

**God's Lessons from History
God's History Lessons on the Degeneracy of the Northern Kingdom – Israel in Crisis
Hosea 11:12 – 12:14**

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Welcome to another non-chapter, chapter kick off. With the opening we receive in Hosea 11:12, per the Hebrew, we begin the last section of the book of Hosea. One would hope we could stay in the future but that future, which will take place, is colored by the rebellion of the present.

We begin with a formal accusation from YAHWEH and receive an announcement of judgement.

This is not good news for Israel and Judah will also get wrapped into this before it is all done.

The beauty of this section of scripture is that the Lord is at the center of it (Hosea 12:5 & 6). His grace is available, His love is available, but His attributes do not change. God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Malachi will clearly point out that will also be a reason why the nation has not been wiped out. "Because I am the Lord, your God, and I do not change." (Lexham Press 2020, Malachi 3:6)

Because God does not change, there is a present urgent need to repent and turn away from their sin and to do so immediately.

Israel is still chasing the wind and Judah is in the process of joining.

Hosea 11:12–12:2

“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. Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is brought to Egypt. The LORD also has a case against Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.” (NASB 2020)

Things are not looking too good.

God is now speaking and the accusation from Him is a repeat of what has already been said about the Northern Kingdom in Hosea 7:3, 9:2 and 10:13. Deception.

Deception has turned into a repeating theme for them and reminds me of a statement Jesus said about the religious leaders of Israel 700 plus years later when He confronts them in the Temple.

The religious leaders that Jesus confronted suffered from the same ailment. They have a problem which prevents them from hearing, and it is the same as the diagnosis here in Hosea.

This is the same reason why many today cannot hear as well. It has roots in Genesis 3 and expands into a serious spiritual problem that if left untreated, leads to eternal consequences.

If we are not following Jesus, then we are following someone else. We may say we aren't, but the truth of the matter is in what Jesus said as part of His bridge building efforts with the Pharisees.

John 8:43–44

“Why don't you understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot accept my teaching. You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The problem for Israel, they were in the flesh and living that way with no interest in the things of God. The Pharisees were there and that is the condition of unbelievers today. Deception comes naturally. Paul's diagnosis.

A preview of the section's main characters is a helpful orientation to the passage. “Those who are spiritual” is a reference to all believers; if not all Christians are “mature,” all have the conditions for such growth, thanks to the Spirit. “The person without the Spirit” refers to non-Christians. (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 135)

Spiritual = Believer, but the natural person, everyone else; not a believer.

1 Corinthians 2:11–16

“For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (ESV)

The world cannot hear what God has to say because they are wholly incapable, without serious help from the Holy Spirit, from hearing at all. We lament about the things taking place today, but it is the world being the world.

We have the answer and we have been given the mission to take the gospel with us everywhere we go.

Matthew 28:19

“Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” (ISV)

Israel could not hear because they were no longer attuned to the appropriate frequency having intentionally perverted the listening device being deceived by the enemy and then deceiving themselves.

This idea of deception will be historically traced in this chapter back to their father, Jacob. The kids continue to act up like dad, and YAHWEH is done with it. The source though is in Genesis 3.

Hosea 11:12

“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.” (NASB 2020)

The northern kingdom are liars and deceivers. They lie to God, themselves and to others and truly are no better than the one they are following at this moment in time, the fallen ones.

Lying and deceit are the terms which he applies, not so much to the idolatry which they preferred to the worship of Jehovah...as to the hypocrisy with which Israel, in spite of its idolatry, claimed to be still the people of Jehovah, pretended to worship Jehovah under the image of a calf, and turned right into wrong. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 94)

Rather than coming to God His way, they tried an alternate easier route. This sounds much like one of the mantras we hear today, there are many roads to God. No, there isn't.

John 14:6

“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (ISV)

Jesus made it crystal clear. If anyone alludes to or says there is more than just one way to heaven, they are lying. AC/DC was correct, most of our culture today truly is on the highway to hell. Deception is still the theme.

In Israel, those who were supposed to know better, the “priests” misled the people. This appears to be more the case in churches today as well. The problem comes from how seriously one takes the Bible.

