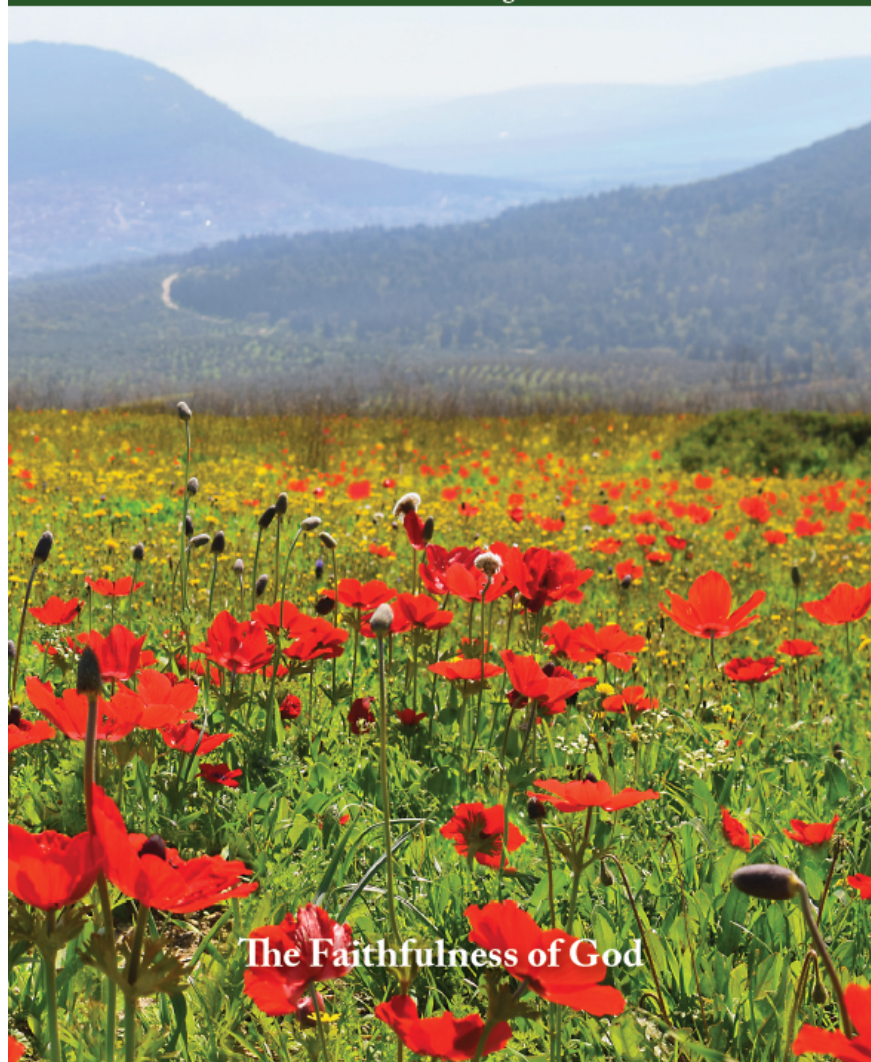


# Hosea

## Explained & Applied 28

Ger de Koning



The Faithfulness of God



# **The Book of Hosea**



# The Book of Hosea

The Faithfulness of God

Ger de Koning

Dutch version:

Hosea (en Joel) – Toegelicht & toegepast 28(en 29)

© 2019 Uitgeverij Daniël, Zwolle, NL

ISBN: 978-90-79718-68-9 (hardcover)

Web shop: [www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl](http://www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl)

Layout for website: Jan Noordhoek

Available as pdf, EPUB and MOBI file on

<https://www.oudesporen.nl/artikelen.php?lang=EN>

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## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

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### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

### **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.



# **The Book of Hosea**

## **Introduction**

### **Preface**

The so-called ‘minor prophets’, of which Hosea is the first, are for most Bible readers not among the favorite books of the Bible. For me, too, they have long had the place they have in the Old Testament in the Bible: at the end. The fact that they are at the end of the Old Testament has nothing to do with their importance compared to the books that precede them. They got their place at the end because they belong there historically. They mainly relate to the last events that took place in and around Israel before the curtain fell for that people and the time after that.

The fact that during my study of the Bible they came at the end has to do with the fact that I did not know very well how to read them and what benefit I could derive from them. When I was asked to give Bible lectures about Hosea, I did not have to think long. In fact, it gave me the opportunity to remove this book of the Bible from the place at the end and put it first in my study of Holy Scripture.

What I was allowed to discover about Hosea and share through the lectures, I elaborated in this commentary in order to share it with the reader. I hope and pray that the reader will receive as much blessing as I do while studying this book of the Bible. May its effects become visible in our lives under the powerful action of God’s Spirit for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Ger de Koning

Middelburg, October 2001 – revised February 2018 – translated October 2020

### **The minor prophets**

The twelve bible books that are called ‘the minor prophets’ are perhaps the least read Bible books and therefore the least known to Christians. But these ‘minor prophets’ also belong to the inspired Scriptures from which we read: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for

reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:16-17). For the prophets, and thus also for the 'minor prophets', there is the special word can be added: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of one's own interpretation" (2Pet 1:20). This means that we need all the prophets and all the books of the Bible in order to compare Scripture with Scripture.

They are called 'the minor prophets' because of the short content of their scriptures compared to prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. We can call these prophets are 'major prophets' because their books are much more voluminous. But for the authority with which their words are covered, it makes no difference at all. Both for what we have of Isaiah and Jeremiah and what we have of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah and the eight following 'minor' prophets in the Bible, the contents are clothed with the same divine authority. Therefore, it is right and necessary that Christians also listen to the message of these twelve 'minor prophets', which some see as one whole and are then referred to as 'The Twelve Prophets book'.

It is not clear why the twelve minor prophets are arranged as we have them in the Bible. They are not arranged chronologically. However, we can make a global classification according to the periods in which they prophesied. The prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum prophesied in the time of the Assyrian world empire. Habakkuk and Zephaniah prophesy at the time of the rise of Babel as a world power. The third period is after the Babylonian exile. In that time the prophets Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi prophesy.

### **Hosea has a topical message**

What God has to say to His earthly people through those twelve prophets speaks the same clear language to God's heavenly people today. The question, however, is whether we still have ears to what God has to say. We will see how topical Hosea's message is for the Christian of today. The Christian is anyone who claims to be a Christian, anyone who counts himself to be one of God's people. As Hosea addresses the earthly people of God very directly, we may listen to Hosea in a spiritually derived sense. We will find the answer to the question: What is his message for God's people today?

## **The person Hosea**

Before we listen to “the word of the LORD which came to Hosea” (Hos 1:1), it is good to first notice some things about the person Hosea, about Hosea as a prophet and about the situation Israel finds itself in during his preaching. Against that background, many of his statements will become clearer to us.

The name Hosea means ‘savior’, ‘deliverer’. In that name, God’s intention with the preaching of this prophet is immediately expressed. He wants to deliver His people from the power of sin. His name reminds us of the name ‘Jesus’. Joseph is told to give the Son, Who Mary will give birth to, the name ‘Jesus’, with the explanation: “For He will save His people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). For that purpose, the Lord Jesus has come to earth. When God sends someone, to man in general or to His people in particular, He always does so for the good of that man and of His people.

What we also know of Hosea is that he is “the son of Beerī” (Hos 1:1). The name Beerī means “my source”. Doesn’t that say something about the source with which Hosea is connected? He does not draw the strength for his service from his own power, but from God. God is his source, from Him he obtains what he needs to do what he is commanded to do. Besides, with less he would never have been able to perform his service. Furthermore not much is known about the person Hosea.

## **A prophet points to sin**

Of a prophet, it is also not so much important who he is, but what the message is that he brings. His person must, as it were, be hidden behind his message. Prophets are generally not very popular among the people. That is because they usually appear on stage when something is not right with God’s people. They appeal to the people for that. Unfortunately, it turns out that the people as a whole are not open to the voice and heart of God, interpreted by the prophets.

God, Who wants the people to confess their sin and return to Him, is rejected. This is clearly visible in the fate that many prophets have undergone. The Lord Jesus says in His lamentation about Jerusalem: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How

often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Mt 23:37).

The people are blind to the fact that God, in His love, sends prophets to them. He does so because a life in sin, with its back to God, never makes them happy. When guilt lies with the people of God through idolatry and other sins, prophets speak in the name of God to the heart and conscience of the people. They warn of the judgment that God must let come.

That is why a prophet is often seen as a troublemaker, a pessimist. Thus, Ahab calls the prophet Elijah “troubler of Israel” (1Kgs 18:17). Ahab, by his ungodly behavior, has called God’s judgment upon Israel and he blames Elijah for that. We also sometimes have a tendency to shift the blame for mischief that afflicts us to others, most of all to the one who points out our sinful behavior.

### **A prophet also points to blessing**

But prophets do not only speak about judgment. Judgment is generally for the masses of the people who refuse to repent. Prophets also speak of blessing for every single person who listens to the Word of God. That promise of blessing is an encouragement to anyone who, in the midst of an unfaithful mass, wants to remain faithful to God and live according to His will, which He makes known in His Word.

There is a difference between a prophet like Hosea and prophets like Elijah and Elisha. There is no book of Elijah and Elisha in the Bible, but there is a book of Hosea. The preaching of Elijah and Elisha relates to the situation of their time and they announce judgment and blessing with that in mind. Their prophecies have no fulfilment in the distant future. They have not prophesied for the restoration of Israel in connection with the coming of the Messiah. This is precisely the case with the prophets of whom we have a book in the Bible.

The ‘writing’ prophets always point forward to the person of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. This realm, called the millennial realm of peace, is still future. With Hosea we will find several references to that time and that realm.

## **The time in which Hosea lives**

The time in which Hosea lives is not a time of poverty and famine, but a time of great prosperity and welfare. That does not make his preaching any easier. Just go and preach judgment when things are going well for people. If they go to church on top of that, they will be confirmed in their feelings that they are very faithful people after all. They reason: 'If we would live badly and sinfully, we probably wouldn't have it that well.'

At the time when Hosea is prophesying, there is nothing to indicate that judgment is imminent. Jeroboam II – to distinguish from Jeroboam I, the first king of the ten tribes kingdom after the division of Israel into two and ten tribes (1Kgs 12:20) – reigns from 793-753 BC. God brought Jeroboam to power because He feels sorry for the misery of the people in his time (2Kgs 14:25-27).

Before Jeroboam becomes king, the situation in Israel is critical. At the time of his grandfather Joahaz, the Syrians brought the people to the edge of the abyss (2Kgs 13:7). There is only a pittance left of the former power and glory of Israel. Under Joash, the father of Jeroboam, Israel scrawls up again (2Kgs 13:25). Under Jeroboam this restoration continues and he brings the country to great prosperity.

## **Times of prosperity**

During that flowering period – you could speak of a golden age – Hosea preaches. Jeroboam is then in the second part of his reign. At that time people enjoy all the comforts and pleasure that prosperity brings, without having to fight for it themselves. They only know from the stories that battles were once fought, that defeats were suffered and that Israel was oppressed. What they enjoy in terms of prosperity and welfare has been thrown into their laps.

It is a well-known fact that prosperity rarely leads to behavior that pleases God. Rather, there is a tendency to forget God, especially if one has not had to make an effort for that prosperity. This phenomenon has been called 'the disease of the third generation'. This 'disease' arises in this way: the first generation acquires, the second generation inherits, the third generation corrupts.

The first generation has made an effort to achieve prosperity. The second generation inherited that prosperity without much effort. That prosperity is still appreciated because that generation recognizes the effort it has taken and is (usually) grateful for it. However, the third generation has no connection whatsoever with the acquisition of prosperity and it does not mean anything to them, they do not appreciate what they possess.

### **Get blessings or fight for them**

Literally this can be applied to the time in which we live. I am writing this at the beginning of the twenty-first century. My parents experienced the Second World War (1940-1945). After the war they had to dedicate themselves to the reconstruction of the Netherlands. That took a lot of effort. I heard their stories about oppression and poverty, but had no part in it. I was born and raised just after the war when there is enough to buy again and the means to buy are there too. Still, at first you should be careful. You could not buy everything you wished for.

However, our children, born in the 70s and later, grew up in wealth and prosperity. They are increasingly surrounded by luxury and things that make life fun and easy. It is thrown into their laps. But does the world look better now? Are today's young people happier? Is there any asking for God? More and more young people are getting stuck in a society that only pays attention to them as far as it can enrich itself from these young people.

What applies in the social field also applies in the spiritual field. There are Christians who feel rich in their knowledge of spiritual blessings. They have heard a lot about the Lord Jesus, they read from the Bible at home, they visit meetings where they talk about Him. Yet all this has no effect in their lives. On the contrary, it seems that their knowledge of these spiritual blessings makes them nonchalant and indifferent. After all, they know everything, don't they? But there is no real relationship with God and no life of thankfulness towards God.

In spite of all external prosperity, God, through Hosea, exposes the true condition of His earthly people. Through this prophet he also wants to expose the real condition of His 'spiritual' people, the church.

## **Duration of the preaching**

As already mentioned, the task of Hosea is not easy. He clearly has the tide against him. Together with Amos and Micah, he has denounced the complete decay of Israel, the ten tribes, and announced the judgment of the entire people. Amos was sent by God as a prophet to the ten tribes during the first part of the reign of Jeroboam II. He is the forerunner of Hosea. But Amos was not listened to. Now it is Hosea's turn.

The fact that the preaching of Amos has hardly produced any results does not make Hosea's task any easier. Yet he courageously goes to work and prophesies against the evil of his days. Through Hosea, God sends one of the last warnings to His people. That is why Hosea so penetratingly addresses the seriousness of the sin of the people and announces the judgment that will surely come if they do not listen. If the people do not heed his call, it will be over for them as a nation.

The period of Hosea's action spans more than fifty years. All this time he has witnessed the rebellion of Israel against God. He loves his people and therefore their condition breaks his heart. From the long time Hosea prophesies, we see how long-suffering God is. In Hosea he gives His people a last chance to return to Him. Hosea may even have witnessed the deportation of the ten tribes under the reign of Israel's last king, his namesake Hosea. The deportation takes place in the year 722 BC. He has been warning the people until the last moment.

## **How Hosea preaches**

In the fourteen chapters that his Bible book contains, Hosea admonishes the people and warns and reprimands them because they have deviated from the LORD. He speaks to the people in examples and powerful language. He does not do so from above, but as someone who belongs to that people. His statements touch himself, they go through him like a sword. Hence the sorrow of his heart which can be heard through his prophecy every time, especially in Hosea 4-10.

His style is extraordinarily powerful and full of sudden transitions. He goes from threats to promises, from a short word of blessing to a scene of bloodshed, from past favors enjoyed to future contractions of labor that

will suddenly come over Ephraim. He speaks this way because judgment is at hand.

He is in a hurry to say everything that can contribute to the repentance of the people. Sometimes he changes the subject so quickly and abruptly that it is better to speak of utterances than speeches. In addition to judgment, however, he also shows again and again how God will finally act in grace with the people and bring a turn in their fate.

### **The area where Hosea prophesies**

The area where Hosea preaches is the ten tribes realm. It seems that he himself also belongs to the ten tribes realm, because he speaks of “our king” (Hos 7:5), by which he indicates to be one with the people he speaks to. Hosea speaks to Israel and Ephraim. Ephraim is the main tribe of the ten tribes realm. He plays the leading role in the unfaithfulness of the people. Occasionally Hosea also speaks about Judah (Hos 4:15; 5:5), but hardly to Judah. Hosea speaks to Israel (or Ephraim). The names Israel and Ephraim are mentioned together almost eighty times, that of Judah only fifteen times.

### **The division of the book**

The division of the book is quite simple. There are three parts:

1. Hosea 1-3. Here we find how Israel behaves and what God therefore has to do with these people. We also find the councils of God towards Israel and His ways with them, how He will fulfill His plan with them, despite the attitude of the people. Each of these chapters ends with the blessing that God ultimately has for the people.
2. Hosea 4-13. Herein are the exhortations which the prophet in the name of the LORD speaks to the people.
3. Hosea 14. Now we hear the call of the prophet to the people to repent and how the people will obey to it. This conversion will take place in the last days, which is in the end time. The result of the conversion is described.

### **What the book of Hosea should do with us**

Before we listen to “the word of the LORD which came to Hosea” (Hos 1:1) one more remark. It is possible to receive the full benefit of what God has to say to us through the service of Hosea. This happens especially when,



while studying this book of the Bible, we are seized by the fierce fear and strong feelings that fill the heart of this man of God because of:

1. The love for his people and
2. The grief of which he knows that God is done with their unfaithfulness.

If the Word of God can go through us like this and take possession of us, we will share God's feelings about the things around us in the world in general and what is happening in Christianity in particular. This attitude gives the Holy Spirit ample opportunity to do His shaping work in us. Its impact will be seen in our lives, as a blessing for our environment and above all as a joy and honor for God.

# Hosea 1

## Introduction

Hosea gets the assignment from God to marry a woman who will be unfaithful to him. In this way he gets to know God's feelings towards Israel, that He has become unfaithful to Him. God can no longer acknowledge Israel as His people. This is expressed in the names Hosea has to give his children:

1. "Jezreel" (verse 4) means 'God scatters',
2. "Lo-ruhamah" (verse 6) means 'no compassion' and
3. "Lo-ammi" (verse 9) means 'not My people'.

Yet the people are not rejected forever. From verse 10 onward, God shows that He will fulfill His intentions with the people in grace, a grace in which also the nations will share.

Hosea 1 can be divided as follows:

1. Introduction (verse 1).
2. The people leave God and are judged for that (verses 2-5).
3. God breaks off relations with His people and ceases to have compassion on them (verses 6-9).
4. Israel and the people outside Israel receive part of the blessings of the new covenant (verse 10).
5. God resumes His relations with Israel and Christ is acknowledged as Head (verse 11).

## Hos 1:1 | The Word of the LORD to Hosea

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

The prophet brings not his own word, but that of the LORD. It does not say 'the words (plural) of the LORD', but "the word of the LORD". This indicates that all the words of God form an inner unity. Each individual word in "the word of the LORD" forms a perfect whole with all other spoken words.

The time in which this word comes to Hosea is mainly indicated by the kings of Judah. Of the ten tribes, where he nevertheless prophesies, he calls only Jeroboam, whereas after Jeroboam he has experienced six kings. It is generally accepted that by naming the kings of Judah he acknowledges that, according to God's election, the kings of the lineage of David are entitled to the throne of Israel. God has promised David that his offspring will reign continually (2Sam 7:12-13). The kings of Israel, the ten tribes realm, are not descendants of David and therefore they have no claim to this promise.

Of the ten tribes realm, Hosea only mentions Jeroboam because he is the last king of Israel through whom God acts and provides help against the enemy. He is used by the LORD to save His people (2Kgs 14:27). After Jeroboam there is only disorder, manslaughter and anarchy (Hos 8:4). Therefore, Hosea does not mention any of Jeroboam's six successors, which are Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hosea. It is as if he is ashamed of them. He would do them too much honor by mentioning their names.

Jeroboam is the third generation after Jehu, who is mentioned in verse 4. Jehu has been promised that he will have someone on the throne until the fourth generation. The fourth will be Jeroboam's son Zachariah. Jeroboam has ruled for a long time, forty-one years (2Kgs 14:23). His son Zechariah reigned for a very short time, only six months (2Kgs 15:8). After the short reign of Zechariah, one king quickly succeeds another, often by murder. Through the long reign of Jeroboam, God shows patience with the house of Jehu.

During the service of the prophet Hosea four kings are murdered. This time is characterized by great political instability. There are also several political parties. One party seeks its refuge in the northern neighbor-

ing country Assyria, the other party strives for an alliance with southern Egypt. But where are the people who place their trust in God?

Today in Christianity, more is expected of churches going along together, of agreements and treaties, all modelled on common secular politics, than of a return to the Lord and His Word. And what about the trust in God in the personal life of the Christian? Is it not often the case that we rely more on the insurances we have contracted, the social services we regard as acquired rights, influential people who can put in a good word for us, than that we trust in God? Let's take a critical look at ourselves. When we discover that we indeed trust other people and things more than God, we have to acknowledge that as a sin before God and we can make a new start.

The fact that in verse 1 Judah and Israel are mentioned as separate realms is a reminder of the sad tearing that has taken place within God's people. Through the unfaithfulness of Solomon, God had to bring this judgment (1Kgs 11:11; 12:16-19).

The great division in Christianity is also the result of the unfaithfulness of Christians. Very early in the history of the Christian church, Christians have dissociated into groups. The main cause of this, however, lies in the creation of a special class of believers who can explain the Word of God to 'ordinary' believers. Because of this, this special class has gained a dominant position in the church. The difference between 'clergy' and 'lay people' was born.

It could not fail to happen, or even among those who formed the ruling class, the clergy, differences occurred. Because of this the whole fell apart into groups. Paul points out this evil to the Corinthians when he qualifies thinking in terms of different groups as 'human thinking and acting' (1Cor 1:11-12; 3:4). The results of the division can be seen in the Christianity around us.

God keeps the way open to live according to His thoughts as His people. Wherever humiliation about the situation is found in the midst of God's people and wherever one goes to ask for His will, He will show that way. His Word is as true and worthy to be obeyed today as it was in the time of Hosea. Those who are willing to listen will be allowed to put into practice,

even if it happens in great weakness, what God meant with the church on earth.

God wants to use Hosea, even today, to awaken Christians, so that they will again and only put their trust in God and His Word. Paul has drawn the days in which we live very clearly in his farewell speech to the elders of the church in Ephesus. He reminds them and us of the only support that remains for the church: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build [you] up and to give [you] the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

### **Hos 1:2 | The Wife of Hosea**

*2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and [have] children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."*

The way in which the LORD begins to speak through Hosea is remarkable. The language He uses points to a marriage- and family drama. It is as if God says: 'I have spoken enough words; now I will speak in a different way. The marriage and the children of Hosea will have a symbolic meaning. If the people still have ears to hear, they will listen to it.'

What must Hosea do? He must marry a wife of whom he is told by the LORD that she will be unfaithful to him. "A wife of harlotry" means a woman branded by harlotry. Children born of that marriage will be "children of harlotry", that is to say, those children will be branded by harlotry.

Because of this, Hosea will understand what God feels about the unfaithfulness of His people Israel. Through the tragedy of his own marriage, he will come to feel something of what the sin of the people is to the heart of God. He will discover what unfaithfulness means for love. Without this experience, his prophecy would have been very different.

We, too, may get to know God through our experiences, so that we are better able to express His feelings in certain circumstances. That really will then happen in a different way than if we had not had that experience.

That Hosea's marriage should be a reflection of God's relationship to His people and vice versa is clear from the reason God gives for the order for

this special marriage: "For the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." God has a relationship with His people, like Hosea will have with his wife. His marriage should also lead the people to see their unfaithfulness toward the LORD. Thus Hosea is by the circumstances of his own life a practical illustration of what God wants to say.

There has been a lot to do about this marriage. Some believe that it was not a real marriage, but that Hosea experienced it only in a vision. Others believe that this marriage should be seen figuratively, as a kind of fable. But there is no reason not to consider it a real marriage.

God knows all things in advance. If He finds it necessary, He can announce future events that will take place in a person's life. For example, He tells Ananias what Paul will have to suffer for Him and what his service will be (Acts 9:15-16).

He does the same with Hosea. In my opinion there is a lot to say that the wife Hosea takes, hasn't committed adultery yet when she marries him. After all, she has to portray the attitude of Israel towards God, doesn't she? When God took His people to be His wife, they were not immediately unfaithful to Him either. He speaks about the early days of His people's relationship with Him as follows: "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown" (Jer 2:2).

Hosea is not the only prophet who passes on a message to the people through his marriage. We find this with three other prophets. God speaks to Ezekiel that He will suddenly take away his wife (Eze 24:16a). Ezekiel's wife is the lust of his eyes. Thus is God's sanctuary and actually the whole people the lust of His eyes. In the message that God links to this, we read how He will give up His sanctuary and His people to the sword (Eze 24:17-27).

With the prophet Isaiah, who is married to a prophetess (Isa 8:3), the message is in the special names he has to give both his children. The LORD tells him to go to Ahaz with his son Shear-jashub (Isa 7:3). Through the name Shear-jashub, which means 'a remnant will return', Isaiah gives his message to Ahaz. This name warns that in case of persistent unfaithfulness, the people as a whole will be taken away into exile and that only 'a

remnant will return'. He had to call the other son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means swift booty, speedy prey (Isa 8:1-3). Herein lies the prophecy that the land will soon fall prey to the enemy.

Another prophet with whom there is something special about marriage is Jeremiah. He is not allowed to marry. Anyone who will ask him why he remains unmarried, he must answer that he does not want to have children because otherwise, through the judgment that God is to bring over Judah, they will fall into the hands of the enemy (Jer 16:2-4).

The unfaithfulness to be denounced by Hosea in the illustration of his marriage is not an occasional matter. There is not only an unfaithful Israelite here and there, but the whole land "commits flagrant harlotry", which means that the land has completely surrendered itself to harlotry. It has become a national sin. The unfaithfulness of the people is evidenced by the many idols it possesses and worships. God mentions this harlotry. Because of this the people have turned away from the LORD. It has gone away from behind the LORD and no longer follows Him.

The faithlessness in Christianity is called by God in the same way: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" (Jam 4:4). Christians who take the world as their norm in their thinking, attitude, and behavior commit spiritual adultery. God and His Word should be the norm for the Christian's thinking, attitude, and behavior in word and deed. That Christianity focuses on what is common in the world is an abomination in God's eye. God is a jealous God. He cannot tolerate that those who are connected to Him give their love and attention to what lives in enmity with Him (cf. 2Cor 11:2-3).

For the Christian, the touchstone of his life can be found at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is the place where the Christian has to test all his deeds. In the rejection of Christ the world has shown its true character. Therefore John writes in his first letter that "the whole world lies in [the power of] the evil one" (1Jn 5:19).

If the devil succeeds in blurring or taking away this consciousness from Christians, an ever-increasing shift to the standards of the world will take place. He succeeds in this by, among other things, making the cross a badge of honor and thus taking away its defamation. You can pin it on in

‘Christian’ countries or walk with it in a procession through the streets. People will appreciate it, as long as you don’t attach the exclusive meaning it has in the Bible. It is necessary to restore the cross to the place of supreme shame and defamation in our lives. It is the place where, when Christ died, God’s judgment of the world and sin was executed.

### **Hos 1:3 | Gomer and Hosea’s First Son**

*3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*

Hosea does what God has ordered him to do. It is not clear if he has functioned as a prophet before and therefore the people already know him as such. It does not seem so, because it is said of his marriage that this is what “the LORD first spoke through Hosea” (verse 2). Therefore, his marriage will have been nothing sensational at first.

The first child to be born does not seem to be an extramarital child. It says that “she conceived and bore him a son”. We do not read that of the next children Gomer will have. They were conceived by an act of adultery. Then the tales came. Hosea is a man with exactly the same feelings that every man has for his wife. There is no reason to think that he would not have loved her. He married her because he loves her. But would not he have waited with fear for the moment when she will tell him that she is pregnant by another man?

### **Hos 1:4 | The First Child of Hosea: Jezreel**

*4 And the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.*

The first child of Hosea is a son. He gets the order to call him “Jezreel”. This is not without reason. The meaning of that name implies a message. What has been said of the children of Isaiah can also be said of the children of Hosea (Isa 8:18). The name Jezreel, in connection with the name Jehu, refers to the city where Jehu exterminated the house of Ahab. He was commanded to do so by God (2Kgs 9:7-10). This history is here recalled by God as something for which retribution must take place. How is that?



