

THE PROPHET HOSEA

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Introduction

The Minor Prophets begin with the book of Hosea. There are twelve of these books which are called by the name "minor prophets" not because their contents are of less authority than the preceding prophetic books, but on account of their size. The Jews considered them one book and the Talmud says of them, "our fathers made them one book, that they might not perish on account of their littleness." The term "minor prophets" was used by the church in early days. Augustinus states: "The prophet Isaiah is not in the books of the twelve prophets who are therefore called minor, because their discourses are brief in comparison with those who are called 'greater' because they composed considerable volumes." Jewish tradition claims that the present arrangement was made by the great synagogue formed by Ezra. This arrangement is not chronological. Joel precedes Hosea, while Hosea, Amos and Jonah were nearly contemporary; Obadiah is difficult to place. The introduction to the book enters into the question of date. Micah, the Morasthite, ministered between the years 757 and 699 B.C. Nahum, the complement and counterpart of the book of Jonah, also prophesied during the period of Isaiah. Habakkuk is later than the preceding prophets. He speaks of the invasion of the land by Chaldeans as imminent; his prophetic office was probably exercised during the second half of Manasseh's reign. Zephaniah prophesied under the reign of Josiah, between 642 and 611 B.C. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are post-exilic.

Hosea and His Times

The first verse of the book determines the period of Hosea. He prophesied while Uzziah was reigning in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, as well as during the time when Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings over Judah. His whole prophetic ministry covers probably over seventy years, so that he must have reached a very old age. His prophecy is directed almost exclusively to the house of Israel, which had degenerated in a short time and Hosea lived during these awful years. Jeroboam II was almost the last king who ruled by the appointment of the Lord. After him kings made their way to the tottering throne of Israel by murdering their predecessors. Shallum slew Zechariah; Menahem slew Shallum; Pekah killed the son of Menahem; Hosea killed Pekah. All was anarchy in Israel.

The religious conditions were still worse. Nearly all these usurpers had made alliances with foreign powers which resulted in the introduction

of the immoral, corrupt Phoenician and Syrian idolatry. The first Jeroboam had set up a rival worship so that the people would not go to Jerusalem to worship in the divinely appointed way. Jeroboam had been in Egypt (1 Kings 11:40; 12:2) where he had seen nature worshipped in the form of a calf, This worship he introduced in the identical words which their fathers had used when they worshiped the golden calf in the wilderness. (See Exodus 32:4 and 1 Kings 12:28). Outwardly the different ceremonies of the law, the feasts of Jehovah, the new moons and Sabbath days, the sacrifices and offerings were maintained, but all was a corrupt worship. The calf was the immediate object of that idolatrous worship. They sacrificed to the calf (1 Kings 12:32); they kissed the calf (Hosea 13:2) and swore by these idol-calves (Amos 8:14). As Dr. Pusey states: "Calf worship paved the way for the coarser and more cruel worship of nature, under the names of Baal and Ashtaroth, with all their abominations of consecrated child sacrifices, and horrible sensuality." It led to the most awful sins and degradation. Here is a description of the moral conditions prevailing in the days of Hosea, a condition brought about by the false worship and departure from God. Hosea and Amos acquaint us with it. All was falsehood (Hosea 4:1; 7:1, 3); adultery (Hosea 4:11, 7:4, 9:10); bloodshed (Hosea 5:2; 6:8); excess and luxury were supplied by secret or open robbery (Hosea 4:2; 10:13; 11:12; 4:11; 7:5; 6:4-6; Amos 4:1); oppression (Hosea 12:7; Amos 3:9-10); false dealing (Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5); perversion of justice (Hosea 10:4; Amos 2:6, 7); grinding of the poor (Amos 2:7, 8:6). Adultery was consecrated as an act of worship and religion (Hosea 4:14). The people, the king and the priests were all steeped in debauchery. Corruption had spread everywhere; even the places once sacred through Jehovah's revelation, Bethel, Gilgal, Gilead, Mizpah, Shechem, were special scenes of vileness and wickedness. Remonstrance was useless for the knowledge of Jehovah was wilfully rejected; they hated rebuke. To understand the message of Hosea and Amos these conditions, both religious and moral, must be fully understood.

The Message of Hosea

Like the message of other prophets Hosea's message is one of judgment and future mercy. He announced the coming judgment as certain and irreversible. They were to be led away into captivity. His sons and daughters born to him by Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, expressed this coming judgment in their names which were given to them by divine direction. "Lo-Ruhamah"--I will have no mercy; and "Lo-ammi"--not my people. Then he announced in the name of the Lord, "I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease;" "I will have no mercy upon the house of Israel:" "They shall be wanderers among the nations;"--"They shall not dwell in the Lord's land;"--"Israel is swallowed up; she shall be among the nations like a vessel in which is no pleasure." In the greater portion of his message there is an exposure of the people's moral condition and their impenitent state.

But there is also the message of mercy, which is found in the very beginning of the book. Here are a few of these comforting words, which still await their fulfillment in the day when they shall "seek the Lord their God, and David their King (the Messiah); and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (3:5):--"I will betroth her to me forever;"--"They shall fear the Lord and His goodness;"--"He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight;"--"Till He come and rain righteousness upon you;"--"I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death,"--"I will heal their backsliding;"--"I will be as the dew

unto Israel, He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth its roots as Lebanon."

"It belongs to the mournful solemnity of Hosea's prophecy that he scarcely speaks to the people in his own person. The ten chapters, which form the center of the prophecy, are almost wholly one long dirge of woe, in which the prophet rehearses the guilt and the punishment of his people. If the people are addressed, it is, with very few exceptions, God Himself, not the prophet, who speaks to them; and God speaks to them as their judge. Once only does the prophet use the form so common in other prophets 'saith the Lord.' As in the three first chapters, the prophet, in relation to his wife, represented the relation of God to His people, so in these ten chapters, after the first words of the fourth and fifth chapters;--'Hear the word of the Lord, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land;'--'Hear ye this, O priests;'--whenever the prophet uses the first person, he uses it not of himself, but of God. 'I,'--'My,'--are not Hosea, and the things of Hosea, but God and what belongs to God. God addresses the prophet in the second person. In four verses only of these chapters does the prophet himself apparently address his own people Israel, in two expostulating with them (9:1, 5); in two calling them to repentance (10:12 and 12:6). In two other verses he addresses Judah, and foretells their judgment mingled with mercy (4:13). The last chapter alone is one of almost unmingled brightness; the prophet calls to repentance, and God in His own person accepts it, and promises large supply of grace" (Dr. Pusey).