Dr. George Barna has just released results from the American Worldview Inventory 2022 that has sobering findings for the church in this nation. He released that “a new nationwide survey among a representative sample of America’s Christian pastors shows that a large majority of those pastors do not possess a biblical worldview. In fact, just slightly more than a third (37%) have a biblical worldview and the majority—62%—possess a hybrid worldview known as Syncretism.” (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2022, Release #5: Shocking Results Concerning the Worldview of Christian Pastors 2022)

Reading through the report is sobering. We like to point fingers at the Israel of Hosea and say we would not see that happen here with spiritual leadership, but that is a majority problem now. Not everyone teaches through the Bible as we do.

Not everyone holds scripture as seriously as we do.

Pray for us. The time is short, and the pressures are not getting any less.

For many churches though, Ichabod should probably be written on the door.

Percentage of Christian Pastors that Possess a Biblical Worldview, by Denominational Family

Denominational Family	Percent with a Biblical Worldview
All Christian Pastors	37%
Non-denominational, independent	57%
Evangelical Protestant	51%
Charismatic/Pentecostal	37%
Mainline Protestant	32%
Holiness	28%
Traditionally Black Protestant	9%
Roman Catholic	6%
Source: American Worldview Inventory 2022, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; N=1,000 Christian pastors; conducted February-March 2022.	

(Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2022, Release #6: Only Half of Evangelical pastors Possess a Biblical worldview: Incidence Even Lower for Most Denominations 2022)

Back to our text. What about Judah? Their kings weren't all bad like up north, right? Still coming for Judah is their worst king, Manasseh, but not yet. They will experience God's grace because of Godly leadership. Revival will take place under Hezekiah and later with Josiah. But Judah is dealing with King Ahaz as Hosea writes this and he was a miserably wicked king. Thus, "...Judah is still unruly against God, Even against the Holy One who is faithful." Hosea 11:12b, NASB 2020)

The word translated unruly is the Hebrew word רָעָה (od) "still; first; again; still more; duration; remainder, rest." (Lexham Press 2017)

I am not a Hebrew scholar but looking at this word and all the possible meanings for it, unruly, as a translation choice, is a bit of a stretch. A better translation would be "Judah is continuing with God..."

The Aramaic version of this verse is as follows.

Hosea 12:1 (Targum)

"The house of Ephraim have multiplied lies before me, and the house of Israel, deceit. But the people of the house of Judah were fervent in worship until the people of God were exiled from their land, and they who worshipped before me in the Sanctuary were called a holy people. Thus were they established." (Cathcart, Maher and McNamara 1990, Hosea 12:1)

The Tanakh has the following but also provides a note saying that the meaning of the word can be uncertain here.

Hosea 12:1

"Ephraim surrounds Me with deceit, The House of Israel with guile. (But Judah stands firm with God And is faithful to the Holy One.)" (Jewish Publication Society 1985, Hosea 12:1)

The sense of the verse is that Ephraim has failed, Judah is remaining somewhat faithful at this time but there are issues. Thus, the NASB 2020 use of the word "unruly" is not entirely lost per the translators of the NASB. If you take the view that under Ahaz, that Judah was straying towards Baal and Molech, then that word choice makes sense.

Judah still had a few good kings in the southern kingdom, but there were none in the northern kingdom. Some of the kings made a profession, but they were using lies and deceit. (McGee 1997, 652)

Our culture today is in the same place. Professions of faith abound among those who are in political leadership, but is there fruit? I will leave that for you to determine. How bad are the lies in Israel?
Hosea 12:1

“Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is brought to Egypt.” (NASB 2020)

Earlier we heard that Israel sowed the wind and reaped tornados. Here that image continues stating that they feed on wind. On top of that, they are chasing after a hot wind from the east that blows off the desert. That is a reference to their so-called alliance with Assyria that does not end so well for them. All I can ask about that is, “why?” No one in their right mind would want a wind like that. Right mind is the operative word.