Jehu has acted by order of God. God has given His approval after Jehu has carried out his commission. There is even a reward attached to it (2Kgs 10:30). Yet here his actions are rejected and God speaks of a bloodshed, for which the house of Jehu will be punished. And not only that, because with the judgment on Jehu and his house the judgment on the whole kingship is pronounced. Israel will cease to be an independent kingdom. What follows after the reign of Jeroboam II are only the convulsions of a doomed empire.

The name 'Jezreel' speaks of the judgment that God is going to make. Jezreel means 'God will scatter' or 'God will sow'. This name, Jezreel, indicates the imminent end of Israel. The people will be scattered among the nations because of their harlotry.

This must have sounded hard to their ears, but they will probably have laughed at it too. After all, they are experiencing a time of prosperity, aren't they? But the laughter will disappear when, in the year 722 BC, the Assyrians deport Israel from its land and, as the Assyrians are used to, scatter the captured Israelites, as it were, over several other countries. In doing so, the enemy eliminated the danger of regrouping and Israel's strength is broken.

But now the question remains as to what Jehu's bloodshed consists of. The solution to this problem is probably as follows. Although Jehu has done God's will, he sins by killing more people than God has said. He killed Ahaziah, the king of Judah, and his forty-two brothers, and God did not command him to do so (2Kgs 9:27; 10:14). In God's public reign, Jehu receives His approval and reward for what he has done. But Jehu's hidden deliberations while fulfilling his commission are not pure. Here God shows how He really thinks about it: Jehu has shown himself to be ambitious and cruel.

Nothing that man himself brings into the work of God is hidden from Him. What is man's own will be judged righteously by God, especially where it happens under His great name 'LORD'. Jehu is rejected for what he has done more than God had commanded him to do.

It is also remarkable that it is already about eighty years ago that Jehu committed these murders. But God forgets nothing. In the same way, God

comes back many years later to something Saul had done and for which no satisfaction has yet taken place (2Sam 21:1). With God, crime never expires. He will at some point confront everyone with acts for which no atonement has been made. There is only one way to escape God's retribution and that is sincere confession. Then an appeal can be made to the work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross of Calvary. There He brought about the reconciliation with the holy and just God for the repentant sinner.

### **Hos 1:5 | The Bow of Israel Will Be Broken**

| *5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."*

A bow is a symbol of strength and an important weapon in warfare. A broken bow speaks of the loss of that power. As in verse 7, where it is said concealed from Judah, here too we find the thought that Israel relies on its own strength in battle.

The valley of Jezreel is a plain where many wars have been fought and where soon the great final battle will take place. The valley is then known as Har-Magedon (Rev 16:13-16). There the Lord Jesus appears (Rev 17:14) and destroys the hostile armies.

### **Hos 1:6 | The Second Child of Hosea: Lo-ruhamah**

| *6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them."*

Maybe Hosea has not been home regularly because of his work as a prophet. Practice shows that such a situation can tempt some women to seek their 'happiness' with other men. Marriage infidelity is not only found in cases where a man is swallowed up by his busy social activities. Also in marriages of busy pastors in Christianity, marital infidelity is unfortunately not an unknown sin. And certainly not only on the part of women.

There is no reason to assume that Hosea has not been good for his wife. On the contrary, if his marriage should symbolically represent the relationship between God and His people, it is very likely that he has done everything to prove to her that he loves her very much. In spite of that, she becomes unfaithful to him.

Many women have found reason in their husband's behavior to become unfaithful to him. Although the behavior of men can sometimes be criticized a lot, it can never find any justification for a woman's infidelity. She will therefore have to confess her act of infidelity as a sin. But the man will also have to confess his sins, in which his wife has found a reason to be unfaithful to him. In this way it is possible to work towards the restoration of the broken relationship.

In the opposite case, the unfaithfulness of the man, of course, the same applies. More often there is not even a clear misbehavior on the side of the woman. Women whose husbands commit adultery generally feel guilty. They wonder in despair how they could have prevented it. But it is often the man who opens himself up to other women, even in spite of the fact that he has a good marriage relationship with his own wife.

The cause of this lies in the lust of the man that he does not control. The Lord Jesus does not address the man for no reason, when He says: "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28). He indicates in the following verse that this lust must be put to an end.

Be radical. Turn away when you see something that can cause lust to arise. Out with that DVD, that book, throw away that stuff that contains things that pollute your mind. Don't be tempted to visit pornographic sites on the Internet. Everything, even the most pernicious sin, is literally within reach these days: with a single movement of your finger, a push of the (mouse) button, you can see the world and all its attractiveness and perversion.

If there is a temptation here for the reader, answer this temptation with the words of the Lord Jesus: "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY'" (Mt 4:10).

After a son, Hosea's wife now has a daughter. This will certainly be meant to indicate that Israel consists of sons and daughters (cf. Hos 2:1). This child was conceived by Gomer in an extramarital relationship. Gomer has become unfaithful to Hosea. What it says in verse 3, that Gomer bore "him", which refers to Hosea, a son, is not in this verse. Yet the child is attributed to Hosea. He gets the responsibility for it. The LORD commands him to give the child the name "Lo-ruhamah", which means 'no compassion'.

People have probably heard that Hosea's wife has become unfaithful to him and that this child does not belong to Hosea. What will they have talked about, as happens in our time when something like this becomes known. Stories of unfaithfulness fill whole gossip magazines and how it is loved. These kinds of magazines are quite popular, which proves that people like to read them. But readers are blind to their own unfaithfulness. Those who like to hear or read such stories are morally numb and have no feeling for the sinfulness that is present in their own hearts. Talking about the sins of others is simply 'delicious'.

The talk will have gone through the city like wildfire and will have been intensified along the way. This is how it usually goes with the 'passing on' of such events. But Hosea can respond to that and say: 'As my wife is, so are all of you!' His preaching must touch consciences and place them in God's light. They need to see that they are doing exactly the same things that they are accusing others of (Rom 2:1), even if those accusations are sometimes justified.

The same goes for the Pharisees who bring an adulteress to the Lord Jesus (Jn 8:3-11). They want to see what He will do with this case. Certainly, she has committed adultery and the evidence is indisputable. She has been caught red-handed. If He condemns her, He cannot be the Savior. Then He is only a Law Enforcer and so are they. If He acquits her, then He cannot come from God, because then He does not do justice to God's law. What does the Lord Jesus do? By asking a question he makes it clear that the sin of which they accuse the woman is present in their own hearts: "He who is without sin among you, let him [be the] first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8:7). When He has said this, they go away. "They [began] to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones" (Jn 8:9).

Look, that is what we also have to learn. How quickly we talk about the sins of others while forgetting how we ourselves are. It is not a matter of condoning sin, but of recognizing it in ourselves first of all. How many Christians watch dirty programs night after night or consciously look for porn on the internet, while easily saying something about the unfaithfulness of others?

Hosea could have said: 'Entering into this marriage has been the mistake of my life. Look, what a misery I have been through, what a disgrace for the children.' He could also have blamed God, just like Adam: "The woman whom You gave [to be] with me" (Gen 3:12). He doesn't do that. When he writes these words, it is as if he looks back and says: 'This is how God has led me.'

This view gives him the power to keep loving her and not become unfaithful himself. Even if she runs away from him, he remains faithful to her. She even comes back to him, as we will see in Hosea 3. In this way Hosea also experiences God's faithfulness towards His people. Even though He has to reject Israel because of unfaithfulness, it is not forever. There will come a time when He will accept His people again.

In this time, in which so much is being done from the point of view of feeling, it is good to also point out this attitude of Hosea. You sometimes hear: 'We should break up, because I don't feel anything for her anymore', or: 'We don't feel anything for each other anymore.' As if the absence of certain feelings could be a valid reason to dissolve a marriage. Who thinks of such a thing? It only comes from Satan's quiver of lies.

The command for men is: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). It is clear, isn't it? No more talk like 'feel nothing for' or 'you should be in my shoes'. Just do it.

The only strength for the best and most difficult marriage lies in the example of the Lord Jesus. He loves the church. He loves her when she is completely devoted to Him in the very beginning of her existence on earth. He also loves her now that she is so unfaithful to Him towards the end of her presence on earth. That love can be seen perfectly on the cross. There He died out of love for His church, His heavenly bride, to acquire her for Himself to be His wife forever.

When Hosea hears the remarks about his unfaithful wife, he points to the name he had to give this child. This name is telling. Once again it must have sounded hard to his people's ears and possibly they laughed again. But God will stop proving His compassion to them. If God withdraws His compassion, it is a terrible thing. He must, however, let Israel feel the effect

if He no longer has compassion for them. A child without compassion is doomed to die or to become a monster. A human being or a people cannot do without compassion. For His people then, Israel, and for His people now, the church, compassion is the basis of their existence. If God can no longer prove His compassion, it means the end.

For God it is a terrible thing that He has to act this way. David says of him: "Just as a father has compassion on [his] children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him" (Psa 103:13). And has not Israel experienced such compassion recently? Only a few years ago, at the time of the reign of Joash, the father of Jeroboam, they experienced it: "But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them" (2Kgs 13:23). And even more recently, under Jeroboam's reign, the LORD saw "the affliction of Israel, [which was] very bitter; for there was neither bond nor free, nor was there any helper for Israel". And then we read: "But He saved them" (2Kgs 14:26-27).

God makes Himself known as a God who takes care of people in need. This is how we also get to know God in the history of Job: "You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and [is] merciful" (Jam 5:11).

There is no greater encouragement to love and serve God than after we have experienced compassion. In Romans 12, Christians are addressed as people who know God's mercy. In Romans 1-8 those mercies or compassions are broadly measured. In Romans 9-11 they are shown to Israel. It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul immediately follows this up by saying: "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship" (Rom 12:1). Because of all that God has done for us in Christ, He may expect us to serve Him with all that we are and have.

It is a great ingratitude when we answer God's compassion with unfaithfulness, doing our own will, and following our own lusts. If we consistently ignore His compassion, if we pretend that it means nothing, the moment will come when He can no longer make us feel His compassion. Soon that moment will come for Israel. It will happen that He will "forgive them", which means that He no longer forgives them.

His compassion is, in fact, most evident in the forgiveness He grants. When God no longer forgives, because there is no more repentance among His people, the people sink further and further into their sins. Then He has to execute the final judgment. This will happen when the ten tribes are deported out of their land. This is the judgment that awaits the people.

### **Hos 1:7 | A Word About Judah**

*7 But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."*

If God must go so far as to deny Israel his compassion, He attaches to this a message for Judah. Although Hosea mainly addresses Israel, the ten tribes kingdom, he also occasionally says something about Judah. That does not mean that Israel does not have to listen then. The saying also contains a message for them.

When we read in God's Word, He speaks – as the Lord Jesus does in the Gospels – to a whole people, a group of people or just one person. We know we are addressed, because what applies to those who are directly addressed, also applies to us. We must always ask ourselves what the message that is spoken to the other person means to us. The reason for what God or the Lord Jesus notices can be a certain behavior. If we recognize such behavior in ourselves, we would do well to listen carefully to the Word of God.

If Israel as a whole can no longer escape judgment, the word that is said to Judah can still mean a way out for the few in Israel who bow under God's judgment. Whoever resorts to Judah can still count on the compassion of God. Even today, where the judgment of Christianity as a whole is inescapable, there is such an escape route. That escape route is separation from evil with the promise of the compassion of God (2Cor 6:17-18).

For Judah, this word is a great encouragement. Here the LORD calls Himself "their God". He is still in connection with them. They will experience His compassion in the salvation He will give (2Kgs 19:35). God has allowed the king of Assyria to deport the ten tribes. In his audacity this king also wants to conquer the kingdom of the two tribes. He has approached

Jerusalem and besieged it. But God does not allow him to take His city (2Kgs 19:33-36).

The salvation does not come by his own strength and effort or by following a cleverly conceived tactic. There is no clattering of Judah's arms. It is a salvation that has clearly only been brought about "by the LORD their God", without the use of any human being. That salvation has come about because of Who God is in Himself, "for my sake", and because of who David is, His chosen servant, "for David's sake, My servant" (2Kgs 19:34). In David we see a picture of the Lord Jesus, the true Servant of God. Salvation, every salvation, is based on pure grace from God which He can show because of Who the Lord Jesus is for Him and what He did on the cross.

### **Hos 1:8-9 | The Third Child of Hosea: Lo-ammi**

*8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. 9 And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."*

Lo-ruhamah is barely weaned or Gomer is back on the bad path. She is quick in her unfaithfulness, the result of which quickly shows itself again. How deeply Hosea must be grieved by this renewed unfaithfulness. Would not he have hoped that, after her first adulterous act, she would now remain faithful to him? Since she must have seen how he cares for her and the children, should not she have been won over by his love? No, as soon as she no longer feels any responsibility for the child she birthed, she goes down the bad path again. In spite of all the love Hosea has proven to her after she has returned to him, she gets pregnant by another man.

But even now, when she comes back for the second time, pregnant again by another man, he lets her in again. Again he takes her in, with her illegitimate child. Again Hosea is commanded by the LORD to give this child a name. Again in that name the judgment of God on His people is expressed.

Again there will have been a lot of gossip about the unfaithfulness of Gomer. And again Hosea has taken the opportunity to announce God's judgment over the people because of their unfaithfulness, because of the meaning of the name of the child. While in the previous name there is only talk of God withdrawing His compassion from His people, in the name he



is to give to this third child, the definitive break between God and His people is indicated. “Lo-ammi” means ‘not My people’. Every bond between God and His people is broken.

Giving up His connection with Israel is an even harder blow than not loving anymore. God is withdrawing. There is no more open acknowledgment that Israel is His people. He will act with them as described in the book of Esther. The Name of God is not mentioned in that book. Yet behind the scenes God is making sure that His people are not exterminated to the last man. In His providence – that is, not openly, but in a hidden way – He remains busy for Israel until today. He will continue to do so until the day of Israel’s restoration. That restoration is the subject of the following verse.

### **Hos 1:10 | Numerous and Sons of the Living God**

*10 Yet the number of the sons of Israel  
Will be like the sand of the sea,  
Which cannot be measured or numbered;  
And in the place  
Where it is said to them,  
“You are not My people,”  
It will be said to them,  
“[You are] the sons of the living God.”*

A bright ray of hope is expressed in the first word of this verse, “yet”. After the warnings of the coming judgment, here the sovereign grace of God comes to the fore. If, because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, He has had to cut through every bond with them, this does not mean forever. There will come a time when God will take up the thread with His people again. Then He will fulfill all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The expression “the sand of the sea” recalls God’s promise to Abraham that his offspring will be “as the sand which is on the seashore” (Gen 22:17). God makes that promise after Abraham has sacrificed his son by faith (Heb 11:17-18). In that event, the picture of God sacrificing His Son Jesus Christ on the cross is clearly visible. It is only because of the sacrifice of Christ that God will fulfill all His promises to Israel.

The people have forfeited all rights to restoration and all claims to fulfillment of the promises. God would bless them if they would remain faithful to Him. They agree with that condition when they pronounce it three times at Sinai: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" (Exo 19:8; 24:3,7). But in the course of their history they have shown how they have despised and trampled on all God's righteous commandments and statutes. It is on this basis that God must pronounce His judgments, as He does in this first chapter of Hosea. These judgments He actually executes. However, this does not mean that His promises have thereby failed (Rom 9:6).

He will fulfill His promises to a remnant that He Himself has chosen, a rest of the people. How this will be done is described in detail in Romans 9-11. There remains a future for Israel. That future is there, not according to the merit of the people, but according to the merit of Jesus Christ. Where Israel has failed, He has perfectly done everything God asks of man. He has earned the fulfillment of His promises.

When the present era, that of the church, has come to an end – that is, when the Lord Jesus has taken the church up to Himself (1Thes 4:15-18) – He will start working with Israel again. Then He will pour out on them "the Spirit of grace and of supplication" (Zec 12:10). Then He will come back to earth and they will see Him Whom they have pierced (Rev 1:7). All who will come to repentance will be allowed to share with Him in the fulfillment of His promises. The masses will be judged because they have accepted the antichrist, who will then reveal himself.

The elect will not be dragged along with the masses in their worship of the image of the beast that was put into the temple by the antichrist (Rev 13:14-15). They will, despite fierce persecution, remain faithful looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. From their side, this is no merit. Only grace will make them remain faithful. Everything comes from God.

In the realm of peace, this rest, this remnant, will grow into a huge crowd and become "like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered". In the expression "sand of the sea" there is an indication that it concerns God's earthly people, Israel. This in contrast to the expression "stars of the heavens" (Gen 22:17) which refers to the heavenly people of God.

However, there will not only be a great change in numbers. There will also, and more importantly, be a change in their relationship to the LORD. Instead of idolaters, they will, after their restoration, be called by God His 'sons'. This change can only be effected by the grace of God.

But if everything is only based on grace, that grace cannot be limited to the Jews, but the door will also be opened to the nations. That is why Paul quotes this verse from Hosea in Rom 9 (Rom 9:26). With this he shows that God is not obliged to limit His grace to the Jews. Romans 9 is a chapter that shows that God is sovereign, also in showing grace to whom He wills. He has the right to call people from the nations and to justify them by faith (Rom 9:30).

The fact that Paul quotes this verse from Hosea is also because it speaks of "sons of the living God". This is typically an expression of the relationship between God and the Christian. God can no longer be in connection with the Jew, as He never has been in connection with the Gentile. Of both He has had to say: "You are not My people." This applies to the Jews since God, as a result of their unfaithfulness, had to break His connection with them. For the Gentiles it has always been the case that God has allowed them to go their own way. And now Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, cites this verse as proof that all who are called by God, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles, are called by Him "sons of the living God".

God is called here "the living God". With this He is in sharp contrast with the dead idols. This contrast is beautifully expressed in the conversion of the Thessalonians, and if it is good for every person who repents (1Thes 1:9-10). That He is the living God not only indicates that He lives, but also that all life finds its origin in Him (Jn 1:4; 5:26).

When Peter answers the question of the Lord Jesus: "Who do you say that I am?" with: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:15-16), he indicates that life is present in Christ Himself. Therefore, the Lord can connect to this confession of Peter about the truth of His Person the wonderful promise of building the church. On Him, the Son of the living God, the church is built, a church that cannot be affected by death (Mt 16:18).

## **Hos 1:11 | One People, One Leader**

*11 And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,  
And they will appoint for themselves one leader,  
And they will go up from the land,  
For great will be the day of Jezreel.*

After the blessing for the ten tribes in verse 10 – and for the Gentiles, as it becomes clear in the light of the New Testament (Rom 9:26,30) – Hosea speaks in this verse of the blessing for all Israel. That blessing lies in the future. There will then be a reunion of the two and ten tribes that have been torn apart since the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I (1Kgs 12:16-19). Jeremiah also spoke about this (Jer 31:31).

When that time comes, they will join their Messiah as one nation. Then they will no longer be two nations, each with its own ruler. No, they will be one nation with “one Leader” (cf. Eze 37:24). They will acknowledge the God-given King in the rejected Jesus of Nazareth. From all over the land they will go to Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God, to honor Him.

It is possible that “go up from the land” also refers to their return from the scattering. “The land” then presents the land of Egypt as a symbol of all the nations to which the Israelites are scattered (cf. Hos 2:14-15; Deu 28:68). In the course of time, many Israelites have returned to their land.

It is not possible to make this verse refer to the return of God’s people from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. That concerns only a rest. Moreover, they are still under the authority of the nations under which God has placed them, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. They have not been able to choose a ‘leader’ themselves. Until 1948 they were never even independent.

When the day or time of which Hosea speaks has come, it can rightly be said that that day is “great”. What no one has dared to dream of, what no enemy of Israel thinks of, will then happen. All God’s promises will be fulfilled in that day and to that people by Him Who is their Leader. That day is called “the day of Jezreel”. Jezreel means, as already said in verse 4, ‘God will scatter’ or ‘God will sow’. The first meaning becomes true when the Assyrians deport the ten tribes and scatter them over all the countries they have conquered. But when Israel has placed itself under his one Lead-

er, God will sow His people into the land. Then it will never be scattered again.

It is not a day of humiliation, but of public glory. Everyone will have their own inheritance in the land and will be able to enjoy the blessings that God will then give generously. At the end of the next chapter we will see how great this blessing is and how God will make it come, where again is spoken about Jezreel (Hos 2:22).

Indeed, “great will be the day of Jezreel”. The time corresponding to that day is the thousand years of peace. Then the undivided, independent nation will experience a time of unprecedented, reborn glory under Christ as the acknowledged Leader (cf. Isa 2:1-5; 11:1-14; Rev 20:1-6).

## Hosea 2

### **Introduction**

This chapter has the same theme as the previous one. Also in this chapter Israel is presented as a woman of harlotry. The difference with Hosea 1 is that this is not about Hosea's marriage, but that Israel's unfaithfulness is described in more detail here.

God calls Hosea to denounce His people as a lewd woman. She has been guilty of the worst unfaithfulness to God by seeking her advantage from the nations. She has forgotten that all blessing comes only from God. That is why God brings her into the loneliness of the wilderness. There He speaks to her heart. His grace works a return of the people that He will call 'My people' again. In the same way God wants to work in our lives when we forget Him.

### **Hos 2:1 | A Remnant and its Characteristic**

| 1 Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah."

After the magnificent view unfolded in the previous verses, the prophet is instructed to say something to a more defined group. This is a word spoken to people whom God calls "your brothers" and "your sisters". God sees these people in connection with Hosea. He regards them as his family. Not the whole people are addressed, but those members of them who share Hosea's feelings towards the whole of Israel and therefore also the feelings of God.

Listening to God, to what He says in His Word, is the true characteristic in those days and is the true characteristic now of everyone He recognizes as a member of His 'family'. In the same way the Lord Jesus speaks when He calls those who do the will of His Father His brothers and sisters (Mt 12:48-50).

This is what can be called 'a remnant' recognized by the heart of God. That remnant is an object of mercy, while the nation as a whole must be rejected by Him. That remnant, after having had to call His people Lo-ammi, not

My people, for a while, He now calls again “Ammi”, My people. The same people He had to call Lo-ruhamah, who did not receive compassion. But now He calls it “Ruhamah” again, who has received compassion.

Even today, in the midst of a Christianity where there is no place for the Christ of the Scriptures and the Word of God is attacked from all sides, love for the Lord Jesus is the simple characteristic of someone who wants to be faithful. That love becomes visible in being obedient to the Word of God.

### **Hos 2:2 | Call to Contend**

*2 “Contend with your mother, contend,  
For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband;  
And let her put away her harlotry from her face  
And her adultery from between her breasts,*

The call to contend with “your mother”, that is Israel – or: to enter into a lawsuit with her – is addressed to the God-fearing within that same Israel. It is a faithful remnant that takes God’s side against sin. The “contention” to which is called is an appropriate and humble testimony against evil, in the sense of being part of the same people being contended. The fact that this call sounds twice in succession indicates the necessity of the accusation. The time is more than ripe for it. A longer delay would give the appearance that God is indifferent to the sins of His people.

When God testifies against evil, so must the faithful believers. Hosea is such a faithful believer, as are those who are called “brothers” and “sisters” in the previous verse (verse 1). Like Hosea, they, too, are indignant about the sin of unfaithfulness to which the people are guilty. They feel the evil and speak and act with it according to God’s will and as His Spirit makes clear to them.

The call comes to the individual, faithful believer to testify that the people as a whole are on the way of sin. But it gives extra courage to give this testimony fearlessly when we know that, even in our testimony against evil, we are not alone, but that others share those feelings with us. By clearly distancing ourselves from evil and not participating in it, or even separating ourselves from it, this testimony gains its true power.

No one can be a true witness against prevailing evil if he remains connected to it. This call can be applied today to a local church that allows worldly influences and deviates from Scripture. Against this, we must make our voice heard and take action. Deviation from God's thoughts must be denounced.

If, after repeated requests, no response is found, separation must take place. This can only happen when all attempts to come to repentance have failed, when it has turned out that one does not judge wickedness, but allows it to exist or remains consciously connected to it. The call is then: "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness" (2Tim 2:19b; cf. Rev 18:4-5).

God can no longer acknowledge Israel as His wife. Through her marital unfaithfulness, she has severed the marriage bond. Through her harlotry she has broken the covenant with Him. She does not seem to have any sense of shame. She is no longer ashamed, no longer knows what blushing is. Instead, the longing for lewdness reads on her face. Jeremiah speaks of having "a harlot's forehead" (Jer 3:3). But it is not only on her face that it is read, but practice also proves her complete unfaithfulness to God. Just as harlots blatantly bare their breasts, so Israel offers herself, without shame, to seduce her lovers.

God, in His description of the unfaithfulness of His people, is by no means flattering. Without restraint He compares the attitude and behavior of His people with that of a cheeky harlot. He does this so that the Israelites will see the repugnance of their behavior and repent. You will be compared to a harlot after all!

We may speak disgracefully of Israel's behavior, but then we do not understand that the same is said to us (2Cor 11:3; Jam 4:4). If that becomes apparent to us, what is our reaction? It is possible to react angrily or with indifference, but there may also be acknowledgment. In the hope of the latter reaction follows the exhortation, both to Israel and to us, to get rid of lewdness in attitude and behavior.

The last part of the verse points out that this adultery takes place in a hidden place, in secret. When hidden sins are confessed and disposed of, Christ can take that place. The bride in Song of Songs says of Him: "My



beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh sleeping between my breasts” (Song 1:13). Anyone who calls the Lord Jesus ‘my Beloved’ will not allow anything or anyone to displace Him from that place.

### **Hos 2:3 | Consequences of Unrepentance**

*3 Or I will strip her naked  
And expose her as on the day when she was born.  
I will also make her like a wilderness,  
Make her like desert land  
And slay her with thirst.*

The word “or” indicates that repentance is still possible. But if the call made at the end of verse 2 is not answered, the consequences will be as described in verse 3. In Hosea 1 there is no such possibility. There the judgment is announced, without mentioning that repentance averts this judgment. However, in a judgment preaching it is not always necessary to point out that one can escape that judgment by repentance. Jonah, for example, only preaches judgment (Jona 3:4). If this judgment is acknowledged, remorse and repentance come (Jona 3:5). As a result, God does not execute the judgment (Jona 3:10).

The judgment that God will bring upon His people if they do not repent means that He will strip her naked as on the day of her birth. This means that He will take away all the privileges He has bestowed on His people. He will also bring her into a state of complete helplessness, a state that the prophet Ezekiel depicts when he describes Israel on the day of his birth (Eze 16:4-5). This is presented to Israel as a warning, so that it will come to repentance. Furthermore, God warns His people that He will also make her like a wilderness, a place where there is no water and people die of thirst. God will withhold the rain from the people in His judgment. No more blessing will be her part.

It is always touching to see how God speaks to His people. It is as if He still hesitates to execute His judgment. Through the service of Hosea, He offers her a last chance to escape. As Hosea sees that the people do not care about his message – a message on behalf of God – his statements become more vehement and penetrating.

