EDIFIED EDITION

Hosea

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

14	197	Old	28
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Hosea 1 introduces Hosea son of Beeri, who prophesied in Israel in the days of Jeroboam II while Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah reigned in Judah. The LORD tells him to marry a promiscuous woman, for the land has been unfaithful to the LORD. He marries Gomer, and her children receive names that are signs: Jezreel, for the LORD will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed at Jezreel; Lo-ruhamah (Not Pitied), for He will no longer show compassion to Israel, though He will save Judah; and Lo-ammi (Not My People). Yet a day is coming when Israel will be as countless as the sand of the sea, and in the place where it was said, "You are not My people," they will be called sons of the living God.

[1]The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel.[1]

[2]When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take a promiscuous wife and have children of promiscuity, for the land commits flagrant prostitution by turning away from the LORD."

[3]So Hosea went and took Gomer, Diblaim's daughter, as his wife, and she became pregnant and bore him a son.

[4]The LORD said to him, "Call him Jezreel, for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.[2]

[5]On that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. The LORD said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them.[3]

7 But I will have compassion on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God, not by bow or sword or battle, nor by horses or horsemen.”

8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, Gomer conceived and gave birth to a son.

9 Then the LORD said, “Call him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people, and I am not your God.”[4]

10 Yet the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. And in the very place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there they will be called “sons of the living God.”[5]

11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be gathered together; they will appoint one head for themselves and go up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

1 Hosea prophesied in the northern kingdom from about 755 BC until shortly before Samaria fell in 722 BC.

2 Jezreel (‘God sows’) was where Jehu massacred the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9–10).

3 ‘Lo-ruhamah’ means ‘Not Pitied’ or ‘No Compassion’.

4 ‘Lo-ammi’ means ‘Not My People’. The last words are literally ‘I am not “I AM” to you’, echoing the name of God in Exodus 3:14.

5 In Hebrew 1:10–11 are numbered 2:1–2, and 2:1–23 are numbered 2:3–25. Romans 9:26 quotes this verse.

Chapter 2

Hosea 2 is a lawsuit against Israel as an unfaithful wife. Her children are to plead with their mother to put away her adulteries, or the LORD will strip her bare and make her like a desert. She said she would go after her lovers, who gave her bread, water, wool and oil, not knowing that it was the LORD who gave her grain, wine and oil and lavished silver and gold on her, which she used for Baal. So He will hedge her way with thorns, take back His gifts, expose her shame and end her festivals. Yet He will allure her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. She will call Him “my Husband” and no longer “my Baal”. He will betroth her to Himself for ever in righteousness, justice, loyal kindness, compassion and faithfulness, and will say to Not-My-People, “You are My people.”

1 Say to your brothers, “My people,” and to your sisters, “Shown compassion.”[1]

2 Plead with your mother, plead, for she is not My wife and I am not her husband. Let her remove the prostitution from her face and the adultery from between her breasts,

3 or I will strip her naked and expose her as on the day she was born. I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land and let her die of thirst.

4 I will have no compassion on her children, because they are children of prostitution.

5 Their mother has been a harlot; the woman who bore them has disgraced herself. She said, “I will run after my lovers; they give me food and water, wool and flax, olive oil and drink.”

6 Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns and build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.

7 She will pursue her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, “I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.”

8 She did not acknowledge that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

9 So I will take back My grain at harvest time and My new wine in its season, and I will snatch away My wool and My linen, which were meant to cover her nakedness.

10 Now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers, and no one will rescue her from My hand.

11 I will put an end to all her celebrations, her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her appointed feasts.

12 I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, “These are my wages, which my lovers gave me.” I will turn them into a thicket, and the wild animals will devour them.

13 I will punish her for the days of the Baals, when she burned incense to them, decked herself with rings and jewellery and went after her lovers, but forgot Me, declares the LORD.

