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July 27, 2001

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Hosea

The Lord God's Message Through Hosea

1 This is the Lord's message that came to Hosea son of Beeri. This message came during the time that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. This was during the time of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel.

²This was the Lord's first message to Hosea. The Lord said, "Go, marry a prostitute* that has had children as a result of her prostitution. Why? Because the people in this country have acted like prostitutes—they have been unfaithful to the Lord."

The Birth of Jezreel

³So Hosea married Gomer daughter of Diblaim. Gomer became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Hosea. ⁴The Lord said to Hosea, "Name him Jezreel.* Why? Because in a little while I will punish the family of Jehu for the blood [he spilled] at Jezreel Valley.* Then I will put an end to the kingdom of the nation* of Israel. ⁵And at that time, I will break Israel's bow at Jezreel Valley."

The Birth of Lo-Ruhamah

⁶Then Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. [The Lord] said to Hosea, "Name her Lo-Ruhamah.* Why?

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

Jezreel This name in Hebrew means "God will plant seeds."

blood ... at Jezreel Valley See 2 Kings 9–10 for the story of Jehu's revolt at Jezreel Valley.

nation Literally, "house." This might mean the royal family of that country.

Lo-Ruhamah This name in Hebrew means "She receives no mercy."

Because I will not show mercy to the nation* of Israel any more. I will not forgive them. ⁷But I will show mercy to the nation of Judah. [I will save the nation of Judah.] I will not use the bow or the sword to save them. I will not use war horses and soldiers to save them. I will save them by my own power."*

The Birth of Lo-Ammi

⁸After Gomer had finished nursing Lo-Ruhamah, she became pregnant again. She gave birth to a son. ⁹Then [the Lord] said, "Name him Lo-Ammi.* Why? Because you are not my people. I am not your God."

The Lord God Promises There Will Be Many Israelites

¹⁰"[In the future,] the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea. You can't measure the sand or count it. Then it will happen that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it will be said to them, 'You are the children of the living God.'

¹¹"Then the people of Judah and the people of Israel will be gathered together. They will choose one ruler for themselves. And their nation will be too large for the land!* Jezreel's day will be truly great."

2 "Then you will tell your brothers, 'You are my people.' And you will tell your sisters, 'He has shown mercy to you.'"*

by my own power Literally, "by the Lord their God."

Lo-Ammi This name in Hebrew means "not my people."

their nation ... land Literally, "they will go up from the land."

you will tell your brothers ... mercy to you Or, "Say to your brothers, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'You have been shown mercy.'"

The Lord Speaks to the Nation of Israel

²“Argue with your mother.* Argue! Because she is not my wife! I am not her husband! Tell her to stop being like a prostitute.* Tell her to take away her lovers* from between her breasts. ³If she refuses to stop her adultery, I will strip her naked. I will leave her like the day she was born. I will take away her people, and she will be like an empty, dry desert. I will kill her with thirst. ⁴I will have no pity on her children because they are the children of prostitution. ⁵Their mother has acted like a prostitute. Their mother should be ashamed of the things she did. She said, ‘I will go to my lovers.* My lovers give me food and water. They give me wool and linen. They give me wine and olive oil.’

⁶“So, I (*the Lord*) will block your (*Israel’s*) road with thorns. I will build a wall. Then she will not be able to find her paths. ⁷She will run after her lovers, but she will not be able to catch up with them. She will look for her lovers, but she will not be able to find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband (*God*). Life was better for me when I was with him. Life was better than it is now.’

⁸“She (*Israel*) didn’t know that I (*the Lord*) was the One who gave her grain, wine, and oil. I kept giving her more and more silver and gold. But the Israelites used this silver and gold to make statues of Baal.* ⁹So I will come back. I will take back my grain at the time it is ready to be harvested. I will take back my wine at the time the grapes are ready. I will take back my wool and linen. I gave those things to her so she could cover her naked body. ¹⁰Now I will strip her. She

will be naked, so all her lovers can see her. No person will be able to save her from my power.* ¹¹I (*God*) will take away all her fun. I will stop her holidays, her new moon feasts, her days of rest. I will stop all of her special feasts. ¹²I will destroy her vines and fig trees. She said, ‘My lovers gave these things to me.’ But I will change her gardens—they will become like a wild forest. Wild animals will come and eat from those plants.

¹³“She served the Baals.* So I will punish her. She burned incense* to the Baals. She dressed up—she put on her jewelry and nose ring. Then she went to her lovers and forgot me.” The Lord has said this.

¹⁴“So, I (*the Lord*) will say romantic words to her. I will lead her into the desert and speak tender words. ¹⁵There I will give her fields of grapes. I will give her Achor Valley as a doorway of hope. Then she will answer like the time she came out of the land of Egypt.” ¹⁶The Lord says this.