We learn then from the message of this book, what is so largely written in all the prophets, that there is a glorious future in store for all Israel. Judah and Israel both will receive the promised blessing and glory in that day when the King comes back, when Ephraim joyfully cries out "I have seen Him" (14:8).

The conditions in Israel also find their counterpart in our own times. Christendom has turned its back in greater part upon the true worship, rejects the truth, yea the highest and the best God has given, the Gospel of Christ, hence the moral decline and apostasy and ere long a greater judgment than that which fell upon Israel.

The Division of Hosea

Hosea (meaning "salvation") in his style is abrupt and sententious. As already stated in the introduction he is the prophet of the ten tribes, though Judah is also mentioned by him. The book begins with two symbolical actions commanded by Jehovah, to illustrate Israel's adulterous condition and Jehovah's enduring love for His people in spite of their faithlessness. This is followed by a terse prophecy as to the condition of the people for many days and their return in the latter days (chapters 1-3).

The main portion of the book begins with the fourth chapter. This part begins with "Hear the Word of the Lord." in this section their religious and moral degradation through the priests and their coming ruin is announced. Then follows a description of the judgment which was to come upon Ephraim (the house of Israel) and also upon Judah. This is beheld by the prophet in a solemn vision (5:8-15), followed by a brief prophecy as to what will take place when the remnant of Israel returns unto the Lord (6:1-3). Then the Lord reproves them for their inconstancy, their immorality, their lewd priests. From chapter 7 to 13 we have similar

remonstrances, with renewed announcements of the judgments on account of their wickedness, idolatries, leagues with heathen nations; the judgment is to be exile. What is to be their lot is predicted. This punishment is not to be delayed; it will, however, not destroy them, but purge them, leaving a remnant. The last chapter is one of gracious promise of what will take place in the day of their return. The division of this book is therefore twofold.

I. THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL AS AN ADULTEROUS WIFE AND
HER FUTURE RECEPTION AND RESTORATION: (1-3)

II. THE MESSAGES OF EXPOSTULATION, JUDGMENT, AND MERCY: (4-12)

There are different subdivisions which will be pointed out and followed in the analysis and annotations.

The book of Hosea is quoted a number of times in the New Testament. See Matt 2:15, 9:13, 12:7; Rom. 9:25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:55; 1 Peter 2:5, 10.

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL AS THE ADULTEROUS WIFE
AND HER FUTURE RECEPTION AND RESTORATION

CHAPTER 1

Israel's Sin and Promise of Restoration

1. The introduction (1:1)
2. The prophet's marriage and birth of Jezreel (1:2-5)
3. The birth of Lo-Ruhamah (1:6-7)
4. The birth of Lo-ammi (1:8-9)
5. The future restoration (1:10-11)

Verse 1. This superscription gives the period of Hosea's ministry. First stands the statement that the word of the Lord came to him. Hosea means salvation; his father's name, Beeri, means "my well." Both are typical names. Critics have pointed out that Hosea was undoubtedly a resident of the northern kingdom of Israel, yet he mentions but one of the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, while four kings of Judah are given in this introduction. Inasmuch as Hosea long survived Jeroboam, the king of Israel, and the Judaic kings extend far beyond the time of the one Israelitish king, it has been alleged that the second part of the superscription does not harmonize with the first. Such is not the case. The superscription is made in this manner for some purpose. Hosea marks his Prophecy by the names of the kings of Judah, because in Judah the theocracy remained. He mentions Jeroboam (the Second), whose reign ended in the fourteenth year of Uzziah, because he was the last king of Israel through whom God acted and vouchsafed help to the rival kingdom. All the other kings of Israel who came after Jeroboam, by whom the Lord sent deliverance to the ten tribes (2 Kings 14:2 7) were therefore recognized by the prophets of God; the kings which followed were robbers and murderers, whose names the Spirit of God finds unfit to mention in the prophetic ministry of Hosea.

Verses 2-5. In the beginning of his ministry, when Hosea was a young man, the Lord commanded him to take unto him a wife of whoredoms and

children of whoredoms, and that for the reason, because the land hath committed great whoredoms, departing from the Lord. This command was at once executed by the prophet; he took to wife Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.

We are confronted with an interesting question. What is the nature of these transactions? Were they real events, that Hosea literally took this woman and had children by her, or were they nothing but pictorial, visionary illustrations of the spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness of Israel? Did the prophet actually and literally enter into such an impure relationship, or, is it wholly an allegory? Luther supposed that the prophet called his lawful wife and children by these names at a certain time to perform a kind of drama before the people and thus remind them of their apostasy. The objectors to the literalness of this incident, and defenders of the allegorical explanation, have pointed out that it would be unworthy of God to command and sanction such an unchaste union. The allegorical meaning is entirely excluded by the text, which speaks of a literal transaction. All is related as real history, the marriage and the birth of the children. We quote first Dr. Pusey's words in support of the literal meaning of this command by the Lord.

"We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us. God does not dispense with the moral law, because the moral law has its source in the mind of God Himself. To dispense with it would mean to contradict Himself. But God, who is absolute Lord of all things which He made, may, at His sovereign will, dispose of the lives or things which He created. Thus, as sovereign judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken by Israel, as, in His ordinary providence, He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. So, again, He, whose are all things, willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude by commanding them to spoil the Egyptians. He, who created marriage, commanded to Hosea whom he should marry. The prophet was not defiled by taking as his lawful wife, at God's bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was."

This is the strongest defense of the literal interpretation of this incident. But there is another interpretation possible, which we believe is the correct one. As the context shows the symbolical meaning of Hosea's marriage is to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness. But Israel was not always unfaithful; she played not always the harlot. Of necessity this had to be symbolized in the case of the prophet's marriage. The question then arises, was Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim an impure woman when Hosea married her, or did she become unchaste after her marriage to the prophet? We believe the latter was the case. The Hebrew does not require the meaning that she was impure at the time of the marriage; in fact, as already indicated, the supposition that Gomer lived the life of a harlot before her marriage to the godly prophet, destroys the parallelism, which the prophet's message embodies, with the relation of God to Israel. The expression "a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms" simply intimated to Hosea what the woman he married was going to be. If not taken in this sense it would mean that Gomer had already children when Hosea married her.

Gomer was called "a wife of whoredoms" by the omniscient Lord, in anticipation of her future conduct. She fell and became immoral after her union with Hosea, and not before. In this way she became a symbol of Israel, married unto the Lord, but afterwards became the unfaithful wife.

