

Hosea

The Lord God's Message Through Hosea

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

²This was the LORD's first message to Hosea. The LORD said, "Go, marry a prostitute who has had children as a result of her prostitution. Do this 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. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Hosea. ⁴The LORD said to Hosea, "Name him Jezreel,^a because soon I will punish the family of Jehu for the people he killed at Jezreel Valley.^b Then I will put an end to the kingdom of the nation^c 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,^d because I will not show mercy to the nation of Israel anymore, nor will I forgive them. ⁷But I will show mercy to the nation of Judah. I will save them, but I will not use bows or swords or war horses and soldiers

^a **1:4 Jezreel** This name in Hebrew means "God will plant seeds."

^b **1:4 people ... at Jezreel Valley** See 2 Kings 9–10 for the story of Jehu's revolt at Jezreel Valley.

^c **1:4 nation** Literally, "house." This might mean the royal family of that country. Also in verse 6.

^d **1:6 Lo-Ruhamah** This name in Hebrew means "She receives no mercy." Also in verse 8.

to save them. I will save them by my own power.^e"

The Birth of Lo-Ammi

⁸After Gomer had finished nursing Lo-Ruhamah, she became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. ⁹Then the Lord said, "Name him Lo-Ammi,^f because you are not my people, and I am not your God."

The Lord Speaks to the Nation of Israel

¹⁰"In the future the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which you cannot measure or count. In the same place that God told them, 'You are not my people,' he will call them '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.^g Jezreel's day will be great!

2 ¹"Then you will say to your brothers, 'You are my people,' and you will say to your sisters, 'He has shown mercy to you.'^h

²"Argue with your mother.ⁱ Argue with her because she is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband! Tell her to stop being like a prostitute. Tell her to take away her lovers^j from between her breasts. ³If she refuses to stop her adultery, I will strip her naked and leave her like the day she was born. I will take away her peo-

^e **1:7 by my own power** Literally, "by the LORD their God."

^f **1:9 Lo-Ammi** This name in Hebrew means "not my people."

^g **1:11 their nation ... land** Literally, "they will go up from the land."

^h **2:1** Or "Then say to your brothers, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'You have been shown mercy.'"

ⁱ **2:2 mother** This means the nation of Israel.

^j **2:2 her lovers** Or "adulteries." Adultery means breaking a marriage promise by sexual sin. God was like a husband to Israel. But Israel was worshipping false gods—this was spiritual adultery against God.

ple, 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. She should be ashamed of what she did. She said, ‘I will go to my lovers,^a who give me food and water, wool and linen, wine and olive oil.’

⁶“So I, the Lord, will block Israel’s road with thorns, and I will build a wall. Then she will not be able to find her path. 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 husband. Life was better for me when I was with him. Life was better then than it is now.’

⁸“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 she used this silver and gold to make statues of Baal. ⁹So I will return and 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 that she could cover her naked body. ¹⁰Now I will strip her. She will be naked, so all her lovers can see her. No one will be able to save her from my power.^b ¹¹I will take away all her fun. I will stop her festivals, her New Moon celebrations, and her days of rest. I will stop all 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“Israel served false gods,^c so I will punish her. She burned incense to those false gods. She dressed up—she put on her jewelry and nose ring. Then she went to her lovers and forgot me.” This is what the LORD has said.

¹⁴“So I, the Lord, will speak romantic

words to her. I will lead her into the desert and speak tender words. ¹⁵There I will give her vineyards. I will give her Achor Valley as a doorway of hope. Then she will answer as she did when she came out of the land of Egypt.” ¹⁶This is what the LORD says.

“At that time you will call me ‘My husband.’ You will not call me ‘My Baal.’^d ¹⁷I will take the names of those false gods out of her mouth. Then people will not use those names again.

¹⁸“At that time I will make an agreement for the Israelites with the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, and the crawling things on the ground. I will break the bow, the sword, and the weapons of war in that land. I will make the land safe, so the people of Israel can lie down in peace. ¹⁹And I will make you my bride forever. I will make you my bride with goodness and justice and with love and mercy. ²⁰I will make you my faithful bride. Then you will really know the LORD. ²¹And at that time I will answer.” This is what the LORD says.