## **Hos 2:4 | No Compassion on the Children**

*4 “Also, I will have no compassion on her children,  
Because they are children of harlotry.*

By speaking of “your mother” (verse 2) the LORD has addressed the people as a whole. Now He speaks of “her children” with whom the individual Israelites are meant. He will show them no compassion, because they were born as a result of ‘the mother’s’ dealings with false gods. The idolatry reigns supreme in Israel. God is not thought of. The blessings obtained are attributed to the Baal (verse 8). Not only the nation as a whole is guilty, but also each Israelite individually. In every Israelite the fruit of the adultery of ‘the mother’ becomes visible. The saying “like mother, like daughter” (Eze 16:44) applies here.

One could argue that children cannot do anything about it if their mother plays the harlot. But that is not the point here. After all, not all follow the mother in her adulterous behavior. Those who are called “brothers” and “sisters” (verse 1), who are called to contend with their mother (verse 2), do not participate.

If God does not take care of children born out of harlotry, it is because they act according to their birth. These children have no repentance, no crying out to God, no begging for His compassion. They do exactly the same things as their mother. The fact that God does not take care of them is only due to themselves, to their own adulterous behavior in imitation of their mother.

## **Hos 2:5 | The Harlotry of the Mother**

*5 “For their mother has played the harlot;  
She who conceived them has acted shamefully.  
For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,  
Who give [me] my bread and my water,  
My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’*

With “mother” again the whole people of Israel is meant. By “them”, in the second line, are meant the children of verse 4. Just as Gomer has followed her lovers and received gifts from them, so Israel does with the idols of

the surrounding nations. Israel attributes all the blessings with which the LORD has overloaded them to the favor of the false gods.

Undoubtedly these things have come into their possession as a result of trade agreements. But Israel links the thought to the fact that the surrounding nations possess this merchandise as a result of the benevolence of an idol. Therefore, in addition to possessing the material benefits, Israel desires to connect spiritually with those gods. After all, these gods bring them all their prosperity.

The unfaithful people pretend that these goods belong to her through the generosity of the world, from which she indeed wants to receive them. By her "lovers" especially Egypt and Assyria are meant, with whom she has made lewd commitments (Eze 16:26,28-29).

She made those commitments in order to obtain earthly benefits. But she is blind to the fact that she has received these earthly benefits from God as well (verse 8). They continue to seek their satisfaction exclusively in earthly pleasures. As a result, they are beyond the experience described by David: "You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound" (Psa 4:7). David's joy does not lie in earthly prosperity and wealth. What everyone who is honest also deeply recognizes today is David's portion. When the heart finds peace in God, it is perfectly happy and does not care about all earthly glory.

What Israel has done, Christianity does now: it seeks its advantage in the world. Without asking for God of Whom everything is, Christians enjoy all kinds of things in the same way as the people of the world do. They also often say that they have worked hard for it themselves, thus asserting their right to a certain standard of living. Only for the form, sometimes a 'form prayer' is said at meals. Many Christians want to benefit as much as possible from all kinds of advantages to make life on earth as pleasant as possible.

Today's Christianity is completely alienated from what drives a man like Paul. When he talks about certain advantages, from which he could make a profit, to the satisfaction of his ego, he says that for Christ's sake he has given up everything (Phil 3:7-8). That is why he can declare Christians who exceed themselves to be enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil 3:18-19).

In what way would there be no idols today? Of how many Christians is the god not “[their] appetite”? They fill themselves with all sorts of worldly ‘delights’. This idol may therefore rejoice in an unprecedented popularity. Why is that? Because Christ is no longer everything to the heart.

We can also learn from Rebekah’s attitude when she is asked to go to Isaac. When Abraham’s servant has told all kinds of things about Isaac and also shown her precious things, and then suggests to her that she goes with him, she says without hesitation, “I will go” (Gen 24:58). She takes all the hardships of the wilderness journey to be with Isaac. Nothing from her parental home is able to keep her there. Although she has not seen Isaac, she has seen so much of his glory that she likes to go with the servant. She gives herself unconditionally to him, he is her first love. If our love for the Lord Jesus is just as great, we are not so full of all those earthly delicacies.

“Bread” and “water” are necessities of life; “wool” and “flax” are used to make clothes; “oil” and “wine” symbolize joy and festivities. It is around these things that the life of the Israelites at the time of Hosea revolves, and it is around these things that the lives of countless Christians today revolve.

The recurring “my” that stands before each of these articles is reminiscent of the parable of the rich fool the Lord Jesus pronounces (Lk 12:13-21). The man is doing well. Things are going so well that he can no longer store everything in his storerooms. He thinks about the measures to be taken and comes to the conclusion that he will demolish the old barns and build bigger ones. He talks about “my crops”, “my barns”, “my grain and my goods”. We see how selfish this man is and how his whole thinking is focused on his possessions. The word “my” comes out of his mouth quite a few times! We also see this selfishness in Nabal who does not want to give David anything of his possessions (1Sam 25:11).

But the man in the parable has not yet finished his reflections. He has his ducks in a row and thinks he can now enjoy himself. We can say that the man has thought well and has arranged his affairs very well, too. But there is one thing he has not thought about and that is the word the Lord Jesus speaks before he tells the parable: “For not [even] when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Lk 12:15b).

Therefore, the parable does not end with a successful businessman enjoying life, but with the reality that God has the last word. God calls someone who lives only for money and good, food, drink and pleasure, a ‘fool’. Suddenly the earthly life can come to an end and then you will no longer have any use for all those things for which you have toiled so hard and to which you are so attached.

### **Hos 2:6 | Thorns and a Wall**

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

This verse indicates how God acts with His people to bring them back from their own path. He uses imagery twice: “hedge up her way with thorns” and “build a wall”. A road barred with thorns is a road on which an impenetrable barrier has been placed. You can only go up that road if you are prepared to suffer painful injuries. The path of sin is made unattractive, its painful side is shown.

Someone can be kept from a sinful road if it is painted in bright colors that will mean, for example, the ruin of his health. A military exercise ground or a minefield can be cordoned off by barbed wire because it is very dangerous to enter this terrain or field. Anyone who does not heed the warnings and still wants to risk it must bear the consequences. He can get a lot of clothes tears and also physical injuries, he even runs the risk of being killed. Only a fool does not care about thorns or barbed wire.

But God still has a means. He will close off access to the path taken by sin with a wall. He does this to bring the illegal users – His unfaithful people – from the path of sin back on the right path. God erects a wall, a wall that provides seclusion, separating His people from their lovers (cf. Job 19:8).

This happens when He scatters Israel. Then they no longer exist as a nation and as a nation they no longer have contact with foreign peoples and their gods. In this way she can no longer commit adultery with the idols. In Hosea 3 this is further elaborated, but here this judgment is described as a disciplinary measure that must lead to conversion (verse 7).

### **Hos 2:7 | The Decision to Return**

*7 "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them;  
And she will seek them, but will not find [them].  
Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband,  
For it was better for me then than now!'"*

In this verse follows the elaboration of what God did in verse 6. If Israel appeals in vain to the nations from whom they have benefited so much, they will remember that they have not had it that bad with God. They will return to Him. Unfortunately, the confession of sin is missing. There is no repentance. There is no disgust for their sin and the idols are not given up.

With the prodigal son in Luke 15 this is different. That boy also thinks it is better in the world than at home. But when he is in misery, he remembers how much better he had it at home. When he gets up and goes back home, he does so with a confession (Lk 15:13-20).

If only Israel had returned to God with such a confession. The following verse makes it clear that they have no awareness that God has given them everything they attribute to the idols.

This picture of Israel also applies to nominal Christians. One seeks the world and its benefits, its riches and prosperity, the pleasant existence, without asking for God. But it can happen that there is no longer any advantage to be gained in the world, for example by a natural disaster that takes away all the abundance of a country, or by a disease that puts an end to all plans. Then there is a tendency to return to that good old 'religion'. In wartime the churches fill up and when there is personal need, people often start praying again. But if one starts asking for God again solely because of need, without remorse and repentance, this is just a hollow phrase. God will certainly not listen to it (Job 35:12-13; 35:9-10).

### **Hos 2:8 | God Is Not Acknowledged as the Giver**

*8 "For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine  
and the oil,  
And lavished on her silver and gold,  
[Which] they used for Baal."*

God is the source of all blessing. “The grain, the new wine and the oil” are more often mentioned together (Deu 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 28:51). They are the three main blessings of the land. If one starts to consider the gifts that God gives in nature or spiritually apart from Him as the Giver, the unfaithfulness is born. Israel has lost the awareness that it owes everything it possesses to God.

We see that this has brought sin into the world. In Paradise, God says to man that he may eat freely from all the trees of the garden. But what comes first with Eve? From her answer to the serpent it appears that with her the fruit is in the foreground and that she is not allowed to eat it freely. Her attention is focused on the gift and not on the Giver. And then things go wrong. In a certain sense God blesses all people (Mt 5:45b; Acts 14:17). But just like Israel and just like Eve, modern man does not realize that God is the source of the food and joy he is allowed to enjoy every day.

Not only does Israel not thank God for it, but they also use the gifts of God in their audacity to give them to Baal. This is done, for example, by turning the gold into a statue for the Baal, but also by sacrificing all kinds of gifts to that self-made statue. It is possible that the name ‘Baal’ stands for all the idols here, of which Baal is the most popular.

We may ask ourselves: For what purpose do I use what I have received from God? Do I serve myself with it? Or do I serve others with it, but only for the benefit that it gives me again? Or do I sometimes serve the gods of our time with it, by being fully absorbed in my career, by paying too much attention and money to how I look or by being able to argue as powerfully as possible? There are more examples where a person abuses what he has received from God, to his own credit.

## Hos 2:9 | God Takes Away the Blessing

9 *“Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time  
And My new wine in its season.  
I will also take away My wool and My flax  
[Given] to cover her nakedness.*

Because of the lack of awareness that God is the source of their blessing (verse 8), God is going to take the blessing away again. Because of their

sinful deeds, God will take away their food and clothing so that there is a lack of the most basic necessities of life (1Tim 6:8). For example, God might withhold the rain from the land. More often the people have been punished with drought for their unfaithfulness and idolatry (1Kgs 17:1-7). He can also take away the blessing from enemies who rob the harvest (Jdg 6:1-6).

God acts this way because the people are unfaithful to Him. That is why this verse, as well as verse 6, begins with “therefore”, because God cannot allow His people to appropriate what is His. God speaks here of “My grain”, “My new wine”, “My wool” and “My flax”, to indicate that it comes from Him and remains of Him. What He gives, He does not lose. He remains its Owner and has the right to take it back.

From a spiritual point of view this is also the case. The church has lost a lot of blessing because of her unfaithfulness. Enemies have got the upper hand in the church. People who criticize the Bible are given the space to spread their pernicious teachings on the pulpit. Christians are more open to influences from the world than to the Word of God. If meeting- and organizing techniques prove to work in the world, they are also used to improve discussions in and the functioning of the church of God.

In this way the enemy gains control over the ins and outs of the church. The Word of God is no longer the point of reference, but the word of people. The church becomes an association that is governed in accordance with what is acceptable in worldly associations. God then takes away what He has given in blessing. Believers lose the sense of their connection to a glorified Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

This can also be applied to natural life and material things. Sometimes money has to be spent on things that are the result of unfaithfulness or violation of prescribed rules. This is the case with a fine for driving too fast. The money to be paid for this is lost. If you cause a collision, it often costs even more money. It is also possible to treat your health irresponsibly, causing your body to lose certain functions. By bad behavior money and good and health can be taken away from you, you have lost it.



But now the reaction. Do I finish up with: ‘Oh, that can happen to anyone, so to me as well’? That is true, but doesn’t the Christian look any further? God speaks through it. Am I open to learning what God wants to teach me through it? You may certainly expect the latter from a Christian.

### **Hos 2:10 | God’s People Disgraced**

*10 “And then I will uncover her lewdness  
In the sight of her lovers,  
And no one will rescue her out of My hand.*

The word translated here with “lewdness” means ‘withered state’. That is the end result, when God has taken all her abundance away from her. Israel’s “lovers” will therefore despise her and want nothing more to do with her. It indicates Israel’s deep humiliation.

This is how it goes with everyone who leaves God to serve the world. God will disgrace such a person before the eyes of the world. The world seems like a lover, but as soon as there is nothing more to be gained, you are pushed aside like dirt. Such a thing happens to an Egyptian young man. Because he has become ill, his lord leaves him behind as a prey for anyone who sees him. Fortunately, this young man falls into the hands of David (1Sam 30:11-20).

When God pronounces His judgment, it is impossible to escape. No one can stop Him then. Maybe there are people who feel sorry for your situation, but if there is no real return to God, it is not possible to really get out of that ‘withered state’.

### **Hos 2:11 | God Puts the People’s Feast to an End**

*11 “I will also put an end to all her gaiety,  
Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths  
And all her festal assemblies.*

God will put to an end everything that pleases His people because it is a pleasure without Him. The feasts have degenerated into religious forms, with no place for God there. The center for religious ceremonies is Jerusalem. The kingdom of the ten tribes will have held its feasts in Bethel and Dan with the golden calves (1Kgs 12:25-33), or in other consecrated places.

Of the feasts described in Leviticus 23, here are mentioned the monthly Feast of trumpets, which are the “new moons”, the weekly “Sabbaths” and “all her feasts”, which are the annual feasts. The annual celebrations include the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Booth.

But what in Leviticus 23 is called “the LORD’s appointed times” or “the feast days of the LORD” (Lev 23:2), is called here “her feasts, her new moons and her sabbaths”, “all her festal assemblies”. We find the same in the Gospel according to John. There the “Passover to the LORD” (Lev 23:5) is called “the Passover of the Jews” (Jn 2:13; 6:4; cf. Jn 5:1; 7:2). They do not hold these feasts in honor of God, but for the feast itself. Only the form is maintained.

The same is true of Christianity. The outer forms of religiosity still exist. However, they are empty shells where God is not honored, but where man is central and gorges himself. In the New Testament two things are said to be “of the Lord”. That is “Supper of the Lord” (1Cor 11:20) and “the day of the Lord” (Rev 1:10). The expression “of the Lord” means ‘belonging to the Lord’ and appears as such only in these two places.

The Supper of the Lord has become a supper of people. Whether one says that the supper serves to strengthen one’s faith, as in Protestantism, or whether one says that by eating it one eats Christ and therefore has eternal life, as in roman catholicism, in both cases it is not understood what this meal means. The Supper is a meal in remembrance of Him, Who surrendered Himself to God and died for the church (1Cor 11:23-26).

In the same way, the day of the Lord, Sunday, has become a day that we fill with doing things we like to do ourselves. Maybe we still visit a church or meeting, but it should not take too long, because there should also be enough time left for ourselves. We don’t think anymore that it is a day that He has set aside especially for Himself.

By the way, the “day of the Lord” is not a disguised form of the Sabbath, for which all kinds of rules have been devised of what you are allowed to do and especially what you are not allowed to do. The goal of the Lord’s day is that on that day every Christian will dedicate himself especially to the Lord. Of course, it also applies to other days that a Christian is dedicated to the Lord. He cannot live without Him for a moment. But on that

special day, the everyday things we always have to do, as much as possible, go aside to honor Him.

Honoring that will happen in the first place by coming together with God's children. We can also honor Him by giving a little extra attention to some of those who appreciate a visit. Furthermore, anyone who lets himself be led by the Lord, will certainly find to give substance to that day that corresponds to the fact that it is "the day of the Lord".

### **Hos 2:12 | Destruction of Vine and Fig Tree**

*12 "I will destroy her vines and fig trees,  
Of which she said, 'These are my wages  
Which my lovers have given me.'  
And I will make them a forest,  
And the beasts of the field will devour them.*

From the feasts in the previous verse, the prophet passes to the fruits of the land. Feasts and fruits belong together because the annual feasts are related to agriculture. The vine and the fig tree represent the delicious fruits of the land, which God intended as a blessing for every Israelite. In the time of Solomon, when he reigns over a large area and has peace on all sides, Judah and Israel live peacefully, "every man under his vine and his fig tree" (1Kgs 4:24-25).

But what is a gift from God is seen by Israel as something they have received from their lovers, Egypt and Assyria. When they see their vine and fig tree, they are no longer reminded of the goodness of God, but of their trading partners. Maybe they boast of their smartness in the negotiations.

God no longer appears in their thoughts. What an insult to Him! But if they think they have received the blessings God has given them from their "lovers", then they no longer need to count on God's protection. He will take away any protection from them and make them a booty for their enemies. He who despises God's blessings must also lack God's protection.

### **Hos 2:13 | Punishment for the Days of the Baals**

*13 "I will punish her for the days of the Baals  
When she used to offer sacrifices to them*

*And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry,  
And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD.*

The reason for the judgment lies in the offering of sacrifices to the Baals. This refers to the days of Ahab by whom Baal service was elevated to the status of “state religion”, while God’s service was set aside (1Kgs 16:31-33). Although Jehu eradicated Baal service (2Kgs 10:18-28), the heart of the people remained attached to Baal. The idolatry has been revived and the serving of Baal has begun again (2Kgs 11:18).

The plural “Baals” indicates that there are several manifestations of idolatry. Regionally different gods are venerated under the name Baal, just as there are today different Madonna’s of the one Mary worship from place to place. There are also Baals with different functions. The tribute to the Baals goes hand in hand with extensive ceremonies. People dress like harlots to seduce their lovers.

Then comes the striking “she forgot Me”. Here we hear the touching language of God’s heart because of the rejection of His love. Forgetting or ignoring Him is perhaps even worse than opposing Him. It shows contempt. It is not only not taking Him into account, but pretending He is not there. There is nothing more that can hurt a person than to pretend that he does not exist. How shocking for a child can be the discovery that his parents have forgotten him. Then you are not really important, then other things or people are apparently more important. Someone can disappear from our thoughts because we no longer find him or her interesting.

This can also happen to God. There are people who say they have a weak memory and think they can apologize for not serving God. But if you listen to them, you notice how they can remember other things very well. Forgetting God is a guilty act, and it does him an enormous amount of injustice. It certainly matters to Him how His people treat Him. If His love is not answered, it causes Him great sorrow.

### **Hos 2:14 | God Is Going to Allure His People**

*14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
Bring her into the wilderness  
And speak kindly to her.*

With this verse a description begins of what God will do to His people in the future. That description continues to the end of the chapter. After the judgments now follow the promises of salvation. The judgment that God must announce and also execute is not His last word to His people. The “therefore” with which the verse begins introduces the blessing, just as the “therefore” of verses 6,9 introduces the judgment.

The place God chooses to begin blessing is the wilderness. There the people, His wife, must learn that the false gods could not make her rich. In the solitude of the wilderness, alone with the LORD, she will learn where her sin has taken her. There she will feel the lack of the blessings God had given her in His land. This is God’s way with His people to do her well at last.

This bringing her into the wilderness is what God does when He lets His people be deported by the Assyrians and scattered in “the wilderness of the nations” (Eze 20:35-36). The wilderness is the place where the “youth memories” are reminisced. God can remind them there of the days of old, when Israel in her first love followed Him (Jer 2:2). The word “wilderness” here in Hosea and the quotation of “Egypt” in the following verse point to a historical similarity with the time of Israel’s departure from Egypt. Just as God then commanded the people to leave Egypt, go into the wilderness, and begin the journey to the promised land, so will He do in the future.

Just as in that time, the time of her first love, the people will be brought back into the “wilderness”. There God will test it, judge it and cleanse it, so that it will find the way of blessing and will regain possession of the land. Many will be judged. Only a remnant will effectively come there. This was also the case with the exodus from Egypt on the way to the promised land. The bodies of many have fallen in the wilderness.

It is remarkable how this judgment of scattering is presented here, namely as a matter of divine love. God says He “will allure” her there and “speak kindly to her”, or literally “speak to her heart”. He “allures” her. He does not drag her into the wilderness. The word for “allure” contains the thought of “persuading by means of attractive benefits”.

Behind the coercion of scattering, which is necessary because of her unfaithfulness, lies God’s love. God wants His people to be only for Him again. “To speak kindly” means to speak to someone in a friendly, encour-

aging, comforting way. The same expression is used in Isaiah 40 and Ruth 2, where it is also meant to put the other person at ease (Isa 40:2; Rth 2:13).

Just as for Israel the wilderness is a picture of scattering among the nations, for us the wilderness is a picture of the place where God tests and forms us. In our personal life, after deviating from the path with the Lord, restoration often begins because we end up in trial.

We discover that life without God does not give the satisfaction we expected from it. We have disappointing experiences. Life starts to look like a wilderness. There is nothing 'edible' to be found, nothing that can really give a person satisfaction. But then we also discover that God has 'allured' us into that trial and wants to 'speak kindly' in it. This is how God does it, also with us, because He loves His own.

### **Hos 2:15 | A Door of Hope**

*15 "Then I will give her her vineyards from there,  
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.  
And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,  
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.*

The return from the wilderness in the land is depicted with beautiful words by Solomon in the book of Song of Songs: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness Leaning on her beloved?" (Song 8:5). Here we see Israel, no longer leaning on her own strength, but on her Beloved. He spoke to her heart and promised her blessings. That is why she is coming out of the wilderness.

The comfort that the LORD has for His people is not only expressed in words. In His grace He will also give her access to His blessings. They are blessings which He has first given her and then taken away from her. Now that she has learned that all blessings come only from God, she may accept them again from God's hand. In His grace He even calls the vineyards "her vineyards". Here the vineyards represent the blessings of the land of Canaan.

"The valley of Achor" is a reminder of God's judgment on sin (Jos 7:1,24-26). When Israel has executed this judgment on the sin that happened among them by God's command, the door that gives access to the blessing

can be opened again. Thus, a “sorrow” – that is what Achor means – becomes a door of hope (cf. Isa 65:10).

It is also true for us personally. The valley where we confess and condemn our sin becomes a place of hope. A valley speaks of humiliation. Humiliation, judging our sins, is the starting point of re-experiencing fellowship with God. In Golgotha we see this place of judgment at its deepest level, but where the door of hope is also opened wide.

If Israel is allowed to possess the blessings of the land again in the future, she will “sing”, as she did at the Red Sea after her redemption from the bondage of Egypt (Exo 15:1,21a). This is the song “in the days of her youth”.

With the blessings she will enjoy again in the future, she will experience the joy of her first rescue and redemption again. Grace gives a new beginning to her history, which is accompanied by unshakeable blessings. The freshness of this renewed youth, which will dawn for the whole people, will then no more be lost.

### **Hos 2:16 | Ishi (My Husband)**

*16 “It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD,  
“That you will call Me Ishi  
And will no longer call Me Baali.*

In the future, when God has again won His people over to Himself in grace, He will be like a Husband for them. He no longer will be ‘my Master’ (Baali) for them and will no longer be addressed as such. It is possible that Israel has come to address the LORD as Baal. If the people still hold on to a connection with God, but the love for Him is no longer present, He is seen as one of the many gods to whom one submits. As far as Israel is concerned, this situation will come to an end in the future. Then Israel will be in the true love relationship with Him again (Isa 54:5).

Also within Christianity there is the idea that God is an uncompromising Ruler, Whose unyielding will no one can escape. God wants to put an end to this situation, which makes the life of many Christians an extremely somber affair. These Christians live, so to speak, in the Achor valley, but without knowing the door of hope that this valley also holds. They always

see God as a God who is angered about sin, their sin. But it seems as if they are blind to the door that God is opening at that very moment.

God wants to make them happy, thankful Christians who are allowed to know Him and address Him as Father, instead of 'a God who constantly angers'. Anyone who only knows God as an angry Ruler has a one-sided and therefore false perception of Him. God is thereby put on a par with the idols who also act entirely arbitrarily, without any affection for their worshippers. Idols are always demanding gods. Whoever presents the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ as a merely demanding God, makes a caricature of Him and disregards the giving and forgiving God. In Jesus Christ, God has given everything to make it possible that a human being becomes His child and He Himself to be his Father. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2Cor 9:15).

### **Hos 2:17 | No More Other Names**

17 *"For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,  
So that they will be mentioned by their names no more.*

Because of her conversion it will be over with her serving the idols. The names of the idols will no longer be mentioned (cf. Psa 16:4). It will be characteristic for the time in which Israel lives again in faithfulness to his God, that other gods will no longer be remembered (Zec 13:2a). The restored people living in the land again will then have written the law in their hearts and act accordingly. They will no longer have any difficulty with the word that was said to them at the Sinai which was subsequently so often broken by them (Exo 23:13).

For us Christians, there is a similar warning in God's Word: "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and [there must be no] filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (Eph 5:3). Who dares to claim that he has never been guilty of one or more of the expressions mentioned? Ambiguous remarks should not come from the mouth of a Christian. Sexual talk does not suit children of God. All sorts of indecent allusions to someone of the other sex are out of the evil one and



not out of God. Statements reminiscent of greed are an indication that we are not satisfied with what we have.

Against all those expressions of the flesh, expressions that are characteristic of the world, there is a single other word: "Thanksgiving." He who thanks is in connection with God as the Giver, the Source of all good gifts and every pure word. God wants us to be in connection with Him alone and to live from that relationship. Then there is no more room for any form of idolatry.

### **Hos 2:18 | Peace on Earth**

*18 "In that day I will also make a covenant for them  
With the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the sky  
And the creeping things of the ground.  
And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,  
And will make them lie down in safety.*

In the future realm of peace, the animal world will no longer be characterized by the fear of man that has been there since the fall into sin (Gen 9:2). The peace that Israel will then possess as a people will have its radiance over the entire earth, including the animal realm. Isaiah speaks exuberantly in his prophecy about that time and the then prevailing peace (Isa 11:6-9). What Hosea says here will literally be fulfilled.

There is also an application to be made. In the different animals we can see the instruments of God's judgments, i.e. the different enemies through whom God chastened His people. When the hostile nations have accomplished their task entrusted to them by God, a covenant will be made with them as well. Thus, they too will share in the blessing that will be Israel's part (Isa 19:22-25). The war, through the centuries the scourge of the earth and here represented by "the bow, the sword and war" will no longer be there. The LORD will make these things vanish from the earth and war will no longer be taught (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3). He will "will make them lie down in safety" which means that His people will live in peace.

## **Hos 2:19 | Israel Betrothed to God**

*19 "I will betroth you to Me forever;  
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,  
In lovingkindness and in compassion,*

God speaks here directly to Israel. A new beginning is made, as if Israel has never been unfaithful. It is a new covenant, which replaces the old one, which has been broken by Israel. The new covenant that God then makes with His people is "forever" and will never be broken again. Israel will then no longer wander away from God because God's law is written in their hearts.

The basis of this relationship is multiple. First and foremost is "in righteousness and in justice". Herein is expressed the perfect legal basis for this marriage. It is not a relationship in which sin has been condoned. All the unfaithfulness of the people has been judged righteously by God, while a remnant has been spared because of the work of His Son. To this remnant, that confesses Jesus as the Christ, God will fulfill all His promises. Because God's righteousness has been fully fulfilled through Christ, Christ is also entitled to the fulfillment of His promises. He is in His right when He takes the people back to be His bride.

In addition to righteousness and justice, "lovingkindness and ... compassion" underlie the restoration of the relationship between the LORD and His bride. In this way it is expressed that God cares for His bride with His whole heart. This points to God's mind for His people and His compassion with the wretched condition in which they have been. What characterizes the relationship between the Messiah and His earthly people is also found in the way the Messiah rules in the realm of peace: "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You" (Psa 89:14).