14 Therefore I am going to win her back. I will lead her into the wilderness and speak to her heart.

15 There I will give back her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as on the day she came up out of the land of Egypt.[2]

16 On that day, declares the LORD, you will call Me "my Husband"; you will no longer call Me "my Baal."[3]

17 I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they will be remembered by name no more.

18 On that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky and the creatures that creep on the ground. I will abolish bow and sword and battle from the land, and I will let them lie down in safety.

19 I will betroth you to Me for ever; I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loyal kindness and compassion.

20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD.

21 On that day I will answer, declares the LORD. I will answer the heavens, and they will answer the earth;

22 the earth will answer the grain, the new wine and the oil, and they will answer Jezreel.

23 I will sow her for Myself in the land; I will have compassion on No-Compassion, and I will say to Not-My-People, "You are My people," and he will say, "You are my God."[4]

1 Hebrew 'Ammi' and 'Ruhamah', reversing the names of 1:6 and 1:9.

2 'Achor' means 'trouble'; see Joshua 7:24–26.

3 'Baal' means 'master' or 'husband', and was also the name of the Canaanite god.

4 Romans 9:25 and 1 Peter 2:10 apply this verse to the Gentiles called by God.

Chapter 3

Hosea 3 tells how the LORD told Hosea to love his wife again, though she was loved by another and was an adulteress, just as the LORD loves Israel though they turn to other gods. Hosea bought her back for fifteen shekels of silver and a measure and a half of barley and told her she must live with him many days without being unfaithful. So Israel will live many days without king or prince, sacrifice or sacred pillar, ephod or household gods; afterwards they will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king, and come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the latter days.

1 The LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."[1]

2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley.[2]

3 Then I said to her, "You are to live with me many days. You must not be promiscuous or belong to any man, and I will be the same towards you."

4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or household gods.

5 Afterwards the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the latter days.

1 Raisin cakes were used in pagan festivals.

2 About 170 grams (6 ounces) of silver and about 240 litres (7 bushels) of barley.

Chapter 4

Hosea 4 brings the LORD's charge against Israel: there is no faithfulness, no loyal kindness and no knowledge of God in the land, but cursing, lying, murder, theft and adultery, so the land mourns. The priests are especially to blame: My people are ruined for want of knowledge, because the priests have rejected knowledge and feed on the people's sin. Like people, like priest. The people consult wooden idols and sacrifice on the hilltops under shady trees, and their daughters turn to prostitution. Judah must not follow Israel to Gilgal or Beth-aven. Israel is as stubborn as a stubborn heifer; Ephraim is joined to idols, so leave him alone.

1 Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, for
the LORD has a charge against the inhabitants of
the land: There is no faithfulness, no loyal
kindness and no knowledge of God in the land.
2 There is only cursing and lying, murder, stealing
and adultery; they break all bounds, and
bloodshed follows bloodshed.
3 Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it
waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds
of the sky, and even the fish of the sea, are swept
away.
4 But let no one bring a charge, and let no one
accuse another, for your people are like those who
contend with a priest.[1]
5 You will stumble by day, and the prophet will
stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your
mother.
6 My people are ruined for want of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you
as My priest; because you have forgotten the law
of your God, I will also forget your children.
7 The more the priests increased, the more they
sinned against Me; I will change their glory into
shame.
8 They feed on the sin of My people and relish their
iniquity.[2]
9 So it will be the same for people and priest: I will
call them to account for their conduct and pay
them back for what they have done.
10 They will eat but not be satisfied; they will
practise prostitution but not increase, because
they have abandoned the LORD to devote
themselves to
11 harlotry. Old wine and new rob them of their
wits.
12 My people consult their piece of wood, and their
staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of
prostitution leads them astray, and they play the
prostitute, leaving their God.
13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn
incense on the hills, under oak, poplar and
terebinth, because their shade is pleasant. That is
why your daughters turn to prostitution and your
daughters-in-law commit adultery.
14 I will not punish your daughters when they turn
to prostitution, or your daughters-in-law when
they commit adultery, because the men
themselves go off with prostitutes and sacrifice
with cult prostitutes. A people without
understanding will come to ruin.
15 Though you play the prostitute, Israel, let not
Judah become guilty. Do not go to Gilgal or go up
to Beth-aven, and do not swear, "As the LORD
lives!"[3]
16 For Israel is stubborn, like a stubborn heifer.
Can the LORD now pasture them like lambs in an
open meadow?
17 Ephraim has wedded himself to idols; let him be!
18 When their drinking is over, they give
themselves to prostitution; their rulers dearly love
shame.
19 A wind has wrapped them in its wings, and they
will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