Deuteronomy 28:28–29

“The LORD will strike you with madness, blindness, and panic. You will grope around in broad daylight like a blind person groping in the darkness, but you will not find your way. You will be oppressed and robbed continually, and no one will come to save you.” (NLT)

The leadership is not in their right mind due to their rebellion and sin and as such, are incapable of making wise decisions. By creating alliances with those who did not know YAHWEH, it meant that Israel would ultimately have to acknowledge the existence of the gods of that foreign trading partner.

They cut a deal with Assyria and then turned around and bribed Egypt with olive oil. “Courting two enemies at the same time was not only an act of disloyalty to God but an act of political madness which was destined to bring down the wrath of both nations on them.” (Hubbard 1989, 212)

The insane foreign policy decisions being made in the closing days of Israel sound like the ones being made in western culture today.

Nations today are cutting deals with countries that want to destroy them, but those countries have oil. The bottom line, they get the oil, and they get the ever-larger number of immigrants looking for a new life who simply take their old life with them to include their lifestyle and religion.

The same fallen ones who were behind the insanity of Northern Kingdom foreign policy then, are behind the same foreign policy seen today in places throughout the world. The goal of these entities is not one for our benefit.

Israel is not the only one playing with fire.

Hosea 12:2

“The LORD also has a case against Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.” (NASB 2020)

And there drops the other shoe. It is clear, a court case is also being drawn up against Judah as well. Here though, the Lord will formulate the case differently and tie it into a history lesson about Jacob. His kids down south just have not learned from what they see happening up north and the judgement that is headed their way is simply a just response to their deeds. They act like their daddy before Bethel.

Why is Judah being included? The covenant was one that was cut with the entire nation, and at one level or another, they have all failed. Not only has Israel played fast and loose with foreign policy, so has Judah.

In fact, the prophet Isaiah, at one point (Isaiah 31), made a public show of revealing publicly, ongoing negotiations which were top secret at the time in order to show the King Hezekiah administration the folly of what they were doing. At the time Hosea is writing this, King Ahaz has allied Judah with Assyria against Israel and Damascus.

This began a problem for Judah that just kept coming back over and over again. So here in verse 3, YAHWEH adds Judah into the indictment He has launched against Israel, because the next phrase, ‘And will punish Jacob according to his ways’ is an all-inclusive phrase that takes the north and the south and treats them as one unit, Jacob.

The use of that name is intentional. It is meant to make one recall all the issues and problems generated by this man before he fully realized who YAHWEH truly was. If God can save Jacob, He can save anyone.

Israel has a problem with lying and deception, so did Jacob.

Judah also has the same issues that Jacob had. To help us understand it better, we get a quick history lesson from YAHWEH about Jacob, and we quickly see that yes, the two nations are like him and at the same time, are nothing like him.

Hosea 12:3–5

“In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his mature strength he contended with God. Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and implored His favor. He found Him at Bethel, And there He spoke with us, And the LORD, the God of armies, The LORD is His name.” (NASB 2020)

Jacob’s name means “he will supplant; he that supplants; he that follows after; a heeler; one who trips up; takes hold by the land; supplanter; a detainer.” (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 118)

Jacob, the heel catcher, the con artist, the deceiver, the thief, the poor excuse for a parent. Jacob here is held up as an example for his descendants. His birth gave us a hint of the kind of person he would be as he eventually deceived his father and stole the birthright and blessing from his brother. Then he went on the lam for a couple of decades to escape his brother. It was then he finally grew up “and in his mature strength he contended with God.”

He reached a turning point in his life and returned home and to the Lord.

When he faced the prospect of death at Esau’s hand on his return to the land of Canaan he wrestled with God, refusing to let go till he received a blessing (Gen. 32:22–32). Later at Bethel, the site of his dream years before (cf. Gen. 28:10–22), God appeared to Jacob again. God changed his name to Israel, blessed him, and renewed His covenant promise (cf. Gen. 35:1–14). (Chisholm 1985, 1404)

That Jacob “prevailed” in that dramatic wrestling struggle shows that he won; the other permitted him to win. The Genesis detail shows how Jacob won with God. He won when he saw the face of God during the match (32:30), and when God changed the face of Esau the next day to be not murderous but merciful, as the face of God (33:10). Esau was merciful by the Lord’s inclining within him, in answer to Jacob’s urgency.

