sprouts remarkably fast; little tender shoots spring up overnight. The term “corn” includes various kinds of wheat or grains. Any germ of the various grains grows readily with moisture under certain conditions. For example, when kernels taken from the husk are planted as seed, they prosper rapidly. The RSV has, “They shall flourish as a garden.” In other words, under Kingdom influences, goodness will prosper speedily. As Israel grows and prospers, the influence will benefit others.

“[They shall] grow as the vine.” Vines grow with great ease; they just ramble all over. The emphasis is on *multiplicity*. Israel will so prosper that its children will say, “This place is too strait for us. We need more room because we are suffocating.” In the restoration, Israel will greatly increase in numbers, grow with much fruit, and spread out, benefiting others with a good and wholesome influence.

Israel’s “scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.” When grapes are ripe, the vineyards have a delightful, almost intoxicating fragrance. The future condition of Israel will be like saying in *happiness*, “Oh, how wonderful this is! How enjoyable!” The influence of Israel will be felt far and wide—its beauty, rootage, sweet fragrance, etc.

Lebanon is mentioned three times in verses 5-7 with regard to its smell, roots, and wine. In Hebrew, the name Lebanon means “white,” probably from the snows of Mount Hermon. The wine of Lebanon must have been renowned in the past. Today the “scent” of the Jew is not too popular, but when Israel’s conversion is seen and the Lord’s blessing and the personal worthiness of those who abide under His shadow, the scent of Israel will be *very pleasant*.

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

The supplied words “shall say” (in italic in the King James) should probably be omitted. The RSV reads, “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.” God is speaking, addressing Ephraim, answering Israel’s prayer. A dumb idol cannot answer prayer, but God can and does. After Israel’s experience in Jacob’s Trouble at the end of the age, the nation will want nothing more to do with idols. Here God reminds Israel that they prayed to idols in the past, but now He is answering them—and He is glad to give a *real* answer. *He* is their tree, and *He* is their fruit. Their blessings come from *Him* if they will just ask.

Spiritually speaking, the communicants who were formerly under Catholicism will prosper in the Kingdom arrangement. One of the reasons for the permission of evil is for mankind to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Therefore, sin will lose its tempting power in the future when it is contrasted with good and the prosperity of God’s Kingdom.

**Hosea 14:9** Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know

**them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.**

Hosea himself added this last comment to the prophecy. The Apostle Paul did the same thing in sometimes appending his own little comments. An example is in his Epistle to the Romans. After telling the principle of God's mercy and grace, he said, "O the depths of the knowledge of God and His wisdom! Who can search out His judgments? His ways are unfathomable!" (Rom. 11:33 paraphrase).

Verse 9 is a summation of God's instruction. Those who obey from the heart will forever prosper and please the Lord. To the incorrigible, however, the pure truth will be a stench of death. To the transgressors, who are not in the right heart condition, the ways of the Lord will be condemnatory, resulting in Second Death. Thus the same pure doctrine of God is a savor of life unto life to one class and an odor of death unto death to another class (2 Cor. 2:16).

**Comment:** The mention of Lebanon three times in chapter 14 with regard to the obedient of Israel in the future is touching because Song 4:11 brings in Lebanon in connection with Jesus' endearments to the Bride class. "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." In each case, there is a clean, wholesome fragrance.

As often happens with the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament, the Book of Hosea ends on a favorable and peaceful note, even though the bulk of the message is critical (but constructive) and pertains to wrongdoing. Chapter 14 is entirely a message of restitution and restoration. We are reminded of Acts 3:20,21, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Hosea spoke God's message on how the ten tribes should mend their ways.

Hosea's ministry ended (that is, he became silent) about the time the ten tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria.