

**The Buck Stops Here  
God Holds Each of Us Accountable  
Hosea 5**

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In chapter 4 we dealt with the indictment against the nation and then specific charges being brought against the leadership of Israel. More specifically, the spiritual leadership.

An important point to remember, even though the spiritual leadership was apostate, they were still being held accountable by God for the misleading of the nation into idolatry away from the worship of YAHWEH. For those of us who teach, we must take notice of this and pray that we always remain faithful to the Word. Yes, we are under grace today, but accountability remains.

Now we arrive at chapter 5 and the story is still about the problems being caused by the sin of Israel, the northern kingdom. This is not a happy section of the Word. Now though, the Lord expands His focus, and He brings the focus onto the King of Israel.

With the words “Hear ye this,” the reproof of the sins of Israel makes a new start, and is specially addressed to the priests and the king’s house, i.e., the king and his court, to announce to the leaders of the nation the punishment that will follow their apostasy from God and their idolatry, by which they have plunged the people and the kingdom headlong into destruction. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 57)

The order which the Lord will follow:

1. The religious professionals and those who think they are
2. The people of Israel
3. The political and business leadership of Israel

By application, this is how the Lord would address every nation.

There is also incredibly good news in the chapter as well. Yes, sin must be dealt with and the consequences of sin for Israel will be severe, but we are told what repentance looks like for Israel and in that, we get a picture of what it looks like today for us.

Israel lived under the law. They had made an agreement with YAHWEH which they abrogated. We live under a different term, grace. Today, the grace of God is seen in the withholding of judgement and giving lost mankind the opportunity to take advantage of the achievement of Jesus Christ on the cross. Our redemption.

That topic does indeed come up at the end of this chapter.

For now, though, for Israel, it looks dark indeed.

Hosea 5:1–7

“Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, house of Israel! Listen, you of the house of the king! For the judgment applies to you, Because you have been a trap at Mizpah, And a net spread out on Tabor. And the rebels have gone deep in depravity, But I will discipline all of them. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; Because now, Ephraim, you have been unfaithful, Israel has defiled itself. Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of infidelity is within them, And they do not know the LORD. Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their wrongdoing; Judah also has stumbled with them. They will go with their flocks and herds To seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them. They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, For they have given birth to illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land.” (NASB 2020)

Again, comes the command to listen. There can be no doubt about the charges being brought. In fact, there are three commands in verse 1.

#### **Hear...pay attention...listen**

- Group 1 – the priests are commanded to hear
- Group 2 – the people of Israel are commanded to pay attention
- Group 3 – the King and his administration are commanded to listen

No one is being left out, God wants them to understand His view.

You see, “God sees them as a menace—this people called to be a blessing to the world! The label once fastened on the Canaanites, and also proverbially on prostitutes, comparing them to snares and traps, must now be pinned upon the Chosen People.” (Kidner 1976, 57)

This is not a happy message. God commands the entire nation of Israel, no one left out, to listen and understand what He is saying to them.

Those who were chosen by God to be His people, to be light to the nations, have apostatized to the point that they are now the problem and are no longer the solution to the problem. In fact, they were worse than the previous occupants of the land. The message which is coming is a message of judgement and it applies to Israel.

In business, I have been involved, more than once, in cleaning up messes made by others. Folks who at one point had good intentions for what they did in the workplace had, due to incredibly poor leadership, had gone to the other side.

I was tasked with turning things around, restoring profitability and improving service. But the problems I encountered were years in the making. Solid performers had left, they had been replaced with those who would “look good” sitting in the office but had no clue how to do the job.

I discovered that to resolve the problem, I had to clean house and within one year only two people remained from the original staff. I had even recommended closing the office entirely and then opening a new operation elsewhere. And there was also other stuff going on too.

None of this was fun, but as senior managers, we had assessed the situation and judged it. The current staff would be gone and soon.

Judgment, here, is not the act of judging as in Mi. 3:1, but the sentence of the judge, 1 K. 3:28; Ps. 17:2, here unfavorable, as in Is. 53:8; Je. 1:16; 4:12; 39:5. (Harper 1905, 269)

They are doomed.

For emphasis, and to eliminate all doubt, the Lord provides the names of two locations at the far southern and northern borders of what remains as Israel. The nation is much smaller now. Mizpah and Tabor.

These two locations have significance historically as well as it appears they both became sites dedicated to the same fertility gods worshiped at Dan and Bethel, also in the north and south of Israel.

### **Border to Border**



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)  
Central Benjamin Plateau Mizpah



(Bolen, Mount Tabor from Nazareth ridge 2012, Used with Permission)  
Mount Tabor from Nazareth ridge

### Mizpah

Mizpah – In the Bible, there are actually five locations that go by the name Mizpah.

1. Mizpah of Gilead – Genesis 31:49 where Laban and Jacob cut a deal. East of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok River.
2. Land of Mizpah – Joshua 11:3 near Mt Hermon where Jabin fled after Joshua defeated him and where we learn the Hivites lived.
3. Mizpeh of Judah – One of the cities assigned to Judah by Joshua. Joshua 15:38.
4. Mizpah of Moab – Where David sent his folks to the King of Moab for protection from Saul. 1 Samuel 22:3.
5. Mizpah of Benjamin – the town located right on the border between Benjamin/Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. It is where the nation prepared to attack Benjamin in Judges 20:1-48, it was one of Samuel's stops as judge 1 Samuel 7:16-17, King Asa of Judah heavily fortified it due to combat operations against Israel 1 Kings 15:22 and later it became the Babylonian provincial capital 2 Kings 25:23.

I think this is the Mizpah of Benjamin being referred to here, as the context is providing what was left of Israel between two geographical points which themselves had also become polluted by the actions of Israel's leaders. Archaeology also supports that view.

Looking at Mizpah on the border, there have been discoveries leading us to believe it had become a site for fertility god worship. "Archaeological explorations have surfaced Astarte figurines, possible evidence of fertility religion in the 8th century BC." (Hubbard 1989, 123)

- It is where Samuel called Israel to repentance. It is also where God responded to that repentance and miraculously defeated the Philistines (1 Samuel 7).
- It was where Saul was publicly proclaimed as King by Samuel (1 Samuel 10:17 – 27).
- It marks the southernmost point on the border with Israel and based on the findings of archaeologists, had become thoroughly corrupted by the northern Kingdom by the time Israel fell to Assyria.

Then there is Tabor. At the time of Hosea, that was the former northern border. It was where Deborah and Barak marshalled all of Israel and it was from there, they defeated Sisera (Judges 4).

#### Hosea 5:1

“Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, house of Israel! Listen, you of the house of the king! For the judgment applies to you, Because you have been a trap at Mizpah, And a net spread out on Tabor.” (NASB 2020)

The message being conveyed is that as one comes into Israel from either the north or the south, they are going to be snared, just as hunters snare birds. The bird believes it is okay to land and is safe, yet once they are on the ground, they are caught in the snare which they could not see from the air.

The message to all of Israel from the Lord is “just as fowlers and hunters spread their nets and set their traps on Mizpah and Tabor, so the folk of Israel are caught and trapped by you, the establishment.” (MacIntosh 1997, 176)

There is also the possibility that this is a reference to an event hinted at in 1 Kings 12:28 when Jeroboam I set up two golden calf locations in the north and south of Israel. Border controls.

“For the rabbinic commentators (Rashi, ibn Ezra and Kimchi) the reference is to Jeroboam I’s having set up military controls on Tabor and Mizpah to prevent his subjects continuing to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 12:28).” (MacIntosh 1997, 177)

The bottom line, the leadership of the nation had determined to lead everyone between those two points astray. They had been captured by the false gods placed before them.

The implication is that a believing Jew from Judah who traveled north and entered Israel, was going to be trapped by the people there and enticed into their lifestyle. Paul wrote to a city that had a reputation like that of Israel, Corinth. The culture was perverse and began to exercise its influence on whoever entered. The need for holiness and separation became even more pronounced leading Paul to say “Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NET)

The culture around us today exercises the same influence. We are to be in the world, but not of it. John added further warnings.

#### 1 John 2:15–17

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.” (NET)

The people of Israel, in following their leaders, loved the world and followed them into their depravity. Culture influencers led the people astray then, they still do today.

#### Hosea 5:2

“And the rebels have gone deep in depravity, But I will discipline all of them.” (NASB 2020)

God is clear. Israel has arrived at the point of being incapable of changing. YAHWEH is using terms that reflect that once there was a relationship there. As Hosea wanted to see repentance from Gomer and have her behavior change, God is the same with Israel. They are incorrigible, discipline is in order with the objective of changed behavior. The key term being used, discipline says that God’s grace will be evident as they will not get what they truly deserve for their treachery.

