

Hosea 11 - God's Continuing Love for Israel

II. Wayward nation and faithful God (Hosea 4:1—14:9)

(3) Israel's restoration due to God's faithfulness (Hosea 11:1—14:9)

(A) God's paternal love for his wayward son (11:1-11)

(a) Past love shown (11:1-4)

(b) Present love scorned (11:5-7)

(c) Future position secure (11:8-11)

(i) Divine promise not to destroy Israel (11:8-9)

(ii) National regathering to the land (11:10-11)

(B) Israel's unfaithfulness and resulting discipline (Hosea 11:12—13:16)

(a) Past unfaithfulness and discipline (11:12—12:14)

Hosea 11

(3) Israel's restoration due to God's faithfulness (Hosea 11:1—14:9)

(A) God's paternal love for his wayward son (11:1-11)

(a) Past love shown (11:1-4)

1 When Israel was a youth I **loved** him, And **out of Egypt I called My son**.

1 When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

1 "When Israel was a young child I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son.

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

- God reminds His people that when Israel was in its early days as a nation, like a "youth," He loved them (Cf. Ex 4:22-23)

- "...loved" - chose for blessing; God chose Israel for special blessing among the world's nations

- "...out of Egypt I called My son" - love was the basis of election and subsequent redemption from Egypt

— "called" - *qara*, to summon a relation; speaks of the adoption, as the Lord has adopted as His own son and also foretells the distant future when His act of love would call His own Son out of Egypt (Cf. Matt 2:15)

— He "called" His "son" Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Cf. Deut 14:1; 32:6; Is 1:2-20; Jer 3:19,22; 4:22; 31:9,20)

Matthew wrote that Jesus Christ fulfilled this verse (Matt 2:15). Jesus did so in that, as the Son of God in another sense, God the Father called and led Him out of Egypt when He was a child. Matthew did not mean that Hosea had Jesus Christ in mind or was predicting His

exodus from Egypt when he wrote, but that Jesus' experience corresponded to what Hosea had written about Israel. He saw the experience of Jesus as analogous to that of Israel. Jesus' experience completed the full divine intention of Hosea's statement and in this sense fulfilled it.

2 The more they called them, The more they went away from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols.

2 The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols.

2 The more I called out to them, the farther they fled from me; they sacrificed to Baals, burning incense to carved images.

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

- God continued to call the Israelites after they left Egypt, through His prophets

— The more the prophets appealed to the people to follow the Lord, the more the people turned aside from following Him

— In response to the love of God as seen in the redemption from Egypt, Israel turned a deaf ear to God's prophets, choosing Baal and other idols instead (v2,7; Judges 2:11-13; 2 Kings 17:13; Jer 7:25; 25:4; Zech 1:4; et al.)

— Israel quickly forgot the lessons of the wilderness when she dwelt in Canaan

How often do we rely upon God in our distress, and then neglect Him when He blesses us?

3 Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to **walk**, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.

3 Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, supporting them by their arms, but they never knew that I was healing them.

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

- "...walk" - behave

— God cared for them and healed them when they needed restoration

— These words seem to parallel Moses' description of Israel's being carried through the wilderness as a father carries his son (Deut 1:31-32; 32:10-11)

- There is little doubt that Hosea's own suffering over the lot of Gomer and their children contributed to the unparalleled insight Hosea gives us into the heart of YHWH

— Yet the entire text of Hosea says nothing about the prophet's inner life—it is not about Hosea; it is about God. It is not about Gomer's disloyalty but Israel's.

4 I pulled them along with cords of a man, with ropes of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down *and* fed them.

4 I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down *and* fed them.

4 I guided them with human kindness, with loving reins. I acted toward them like one who removes a yoke from their neck; I bent down and fed them.

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

- The restraints that the LORD had placed on Israel in his youth were cords of love, designed to protect and preserve the people, rather than robbing them of freedom

— The LORD freed them from oppressive bondage and made special provision to feed them

— The image of a loving herdsman taking care of his animal is in view

(b) Present love scorned (11:5-7)

5 They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria—he will be their king Because they refused to return *to Me*.

5 They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria—he will be their king Because they refused to return *to Me*.

5 "They will not return to the land of Egypt; instead, the Assyrian will be their king, because they kept refusing to repent.

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

- Because Israel refused to "return" (*shub*) to *Yahweh* after so many appeals by His prophets (v2), He would "return" (*shub*) the nation to captivity. The place of exile would not be Egypt but Assyria.

— In other messages, Hosea identified Egypt as the place of Israel's future exile (Cf. 7:13; 8:13; 9:3,6), but here it becomes clear that he was using "Egypt" as a metaphor for a place of captivity. Assyria would be the geographical location of Israel's exile. Thus "Egypt" is an code name for Assyria (Cf. 4:15).

6 And the sword will whirl against their cities, And will destroy their oracle priests And consume *them*, because of their counsels.

6 The sword will whirl against their cities, And will demolish their gate bars And consume *them* because of their counsels.

6 The sword will fall on their cities, consuming and devouring their fortified gates, despite their planning.

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

- A whirling sword represents this exchange of kings.

- Enemy soldiers would swarm around Israel's cities and break down the gate bars that secured them from attack

— These enemies would consume the Israelites because of the decisions that the Israelites had made to depart from the Lord (Micah 6:16)

— This was the result, in part, from the advice of false prophets

— God fed His people, but now the sword would feed on them (Cf. Is 1:19-20)

7 So My people are **determined** to turn from Me. Though they call them to *the One* on high, None at all exalts *Him*.

7 So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them to *the One* on high, None at all exalts *Him*.

7 My people are determined to turn away from me; though they call to the Most High, no one is worshiping.

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

- "...determined" - *tala'*, resolved, addicted to; Israel's resolve to abandon God was firm

— In spite of the prophets' appeal to return to Him, none of them did

Another Assurance of Restoration

The Lord here asked four rhetorical questions that reveal how hard it was for Him to turn Israel over to an enemy for punishment.