Actually Hosea surveys Jacob’s winning in two phases.

1. Winning at Peniel when he “prevailed.”
2. Winning at Bethel (Gen. 28, 35). In both scenarios, God blessed Jacob. The first was when he was leaving the promised land, the other was upon returning to it. God reaffirmed His covenant blessing for Jacob and his people in each instance. (Rosscup 2008, 1304)

The language used here is very revealing, Jacob was not winning the wrestling match with the preincarnate Christ, he finally realized who it is he was struggling with, and he knew he would never win the match. Yet he did win, he won by letting go of self. He was scared out of his mind for his family and his life, even though he had already received promises from God.

Jacob is brought to tears at this realization, and he asks. It also implies that in the encounter with YAHWEH, He met with the divine council. He saw the face of God in the angel who is the preincarnate Christ.

He's telling us that Jacob wrestled with God himself, physically embodied—and identifies God with the angel who said he was the God of Bethel.

We've seen this "confusion" of God with an angel before. It is deliberate. The point is not that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is a mere angel. The reverse is the case. This angel is Yahweh. (Heiser 2015)

Jesus will later clear this up for His disciples.

John 14:9

““Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?” Jesus asked him. “The person who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (ISV)

All of this is brought up by YAHWEH as an object lesson. Jacob did this, he returned, you guys should too.

Anyone familiar with the story would know about all the problems and issues caused by Jacob's own sin and his fast and loose lifestyle. Issues that did not become corrected until he turned completely to the Lord in faith. He did pass them onto his family though thus the need for his family to now “get it.”

This is where the two kingdoms need to go. The one Jacob turned to has not changed His name.

Hosea 12:6

“So as for you, return to your God, Maintain kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.” (NASB 2020)

God's people must learn from Jacob who realized he was strong when he was weak and relied on the Lord. Paul made reference to this as well.

2 Corinthians 12:10

“That is why I take such pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for the Messiah's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (ISV)

If they would learn from this history lesson, then the result would be a change in behavior such as seen in Jacob. “If they are truly Jacob's children, they should respond spiritually just as he had done when the LORD commanded him ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you’ (Gen. 31:3)...Renewed personal commitment to the covenant King would be evidenced by maintenance of the sort of conduct he stipulated in his law.” (Mackay 2012, 326-327)

But that is not the case.

Hosea 12:7–8

“A merchant, in whose hands are fraudulent balances, Loves to exploit. And Ephraim said, “I have certainly become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No wrongdoing, which would be sin.”” (NASB 2020)

God's assessment along with a statement from Israel is the reality rather than an exercise of repentance and return.

Even though the lesson from history is one Israel should take note of and return to the Lord as Jacob did, they are instead convinced that their “abilities” are superior to anything they could ever obtain from YAHWEH. God compares them to crooked businessmen.

The word translated merchant though points to a much deeper problem with the people and where the comparison is really going.

It is the word כְּנָעַן (Knaan) – Canaan.

For ‘Canaan’ is the word translated here ‘A trader’, branding Ephraim a true successor to the old corrupt inhabitants of the land. In cold print, his bland assurance that his extorted riches carry no guilt—or none to speak of—and even put him above the law, is patently absurd. Yet human attitudes, which venerate success and, at a safe distance, admire a clever rogue, still help to build up this cocksureness in the man who sells his soul to the present. (Kidner 1976, 110)

It was simply business. It was bad enough to worship the false gods, but the straying away from YAHWEH has become manifested in the nation doing business just like the world does business. Success in Israel no longer involved the Lord but now equated to riches and a good business sense. To ensure this continued “blessing,” they had perverted their worship to include sexual deviancy of all types and embraced infanticide as a way of dealing with the unwanted hindrances to their pursuit of the good life.