#### Hosea 5:3–5

“I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; Because now, Ephraim, you have been unfaithful, Israel has defiled itself. Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of infidelity is within them, And they do not know the LORD. Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their wrongdoing; Judah also has stumbled with them.” (NASB 2020)

When Adam and Eve sinned, what did they try to do when God showed up? Hide.

Genesis 3:8

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (ESV)

Children do the same when they do something contrary to what mom or dad want them to do. Even felons do that to not be held accountable for what has been done. We all have a built-in justice meter. We are made in the image of God and as such, since God is justice, we still have that to deal with.

Israel’s leadership had learned how to spin and had convinced themselves they had not done anything really wrong. It was all about the maintenance of the nation after all. They believed that since they were God’s chosen people; and He loves us, He will give us a pass.

The problem was there was no loving loyalty to Him and Him alone. That was what the covenant requirement was. There was only one approved place to worship, Jerusalem and that was not politically correct anymore. They had mixed elements from the Torah with elements from some of the gods nearby and produced a politically acceptable alternative. It involved approaching God on their own terms.

God knows that. “God’s knowledge of Ephraim/Israel’s deeds is complete. One wonders if there were some in Israel who thought otherwise, i.e., that they might escape YHWH’s vigilance with secret activities.” (Dearman 2010, 173)

Ephraim and Dan had taken the lead in going into and leading others into idolatry.

The Lord has a right to judge Ephraim because of his knowledge of Ephraim’s sins; nothing is hidden from him. Note that Ephraim and Israel are synonymous throughout this arraignment. The leaders and common people are involved in immorality and corruption, which have robbed them of the ability to come back to God. (Livingston 1995, 608-609)

The issue of idolatrous leadership carries on into the book of Revelation, specifically, the tribes making up the 144,000.

Revelation 7:4–8

“And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.” (ESV)

Normally, when Manasseh is referenced, then Ephraim is as well.

There are numerous listings which exclude Levi and name the two tribes of Joseph as well as naming Levi and then the tribe of Joseph. But here in Revelation, we see a clear anti-idolatry bias show up. Ephraim is not referenced by name, Manasseh is, and the tribe of Joseph is. This is a left-handed way of saying Ephraim without saying Ephraim. Dan is not referenced at all and is not part of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation.

The prophecy of Hosea is mainly directed to Ephraim, yet occasionally he refers to Judah. Sometimes he regards Ephraim and Judah as both on the same footing: sometimes he makes a marked difference between them. It will be seen from the passages that both worship idols, both rely on human aid, both will meet with punishment: yet Judah is constant to Jehovah however she may add the worship of other gods: Ephraim has abandoned Jehovah though occasionally she makes pretence to recognize Him. (Sharpe 1884, 18-19)

We pick up more concerning Ephraim and Dan choosing idols over YAHWEH in Amos. In Amos, we will see that he “agrees with Hosea in denouncing the sin of Samaria and the god of Dan (Amos 8:14).” (Sharpe 1884, 20)

Here in Hosea, Ephraim and Israel are interchangeable terms for the Northern Kingdom. There is only one entity being discussed. But let’s relook at this section with the meaning of the names being used. There are positive and negative meanings associated with both names.

Ephraim = Two fold increase; very fruitful; doubly fruitful. Double ash-heap. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 70)

Israel = He will be a prince with God; prince with God; contender of God; he strives with God; soldier of God; God will rule; God ruled man; ruling with God; one that prevails with God. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 114)

I know double ash heap and striving with God is not hidden from me. Because now, double ash heap, you have been unfaithful, striving with God has defiled itself.

Let’s take a look at the NASB translated phrase, “...you have been unfaithful.”