“At that time you will call me ‘My husband.’ You will not call me ‘My Baal.’* ¹⁷I will take away the names of the Baals out of her mouth. Then people will not use the Baals’ names again.

¹⁸“At that time, I will make an agreement for the Israelites with the animals of the field, with the birds of the sky, and with the crawling things on the ground. I will break the bow, the sword, and weapons of war. I will make the land safe, so the people of Israel can lie down in peace. ¹⁹And I (*the Lord*) will make you my bride* forever. I will make you my bride with goodness and fairness and with love and mercy. ²⁰I will make you my faithful bride. Then you will truly know the Lord. ²¹And at that time, I will respond.” The Lord says this.

mother This means the nation of Israel.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

her lovers Or “adulteries.” Adultery means not being faithful in marriage. God was like a husband to Israel. But Israel was worshiping false gods—this was like a spiritual adultery against God.

lovers This means Israel’s false gods.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

power Literally, “hand.”

Baals False gods worshiped by the Canaanites in the land where the Israelites lived.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

My Baal This is a word play. The name Baal also means, “lord, or husband.”

make you my bride Literally, “I will betroth you to me.”

“I will speak to the skies,
and they will give rain to the earth.
22 The earth will produce grain, wine,
and oil.
And they will meet Jezreel’s needs.
23 I will sow her many seeds* on her land.
To Lo-Ruhamah,*
I will show mercy.
To Lo-Ammi,*
I will say, ‘You are my people.’
And they will say to me,
‘You are my God.’”

Hosea Buys Gomer Back from Slavery

3 Then the Lord said to me again, “Gomer* has many lovers. But you must continue loving her. Why? Because that is like the Lord. The Lord continues loving the people of Israel. But they continue to worship other gods. And they love to eat raisin cakes.”*

²So I bought Gomer 6 ounces* of silver and 9 bushels* of barley. ³Then I told her, “You must stay at home with me for many days. You must not be like a prostitute.* You will not be with another man. And I will be your husband.”

⁴In the same way, the people of Israel will continue many days without a king or a leader. They will be without a sacrifice or a memorial stone.* They will be without an

I will sow her many seeds Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi are Hosea’s children. But the names also have special meanings. The name Jezreel means, “God will plant seeds.” But Jezreel is also the name of a large valley in Israel. This probably shows that God will bring his people back to Israel. Lo-Ruhamah means “She was not shown mercy,” and Lo-Ammi means “Not my people.”

Lo-Ruhamah This name in Hebrew means “She receives no mercy.”

Lo-Ammi This name in Hebrew means “not my people.”

Gomer Literally, “a woman.”

raisin cakes This kind of food was apparently used in the feasts that honored false gods.

6 ounces Literally, “15 pieces.”

9 bushels Literally, “1 homer and 1 letek.”

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

memorial stone(s) Stones that were set up to help people remember something special. In ancient Israel, people often set up stones as special places to worship false gods.

ephod* or a household god. ⁵After this the people of Israel will come back. Then they will look for the Lord their God, and for David their king. In the last days, they will come to honor the Lord and his goodness.

The Lord Is Angry Against Israel

4 People of Israel, listen to the Lord’s message! The Lord will tell his argument against the people that live in this country. “People in this country don’t really know God. The people are not true and loyal to God. ²The people swear, lie, kill, and steal. They do the sin of adultery,* and they have their babies. The people murder again and again.* ³So the country is like a person crying for the dead, and all of its people are weak. Even the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, and the fish in the sea are dying.* ⁴No person should argue or blame another person. Priest, my argument is with you!* ⁵You (*priests*) will fall in the daytime. And at night, the prophet will also fall with you. And I will destroy your mother.

⁶“My people are destroyed because they have no knowledge. You have refused to learn. So I will refuse to let you be a priest for me. You have forgotten the law of your God, so I will forget your children. ⁷They became proud! They sinned more and more against me. So I will change their glory to shame.

⁸“The priests joined in the people’s sins. They wanted more and more of those sins.* ⁹So the priests are no different than the people. I will punish them for the things they did. I will pay them back for the wrong things they did. ¹⁰They will eat, but they will not be satisfied! They will do sexual sins, but they

ephod A special coat worn by the priests.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

and they ... again Literally, “they break out, and blood touches blood.”

dying Literally, “being taken away.”

No person ... you Or, “The people can’t complain or blame someone else. The people are helpless, like arguing with a priest.” Many times the priests and Levites served as judges, and their decisions were final.