It is difficult for some to understand that the Lord Jesus has two brides, an earthly bride, Israel, and a heavenly bride, the church, "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9). But we must keep in mind that it is all about metaphors. It is a representation of the relationship between the Lord Jesus and Israel and a representation of the relationship between the Lord Jesus and the church. With both Israel on earth and the church in heaven, the Lord

Jesus maintains a close relationship of love and fellowship. That relationship and that bond, which He has both with Israel and with the church, cannot be better represented than by the picture of marriage.

### **Hos 2:20 | Faithfulness**

*20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.*

*Then you will know the LORD.*

The fifth characteristic, after the four of the previous verse on which the new relationship between God and His people is based, is “faithfulness”. This characteristic of faithfulness will certainly also apply to the people in their relationship with God. They will no longer be unfaithful to Him. For God, this is always so: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2Tim 2:13).

That He is faithful is also evidenced by the fact that He is the guarantor of all His promises to Israel. He will fulfill them. They will not wander away from the LORD again, because they will really know Him. That is the result of the new heart they will have received, in which God has written His laws (Heb 8:8-12; Jer 31:31-34). It is this knowledge of the LORD that is characteristic of the realm of peace (Isa 11:9). This knowledge is not yet present (Hos 2:8; 4:1,6).

### **Hos 2:21-22 | The LORD Responds**

*21 “It will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the LORD.*

*“I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,*

*22 And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,*

*And they will respond to Jezreel.*

The heart of the people have been brought back to God. The broken relationship between God and His people has been restored. After the restoration of the inner bond, nothing stands in the way of God’s blessing anymore. But that stream of blessing only comes after the people have asked for it. God wants to make Himself known as a God Who responds. That comes first. Everything else is just its effect. While Israel first saw the blessings of the land as its own possessions, they now acknowledge

through their prayer that they are blessings that must come from God, given by grace.

They no longer count on the favor of the idols for their needs. Israel has attributed the blessing to the Baals. Therefore, God has taken this blessing away from them so that they might learn that He is the Giver (verses 7-8). Now there is no place for idols anymore. In the restored relationship with their God, they now make their needs known to Him in prayer. He will answer them, and how! There will be an uninterrupted stream of blessing between the LORD and His earthly people.

Heaven and earth have been separated since man's fall into sin. Since that time satan has the power (a limited power) on earth (Lk 4:5-6) and appears before God in heaven as the accuser of the believers (Rev 12:10). But in the time of blessing that will then come for Israel, the power of satan will be broken. On earth he can do no more evil during that time (Rev 20:2-3). And heaven, after he is removed from it, will be cleansed of his presence (Rev 12:10).

Then there will be a beautiful harmony between heaven and earth. There will also be a beautiful harmony between sowing and harvesting. The chain of blessing finds its origin in God. The first thing that is said is: "I will respond." That is what God says and then the blessing begins to flow. Heaven will ask God to give rain to the earth, that is blessing, and God will respond. But the question of heaven comes from the earth. The earth is seen as a person asking for rain from heaven. Heaven will respond and give the blessing.

But also the question of the earth does not stand alone. In turn, the earth is asked for fertility by the grain, the new wine and the oil. That is why the earth asks for rain from heaven. But also the demand of the grain, the new wine and the oil does not stand alone. Jezreel has asked for the fruit of the land. So Jezreel asks first. Jezreel is Israel as it will have been sown in the land by God at that time – see also the explanation at Hosea 1:11. Israel is the object of God's blessing. Thus, heaven and earth and the fruit of the earth – in the realm of peace – will meet the needs of the people of God.

It is wonderful to see how the prayers are attuned to each other here. All prayers have the same goal, every link in this chain of prayer contributes to

this. It is about blessing for God's people. Heaven is answered by God who will give rain. Because of this, Jezreel will be able to enjoy the blessing of the land as coming out of God's hand and as a response to prayer.

The content of these prayers has something to say to us. God also wants to bless His present people, the church. Do we pray for that? It is about enjoying what God has already given us. God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ" (Eph 1:3). But Paul prays for the Ephesians that God gives them that they will also enjoy it (Eph 1:16b-19; cf. Col 1:9-10; 4:2-3). If we were to focus more in our prayers on the content of what Paul is praying, would not God's true blessing in Christ be enjoyed by us?

Regarding the restoration of Israel in their relationship to the LORD, there is even more result to report. There will not only be a blessing for Israel, but the whole earth will share in that blessing. The whole creation will then be set free from the curse that was placed upon it by the fall into sin. The setting free of creation will be linked to "the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom 8:19-21).

When the Lord Jesus returns and that glorious time for Israel and the whole earth will come, He will not come alone. All those who have become sons of God through faith in the Son of God will accompany Him (Rev 19:14). Together with all the believers of the Old Testament and also with all those who are killed in the great tribulation after the church has been raptured, they will "reign with Christ for a thousand years" (Rev 20:4-6).

## **Hos 2:23 | You Are My People**

*23 "I will sow her for Myself in the land.*

*I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,*

*And I will say to those who were not My people,*

*'You are My people!'*

*And they will say, '[You are] my God!'"*

God has come to His purpose. He has returned His people to His heart and to His land. The people sown by and for Him will enjoy full blessing in fellowship with Him. In that time, the time of the kingdom of peace, the situation which Hosea had to express in his days in the names of his chil-

dren (Hos 1:4,6,9), will be totally reversed. The phrase ‘God scatters’, the one meaning of ‘Jezreel’, in which His judgment is expressed, is changed into ‘God sows’, the other meaning of ‘Jezreel’. This is how God’s blessing is expressed. The fact that God speaks here of sowing, in addition to the blessing for the seed, also makes us think of multiplying, increasing in number. The people will enjoy the blessing, but will also become very numerous and be spread abroad (Isa 54:3).

Paul quotes this verse in his letter to the Romans (Rom 9:25). In Romans 9 he also quotes Hosea 1:10, as we have seen (Hos 1:10; Rom 9:26). That quote serves to show that God’s grace cannot be limited to the Jew. Quoting verse 23 of Hosea 2 serves another purpose. This verse makes it clear that although grace is shown to Jew and Gentile without distinction, a separate blessing remains for the Jew. That blessing is: restoration in the land.

Peter also refers to this verse in his first letter. He highlights yet another aspect. From his letter it appears that he writes to converted Jews who are “scattered” (1Pet 1:1). He writes to them: “For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1Pet 2:10). With this Peter refers to verse 23 here. With this he wants to make it clear that the believing Jews to whom he writes are already in the relationship with God that the whole people will only have in the future.

As Jews by nature, the judgment that God revealed in Hosea rests upon them. As converted Jews, they have already been accepted as God’s people and have already received His mercy. It is also true that through their faith in the Lord Jesus they have joined the church, but that fact is not mentioned here by Peter. It is for him to show his Jewish brethren what they have received from God through faith in the Messiah.

As we have already seen with the name ‘Jezreel’, here also the other names mentioned in Hosea 1, “Lo-ruhamah” and “Lo-ammi”, are changed for the better by God’s grace. In Hosea 1 they mean judgment. Here they get a positive meaning, reminiscent of mercy and blessing. God takes care of Lo-ruhamah, which means ‘no compassion’. To Lo-ammi, which means ‘not My people’, He says: “You are My people.”

With so much goodness, the people can only cry out: “My God.” In doing so, they express all the feelings of gratitude, admiration and praise that fill their hearts. This is reminiscent of what we read of Thomas. Thomas is a picture of the remnant, which only comes to faith when it sees the risen Lord. But when Thomas sees Him, he says, filled with reverence and awe: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28).

## Hosea 3

### Introduction

Also in this chapter Israel's history is portrayed. Hosea once again has to accept his adulterous wife as his wife, but without having a real marriage relationship with her. He will make her a lonely woman. God will do the same with Israel. He will make the people lonely for a time, without a king and so on. That is the situation of Israel at the moment. But in the future they will repent and come to the LORD and His salvation.

This short chapter shows Israel's past, present and future:

1. In verses 1-3 the past,
2. in verse 4 the present and
3. in verse 5 the future.

### Hos 3:1 | Hosea Must Take His Wife Back

*1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman [who] is loved by [her] husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."*

We can imagine that things have gone from bad to worse with Gomer. If there is a continual falling back into certain forms of evil, the situation can never improve, but only get worse. Improvement only occurs when there is a radical break with the past.

Gomer has probably returned to Hosea again and again after her various 'outings'. In spite of all the pain and sorrow he felt because of her adulterous behavior, he has taken care of her again and again. Each time he must have hoped that she would really break with sin. Every time he was disappointed in his love, faithfulness and care for her, because every time she was unfaithful to him. Until she leaves and stays away. It is possible that Hosea, after the birth of the third child, had to send her away, just as God sent His people away in the scattering. It is also possible that she herself has run away.



It must have been the talk of the town. He must have heard well-intentioned pity. He will also have experienced insensitivity with his situation. People may have said: 'That's quite something, that she let you down with the children. You didn't deserve that from her.' But on the other hand: 'Man, be happy about it. This wasn't a life after all. Now you get peace in your house again.' Numerous variations on this are conceivable. But situations like Hosea's are unique. In the discussion of Hosea 1 a number of things have already been said about this. The heart that cries from the pain that one feels in such circumstances cannot be comforted with well-intentioned words and it does not diminish the pain.

Just as Hosea acted with Gomer, so did God with Israel. Again and again He has shown her His love. If the word of the LORD comes to Hosea that he should take Gomer back to be his wife, it is because God will do the same with Israel. He has also not sent away His people forever. God will not command to love another woman than His own lawful wife. There would be no message for Israel in that.

This is about Gomer. Her name is not mentioned because it goes without saying that it is about her. It is also more about the circumstances in which she ended up than about her person. The fact that she is not called 'your' wife here, but 'a' woman, may indicate the alienation that has arisen between Hosea and her through her behavior. That must have made it even more difficult to carry out God's command.

In the discussion of Hosea 1:3 we have already discussed this command to love. The command Hosea receives here, gives reason to point this out again because of the false motives to get away from this command. Hosea has to take her back, despite the fact that he may no longer 'feel' anything for her. 'Feeling' has the upper hand today and even becomes the norm. Hosea is given the assignment: "Go ... love". 'Love' is a command.

It is an outright excuse, even worse, it is self-deception, when a couple breaks up with the excuse: 'We don't feel anything for each other anymore, so we just break up.' But the fact that you are 'no longer in love' is not a valid reason to break up. It is self-deception to give validity to such an excuse. It is also disobedience to God and therefore sin. The question is not whether I feel something for my wife, but whether I want to obey God's

command. The command in the New Testament reads: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25).

To love is not just a feeling, it is above all an act. The man must love his wife. That is possible if the love of God dwells in him, because God is love. Only love to the Lord makes us fit to fulfill His command. The Lord does not ask Peter whether he loves the lambs and sheep, but whether he loves Him. If that is the starting point for each service, then love for the lambs and the sheep will come.

Hosea must go to Gomer and love her as God loves His people. It is not enough to know that God is love, we have to act accordingly. Hosea loves Gomer before she becomes unfaithful to him. He also has to love her after her unfaithfulness by rescuing her from that situation.

As in Hosea 1, God gives His reason for this heavy task. That reason is that in taking back Gomer, Hosea illustrates God’s love for His people. Israel, just like Gomer, has forfeited all right to restoration. But grace is searching for her. Not in the first place to restore her, but more to free her from the situation in which she ended up through her own fault. Then she will be restored (Isa 54:6-8).

Israel, like Gomer, has made life a feast, a feast without God. By making illicit connections, the people think they can get more out of life. They forget that by their actions they do not get more out of life, but that life is taken out of them. Real life is only possible in connection with the living God. The idols are dead, dead material.

The “raisin cakes”, made from the fruit of the vine, symbolize joy, for God is with His people and He strengthens them (cf. 2Sam 6:19; 1Chr 16:3; Song 2:5). But these cakes are used as offerings in the idolatrous cult. They are eaten in connection with the idols, showing in which the people seek their joy and strength. It is yet another proof of how God has disappeared from their minds, how they have forgotten Him (Hos 2:13).

### **Hos 3:2 | Repurchased**

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

Hosea has to ransom his wife. That's how it works if someone is going to serve sin. That person has to be ransomed. Gomer has become someone else's slave. What has smiled on her as freedom has led her into slavery. She thought she was free, but has become a slave. That is always the case when serving sin. "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (Jn 8:34). The devil tries to tell us that we are free outside of God, but just like Gomer, you notice that you become a slave. But just like Hosea, God also goes after people and wants to give them His salvation.

How humiliating it must have been for Hosea to have to go to the man where his wife is now. She probably sunk so low that she became a slave. It seems that he finds her at a slave market, where she is offered for sale because her lover may have had enough of her. He has to negotiate with the man to get his own wife back. They agree on the price. Hosea has to pay for her even less than the price of a slave and some in kind. Fifteen pieces of silver is half the price for a slave (Exo 21:32). The low price indicates her owner's low appreciation for her.

The one and a half homer barley is a reminder of poverty. Barley is the food of the poor. It seems that Hosea gives all his money and complements it with something in kind. He simply has to ransom her. God has done the same with His people (Isa 43:3-4). Only true love sees something in an object that – due to so much unfaithfulness – is only worth being rejected.

### **Hos 3:3 | Back, But Kept at a Distance**

*3 Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you."*

Hosea takes Gomer home and places her under house arrest. Again that is a picture of what God will do to Israel. Israel has been deported and has lived isolated among the peoples for centuries. But there will come a time when they will return and seek the LORD. Gomer, too, is isolated; she sits like a slave in her own house. But Hosea has no contact with her either.

This disciplinary measure, a withdrawn life in solitude and excluded from all intercourse with a man, serves to make her come to her senses. She will no longer have the opportunity to commit adultery and commit for-

nication with other men. Nor will she have a normal relationship with her husband.

We can also apply this situation to personal life. It could be that someone is in solitary confinement with his life. He is tired of sin. He doesn't do evil anymore, but there is also no doing good. There is no real life. If someone starts to realize that, then God can give real life.

This situation can also be applied to a Christian community. They have removed evil. Then, out of fear of evil, they have isolated themselves in such a way that there is nothing at all seen from them. When they start to realize this, the time will come for God to give real life. However, if one continues to stay in that 'isolation cell', there is a good chance that the misery will become greater than it once was (Mt 12:43-45).

"Many days" indicates an indefinite period of time. Gomer does belong to Hosea that whole period – he bought her, after all –, but there is no question of a normal relationship. She has to sit like a widow until he comes to her. As said, this is the situation of Israel after God has brought the people back from exile. When much later the Lord Jesus came to His people, they did not want Him. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (Jn 1:11). Not only did they not receive Him, but they also even rejected Him! What the result of this is, is said in the following verse.

### **Hos 3:4 | Israel Is Without ...**

*4 For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or [sacred] pillar and without ephod or household idols.*

In this verse some particulars are brought to the fore that have not been discussed in the two previous chapters. Hosea 1 gives the general position in which the people find themselves and in which they are placed by God's judgment. In Hosea 2 several details are filled in in more detail. Hosea 3 gives clarity about the humiliation and the isolated position of Israel. And not for a moment, but for an indefinite period of time, with at the end of that period her introduction in the abundant blessing.

In this one verse the whole situation in which Israel has found itself for many centuries comes to the fore. No Jew can deny that this verse aptly

represents the actual situation. The period of “many days” is the time after the cross. All that time the people have been “without king or prince”, i.e. without a recognized government with an official head of state. This applies especially to the ten tribes, which are scattered.

They are also “without sacrifice”. They have no worship in which they approach God on the basis of sacrifice. But they are also without “[sacred] pillar”. These pillars are the pillars consecrated to the idols that Israel has had to destroy (Exo 23:24), but that have gained a foothold in Israel (2Kgs 3:2; 10:26-28; 17:10). The sacred pillar represents the idolatrous worship that Israel has taken over from the surrounding peoples. Thus, the people will be without true, but also without false means of worship.

Finally, they will be “without ephod”, which is the high priestly garment. There is no priestly mediation to consult the LORD. But the “household idols” are also lacking. These are the teraphim, the idols for the worship of ancestors. Instead of priestly consultation, there is also no consultation of the idols through the images designed for that purpose.

It may be called a wonder that, despite the lack of what seems necessary to exist as a people, Israel has continued to exist for centuries. It is yet another proof of the truth and reliability of the Bible, which attributes unconditional promises of God to Israel. That God is using this time of Israel’s ‘isolation’ to gather the church is a truth that is unfolded not in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament.

### **Hos 3:5 | Israel Returns to the LORD**

*5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.*

The word “afterward” with which this verse begins is still in the future and refers to the time of Christ’s return to earth and His blessed reign. “David their king” is the Lord Jesus, the true David. David means “the beloved”. “Their king” is an indication for the Messiah. At His first coming there was hardly any search for Him. Yes, a few magi from the east, who have seen His star, come to worship Him. And also Herod is looking for Him, but only to kill Him. Furthermore, there are still a few people who

recognize Him. But the people as such? They have rejected Him. In the future it will be different (Eze 37:23-24).

God has not finished with His people forever. Israel is also not incorporated into the church as a people. The individual Jew who repents is incorporated into the church, but then ceases to be a Jew (Col 3:11). "In the last days", the Israelites will be attracted by "His goodness", even overwhelmed by it. The expression "trembling" indicates reverence, which is accompanied by shame at the fact that they have left Him.

The final restoration of Israel under the blessed government of the Messiah, in which the people will enjoy all the promised blessings, begins when the people repent. Repentance is the first necessary step to get in touch with God. This happens when a man, or a people, realizes that he has lived with his back to God. When a person repents from that path, he turns around and can, thus, look to God.

Whoever looks God in 'the face', cannot help but acknowledge that He is holy. Man himself can only acknowledge that he is unholy and sinful and that God must judge him for that. But now he has turned towards God, because he is attracted to God's goodness. God must punish man who persists in his sins. But man who confesses his sins finds compassion with Him.

With Israel, the moment of repentance has come when through the action of God's Spirit the people confess their sin – their rejection of the Lord Jesus, their Messiah – and repent (Zec 12:10). The sadness that comes from the acknowledgment of their sin is a sadness in agreement with God. Such sadness over committed sins "produces a repentance without regret [leading] to salvation" (2Cor 7:10). Whether it concerns a people or a few, all true restoration begins with this.

## Hosea 4

### **Introduction**

After the first three chapters, which form the introduction to the book, now follows the main part of Hosea's prophecy. In it the Holy Spirit makes an indignant appeal to Israel's conscience because of the increasing evil. The first chapters take place in the period of the reign of Jeroboam II. What follows now in Hosea 4:1-6:3 moves us to a later part of the history of Israel, the ten tribes realm. This is apparent from the allusions to the assassinations of kings.

"Bloodshed follows bloodshed" (Hos 4:2) is such an allusion. We can think of Zechariah, the last descendant of the generation of Jehu, who is murdered by Shallum, and of Shallum who in turn is murdered by Menahem. Menahem's successor, his son Pekahiah, is murdered by Pekah, who in turn is murdered by Hoshea, the last king of the ten tribes realm. The history of these assassinations is described in 2 Kings 15 (2Kgs 15:8-10,13-14,25,30). The prophet Hosea does not mention their names; he only wants to tell the people their moral condition.

In this part of the prophecy there is much talk about the leaders of the people and other main responsible persons, such as the priests and the prophets. There is not much to be seen of the brilliant perspective of the future with which each of the first three chapters ends in the days of the prophet. Nevertheless, a ray of hope regularly breaks through the series of indictments that the prophet pours out on the people. These rays of hope are characteristic of all 'writing' prophets.

The course of events of the common people and the actions of the religious leaders are discussed in this chapter. In fierce words the indictment is made. Verse 6 gives the essence of all deviation and decay: there is no knowledge. If there is no knowledge of what God wants, one comes to the most sinful practices.

Because of the persistence of their sinful behavior, God must bring judgment. He will take His hands off them and leave them to themselves. This final judgment comes about as follows:

1. First, God indicates that He no longer wants to listen to them.
2. Then, in verse 14, He says that judgment makes no sense.
3. Finally, in verses 17-18, He comes with the worst judgment by leaving the people to themselves. Indeed, a man or a people cannot suffer a worse judgment than to be left to himself, without any help.

What we read in verses 1-2 is reminiscent of Romans 3. There is a description of what a man is and does without God (Rom 3:9-19). That description applies to all humans without exception. But Hosea speaks to God's people. That makes his indictment all the more penetrating.

### **Hos 4:1 | The Case of the LORD**

*1 Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel,  
For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land,  
Because there is no faithfulness or kindness  
Or knowledge of God in the land.*

The first call made to the whole people is to listen. From whom may God expect more that they will listen to Him than from those who profess to be His people? They do want to listen to a word of comfort. But do they also want to listen when there is exhortation, when there is an indictment against them? The LORD is the accuser. At first the indictment sounds rather general.

Hosea points in this verse to things he misses among the people. They should be present! In the following verse he speaks of things that are present with the people, while they should not be present.

1. The first thing that is missing is "faithfulness". By this is meant reliability as well as sincerity and honesty.
2. Also the "kindness" is missing, which means that goodness and benevolence are not found.
3. The third missing thing is called "knowledge of God". This knowledge, which will be present in the future (Hos 2:20), is completely lacking here.



This lack of knowledge stems from inner alienation away from God, meaning that the heart is no longer directed toward God. The result can only be spiritual degeneration.

This chapter focuses on the lack of knowledge of God (verses 1,6,14). All abuses are a consequence of this. If the knowledge of God is lacking, nothing good can be expected. With knowledge is not meant intellectual knowledge. We even encounter it with the devil. It is about a deep, intimate, personal relationship, a knowing with the heart. To be able to experience such knowledge it is necessary to study the Word of God. With someone who is honest, his knowledge of God will become visible in his way of life.

Knowing God and living in evil do not fit together. Those who practice sin as a lifestyle do not know God. Paul points several times to this ignorance as the cause of sinful opinions and a resulting sinful behavior (1Cor 15:34; Eph 4:17-19; 1Thes 4:13).

### **Hos 4:2 | Various Iniquities**

2 *[There is] swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery.  
They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.*

When faithfulness, kindness and knowledge of God are lacking, there is ample room for all kinds of iniquities or sins. If the bond with God is severed, this also has harmful consequences for the relationships between people. Where God's rights are disregarded, what is normal between people is also lost sight of. We already see this with Adam and Eve. As soon as they deviated from God, they also abandon each other. They blame each other. Also with their children the failure to acknowledge God's rights becomes visible. Cain kills Abel.

From the sins that Hosea lists with short, powerful words, it becomes clear how the people trample the law of God underfoot. Various commandments, which are briefly discussed below, are grossly violated here:

1. "swearing", that is swearing to confirm a lie, is a violation of the third commandment,
2. "deception" is a violation of the ninth commandment,
3. "murder" is a violation of the sixth commandment,

4. "stealing" is a violation of the eighth commandment and
5. "adultery" is a violation of the seventh commandment (Exo 20:1-17).

The violation of the sixth commandment, murder, is emphasized by Hosea. The expression "bloodshed follows bloodshed" reads literally "bloody deed touches bloody deed". Apparently the killing has become a very common thing that happens frequently. It seems as if one murder touches the next, as if it is a kind of murder raid. Because of this the land is filled with blood guilt (2Kgs 21:16; Psa 106:38).

By swearing is meant the swearing of an oath. With this it is confirmed what has been said. In this context we should especially think of lying statements that must be considered as absolutely true. This is related to the third commandment: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain" (Exo 20:7; cf. Lev 19:12).

The Lord Jesus teaches us the true meaning of this commandment (Mt 5:33-37). The oath at issue there relates to the mutual intercourse between people in everyday life. There are people who want to strengthen their words by swearing an oath. This happens especially when their honesty is questioned. The Lord forbids such swearing.

It is a proof of weakness or possibly even mendacity if we accompany our words with all kinds of terms of force in order to enforce credibility. The Lord says: "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' [or] 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil" (Mt 5:37). We must be known as people who can be trusted in what they say. Not deceitful, not ambiguous, but reliable, honest. Does everyone know us that way?

Closely related to swearing is deception or lying. It is about speaking plainly and consciously falsehood. Anyone who does so violates the ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exo 20:16). Swearing is more a personal matter; deception or lying also involves another person. The truth is violated, usually to put the other person in a bad light. This is done in order to get better off or at least not worse. Even more than in the case of swearing, the depraved relationship between the members of God's people appears here.

In the church in Ephesus there is also this evil. And today, it can be said, it occurs in the church in 'Everywhere'. Paul has the following recommendation for this situation: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph 4:25). The lie must be confessed before God as sin and thus removed.

By the way, it is short-sighted to lie to each other as members of the church. After all, we are "members of each other". In the Bible the church is compared to a body (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18). It is absolutely foolish if one member of my body does something that damages or hurts another member. This damages the whole body.

Well, this is also the way we relate to each other as members of the body of Christ. But something positive must replace that. We have to speak the truth and about the truth to each other. That builds up. What do we talk about and how do we talk to each other?

When lying to our neighbor the neighbor is harmed. Murder goes one step further. Whoever kills someone, prevents him from living. Then the sixth commandment is violated: "You shall not murder" (Exo 20:13). Not only is life taken away from the person, but it is also no longer possible for him to enjoy what God has given. It is God's intention that His people live in a land overflowing with milk and honey. This comes to an abrupt end for the murdered person.

Maybe we do not run the risk of killing another person in a literal sense. Nevertheless, the word of John in his first letter does come close when he says: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1Jn 3:15). It is not God's intention to try to deprive life of our brother and sister in a spiritual sense, but to make life as pleasant as possible for them. This is only possible if there is love in our hearts instead of hate. If love is active in our hearts, instead of taking our brother's life, we will even be able to lay down our own life for our brother.

The love that is capable of doing this, we have come to know in the Lord Jesus, Who actually laid down His life for us (1Jn 3:16). Only by looking upon Him, can we be able to step aside for our brother or sister so that they

can enjoy the true life, the life with the Lord Jesus. Do we give our brother and sister the space to live?

Stealing means depriving another of something that belongs to him. This is a violation of the eighth commandment: "You shall not steal" (Exo 20:15). It does not go as far as murder, because in doing so you take someone's life. Stealing is about someone's property, for which the thief has no respect.

Ephesians 4, quoted earlier, says something for anyone who cannot keep his hands to himself: "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need" (Eph 4:28). Here too, on the one hand, sin is condemned, while on the other, something positive is put in its place.

The command is that work must be done. In a practical sense this is a smart thing to do. He who does nothing is in great danger of getting income in the wrong way. By working someone can provide for himself. But work is not a 'must' to be able to provide only for one's own needs. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, says that believers have to work, precisely to share with others who are in need.

This is now typically Christian. There the other comes first and only then do you think of yourself. That is how it works in God's church. What do we do with our possessions, both temporal and spiritual? Do we make them available to our fellow believers?

Stealing usually involves material things, but it is also possible to steal in an immaterial way. We can also steal someone's words: ""Therefore behold, I am against the prophets", declares the LORD, "who steal My words from each other"" (Jer 23:30). The point is that we can say things that show that we are only parroting someone else, without having thought about it ourselves and made it our spiritual possession. We can also steal someone's honor, that is to say, take the honor that belongs to someone else. Instead, we are told to render "honor to whom honor" (Rom 13:7).

Then another thing. The Lord Jesus has given a gift to every member of the church. The intention is that each member serves the other members. Serving someone else means that through our service the other can function better, i.e. perform his or her task more for the glory of the Giver. In

this way all members are a gift to each other. If we use this gift 'to glorify' ourselves or we do nothing at all with our gift, we commit theft. We rob the church of the use of the gift. A gift is not something to boast about. It has only been given (1Cor 4:7). What do we do with our gift?