הִזְנִיתָ (hizneta) - to commit fornication, be unfaithful; to abandon someone to fornication...to encourage to commit fornication. (Landes 2001, 71)

Also, “to act unfaithfully, prostitute, to act unfaithfully or treacherously, conceived of as living like a prostitute, to prostitute, to exchange sex for goods or money, cause to act unfaithfully, prostitute, to cause another to act unfaithfully or treacherously, conceived of as living like a prostitute...to make prostitute, to make someone exchange sex for goods or money...to solicit as a prostitute, to incite someone to act as a prostitute.” (Lexham Press 2017)

Israel and its leadership are not just faithless, this is not just simple infidelity anymore. It is much worse. They are now “confronted with the accusation: you have encouraged whoredom, because the royal establishment and the priests of the north have promoted Baal worship.” (Mackay 2012, 161)

They are not just simply defiled; they are listening to the fallen ones in the unseen realm. Israel is now a nation that accepts and embraces Canaanite ideology and practices.

They have become a snare indeed as they are all now actively leading anyone who comes near, away from YAHWEH and into their idolatry. Today, we see this same recruiting take place with lifestyle views involving various support groups focused on aberrant behavior.

All the reasons that God was with them when Joshua waged war against the people of the land displacing them due to their sin, has now turned around and settled on the ones who had been involved in the warfare. Now, Israel must be displaced because they are engaging in the same activities as those they booted out. They are the problem.

The northern kingdom, the people of Israel, had ceased being salt and light turning to engage instead in abominable behavior. In fact, they had become the purveyors of everything that God held as abominable behavior.

Just like what we see happening in many nations around the world today and graphically supported in the United States.

For Israel, they had arrived at Deuteronomy 28:28 – 29.

For our culture today...ditto. The world is indeed setting up for judgement, which we know as the term, the Tribulation.

Deuteronomy 28:28–29

“The LORD will also subject you to madness, blindness, and confusion of mind. You will feel your way along at noon like the blind person does in darkness and you will not succeed in anything you do; you will be constantly oppressed and continually robbed, with no one to save you.” (NET)

When a people turn from the truth of who God is and turn to their own internal wisdom, they wind up, ultimately, being misled by the enemy. Madness ensues. As believers, we find ourselves today looking on like Habakkuk did and wondering the same thing he did.

Habakkuk 1:2–4

“O LORD, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you endure to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all round me, and there is fighting and quarrelling everywhere. The law is weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.” (GNB)

Hosea 5:4

“Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of infidelity is within them, And they do not know the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

Israel has gone so far away, that except for a remnant, most of the nation are now unbelievers. But they are religious.

They have reached the point of no return. They no longer have an intimate relationship with YAHWEH. They do the ritual, but they have no knowledge or relationship with God. God talk is in vogue, but not faith in Him. The psalmist explained this problem and the results. So did Paul.

Psalms 81:11–13

“But my people did not obey me; Israel did not submit to me. **I gave them over to their stubborn desires; they did what seemed right to them.** If only my people would obey me! If only Israel would keep my commands!” (NET)

Romans 1:24–25

“**Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity,** to dishonor their bodies among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” (NET)

I wonder how many in our culture today have reached that point of no return? It is not for us to figure that out, it is for us to continue to tell our story to whoever will listen. To continue making disciples just as He told us to do (Matthew 28:19).

Have you ever talked with someone who is deep into false religion of some type? It really does not matter which one you name. We tend to think it is easy to identify because it looks like Buddhism or Islam or Shintoism. That is not what is being discussed here. These are people who thought, because they were Jews, that they had a corner on God.

The problem...they disconnected the fact that He is the creator and the God of the universe, and they had begun to treat Him as if He were simply a localized deity belonging to Judah and no more important than that.

When I talk with folks, I find myself wondering how far the conversation should go, when folks do not identify themselves as followers of Christ or as Believers or Christians, but as Baptists, or Methodists, or



Calvinists, or you name it. This is essentially what Israel was doing and they truly were proud about it too.

Hosea 5:5

“Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their wrongdoing; Judah also has stumbled with them.” (NASB 2020)

Don't bother me with the Bible, I know my doctrine. I know what I believe. I know what I have been taught. But the question is, is there a relationship with Jesus Christ? Where is the love? Or is it spiritual pride, like with Israel?

Jesus discussed this with the church in Sardis which had a problem involving this idea of spiritual pride.