With this view, the entire prophetic message of Hosea in the beginning of this book harmonizes. The name of the woman is likewise suggestive. Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, means "Completion--a double cake of figs." Israel's wickedness is symbolized as complete and the double cake of figs is symbolical of sensual pleasures. And the prophet in spite of her unfaithfulness still loved her and did not abandon her. This illustrates Jehovah's love for Israel.

Then she bore him a son. Expositors have stated, "The children were not the prophet's own, but born of adultery and presented to him as his." But that can not be the meaning in view of the plain statement "she conceived and bare him a son."

The Lord commands him to call this son "Jezreel." Jezreel has likewise a symbolical meaning. It means "God shall scatter" (Jer. 31:10); but it also means "God shall sow" (Zech. 10:9). Thus Israel was to be scattered and sown among the nations. Jezreel was the valley in which Jehu executed his bloody deeds. On account of his hypocritical zeal, the blood of Jezreel is now to be avenged, and the kingdom of the house of Israel would cease. Thus the name Jezreel (resembling in sound and form "Israel") indicates the speedy end of Israel, scattered and sown among the nations, on account of their whoredoms (see Ezek. 23).

Verses 6-7. Next a daughter is born. Here "bare him" as found in verse 3 is omitted. The prophet receives a name for her--Lo-ruhamah, which means "not having obtained mercy." Interesting are the two renderings of the Holy Spirit of this passage in the New Testament. In Romans 9:25 it is rendered "not beloved" and in 1 Peter 2:10, "hath not obtained mercy." Love and mercy were now to be withdrawn from Israel and they were to be taken away utterly.

Then the house of Judah is mentioned. They shall be saved by the Lord their God, because He has mercy on them. Their salvation was not by bow, by sword, or by battle, horses and horsemen. It was only a little while later when the Assyrian, who was God's instrument in the execution of judgment upon Israel, came before the gates of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem was saved in the manner as predicted here, not by bow or sword, but the angel of the Lord smote the army of 185,000 in one night. And later Judah was saved and a remnant brought back from Babylon. Then there is a future salvation for Judah in the end of the age.

Verses 8-9. Another son is born and "God said, Call his name Lo-ammi, for ye are not my people and I am not your God." Lo-ammi means "not my people." Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi are symbolical of Israel's rejection and the withdrawal of God's mercy. That this is not to be permanent the next two verses make this clear.

Verses 10-11. Abruptly we are transported from the present into the distant future, and a prophetic utterance of great depth follows. The tenth verse is quoted by the Holy Spirit in Romans 9 and gives full light on the meaning of the passage here. God's sovereignty is the theme of the ninth chapter of Romans: "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As He saith also in Osee (Greek form of Hosea), I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people,

there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Rom. 9:23-26). Here is the commentary of Hosea 1:10. It means first that Israel shall be reinstated; but it also means the call and salvation of the Gentiles, and Gentiles called in sovereign grace are to be constituted "the sons of the living God." It is a prophetic hint on the blessing to come to the Gentiles, and that blessing is greater than Israel's.

The eleventh verse is a great prophecy and remains still unfulfilled. Some expositors claim that it was fulfilled in the return of the remnant of Jews under Zerubbabel. But the Babylonian captivity is not in view here at all. The great day of Jezreel will come, when King Messiah, our Lord returns. Then shall Judah and Israel be gathered together under one head, and gather once more to their national feasts in the land.

CHAPTER 2

Appeal and Punishment for Unfaithfulness The Resumed Relationship

1. The appeal and complaint (2:1-5)
2. The punishment for Unfaithfulness (2:6-13)
3. The resumed relationship and its great blessing (2:14-23)

Verses 1-5. Who is addressed in the first verse of this chapter? Some think the children of the prophet are meant. The godly in Israel, those who obtained mercy, are addressed, for the Lord acknowledges such still as "Ammi"-my people. The godly are to plead with the rest of Israel their mother, but who is disowned by Jehovah as the wife, on account of her adulterous conduct. Then the Lord threatens her with severe punishment because of her unfaithfulness. She is to be stripped naked and be as in the day she was born (see Ezek. 16:4). Nor would there be mercy for her children because the mother, Israel, continued to go after her lovers.

Verses 6-13. Her way is to be hedged up with thorns; a wall of separation is to be raised and to keep her from her lovers. And if she follow after them and make a sinful alliance with them (symbolical of the idol worship of heathens which Israel practiced) she would not find them. Thus she might return to her first husband, to Jehovah. Israel had received from the Lord corn, wine, oil, silver and gold. Then they attributed it all to Baal and used it in idol worship. In verses 9-13 the punishment is fully made known. She is to be left alone; the gifts and blessings will be withdrawn; her lewdness is to be uncovered, all mirth will cease and the days of Baalim, spent in licentious worship, would be visited upon her in judgment.

Verses 14-23. Immediately after the announcement of her punishment follows the assurance or future mercy. Israel's conversion is promised (verses 14-17) and the great mercies of Jehovah's covenant are to be renewed (verses 18-23). The Lord of love will not forever abandon His people and though Israel has played the harlot so long, with no willingness to return unto Him, He Himself in infinite love is going to woo her back. He will allure her, as He brings her into the wilderness, and there speak "to her heart" (the Hebrew meaning). That will be in the coming day when the Lord will remember the remnant of His people during the time of Jacob's trouble and save them in that day. Then she will get her vineyards, her place of blessing, promised to Israel as His earthly people. The valley of Achor shall be the door of hope. In that valley Achan died, on account of

whom all Israel had fallen under the ban (Josh. 7). There judgment had been enacted and after that blessing was restored to Israel and the ban was removed. Achor means "troubling." When Israel is in that great trouble, the great tribulation, the valley of trouble will become the door of hope, for then the Lord will forgive them their sins, cover them with His grace and redeem them by His power. Then the singing times begin again for Israel. "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." Songs of praise on account of accomplished redemption by Jehovah's power will then burst forth (Exod. 15; Isa. 12). She will be fully restored to her former relationship, typified by marriage. "It shall be in that day, saith the Lord, that Thou shalt call Me Ishi (my husband), and shalt call Me no more Baali (my master)." She will be re-married to the Lord, symbolically speaking, and become the earthly wife of Jehovah, while the church, the espoused virgin, becomes in glory the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19:6-8).