The priests joined in the people’s sins. They wanted more and more of those sins This is a word play. The word “sins” also means “sin offerings.” So instead of eating sacrifices, the priests became hungry for sin itself.

will not have babies.* Why? Because they left the Lord and became like prostitutes.*

¹¹“Sexual sins, strong drink, and new wine will ruin a person’s ability to think straight. ¹²My people are asking pieces of wood for advice. They think those sticks will answer them. Why? Because they have chased after those false gods like prostitutes.* They left their God and became like prostitutes. ¹³They make sacrifices on the tops of the mountains and burn incense* on the hills under oak trees, poplar trees, and elm trees.* The shade under those trees looks nice. So your daughters lie under those trees like prostitutes. And your daughters-in-law do their sexual sins.

¹⁴“I can’t blame* your daughters for being prostitutes,* or your daughters-in-law for doing sexual sins. The men go and sleep with prostitutes. They go and offer sacrifices with the temple prostitutes.* So, those foolish people are destroying themselves.

The Shameful Sins of Israel

¹⁵“Israel, you act like a prostitute.* But don’t let Judah be guilty. Don’t go to Gilgal* or go up to Beth-aven.* Don’t use the Lord’s name to make promises. Don’t say, ‘As the Lord lives ...!’ ¹⁶The Lord has given many things to Israel. He is like a shepherd that takes his sheep to a large field with much grass. But Israel is stubborn. Israel is like a young cow

They will do sexual sins, but they will not have babies A part of worshiping the false gods was having sexual relations with temple prostitutes. The people thought that this would make the gods happy. And then the gods would give the people large families and good crops.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

under oak trees, poplar trees, and elm trees Trees and groves were an important part of the worshiping false gods.

blame This word can mean, “visit,” “put in charge of,” “take account of,” or “to hold responsible for.”

temple prostitutes Women that were prostitutes at the temples of the false gods. Their sexual sins were part of worshiping those false gods.

Gilgal A city in Israel. The people worship false gods there.

Beth-aven In Hebrew the meaning is “House of Evil.” It is a word play on the name “Bethel,” a town in Israel. There was a temple in this town.

that runs away again and again. ¹⁷Ephraim* has joined his idols.* So leave him alone.

¹⁸“Ephraim has joined their drunkenness. Let them continue to be prostitutes. Let them be with their lovers. ¹⁹They went to those gods for safety, and they have lost their ability to think.* Their sacrifices bring them shame.”

The Leaders Cause Israel and Judah to Sin

5 “Priests, nation of Israel, and people in the king’s family, listen to me. You have been judged guilty!

“You were like a trap at Mizpah.* You were like a net spread on the ground at Tabor.* ²You have done many, many bad things.* So I will punish you all! ³I know Ephraim.* I know the things that Israel has done. Ephraim, right now you act like a prostitute*. Israel is dirty with sins. ⁴The people of Israel have done many bad things. And those bad things keep them from coming back to their God. They are always thinking of ways to chase after other gods. They don’t know the Lord. ⁵Israel’s pride is a witness against them.* So Israel and Ephraim will stumble in their sin. But Judah will also stumble with them.

⁶“The leaders of the people went to look for the Lord. They took their ‘sheep’ and ‘cows’ with them. But they did not find the Lord. Why? Because he left them. ⁷They have not been faithful to the Lord. Their children are from some stranger. And now, he will destroy them and their land again.”*

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

They ... think Or, “The wind has carried them away on its wings,” or “The spirit held them tight in its wings.” This verse is very hard to understand in Hebrew.

Mizpah A mountain in Israel. The people worshiped the false gods on many of the hills and mountains.

Tabor A mountain in Israel.

You have done ... bad things This sentence is hard to understand in Hebrew, probably because there is a word play and a reference to things we are not sure of.

them Literally, “his face.”

And now ... again The Hebrew here is hard to understand.

A Prophecy of Israel's Destruction

- 8 “Blow the horn in Gibeah.*
Blow the trumpet in Ramah.*
Give the warning at Beth-Aven.*
The enemy is behind you, Benjamin.
- 9 Ephraim* will become empty
at the time of punishment.
I (*God*) warn the families of Israel
that those things really will happen.
- 10 The leaders of Judah are like thieves
trying to steal another man's property.
So I (*God*) will pour out my anger
on them like water.
- 11 Ephraim* will be punished.
He will be crushed and pressed
like grapes.
Why? Because he decided to follow filth.
- 12 I will destroy Ephraim,
like a moth destroys a piece of cloth.
I [will destroy] Judah,
like rot [destroys a piece of wood].
- 13 Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah saw his wound.
So they went to Assyria for help.
They told their problems to the great king.
But that king can't heal you.
He can't cure your wound.
- 14 Why? Because I will be like a lion
to Ephraim.
I will be like a young lion
to the nation* of Judah.
I—yes, I (*the Lord*)—will rip them to pieces.
I will carry them away,
And no person can save.
- 15 I will go back to my place,
until the people admit they are guilty,
until they come looking for me.
Yes, in their trouble they will try hard
to find me.”

Gibeah, Ramah Hills on Judah's border with Israel.