Hosea concludes his enumeration of sins with adultery, a violation of the seventh commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exo 20:14). Much has been said about marriage and unfaithfulness while discussing Hosea 1 and Hosea 3. In the relationships that can exist between people, marriage is the closest. The marriage relationship is not only close, in God's eye it is inseparable. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mt 19:6). Mind you, it says "what", not 'who'. The word "what" indicates that it is the institution of marriage itself. What is merged by the bond of marriage should not be divorced.

Now also here, as in the case of murder, perhaps the danger of adultery is not immediately present. But let us not be mistaken. The Lord Jesus points out this danger in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:27-28).

If the Lord already says this to His disciples, it is certainly not a superfluous luxury for us to take this word to heart. The world we live in is largely focused on sex. Research shows that people who call themselves Christians also regularly watch sex programs. Studies aimed at mapping out how many Christians visit porn sites via the Internet make that clear.

The Lord Jesus gives the solution, so we do not have to fall into this danger. That solution is that without hesitation we should get rid of everything in our lives that can tempt us to sin. "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; ... If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you" (Mt 5:29-30).

### **Hos 4:3 | Consequences of Sin**

*3 Therefore the land mourns,  
And everyone who lives in it languishes  
Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky,*

| *And also the fish of the sea disappear.*

If man breaks his connection with God, it has dramatic consequences for the relations between people. We see this in the previous verse. But that is not the only consequence. The actions of man living in sin also have consequences for his natural environment, creation. As a result of the sins mentioned in verse 2, God has had to judge the land by withholding the rain from it (1Kgs 17:1-7; Joel 1:10-12,17-20). The result of that, the drought, gives the land a desolate appearance. Land-, air- and sea beasts are dying out. All life disappears.

Throughout the Old Testament, the sin of the people and the condition of the land are closely connected. When God's people listen to Him, there is abundance; when they disobey, the land is 'smitten' and there is scarcity.

What applies to Israel also applies to the whole creation: "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (Rom 8:22). This is the result of man's actions (Rom 8:20). As a result, creation now does not produce its abundance, as it will in the realm of peace. The disturbed relations in the realm of animals are also a consequence of man's sin.

Man was originally set to rule "over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). If man had continued to serve God faithfully, it would have meant blessing for creation. But by sinning, man has dragged creation into his apostasy from God. God placed man on the earth to cultivate it and keep it and to rule over the animals (Gen 2:15). Nothing of this has come to pass. Just as in Israel in the past, the consequences of sin are visible in creation in our time.

#### **Hos 4:4 | No One Can Accuse the Other**

| *4 Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof;  
For your people are like those who contend with the priest.*

There they are in the dock, all of them. It is quite a queue: people, princes, priests, prophets. You see them looking at each other. But they really do not have to. Nobody has to lift an accusing finger at someone else. They are all guilty, no one goes free. Accusing each other would only make

things worse. Sometimes an accusation results in people realizing that the accusation is justified. But in that respect, too, indictment no longer makes sense because there is no hope of restoration.

The priests do have to be accused, an accusation that God Himself does. They are primarily responsible for the decay because they have gone ahead in it. These are not priests of the LORD, but those who serve in the idolatry sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan and other places. That whole, false priesthood that deceives the people will be exterminated by God.

We live at the end of the Christian dispensation. We may wonder how we can get the ears open for the message of God. If from lots of pulpits it is preached that you should not take the Bible seriously in everything, the logical consequence is that people do not take what the preachers preach seriously anymore. It is therefore not surprising that the churches are emptying. Because of the false preaching 'blood guilt' sticks to the hands of the pastors. The same goes for evangelical and charismatic circles where a 'prosperity preaching' addresses feelings and not consciences and where the fallacy of general reconciliation is taken at face value.

Whatever the content of the sermon, however, the one who listens to a sermon has the responsibility to test, on the basis of the Word of God, whether what is said is true. Everyone who calls himself a Christian is personally responsible for what he believes or does not believe.

The observation that the churches are emptying has led some people to seize popular means to fill the churches again. It must be made attractive to come and listen. They use PR as if the church is a business. An advertising film with celebrities should persuade people to go to church.

The message has to be adapted, or at least the packaging. Pop groups have to 'cheer up' the church services. This means that the message is literally overpowered by the packaging. God does not get through with His Word anymore. In some cases, it even does not make sense to point it out anymore. Leave the indictment then.

## Hos 4:5 | Stumble

*5 So you will stumble by day,  
And the prophet also will stumble with you by night;*

| *And I will destroy your mother.*

If someone stumbles during the day, it is usually due to inattention. Of course, one can also literally be blind. The Lord Jesus applies this to the way He goes. He allows Himself to be guided by His Father and walks in His light. Because of this He knows perfectly what to do without stumbling (Jn 11:9-10).

In this He is an example for us. For us He is the light of the world. He says to us: "He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (Jn 8:12). He who is without light, whether through blindness or total darkness around him, is doomed to stumble. For those who are blind, it makes no difference whether it is day or night. Day and night are then equal.

The priests and prophets, who should be examples of good, lead the people astray. About the leaders in His days the Lord Jesus says: "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Mt 15:14). As in the days of Hosea, the Lord Jesus has given up hope of the restoration of these Pharisees. That is why He says: "Let them alone." But also just as in Hosea, He accuses these leaders when He speaks to them: "Woe to you, blind guides" and: "You fools and blind men!" and: "Blind guides" (Mt 23:16,17,24).

The kind of prophets Hosea talks about are also found in 1 Kings 22 (1Kgs 22:6). Similar priests were appointed by Jeroboam I in the past, according to his own thoughts. They came from all layers of the people (1Kgs 12:25-33; 13:33). There are no longer any priests from the generation chosen by God. They all moved to Judah, "for Jeroboam and his sons had excluded them from serving as priests to the LORD" (2Chr 11:13-16).

Undoubtedly, most of the true prophets of the LORD were also unable to stand longer in Israel. Only prophets like Hosea and formerly Elijah and Elisha can be found there because they have received the command of the LORD to preach there. Should there still be some hope that the people as a whole would be spared, then that hope will be taken away as well. No help is to be expected from the whole because God will eradicate the whole. The false priests and prophets will be exterminated together with the unfaithful people, "the mother".



## Hos 4:6 | No Knowledge

*6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
Because you have rejected knowledge,  
I also will reject you from being My priest.  
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.*

The priests are mainly responsible for the lack of knowledge of the people. Precisely they have, together with the Levites, the task to teach the law to the people of God (Deu 33:8,10; Eze 44:23; Mal 2:7). God's judgment of the priests means that He will remove them from His presence. After all, the great privilege of priests is that they may be in the presence of God, isn't it? But God can no longer tolerate them there. He still speaks of "My people" (cf. verse 12), but it will not be long before He will have to call them "Lo-ammi", 'not My people'.

The lack of knowledge is not because they have no light, but because they hate the light. They are not wandering astray because they do not know the way, but because they have no desire to go God's way. They have become like the people of whom Job says: "They say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways'" (Job 21:14).

The attitude and behavior of priests and people do not only affect them. If parents reject the knowledge of God, they cannot pass anything on to their children. The consequences of a Godless upbringing are easy to guess: even the children will not ask for God. If children in the families of God's people do not learn to remember their Creator, they cannot expect their Creator to remember them.

An example of priestly sons rejected by God can be seen in the sons of Eli. Eli did not teach his sons any knowledge of God. This is God's reproach to him (1Sam 2:29). Eli's attitude determines the behavior of his sons. And through their behavior, people in Israel start to despise the offering of the LORD (1Sam 2:17). The contempt Eli's sons show for the offering is attributed to Eli. God has no choice but to deprive Eli and his house of the priesthood (1Sam 2:30-31; 3:12-14).

The knowledge of the Word of God is of utmost importance to every member of God's people. Only by reading and studying the Bible is it possible

to live to the glory of God. But also here the time spirit affects God's people. There is hardly any demand for Bible study anymore. People are more looking for books that are easy to read and fit the feeling. That market is far from saturated. Of course there are also good, faith-building books, especially when it comes to books that are written from a pastoral concern with the flock. This is apparent from the number of references to the Bible.

It is often the case that one abandons as soon as some effort is required. Sometimes even the accusation is made that you do not have to quote a Bible text for everything. It indeed is not always wise to quote texts haphazardly. What matters is the attitude we encounter in Christianity today. There is hardly any interest anymore in digging into the Word of God, while it is precisely through Bible study that God's thoughts become more our own.

This stratagem of satan is doing well. The call of Isaiah must be heard again: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isa 8:20). Back to the Scriptures! Those who think they can do it without will not see the light, but will continue to wander in the darkness and remain in it forever. Back to the Scriptures! Those who think they can do it without will not see the light, but will continue to wander in the darkness and abide in it forever.

How we can study the Bible in a good and fruitful way and then also serve others with God's Word, we see with Ezra. In his dealings with the Word of God we see three elements that are of decisive importance: "For Ezra had set his heart

1. to study the law of the LORD and
2. to practice [it], and
3. to teach [His] statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Here it becomes clear that it is primarily about the knowledge of the heart (cf. Eph 1:17-18) and not about sheer head knowledge. If in the heart is the right mind, the desire is first "to study" or "to examine", then to "practice" what has been learned from God's Word, and finally to "teach" to God's people what has been learned and put into practice.

## Hos 4:7 | Abusing What God Gives

*7 The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me;  
I will change their glory into shame.*

“Multiplied” is reminiscent of growth. But with the words “more multiplied” there is also the thought of an increase in honor and prestige. Be that as it may, whether they increase in number or in dignity and possibly power, the result is an increase in sin. If we look at the history of mankind, it appears time and again that acquired greatness has been abused by man to self-exaltation, while God is forgotten.

But God will meet them. If their multiplication is their honor, God will reduce this so much that it becomes a shame for their number. Are they proud of their prestige? Well, God will make them despicable so that everyone who sees them will shake their heads. Do they pride themselves on their wealth? God will make them poor. God will strike man precisely in the things on which he boasts.

We see this, for example, in the judgment of the firstborn in Egypt, just before the deliverance of Israel (Exo 11:4-6; 12:29-30). The Egyptians have placed their hope in those firstborn. But God “also struck down all the firstborn in their land, The first fruits of all their vigor” (Psa 105:36). But God does this only after many warnings. In the same way He deals with His people Israel and with the church. Everything on which a man, especially the Christian, boasts at the expense of God, He must take away.

## Hos 4:8 | The ‘Benefits’ of Sin

*8 They feed on the sin of My people  
And direct their desire toward their iniquity.*

If a member of the people sins, a sin offering must be brought. The sacrificial animal goes to the priest who sacrifices it for sin. The priest must eat of that sin offering. This is how God prescribed it (Lev 6:26,29). For the priests, sin means livelihood. The more the people sin, the more they have to eat.

This is opposite to God’s intention with the precept to eat of the sin offering. God wants to achieve through this precept that the priest, by eating

from the sin offering, identifies himself with this sin, that he feels, as it were, the inner disgust of it.

What Hosea says does not answer that, but gives a different picture. Literally he says that they 'devour' the sins of the people. They are greedy that the people sin in order to get as much profit as possible from it. They not only feast on it literally, but also figuratively: they enjoy it when they see the sin of others.

We too are able to condemn the sins of others and yet secretly enjoy them (Rom 1:32). That is a bad thing. It is all the more evil when the sin of the other person benefits us in some way.

The evil pointed out by Hosea can be compared to the indulgence of the roman catholic church. The indulgence is a bill you can buy that says that a certain debt has been forgiven. The bigger the crime, the higher the amount. It is signed by a church leader. This custom has disappeared into the background for quite some time, but lately it is being pointed out more. This custom meets the needs of people to do something or pay for something that has gone wrong. The roman catholic church does benefit from it. The more people sin and want an indulgence for it, the more will come into the church's treasury.

Instead of raising one's voice against sin and warning against it, sin is stimulated in veiled terms. Of course, it is said that what has happened is wrong. But only when there is sincere confession before God and the awareness of what it has cost Christ to bear the judgment for that sin will the effect be that one gains a greater understanding of the seriousness of sin.

As long as a certain quid pro quo for a committed sin is demanded, one has not yet understood anything of Christ's work. The consequence is that one does not see sin as God sees it. As a result, one can trade with sin. Practicing sin has become an activity from which the church, or the clergy, can make a profit.

### **Hos 4:9 | People and Leader**

*9 And it will be, like people, like priest;  
So I will punish them for their ways*

| *And repay them for their deeds.*

Here the saying applies that a people gets the leadership it deserves. There is an interaction between the two. The people want to have leaders who tell them what they like to hear and the leaders find a willing ear for their depraved teachings (2Tim 4:3-4). The people do not want to be addressed about their responsibility to live as God's people. Therefore, they choose leaders who do not call sin – sin, or even condone sin. As a result, the 'church people' do not take the will of God into account. In this way leaders become seducers. God will visit their wrong ways and deeds.

This contains an important warning for anyone who holds a prominent position in the midst of God's people and that warning is that someone does not leave the way of God alone. There are always people who follow that path. There is also an important warning for the people of God. The leaders are not the only ones to blame. The people have their own responsibility. If they follow their leaders on their wrong path, they do so because they like that path.

It is important that we pray for those who lead, that they will do so "in the Lord" (1Thes 5:12). "In the Lord" means that leading should not be done in one's own power, but in the power of the Lord. One's own insights must be submitted to Him. He alone can give good insight in problems. Therefore, leading must happen in full dependence on the Lord. The way in which leading is given, must be surrounded, as it were, by His presence. That will be so if it happens in His mind.

### **Hos 4:10 | Not Enough and No Increase**

| *10 They will eat, but not have enough;  
They will play the harlot, but not increase,  
Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.*

The visitation and retribution announced in the preceding verse are elaborated in this verse. The priests and the people may think that sin brings benefits, but they will never feel satisfied with it (cf. Mic 6:14). That they are insatiable is the result of the judgment of God.

In a literal sense we can think of a special curse of God, by which the beneficial effect of the food is taken away or even changed in the reverse. Zophar

alludes to this possibility in his (incorrect) assessment of Job (Job 20:14-15). Together with his two friends he accuses Job of secret sins. He thinks he sees the indications for this in the suffering that Job goes through. Perhaps Hosea, when he wrote this down, thought of what Zophar wrongly applied to Job.

In any case, sin never gives the satisfaction sought. The same goes for harlotry, possibly with a view to numerous offspring. God will see to it that nothing is left of it. How could God bless their walk and conduct when they do not take Him into account? They do not think of worshiping the LORD. All their actions are aimed at favoring themselves as much as possible, both in terms of possession and status.

### **Hos 4:11 | The Heart Taken Away**

| *11 Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding.*

Israel did not take to heart Solomon's admonition to his son (Pro 4:23). Instead of protecting their understanding or heart (Darby Translation), they opened it to the enemies "harlotry, wine and new wine". They have seized their hearts. The term "heart" means the center of the human personality, connected with feeling and reason. Once harlotry, wine and new wine have been allowed into the heart, they begin to control the whole human being – i.e. his feelings, his mind and his will – and make him a slave.

Who ever has to deal with such people, makes the shocking discovery of how helpless they are. They no longer have the strength to break with sin. It may be called a miracle when people get rid of this addiction. Most of them do not manage that on their own. Certainly, there is power in the Lord to help, but often He engages people to do so. Someone who for years was addicted to all kinds of things, made the following statement in a newsletter: 'You have to hate it to let it go.'

If the heart does not remain in fellowship with the Lord, there is no longer a correct view of the everyday things in life. The lack of thoughtful judgment is mainly caused by a licentious approach to marriage, "harlotry", and an excessive longing for earthly pleasures, "wine and new wine". If the heart is focused on this, it is away from God.

He asks just our heart: “Give me your heart, my son” (Pro 23:26a). If we give our hearts to Him, all our dealings and walks will be directed toward Him and He will be honored.

### **Hos 4:12 | Idolatry and Harlotry**

*12 My people consult their wooden idol, and their [diviner's] wand informs them;*

*For a spirit of harlotry has led [them] astray,*

*And they have played the harlot, [departing] from their God.*

The consequences that arise when the heart is no longer focused on God become visible here. The people, whom God still painfully calls “My people”, resort to divination, the general practice of the pagan, idolatrous peoples. They ask for guidance from a piece of wood! God is exchanged for a wooden idol and a magic wand. The less account is taken of God, the more room there is for superstition. Jeremiah sharply denounces this foolish superstition (Jer 2:27a).

The foolishness of this action is sarcastically painted by Isaiah (Isa 44:14-17). He makes their nonsense clear by saying that man uses half of a piece of wood as firewood, to heat himself or to bake bread on it, but of the other half he makes a god to whom he bows down. Anyone with a bit of sense, sees the ridiculousness of it. But what do you want when your heart has been seized by harlotry, wine and new wine (verse 11). Then you fall into such follies. Man cannot do without an object of worship. If he does not worship God (verse 10b), he falls into idolatry and superstition.

Idolatry and superstition do not stand on their own. They are nourished by “the spirit of harlotry”, which permeates the whole atmosphere. All those who do not submit to God’s authority, who in fact withdraw from it, come under the seizure of that spirit of harlotry and are influenced by it. This leads to spiritual adultery. In the realm of sin there is always a satanic spirit active, to whom someone who is in that realm surrenders himself. For this, however, one is responsible oneself.

Those who ignore the statements of God in His Word and consult the world and the flesh, in fact consult their wood and ask for information on their wand. Here too the parallel between the days of Hosea and ours is

clear. It has become possible for a spirit of harlotry to be active in Christianity. More and more the contact with the world is sought.

The motives put forward, as if it were to bring the world under the influence of Christianity on the basis of that contact, are no good. The Lord Jesus says of His disciples: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn 17:16). Whoever forgets that and imitates the world in order to be successful, even with the most beautiful motives, for example, to gain entrance for the gospel, falls under the influence of the spirit of harlotry. This leads them to playing the harlot and departing from their God. We must not want to be wiser than what God tells us in His Word.

### **Hos 4:13 | Sacrificial Places**

*13 They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains  
And burn incense on the hills,  
Under oak, poplar and terebinth,  
Because their shade is pleasant.  
Therefore your daughters play the harlot  
And your brides commit adultery.*

In the law, God warns His people to completely destroy all those places where the people practice idolatry (Deu 12:2). Then He tells how He wants it to be done (Deu 12:5-6a). God has chosen Jerusalem as the only place of worship. Israel, the ten tribes, turned their backs on that place after the tearing. As a replacement, Jeroboam I invented Bethel and Dan, with the golden calves as objects of worship. But it did not stop there. In other places too they have, according to the pagan model, introduced idolatrous rituals of sacrifice. With the introduction of pagan practices, they also dragged their daughters into their harlotry.

The people find it pleasant to abide there. It feels like a protective shadow against the hot rays of the sun. It is pleasant, because the conscience is kept out of reach; pleasant, because in a self-conceived worship service you can control everything to your own liking; pleasant, because it makes you feel good. In a more refined form we can observe all this, in all sorts of variations, on the Christian area.



Christianity is imbued with the feeling of ‘every man for himself and God for us all’. This may sound nice, but this view is contrary to God’s will. No one has the right to devise a worship service of their own. Also, it is not right to simply join an already existing worship service, but one conceived by people, because he feels most comfortable with it, where “their shade is pleasant”.

In Deuteronomy 12 the LORD urges the Israelite to look for the place where He dwells (Deu 12:5-7,10-14,26). Later it turns out to be Jerusalem. In the New Testament there is also a place of which the Lord Jesus said: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Mt 18:20). From the context in which this verse is written it is clear that it is about the gathering of the local church. There the sacrifices of praise and thanks may be brought. There the shade of the Beloved can be experienced, as the bride says in Song of Songs (Song 2:3).

God desires to come together with His own, not in any place, but in the place where He can dwell. That is, in the place where He rests because one submits to Him. If He and His Word are not the norm, but the service is adapted to the taste of man, the negative result should come as no surprise: “Therefore your daughters play the harlot And your brides commit adultery.” A worship service that contains many elements that caress the flesh will have the effect that our children will live for nothing but the flesh.

### **Hos 4:14 | God No Longer Supports the People**

*14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot  
Or your brides when they commit adultery,  
For [the men] themselves go apart with harlots  
And offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes;  
So the people without understanding are ruined.*

The fact that God does not visit the daughters in their harlotry and adultery with His judgment does not mean that He overlooks their deeds. God can never tolerate sin or let it take its course. If God takes His hands off someone, it does not mean He is indulgent. He acts in this way by way of

judgment because the person is incorrigible. By exposing such a person to sin, God seals the choice made in favor of sin (cf. Rom 1:28).

Withdrawal by God has – besides the issue with the daughters – another reason. The elderly take the lead in this sin over the young. If children have such examples, is there anything to blame on them if they are guilty of harlotry and adultery in the same or even worse way? Certainly, adult children have their own responsibility. But those who take the lead in committing sin are guiltier. Where older people take precedence, it is very difficult to point out sin to young people.

The unrestraint reign supreme. Following the disgraceful Canaanite norms, women who are ‘devoted’ to the idol and surrender to prostitution can be found at the sacrificial sites. Such a behavior arises from a people who have “stopped giving heed to the LORD” (verse 10). The fall of Israel has become inevitable and unstoppable.

#### **Hos 4:15 | Not to Gilgal and Not to Bethel**

*15 Though you, Israel, play the harlot,  
Do not let Judah become guilty;  
Also do not go to Gilgal,  
Or go up to Beth-aven  
And take the oath:  
“As the LORD lives!”*

“Gilgal” is the place where God has had the people circumcised for the second time. Because of this, they rolled away the reproach of Egypt (Jos 5:2-9). Bethel is the place where their ancestor Jacob received the promises of God (Gen 28:10-19). But Gilgal, the place from which the land was conquered, has become a place of idolatry. And Bethel, meaning ‘house of God’, has got a golden calf. That is why the prophet here calls it ‘Beth-aven’, which means ‘house of iniquity’. It is not God Who dwells there, but iniquity has taken up residence there.

They do not even hesitate to connect the holy Name of the LORD with their idolatrous practices. They swear by His Name. Thus they connect the Name of the LORD with sin, which is of course abominable. The swearing of an oath is not sinful in itself, as long as it is done in sincerity before God.

Israel and Judah are mentioned separately in this verse. There is still a distinction between the two realms. During the last days of the prophet Hosea Judah experiences a time of revival under Hezekiah and even later under Josiah. Then the horrors are removed from the land, but unfortunately not from the hearts. Judah will also stumble (Hos 5:5). Still, it is as if the prophet looks at Judah with a slanting eye and warns people not to go into the apostasy from God.

It may be that people from Judah go to places in the ten tribes realm to celebrate and that Hosea has them in mind. Bethel lies against the border of Judah. Seeking contact with what is sinful puts that sin itself in danger. “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1Cor 15:33). You are infected with that which you associate yourself with.

Although Hosea mainly prophesies in the northern realm, he sometimes raises his warning voice to Judah. Here he warns the southern kingdom not to follow his northern neighbor in his horrible forms of worship.

In order to stay free from something, it is best to stay as far away from it as possible. It is life-threatening to visit sinful places purely out of curiosity. The atmosphere can get a hold of someone just like that and before one notices it, one joins in. This applies to places where the world seeks its entertainment. But it also applies to all kinds of religious manifestations where emotions are skillfully addressed. Emotions certainly have their place in serving and honoring God. But as soon as they become the norm for serving and honoring God, the heart is taken away from the one true norm: the Word of God. In it the separation between what is of God and what is not of God is clearly stated.

The believer is warned to keep away from everything that originated from unbelief, while beautiful promises of obedience are made (2Cor 6:14-18). Although that part is about the connection to the world, its application to things found within Christianity, but originating in the world, is certainly justified.

### **Hos 4:16 | In a Large Field**

*16 Since Israel is stubborn  
Like a stubborn heifer,*

*Can the LORD now pasture them  
Like a lamb in a large field?*

After the warning addressed to Judah, the prophet addresses himself in this verse to Israel, the northern realm. Just as “an unruly heifer” shakes off the yoke, so Israel refuses to wear the yoke of obedience to God. Do they want to be free? Well, they will be. ‘But’, Hosea seems to say with a certain sarcasm, ‘if you behave like an unmanageable, rebellious cow, don’t think that the LORD will treat you like meek sheep’. The LORD will act with them like a shepherd acts with a stubborn lamb. The lamb may go its own way in the large field, where it will surely perish for lack of protection.

Even now it is still like that. Whoever finds it too oppressive in the vicinity of the Lord may seek ‘space’; no one is forced to serve Him. Whoever experiences His yoke as oppressive, can throw it off. But let someone like that think: ‘If I go away from the Lord, I will inevitably face destruction.’ A lamb left to itself is lost helplessly. “A lamb in a large field” is the prey of all hostile animals.

### **Hos 4:17 | Ephraim and the Idols**

*17 Ephraim is joined to idols;  
Let him alone.*

Ephraim, the most influential tribe, represents the ten tribes here. Instead of being attached to God, Ephraim is attached with heart and soul to the idols. Being “joined” means being “deeply attached to”. The idolater is not the man who has broken with religion, but practices it. For Paul, in his conversation with the pagan inhabitants of Athens, this is a welcome starting point. As he walks through the city, he sees many idols. As a result, he begins his proclamation of the gospel in that city: “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects” (Acts 17:22). From there he starts preaching to them the unknown God.

Idolatry is a false representation and depiction of God. If, for example, the Lord Jesus, Who alone is the image of God, is only seen as a good person, idolatry is committed. Then one has a false representation of God.

Being faithful to the true God can never lead to a compromise. We can never compare the Lord Jesus with Buddha, Muhammad and other idols. It does Him a huge disservice. He stands outside and above any comparison. We can respect the Mohammedan and the Jewish rabbi as human beings, but never stand with them on a common, religious platform. They are devoted to a false representation of God.

If the case with Israel then and with Christianity today is like this, God has no choice but to give free rein to evil. That evil will manifest itself fully and God will execute His righteous judgment on it. If God gives Ephraim, or anyone else, such peace, it is because He has given up all hope for improvement. If God withdraws His hands and leaves man to himself, it is a terrible thing for a man (cf. verses 4,14a; Deu 32:20). The Lord Jesus says something similar about the incorrigible Pharisees: “Let them alone” (Mt 15:14). Those who are not troubled by their sins will be ruined by it.

### **Hos 4:18 | The Rulers**

*18 Their liquor gone,  
They play the harlot continually;  
Their rulers dearly love shame.*

When they have drunk and are drunk, all bets are off and they surrender to harlotry. Their life in debauchery knows no limits. Their rulers precede them in it. The word for ‘rulers’ can also be translated as ‘shields’. The rulers, like shields, should be a protection for the people (cf. Psa 47:9). But instead of being protective, they surrender themselves to harlotry.

Everything is aimed at the satisfaction of one’s own low desires. This way of living goes hand in hand with shamelessness, which leads to disgrace. It is not an occasional sin of adultery, but they sin continuously. They are people who sin without a break, “who do not cease to sin” (2Pet 2:14).

### **Hos 4:19 | Sacrifices That Make One Ashamed**

*19 The wind wraps them in its wings,  
And they will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.*

Hosea here describes in symbolic language how the people will be wiped out in a quick and shameful destruction. God will “He will sweep them

away with a whirlwind” (Psa 58:9b) with His judgment on them. They refuse to learn peace and righteousness from God and must therefore be surrendered to a “wind”, which is the king of Assyria. This enemy will completely surround them, take them away from their land and scatter them.