1 The Hebrew of the last line is uncertain; a slight change gives 'for with you is My contention, O priest'.
2 The priests profited from the sin offerings (Leviticus 6:26), so they welcomed the people's sin.
3 'Beth-aven' ('house of wickedness') is a scornful name for Bethel ('house of God').

Chapter 5

Hosea 5 calls priests, people and royal house to hear the judgement, for they have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread on Tabor. Their deeds do not let them return to God, for a spirit of prostitution is in them; Israel's arrogance testifies against them, and Judah stumbles with them. When they go with flocks and herds to seek the LORD, they will not find Him, for He has withdrawn. The alarm is sounded at Gibeah and Ramah. The LORD is like a moth to Ephraim and like rot to Judah; when they saw their sickness they turned to Assyria, which could not heal them. He will be like a lion to them, tearing and carrying off, and then return to His place until they admit their guilt and seek His face.

1 Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, house of
Israel! Listen, royal house! For this judgement
concerns you: you have been a snare at Mizpah
and a net spread out on Tabor.

2 The rebels are deep in slaughter, but I will
discipline them all.[1]

3 I know all about Ephraim; Israel cannot hide
from Me. For now, Ephraim, you have turned
harlot, and Israel has made itself unclean.

4 Their deeds do not allow them to return to their
God, for a spirit of prostitution is within them, and
they do not know the LORD.

5 Israel's arrogance testifies against him; Israel
and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity, and Judah
also stumbles with them.

6 When they go with their flocks and herds to seek
the LORD, they will not find Him; He has
withdrawn from them.

7 They have been unfaithful to the LORD, for they
have borne illegitimate children. Now the new
moon will devour them along with their fields.

8 Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in
Ramah! Raise the battle cry in Beth-aven; we are
behind you, Benjamin![2]

9 Ephraim will become a desolation on the day of
punishment. Among the tribes of Israel I have
made known what is certain.

10 The leaders of Judah are like those who move
boundary stones; I will pour out My wrath on
them like water.

11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgement,
because he was determined to follow futility.[3]

12 So I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the
house of Judah.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his
wound, Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to the
great king. But he cannot heal you or cure your
wound.

14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a young
lion to the house of Judah. I Myself will tear them
to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, and
no one will rescue them.

15 Then I will go back to My place until they
acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their
distress they will earnestly seek Me.

1 The Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.

2 Probably the Syro-Ephraimite war of 735–732 BC (2 Kings 16:5–9).

3 'Futility' follows the Greek; the Hebrew word is uncertain and may mean 'command' or 'filth'.

Chapter 6

Hosea 6 opens with the people saying, "Come, let us return to the LORD," confident that He will revive them after two days, raise them up on the third, and come to them as surely as the dawn and the spring rains. But the LORD asks what He can do with Ephraim and Judah, whose loyal kindness is like the morning mist that vanishes. So He has cut them down by the prophets, for He desires loyal kindness rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. Like Adam they have broken the covenant; Gilead is a city of evildoers, priests murder on the road to Shechem, and Ephraim and Israel are defiled.

1 Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn
us, but He will heal us; He has struck us, but He
will bind up our wounds.