Beth-Aven In Hebrew the meaning is “House of Evil.” It is a word play on the name “Bethel,” a town in Israel. There was a temple in this town.

Ephraim Joseph's younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim's family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

nation Literally, “house.” This might mean the royal family of that country.

The Rewards of Coming Back to the Lord

- 6 “Come, let's go back to the Lord.
He hurt us, but he will heal us.
He wounded us,
but he will put bandages on us.
- 2 After two days he will bring us back
to life.
He will raise us up on the third day.
Then we can live near him.
- 3 Let's learn about the Lord.
Let's try very hard to know the Lord.
We know he is coming,
like we know the dawn is coming.
The Lord will come to us like the rain,
like the spring rain that waters
the ground.”

The People Are Not Faithful

- 4 “Ephraim,* what should I do with you?
Judah, what should I do with you?
Your faithfulness is like a morning mist,
Your faithfulness is like the dew
that goes away early in the morning.
- 5 I used the prophets,
and made laws for the people.
The people were killed at my command.
But good things will come
from those decisions.*
- 6 Why? Because I want faithful love,
not sacrifice,
[I want people] to know God,
not [to bring] burnt offerings.
- 7 But the people broke the Agreement
just like Adam did.*
They were unfaithful to me
in their country.
- 8 Gilead* is a city of people that do evil.
People have tricked and killed other people.
- 9 Robbers hide and wait to attack someone.
In the same way,
priests wait on the road to Shechem
and attack the people that pass by.
They have done evil things.

But good things ... decisions Or, “I cut them with the prophets. I killed them with the words from my mouth. Light will come from your decisions.”

like Adam did See Gen. 3.

Gilead An area where some of the people from the family group of Manasseh lived. See Numbers 26:29.

- 10 I have seen a terrible thing
in the nation* of Israel.
Ephraim* was unfaithful to God.
Israel is dirty with sin.
- 11 Judah, there is also a time of harvest for you.
It will happen at the time that I bring
my people back from captivity.”

7 “I will heal Israel!
Then people will know
that Ephraim* sinned.
People will know about Samaria’s* lies.
People will know about the thieves
that come and go in that town.

2 Those people don’t believe
that I will remember their crimes.
The bad things they did are all around.
I can see their sins clearly.

3 Their evil makes their king happy.
Their false gods please their leaders.

4 A baker presses dough [to make bread,]
[He puts the bread in the oven.]
The baker does not make the fire hotter
while the bread is rising.
[But the people of Israel are not like that.]
The people of Israel are always making
their fire hotter.

5 On Our King’s Day,
[they make the fire hotter]
[they give their drinking parties.]
The leaders become sick from the heat
of wine.
So the kings join hands with people
that laugh at God.

6 The people make their secret plans.
Their hearts burn with excitement
like an oven .
Their excitement burns all night.
And in the morning it is like a hot fire.

7 They are all like hot ovens.
They destroyed their rulers.
All of their kings fell.
Not one of them called to me for help.”

Israel Does Not Know It Will Be Destroyed

- 8 “Ephraim* mixes with the nations.
Ephraim is like a cake
that was not cooked on both sides.
- 9 Strangers destroy Ephraim’s strength.
But Ephraim does not know it.
Gray hairs* are also sprinkled on Ephraim.
But Ephraim does not know it.
- 10 [Ephraim’s] pride speaks against him.
The people had many, many troubles,
but they still didn’t go back
to the Lord their God.
The people didn’t look to him for help.
- 11 So Ephraim has become like a silly dove
without understanding.
The people called to Egypt for help.
The people went to Assyria for help.
- 12 They go to those countries for help,
but I will trap them.
I will throw my net over them,
and I will bring them down like
the birds of the sky.
I will punish them for their agreements.*
- 13 It will be bad for them.
They left me.
They refused to obey me.
So they will be destroyed.
I saved those people.
But they speak lies against me.
- 14 They never call to me from their hearts.
Yes, they cry on their beds.
And they cut themselves
when they ask for grain and
new wine.
But [in their hearts,] they have turned away
from me.
- 15 I trained them
and made their arms strong.
But they made evil plans against me.
- 16 But they were like a boomerang.*

nation Literally, “house.” This might mean the royal family of that country.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

Samaria The capital of the northern ten-family group kingdom of Israel. Here it is often used to mean the northern kingdom itself.

Gray hairs This word might describe something that was put on the food when people cooked, something that looked like gray hairs.

for their agreements Or, “for the report of their treaties.”

boomerang A curved stick used in hunting birds. When thrown properly, it flies low to the ground and suddenly curves upward, often returning to the thrower. Literally, “a bow of throwing,” or “a bow of deception.”

They changed directions,
 but they did not come back to me.*
 Their leaders bragged about their strength,
 But they will be killed with swords.
 And the people in Egypt will laugh at them.