“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^e on her land.
To Lo-Ruhamah,^f I will show
mercy.

To Lo-Ammi,^g I will say, ‘You are my
people.’

And they will say to me, ‘You are
our God.’”

Hosea Buys Gomer Back From Slavery

3 ¹Then the LORD said to me again, “Gomer^h has many lovers, but you must continue loving her. Do this because

^d **2:16 My Baal** This is a wordplay. Baal was a Canaanite god, but the name also means “lord or husband.”

^e **2:23 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.

^f **2:23 Lo-Ruhamah** This name in Hebrew means “She receives no mercy.”

^g **2:23 Lo-Ammi** This name in Hebrew means “not my people.”

^h **3:1 Gomer** Literally, “a woman.”

^a **2:5 lovers** This means Israel’s false gods. Also in verses 7, 10, 13.

^b **2:10 power** Literally, “hand.”

^c **2:13 false gods** Literally, “Baal’s.”

it is an example of the LORD's love for Israel. He continues to love them, but they continue to turn to other gods, and they love to eat those raisin cakes.^a

²So I bought Gomer back for 6 ounces^b of silver and 9 bushels^c of barley. ³Then I told her, "You must stay at home with me for many days. You will not be like a prostitute. You will not have sexual relations with another man. 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 ephod or a household god. ⁵After this, the people of Israel will come back and 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 ¹People of Israel, listen to the LORD's message. The LORD has something to say against those who live in this land: ²"The people in this land are not honest or loyal. They don't really know God. ²They are always cursing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery. They murder one person after another. ³So the country is like someone 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.^d ⁴No one should argue or blame another person. Priests, my argument is with you!^e ⁵You priests will fall in the daytime. And at night the prophet will also fall with you. I will also destroy your mother.

⁶"My people are destroyed because they have no knowledge. You priests have refused to learn, so I will refuse to let you be priests for me. You have forgotten the law of your God, so I will forget your children. ⁷They became proud. They sinned

^a **3:1 raisin cakes** This food was used in the feasts that honored false gods such as the "Queen of Heaven."

^b **3:2 6 ounces** Literally, "15 shekels," (172.5 g).

^c **3:2 9 bushels** Literally, "1 homer and 1 *letek*" (231 l).

^d **4:3 dying** Literally, "being taken away."

^e **4:4** Or "The people cannot 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.

more and more against me, so I will change their honor to shame.

⁸"The priests fed on the people's sins. They wanted more and more of their sin offerings.^f ⁹So the priests are no different from 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 commit sexual sins, but they will not have babies.^g This is because they left the LORD and became like prostitutes.

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

¹⁴"I cannot blame your daughters or your daughters-in-law for doing this, because your men go and have sex with the temple prostitutesⁱ and offer sacrifices with them. This is how foolish people destroy themselves.

The Shameful Sins of Israel

¹⁵"Israel, just because you act like a prostitute doesn't mean that Judah should feel guilty too. People, don't go to Gilgal or Beth Aven!^j 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 who

^f **4:8** This is a wordplay. The word "sins" also means "sin offerings." So instead of eating sacrifices, the priests became hungry for sin itself.

^g **4:10 They ... babies** A part of worshiping the false gods was having sexual relations with temple prostitutes. The people thought this would make the gods happy. And then the gods would give the people large families and good crops.

^h **4:13 under ... trees** Trees and groves were an important part of worshiping false gods.

ⁱ **4:14 temple prostitutes** Women who were prostitutes at the temples of the false gods. Their sexual sins were part of worshiping those false gods.

^j **4:15 Beth Aven** A name meaning "House of Evil." It is a wordplay on the name "Bethel," a name meaning "House of God." There was a temple in this town. Also in 5:8.

takes his sheep to a large field with plenty of grass. But Israel is stubborn like a young cow that runs away again and again.

¹⁷“Ephraim has joined his idols, so leave him alone. ¹⁸Ephraim has joined their drunkenness. Let them continue to be prostitutes. Let them be with their lovers.^a ¹⁹They went to those gods for safety, and they have lost their ability to think.^b Their altars will bring them shame.