2 Within two days He will revive us; by the third
day He will have raised us up to live in His sight.[1]

3 Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.
His coming is as sure as the dawn; He will come
to us like the showers, like the spring rains that
water the earth.

4 What shall I do with you, Ephraim? What shall I
do with you, Judah? Your loyal kindness is like a
morning cloud, like the dew that vanishes early.

5 So I have cut them to pieces through the
prophets and killed them with the words I spoke,
and My verdict shines out like the daylight.[2]

6 For I desire loyal kindness, not sacrifice, and the
knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.[3]

7 Yet like Adam they have broken the covenant;
they betrayed Me there.[4]

8 Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with
footprints of blood.

9 As marauders lie in wait for a man, so do bands
of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem;
they commit wicked crimes.

10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible
thing: there Ephraim plays the prostitute, and
Israel is defiled.

11 For you also, Judah, a harvest is appointed,
when I restore the fortunes of My people.

1 Compare 1 Corinthians 15:4, 'raised on the third day according to the Scriptures'.

2 'My judgement goes out' follows the Greek and Syriac; the Hebrew reads 'your judgements'.

3 Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'.

4 Or 'at Adam', a town by the Jordan (Joshua 3:16).

Chapter 7

Hosea 7 describes Israel's corruption. Whenever the LORD would heal Israel, Ephraim's sins and Samaria's crimes are exposed: deceit, theft and banditry. They delight the king with their wickedness; they are all adulterers, burning like an oven, and in their intrigues they devour their rulers, while none of them calls on the LORD. Ephraim mixes with the nations and is a cake not turned; foreigners sap his strength and he does not know it. Like a silly, senseless dove he flits between Egypt and Assyria, and the LORD will throw His net over him. Woe to them for straying! He would redeem them, but they speak lies against Him, wail on their beds without crying to Him, and turn like a faulty bow.

1 Whenever I would heal Israel, the iniquity of
Ephraim is exposed and the crimes of Samaria
revealed. For they practise deceit; thieves break
in, and bandits raid outside.

2 They do not consider in their hearts that I
remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds
surround them; they are always before Me.

3 Their evil keeps the king amused, and their
falsehoods please the officials.

4 They are all adulterers, burning like an oven
whose fire the baker need not stir from the
kneading of the dough until it rises.

5 On the day of our king the princes became sick
with the heat of wine, and he joined hands with
the mockers.

6 Their hearts are like an oven as they approach
with their intrigue. All night their anger
smoulders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming
fire.[1]

7 All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour
their rulers. All their kings fall, and none of them
calls on Me.

8 Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim
is a flat cake not turned over.

9 Foreigners devour his strength, but he does not
know it. Grey hairs are sprinkled on him, but he
does not notice.

10 Israel's arrogance testifies against him, yet for
all this they do not return to the LORD their God
or seek Him.

11 Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and
senseless, calling to Egypt, then turning to
Assyria.

12 As they go, I will spread My net over them; I will
bring them down like birds of the sky. I will
discipline them as their assembly has been
warned.

13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me!
Destruction to them, for they have rebelled
against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak
lies against Me.

14 They do not cry out to Me from their hearts, but
wail on their beds. They gash themselves for grain
and new wine, and turn away from Me.[2]

15 I trained them and strengthened their arms, yet
they plot evil against Me.

16 They turn, but not to the Most High; they are
like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the

sword because of their insolent tongues; for this
they will be ridiculed in the land of Egypt.

1 ‘Their anger’ follows the Syriac; the Hebrew reads ‘their baker’. Four of Israel’s last six kings were assassinated (2 Kings 15).
2 ‘Gash themselves’ follows some manuscripts and the Greek; compare 1 Kings 18:28.