Idol Worship Leads to Destruction

8 “Put the trumpet to your lips and give the warning. Be like an eagle over the Lord’s house.* The Israelites have broken my Agreement. They have not obeyed my law. ²They yell to me, ‘My God, we in Israel know you!’ ³But Israel refused the good things. So the enemy chases him. ⁴The Israelites chose their kings, but they didn’t come to me for advice. The Israelites chose leaders. But they didn’t choose men that I knew. The Israelites used their silver and gold to make idols* for themselves. So they will be destroyed. ^{5–6}The Lord has refused your calf, Samaria.* God says, ‘I am very angry against the Israelites.’ The people of Israel will be punished for their sin. Some worker made those statues. They are not God. Samaria’s calf will be broken into pieces. ⁷The Israelites did a foolish thing—it was like trying to plant the wind. But they will get only troubles—they will harvest a whirlwind. The grain in the fields will grow. It will give no food. Even if it grew something, strangers would eat it.

- 8 Israel was destroyed.
 Its people are scattered among the nations
 like some dish that was thrown away
 because no one wanted it.
- 9 Ephraim* went to his ‘lovers.’
 Like a wild donkey,
 he wandered off to Assyria.

They changed ... to me Or, “The turned, but not upward,” or, “They turned to the ‘no-gods’”—that is, the statues people worshiped as gods.

Be like an eagle over the Lord’s house Or, “Like a guard over the Lord’s house.”

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

calf, Samaria Samaria was the capital of Israel. The people of Israel made statues of calves and put them in the temples at Dan and Bethel. It is not clear if these statues represented the Lord or some false god. But God didn’t want them to use these statues. See 1 Kings 12:26–30.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

- 10 Israel went to his ‘lovers’ among the nations.
 But I will gather the Israelites together.
 But they must suffer a little from the burden
 of that mighty king.

Israel Forgets God and Worships Idols

- 11 Ephraim* built more and more altars,*
 and that was a sin.
 They have been altars of sin for Ephraim.
- 12 Even if I wrote 10,000 laws for Ephraim,
 he would treat them like they were
 for some stranger.
- 13 The Israelites love sacrifices.*
 They offer the meat and eat it.
 The Lord does not accept their sacrifices.
 He remembers their sins.
 And he will punish them.
 They will be carried as prisoners to Egypt.
- 14 Israel built kings’ houses.
 But it forgot its Maker!
 Now Judah builds fortresses.*
 But I will send a fire on Judah’s cities.
 And the fire will destroy its fortresses!”

The Sadness of Exile

9 Israel, don’t celebrate like the nations do!
 Don’t be happy! You acted like a prostitute* and left your God. You did your sexual sin* on every threshing floor.* ²But the grain from those threshing floors will not give enough food for Israel. There will not be enough wine for Israel.

³The Israelites will not stay in the Lord’s land. Ephraim will return to Egypt. In Assyria they will eat food that they should not eat. ⁴The Israelites will not give offerings of wine to the Lord. They will not offer sacrifices to

altar(s) A stone table used for burning sacrifices offered as gifts to God.

The Israelites love sacrifices This line is uncertain.

fortress(es) A building or city with tall, strong walls for protection.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

You did your sexual sin This means that the people were not faithful to God. But it also means the people had sexual relations with temple prostitutes. They believed their false gods would give them many children and good crops.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

him. Their sacrifices will be like food eaten at a funeral*—whoever eats it will become unclean. Their bread will not go into the Lord’s temple—they will have to eat that bread by themselves. ⁵They will not be able to celebrate the Lord’s holidays or festivals.*

⁶The people of Israel left because the enemy took everything from them. But Egypt will take the people themselves. Memphis* will bury them. Weeds will grow over their silver treasures. Thorns will grow where the Israelites lived.

Israel Rejected the True Prophets

⁷The prophet says, “Israel, learn these things: The time of punishment has come. The time has come for you to pay [for the evil things you did.]” But the people of Israel say, “The prophet is a fool. This man with [God’s] Spirit is crazy.” The prophet says, “You will be punished for your bad sins. You will be punished for your hate.” ⁸God and the prophet are like guards watching over Ephraim.* But there are many traps along the way. And people hate the prophet, even in the house of his God.

⁹The Israelites have gone deep into ruin like in the time of Gibeah.* The Lord will remember the Israelites’ sins. He will punish their sins.

Israel Is Ruined by Its Worship of Idols

¹⁰At the time I found Israel, they were like fresh grapes in the desert. They were like the first figs on a fig tree at the beginning of the season. But then they came to Baal-Peor.* And they changed—and I had to cut them off

sacrifices ... funeral Literally, “bread of mourners.” See Num. 19:11–22.