The Leaders Cause Israel and Judah to Sin

5 ¹“Priests, nation^c of Israel, and people in the king’s family, listen to me. You have been judged guilty!

“You were like a trap at Mizpah^d and like a net spread on the ground at Tabor.^e

²You have done many evil things,^f so I will punish you all. ³I know Ephraim. I know what Israel has done. Ephraim, right now you act like a prostitute. Israel is dirty with sin. ⁴The people of Israel have done many evil things, and these evil 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,^g 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 cattle with them, but they did not find the LORD because he refused to accept 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.^h

A Prophecy of Israel’s Destruction

⁸ “Blow the horn in Gibeah.

^a **4:18 lovers** This means Israel’s false gods.

^b **4:19 They ... think** Or “The wind has carried them away on its wings” or “The spirit held them tight in its wings.” The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

^c **5:1 nation** Literally, “house.” This might mean the royal family of that country. Also in verse 14.

^d **5:1 Mizpah** A mountain in Israel. The people worshiped the false gods on many of the hills and mountains.

^e **5:1 Tabor** A mountain in Israel.

^f **5:2 You ... evil things** The Hebrew text here is hard to understand. It seems to be a wordplay of some kind.

^g **5:5 them** Literally, “his face.”

^h **5:7 And now ... again** The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

Blow the trumpet in Ramah.ⁱ

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 this really will happen.

¹⁰ The leaders of Judah are like thieves trying to steal someone’s property,

so I will pour out my anger on them like water.

¹¹ Ephraim will be punished.

He will be crushed and pressed like grapes,

because he decided to follow filth.

¹² I will destroy Ephraim as a moth eats a piece of cloth.

I will ruin Judah, like rot on 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 he cannot heal you or cure your wound.

¹⁴ I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a young lion to the nation of Judah.

I—yes, I myself—will rip them to pieces.

I will carry them away, and no one can save them.

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 very hard to find me.”

The Rewards of Coming Back to the Lord

6 ¹“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.

ⁱ **5:8 Gibeah, Ramah** Cities on Judah’s border with Israel.

Then we can live near him.

³ Let's learn about the LORD.

Let's try very hard to know him.

We know he is coming,

just as we know the dawn is coming.

He 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.^a

⁶ This is 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 as Adam did.^b

They were unfaithful to me in their country.

⁸ Gilead is a city of people who do evil—people who have tricked and killed others.

⁹ The priests are like gangs of robbers hiding and waiting on the road to attack someone.

They murder people before they reach safety in Shechem.

They do such evil things.

¹⁰ I have seen a terrible thing in the nation^c of Israel.

Ephraim was unfaithful to God.

Israel is dirty with sin.

¹¹ Judah, there is also a time of harvest for you.

^a **6:5 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."

^b **6:7 as Adam did** See Gen. 3.

^c **6:10 nation** Literally, "house." This might mean the royal family of that country.

It will happen when I bring my people back from captivity.^d

7 ¹ "I will heal Israel!

Then people will know that Ephraim sinned.

They will know about Samaria's^e lies.

They will know about the thieves who come and go in that town.

² They 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.

He does not make the fire hotter while the bread is rising.

But the people of Israel are not like that.

They are always making their fire hotter.

⁵ On Our King's Day, the leaders get so drunk that they get sick.

They become crazy with wine

and make agreements with people who 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 their kings fell.

Not one of them called to me for help.

Israel and the Nations

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.

^d **6:11 It will ... captivity** Or "It will happen when I restore my people's fortune."

^e **7:1 Samaria** The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Gray hairs^a are also sprinkled on
 Ephraim,
 but Ephraim does not know it.
¹⁰ Ephraim's pride speaks against him.
 The people had many troubles,
 but they still didn't go back to the
 LORD their God.
 They 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.
 They 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.^b
¹³ It will be very bad for those who left
 me.
 They refused to obey me, so they
 will be destroyed.
 I saved them,
 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 Like a boomerang, they changed
 directions,
 but they did not come back to me.^c
 Their leaders bragged about their
 strength,
 but they will be killed with swords.
 And the people in Egypt
 will laugh at them.