The people had mistakenly understood the prosperity under Jeroboam II as a divine favour which contributed to their moral decay. Verse 9(8) quotes Ephraim, who claims to be honest in his acquisition (יָגַע) of wealth, but the rhetorical context clarifies the claim to be illusory, for Ephraim indulges in immorality, religious infidelity and in the oppression of others. The pun of און and עון indicates that Ephraim’s wealth is inseparable from his iniquity. Ephraim has found (מָצָא) fortune instead of finding (מָצָא) the God of Bethel (cf. v. 5). (Laldinsuah 2015, 257)

This is an ironic way for Hosea to speak. In effect, it says that Israel has lost its identity and has adopted the character of its Canaanite neighbors. The character portrayed by Hosea is not attractive. Israel as Canaanite trader is dishonest, oppressive, boastful, rich, and deluded. (Birch 1997, 108)

Once again, we see comparisons between the culture of Israel of the time of Hosea and our culture today. Our culture calls for a complete separation of church and state to the point that God is no longer seen in the marketplace. Business is not to be done by “the Book” but rather by whatever makes a buck. The result of this is evident in the marketplace today and shows up as discrimination, greed, oppression, controlled shortages, intentional manipulation of supply and demand, egalitarianism, ageism and the acceptance and pandering to lifestyles that are good for business but not for morality.

It is accepted behavior in many industries today that when senior management changes, all those middle managers who worked their way up in the business are expendable as new management brings in their people to take over. Business is all about making a buck and it does not matter who is stepped on in the process.

As an executive, I have been caught up in the “house cleaning” of a healthy operation more than once and I was also the house cleaner a couple of times too.

The pressure to compromise the word for a believer is there.

We always ask for prayer for those who are Pastors and teachers but pray for those who are in business leadership too. Whether in working in government or in the private sector, the pressure to conform to the world and take advantage of people is just as real as what the leaders in Israel were experiencing.

It seems we have gravitated to the same metrics of success as they had.

Like Israel, we also equate riches and prosperity as God’s favor. But it isn’t. For Israel, judgement is coming. For our culture, we are in the last hours of the last days and events seem to be accelerating and converging. We need to be looking up.

Revelation 3:11

"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown." (NET 2nd ed.)

YAHWEH has a response to the self-aggrandizing statements made by those in the northern kingdom.

More history.

Hosea 12:9–10

"But I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, As in the days of the appointed festival. I have also spoken to the prophets, And I provided many visions, And through the prophets I spoke in parables." (NASB 2020)

God is not deceived by the lies of Israel. Again, He is God, unlike the gods of the nations, who have been embraced by Israel, He is not a God who can be negotiated with and approached any old way. He is not blind and does not wink at sin. Sin must be dealt with, preferably by repentance, but if not, then a fulfillment of the curse provisions made in the covenant.

YAHWEH walks the nation back to the ultimate display of deliverance, the exodus from Egypt. It is being used here as a reference point for the display of grace He gave to the nation to free them from the slavery of Egypt. They need to see grace in order to understand what they are rejecting. God has just accused His own people of acting like or worse than a Canaanite.

Israel may have become a Canaanite but Yahweh is still Yahweh! Israel is sinning against the God who had redeemed him by the blood of the lamb. It is a serious matter to sin against one's redemption. (Eaton 1996, 179)

The Lord has taken them back to when He first redeemed them and led them from Egypt; can He take them back to Egypt again? Hardly, they have been redeemed. They have "profaned the blood of the covenant." I am reminded of what it says in Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:29

"How much greater punishment do you think that person deserves who has contempt for the Son of God, and profanes the blood of the covenant that made him holy, and insults the Spirit of grace?" (NET 2nd ed.)

The nation has done this intentionally. We see this same thing happening today with many who used to name the name of Jesus Christ being sucked back into the world. This has accelerated since the pandemic.

Peter talked about this problem.

2 Peter 2:20–22

"For if after they have escaped the filthy things of the world through the rich knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again get entangled in them and succumb to them, their last state has become worse for them than their first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. They are illustrations of this true proverb: "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow, after washing herself, wallows in the mire.'" (NET 2nd ed.)