Chapter 8

Hosea 8 sounds the alarm: an eagle hovers over the LORD’s house because Israel has broken His covenant. They cry, “My God, we know You!”, yet have rejected what is good. They set up kings without the LORD and made idols of silver and gold; the calf of Samaria will be smashed. They sow the wind and will reap the whirlwind. Israel is swallowed up among the nations like a useless vessel, having gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey and hired lovers. Ephraim multiplied altars for sinning and treated God’s many laws as strange; their sacrifices are not accepted, and they will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces, Judah has multiplied fortified cities, but fire will consume them.

1 Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle hovers
over the house of the LORD, because they have
broken My covenant and rebelled against My law.
2 Israel cries out to Me, “My God, we know You!”
3 But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy
will pursue him.
4 They set up kings, but not by Me; they appointed
princes without My knowledge. With their silver
and gold they made idols for themselves, to their
own destruction.
5 He has rejected your calf, Samaria! My anger
burns against them. How long will they be
incapable of innocence?[1]
6 For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it, and it
is not God. The calf of Samaria will be broken into
splinters.
7 For they sow the wind, and they will reap the
whirlwind. The standing grain has no head; it will
yield no flour. Even if it did yield, foreigners would
swallow it up.
8 Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the
nations like a vessel no one wants.
9 They have gone off to Assyria, a wild donkey
roaming on its own; Ephraim has bought himself
lovers.
10 Though they hire allies among the nations, I will
now gather them together, and they will soon
writhe under the burden of the king of princes.[2]
11 Because Ephraim multiplied altars for sinning,
they have become altars for sinning.
12 Though I wrote out for him My law in all its
detail, he looks on it as something foreign.
13 They offer Me sacrifices as gifts and eat the
meat themselves, but the LORD takes no pleasure
in them. He will now call their guilt to mind and
punish their sins: back to Egypt they will go.
14 Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces;
Judah has multiplied fortified cities. But I will send
fire on their cities, and it will consume their
strongholds.

1 The golden calf set up by Jeroboam at Bethel (1 Kings 12:28–29). The Greek reads ‘I have rejected’.
2 The king of Assyria, who imposed heavy tribute (2 Kings 15:19–20).

Chapter 9

Hosea 9 warns Israel not to rejoice like the nations, for they have been unfaithful to their God and loved a prostitute’s wages on every threshing floor. They will not remain in the LORD’s land but return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria, with no offerings for the LORD’s festivals. The days of punishment have come; the prophet is called a fool and the inspired man mad, though he is the watchman of Ephraim. The LORD found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, but at Baal-peor they consecrated themselves to shame. Ephraim’s glory will fly away like a bird, with no birth, no pregnancy and no conception; all their wickedness began at Gilgal. My God will reject them, and they will be wanderers among the nations.

1 Do not rejoice, Israel; do not exult like the
nations, for you have been unfaithful to your God.
You have loved a prostitute’s wages on every
threshing floor.

2 Threshing floor and winepress will not feed them,
and the new wine will fail them.
3 They will not remain in the LORD's land;
Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food
in Assyria.
4 They will not pour out wine offerings to the
LORD, nor will their sacrifices please Him. Their
bread will be like mourners' bread; all who eat it
will be defiled. Their bread will be for themselves
alone; it will not come into the house of the
LORD.[1]
5 What will you do on the day of the appointed
festival, on the day of the LORD's feast?
6 For look, they have gone away from the
destruction, yet Egypt will gather them and
Memphis bury them. Nettles will possess their
treasures of silver, and thorns will grow in their
tents.
7 The days of punishment have come; the days of
reckoning have arrived. Let Israel know this!
Because of your great iniquity and great hostility,
the prophet is considered a fool and the man of
the Spirit a madman.
8 The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim with my
God, yet a fowler's snare lies on all his paths, and
hostility in the house of his God.
9 They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the
days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity
and punish their sins.[2]
10 Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel; like
the first ripe fruit on the fig tree I saw your
fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and
consecrated themselves to that shameful thing,
and became as detestable as the thing they loved.[3]
11 Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird: no
birth, no pregnancy, no conception.
12 Even if they bring up children, I will bereave
them until not one is left. Woe to them indeed
when I turn away from them!
13 I have seen Ephraim, planted like Tyre in a
pleasant place; yet Ephraim will bring out his sons
to be slaughtered.[4]
14 Give them, LORD, what will You give them? Give
them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are
dry.
15 Every evil of theirs began in Gilgal; it was there
that I came to hate them. For their wicked deeds I
will drive them from My house and love them no
longer; every one of their leaders is a rebel.
16 Ephraim is struck down; their root is withered,
and they bear no fruit. Even if they bear children,
I will put to death the precious offspring of their
womb.
17 My God will reject them because they have not
listened to Him; they will be wanderers among the
nations.