Then they will realize that all their sacrifices to the idols have not benefited them. They will be ashamed of their own foolishness by being so attached to the idols. They turn out to be gods who have no strength whatsoever to offer help. By relying on those idols, they have made God their enemy, God, Who is powerful, but who now uses His power against them and scatters them.

We may wonder to whom we give our sacrifices. If we are not careful, we will also be ashamed. How much of our time, energy and money have we ‘sacrificed’ to the satisfaction of our own pleasures and to the world?

## Hosea 5

### Introduction

The prophet continues his indictment. In this chapter the royal family is also involved. The leaders put the people on the wrong track, but that does not make the people less guilty. It is said of all that they do not know the LORD (verse 4).

When the LORD tries to bring them to repentance through discipline, they seek help from the surrounding nations (verse 13). That is how deep the people have sunk, and that is how deep we too can sink. Are we too not inclined to seek our help with others rather than with the Lord?

### Hos 5:1 | Call and Deceit

*1 Hear this, O priests!  
Give heed, O house of Israel!  
Listen, O house of the king!  
For the judgment applies to you,  
For you have been a snare at Mizpah  
And a net spread out on Tabor.*

The prophet continues with that with which he started in the previous chapter. He started there by addressing the priests and the people. He now adds the house of the king. He summons them: “Hear this ...”, “give heed ...”, “listen ...”. You can hear him begging: ‘Please listen carefully to me!’ He especially addresses those who have to set an example in the good, such as the priests and the king. In practice they have become a snare for the people.

Those who by their position are in a direct relationship with God are the most to blame. Priests, the religious leaders, and rulers, the political leaders, are addressed. But also, the common people cannot escape the serious preaching of Hosea. All layers of the people are permeated by the evil of idolatry and all kinds of other forms of evil that result from it. All are told the verdict directly.

Hosea reminds the leaders of the task entrusted to them to uphold the law and to administer justice fairly. The practice is that anyone who comes to them with a lawsuit is caught in a trap. The leaders distort the law and starve the people. “Mizpah” is reminiscent of the days of Samuel. It is one of those places where Samuel judges Israel (1Sam 7:16), where the people come to him with their trials. On the mountain “Tabor” Israel’s army is gathered in the time that Deborah judges Israel (Jdg 4:4-6,14).

Both places therefore have a special, national and religious significance. Where the people are allowed to count on justice, the leaders violate the law, only to increase their power and wealth. The people are lured there. But instead of getting the justice they come for, people are led to all kinds of idolatrous and shameful practices.

Working with familiar names and familiar notions is a tactic the enemy likes to use to get hold of unsuspecting souls. It is not enough in itself to go to the place where our ancestors served and met the Lord. We must also be convinced that the Lord is still being served in that trusted place.

We have no business going there when those places have become places where sinful flesh is served and people’s interests are pursued. Each one of us may ask: ‘Am I in the place where I want to serve the Lord perhaps “a snare” or “a net spread out” for some other person, because my behavior or words do not correspond with my confession?’

### **Hos 5:2 | The Revolters**

| 2 *The revolters have gone deep in depravity,  
But I will chastise all of them.*

The revolters are the king, the priests and the people who have become apostates from God and have turned to the idols. They descend to the places where the idols are to slaughter their sacrifices. The places of idolatry are often high places, but God calls it to go deep to those places. The way of God is always a way down.

In the face of this apostate behavior, God places Himself as ‘a chastiser’ (Darby Translation). God does not say that He will chastise them, but that He Himself is a chastiser. He does not chastise, but points to Himself. Everything that becomes visible of God, in which He reveals Himself, is a



chastisement to the apostate people. From all His attributes, such as His mercy, love and righteousness, speaks chastisement. The contradiction between the first and the second line of this verse is great.

### **Hos 5:3 | Known by God**

*3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me;  
For now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot,  
Israel has defiled itself.*

What God says here about Ephraim is reminiscent of what David says, that the LORD knows him through and through (Psa 139:1-4). But there is a big difference between Ephraim and David. In Psalm 139 David testifies of God's omniscience. He is aware that God knows him thoroughly. It makes him small and at the same time full of confidence. With Ephraim or Israel, it is different. They are not aware that God knows them and sees all their deeds (cf. Hos 7:2). God knows them, but they do not know Him (verse 4).

God says that He knows the harlotry of Ephraim and the defilement of Israel. He mentions their deeds. That God knows His people through and through, He proves by presenting them their sins. Nothing is hidden from Him. There is no doubt about their sins. They are defiled and therefore God cannot tolerate them in His presence.

It is grace that God points out their sins to His people. He wants them to see their sins as He sees them, so that they can confess them and He can forgive them. To this end, a whole people or a single human being will only come if there is an upright prayer, as David prays:

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way" (Psa 139:23-24).*

### **Hos 5:4 | Again the Spirit of Harlotry**

*4 Their deeds will not allow them  
To return to their God.  
For a spirit of harlotry is within them,*

| *And they do not know the LORD.*

Unfortunately, a mind like David's is completely alien to the people. They act in a way from which it can absolutely not be deduced that they want to repent. They are simply entangled in sins, they are completely stuck in them. They do not see the way out and they do not want to see it. They are completely in the power of a spirit of harlotry that is "within them".

This goes beyond the earlier mention of that spirit (Hos 4:12), which is active and makes them wander. Here we read that this spirit is within them. This goes a step further. When that spirit has been given a place within them, it closes the door to knowing the LORD.

A moving and terrifying example we see in Judas, the disciple who betrayed the Lord Jesus. First we read of him: "During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, [the son] of Simon, to betray Him" (Jn 13:2). This is similar to the spirit of harlotry that makes one wander. But then we read: "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him" (Jn 13:27a). Satan came into him and took control of his life. Fortunately, a child of God may know: "Greater is He who is in you [i.e. the Spirit of God] than he who is in the world [i.e. the devil]" (1Jn 4:4).

### **Hos 5:5 | The Fall of Israel and Judah**

| *5 Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him,  
And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;  
Judah also has stumbled with them.*

The pride of Israel is not something that is only present in the heart. Their whole attitude radiates pride. The people walk as it were with their nose in the air and look down on others with contempt. There is a total lack of humility and dismay about the sins that are committed openly. It even seems that they boast about what they do. After all, they are God's chosen people?

But if one forgets what being chosen means, the result is pride. Everything that God has given to His people is seen by them as something to which they are entitled. Gone is dependence on and gratitude to God.

There is therefore no strength left to stand up to the enemy. Stumbling is the result. He who is wringing his hand from the hand of God will not get far. A big mouth will possibly impress others just for a while, but then it is finished. A people without God is lost. This is how it has been with Israel and this is how it will be with Christianity.

Christianity also boasts of its privileges as if it has deserved them (Rom 11:19-20). This can also be applied personally. Am I proud of something God has given me, for example the position I occupy? Then the fall is near. Earlier the LORD warned Judah not to imitate Israel (Hos 4:15), but in vain. Judah stumbles with Israel.

### **Hos 5:6 | The LORD Withdraws From Them**

*6 They will go with their flocks and herds  
To seek the LORD, but they will not find [Him];  
He has withdrawn from them.*

Hosea's preaching seems to have an effect. Israel goes in search of the LORD. They even have sacrificial animals with them. But alas, they want to sacrifice without repentance for their sins and therefore they seek the LORD in vain. It is a knocking and calling: "Lord, lord, open up for us", but He will say: "I do not know you" (Mt 25:11-12).

It is important how we seek Him. They come "with their flocks and herds". With this they want to satisfy God, buy off the judgment and buy His favor. But then God does not respond. They come as people who think they have a right to something and not in humility. The outer forms are there, but God is not there. He withdraws from them.

The fact that the people seek the LORD but do not find Him seems contrary to the promise of Lord Jesus that "everyone ... who seeks finds" (Mt 7:8). But the comparison does not hold. In Matthew 7 the Lord speaks of sincere, honest people seeking. If such people seek, they will always find. That promise does not apply to insincere people, who want to use God to fulfill their own plans.

In the same way, we cannot explain what God has said in the Bible according to our own ideas and use texts in the way that suits us best. God's

Word is only meant for people who really take Him at His Word. They can count on God to keep His Word.

What applies to Israel also applies to nominal Christians. If, in the time of judgment, they boast of the prerogatives granted to them, they too will experience God withdrawing from them, or disconnecting Himself from them, as it can be translated. Instead of bowing under the discipline of God, which He sometimes has to bring because of unfaithfulness, local churches can come to boast of their (imagined) great insights and progress.

In the church in Laodicea we also find this spirit of pride (Rev 3:14-22). While the Lord Jesus is addressing them, He is standing outside the door: He has to knock to be let in (Rev 3:20). God withdraws from unfaithful Christians. He does not withdraw from unbelievers. Through them He wants to let Himself be found. For this He reveals Himself to them in the gospel.

### **Hos 5:7 | Consequences of Dealing Treacherously**

*7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD,  
For they have borne illegitimate children.  
Now the new moon will devour them with their land.*

Dealing treacherously against the LORD has been expressed by their idolatry. Instead of worshiping Him, they have followed strange gods and honored them. The result is seen in their children. If the parents do not seek God, but bow down to the gods of the nations around them, the children will do the same.

It is always easier to serve an idol than the living God. You choose an idol yourself and if you do not like him, you just choose another one. If necessary you make one yourself. But if you are dealing with the living God, there is no choice of your own. Then the question is important: Do you want to obey Him?

The people have turned their backs on God. In their alienation from God they have not told their children about the God of Israel either. So the children do not know the living God. They have become a generation of “illegitimate children”, a generation estranged from God.

The application is obvious. What we as parents are looking for and want to own, will be taken over by our children. That is why we always have to ask ourselves: What do we teach our children, where do we bring them, what do we give them, what do they see of us?

In the last part of this verse a punishment is announced. When children no longer ask for God because parents no longer acknowledge God, all hope is gone. If parents give their children the wrong example, the hope of improvement in the next generation will be futile. The “new moon” speaks of a new beginning, of hope. With new moon nothing can be seen of the moon, but at the same time that position of the moon means that the light will come again and that is a reason for expressions of joy (Psa 81:3).

However, in the days of Hosea there is no new hope, no new beginning. On the contrary, whatever announces renewal will only bring destruction. This destruction will not only affect man who has turned his back on God. Everything under the control of the unfaithful man will also be surrendered to judgment. Man will perish together with his possessions, “with their land”, will be consumed.

### **Hos 5:8 | Blow the Horn**

*8 Blow the horn in Gibeah,  
The trumpet in Ramah.  
Sound an alarm at Beth-aven:  
“Behind you, Benjamin!”*

The announced judgment, at the end of the previous verse, is followed by warrior murmur in this verse. The trumpet does not call for a feast, but blows an alarm. The enemy is approaching! Destruction threatens!

The two mentioned cities symbolize the situation of the people. “Gibeah” speaks of deep decay. What has happened there in the past (Jdg 19:22-30) will bring shame to anyone who thinks about it. That is why the horn must be blown right there. Conscience must be awakened, there must be a call to reflection. The result must be a confession of abandoning God and committing idolatry and the recognition that His judgment is just.

In “Ramah” the trumpet must be blown. It is the place where Samuel lived and where he judged Israel (1Sam 7:17). It is also the place where the peo-

ple came to him to demand a king like the people around them (1Sam 8:5). Also “Beth-aven”, which was first called Bethel (= house of God), and “Benjamin”, which belongs to the two tribes, are warned. The danger of war threatens from all sides. Before his mind’s eye Hosea sees the enemy approaching. He is advancing, both from the front and from behind. City after city falls. The enemy gradually takes possession of all the cities.

It is a picture of how it can go in the life of someone who belongs to God’s people. First, he starts to think worldly, then you notice it in his way of speaking and finally it is expressed in his actions. He has deviated from God. Therefore, also in our time it is necessary that the Word of God, like a powerful trumpet, makes its sound to warn His people of the schemes of the enemy (2Tim 4:2).

### **Hos 5:9 | God Makes His Plans Known**

*9 Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke;  
Among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure.*

What Hosea sees through his spiritual eye as imminent danger, will surely happen someday. It is determined. The judgment of sinners is certain. It is therefore important to flee from the coming wrath, for the day of judgment is coming. It is a special grace of God that He makes known what is sure, that He declares what He is planning, also when it comes to the judgment.

God often warns, because He does not want the sinner to perish, but to repent and live. But He must let his judgment come upon the stubborn pursuit of a sinful path and the persistence of a life in sin. He never leaves it at threats, but carries them out if there is no repentance.

### **Hos 5:10 | Moving Boundaries**

*10 The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary;  
On them I will pour out My wrath like water.*

Judah wants to exploit the calamity that has struck the northern empire to enlarge his territory. But whoever tries to expand his territory in such a vile way is calling God’s judgment upon himself. Several times there are explicit warnings against this form of land grabbing. There is even a curse on who does such a thing (Deu 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Pro 22:28).

God has given each tribe its own inheritance. Someone else was not allowed to appropriate a piece of it. He who truly values what he has received from God, will be careful that others not take something away from him. In Naboth we have an example of someone who is aware of the value of his inheritance. King Ahab wants to buy it from him or exchange it for another piece of land, but Naboth refuses (1Kgs 21:1-3). He has to pay his refusal with death (1Kgs 21:4-13). Ahab shows no respect for the boundaries God has drawn.

This lack of respect for the boundaries set by God is also indicative of the twenty-first century in which we live. Not that sincere Christians would consciously seek to erase those boundaries. Nevertheless, the attentive Christian will perceive that the original boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred and that new boundaries are emerging. The area enclosed by the boundaries is being widened. Think, for example, of marriage and cohabitation.

For the perceptive, faithful reader of the Bible it is not a point. Only marriage is the God-imposed form in which man and wife experience sexuality. Today, more and more Christians are arguing in favor of unmarried cohabitation as marriage. Thus, the boundary of marriage has been widened and cohabitation has also been brought within that boundary. And what about married or unmarried cohabitation of two men or two women? The boundaries are being widened and moved further and further.

Take a look at the difference between man and woman, for example when it comes to church meetings. In the past, the silence of the woman in the church was not a point (1Cor 14:34). Now all that is not so clear anymore. There are lots of discussions about how you should see this exactly. Or actually it is more about how you should at least not see it. Instead of a clear explanation of this verse, numerous explanations are sought and found to make clear how unclear this verse actually is. So, in conclusion, you cannot say what it does mean. And if you want to say what it means, you have to say: 'I think it means this.'

The relativization of the Word of God has struck and slays its thousands (cf. 1Sam 18,7). There is a recurring pattern of moving the boundaries. First things are questioned. The point keeps returning to the agenda. That pro-

cess leads to a change of mind. When the spirits are ripe for it, those matters are put into practice.

It is not the ignorant or the lowest classes of the population who are responsible for moving boundaries. It is the princes of Judah, the leaders of a tribe that is extraordinarily privileged by God. In Judah lies Jerusalem with its temple and worship. But the greater the privileges, the greater the deviation if the heart does not remain in fellowship with God. The leaders have preceded the people on the path of unfaithfulness, a path on which what God has said is trampled underfoot. Everyone is out for their own sake.

Certainly, this attitude will be wrapped up in pious words, so that at first sight it really seems to be about the honor of God. But reality will sooner or later become public and its end is death. About these things God's wrath will irrevocably come as the waters of the deluge. Those who break through God's boundaries will be called to account by Him.

### **Hos 5:11 | God Exercises Justice**

*11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,  
Because he was determined to follow [man's] command.*

With the oppression that has befallen Ephraim, we can think of raids by Tiglath-Pileser (2Kgs 15:29). If God exercises justice, he who does not fulfill that justice will be crushed. God oppresses Ephraim because they have chosen to follow Jeroboam in his idolatry in Bethel and Dan (1Kgs 12:28-33). They followed "[man's] commandment" i.e. the command of Jeroboam and did not go to Jerusalem anymore.

### **Hos 5:12 | Moth and Rottenness**

*12 Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim  
And like rottenness to the house of Judah.*

The LORD compares Himself here with a moth and a process of rotting. Both refer to a destructive, corrupting power. A moth eats up the clothes, so that at some point you get naked. The process of rotting happens from the inside and gnaws at the bones. Moth and rottenness represent pernicious influences, which slowly but surely work their way through. A moth



gradually makes its way as it eats and a process of rotting gnaws at the inside of the people's existence.

The most poignant thing is that the corrupting power is the LORD Himself at work! Externally and internally the people are judged by God. Foreign enmity and internal unrest ultimately come from Him as punishment for the sinful people.

How many churches have lost all their strength because of mutual envy and have experienced that "envy is rottenness of the bones" (Pro 14:30b, Darby Translation)? Sometimes they have even been ruined. A community suffers tremendously when one leader becomes envious of the influence of another. This is also the case when leaders are played off against each other. Paul warns the church in Corinth about this (1Cor 3:3-4).

Unfortunately, as Christians, we have not listened to this word. Division, also as a result of envy, damages the testimony of God in this world. There is no strength left to make Him great together.

In marriage, too, envy ultimately has a devastating effect. It consumes the strength to build up marriage. Instead of building, it is demolished. If envy is not overcome in the power of God's Word and God's Spirit, this marriage will eventually be ruined.

### **Hos 5:13 | Wrong Effect of the Discipline**

*13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,  
And Judah his wound,  
Then Ephraim went to Assyria  
And sent to King Jareb.  
But he is unable to heal you,  
Or to cure you of your wound.*

The purpose of the discipline of moth and rottenness is, that the people will become aware of their weakness and will seek the source of strength with the LORD. But what have they done? They went to Assyria.

Certainly, through the discipline that has come upon him, Ephraim has realized that he is sick. But instead of turning to his God for healing, he has turned to humans (2Kgs 15:19). He does not realize that his sickness

cannot be cured by humans because the sickness comes from the LORD. Ephraim does not wonder why he is sick and seeks the solution of his problem outside of the LORD.

Many do exactly the same today. If a deviated believer seeks support from the world, he will have the same experience as Ephraim. The world does help, but this is at the expense of his spiritual blessings.

“King Jareb” means ‘King Combative’ and is a prophetic term for the king of Assyria. They seek their support where they can only expect death (cf. 2Chr 28:16). This is how it always goes with a people who are estranged from God. Carnal hearts see their sickness or wounds, but do not see the cause. Seeking support from humans instead of from God always leads to disappointment.

### **Hos 5:14 | God Like a Lion**

*14 For I [will be] like a lion to Ephraim  
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away,  
I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver.*

Here the LORD presents Himself as a lion. The lion presents a quick, sudden, and terrible judgment. Here too the goal is to bring the people to repentance. If moth and rotteness do not reach the intended goal, God comes with more powerful means, represented in the lion.

This is also how it goes in human life. Sometimes God whispers something into our ears through His Word. He tries to reach our conscience with it. But if we continue on the path we have taken without listening to His soft voice, God has to speak with raised voices, sometimes He even has to roar. God then uses suffering as a megaphone, as has been said. It can then suddenly become very raging and stormy in our lives. God then speaks clearly. Let us listen when He speaks, softly or loudly.

With Israel, He sees no other way than to drag them away from the land that they have so much defiled. No one can prevent that. But He does not let His people go away without going away as well. He also goes and retreats to wait and see what the effect of His meddling will be.

**Hos 5:15 | God Withdraws Until ...**

*15 I will go away [and] return to My place  
Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face;  
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.*

God has withdrawn from Israel. His glory has departed from Israel and gone back to His dwelling place, heaven (Eze 10:4,18-19; 11:22-23). He will only return to Israel when they realize their guilt towards Him. That He has not definitively withdrawn Himself from the people is beautifully expressed in the word “until”. This word gives hope. It indicates a turning point. That turning point depends on the acknowledgment of guilt (Lk 15:20).

When the Lord Jesus describes the rebelliousness of Jerusalem and, as a result, has to leave it, He uses the same conditional “until” as Hosea (Mt 23:37-39). Until they feel guilty of idolatry and also feel guilty of their rejection of their Messiah, God cannot have compassion on His people. This was also discussed in Hosea 1. There we also saw that there is a future for the people because they will be accepted as God’s people again (Rom 11:25-32).

If God’s face and protection are withdrawn, it means for Israel the scattering from the land. If they walk with God, nothing can harm them. But sin separates them from God. If God withdraws, we have lost everything. The right distinction between good and evil is gone. Above all, love is gone. When God leaves, He takes everything that is valuable and precious, all good.

God only leaves man when man has first left Him and He has tried everything to bring man back into the right relationship with Him. He does this by being for them like a chastiser (verse 2), like a moth and a rotteness (verse 12) and finally like a lion (verse 14).

“The affliction” will take place during the great tribulation. That time is called “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7). The Lord Jesus speaks of the same period in His great prophetic discourse in Matthew 24-25 and says: “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” (Mt 24:21).

At the end of that period, which will last three and a half years, the people, i.e. the faithful remnant, will feel guilty. They will come to confession and longing for God Who will save them from their need. God will do this by sending the Lord Jesus to earth for the second time. He will not come to suffer and die for sin, but to judge evil and to reign (Zec 12:10; 14:3-5; Heb 9:28).

When God returns to His place in Israel, it is to bless His people. He waits in grace for their conversion. When that moment finally comes, He will rise from His place and help His people in their need. He will do this by judging His enemies: "For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa 26:21).

## Hosea 6

### Introduction

The last verses of the previous chapter tell us that the discipline of the LORD will finally have the effect desired by Him. Every member of the people who acknowledges his guilt will let hear the call with which Hosea 6 begins: “Come, let us return to the LORD” (Hos 6:1). Then they will be blessed. These individuals are a remnant who have confidence in God. He does not shame that confidence.

Unfortunately, the call will not be heeded by the majority of the people. That part is only externally religious, but has no real love for God. The loyalty of the people is compared to a promising cloud, but which dissolves into nothingness (verse 4). God is not concerned with outer forms, but with a goodness that comes from the heart. That is still true today.

### Hos 6:1 | A Call Full of Confidence

1 *“Come, let us return to the LORD.  
For He has torn [us], but He will heal us;  
He has wounded [us], but He will bandage us.*

When we have left God, we have to go back to where we left Him. There we can find Him back, there He has stayed and is waiting for us. With the call to return to the LORD, Hosea appeals to the conscience of the people. It is also possible that the faithful in the people speak those words to each other. They express acknowledgment and trust. Acknowledgment that the judgments are justified, that they have deserved them, and trust that the LORD heals and bandages. The call also means that they no longer go to the Assyrians for help.

Hosea, or the faithful of the people, connects with these words to the words of the LORD Himself in the previous chapter (Hos 5:15). By adopting in faith the words of the LORD they also acknowledge the truth of them.

It speaks of spiritual maturity when things that happen in our lives are accepted from the hand of the Lord, and are not attributed to people or

circumstances. Job has accepted all the suffering that has befallen him out of the hand of God: “For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands [also] heal” (Job 5:18; 1:21; 1Sam 2:6).

After the experience of God’s wrath, faith also sees the greatness of His compassion and lovingkindness. They will acknowledge that His judgment is righteous. They will also express their faith as well as their hope for His mercy and the promised blessing of restoration. They will now see that they are sick and that only the LORD can heal them. To Him they go. They go in the confidence that God never ‘strikes’ to alienate His children from Himself, but rather to bring them to Himself.

God “tore” and “wound” the ten tribes when the Assyrians took them into scattering, and the two tribes when the king of Babylon took them into exile. The word “torn” is the word used for tearing them apart like a predator does (cf. Hos 5:14).

### **Hos 6:2 | Revived, Raised Up, Live**

*2 “He will revive us after two days;  
He will raise us up on the third day,  
That we may live before Him.*

When God’s people have honestly acknowledged that there is no longer any right to blessing because they have forfeited everything, He will go to work. That is why in verses 1-2 it says “He will” four times. He brings life into death. He is God and no one else (Deu 32:39). The third day in the Bible usually speaks of the resurrection from the dead. Just as Jonah is spit out by the fish on the third day (Jn 2:10), so for Israel there comes a third day of life and glory. It is important to also connect this verse with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (1Cor 15:3-4). He is the true Israel (cf. Hos 11:1; Mt 2:15).

Verse 2 holds a promise for the future. God will raise His people from the dead. This will happen in phases. Ezekiel gets to see this in his prophecy. He sees a valley full of dry bones (Eze 37:1-6). This represents Israel in the time of scattering. But he also sees how the bones join together, without any spirit in them (Eze 37:7-8).

This is the situation Israel has been in since May 14, 1948. There is a national existence, but not yet a connection with God. It is a state established by its own effort and maintained in trust on its own military strength and with the help of allies. God is not taken into account. Only when God pours out on them the spirit of grace and supplications and confessions of guilt (Zec 12:10-14) will the relationship with God be restored. Then the people will “live before Him”, i.e. live in His favor.

This can also be applied to the life of the Christian. A Christian only truly lives if he lives from confession of guilt and the certainty of forgiveness. Then there will and may be an awareness that he is living in God’s favor. That life is, so to speak, connected with the third day, with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. His resurrection is the proof that God no longer sees all the sins of those who believe in His Son. They are gone forever. Whoever really experiences this will enjoy real life in God’s favor and will no longer want it any other way. How to enjoy that life is made clear in the following verse.

### **Hos 6:3 | Knowing and Going Forth**

3 *“So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.  
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;  
And He will come to us like the rain,  
Like the spring rain watering the earth.”*

After the resurrection there is new life, a life that fits the resurrection. That new life has only one desire: To get to know Him. But, could one say, once you have new life, you already know Him? That is true. Yet it is only partly true, because in that knowing only one aspect of the Lord Jesus has come to the fore. The people of Israel will be redeemed by the Lord Jesus in the end time. They will get to know Him as Savior. This also applies to everyone who, as a sinner, now gets to know Him.

But the Lord Jesus is so much more than Savior. The richness of His Person is infinite. Well, every person who has come to know Him as Savior will long to discover more and more glories in Him. This longing is a proof of the new life. And the more knowledge we gain of God and His Son, the more the foundation will be laid for a life of faith and obedience.

If there is the desire to know the Lord, there will also come the effort to know Him. Without effort there will be no increase in knowledge. Truth must be ‘bought’ (Pro 23:23). A price must be paid for it. That can be a price in the form of time to study God’s Word. That is why it is added in this verse that they want to press on to know Him.

This is reminiscent of the desire of the apostle Paul. In his letter to the Philippians he also writes about getting to know the Lord Jesus and pressing on to it (Phil 3:8,10,14). We could say: But Paul already knows the Lord very well, doesn’t he? He does. Yet Paul also knows about the infinite glory of his Savior and Lord and he wants to discover more and more of that. He does anything for that. How is that with us?

But there is something additional. Precisely the lack of knowledge is the cause of their downfall (Hos 4:6). If, however, there is a longing for the true knowledge of God, the result will not be downfall and that God withdraws, but just the opposite. Instead of the night that had to come over the people, “the dawn” will come. The desire of the people will be answered by the fact that the Lord Jesus goes forth as the rising Sun at the dawn, which is the dawn of the millennial realm (Mal 4:2; cf. Psa 19:6a).

The result is an abundant rain, through which the land will produce an abundant fruit. A renewed outpouring of the Spirit will take place for the people that ‘came to life’ nationally in 1948 (Joel 2:28-30). Then the stone heart will be taken from the people and instead God will give them a heart of flesh and also His Spirit (Eze 36:26-27). From then on they will live under the blessing and grace of God in Christ Who will reign as King (Pro 16:15).