They ... the Lord’s holidays or festivals Literally, “What will you do for a day of solemn assembly, for the Lord’s festival day?”

Memphis An important city in Egypt.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

Gibeah At this place, men of the Benjamin family group did a very terrible sin. See Judges 19–20.

Baal-Peor This happened when Moses was still leading the Israelites in the desert. Read Num. 25:1–5.

(*destroy them*) like rotten fruit.* They became like the terrible things (*false gods*) that they loved.

The Israelites Will Have No Children

¹¹Like a bird, Ephraim’s* glory will fly away. There will be no more pregnancies, no more births, no more babies. ¹²But even if the Israelites do raise their children, [it will not help.] I will take the children away from them. I will leave them, and they will have nothing but troubles.

¹³I can see that Ephraim is leading his children into a trap.* Ephraim brings out his children to the killer. ¹⁴Lord, give them what you will. Give them a womb that loses babies, give them breasts that can’t give milk.

¹⁵ All their evil is in Gilgal,*
I began hating them there.
I will force them to leave my house,
because of the evil things they do.
I will not love them any more.
Their leaders are rebels—
[they have turned against me.]

¹⁶ Ephraim* will be punished.
Their root is dying.
They will not have any more babies.
They might give birth to babies,
but I will kill the precious babies
that come from their bodies.

¹⁷ Those people will not listen to my God.
So he will refuse to listen to them.
And they will wander among the nations
without a home.

Israel’s Riches Led to Its Worship of Idols

10 Israel is like a vine that grows plenty of fruit.
But as Israel got more and more [things]
he built more and more altars
[to honor false gods].
His land became better and better,
so he put up better and better stones
[to honor false gods].

they changed ... rotten fruit This is a word play that can also mean, “they dedicated themselves to a shameful idol.”

I can see ... trap The Hebrew is not clear here.

Gilgal A city in Israel where people had worshiped God. But later they began worshiping false gods at that place.

2 The people of Israel tried to trick God.
But now they must accept their guilt.
The Lord will break down their altars.*
He will destroy their memorial stones.*

The Evil Decisions of the Israelites

3Now the Israelites say, “We have no king.
We don’t honor the Lord! And his king can’t
do anything to us!”

4They make promises—but they are only
telling lies. They don’t keep their promises!
They make agreements ₁with other countries.
God does not like those agreements₁. The
judges are like poisonous weeds growing in a
plowed field.

5The people from Samaria* worship the
calves at Beth-Aven.* Those people will really
cry. Those priests will really cry. Why? Because
their beautiful ₁idol₁ is gone. It was carried away.
6It was carried away as a gift to the great king of
Assyria. He will keep Ephraim’s shameful ₁idol₁.
Israel will be ashamed of its idol.* 7Samaria’s
false god* will be destroyed. It will be like a
piece of wood floating away on the water’s
surface.

8Israel sinned and built many high places.*
The high places of Aven* will be destroyed.
Thorns and weeds will grow on their altars.*
Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover
us!” and to the hills, “Fall on us!”

altar(s) A stone table used for burning sacrifices offered as gifts to God.

memorial stones Stones that were set up to help people remember something special. In ancient Israel, people often set up stones as special places to worship false gods.

Samaria The capital city of north Israel.

Beth-Aven In Hebrew the meaning is “House of Evil.” It is a word play on the name “Bethel,” a town in Israel. There was a temple in this town.

idol Or, “advice.”

false god Or, “king.”

high places Places for worshipping God or false gods. These places were often on the hills and mountains.

high places of Aven Aven means “evil,” “wickedness.” This probably means the temple and other places of worship at Bethel.

Israel Will Pay For Sin

9Israel, you have sinned since the time of Gibeah.* (And those people have continued sinning there.) War truly will catch those evil people at Gibeah. 10I will come to punish them. Armies will come together against them. They will punish the Israelites for both of their sins.

11Ephraim* is like a trained young cow that loves to walk on grain on the threshing floor.* I will put a good yoke* on her neck. I will put the ropes on Ephraim. Then Judah will begin plowing. Jacob* will break the ground himself.

12If you plant goodness, you will harvest true love. Plow your ground, and you will harvest with the Lord. He will come, and he will make goodness fall on you like rain!

13But you planted evil, and you harvested trouble. You ate the fruit of your lies. Why? Because you have trusted in your power and your soldiers. 14So your armies will hear the noise of battle. And all your fortresses* will be destroyed. It will be like the time Shalman* destroyed Beth Arbel. At that time of war, mothers were killed with their children. 15And that will happen to you at Bethel. Why? Because you did so many evil things. ₁When that day₁ begins, the king of Israel will be fully destroyed.”

Israel Has Forgotten the Lord

11 ₁The Lord said,₁
“I loved Israel when he was a child,
and I called my son out of Egypt.