Revelation 3:1–6

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: “This is the message from the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know what you are doing; I know that you have the reputation of being alive, even though you are dead! So wake up, and strengthen what you still have before it dies completely. For I find that what you have done is not yet perfect in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you were taught and what you heard; obey it and turn from your sins. If you do not wake up, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not even know the time when I will come. But a few of you there in Sardis have kept your clothes clean. You will walk with me, clothed in white, because you are worthy to do so. Those who win the victory will be clothed like this in white, and I will not remove their names from the book of the living. In the presence of my Father and of his angels I will declare openly that they belong to me. If you have ears, then, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches!” (GNB)

Historically, this is the church of the reformation. Jesus had nothing good to say to this church. Not all were saved, some were.

But note, just like Israel, they have a name, everyone thinks that they have it together and are the true believers. But they are dead.

They identify with Christ, but they do not have Christ. The call is to remember, keep His word and repent. Be the church, not just do church. Israel has a name, but they are dead.

They stumble. They have left the path which was drawn out for them, they have no personal knowledge or relationship with God. They are doing Torah, but not following Torah.

Remember, Israel is into marketing its alternative lifestyle to everyone around them. Cultures on the way down historically tend to do that. We know that one of the cities on the border yet in Judah, Mizpah, has already been impacted by the immorality and idolatry going on in Bethel just a few miles away. Israel is not alone in their apostasy; they are being joined by Judah.

The pervasiveness of this going on today though is all about us living in the last days.

Sinful Israel had become so overpowered by a spirit of prostitution (Hosea 5:4; cf. 4:12) that any possibility of repentance and recognition of the Lord's authority was precluded for the time being. (Chisholm 1985, 1391)

Here is the picture, Israel is proud about their lifestyle, and they walk about with their head held high not paying attention to where it is they are going. Their pride has blinded them to the truth and as a result they will stumble. Judah is now beginning to do the same.

Hosea 5:6

“They will go with their flocks and herds To seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them.” (NASB 2020)

Remember, they are still doing the Jewish thing. They are making sacrifices, just not at the Temple. They are doing stuff to draw near to God, based on how they want to do it. Pride and hypocrisy rule.

When trouble really does come, as a last resort, they turn to God. But He is telling them that when you do that, I won't be there because I have done as you wanted, I have withdrawn so that you can make do with your false gods.

Israel is wrapped up into their alternative lifestyle of idolatry and prostitution, and they believe that they are still being faithful because they sacrifice. God tells them He is not into that. He has withdrawn.

We see this same behavior in our culture today. People get lied to by the enemy and sucked into following a lifestyle that is nowhere near what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. But churches have sprouted up all over the place with spiritual leadership that affirms the sinful choices made by those who have been lied to.

Jesus spent time encouraging us to find the narrow path, the one that follows what it is His word teaches. Then He warns about those who are pointing to a much wider path.

Matthew 7:13–23

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'” (ESV)

Many today have joined in with Israel on the wide path that leads nowhere.

Going the wrong way, looking to our idols or our own works to get us to God just does not work. For Israel, they need believing loyalty in YAHWEH, for us, believing loyalty in Jesus Christ. Searching for salvation in anything but through Jesus Christ is illegitimate.

John 14:6

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

For Israel, it is not only illegitimate, but constitutes the ultimate treachery against the one who rescued them from Egypt.

Hosea 5:7

“They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, For they have given birth to illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land.” (NASB 2020)

By breaking the covenant, and doing so with open eyes, God considers this to be treachery. “Israel ought to have begotten children of God in the maintenance of the covenant with the Lord; but in its apostasy from God, it had begotten an adulterous generation, children whom the Lord could not acknowledge as His own.

“The new moon will devour them,” viz., those who act so faithlessly. the meaning is not, “they will be destroyed on the next new moon;” but the new moon, as the festal season, on which sacrifices were

offered (1 Sam. 20:6, 29; Isa. 1:13, 14), stands here for the sacrifices themselves that were offered upon it. The meaning is this: your sacrificial feast, your hypocritical worship, so far from bringing you salvation, will rather prove your sin.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 59)

#### Hosea 5:8–15

“Blow the horn in Gibeah, And the trumpet in Ramah. Sound an alarm at Beth-aven: “Behind you, Benjamin!” Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke; Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is trustworthy. The leaders of Judah have become like those who displace a boundary marker; On them I will pour out My anger like water. Ephraim is oppressed, broken by judgment, Because he was determined to follow man’s command. Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim, And like rottenness to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his sore, Ephraim then went to Assyria And sent word to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, Or to cure you of your sore. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, yes I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be no one to rescue. I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their distress they will search for Me.” (NASB 2020)

Judgement is sure. An invasion army is coming. Blowing the horn is the signal for this.