### **Hos 6:4 | The LORD Consults With Himself**

*4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
For your loyalty is like a morning cloud  
And like the dew which goes away early.*

With this verse begins a new part, a new prophetic speech. Probably we can place this part in the time of King Pekah, who by the assassination of King Pekahiah takes control of the government over the ten tribes (2Kgs



15:25; cf. Hos 6:8; 7:7). After an ‘in-between sentence’ – which runs from Hosea 5:15-6:3 and deals with the repentance and restoration of Israel – Hosea here again takes up his normal task of warning. The LORD speaks. He asks in holy wrath what He will do with Ephraim and Judah, just as someone in utter indignation asks how He will punish a discovered evil righteous.

This verse shows how God struggles, as it were, with Himself to reach the heart of the people. The message moves back and forth between the affection of the Divine heart and the depravity of man. It seems as if God no longer knows what to do. Of course He speaks humanly (cf. Isa 5:4).

Ephraim and Judah now fall under a common judgment. Their love is only volatile and superficial, like the dew that lies over the fields early in the morning. A beautiful sight, that glitter. But how quickly the dew has disappeared again. What a contrast is the dew that disappears quickly with the LORD Who is like the rise of the dawn (verse 3). The sun rises steadily and continues to shine all day. Thus is the love of the LORD for His people. They may continue to enjoy it. However, their love is short-lived.

When the people declare their love for God at the birth of the nation under Moses (Jer 2:2), it is also only temporary. In their history there have always been certain moments that they want to live with God, but they are only flicks, temporary expressions of love, which have disappeared. Often our love is the same, changeable, up and down. Thank God that His love for us is not like that.

The love that is meant here can be the love for God, but it can also be the love for neighbor. In any case, their expressions of love are merely appearances.

### **Hos 6:5 | What the Word of God Effects**

*5 Therefore I have hewn [them] in pieces by the prophets;  
I have slain them by the words of My mouth;  
And the judgments on you are [like] the light that goes forth.*

Now follows the answer to the question from the previous verse: “What shall I do with you?” God has sent His prophets to His people. They have come with words of judgment instead of comfort. They were conceived by

Him to bring the hearts of the people back to Him. The language of this verse shows that God's Word is a word of power, acting with force upon the hearer.

God speaks using clear language. He does not want to be misunderstood. Every hearer must feel its power. The Hebrew word means beating or hammers out stones in a quarry. It also contains a beautiful thought. It reminds us that God with His Word works on us like a sculptor works on a piece of stone. The sculptor hammers away more and more of the rough stone, so that the image he has in mind becomes more and more visible.

Prophets and other servants are God's 'tools' for working His people. Paul also wants Christ to be formed in the believers (Gal 4:19). Because with Israel God's Word does not have the effect that God desires, for them the preaching of the Word means death. Whoever accepts what God says will live through it, but whoever rejects it will be judged by it.

### **Hos 6:6 | Loyalty and Knowledge Are Better Than Sacrifice**

*6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,  
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

God does not let Himself be deceived if there are only outer forms and no inner relationship with Him. In serving God it does not come down to outward tribute, but to the mind of the heart. This verse is quoted twice by the Lord Jesus. The first time He quotes this verse to indicate that His grace goes out to sinners and not to people who think they are righteous (Mt 9:13). The second time He does so to indicate that the innocent should not be judged (Mt 12:7).

In the same sense as Hosea, some of his contemporaries also prophesied (Isa 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8). Several prophets have pointed out that God longs for real faith and not for meaningless sacrifices.

This does not mean that God despises sacrifices as such, but He does if they are brought without sincere faith in Him. God desires a heart that goes out to Him and the neighbor. He has commanded His people to sacrifice. But this sacrifice must be brought from a sincere heart, otherwise the sacrifice is meaningless and worthless (Jer 7:22-23; Mk 12:33; Psalms 51:18-19). God wants people to live to His honor. If their sacrifices connect to that,

they get real value for Him. In idolatry it is the other way around. The idol wants his altar to be overloaded with sacrifices and then man may live as he wants.

### **Hos 6:7 | Transgressed Like Adam**

*7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;  
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.*

As soon as God gives a man responsibility for something, he fails. That already started with the first man, Adam. And this fact has been repeated many times in the history of man. We find it with the people of Israel, to whom God holds up the example of Adam. But the church did not do any better.

“There” means in transgressing the covenant the people made with God at Sinai. “There” can also refer to the land of Israel and perhaps even more specifically to Bethel. In Bethel they have placed a golden calf and bowed down before it, while God has strictly forbidden idolatry.

Adam is expelled from the garden because of his transgression, Israel is expelled from the promised land because of his transgression. Gentiles are always called ‘sinners’ and not ‘transgressors’. There is talk of “transgressors” when there is a commandment. God has placed Adam under a ‘law’, a certain commandment that He has imposed on him. He violates that commandment. Israel is under the law that God has given them at their own request.

God has clearly written on the two tablets of the law what He wants. But the people have not obeyed it. They have deliberately and consciously broken His law and thereby openly shown their faithlessness against Him. They have personally wronged God to a great extent.

### **Hos 6:8 | Gilead**

*8 Gilead is a city of wrongdoers,  
Tracked with bloody [footprints].*

Gilead is a region on the east side of the Jordan. The whole area is a stronghold full of crime. It is assumed that Shallum, the murderer of King Zech-

ariah (2Kgs 15:10), comes from Gilead. Pekah, who murdered king Pekahiah, uses a gang of assassins of fifty Gileadites (2Kgs 15:25) to carry out his plans.

Gilead is known for his balm (Jer 8:22) to heal wounds and soothe pain. They did not honor that name. Instead of bringing enlightenment and healing, they spread death and destruction around them. Instead of blood stemming, there is blood shedding activity.

### **Hos 6:9 | Priest Gangs**

*9 And as raiders wait for a man,  
[So] a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem;  
Surely they have committed crime.*

Shechem is on the route from the capital Samaria to the religious center of Bethel. The idea here is that it is precisely the priests – appointed by Jeroboam from all layers of the population (1Kgs 12:31) – who rob and murder the pilgrims. The priests have become ordinary street robbers.

It is not only the Gilead from across the Jordan that is guilty of crimes, but also in the land itself they commit many crimes. It is one great gang of robbers. The priests operate in gangs. The mutual unity in evil is great. What someone alone would not dare to do, they dare to do together with others. That has always been and still is the case.

They operate in a mean and sneaky way, they are lurking. Once the prey is caught, they also act violently, they murder and commit misdemeanors. They do that “on the way to Shechem”. Shechem is one of the cities of refuge for manslayers (Jos 20:1-7). On the way to the city where someone can flee to find protection from the manslayer, there are these homicidal people.

### **Hos 6:10 | What God Has Seen**

*10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;  
Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself.*

If the evil described in these verses would refer to the Gentiles, then that is understandable. But God has seen this horrible thing in His people. And

what evil is at stake? Fornication, harlotry. This can be understood both literally and spiritually.

Literally there is a lot of unfaithfulness in the marriages in Israel. Even today it is painful to see that unfaithfulness increases in Christian families. Statistics indicate that the percentage of divorces among Christians is just as high as among non-Christians.

This literal unfaithfulness is a consequence of the spiritual unfaithfulness. Many Christians no longer live their lives according to biblical standards, they live according to what is common in the world. That is spiritual adultery. “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1Cor 15:33). Bad company is the result of not knowing God. Christians should be ashamed of this (1Cor 15:34). They should work hard to undo that ignorance by studying God’s Word with a desire to know His will.

By committing harlotry, Israel has defiled itself (Hos 5:3). As a result, God cannot have any connection with them. That defilement can only be made undone through confession of guilt and sacrifice. If there is no cleansing, God can no longer acknowledge His people as His people and must judge them. Ultimately, this judgment comes when the Assyrians invade Israel and scatter the people.

### **Hos 6:11 | The Restoration**

*11 Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you,  
When I restore the fortunes of My people*

It is not immediately clear what is meant by “a harvest”. The most plausible thing is to see here again such a sudden ray of hope that becomes visible in the midst of other judgments. The harvest for Judah is then the blessing of the land they will receive after the judgments. This does not mean the return from Babylon, but we can see a reference to the realm of peace in it. Judah is the core and around Judah the whole of Israel, “My people”, will share in the promised blessing.

Whatever “a harvest” may mean, bringing a change in the captivity of God’s people at least refers to the situation that all unfaithfulness and the associated judgments have come to an end. Then the time has come for enjoying all the promises God has made and will give to His people. The peo-

ple will receive those promises because all conditions have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. In Him all God's promises are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

## Hosea 7

### Introduction

In this chapter, the changing pictures described by the prophet follow each other more and more boisterously. This is due to his indignation about all the evil that his eye perceives. Only Ephraim, the ten tribes, are discussed. Verses 3-7 deal with internal affairs, verses 8-16 with external politics.

Every attempt by God to heal Israel is answered by them with even greater unfaithfulness. Ephraim (= Israel) has not kept itself isolated from the nations. As a result, his power has disappeared, but he does not see that for himself. And when they cry out to God for help, it is not with their heart. They only need God to come out of misery and then go their own way again. Woe to us if we think we can deal with God in this way.

### **Hos 7:1 | Healing Manifests Evil**

*1 When I would heal Israel,  
The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered,  
And the evil deeds of Samaria,  
For they deal falsely;  
The thief enters in,  
Bandits raid outside,*

All God's gracious attempts to heal Israel remain without result. Rather, there is an even greater manifestation of iniquity. These attempts consist of sending His prophets. God wants to reach their conscience, so that the people will see their guilt and confess their sin. But instead of listening to these prophets, their hatred of Him becomes manifest. They reject Him in His prophets. The most obvious example is when the Lord Jesus comes in the midst of His people. His presence brings this iniquity to light in the clearest way possible.

God is always looking for healing, He always offers salvation. But everything is refused, by Israel and also by the sinner today. God wants to heal, but the ailment must be acknowledged. Instead of acknowledging the ail-

ment and letting God do His work, the people aggravate their ailment by rejecting Him. They do not want to see their disease.

If a doctor constantly has to prescribe other medications because the earlier ones do not work, the ailment must be persistent and deep. There is then a very serious disease. The LORD has always given good medicines, but the patient Israel has not taken them. The sins do not remain hidden, but they break out clearly visible to everyone.

The iniquity is described in three forms, in which it takes more and more brutal forms:

1. First there is that "they deal falsely". This is done sneakily, while the impostor presents himself decently to the outside world.
2. The next, more brutal form is that of the thief. The thief also does something sneaky, but his behavior, he "enters in", can hardly be called decent.
3. The third and most brutal form of evil becomes visible in the "bandits". Bandits are not ashamed of anything. These bandits "raid outside", they commit their iniquity in full daylight.

This is how it goes from bad to worse. If a disease is not stopped, there is only deterioration.

This progression of the disease, which is therefore deterioration of health, also characterizes Christianity. Certain sins, which used to be an exception, are now becoming more and more common. This is because some sins are no longer experienced as sins. And, it is argued, if you no longer experience something as sin, it is not sin. The feeling that everyone has, is becoming norm, and the Bible, the only correct norm, is being eroded more and more and finally pushed aside. This means an absolute numbness of natural feelings.

It has been said that we are beyond shame. This means that the feeling of shame, which has come into man through the fall in sin, is disappearing more and more. More and more people are becoming ashamed of fewer and fewer things. As far as the Netherlands is concerned, it has even been noted that it is no longer possible to sin in this country. For there is nothing more that is called sin. Everything is allowed and considered normal. The clear example of same-sex marriage shows that. For something so horrible,



a legal basis has been laid in the Netherlands, as the first country in the world.

### **Hos 7:2 | Nothing Escapes God**

*2 And they do not consider in their hearts  
That I remember all their wickedness.  
Now their deeds are all around them;  
They are before My face.*

Their shameless attitude and behavior stem from the denial of God's omniscience and omnipresence. One does not live by faith in the living God. It typifies the wicked that he thinks there is no God. It typifies the apostate that he thinks God does not see it. When God looks at them, He sees only sins; they are completely surrounded, yes, encircled by them. They are in the grip of their sins as in a vicious circle from which they cannot escape.

Their sins are always before God. That goes for the sins of all people. Nothing and no one can escape His eye. God forgets nothing of what a man has done. Everyone, the Bible says, will be called to give account before Him. Without fail, God will confront every man with his words and deeds and judge him according to his works and words (Rev 20:12; Mt 12:37). Now is the time for a man to repent to God and accept the Lord Jesus in faith as the atonement for his sins. Of all those who do so, God says: "And I will remember their sins no more" (Heb 8:12b).

### **Hos 7:3-4 | Deeds That Bring Joy and Death**

*3 With their wickedness they make the king glad,  
And the princes with their lies.  
4 They are all adulterers,  
Like an oven heated by the baker  
Who ceases to stir up [the fire]  
From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.*

Verses 3-7 deal with kings, rulers, how one sees them and deals with them, and ends with their assassination. It seems that these verses describe how the king and his royals are treacherously overthrown. In order to sketch what is happening here, metaphors are used. The people who want to kill

the king are compared to a heated oven. They are full of evil and vengeance and their entire inside glows with zeal to kill the king. The dough represents the king who must be put to death in the oven of their lust for murder. Outwardly they are kind to the king, but in their hearts they hate him.

Here the treacherous nature of sin manifests itself clearly. It begins underground, unnoticed. The fire is stirred up, the dough is kneaded, and the baker sleeps. Then the appropriate moment arrives and the flames flare up high. Unscrupulous people take their chance, kill the king and another sits on the throne. What the baker and the assassin have in common in this imagery is that – after having made the necessary preparations – they both wait until the moment of action has arrived. In all this, there is no thought of God present. There is no one calling to the LORD.

“Make the king glad” (verse 3) means that they make him happy by giving him wine in order to be able to kill him all the more easily. They use lies to get the rulers at the feast they organize. To celebrate a feast, the rulers always can appreciate that. Whether there is a valid reason for it, does not matter. Even less does it matter if it is a feast where also the LORD can be. If only something can be celebrated. After all, life is one big celebration. But the rulers do not realize how hatred burns in the hearts of those they are invited by.

The metaphor of verse 4 is not so easy to understand. What is clear, however, is that the adulterous behavior of the people is compared to an oven that continues to burn, without new food being given to it. It indicates the attitude, the mind of their hearts, which is aimed at giving in to every lust that arises. We can take their adulterous behavior literally. One can also think of a behavior that is equal to that of the nations around them. They think only of their own advantage.

If the rulers do not provide this, they must be eliminated. The preparation for that can possibly be seen in the kneading of the dough. People’s thinking must be made ripe. The baker, which is he who has prepared his plan, tries to convince the people. He deludes them about how much benefit it will bring if the king is put aside. This is in line with the hatred the people

have for their king. When their thoughts have been influenced in this way, “until it is leavened”, the time is ripe to strike.

Perhaps some people even think they are doing God a favor by killing their king. The mixing of idolatry with a service to God is, however, aptly expressed in the mixing of the leaven – in the Bible always a picture of something sinful – with the dough made from the fruit of the land given by God. The Lord Jesus shows with the picture of the leaven that false doctrine will permeate the whole Christianity (Mt 13:33).

### **Hos 7:5 | Drunkenness and Kingship**

*5 On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine;  
He stretched out his hand with scoffers,*

Talking about “our king” seems to be an indication that Hosea is a subject of the ten tribes realm. “The day” can be a birthday or some other kind of day of remembrance. The fact that they want to get their rulers drunk says a lot about the moral state of the people of God. Whoever makes someone deliberately drunk, certainly a ruler, calls God’s judgment upon himself (Hab 2:15). It also says a lot about the moral condition of the king who allows himself to be drunk. The king himself is responsible (Pro 31:3-4).

How can someone who cannot govern himself rule a country? Drunkenness makes people sick and affects their health. In addition, it leads to shameless and unscrupulous behavior, a behavior that one would not normally come to. It brings someone into the company of unscrupulous people. The intoxication of the drink makes him agree with those people. He lowers himself to their level.

Children of God are also kings. They are warned above all to stay sober and not to be intoxicated by the wine. And not only in a literal sense. Also, in a spiritual sense they should not let themselves be intoxicated by the thinking of the world. It is important that they keep a clear view of God’s plan with their lives. Those who constantly allow the influence of TV programs or the filth of the internet to influence themselves will eventually lower themselves to the level of thinking and acting as it is shown there.

## **Hos 7:6 | Conscience and Lust**

*6 For their hearts are like an oven  
[As] they approach their plotting;  
Their anger smolders all night,  
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.*

The phrase “their anger smolders” can also be translated as “their baker sleeps” (cf. verse 4). In this verse we can then see the following picture: the ‘oven’ is the plotting, the ‘heart’ is the dough or the bread, the ‘baker’ is the passion of idolatry and of evil lusts. In the ‘baker’ we can also see the conscience of man. Their conscience sleeps; they follow their own will and imagination. Their hearts are on fire because of their passions. An unclean heart is like a heated oven, and its unclean lusts and desires are like the fuel that makes the fire hot.

Paul uses the same imaginative language when he describes the lewd lusts to which people surrender who do not care about God and His Word (Rom 1:27). The natural feelings are killed when one no longer takes into account what God has said and one simply follows one’s own lusts.

Conscience has been given to man by God after and as a result of the fall in sin. It is a ‘warning mechanism’. This means that the conscience only gives a signal when we think of and do something that is not right. We can ease our conscience by constantly coming up with arguments to make the wrong thing we did not seem so bad after all. If we repeat this often enough, the conscience will eventually no longer respond if something is done that is contrary to God’s Word. The conscience becomes numb, it is as if it is asleep. But lust does not sleep. It burns constantly like an oven.

## **Hos 7:7 | Hot Like an Oven**

*7 All of them are hot like an oven,  
And they consume their rulers;  
All their kings have fallen.  
None of them calls on Me.*

In verse 6, only the heart is an oven. Here in verse 7 it seems that the whole person has become an oven, an oven that consumes their rulers and kings. All their thoughts and actions are aimed at killing their leaders. All the

actions of a person come from his heart (Pro 4:23). If feelings of hatred or lust are cherished in the heart, they will at some point be transformed into actions.

How hurtful all this is to God can be heard in the last words of this verse. God complains that there is no one calling on Him. Nothing would be better for the people than to turn to Him Who not only can give a solution, but seeks the best for His people.

### **Hos 7:8 | No Mixing with the Nations**

*8 Ephraim mixes himself with the nations;  
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.*

In their personal need, the people try to get rid of their rulers. The people feel the yoke of their king too much. He does not give them the space they want. There is not only internal dissatisfaction, but also danger externally. In the north is Assyria. When danger from that side really threatens, they seek help from southern Egypt. If Egypt becomes a threat, they try to make an alliance with Assyria. In this way Ephraim, that is Israel, seeks help with the nations. They are actively engaged in intermingling. They have forgotten what God has had said of them as a people through Balaam: "Behold, a people [who] dwells apart, And will not be reckoned among the nations" (Num 23:9).

How God judges this mixture becomes clear from a second imagery from the baker's world. Through his action, Ephraim resembles a cake that a baker has forgotten to turn. As a result, the bread is burned on one side and the other side is not yet cooked. This picture represents people who are extreme on two sides: they are zealous in evil, the black baked side, and they neglect the service of the LORD, the side that is not cooked. The underside, directed toward the world, is overheated; the top, directed toward God, is still dough, so disgusting.

Assyria and his idols are served with all diligence, while they forget the LORD. This makes Israel an abomination. It cannot be eaten or sold. You cannot do anything with it. The only thing it is good for is to be thrown away. This is what happened through the scattering.

The Christian is also warned not to mingle with the world: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers” (2Cor 6:14a). In the verses that follow, the absurdity and foolishness of such mingling is made clear (2Cor 6:14b-16).

### **Hos 7:9 | He Does Not Know It**

*9 Strangers devour his strength,  
Yet he does not know [it];  
Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him,  
Yet he does not know [it].*

The third metaphor is that he “got grey hair”. This indicates that the strength and energy of the past are no longer there. Greyness is often a sign of old age and wisdom, but not here. Here it means diminishing strength, which culminates in the end of their existence as a people. When the first gray hairs become visible in someone, it is immediately noticed. There are mirrors for this. If it is not noticed, it is unnatural. This is the case with Israel. Having gray hair is not a disgrace, but not seeing it is. Twice it says in this verse that he does not know it. How tragic!

In the book of Malachi, we also come across this lack of awareness of one’s own shortcomings. We hear the people asking the question several times that they have done this or that. They are unaware that they have strayed in the things about which they are addressed.

From a spiritual point of view, the first gray hairs become visible in us when, for example, our need to come together with God’s people begins to diminish; or when our interest in God’s house diminishes; or when our commitment and need to bring people the gospel diminishes; or when we no longer take it so strictly in our work and the like. It can also happen to us that we do not notice it. And the cause? Strangers have taken away our strength. Strange thoughts have gained access to our thinking by opening the door to worldly thinking.

The only fruit Israel reaps from its search for help from the worldly powers is dependence. The people end up in a dependent position and are sucked out. We can think of the heavy tax Menahem has to pay for the help he asks from the king of Assyria (2Kgs 15:19-20). Any favor that a believer

asks of the world must be paid dearly. The world never gives anything for nothing. Dealing with the world consumes the power of a believer without him knowing it.

Ephraim is a decrepit greybeard, stumbling to the grave. It should be a separated people, as a testimony of God. Nothing comes of this testimony because the people went on the way of the pagans and adopted pagan customs.

Samson is an imaginative illustration of what is said here about Ephraim. When Samson has revealed the secret of his power, which lies in his being a Nazirite – that is, his separation for the LORD – his power is gone. Just as tragically as with Ephraim, we read of Samson that he does not know that the LORD is no longer with him: “But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him” (Jdg 16:19-20).

Any fraternizing with the world, under whatever cover, causes the Christian to lose his fellowship with the Lord and therefore all spiritual energy, often without being aware of it.

### **Hos 7:10 | Pride Makes Blind**

*10 Though the pride of Israel testifies against him,  
Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God,  
Nor have they sought Him, for all this.*

It testifies of pride when people boast about their own qualities, while they are blind to the flaws that make these highly praised qualities fade away. This is how it is with Israel. Blind as they are for the blurring of national fame, they see no reason to repent to the LORD their God. Why should they repent at all? Surely there is nothing wrong with them, is there? What is wrong with them is that they are blind to their own pride.

What the Lord Jesus says to the Pharisees applies to them. They also believe that they see and do everything well, while they are blind to their sins because of their pride (Jn 9:40-41). Those who think they see, but in reality are blind to their own sins, remain in their sins. Such a person thinks he does not need repentance; there is no search for God. After all, do they think they already belong to Him?

It is an attitude that we also encounter in Christianity. It is presented to us in particular in the message to the church in Laodicea. This church boasts that everything is perfectly in order with them. There is nothing wrong with them. Listen to their language: “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3:17a). Do we recognize any of this in our own hearts or in the local church of which we are a part? Then that must be judged.

In reality, the Lord Jesus is outside the door in Laodicea. His reaction is therefore not soft: “And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.” In His love to win them back, He gives them good advice (Rev 3:17b-18). Here too, as in Hosea, through pride, there is a lack of awareness of the misery in which the church finds itself. The way out that is still offered, is to open the door of our hearts and let the Lord Jesus enter to have fellowship with Him. That is the repentance He is waiting for (Rev 3:19-20).

Dear fellow Christians, give Him again all the authority in your life. As long as the Lord Jesus is knocking, there is still hope. For Israel that hope lies in that touching “their God”, as He still calls Himself here.

### **Hos 7:11 | A Silly Dove**

*11 So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense;  
They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.*

With ever new metaphors the prophet tries to make clear to the people what position they are in. He uses a fourth metaphor, that of a dove. This animal often represents something positive. We have to be ‘innocent’ or ‘simple’ as doves, says the Lord Jesus (Mt 10:16). “Innocent” or “silly” is opposed to cunning and unreliability. A dove is rather naive and is easily deceived and captured. A dove knows its home, it almost always goes back there.

But Israel has no sense. They are silly and without sense. Who goes to Egypt or to Assyria to seek protection, peoples who also easily reveal themselves as enemies (Hos 5:13)? There is a hesitant policy that makes the folly of forgetting God even greater. The inner state of half-heartedness has an effect on entering into these foreign relations. This behavior is as



reprehensible as the cake that cannot be eaten (verse 8). Without sense is literally ‘without heart’. They do not even realize that the danger comes from the side where they seek support.

### Hos 7:12 | The Net Is Spread Out

*12 When they go, I will spread My net over them;*

*I will bring them down like the birds of the sky.*

*I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.*

By “My net,” God means Assyria. Just as a bird moves thoughtlessly into the net, so too Israel, with its policy of unbelief, plunges blindly into destruction. That destruction is caused by the righteous judgment of God on them. The swarm of birds in the sky, the fifth metaphor, seems to indicate a common attempt by the leaders to get help from both Egypt and Assyria. They will be brought down. This punishment of God will come fully upon them when He surrenders Israel into the power of the king of Assyria.

The meaning of the last line is that they will be chastised according to the judgments in the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 27-28), which are to be read to the whole people (Deu 31:12).

### Hos 7:13 | Straying, Rebellion, Lying

*13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me!*

*Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me!*

*I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.*

God Himself calls out the “woe” over them because they have strayed from Him. He who leaves God has to fear grief after grief. He who falls away from God violates his own soul and proves to be completely blind to all God’s goodness. Both the “strayed” and the “rebelled” indicates that the connection with God has been there, but that they no longer appreciate it. That shows a hardened heart, a conscious turning its back on God.

In order to justify this attitude, they can think of nothing else than to speak lies against God. When the Lord Jesus is on earth, the religious leaders do the same. They even dare to attribute His works of mercy to the prince of demons (Mt 9:32-34). In this way, Israel answers all God’s goodness with

nothing but ingratitude. It is possible that they accuse God of not helping them against their enemies in the past, although He did.

It can happen in the life of someone who confesses to have become a Christian, that life as a Christian is so difficult for him, that he turns his back on God. In order to justify his return to the world, such a person often attributes incongruous things to God. Disappointed as he is in God, he is going to badmouth God.

For the sake of convenience, he forgets that God did prove Himself as the redeeming God in his life. For example, God has saved him from a difficult situation in financial matters or in things within the family or with regard to health. But if the heart has not come into a living relationship with God through true repentance and faith, things will happen that will bring to light the reality of his relationship with God. Then it will turn out that such a person did not have a real relationship with God.

### **Hos 7:14 | Believing Because of Earthly Happiness**

*14 And they do not cry to Me from their heart  
When they wail on their beds;  
For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves,  
They turn away from Me.*

“God, who knows the heart” (Acts 15:8) knows exactly why a man cries to Him. His people cry to Him because of the lack of earthly prosperity. They are sad that they no longer have them in such abundance. Alas, they ignore the fact that the scarcity is the result of the discipline of God because they are unfaithful. But they do not manage to acknowledge that. They cry to the LORD, but not with their heart. They cry only because they have lost their prosperity and blessing. They treat Him as a pagan idol, who by their self-flagellation will break down and give them what they ask for (cf. 1Kgs 18:26-28).