2 But the more I* called the Israelites,
the more the Israelites left me.

Gibeah At this place, men of the Benjamin family group did a very terrible sin. See Judges 19 and 20.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

yoke A pole that was put on the shoulders of men or animals to help them carry or pull things. This often showed that a person was a slave.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

fortress(es) A building or city with tall, strong walls for protection.

Shalman This is probably Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.

I This is what the ancient Greek says. The Hebrew says, “they.”

- The Israelites gave sacrifices to the Baals.*
They burned incense* to the idols.*
- 3 “But it was I who taught Ephraim* to walk!
I took the Israelites in my arms!
I healed them!
But they don’t know that.
- 4 I led them with ropes.*
But they were ropes of love.
I was like a person who set them free.*
I bent down and fed them.

5“⁵The Israelites refuse to turn back ^{to} God. So they will go to Egypt! ^{to} The king of Assyria will become their king. ⁶The sword will swing against their cities. It will kill their strong men. It will destroy their leaders.

⁷“My people expect me to come back. They will call to God above. But God will not help them.”

The Lord Does Not Want to Destroy Israel

- 8 “Ephraim,* I don’t want to give you up.
Israel, I want to protect you.
I don’t want to make you like Admah!*
I don’t want to make you like Zeboiim!*
I am changing my mind.
My love for you is too strong.
- 9 I will not let my terrible anger win.
I will not destroy Ephraim again.
I am God, and not man.
I am the Holy One, I am with you.
I will not show my anger.
- 10 I will roar like a lion.
I will roar, and my children will come
and follow me.
My children will come from the west,
shaking with fear.
- 11 They will come from Egypt

Baals False gods worshiped by the Canaanites in the land where the Israelites lived.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

ropes The Hebrew says, “ropes of a man.”

set them free Literally, “lifted the yoke from their jaws.”

Admah, Zeboiim Two cities that were destroyed when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19; Deut. 29:23.

shaking like birds.

They will come shaking like doves
from the land of Assyria.

And I will take them back home.”

The Lord said that.

- 12 Ephraim surrounded me with false gods.
The people of Israel turned against me.*
^{to} And they were destroyed!
But Judah still walks with El.*
Judah is true to the holy ones.*”

The Lord Is Against Israel

12 Ephraim* is wasting its time—Israel “chases the wind” all day long. The people tell more and more lies. They steal more and more. They have made agreements with Assyria, and they are carrying their olive oil to Egypt.

²^{to} The Lord says, “I have an argument against Israel.* Jacob* must be punished for the things he did. He must be punished for the bad things he did. ³Jacob was still in his mother’s body, and he had already started tricking his brother.* Jacob was a strong young man. And at that time, he fought with God. ⁴Jacob wrestled with God’s angel and won.* He cried and asked for a favor. That happened at Bethel. At that place, he spoke with us. ⁵Yes, YAHWEH is the God of the armies.* His name is YAHWEH (*the Lord*). ⁶So come back to your God. Be loyal to him. Do the right thing! Always trust your God!

⁷“Jacob* is a real businessman. He even cheats his friend! Even his scales* lie.

Ephraim ... me Or, “Ephraim surrounded me with lies. The house of Israel surrounded me with deception.”

El This might be one of the names of God, or it might be El, the most important god of the Canaanite people. It is not clear if this means that Judah was being faithful to God, or if Judah was worshiping the false gods.

holy ones These might be angels or Canaanite false gods.

Israel Hebrew has, “Judah.”

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

he had already started tricking his brother Or “he grabbed his brother’s heel.” This is a word play. The Hebrew word is like the name “Jacob.” Read Genesis 25:26.

Jacob wrestled with God’s angel and won Read Genesis 32:22–28.

YAHWEH is the God of the armies This is like one of the names for God. It is usually translated “Lord All-Powerful.

scales Or, “balances.” A tool for weighing things.

⁸Ephraim* said, ‘I am rich! I have found true riches! No person will learn about my crimes. No person will learn about my sins.’

⁹“But I have been the Lord your God since [the time you were in] the land of Egypt. I will make you live in tents—like during the time of the Tent of Meeting.* ¹⁰I spoke to the prophets. I gave them many visions.* I gave the prophets many ways to teach my lessons to you. ¹¹But the people in Gilead* have sinned. There are many terrible idols in that place. The people offer sacrifices to bulls at Gilgal. Those people have many altars.* There are rows and rows of altars—like the rows of dirt in a plowed field.

¹²“Jacob ran away to the land of Aram. In that place, Israel* worked for a wife. He kept sheep to get another wife. ¹³But the Lord used a prophet and brought Israel out of Egypt. The Lord used a prophet and kept Israel safe. ¹⁴But Ephraim caused the Lord to be very angry. Ephraim killed many people. So he will be punished for his crimes. His master (*the Lord*) will make him bear his shame.”