Jesus framed it as well.

Luke 9:62

"Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" (NET 2nd ed.)

The redeeming blood can only be shed once! So God does not take them back to Egypt and have the lamb die for their redemption again. But he can take them back to the wilderness! Their 'Canaanite' way of life must end. They will lose the privilege of residence in houses and will go back to living in tents, just as they do when they keep the Festival of Tabernacles. (Eaton 1996, 179)

Being told they will go back to living in tents is also another way of saying that they are going into exile. The houses they worked hard for, will belong to someone else now.

God brought Israel out of Egypt through the Prophet Moses. Throughout their history up to the time of Hosea, He has sent prophet after prophet to them to give them a hint of things to come as well as to call them back to a relationship with Him.

They have been encouraged, warned, and admonished.

Israel, however, has not allowed itself to be admonished and warned, but has given itself up to sin and idolatry, the punishment of which cannot be delayed. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 98)

Here is a scary thought, God kept track of the various prophecies that they heard. That means He also is keeping track of all the teachings and sermons we have heard as well. And I went to Bible school.

The thought that God keeps track is sobering. I have heard a lot of messages over the years that had appeals for action from God's word, and not all of them did I follow immediately.

As believers, we know that we are destined to spend eternity with the Lord, but there is also a job evaluation in our futures as well. It is called the bema seat of Christ. It is for believers only. It is not a determination of eternal destination, that issue is settled, it is about rewards contingent upon faithfulness.

Paul gave a preview of it.

2 Corinthians 5:10

"For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life." (GNB)

The bema is the place where Christ will reward those who have finished the race and obeyed the rules and where He will withhold reward from those who have been unfaithful. It's called the judgment seat "of Christ" because Jesus will be the judge. (Hitchcock 2012, 208)

God will hold the people of Israel accountable for what they have heard. After being rejected by the leadership, Jesus moved to using parables as His teaching tool. The reason was simple, in His grace and love, He was blocking the message from those who should know better but had blinded themselves by ignoring the truth and believing lies.

God loved the pharisees and by them not getting it, it was not something to be confronted with later at the Great White Throne as something they should have taken action on.

Matthew 13:10–13

"Then the disciples came to Jesus and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?" Jesus answered, "The knowledge about the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. For the person who has something will be given more, so that he will have more than enough; but the person who has nothing will have taken away from him even the little he has. The reason I use parables in talking to them is that they look, but do not see, and they listen, but do not hear or understand." (GNB)

God brings up two cities as examples.

Hosea 12:11

“Is there injustice in Gilead? Certainly they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, Yes, their altars are like stone heaps Beside the furrows of a field.” (NASB 2020)

Here God brings up two cities to show how pervasive the problem is in Israel. He brings up Gilead and Gilgal again.

Gilead was used as an example of recent crime taking place in the nation back in Hosea 6:8. Gilgal has been referred to earlier as an example in Hosea 9:15 where God’s people entered the land but were not committed to covenant as they should be.

Like most of Hosea’s references to places (e.g. 5:1f.; 6:7ff.; 10:9), these allusions to Gilead and Gilgal are vague because they presuppose a contemporary’s knowledge of what was going on there. Hosea uses Gilead as the name of a town or cultic site; it is in parallel with Gilgal, and is used for a particular place in 6:8 where it is said to be the residence of evildoers. (Mays 1969, 168)

We do not have the entire story on the evil taking place in these two locations. “God names actual places, far and near, that are ripening for judgment, and pours fine scorn on pious superstitions, punning on the falsely venerated Gilgal with the disrespectful plural of gal, ‘a rubble heap’.” (Kidner 1976, 112)

Those sites which Israel thought were important and they constructed altars at, the altars will be destroyed to the point that they will be rubble in the field that needs to be picked up and moved out of the way, placed in a heap at the edge of the field. They will become a worthless mound of stones.

The number of the pagan altars at Gilgal was as great as the piles of stones that the farmers gathered beside their furrows. These altars would become simply piles of stones. There is a play on the name “Gilgal,” which sounds like the Hebrew word gallim, meaning “pile of stones.” (Constable 2003, Ho 12:11)

YAHWEH goes back to the history lesson.