^a **7:9 Gray hairs** This word might describe something that was put on the food when people cooked, something that looked like gray hairs.

^b **7:12 for their agreements** Or "for the report of their treaties."

^c **7:16 they changed ... to me** Or "They turned, but not upward" or "They turned to the 'no-gods.'" That is, the statues people worshiped as gods.

Idol Worship Leads to Destruction

8 ¹"Put the trumpet to your lips and give the warning. Be like an eagle over the LORD's house.^d The Israelites have broken my agreement. They have not obeyed my law. ²They yell out at 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. They chose leaders, but they didn't choose men I knew. The Israelites used their silver and gold to make idols for themselves, so they will be destroyed. ⁵⁻⁶He has refused your calf, Samaria.^e God says, 'I am very angry with 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, but 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.'^f
 Like a stubborn donkey, they led
 him off to Assyria.

¹⁰ Yes, Israel was taken to the nations,
 but I will bring them back.
 But first, they must suffer a little
 by carrying 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

^d **8:1 Be like an eagle ... LORD's house** Or "Be like a guard over the LORD's house."

^e **8:5-6 calf, Samaria** Samaria was the capital city 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.

^f **8:9 lovers** This means Israel's false gods.

- Ephraim.
 12 Even if I wrote 10,000 laws for Ephraim, he would treat them as if they were for some stranger.
 13 The Israelites love sacrifices.^a 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 away as prisoners to Egypt.
 14 Israel has built palaces for their kings, and now Judah builds fortresses. But they have forgotten their Maker! So I will send a fire to destroy their cities and 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 committed your sexual sin^b on every threshing floor. ²But the grain from those threshing floors will not provide 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. ⁴They will not be able to give offerings of wine to the LORD. None of their sacrifices will please him. What they offer will be like food eaten at a funeral—whoever eats it will become unclean. They can eat that food for their own hunger, but it cannot be taken into the Lord's Temple. ⁵They will not be able to celebrate the LORD's feasts or festivals.^c

⁶The people of Israel left because the enemy took everything from them. But Egypt will take the people themselves. Memphis^d will bury them. Weeds will

^a 8:13 **The Israelites love sacrifices** The meaning of the Hebrew text here is uncertain.

^b 9:1 **You committed your sexual sin** This means 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.

^c 9:5 Literally, “What will you do for a day of solemn assembly, for the LORD's festival day?”

^d 9:6 **Memphis** An important city in Egypt.

grow over their silver treasures, and thorns will grow where the Israelites lived.

Israel Rejected the True Prophets

⁷The prophet says, “Israel, learn this: 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 terrible sins. You will be punished for your hate.” ⁸God and the prophet are like guards watching over Ephraim, but there are many traps along his way. And people hate the prophet, even in the house of his God.

⁹The Israelites have gone deep into ruin as in the time of Gibeah. God will remember the Israelites' sins, and he will punish them.

Israel Is Ruined by Its Worship of Idols

¹⁰“At the time I, the Lord, 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 when they came to Baal Peor,^e they changed. So I had to cut them off like rotten fruit.^f They became like the terrible things that they loved.

The Israelites Will Have No Children

¹¹“Like a bird, Ephraim's glory will fly away. There will be no more pregnancies, no more births, and no more babies. ¹²But even if the Israelites do raise their children, it will not help, because 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 will lead his children out to the killer. ¹⁴LORD, give them what you will. Give them a womb that loses babies and breasts that cannot give milk.

¹⁵ All their evil is in Gilgal; I began hating them there.

^e 9:10 **Baal Peor** This happened when Moses was still leading the Israelites in the desert. Read Num. 25:1–5.

^f 9:10 **they changed . . . rotten fruit** This is a wordplay that can also mean “they dedicated themselves to a shameful idol.”

I will force them to leave my house
because of the evil things they do.

I will not love them anymore.

Their leaders are rebels who 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
who 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 ¹Israel 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.

² The people of Israel tried to trick God,
but now they must accept their
guilt.

He will break down their altars
and 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
cannot do anything to us.”