1 Food in a house of mourning was unclean (Numbers 19:14; Deuteronomy 26:14).
2 See Judges 19–21.
3 See Numbers 25:1–5.
4 The Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.

Chapter 10

Hosea 10 compares Israel to a luxuriant vine: the more fruit it bore, the more altars it built and the finer its sacred pillars. Their heart is false, so the LORD will break down their altars. They will say they have no king because they did not fear the LORD; they make empty promises, and lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds. The calf-idol of Beth-aven will be carried off to Assyria, Samaria's king will drift away like a splinter on the water, and the people will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" Israel has sinned since the days of Gibeah. Ephraim was a trained heifer that loved to thresh; now they must sow righteousness and reap loyal kindness, for it is time to seek the LORD. But they have ploughed wickedness and eaten the fruit of lies, and their king will be utterly cut off.

1 Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The
more his fruit increased, the more altars he built;
the better his land became, the finer the sacred
pillars he made.
2 Their heart is false; now they must bear their
guilt. The LORD will break down their altars and
destroy their sacred pillars.
3 Then they will say, "We have no king, because we
did not fear the LORD. And what could a king do
for us?"
4 They speak mere words, swearing false oaths and
making covenants; so lawsuits spring up like

poisonous weeds in the furrows of a field.

5 The people of Samaria fear for the calf-idol of Beth-aven. Its people mourn over it, and its idolatrous priests, who rejoiced over its glory, wail because it has been taken from them into exile.

6 It too will be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim will be put to shame, and Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel.

7 Samaria's king will drift off like a splinter on the face of the water.

8 The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; thorns and thistles will grow over their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"[1]

9 Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned, Israel, and there you have remained. Will not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?

10 When I please, I will discipline them; nations will be gathered against them when they are bound for their double iniquity.

11 Ephraim was a trained heifer that loved to thresh, so I spared her fair neck. But now I will put a yoke on Ephraim; Judah must plough, and Jacob must harrow for himself.

12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap the fruit of loyal kindness. Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, until He comes and rains righteousness on you.

13 You have ploughed wickedness and reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in your many warriors,

14 the roar of battle will rise against your people, and all your fortresses will be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to pieces with their children.[2]

15 So it will be done to you, Bethel, because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be utterly cut off.

1 Jesus echoes these words in Luke 23:30; compare Revelation 6:16.

2 This event is not otherwise known; Shalman may be Shalmaneser V of Assyria.

Chapter 11

Hosea 11 reveals the LORD's love for Israel. When Israel was a child He loved him and called His son out of Egypt, but the more He called, the further they went, sacrificing to the Baals. It was He who taught Ephraim to walk and took them in His arms, leading them with cords of human kindness and bands of love, yet they did not know that He healed them. They will return to Egypt and Assyria will rule them, for they refuse to repent. Yet His heart recoils within Him: how can He give Ephraim up or make him like Admah and Zeboiim? He will not carry out His fierce anger, for He is God and not man, the Holy One among them. They will follow the LORD when He roars like a lion, and His children will come trembling from the west, from Egypt and Assyria, and He will settle them in their homes.

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.[1]

2 The more they were called, the more they went away from Me. They sacrificed to the Baals and burned incense to carved images.[2]

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms, but they did not realise that I had healed them.

