

Hosea continues listing the that Israel is guilty of committing and warns them of the LORD's judgment because of them. They have not only sinned against the LORD but also against their fellow countrymen. They have forsaken Him and instead seek their guidance from pieces of wood that have been carved into idols. Their rebellion is compared to a heifer that stubbornly resists being pulled by a rope.

Hosea 4

1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. 2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

“Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel” – Hosea calls for Israel to pay attention to what the LORD is saying. The LORD is aware of Israel's deeds and is not pleased to say the least.

“for the LORD hath a controversy [*quarrel; dispute; a legal case*] with the inhabitants of the land” – The LORD has an indictment or accusation against Israel. The Hebrew word for “controversy” was used of an accusation made when someone brought a case before a judge. Hosea will lay out the LORD's case against Israel.

“because *there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*” – The first accusation is that truth, mercy and the knowledge of God were absent in Israel. Apparently deceit and cruelty were the norm and few, if any, people truly sought to know God.

“By swearing [*to take an oath*], and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out [*to burst forth*], and blood toucheth blood” – The Hebrew word for “swearing” refers to placing a curse on someone through an oath in an expression of ill will. Hosea is listing a variety of sins that Israel was committing and Israel's offenses were even overflowing to the extent of violence against one another and bloodshed was following bloodshed.

Verses 3-5: The LORD states that the land and the animals that dwell there would suffer because of Israel's rebellion because the nation was headed for destruction.

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

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [*perception; discernment; understanding*]” – Israel was heading for destruction because of their lack of understanding in the things of God. They believed that they were benefiting from their sinful behavior when in reality those things were only bringing God's judgment upon them. They did not understand that God would bless them abundantly if they repented and returned to Him.

“because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me” – Their lack of knowledge was not mere ignorance. They did not want to know the truth because they did not want to give up their sin. Since they willingly rejected knowledge of the truth, the LORD was also rejecting them. The LORD had told Israel that they would be a “kingdom of priests” (**Ex. 19:6a** “*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*”). The LORD intended Israel to lead the nations of the world into a relationship with Him but since they had utterly failed in that role, He was rejecting them as priests. However, Israel will indeed serve in that capacity in Christ's millennial kingdom (**Zech. 8:23** “*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you*”).

“seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” – Since Israel had lost interest in knowing and obeying the law of God, the LORD would not have any interest in the well being of their descendants.

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

As is true for us many times, the more Israel prospered, the more they believed they didn't need God or need to obey Him. They were following their own sinful desires but God will punish them by taking away the things that they gloried in (their prosperity).

Verses 8-9: Israel has set their heart on committing iniquity and the LORD promises that He will punish them.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

“For they shall eat, and not have enough” – They will not enjoy what they eat for it will not satisfy their fleshly cravings.

“they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase” – They will seek children through illegitimate means but the women will either be barren or their children will die young.

“because they have left off to take heed to the LORD” – The reason the LORD will have removed His hand of blessing and even be actively working against Israel is because they have refused to obey the law of the LORD or to listen to the warnings to repent that He has sent through the prophets.

“Whoredom [*harlotry; fornication*] and wine and new wine [*freshly pressed grape juice*] take away [*seize; enslave*] the heart [*will; understanding*]” – This statement speaks to the enslaving power of our flesh's carnal desires. Sexual temptations, especially when one is drunk, are powerful and can overcome our will power and common sense, leading us to sin. The flesh seeks pleasure but satisfying such pleasure illegitimately is a sin.

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

“My people ask counsel [to inquire; to beg] at their stocks [tree; timber], and their staff [stick] declareth unto them” – “Stocks” refers to the wooden idols that the people were asking for guidance and blessing and the “staff” refers to something like a walking stick that had an image of their false god on the top. These were both used for worshiping their false gods and seeking their guidance and favor.

“for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God” – Just as the whoredoms had led Israel astray sexually, that same spirit had led them away from the LORD to follow other gods.

Verses 13-15: Israel insists on sacrificing to these false gods in high places (on mountains and hills) but their rebellion will lead to the immorality of their daughters becoming prostitutes and the spouses committing adultery. Sin only leads to greater sins.

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

“For Israel slideth back [to be stubborn or rebellious] as a backsliding [stubborn; rebellious] heifer” – The picture being used here is of a heifer that is stubbornly resistant to being led by the rope tied around her neck. Such a heifer will stiffen her legs and neck and pull against the rope. The LORD says that this is the behavior that Israel is exhibiting.

“now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place” – Since Israel is resisting His leading, He will abandon them in the same way someone might abandon a lamb in a “large place” (the wilderness) where it would be at the mercy of any predators that might encounter it.

Hosea 8

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

Verses 1-4: Israel may have claimed that they were serving the LORD but He had nothing to do with the things they have been doing. They were, in fact, disobeying the LORD when they used their silver and gold to make idols.

“Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off” – The word “*thee*” is not in the original Hebrew, so it could be more literally rendered as “Thy calf, O Samaria, hath been cast off,” which would be more consistent with the next line.

“mine anger is kindled against them” – Calf worship was instituted by Jeroboam shortly after the kingdom became divided between Judah and the rest of the nation of Israel. Jeroboam had setup two calves in Dan and Beth-el as alternatives to worshiping the LORD in Jerusalem and they were apparently still being worshiped (1 Kings 12:25-33). The LORD states that He has rejected Israel’s calf worship and that He is angry with Samaria (Israel) because of it.

“how long will it be *ere* [before] they attain to innocency?” – Israel’s innocency would not happen until they repent of their sins and return to the LORD for forgiveness. The LORD asks how long will it be before they would do this.

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

“For from Israel was it also: the workman made it” – The calves being worshiped were manufactured in Israel by the hands of a workman, proving that they were inanimate objects created from ordinary physical materials.

“therefore it *is* not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces” – The calf that Israel worshiped was a manufactured object and therefore could not be God. It had no power to protect itself and so it would eventually be destroyed. The calves in Dan and Beth-el were likely taken and destroyed when the Assyrians conquered Israel and took them away captive.

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

“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” – They may think their sins as minor, but the repercussions of Israel’s sins will be much greater than they expect. God takes sin seriously and His coming judgment would not be a slap on the wrist.

“it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal” – The harvest of their crops will be meager.

“if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up” – What little that they get from their harvest will be taken and eaten by foreign enemies.

Hosea 9

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

“My God will cast them away [reject], because they did not hearken unto him” – Israel’s stubbornness and lack of repentance will catch up with them. They would not listen to His repeated calls for them to return to Him and so now He has rejected them just as they have rejected Him.

“and they shall be wanderers among the nations” – The LORD had warned Israel throughout their history that He would scatter them throughout the world if they turned away from following Him (**Lev. 26:33** “*And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste*”). He had named one of Hosea’s children “Jezreel,” which means “God scatters” as a part of Hosea’s warning of the coming judgment against Israel.