But greater blessing will be connected with that coming day of blessing, when Israel is received back (Rom. 11:15). Verse 18 tells us that creation will then be blest; the time of its deliverance has come. Here the same is indicated as in Isaiah 11:6-7 and Romans 8:21. The end of wars comes then and universal peace blesses the whole earth. This is always the order in the divine forecasts. First, Israel has to be brought back, and after that the blessings for the earth and the nations, including that peace, which the blinded world-church tries to secure without the Lord Jesus Christ. All these promises as to the future of Israel, her restoration and spiritual blessings, are unrealized. "It is infatuation to think that all this was fully accomplished in the return of a remnant from the captivity. The result is that even Christians, misled by this miserable error, are drawn away into the rationalistic impiety of counting God's Word here mere hyperbole to heighten the effect, as if the Holy Spirit deigned to be a verbal trickster, or a prophet were as vain as a litterateur. No; it is a brighter day, when the power of God will make a complete clearance from the world of disorder, misrule, man's violence and corruption, as well as reduce to harmless and happy resubjection the entire animal kingdom."

In that day all the great covenant blessings will return to redeemed Israel. Betrothed again to Jehovah in righteousness, in judgment, in faithfulness and mercies, Israel will know Jehovah. There will be an uninterrupted line of blessing from the heavens down to every earthly blessing. Heavens and earth will be gloriously united, and in answer to the call of His people the heavens will hear and cover all with blessing, for Satan's power is now gone. Israel is no more Lo-ammi, but they will be "His people" and He will be "their God," while the redeemed nation itself will be a blessing in the earth.

CHAPTER 3

Israel's Past, Present, and Future

1. The past (3:1-3)
2. The present (3:4)
3. The future (3:5)

Verses 1-3. The command here is not that the Prophet should enter into relation with another woman, but it concerns the same Gomer, the unfaithful wife. It seems she left the prophet and lived in adultery with another man. "And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a wife, who is beloved of her

friend and who is an adulteress; just as Jehovah loves the children of Israel, who have turned towards other gods, and love raisin cakes" (correct translation; used in the idolatrous worship). She is not called "thy wife," simply "a wife"; yet the prophet is told to love the adulterous wife. This woman, whom the Lord commands Hosea to love, he had loved before her fall; he was now to love her after her fall, and while in that condition, in order to save her from abiding in it. It was for her sake that she might be won back to him. Such is the love of Jehovah for Israel.

He bought the adulteress for half of the price of a common slave (Exod. 21:32); it denotes her worthlessness. The measure of barley mentioned reminds of the offering of one accused of adultery, and, being the food of animals, shows her degradation likewise. He thus was to buy her back, not to live with him as his wife, but that she might sit as a widow, not running after others, but wait for him during an undefined, but long season, until he would come and take her to himself. While she was not to belong to another man, he, her legitimate husband, would be her guardian. Israel's spiritual adultery is in view in all this.

Verse 4. Here we have direct prophecy, a very remarkable one, as to Israel's present condition. It is to be their state for "many days." These "many days," unreckoned, are the days of this present age, in which Israel is in the predicted condition, while God visits the Gentiles, to gather through the preaching of the gospel a people for His Name, that is, the church. Their condition is to be threefold: Without a civil polity, without king or prince; without the appointed Levitical worship, no sacrifice; without the practice of idolatry, to which they had been given, without image, ephod and teraphim-- the distinctly priestly garment, the ephod; the teraphim, the tutelary divinities, which they used before the captivity. Before the captivity they had kings; now they have none, would have none; after the captivity Judah had princes; no princes during the "many days." The real approach to God according to the Levitical service was to cease, for during the "many days" there would be no sacrifice. This has been Israel's condition for nineteen hundred years. What a wonderful forecast of the present we have here! Clearly then, this describes the present condition of Israel--the most anomalous spectacle the world has ever seen--a people who go on generation after generation without any of those things which are supposed to be essential for keeping a people in existence. They have lost their king, their prince; they have neither the true worship nor the worship of idols. They are unable to present a sacrifice, because they have no temple and no more priesthood. Here is an evidence of the supernaturalness of the Bible, one which no Jew nor destructive critic can deny.

Verse 5. Afterward--in the latter days. These two statements open and end the prophecy concerning their future. The "afterward" is not yet; the latter days are still to come. Their future is returning and seeking the Lord, their God and David their king. This is Christ. Nearly all the rabbinical writers and expositors explain it in this way. David himself this could not be. It is He who is David's Son and David's Lord, our Lord (Ezek. 37:23, 24). Here we have the prediction of the future conversion of Israel to the Lord, in the latter days, the days of His coming again.

(The Targum of Jonathan says on Hosea 3:5: "This is the King Messiah; whether he be from among the living or from the dead. His name is Messiah. The same explanation is given by the mystical books Zohar, Midrash Shemuel and Tanchuma. The greatest authorities among the Jews are one in declaring

that 'the last days' mean the days of the Messiah; we have reference to Kirnchi, Abarbanel, Moses Ben Nacham and many others.)

II. THE MESSAGE OF EXPOSTULATION, JUDGMENT, AND MERCY

CHAPTER 4

The Lord's Controversy with His People

1. The condition of the people (4:1-5)
2. The loss of their priestly relation (4:6-11)
3. Israel's idolatry (4:12-19)

Verses 1-5. This chapter begins with a terse description of the condition of the professing people of God. First, we have the negative side--no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God. And there was no truth, because they had rejected the Word of the Lord, hence the result no mercy and no knowledge of God. It is so still whenever and wherever the Word of God is set aside. Then follows the positive evil which was so prominent in their midst: Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery, and abundant shedding of blood. Such was the continued moral condition of the house of Israel, the ten tribes. It was all the result of having rejected the Word of the Lord and having turned away from Him. The result of unbelief, destructive criticism and denial of the truth is today, as it was then, swearing, lying, stealing, killing and the immoralities of our times. Therefore judgment would overtake all, even the land itself.

Verses 6-11. The people were destroyed for lack of knowledge, the knowledge of God and His truth. They had lost their place of nearness to the Lord, their priestly character into which the Lord had called the nation (Exod. 19). Therefore they would be rejected to be no longer in priestly relationship to Jehovah. And the priestly class was as corrupt as the people--"like people like priests." They were to be punished for their ways and their doings.

Verses 12-19. Having left Jehovah they had turned to idols, asked counsel of a piece of wood and practiced divination. This abominable idol worship was practiced upon the tops of mountains. There, under trees, they gave themselves over to the vile rites of Baal-peor and Ashtaroth, both men and women abandoned themselves to the grossest sins of the flesh. And the Lord threatens that He would leave them alone in their vileness and not correct them, that they might be brought back. The first chapter of Romans is illustrated by verse 14; they glorified not God, became idolators and then God gave them up to their vile affections.