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

⁵The people from Samaria worship the
calves at Beth Aven.^a They will cry. The
priests will cry, because their beautiful
idol is gone. It was carried away. ⁶It was
carried away as a gift to the great king of
Assyria. He will keep Ephraim’s shame-

^a **10:5 Beth Aven** A name meaning “House of Evil.” It is a word-play on the name “Bethel,” a name meaning “House of God.” There was a temple in this town.

ful idol. Israel will be ashamed of its idol.^b
⁷Samaria’s false god^c 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^d 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!”

Israel Will Pay for Sin

⁹“Israel, you have sinned since the time of
Gibeah. (And the people have continued
to sin there.) Those evil people at Gibeah
will be trapped by war. ¹⁰I will come to
punish them. Armies will come together
against them and punish the Israelites for
both of their sins.^e

¹¹“Ephraim is like a trained young cow
that loves to walk on grain on the thresh-
ing 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 har-
vest faithful 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 har-
vested trouble. You ate the fruit of your
lies, because you had 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^f destroyed Beth Arbel.
At that time of war, mothers were killed
with their children. ¹⁵And this will happen
to you at Bethel, because you did so many
evil things. When that day begins, the king
of Israel will be fully destroyed.

^b **10:6 idol** Or “advice.”

^c **10:7 false god** Or “king.”

^d **10:8 high places of Aven** Aven means “evil” or “wickedness.” This probably means the temple and other places of worship at Bethel.

^e **10:10** This probably refers to worship at Gibeah and Beth Aven.

^f **10:14 Shalman** This is probably Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.

Israel Has Forgotten the Lord

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

² But the more I ^a called the Israelites, the more they left me.

The Israelites gave sacrifices to the false gods ^b and burned incense to the idols.

³ “But I was the one 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, ^c but they were ropes of love.

I was like a person who set them free. ^d I bent down and fed them.

⁵ “The Israelites will not go back to Egypt. The king of Assyria will become their king, because they refused to turn back to God. ⁶The sword will swing against their cities and kill their strong men. It will destroy their leaders.

⁷ “My people expect me to come back. They will call to God above, but he will not help them.” ^e

The Lord Will Not 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. ^f

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 a human.

I am the Holy One.

I am with you.

I will not show my anger.

¹⁰ I, the LORD, will roar like a lion,

^a **11:21** This is from the ancient Greek version. The standard Hebrew text has “they.”

^b **11:2 false gods** Literally, “Baal’s.”

^c **11:4 ropes** The Hebrew says, “ropes of a man.”

^d **11:4 set them free** Literally, “lifted the yoke from their jaws.”

^e **11:7** Or “My people are hanging on poles, around my dwelling place. They called up to him, but he didn’t lift them up.”

^f **11:8 Admah, Zeboiim** Two cities that were destroyed when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19; Deut. 29:23.

and my children will come and follow me.

They will come from the west, shaking with fear.

¹¹ They will come from Egypt, shaking like birds.

They will come shaking like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will take them back home.” This is what the LORD said.

¹² “Ephraim surrounded me with false gods.

The people of Israel turned against me. ^g

But Judah still walks with God ^h and is true to the Holy One. ⁱ”

The Lord Is Against Israel

12 ¹Ephraim is wasting its time; Israel “chases the wind” all day long. The people tell more and more lies and steal more and more. They have made agreements with Assyria, and they are carrying their olive oil to Egypt.

²The LORD says, “I have a complaint against Israel. ^j Jacob must be punished for the bad things he did. ³While Jacob was still in his mother’s womb, he began to trick his brother. ^k Jacob was a strong young man, and at that time he fought with God. ⁴Jacob wrestled with God’s angel and won. ^l He cried and asked for a favor. That happened at Bethel. There he spoke to us. ⁵Yes, YAHWEH is the God of the armies. ^m His name is YAHWEH. ⁶So come back to your God. Be loyal to him. Do the right thing, and always trust in your God!

⁷ “Jacob is a tricky merchant. ⁿ He even

^g **11:12 Ephraim ... me** Or “Ephraim surrounded me with lies. The house of Israel surrounded me with deception.”

^h **11:12 God** Literally, “El.” This might be one of the names of God, or it might be El, the most important god of the Canaanites. It is not clear if this means Judah was being faithful to God or if Judah was worshiping the false gods.