(c) Future position secure (11:8-11)

(i) Divine promise not to destroy Israel (11:8-9)

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I surrender you, Israel? How can I make you like **Admah**? *How* can I treat you like **Zeboiim**? My heart is **turned over** within Me, All My compassions are kindled.

8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled.

8 "How can I give up on you, Ephraim? I will deliver you, will I not, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? I can't make you like Zeboim, can I? My heart stirs within me; my compassion also fans into flame!

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings

are kindled together.

- "...Admah...Zeboiim" - cities that God destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Cf. Gen 10:19; 14:2,8; Deut 29:23)

— God could not bring Himself to deal with the cities of Israel as He had with these two towns; He would not completely destroy them

- "...turned over " - God's heart of judgment was "turned over" into a heart of compassion

— The heart of a loving Father who cannot surrender the son He has loved and nurtured...

— The divine complaint expressed in self-directed questions lays bare the intensity of the covenant love in terms *unsurpassed in the OT*

— His covenant love will transcend the legal regulation of the law, which would have dictated that He have His rebellious son stoned to death (Deut 21:18-21)

9 I will not carry out My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For **I am God and not a man**, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.

9 I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.

9 I will not act in my anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim, For I am God, and not a human— the Holy One among you— so I will not enter the city in anger.

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

- God did not change His mind about bringing judgment on Israel, but He promised not to apply the full measure of His wrath or destroy Ephraim again in the future

- "...I am God and not a man" - God would show restraint because He is God, not a man who forgets his promises, is arbitrary in his passions, and might be vindictive in his anger (Cf. 1 Sam 15:29)

— We often do not understand or believe that God has emotions; this verse contradicts that thinking or belief. This verse shows that God has a wide range of emotions but He, unlike human beings, expresses His emotions in perfect balance.

— The distinction between God and human beings does not lie in some supposed absence of divine emotion, but in God's ability to control His emotions and express them appropriately

(ii) National regathering to the land (11:10-11)

10 They will walk after the LORD, He will **roar like a lion**; Indeed He will roar, And *His* sons will come trembling **from the west**.

10 They will walk after the Lord, He will roar like a lion; Indeed He will roar And *His* sons will come trembling from the west.

10 They will go after the LORD, who will roar like a lion; and when he roars, the children will come trembling from the west.

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

- With the penalty of sin satisfied in the death of Christ, the Lord will create in His people a new heart (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:25-27)

- With a heart implanted, Israel will at last walk after the Lord

- "...roar like a lion" - the lion's roar, summoning Israel back to its own land like a pride of skittish cubs (Cf. Amos 3:4-8; Is 11:11-12)

- He will not be like a lion seeking to devour His prey, but like a lion leading His cubs to safety

- "...from the west" - this cannot be an allusion to Assyria or Babylon, which would be from the east!

- This would seem to be a reference to the *Diaspora*, and the regathering of the Jews in the end times (Deut 30:3-4; Ezek 20:37-38; 37:1-4)

11 They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, And like doves from the land of Assyria; And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD.

11 They will come trembling like birds from Egypt And like doves from the land of Assyria; And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD.

11 Trembling like a bird, they will come out of Egypt, and as a dove from the land of Assyria; and I will settle them in their houses," declares the LORD.

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

- The idea of a universal return finds support in the references here to return from both Egypt (the symbolic place of exile) and Assyria (the literal place; Cf. Zech 10:10-11)

- The Israelites had been as silly as doves seeking foreign alliances (7:11), but now they would return as swiftly as doves to the land (Cf. Ps 55:6-7; Is 60:8).

- God promised to settle the Israelites in their houses, namely, in the places that they formerly had left, in the land of Israel.

[Verse 11 ends Hosea 11 in the Hebrew Bible]

(B) Israel's unfaithfulness and resulting discipline (Hosea 11:12—13:16)

Several comparisons of Israel and the patriarch Jacob point out the deceitfulness of the Northern Kingdom in this apparent mosaic of messages. Israel had cheated on its covenant with *Yahweh*. The form of the passage is again that of a lawsuit in which the LORD brought charges against Israel (the *rib* oracle) and concluded by announcing its doom.

(a) Past unfaithfulness and discipline (11:12—12:14)

12 Ephraim surrounds Me with lies And the house of Israel with **deceit**; Judah is still **unruly** against God, Even against the Holy One who is faithful.

12 Ephraim surrounds Me with lies And the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against God, Even against the Holy One who is faithful.

12 "Ephraim surrounds me with lies, and the house of Israel surrounds me with deceit, But Judah still rules with God, and remains faithful, along with the godly ones."

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

- The Lord complained that Israel consistently lied and tried to deceive Him

- He described Himself as surrounded and under attack by His own people

- "...deceit" - *mirmah*, unfaithfulness; a character trait of Israel's ancestor Jacob (Cf. 12:3-4,12; Gen 27:35)

- "...unruly" - *rud*, wayward; Judah had also been "wayward" in their relationship with God, who is always faithful

- *Yahweh* was always faithful to His covenant promises, even though the Israelites and the Judahites had wandered from Him and sought out Baals and foreign allies