Then there is a warning to the house of Judah in verse 15. The most sacred places, like Gilgal, had become the scene of the idolatry of the ten tribes. Bethel, the house of God, became a Beth-aven, the house of vanity. If Judah offended and committed the same whoredoms, she would not escape judgment. The warning was unheeded.

"Ephraim (the ten tribes) is joined to idols; let him alone." Ephraim was too far gone; further remonstrances would not help, and so the evil is permitted to go unchecked, to run its full course.

their affliction.

The last verse of this chapter has a wider meaning than the past judgment which came upon the house of Israel. The Lord of glory came to earth and visited His people. He came with the message and offer of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. After they had rejected Him, delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles to be crucified, He returned to His place. There He is now at the right hand of God, waiting for that day, when the remnant of Israel will repent and seek His face (Acts 3:19-20). That will be in their coming great affliction, in the time of Jacob's trouble.

Chapter 6:1-3. The division of the chapter at this point is unfortunate. The three verses of chapter 6 must not be detached from the previous chapter. Here we have the future repentance of the remnant of Israel, that is during the great tribulation. Believingly they will acknowledge His righteous judgment and express their faith and hope in His mercy and the promised blessings and restoration. They express what their great prophet Moses so beautifully stated in His prophetic song, that great vision given to him, ere he went to the mountain to die. "See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand" (Deut. 32:39). "After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight (literally, before His face)." They have been dead spiritually and nationally, but when the two days of their blindness and dispersion are over, there is coming for them the third day of life and resurrection. Jewish expositors have pointed out the fact that a day is with the Lord as a thousand years. They state that they will be in dispersion for two days, that is, two thousand years, after which comes the third day of Israel's glorious restoration. One Rabbinical commentator says: "The first day we were without life in the Babylonian captivity, and the second day, which will also end, is the great captivity in which we are now, and the third day is the great day of our restoration." Like Jonah was given up by the fish on the third day, so comes for Israel a third day of life and glory. Then the latter and the former rain will fall upon their land again, and, blest by Him, their Saviour-King, they will live in His sight. But the passage, no doubt, also points to the resurrection of our Lord, the true Israel in a hidden way.

CHAPTER 6:4-11

Divine Mourning over Ephraim and Judah

1. What shall I do to thee? (6:4-6)
2. Their transgression (6:7-11)

Verses 4-6. The Lord grieves and mourns over the condition of the people whom He loves. After the brief glimpse given of their great future of glory we are brought back into the days of Moses. The Lord grieves and mourns over His people whom He loves, who today are still beloved for the Father's sake (Rom. 9). But while He loved them, their love was like the morning cloud, like the dew, vanishing soon away. The morning cloud looks beautiful, gilded by the rays of the rising sun, but it quickly disappears through the heat of the sun; the dew glitters in the early morning, but soon it is gone. Thus was their love, fluctuating and changing. How often is the love of His heavenly people like the morning cloud and the dew! Thank God that His love never changes! The Prophets He had sent to them

came, therefore, with words of condemnation, instead of words of comfort and cheer. They came to hew, as stone or wood is hewn, and the message of judgment they proclaimed condemned them; this is the meaning of the sentence, "I have slain them by the words of My mouth."

Verses 7-11. "Yet they like Adam have transgressed the covenant; they have dealt treacherously against Me." As God had made known His covenant to Adam, given him a commandment, so He had made a covenant with them and made known unto them His will. Like Adam they had transgressed the covenant. Adam had been called into relationship with His Creator and a place of blessing and favor in Eden had been given to him. He transgressed, and after his fall he was driven out. This happened to Israel. Called of God, who entered with them into a covenant and gave them the land of promise, but when they transgressed, like Adam, they were also driven out. Iniquity and blood was everywhere. Even the priests lurked as a band of robbers and murdered the travelers on the way to Shechem, one of the cities of refuge. (Note correct translation: "Upon the way they murder (those who go) to Shechem" verse 9.)

(Attention has been called to an important distinction. Man is called a sinner. The Gentiles as such are never called transgressors. We read in the New Testament of sinners of the Gentiles, but never "transgressors" of the Gentiles. Adam was under a law, which he broke and by it he became a transgressor. Israel was under the law, which they broke and became transgressors. But no covenant existed with the Gentiles, nor had they the law given to them; hence while they are lost sinners, they are not called transgressors in the sense in which the covenant people are called transgressors.)

The horrible thing was that Israel was steeped in whoredoms; they were not only spiritually adulterers, but following the idol worship they lived in literal harlotry and lewdness. Judah, too, would get a harvest. But the final sentence of this chapter, "When I return the captivity of My people," is a prophecy, not concerning the return from Babylon, but that other great restoration which is yet to come. Looked upon in this light the entire verse is prophetic. "For thee, also, Judah a harvest waits, when I shall turn the captivity of My people." When God restores His people in His promised covenant mercies then Judah will be visited by judgment as it will be in the end of this age.

CHAPTER 7

The Moral Depravity of Israel

1. Their moral depravity (7:1-7)
2. Mingling with heathen nations (7:8-16)

Verses 1-7. All the gracious efforts of the Lord to heal Israel resulted in a greater manifestation of the iniquity of Ephraim. Instead of turning to Him in true repentance and self-judgment their evil heart turned away from Jehovah, and they continued in their downward course. They did not consider that the Lord would remember all their evil deeds and punish them for it. The king and the princes, the political heads were as corrupt as the priests, they were pleased with the impenitence and wickedness of their subjects. Then follows a graphic description of their moral depravity. They were adulterers, burning with lust, "like an oven heated by the baker, who rests, stirring up (the fire), after he has kneaded the

dough until it be leavened." They indulged in all the vile, obscene practices connected with the idol worship of the heathen about them. They were also drunkards and were heated with wine as they were with lust. They made their heart like an oven; their baker (meaning their own evil will and imagination) slept all night, but, awakening in the morning, their lust is stirred up again. Nor did anyone call upon the name of the Lord.

Such was the moral depravity of a people with whom the Lord had entered into covenant, the favored nation. The source of it was unbelief and the rejection of His Word. The sad history of Israel is repeated in professing Christendom today.