ⁱ **11:12 Holy One** This is a plural form in the Hebrew text and may refer to God or to Canaanite false gods.

^j **12:2 Israel** Literally, “Judah.”

^k **12:3 he ... his brother** Or “he grabbed his brother’s heel.” This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word is like the name “Jacob.” Read Gen. 25:26.

^l **12:4 Jacob wrestled ... and won** Read Gen. 32:22–28.

^m **12:5 YAHWEH is the God of the armies** This is like one of the names for God. It is usually translated “LORD All-Powerful.”

ⁿ **12:7 Jacob ... merchant** Literally, “Cannan.”

cheats his friend! Even his scales^a lie.
⁸Ephraim said, ‘I am rich! I have found true riches! No one will learn about my crimes. No one will learn about my sins.’

⁹“But I am still the LORD your God, as I was when you left the land of Egypt. I will make you live in tents, as you do during the Festival of Shelters.^b ¹⁰I spoke to the prophets and 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. They offer sacrifices to bulls at Gilgal. They 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. There Israel worked for a wife. He kept sheep to get another wife. ¹³But the LORD used a prophet and brought Israel out of Egypt. He used a prophet and kept Israel safe. ¹⁴But Ephraim made the LORD very angry. Ephraim killed many people, so he will be punished for his crimes. His Lord will make him bear his shame.”

Israel Has Ruined Itself

13 ¹“The tribe of Ephraim made itself very important in Israel. Ephraim spoke and people shook with fear. But Ephraim sinned by worshiping Baal, so he must die. ²Now the Israelites sin more and more. They make idols for themselves. Workers make those fancy statues from silver, and then they talk to their statues. They offer sacrifices to them, and they kiss those calf idols. ³That is why those people will soon disappear. They will be like a fog that comes early in the morning and then quickly disappears. The Israelites will be like chaff that is blown from the threshing floor. The Israelites will be like smoke that goes out a window 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

^a **12:7 scales** Or “balances,” a tool for weighing things.

^b **12:9 as ... Shelters** Literally, “as in the days of meeting.” This might also refer to the meeting of God with his people in the Holy Tent (see “HOLY TENT” in the Word List) during their wandering in the desert.

me. I am the one who saved you. ⁵I knew you in the desert—I knew you in that dry land. ⁶I gave food to the Israelites, and they ate it. They became full and satisfied. They became proud, and then 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 and rip open their chests. I will be like a lion or other wild animal tearing and eating its prey.

Israel Cannot Be Saved From God’s Anger

⁹“Israel, I helped you, but you turned against me. So now I will destroy you. ¹⁰Where is your king? Can he save you in any of your cities? Where are your judges? You asked for them, saying, ‘Give me a king and leaders.’^c 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 of a woman giving birth.

He will not be a wise son.

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

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 his well will dry up.

His spring of water will be dry.

The wind will take away anything of value.

¹⁶ Samaria must be punished

because she turned against her God.

The Israelites will be killed with swords.

C 13:10 You asked for ... leaders See 1 Sam. 8:4–9.

Their children will be torn to pieces,
and their pregnant women will be
ripped open.”

Return to the Lord

14 ¹Israel, you fell and sinned against
God. So come back to the LORD
your God. ²Think about what you will say,
and come back to the LORD. Say to him,

“Take away our sin,
and accept these words as our
sacrifice.

We offer you the praise from our
lips.^a

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.

This is because you are the one who
shows mercy to orphans.”

The Lord Will Forgive Israel

⁴ The Lord says,

“I will forgive them for leaving me.

I will show them my love without
limits,

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

^a **14:2 praise from our lips** Literally, “the fruit of our lips.”

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 and watches over you.^b

I am like a fir tree that is always green.

Your fruit comes from me.”

Final Advice

⁹ A wise person understands these
things,

and a smart person should learn
them.

The LORD’s ways are right.

Good people will live by them.

Sinners will die by them.^c

^b **14:8 and watches over you** This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word is like the name “Assyria.” God is saying that he, not some foreign country, protects Israel.

^c **14:9 Good ... die by them** Literally, “Good people will walk on them. Sinners will stumble on them.”

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