Hosea 12:12–14

“Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep. But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, And by a prophet he was protected. Ephraim has provoked God to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his guilt for bloodshed on him And bring his disgrace back to him.” (NASB 2020)

Once again God’s grace is recalled showing up as events in the life of Jacob. The first event is Jacob deceiving his dad and stealing the birth rite and blessing from his brother then having to run for his life with nothing to Aram and a type of slavery.

This is compared to the nation of Israel being held as slaves in Egypt.

Aram and Egypt are both foreign countries which served initially as a place of refuge in the life of Jacob. He was a fugitive in Aram on the lam from his brother meanwhile in obedience to God, he took his family to Egypt to escape famine.

This would be the first level that a Jew reading this would pick up on. The second is the involuntary servitude, slavery, that Jacob did in order to win his bride and he did it twice because his employer and his first wife deceived him.

The nation in Egypt thought they were safe, but they were lied to and turned into slaves.

The third level has to deal with the intent to leave Jacob, and the nation, with nothing. The intent of Laban was to use Jacob to amass wealth for himself at the expense of Jacob. Jacob was not to get anything for himself, but God delivered Jacob instead creating the circumstances that Jacob not only

became a wealthy man, but also made him onerous to Laban who wanted him gone. In Egypt, the nation would also leave with wealth as God delivered them through plagues.

Moses is the one who God used to bring Israel out of Egypt. God rescued and preserved his bride by the use of prophets. The climax of the argument then is not that Ephraim has followed in the footsteps of Jacob, though that is surely part of the story, but that Yahweh was again ready to work through a prophet. He had used Moses, as the prophet of the exodus, and Samuel, as the prophet of the settlement in Canaan by whom Israel was preserved. Now another prophet held centre-stage, Hosea, whom the Israelites had previously deemed mad (9:7). (Hubbard 1989, 222-223)

The message, Jacob was protected by the grace of God in both places. The nation was also protected by the grace of God as He went through the process of redeeming them from Egypt. They were further protected by God through His prophets beginning with Moses up to and including Hosea and even though they are facing judgement, God's grace is evident because the message comes via a prophet.

There is a problem though, God has done all of these great things on behalf of His people who attributed none of it to Him.

By placing Hosea as a prophet in line with Moses (cf. Amos 2:10–12), the oracle warns that the people will not survive unless they take heed of the prophetic warning, acknowledge their failure and return to Yahweh. Rejecting Hosea is tantamount to rejecting Moses. Yet Ephraim shows no signs of transformation, but has continued to provoke (וַיְבִזּוּ) Yahweh. (Laldinsuah 2015, 259)

Hosea 12:14

"Ephraim has provoked God to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his guilt for bloodshed on him And bring his disgrace back to him." (NASB 2020)

Ephraim has provoked YHWH, and unlike Jacob shows no signs of transformation. Perhaps the fact that Ephraim is not more like Jacob in the sense of waiting expectantly on God and in working toward reconciliation is the essential case that YHWH makes in 12:2–14. (Dearman 2010, 315)

In spite of all the grace shown to Israel and the loving care provided by YAHWEH on their behalf, they continued with their idol worship and attributed it to demons and fallen angels. So here in verse 14 is the verdict of the judge.

Hosea 12:14b

"So his Lord will leave his guilt for bloodshed on him and bring disgrace back to him." (NASB 2020)

They have done the opposite of what Jacob did. The nation continues to openly provoke the Lord through their idol worship.

Because their response to YAHWEH was to become more like the Canaanites, the very people they pushed out of the land under Joshua, they are being held guilty by the judge. "Israel's cultic perversion deserves the sentence of death. It is a shameful reproach against the Lord (Hosea uses 'adōnayw only here), so the one who rules Israel will turn the reproach back on the guilty as a revelation of his lordship." (Mays 1969, 171)

Yet to come up in this final section, we have a picture of impending doom, but we will close out Hosea by experiencing God's grace and blessing yet to come.

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