Verses 8-16. The Lord called Israel to be a separated nation, but Ephraim mingled with the heathen (not, people) and is compared to a cake not turned. They adopted heathen ways, heathen manners and heathen vices. Like an unturned cake, which is black and burnt on the one side, while above it is unbaked, such was Ephraim's condition. Such a cake was fit for nothing; it had to be thrown away. The strangers with whom they mingled devoured their strength, nor did they not notice the signs of their speedy national decay. This is the meaning of the statement, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he does not know it." Furthermore, Ephraim is likened to a silly dove without understanding. Instead of flying back to Jehovah their help and rest, they fluttered, like a moth around the flame, around Egypt and Assyria, trying to find deliverance there. But while fluttering from Egypt to Assyria and from Assyria to Egypt, they did not see the net which was spread for their destruction--that net was Assyria itself. In this net the Lord caught them; their freedom would be ended and captivity begin. Then follows the divine Woe. "Woe unto them! for they have wandered from Me. Destruction upon them, that they have transgressed against Me!" The divine lament cried after them, "I would have redeemed them, but they spoke lies against Me." While they may have cried with their mouth, their heart did not. They were like a deceitful bow on which the archer cannot depend, so the Lord could not depend upon Israel. God had, to apply the symbol, bent Israel as His own bow against evil and idolatry, but they turned themselves against Him.

CHAPTER 8:1-9:9

The Apostasy is Followed by Judgment

1. The judgment announced (8:1-7)
2. The apostasy which resulted in judgment (8:8-14)
3. Warning against self-security (9:1-9)

Verses 1-7. The prophet is commanded to sound the alarm of the impending judgment. The message is that the enemy will come swift as an eagle upon the house of the Lord, which here does not mean the temple (which was in connection with Judah), but Israel as the chosen people was the house, the dwelling-place of the Lord. All their spurious profession, their false claim, "My God, we know Thee, we, Israel", will go for nothing, because they transgressed the covenant and the law. The obnoxious thing they did is stated in verse 4. They had separated themselves from Judah and chosen their own kings and princes in self will, thus putting themselves outside of the theocracy; idolatry speedily followed. In Bethel they had erected the worship of the calf, the great abomination in the sight of the Lord. He rejects their corrupt worship, and ere long the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces, like the golden calf their fathers made in the

wilderness. They sowed the wind and the whirlwind would be the harvest (chapter 10:13, 12:2; Job 4:8; Prov. 22:8). They sowed vanity and evil; the tempest of destruction would be their reaping. What they sowed would not yield fruit at all. The Hebrew contains a play of words, "Tsemach brings no Quernach," which may be rendered, "shoot brings no fruit."

Verses 8-14. Israel had been swallowed up by the nations, that is, by mingling with them. By their doings they have become like a despised vessel. Their sin was going up to Assyria, like a wild ass, suing there for love and favor. They were like a stubborn brute going there by itself. Ephraim was even worse than the stubborn ass. They formed unnatural alliances with the Gentiles. There they gave presents, hiring lovers, literally rendered, "Ephraim gave presents of love" to practice her whoredoms. They forgot their Creator, God; their sacrifices Jehovah despised. Therefore the judgment.

Chapter 9:1-9. Under the reign of Jeroboam II Israel enjoyed great prosperity. It seems they had a bountiful harvest, corn and wine was in abundance. They gave themselves over to feasting and rejoicing. It was at such an occasion when the Lord sent this warning against their own security. Their captivity is announced where they would eat things unclean and feast days will no longer be possible. Then the prophet beholds them as already in the Assyrian captivity. They went away and turned towards the south to escape the sure destruction. But "Egypt will gather them, Memphis will bury them." Their precious things of silver will give way to thistles and thorns. The day of visitation was at hand; their iniquities are remembered and their sins will be visited.

CHAPTER 9:10-11:11

Retrospect, Israel's Failure and Ruin

1. Israel once beloved, now fugitive wanderers (9:10-17)
2. Their guilt and punishment (10:1-11)
3. Exhortation and rebuke (10:12-15)
4. The mercy of a merciful God (11:1-11)

Verses 10-17. Like a wayfaring man who finds grapes and figs in the desert and delights in them, so the Lord found Israel in the desert and they were His pleasure when He led them out of Egypt. But they requited His love by going after Baal-peor, one of the filthiest gods of heathendom. To this they consecrated themselves and practiced their vile abominations. Therefore the glory which He had given to His people will fly away like a bird and their licentious worship of unnatural vices would avenge itself so that there would be no pregnancy and no birth, the promised increase would stop. It seems verses 14-17 are an outburst of the prophet. How literally the sentence has been fulfilled. "They will be wanderers."

Chapter 10:1-11. Here is another retrospect, Israel once called to be a thriving vine (not empty), called to be fruitful; but Israel did not bring forth the expected fruit. As the nation abounded and prospered they increased their idol altars; as the land yielded its increase in the same measure they made their images. Their heart was smooth, or deceitful, for this they will now have to suffer. "Their heart is smooth; now will they make expiation." They will have no more king. The smooth or deceitful heart is described in verse 4, while in the verse which follows the judgment upon their calves they worshipped is announced. It, the calf, will be carried to

Assyria to be made a present of to the king. The high places will be destroyed and thorns and thistles will overgrow its altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall upon us!" Well, it is to read in connection with this prophetic statement what our Lord said about the judgment of Jerusalem in Luke 23:30 and what is written in connection with the breaking of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:16.

Gibeah is mentioned (verse 9). The corruption of Gibeah is also noted in chapter 9:9. The horrible abomination of Gibeah is recorded in Judges 19 in consequence of which the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out. And the people had become as wicked and guilty as Benjamin at Gibeah. The nations are now to be used to punish Israel. "And the nations will gather themselves against them, when I bind them for their offenses" (verse 10, literal translation).

Verses 12-15. Here is a break in the judgment message. If they would return to the Lord and would sow righteousness, they would reap mercy. But such sowing is impossible unless the fallow ground is broken up, that is, true repentance and a heart return unto the Lord. "For it is time to seek the Lord, until He come and rain righteousness upon you." In what infinite patience He waited for the repentance of His people! But while He would save them, they would not! Still God's gifts and calling are without repentance and the day will come when a remnant of Israel will seek the Lord; then He will come and rain righteousness upon them.

How different was their condition! The Lord rebukes them, for they had ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity. The noise of war is now heard; Shalman (a contracted form of Shalmanezar, the King of Assyria) is advancing and shall destroy all their fortresses as he destroyed Beth-arbel. (There is no further record of Beth-arbel and its destruction.) And who was responsible for all this havoc and the impending calamity? "Thus has Bethel done to you, for the evil of your great evil. In the early morning the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off." Bethel was the seat of Israel's idolatry, it drew God's wrath and finally ended the monarchy in Israel and their national existence.