Israel Has Ruined Itself

13“Ephraim* made himself very important in Israel. Ephraim spoke and people shook with fear. But Ephraim sinned—he began worshiping Baal.* ²Now the Israelites sin more and more. They make idols* for themselves. Workers make those fancy statues

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

during the time of the Tent of Meeting The special tent where the people worshiped God. This might also mean, “like during the holiday of Succoth.” The Jewish people live in tents or temporary buildings during this holiday.

vision(s) Something like a dream that God used to speak to people.

Gilead The area east of the Jordan River. The family groups of Reuben, Gad, and half of the group of Manasseh lived in that area.

altar(s) A stone table used for burning sacrifices offered as gifts to God. All the people of Israel were supposed to use the one altar in Jerusalem.

Israel Another name for Jacob. See Gen. 32:22–28.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

from silver. And then those people talk to their statues! They offer sacrifices to those statues. They kiss those [golden] calves. ³That is why those people will soon disappear. They will be like the fog that comes early in the morning—that fog comes and then soon disappears. The Israelites will be like chaff* that is blown from the threshing floor.* The Israelites will be like smoke that rises from a chimney and disappears.

⁴“I have been the Lord your God since the time you were in the land of Egypt. You did not know any other god except me. I am the One who saved you. ⁵I knew you in the desert—I knew you in that dry land. ⁶[I gave food to the Israelites.] They ate that food. They became full and satisfied. They became proud. And they forgot me!

⁷“That is why I will be like a lion to them. I will be like a leopard waiting by the road. ⁸I will attack them like a bear whose cubs were robbed from her. I will attack them. I will rip open their chests. I will be like a lion or other wild animal tearing and eating its prey.”

No One Can Save Israel from God’s Anger

⁹“Israel, I helped you. But you turned against me. So now I will destroy you! ¹⁰Where is your king? He can’t save you in all your cities! Where are your judges? You asked for them, saying, ‘Give me a king and leaders.’* ¹¹I was angry, and I gave you a king. And when I became very angry, I took him away.

¹² “Ephraim tried to hide his guilt.

He thought his sins were a secret.

[But he will be punished.]

¹³ [His punishment] will be like the pain a woman feels giving birth.

He will not be a wise son.

The time will come for his birth,
and he will not survive.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

You asked for ... leaders See 1 Sam. 8:4–9.

- 14 “I will save them from the grave!
I will rescue them from death!
Death, where are your diseases?
Grave, where is your power?
I am not looking for revenge!
- 15 [Israel] grows among his brothers.
But a powerful east wind will come—
the Lord’s wind will blow from the desert.
Then [Israel’s] well will become dry.
His spring of water will become dry.
The wind will take every valuable thing
from [Israel’s] treasure.
- 16 Samaria must be punished.
Why? Because she turned against
her God.
The Israelites will be killed with swords.
Their children will be torn to pieces.
Their pregnant women will be ripped open.”

Return to the Lord

14 Israel, you fell and sinned against God.
So come back to the Lord your God.
²Think about the things you will say. And
come back to the Lord. Say to him,

“Take away our sin.
Accept our good [words].
We offer you the praise from our lips.*

- 3 “Assyria will not save us.
We will not ride on [war] horses.
We will never again say, ‘Our God’
to something we made with our hands.
Why? Because you are the One who
shows mercy to orphans.*”

praise from our lips Literally, “the fruit of our lips.”
orphans children with no parents.

The Lord Will Forgive Israel

- 4 The Lord says,
“I will forgive them for leaving me.
I will love them freely,
because I have stopped being angry.
- 5 I will be like the dew to Israel.
Israel will blossom like the lily.*
He will grow like the cedar trees
of Lebanon.
- 6 His branches will grow,
and he will be like a beautiful olive tree.
He will be like the sweet smell
from the cedar trees of Lebanon.
- 7 The people of Israel will again
live under my protection.
They will grow like grain.
They will bloom like a vine.
They will be like the wine of Lebanon.”

The Lord Warns Israel About Idols

- 8 “Ephraim,* I will have nothing more
to do with idols.*
I am the One who answers your prayers.
I am the One who watches over you.*
I am like a fir tree that is always green.
Your fruit comes from me.”

Final Advice

- 9 A wise person understands these things.
A smart person should learn these things.
The Lord’s ways are right.
Good people will live by them.
Sinners will die by them.*

lily A kind of flower.

Ephraim Joseph’s younger son (Gen. 41:50–52). Ephraim’s family became a family group in Israel. Here the name is used to mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

I am the One who watches over you This is a word play. The Hebrew word is like the name “Assyria.” God is saying that he, not some foreign country, protects Israel.

Good people ... die by them Literally, “Good people will walk on them. Sinners will stumble on them.”