4 I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to his cheek, and I bent down to feed them.

5 Will they not return to the land of Egypt? Assyria will be their king, because they refuse to repent.

6 A sword will whirl through their cities, destroy the bars of their gates and consume them because of their schemes.

7 My people are bent on turning away from Me. Though they call to the Most High, He will not raise them up at all.

8 Ephraim, how could I abandon you? Israel, how could I surrender you? Could I treat you as I did Admah, or deal with you as with Zeboiim? My heart turns within Me; My pity is all aflame.[3]

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

10 They will follow the LORD; He will roar like a lion. When He roars, His children will come trembling from the west.

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

12 Ephraim has surrounded Me with lies, the house
of Israel with deceit. And Judah still wanders from
God, even from the faithful Holy One.[4]

1 Matthew 2:15 quotes this verse of Jesus, the true Son who relives Israel's story.

2 'From Me' follows the Greek; the Hebrew reads 'from them'.

3 Admah and Zeboiim were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 29:23).

4 In Hebrew this verse is 12:1, and 12:1–14 are numbered 12:2–15. The meaning of the last sentence is uncertain.

Chapter 12

Hosea 12 accuses Ephraim of feeding on the wind and chasing the east wind, multiplying lies and violence, making a treaty with Assyria and sending oil to Egypt. The LORD has a case against Judah and will punish Jacob for his ways. In the womb Jacob grasped his brother's heel, and as a man he struggled with God; he wept and pleaded with the angel and met God at Bethel. So Israel must return to God, keep loyal kindness and justice and wait for Him continually. But Ephraim is like a merchant with dishonest scales who boasts that he has grown rich without sin. The LORD, who brought them out of Egypt, will make them live in tents again. He spoke through the prophets and led Israel out of Egypt by a prophet, but Ephraim has bitterly provoked Him, and the Lord will repay him for his contempt.

1 Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east
wind all day long. He multiplies lies and violence;
he makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil
to Egypt.

2 The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah;
He will punish Jacob according to his ways and
repay him according to his deeds.

3 In the womb he grasped his brother's heel, and
in his manhood he struggled with God.[1]

4 He struggled with the angel and prevailed; he
wept and pleaded for his favour. He found Him at
Bethel, and there He spoke with us,

5 the LORD God of Armies, the LORD is His name!

6 So you must return to your God; maintain loyal
kindness and justice, and wait for your God
continually.

7 The trader keeps false scales in his hand and
takes pleasure in cheating.[2]

8 Ephraim says, "I have indeed become rich; I have
found wealth for myself. In all my labours they will
find in me no iniquity that is sin."

9 But I am the LORD your God from the land of
Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the
days of the appointed feast.

10 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied
visions and spoke parables through the prophets.

11 Is Gilead wicked? They are worthless indeed. In
Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars will be like
heaps of stones in the furrows of a field.

12 Jacob ran away to the land of Aram; there Israel
laboured to win a wife, and kept sheep to pay for
her.

13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from
Egypt, and by a prophet he was kept.

14 Ephraim has provoked bitter anger; so his Lord
will leave his bloodguilt on him and repay him for
his contempt.

1 See Genesis 25:26 and 32:24–30. 'Jacob' sounds like 'heel', and 'Israel' like 'he struggles with God'.

2 'Merchant' is literally 'Canaanite', a word that came to mean 'trader'.

Chapter 13

Hosea 13 recalls that when Ephraim spoke, people trembled, but he became guilty through Baal and died. Now they sin more and more, making silver idols and kissing calves. So they will vanish like morning mist, chaff and smoke. The LORD has been their God since Egypt, their only Saviour, who cared for them in the wilderness; but when they were satisfied they forgot Him. So He will meet them like a lion, a leopard, a bear robbed of her cubs. Where now is their king to save them? Ephraim's guilt is stored up, and he is like an unwise child who will not come to birth. Yet the LORD will ransom them from Sheol: "Where, O death, are your plagues?" An east wind from the LORD will dry up Ephraim's spring, and Samaria will bear her guilt.