Chapter 11:1-11. This chapter starts with a beautiful allusion to Israel's youth, when in sovereign love He called Israel, His firstborn son, out of Egypt, redeeming them by blood and power (Exod. 4:22-23). But this passage is quoted in the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son" (Matt. 2:15). The blending together of Israel and Christ is very interesting. Christ is the true Israel and goes through the entire history of the nation, without failure and in divine perfection. He was carried as an infant into the land where Israel suffered in the fiery furnace; and finally He died for that nation and in some future day through Him, the true Israel (called such in Isa. 49), Israel's great future and glory will come to pass.

But while the Son of God, the true Israel, was perfect and holy in all His ways, Israel was unfaithful. This record of Jehovah's faithfulness and mercy is here unfolded. He sent them prophets who called them, but they turned away from Him and gave themselves over to the Baalim and the idol-gods. How loving He had been to them! He led them, took them into His arms and healed them. He drew them with cords of love and was towards them "as those that would raise the yoke-strap over their jaws, and I reached out to them to eat" (verse 4). It is a beautiful picture of His great

gentleness with them. Perhaps some of them were anxious to turn to Egypt and find a home there and thus escape the cruel Assyrian. But the Lord declares that they shall not return to Egypt, but Assyria is to be their king, because they refused to return. The sword of judgment would do its work completely (verses 6-7). Then follows a most wonderful outburst of deepest sorrow over the stubborn nation:

How should I give you up, Ephraim?
How shall I surrender thee, Israel?
How should I make thee like Admah?
Or set thee like Zeboim?
My heart is turned within me;
My repentings are kindled together.

It is the same Lord who speaks here, who centuries later stood before the city and broke out in loud weeping when He beheld the city: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:37). How He loves His people! And though He has punished them, He does not forsake them; He will not be angry forever; He is a covenant keeping God, "For I am God and not man" (verse 9). "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). And so here, this chapter of Jehovah's mercy ends with the assurance of their future restoration and blessing. "They will follow the Lord." That will be "when like a lion He roars." That is the day when He appears again as "The lion of the tribe of Judah." Then, in that day, like a bird from Egypt they will hasten back and like a dove from Assyria. "Then will I make them dwell in their houses, saith the Lord." Here is another prophecy of their restoration to their own, God-given home land.

CHAPTERS 11:12-12:14

The Indictment

1. Ephraim's indictment (11:12-12:2)
2. Remembrance of the past (12:3-6)
3. What Israel had become (12:7-14)

Chapter 11:12-12:2. Lying and deceit had been Ephraim's course towards Jehovah; instead of trusting Him and following Him faithfully they had attached themselves to idols, while Judah still outwardly cleaved to Jehovah, though it was in a rambling way. The word translated "ruleth" means rambling. The better rendering of the sentence is "and Judah is also rambling towards God (or unbridled against Him) and towards the faithful Holy One." But while outwardly Judah seemed to be all right, Ephraim fed on wind, was occupied with the vain, the empty things, increased in lies and desolation and turned to Assyria and Egypt for help, sending as a present olive oil to the latter and making a covenant with the former (see 2 Kings 17:4). Then the mask is torn from Judah's face. The Lord had a controversy with them also and would repay them according to their evil deeds.

Verses 3-6. Jacob's sons are now reminded of Jacob's experience.

Though he was so weak and sinful yet the Lord in marvelous grace met him. The experience at Peniel is recalled. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto Him." There he learned the sufficiency of grace and his strength was made perfect in weakness. The angel who appeared unto him that night was none other than the Son of God. What a reminder it was to them. "He found him (Jacob) in Bethel!" In the very place where the Lord found Jacob and Jacob found the Lord, they had set up their awful, God-denying idol worship. Where God had shown such mercy there they practiced now their abominations. Jehovah, the God of hosts, was still the same. He is the Lord who changes not. He was waiting still for their return. To such a God, who keeps His covenant promises they were urged to return and prove their true return by keeping mercy and justice and by waiting on Jehovah continually. But the call of grace and mercy was unheeded.

Verses 7-14. The Lord calls apostate Israel a merchant, that is in Hebrew "Canaan." (Canaan means traffic; see Ezek. 17:4.) They had become Canaanites with the balances of deceit, loving to oppress. They had become fraudulent merchants, by cheating and oppression. Their wrong attitude towards Jehovah, having forsaken Him, led to a wrong attitude towards their fellowmen. Instead of repenting they boasted, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance." They were breaking the law continually (Lev. 19:36 and Deut. 25:13-16). Yet in all their lawbreaking they prided themselves of being a righteous nation. "In all my labors they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin." How all this fits a good part of the Jews today is too well known to need further comment.

Some day it will be different through the grace and mercy of the never-changing Lord. He is the Jehovah who delivered them out of Egypt; all their blessing and prosperity they owed to Him; He had guided and preserved them, and all their sinning would not diminish His faithfulness to them. They are going to dwell again some day in tents, a reference to the feast of tabernacles, that great feast which typifies the coming millennial blessings for restored Israel. Such had been the continued testimony of the prophets He had sent, who announced the coming judgments and the final blessings in a future day. But now everything was ruin on account of their idolatry. Gilgal was the seat of a part of their idolatry (chapter 4:15, 9:15). Then once more they are reminded of their progenitor Jacob. He fled before Esau his brother, yet though he was weak he served faithfully for a wife and for a wife he kept guard and Jehovah guarded and blest him. So He would concern Himself with them again. The twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy throws light on this passage. But what was Ephraim's condition? Instead of acknowledging all Jehovah had done for Jacob and his offspring they provoked Him to bitter anger, therefore the Lord would punish them.

CHAPTER 13

Ephraim's Ruin and judgment

1. Ruin and judgment (13:1-8)
2. It is thy destruction, O Israel! (13:9-11)
3. Mercy to follow wrath (13:12-14)
4. The desolation of the nearing judgment (13:15-16)

Verses 1-8. In the beginning Ephraim was humble, and knowing his dependence, he spoke with trembling. Then he became puffed up, exalted himself in Israel, loving the preeminence, it led on to the schism from

Judah and the house of David. The next step after this separation from Judah was idolatry, then the dying of the nation began. This sad history of Ephraim, revealing the steps of decline, beginning with self-exaltation and ending in ruin and death, has often been repeated in the individual history of countless multitudes among the professing people of God.

Then they went from sinning to sinning, from bad to worse, just as in our own days, the apostates in Christendom go from bad to worse in fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:13. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Idolatry flourished on all sides. They added idol images in Gilgal and Beer-sheba to the golden calves (Amos 8:14). Then the judgment is announced. Just as the rising sun quickly disperses the morning clouds and the dew, so they should pass away (chapter 6:4). They would be like the chaff driven with a whirlwind out of the threshing floor (Psa. 1:4, 35:5; Isa. 17:13, 41:15-16); they would be like the quickly evaporating smoke, which comes out of the windows of a house without a chimney.