The cities named are in the south of Israel on the border with Judah, pointing that the invader is coming up from the south. This also comes from the warning for Benjamin to check their 6.

Hosea seems to take the role of watchman, shouting the alarm for an invasion into Israelite territory from the south. Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel (Beth-aven is a derisive name for Bethel; see 4:15) are strategic locations on a direct route from Jerusalem into Israelite territory.

Hosea seems to be warning of a possible counterattack from Judah, which had been attacked by the Israel-Syria coalition trying to force them into an alliance against Assyria. Hosea warns that Israel’s violent policy could boomerang against them. (Birch 1997, 64)

This was indeed the case as King Ahaz will pay off Assyria to go after Israel and Damascus (2 Chronicles 28:16 – 25). But it is an agreement that will backfire (Isaiah 8:8).

We see that “the northern kingdom (called both ‘Israel’ and ‘Ephraim’ in these chapters) was wiped out in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom, Judah and Benjamin, was brought to its knees in 701, surviving by a hair’s breadth,” only because Hezekiah prayed, and God intervened (Isaiah 37:14 – 38). (Kidner 1976, 60)

Israel went off into exile as a result of Ahaz and his deal with Assyria. The Lord looked at that deal differently than Ahaz did, He said it was no better than moving boundary markers which is prohibited (Deuteronomy 19:14, 27:17). Judah coveted the land Israel had, they had fought over it every now and then for 200 years. It was out of reach and remained so after Assyria took Israel over.

#### Hosea 5:13

“When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his sore, Ephraim then went to Assyria And sent word to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, Or to cure you of your sore.” (NASB 2020)

Politics as normal continued. When you no longer have an army to defend you, then you attempt to buy off the enemy. Sometimes that works, until someone pays them more money, like Ahaz did. Conscious of her troubles, Ephraim sought help from the Assyrian, asking aid of king Jareb (Contentious), “the fighting king,” perhaps Tiglath-pileser III. (Pfeiffer 1962, Ho 5:13)

#### Hosea 5:14

“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, yes I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be no one to rescue.” (NASB 2020)

By the time Hezekiah becomes King, this prophecy of Hosea's is fulfilled. Israel is torn into shreds and exiled. Judah suffered severe damage as well but, in their case, it was not terminal, and God did intervene. But lion cubs grow up eventually. Judgement is coming for Judah.

Israel though was destroyed. They were taken into exile in Assyria.

Hosea 5:15

"I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their distress they will search for Me." (NASB 2020)

Once the judgement is complete, there is hope. God is saying He will withdraw to His place, heaven. A time is coming when the nation of Israel will once again, as one. Turn to their God. When they do, He will deliver them. This language appears to point to the end of the Great Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium. The purpose of what is to take place to Israel is to ultimately restore them.

What is it that drew many of us to Christ? For some of us, we just couldn't seem to keep all the balls in the air by ourselves anymore. Stuff began to pile up and it began to become clear something was not right.

Here in Hosea, we are told what we need to do to make things right with God.

It all begins with the picture of Him sitting and waiting for us to do something with the light that He has given us. That is the job of the Holy Spirit, confronting us with truth.

**Step One – Acknowledge that we are sinners.** For Israel, that was to acknowledge their guilt. That is an event that is yet to happen for them but will take place soon, per Zechariah 13:9. For us, it is admitting that we are sinners. This is an agreement with the diagnosis that God has already made about our condition and the reason why He has provided a solution for us.

**Step Two – Seek His face.** For us today, this is incredibly simple thanks to what Jesus Christ has achieved for us on the cross.

Romans 10:9–10

"If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved." (GNB)

Seeking God's face is done by praying to Him. The prayer is simple.

Lord, forgive me, I agree with you that I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sin and then rose from the dead. Jesus be the Lord of my life.

That's it. It is no more complicated than that. Let's recap what Hosea tells us.

Hosea 5:15

"I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their distress they will search for Me." (NASB 2020)

### **ABC's of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

Coming to Christ is no more complicated than that.

For some of us, we came to Him during a time of distress and for His people, at the end of the Tribulation when they do so, it will indeed be a time of distress.

Zechariah 13:9

“I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’ ” (NKJV)

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