1 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he
was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty
through Baal and died.
2 Now they sin more and more and make for
themselves cast images, idols skilfully made from
their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen.
People say of them, “Those who offer human
sacrifice kiss calves!”[1]
3 Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like
the dew that vanishes early, like chaff swirling
from a threshing floor, like smoke from a window.
4 But I am the LORD your God from the land of
Egypt; you are to know no God but Me, for there
is no Saviour except Me.
5 It was I who cared for you in the desert, in a land
of scorching heat.
6 When they had pasture, they were satisfied;
when they were satisfied, their hearts became
proud, and so they forgot Me.[2]
7 So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I
will lurk beside the road.
8 I will meet them like a bear robbed of her cubs
and tear open their chests. There I will devour
them like a lioness; a wild beast will rip them
apart.
9 You are destroyed, Israel, because you are
against Me, your helper.
10 So where is this king of yours who could rescue
you in your towns, and the rulers you asked for
when you said, “Give me a king and princes”?
11 In My anger I gave you a king, and in My wrath I
took him away.
12 Ephraim’s guilt is wrapped up and kept; his sin
is laid away in store.
13 The pains of childbirth come upon him, but he is
an unwise son; when it is time, he does not
present himself at the opening of the womb.
14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?
Shall I redeem them from death? Where, O death,
are your plagues? Where, O Sheol, is your
destruction? Compassion is hidden from My eyes.[3]
15 Though he flourishes among his brothers, an
east wind will come, a wind from the LORD rising
from the wilderness. His spring will run dry and
his fountain will fail; it will plunder his treasury of
every precious thing.
16 Samaria must pay for her guilt, for she has
defied her God. Her people will be cut down by
the sword, their infants smashed to the ground,
their expectant mothers torn open.[4]

1 Or ‘Let those who sacrifice kiss the calves!’ The Hebrew is uncertain.
2 Compare Deuteronomy 8:11–14.
3 Or ‘I will ransom them ... I will redeem them’. Paul quotes the Greek form of these words in 1 Corinthians 15:55, ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’
4 In Hebrew this verse is 14:1, and 14:1–9 are numbered 14:2–10.

Chapter 14

Hosea 14 ends with a call to return. Israel is to return to the LORD and take words with them, asking Him to take away all iniquity and accept what is good, and promising no longer to trust in Assyria or horses or call the work of their hands “our gods”, for in Him the orphan finds compassion. The LORD answers that He will heal their faithlessness and love them freely, for His anger has turned away. He will be like the dew to Israel; they will blossom like the lily, take root like the cedars of Lebanon and be fragrant like Lebanon. Ephraim will have nothing more to do with idols; the LORD is like a flourishing cypress, and Israel’s fruit comes from Him. The wise will understand these things, for the ways of the LORD are right.

1 Return, Israel, to the LORD your God, for you
have stumbled because of your iniquity.
2 Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say
to Him: “Take away all iniquity and accept what is
good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips.[1]
3 Assyria will not save us; we will not ride on
horses. We will never again say ‘our gods’ to the
work of our hands, for in You the orphan finds
compassion.”
4 I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them
freely, for My anger has turned away from them.
5 To Israel I will be like the dew; he will bloom like
a lily and strike his roots deep like Lebanon’s
cedars.
6 His shoots will spread out; his splendour will be
like the olive tree and his fragrance like Lebanon.
7 Those who live in his shade will return; they will
grow grain and blossom like the vine, and his

renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is
I who answer him and watch over him. I am like a
flourishing cypress; your fruit comes from Me.

9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these
things; whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous
walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

1 ‘The fruit of our lips’ follows the Greek and Syriac; the Hebrew reads ‘bulls of our lips’. Compare Hebrews 13:15.