Then the Lord reminds them of their former relationship and that He is the true God, "and there is no Saviour beside Me." In the land of the wilderness He knew them and there He cared for them and provided all their needs. But instead of acknowledging Him, they became full; self-exaltation followed, and then they forgot Him. Throughout the Word of God self-exaltation, pride is always given as the starting point of departure from God and the consequent ruin.

Verses 7-8 are interesting. They are to be rent by wild beasts, which, symbolically, represent the Gentiles. The ten tribes were carried away by the Assyrian, while later, when Judah met its judgment, the whole land was devastated by the lion-empire (Babylonia); by the bear (Medo-Persia); by the leopard (the Graeco-Macedonia); and finally by the dreadful beast, "the beast of the field shall tear them," the Roman power.

Verses 9-11. "It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against Me, against thy help." What they had done in lifting themselves up, in forsaking Jehovah was spiritual and national suicide. They were alone responsible for their destruction. Where was their king to save them out of such ruin and destruction? The house of David with which the covenant had been made they had forsaken. He reminds them again of an episode in their past history, when they, their fathers, were rebellious and asked for a king. Such kings like Saul had been their kings which reigned over the ten tribes.

Verses 12-14. Ephraim deliberately held on to his sin. Their iniquity was bound up; it was laid by in store. The reference is to the oriental custom of tying up money and other valuables into a bundle and hiding it somewhere. It was done for security. So the Lord would see to it that their sins and iniquity would not be forgotten; all their sins were preserved for punishment (see Deut. 32:34). Sorrow and great trouble should come upon them. It has been thus in the past, it will be so in the future, in the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). When that time comes, when all their hope and strength is gone (Deut. 32:36-43) then He will deliver. Then all the enemies will be put down. Redemption from death and the plagues will come; they will be ransomed from the power of Sheol (not hell). Israel will be raised from its national death-sleep. Long she has been buried among the nations, without spiritual and national life, like those who are in the power of Sheol. But Jehovah will deliver the faithful portion of Israel and

Judah, and they will rise from the dust of the earth, the symbol of their national restoration. To use this passage, as it has been done, to teach the restitution of the wicked, is wrong. It has nothing to do with the wicked dead and their future, but all applies to the restoration of Israel. (See the annotations of chapters 16 and 37 of the Prophet Ezekiel.)

Verses 15-16. These verses describe the horrors of the coming judgment by the Assyrians (2 Kings 8:12, 15:16, and Amos 1:13).

CHAPTER 14

The Return and the Glorious Redemption

1. The exhortation to return (14:1-3)
2. The glorious redemption (14:4-9)

Verses 1-3. This chapter is a wonderful finale to the messages of Hosea. What tender entreaties! What gracious assurance! What glorious promises of a future redemption! It is Jehovah beseeching His people, those who had forsaken Him, outraged His character of holiness and who had despised Him. First is the call to return. God's hands are tied as long as His people stay away from Him and do not return to Him in true repentance. No true salvation and deliverance for His people is possible without a true heart return unto Him. It is this for which He looks and waits.

Then the Lord Himself puts His word and a prayer into their mouth. He loves to provide all. "Take with you words and turn to Jehovah and say unto Him, Forgive all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." Could their poor, darkened and mistrusting hearts ever even have imagined to ask thus of Him? Their consciences were defiled; the burden of guilt was upon them. But Jehovah does not mention their sins and their guilt, but tells them just to pray for forgiveness and for a gracious reception. And He who tells His wayward people to pray, to turn to Him, to pray for forgiveness, He who assures them that He hears, assures them of a gracious receiving, will never fail. How full of comfort these sentences are to all His people at all times! We can imagine that in Hosea's day there were individual Israelites who took these words to heart. After them generations of Jews read them and turned individually to the Lord, found forgiveness and became the objects of His grace. And we too, as His people, when we have gone back in our spiritual life, can find our comfort here, and appropriate all this in faith as we act upon His Word. In the future the remnant of Israel will take these gracious exhortations to heart, and before the glorious redemption is given to them return to the Lord with this prayer.

"So will we render the calves of our lips." Literally rendered it is "we will pay as young oxen our lips," i.e., present the prayers of our lips as a thankoffering; we will be worshippers. Such is the result of a real return unto the Lord with sins forgiven and restored to His fellowship. The days of singing are coming for Israel in that day when they return unto Him and He appears in His glory to be enthroned as King. It will usher in the singing times for all the world, including groaning creation, then delivered. Then follows the evidence of their genuine repentance. It is expressed in words suited to the condition of Ephraim in Hosea's day. They repudiate Assyria; they acknowledge that no salvation is there, but only in Jehovah. No longer will they trust in their own strength and in the strength of their horses; no longer will they turn to idols and call them

"Our God," but they will acknowledge Him in whom the fatherless findeth mercy. Israel, God's firstborn son, had been the prodigal, was fatherless, though the Father's love never gave them up. But now the prodigal returns and knows there is One in whom the fatherless findeth abundant mercy. All this true repentance will be manifested at the close of this age, when the remnant of Israel turns to the Lord.

Verses 4-9. His gracious answer to such repentance follows. Three times Jehovah speaks "I will." This is the word of sovereign grace. (See annotations on Ezekiel.) The three "I wills" are: (1) I will heal their backslidings; (2) I will love them freely; (3) I will be a dew unto Israel. They are arranged in a most blessed order. Mercy, love and gracious refreshment resulting in fruitfulness and beauty, such is the order. The past is wiped out, the present is love and the future is glory. Like the lily, like Lebanon and like the olive-tree, Israel is to be. The lily denotes beauty; they will be clad in the beauty of holiness. Lebanon stands for strength and stability; they will become the nation of power which can never be moved. Then they shall be once more the olive tree; the broken off branches will be put back (Rom. 11:16, etc.). The blessings of the restored Israel in the millennium are given in the seventh verse.

Beautiful is verse 8. "Ephraim (shall say), 'What have I to do any more with idols? I hear and I look upon Him; I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found.'" Ephraim, the cake half turned, Ephraim, of whom it was said, he is joined to idols, leave him alone, now repudiates the idols. And why? I hear and I look upon Him! The vision of the Lord turned the stubborn heart. It is so still; the great power is to hear Him, to look upon Him. In that day Israel will look on Him whom they pierced, the great turning point in their future history. Then the nation will yield the fruit through their fellowship with Him. Blessed ending of this prophecy. "For the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

[Return to Top](#)