Today is no different. Christians also sometimes believe that they can use God to act favorably for them through all kinds of self-designed actions. In doing so, they hurt themselves or they refrain from certain things. Their goal is earthly prosperity and a healthy life. They ignore the fact that faith in the Lord Jesus guarantees nothing with regard to natural happiness and

physical health. On the contrary. God says in His Word: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Tim 3:12). This is different from the gibberish talking of the success preachers, who promise their hearing richness and health when they accept Jesus.

### **Hos 7:15 | God’s Help and the Response of His people**

*15 Although I trained [and] strengthened their arms,  
Yet they devise evil against Me.*

God has not left His people in doubt about His plans with them and how He wants them to live. His servants have always taught them about that. His power is also at their disposal, so that they can fulfill His will. For His part, He has done everything to keep His people on the right track. But the people do not care about God’s will and His message. Not only do they not listen to Him, but they also even turn against Him.

In spite of who He has been for them and what He has done for them, the people treat Him wickedly. The evil they conceive against Him can be seen in their worship of the idols in Bethel and Dan. They decide for themselves how and where they will serve God.

Every form of self-willed religion is a devising of evil against God. He sees that as rebellious acting. No one who pursues a self-willed religion can be excused, because God has clearly revealed His will in His Word.

### **Hos 7:16 | A Deceitful Bow and the Derision in the World**

*16 They turn, [but] not upward,  
They are like a deceitful bow;  
Their princes will fall by the sword  
Because of the insolence of their tongue.  
This [will be] their derision in the land of Egypt.*

In the first words of this verse we see the restless search for support from the surrounding nations, while their gaze is not directed upward, i.e. to the Most High, to seek help from Him. But those who expect help from people resemble “a deceitful bow”, the sixth metaphor used for the people. A deceitful bow hits no target, or any other target than that on which it is aimed. The bow is no good. It does not allow you to shoot accurately, and

it does not keep the distant enemy away from you (cf. Gen 49:23-24). If Israel, like Joseph, had put its trust in God, they would have been exactly as God wanted: a bow against evil and idolatry. Instead, they turn against God.

In spite of their big mouths, their kings will fall by the sword. We can think of men like Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah and Pekah, who have all fallen victim to murder. If we do not use our weapons to keep the enemy at a distance, they will be used to cause mischief in the midst of the people of God. This will deprive the people of God of their power and at the same time make them a derision in the world. This is how it has been with Israel. In the days of prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel has boasted against Egypt in its power. Now, Israel is derided by Egypt because of the fall of their kings.

People who first expressed themselves to be Christians and later started looking for the world again, eventually become a derision for that world. Those who seek the friendship of the world not only lose God, but also the world, of whom one becomes a slave again.

## Hosea 8

### Introduction

The trumpet announces the imminent judgment of a people who confess with their lips that they know God, but do not take it into account in their actions. They have made many altars and perform their idolatry there, but they regard the words of God as the words of a stranger. Yes, they have forgotten Him and live for their own pleasure. But God will consume all their works by fire (= judgment).

In this chapter five blasts of the trumpet are given, as it were, each giving a reason for judgment:

1. verse 1 transgression and rebellion;
2. verse 4 appointing false kings and rulers without consulting God;
3. verse 5 idolatry;
4. verse 9 asking Assyria for help;
5. verse 11 false altars.

### Hos 8:1 | The Judgment Announced

*1 [Put] the trumpet to your lips!  
Like an eagle [the enemy comes] against the house of the LORD,  
Because they have transgressed My covenant  
And rebelled against My law.*

The last part of this Bible book, Hosea 8-14, is probably about the time when the last king, Hoshea, reigned over the ten tribes kingdom. It is not clear whether the prophet also experienced the time of the removal under King Hoshea. He does not write about it. In the previous chapters the prophet Hosea has extensively demonstrated the sins. Now he is going to speak more about the coming judgment that God must let come as a result of those sins.

This chapter begins particularly threatening. War is coming. The prophet must put the trumpet to his lips to warn of this impending judgment that comes according to God's plan. Several times in the prophetic books the trumpet is mentioned as a warning instrument (Eze 33:3; Isa 58:1; Jer 6:17; Mt 24:31; Rev 8:6). The blowing of the trumpet can be compared to the speaking of the Word of God. It should not be vague, but clear and certain (cf. 1Cor 14:8). The hearers must know where they stand.

Unfortunately, there are preachers who do not talk about the horrors that will come over mankind. Or they explain the Word of God in such a way that it is pleasant for people to hear it. Then the trumpet makes an unclear sound. Conscience is not addressed and therefore no measures are taken to escape the approaching judgment.

If the preacher is faithful to his Sender, he will speak in such a way that his words do not allow any misunderstanding about the situation in which his listeners find themselves. The consequence is then: "The prudent sees the evil and hides himself" (Pro 22:3a). Whoever converts to God will find protection with the Lord Jesus. If the people would repent, they would escape judgment.

The enemy, the judgment, comes to his prey silently and with the speed of an eagle (Deu 28:49). As prey is here called "the house of the LORD". It is possible to think here of the temple, although it is not in Israel, but in Jerusalem in Judah. It is more likely that "the house of the LORD" refers to Israel as a whole. Israel as such is also a dwelling place for God. In any case, the judgment is announced in connection with the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people.

Where God dwells, everything must correspond to His Being. If that, despite many exhortations, does not happen, God can do nothing but judge the evil and the evildoers. The same goes for the church now: "For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1Pet 4:17a).

The reason for the announced judgment is given. God has made a covenant with them. They have transgressed that. God has given His law. They have rebelled against it. The people have become unfaithful to their covenant with Him. Not only have they ignored His statements, but they

have also reproached Him and openly declared that they do not want to abide by them.

This audacity is also found in today's religious man. That man professes to have a connection with God, but he reserves the right to give his own interpretation of it. In the same way he deals with the Word of God. He reads it, but explains it as he sees fit. How God intended it, he does not care.

### **Hos 8:2 | A Confession of the Lips**

*2 They cry out to Me,  
"My God, we of Israel know You!"*

They still live under the delusion that in their need they can call upon God as His people. But that is self-deception. The statement that they know Him is nothing but a confession of the lips, without truth in the heart (Mt 7:21; 25:11-12; Lk 13:26-27). It is precisely because they have knowledge of God that they are all the more guilty of deviating from Him. Only when there is true humility will God listen when an appeal is made to Him.

As in choruses, the people respond to the announcement of judgment. Some say "my God", others say "we ... know You". With this they want to express that it is unthinkable for them that God will give them up to the judgment. Surely that is not possible? They are the covenant people, aren't they?

### **Hos 8:3 | The Good**

*3 Israel has rejected the good;  
The enemy will pursue him.*

For "the good" can also be read here, as in the first letter of Peter, 'the Good One' (1Pet 3:13). It is clear who is meant by 'the Good One': God. Instead of being diligent in following the good or following the Good One, Israel abhors the good and therefore the Good One.

They have despised His law. The law is said to be good (Rom 7:12-21). Doing the law meant life for Israel. But Israel has rebelled against God's law. Therefore, the enemy will pursue him. It is impossible to say 'my God' and

not listen to Him. This disobedience is expressed in the abhorrence of His Word and thus of Himself.

### **Hos 8:4 | Kings and Idols**

*4 They have set up kings, but not by Me;  
They have appointed princes, but I did not know [it].  
With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves,  
That they might be cut off.*

In this verse two sins are mentioned:

1. the people have set up kings according to their own discretion, and
2. it has committed idolatry.

Because it was not God, but the people who have set up kings in their own authority, all the kings who succeeded Jeroboam II are not mentioned at the beginning of this book of the Bible (Hos 1:1). God is not known in it, they have ignored Him (cf. Isa 31:1). That setting up kings outside of God is already present in the bud in their request for a king like the nations (1Sam 8:1-10). In Saul they get the king to their taste. This is repeated in King Jeroboam I (1Kgs 12:20). After Jehu, revolution and manslaughter made kings disappear and appear. All this can only result in their destruction.

Today in Christianity people are also busy arranging things according to their own ideas. How God thinks about it is not asked. His Word is explained as it suits people. This is perceptible in all kinds of groups and churches. They try to make everyone happy. Teachers are chosen for themselves, according to everyone's taste (2Tim 4:3).

Sometimes this selfish action is defended with pious sounding but misleading arguments. It is said that you do not have to pray for everything, do you? Surely you do not have to speak about your faith in everything, do you? You have to be businesslike, you have to look at things soberly, you have to use your sober mind that God has given you well. That is how reasoning is done and that is how things come about 'outside of Him'.

Kings are set up without consulting God; that is the political field. In the religious field it is even worse. God has been replaced by idols! To this end



they abuse their silver and gold. Idolatry is the root of all sins, through which man can enjoy nothing of what God wants to give him.

This abomination for God is also the great danger for which the Christian is warned. John warns in the last verse of his first letter, in which he wrote about the Lord Jesus as eternal life in the believer: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1Jn 5:21).

### **Hos 8:5 | How Long?**

*5 He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, [saying],  
"My anger burns against them!"  
How long will they be incapable of innocence?*

The idolatry is denounced. It takes place in the land of Samaria, in imitation of the calf in Bethel. God expresses His abhorrence about it. How long must He endure it before they will cleanse themselves of these abominations? The question "how long?" indicates God's desire for their recovery, it shows His longsuffering. The LORD calls with His heart and that cannot be said of Israel, which is what is lacking in them. Their very heart is impure in its motives. It is not innocent.

### **Hos 8:6 | The End of the Idol**

*6 For from Israel is even this!  
A craftsman made it, so it is not God;  
Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces.*

The calf is human work, it does not come from God. A handmade god is not a god. Yet man, in his foolishness and blindness, believes that handmade gods are indeed gods. When Paul is accused of exposing this foolishness, he gets the whole crowd against him (Acts 19:26-28). Apart from being foolish and nonsensical, it is also a terrible sin.

Isaiah also shows in a mocking tone the folly of kneeling before the work of human hands. A little sober thinking should make someone understand its foolishness. Isaiah describes a man who goes to the forest and cuts down a tree there that he has cultivated himself. He uses part of that tree to make a fire so he can bake bread. Of another part of the same tree he makes a carved statue and kneels down in front of it (Isa 44:13-19).

What remains of the statue are only pieces or ashes, an example of the powerlessness of the idol to protect himself and his worshippers. What Moses did with the golden calf will happen to it: “He took the calf which they had made and burned [it] with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink [it]” (Exo 32:20).

### **Hos 8:7 | Sowing and Reaping**

*7 For they sow the wind  
And they reap the whirlwind.  
The standing grain has no heads;  
It yields no grain.  
Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.*

Every act performed by a human being has consequences. Good deeds have good consequences, bad deeds have bad consequences. It can be seen in nature. Good seed gives a good harvest, bad seed gives a bad harvest. A human being ‘sows’ words and deeds all day long. Everything he does has certain consequences, for himself and possibly also for others. Sometimes those consequences are dramatic, sometimes they are not perceptible or measurable. In any case God always takes note of them.

Every word and every deed is weighed and judged by God. A person is either busy with and for himself, or with and for God. That is the background of everything he says or does. Paul tells the legal believers of the churches in Galatia that a man reaps what he has sown (Gal 6:7-8; Hos 10:13; Job 4:8; Pro 22:8). The idolatrous worshippers, Israel, sow wind. “Wind” refers to the emptiness of Israel’s sin; the “whirlwind” or storm they will harvest speaks of God’s judgment and destruction. According to the law of multiplication, what is harvested is always more than what is sown: the wind has become a storm, a power that destroys.

In all the sowing of sin by the people, any hope of fruit is futile, in vain (Ecc 5:15; Hab 2:13). Fruitlessness is the result. There is no fruit for them, they are hungry, but there is also no fruit for God. And if there is some fruit anyway, it is all swallowed up by strangers. And even that is not the end. The following verse shows an even greater emptiness.

## Hos 8:8 | No Vessel for Honor

*8 Israel is swallowed up;  
They are now among the nations  
Like a vessel in which no one delights.*

Not only has the fruit been swallowed up (verse 7), but Israel itself has disappeared, swallowed up by its enemies. This refers here not so much to the scattering by the Assyrians, but more to the complete mixing with the peoples, as a result of which they have lost their own identity as a people for many centuries. Israel has become a worthless and useless “vessel” (cf. Jer 22:28a).

Who as a person or as a people, but also as a local church, does not or no longer fulfill God’s purpose, will have nothing attractive for all who look at it with God’s eyes. The loss of that attractiveness is caused by the introduction of worldly elements, through which one thinks to be able to promote oneself. But those who think they can come across better by behaving like the world, will have to deal with the opposite effect: it repels.

Israel has given up its high calling and has become an object of contempt. By connecting with the nations, the people have been swallowed up. The same has happened to Christianity, both in its being despised and in its being swallowed up. In opposition to this “vessel in which no one delights”, we can be a vessel for honor, useful to the master (2Tim 2:19-22).

## Hos 8:9 | A Wild Donkey

*9 For they have gone up to Assyria,  
[Like] a wild donkey all alone;  
Ephraim has hired lovers.*

A wild donkey is a shy animal. It lives in the steppes, far away from the noise of the city. With this Ephraim is compared, but as a contrast. The wild donkey, this animal without reason, shuns the contact with people in order to maintain its autonomy and independency (Job 39:5-7). Ephraim however, contrary to its divine destiny, enters into unnatural connections with the peoples around them. Instead of separating himself from Assyria, Ephraim gives evidence of love to Assyria (2Kgs 15:19) to make an alliance

with it. They offer themselves for sale. They give gifts of love in order to be able to commit fornication.

What they should learn is that wild donkeys do not dare to come near people, because they could rob them of their freedom. But Israel lacks that wisdom. The people go to Assyria to connect with it and put their freedom at risk. It has actually lost its freedom.

### **Hos 8:10 | False Hope**

*10 Even though they hire [allies] among the nations,  
Now I will gather them up;  
And they will begin to diminish  
Because of the burden of the king of princes.*

God says here that the people have nothing to expect “of the king of princes”, that is the king of Assyria. Even if it would seem that Assyria is responding to the rapprochement of Israel, God will make sure that their desired result will not be achieved. On the contrary, He will use this rapprochement to fulfill His judgments. He will use Assyria to gather His people in captivity. Assyria will not make friendship with them, but will scatter them among the nations. That burden will deprive them of all freedom of movement.

### **Hos 8:11 | The Altars**

*11 Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin,  
They have become altars of sinning for him.*

God has given His people only two altars: the bronze burnt offering altar in the court of the temple and the golden altar of incense in the temple. David speaks of these two altars as places where a person can find rest (Psa 84:3). The bronze altar of burnt offering represents the cross of the Lord Jesus, where the sinner can get rid of the burden of his sins and where he can find rest for his conscience. The golden altar of incense speaks of the worship that one may bring to God.

All the other altars mentioned do show a semblance of religiosity, but are in reality only a cause for sin. They are altars conceived and erected by people. They speak of an approach to God in a way that is easy for man-

kind and does not take into account what God has said about approaching Him. Later Hosea refers to these altars again (Hos 10:1).

### **Hos 8:12 | Treating God as a Stranger**

*12 Though I wrote for him ten thousand [precepts] of My law,  
They are regarded as a strange thing.*

Ephraim has been able to know the right way, the right path, but it does not want to listen to any teachings. They regard what God says as the words of a stranger. They do not listen to what He says, because it does not concern them, they think. They do not understand that this teaching of God is meant for them.

We too can deal with God's Word as if He were a stranger to us. We only listen to Him when we have time or feel like it, or we consult Him by reading His Word only on special occasions. Sometimes we read the Bible to please our religious feelings, in which case reading the Bible can be experienced as a pleasant pastime.

What is lacking in all of this is the sober application of what God says in all areas of life. From Moses to Hosea, God has given an abundance of teaching, so that Israel has no excuse for not knowing God's will.

### **Hos 8:13 | Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice**

*13 As for My sacrificial gifts,  
They sacrifice the flesh and eat [it],  
[But] the LORD has taken no delight in them.  
Now He will remember their iniquity,  
And punish [them] for their sins;  
They will return to Egypt.*

If God's Word is not listened to (verse 12), it makes no sense to sacrifice either. God does not value it then. He does not want those sacrifices. He does not even notice them. Moreover, they themselves eat of their sacrifices to their heart's content, as the sons of the priest Eli did (1Sam 2:12-17). Their hearts are not focused on God, but on themselves. Therefore, the sacrifices they make are in God's eyes, only food for His people and not sacrifices for Him.

It is as with much that is called “worship” in Christianity. It comes down to the fact that you may and must immerse yourself in it, you enjoy it, you feast on it, and then you believe that God will also be very happy with it. We do not worry about the arranging of our lives according to God’s will. Reading and studying His Word is just an exhausting activity.

Still, our obedience is the only thing God is really waiting for. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, [And] to heed than the fat of rams” (1Sam 15:22). Where obedience is not found, there may seem to be so much spiritual activity, but God cannot take it. He will bring all those religious people back to Egypt. That is, they will return to the slavery in which they used to be and which they have forgotten. This time the Assyrians will take them away into slavery (Hos 9:3; 11:5).

### **Hos 8:14 | The Maker Forgotten**

*14 For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces;  
And Judah has multiplied fortified cities,  
But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings.*

There is more often talk about God as “Maker” (Deu 32:15; Job 35:10; Psa 100:3). What He makes belongs to Him and is for Him, to benefit from it and to rejoice in it. As a Maker, He has equipped His makings with all kinds of functions, so that His makings can function optimally, with a perfect harmony between the different functions. He has given in His law a detailed manual for His creation.

But unfortunately, it has forgotten to remain dependent on its Maker. They have ignored his ‘instructions for use’. They have given their own interpretation to their functioning. They have forgotten who they are and what their task is. When entering into the bond with His people, God said: “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exo 19:6). That is what they have lost.

The word “forgot” here literally means “put it in the wrong place”. Forgetting God is not the same as not thinking about Him, but not giving Him the place He deserves. For example, we can assume as a fact that God exists, intellectually agree that He is there, without this affecting our be-

havior. In this way we can banish God until the Sunday meeting or church service and leave Him there until the next Sunday.

If God has been given a wrong place, He has lost His active power over our lives. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses warns the people time and again not to forget God, not to give Him the wrong place by not taking Him into account. In that case God is, so to speak, banished to the temple and left there.

If the people no longer give God the place that is due to Him, this can be seen, among other things, in the activities they develop. Instead of occupying themselves with His house, they are building their own temples or palaces and fortified cities. Temples and palaces both point to space, vastness. It does not matter if that space is used for worship or for pleasure. The origin is the will and lust of man. It is the desire for greatness, a building without God.

Building fortified cities looks at the attempt to obtain safety and security apart from God. Israel and Judah are addressed together again. They have forgotten their Maker and dedicate themselves to earthly splendor and greatness, palaces in which one lives luxuriantly, and solid cities in which one feels safe from the enemy. Safety is something that man is constantly looking for. He constantly lives in fear of what he can lose in terms of possessions and health.

As punishment, God will give it all up to the fire. Both Israel and Judah will have to deal with the judgment, each for the sin it has committed. Israel will be scattered by the Assyrians and Judah will be taken away in exile to Babylon.

## Hosea 9

### Introduction

The prophet threatens to deport the population and their scattering. Then their worship will be over. The land will be left devastated. For the depopulation of the country, the prophet uses events that appeal to the imagination: no more birth, mother's womb or conception and making them childless by extraditing to the murderer what is left of children. What is left is driven out of the land by God. He rejects them. The reason is given in the last verse: "Because they have not listened to Him."

### Hos 9:1 | Wrong Exultation

*1 Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations!*

*For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.*

*You have loved harlots' earnings on every threshing floor.*

God certainly has no aversion to joy. Somberness has nothing to do with God and His service. God rejoices too. He is the God who wants to fulfill His people with "all joy" (Rom 15:13). But the joy of Israel is a false joy. They are like the eldest son in the parable in Luke 15. That boy also wanted to be happy, but only with his friends, without his father (Lk 15:29). The joy we notice here in Israel is a joy "like the nations". God is excluded.

The prosperity that the people knew under Jeroboam II and that has become visible in an abundant harvest, they use for their own pleasures. They give them to Assyria to buy his favor. In this way they enter into an adulterous relationship. They do not realize that only God can give a solution and that human help is of no use (Psa 60:11b).

Verse 1 suggests that Hosea expresses his message while the people are feasting (cf. verse 5). Possibly it is a harvest festival, the Feast of Booth, or at least that which Jeroboam I invented as a substitute. For the announcement of the approaching judgments of God the prophets have several times made use of the great appointed festivals, because then there are many people together. Hosea must have been seen as a great killjoy there.



He admonishes them to stop having fun. They rejoice like the nations, and therein lies their harlotry. Through their covenant with God they have entered into a marriage relationship with Him. Every other connection has to be renounced. At such festivals, in addition to the spiritual harlotry practiced by the people, there is often literally harlotry as well. Hosea wants to awaken them from their rush of frivolous joy, because there is no reason at all for celebrating (Jam 4:9).

### **Hos 9:2 | Taking Away the Cause of Joy**

*2 Threshing floor and wine press will not feed them,  
And the new wine will fail them.*

God's judgment begins to strike the Israelites in their harvest. When there is nothing left to eat, there is also nothing left to party with. Probably due to lack of rain there will be no yield. Hosea's message is: 'Now you are celebrating, but soon there will be no more wheat to harvest and no more wine to be merry.' Whoever finds his joy in the Lord Himself and not only in what He gives, will be able to rejoice in the Lord, even if there is want (Hab 3:17-18).

### **Hos 9:3 | Removed from the Land of the LORD**

*3 They will not remain in the LORD's land,  
But Ephraim will return to Egypt,  
And in Assyria they will eat unclean [food].*

The judgment of the crop failure will be followed by the judgment of their removal from the land. The land ceases to feed and host the people. The land is here called "the LORD's land". The land is God's exclusive property (Lev 25:23). It should be "a land of right" (Isa 26:10), a land where everyone gets his share of the abundance it brings (Deu 8:7-9).

However, they pretend it is their own land. They will be driven out of it as wicked people like Adam and Eve used to be from paradise. Those who do not submit to God's law and do not open themselves to His mercy and love should not expect to remain in His land. God owns the right of ownership not only with respect to the land of Israel. His right of ownership

concerns the whole earth (Psa 24:1). Therefore, every evil one will eventually be removed from it.

Egypt and Assyria are the countries to which they will be taken. Assyria is the land that will actually carry out the judgment (Hos 11:5). Mentioning Egypt should probably be seen more symbolically. Egypt is symbolic of the slavery from which Israel used to be liberated. In this slavery they end up again because of their unfaithfulness (cf. Hos 8:13), but now the king of Assyria will exercise power over them. In any case, Egypt and Assyria are the countries in which they have placed their trust instead of in God.

Anything they will eat under the slave yoke of the king of Assyria will be unclean because it does not come from the soil of the land of the LORD. Nor will the food be selected and prepared as Moses prescribed it, nor will it be sanctified because its first fruits have not been offered to God (Lev 23:10-12).

#### **Hos 9:4 | Sacrifices That Are Not Pleasing to the LORD**

*4 They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD,  
Their sacrifices will not please Him.  
[Their bread will be] like mourners' bread;  
All who eat of it will be defiled,  
For their bread will be for themselves [alone];  
It will not enter the house of the LORD.*

The people do not think of giving anything of the fruit of the land to the LORD. They will “not pour out drink offerings of wine” to Him. Everything is for themselves. And if they bring anything as a sacrifice, it is also only to be able to eat it themselves (Hos 8:13). Once removed from the land, it is over with all the external, ceremonial service of Israel. There is one place of worship (Deu 12:5-6). This leaves no room for offering sacrifices in the foreign country to which they will be deported.

But even if they wanted to bring their sacrifices to Jerusalem, God would not accept them. Their sacrifices are not pleasing to Him. He does not want them in His house because their hearts are not humbled. When someone has died, they eat bread of mourning (cf. Jer 16:7). This is unclean through death (cf. Deu 26:14). So everything they want to sacrifice or eat will carry

this character because it happens in an unclean land and by an unclean people.

### **Hos 9:5 | A Question to Speak to Conscience**

*5 What will you do on the day of the appointed festival  
And on the day of the feast of the LORD?*

Once taken away to Assyria they will not be able to make any more sacrifices. But they would not be able to feast either. During their stay outside the land, they will think of Jerusalem with homesickness and of the joy that was their part in the feasts of the LORD, but which has come to an end because of their unfaithfulness. The question of the prophet “what will you do?”, should bring them to reflection. They must understand the situation in which they find themselves and that the judgment is approaching.

### **Hos 9:6 | Every Escape Cut Off**

*6 For behold, they will go because of destruction;  
Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them.  
Weeds will take over their treasures of silver;  
Thorns [will be] in their tents.*

To escape the Assyrians, some will go south. But that land of their exile will also become their grave. By Egypt possibly again Assyria is meant. Memphis is famous for its enormous pyramids and numerous graves. It is also possible that they will seek refuge in Egypt for the Assyrians and will hope to return soon. That will not happen, however.

While they themselves will perish, all their treasures and all their wealth will be covered by weeds and thorns, which are an indication of what is reprehensible and will be burned. It will bring them nothing. As far as they will survive, there will be no peace in their tents, their homes. Prickly things, the irritations in their mutual relationships, will sour their lives. Thistles are the result of sin (Gen 3:18).

### **Hos 9:7 | The Messenger of God Scorned**

*7 The days of punishment have come,  
The days of retribution have come;*

*Let Israel know [this]!  
The prophet is a fool,  
The inspired man is demented,  
Because of the grossness of your iniquity,  
And [because] your hostility is [so] great.*

Hosea sees that “the days of punishment” and “the days of retribution” have come. He means to say that they are at the door. There is also no doubt that Israel will experience the punishment and retribution in person. It seems that the people declare the prophet “is a fool” and call “the inspired man”, the man who is led by the Spirit of God, “demented”. This is how the people react to the man who clearly points out their sins to them. With these words, Israel will then taunt the true prophet. They may see that the prophet is in spirit. He is fully involved in his message (Isa 21:3).

We can imagine this as follows. After Hosea has announced the days of the judgment in the middle of the feast square, someone shouts: ‘The prophet is a fool! Away with that man, he disturbs our party.’ In this way the Lord Jesus is also scolded. From Him they say: “He has lost His senses” (Mk 3:21) and “He has a demon and is insane” (Jn 10:20). Also, Paul is mocked in this way: “You are out of your mind! [Your] great learning is driving you mad” (Acts 26:24). In fact, anyone who is a true follower of the Lord Jesus can agree with what Paul says of himself and his associates: “We are fools for Christ’s sake” (1Cor 4:10).

By calling Hosea a fool, it is said that the prophet is someone to whom you should not pay any attention. When someone speaks harsh words that touch the conscience, it is best to call him insane, someone who rages. Then you immediately have an excuse not to listen to him.

After the prophet has interrupted and he has been scolded, he goes on imperturbably. He even agrees with the words of the mocker. Yes, he is insane, but the cause of this lies in the enormous scale of the iniquities of the people. At the sight of so much iniquity one cannot remain unmoved, can one? Does not that strike you? All the more so when you also see what a heavy judgment God will bring on this. It speaks of real love for the people to point this out to them and to continue even after rejection.

As the prophet warns the people in his love for them more and more vehemently, the reaction of the people becomes more and more painful for him and he is emphatically rejected. Behind the prophet we see God Himself. How must the reaction of the people have also grieved Him intensely. The sin to which the messenger of God points and from which one does not want to renounce, is the cause of their actions. The great enmity with which the people treat the prophet is in fact enmity against God. It shows great courage to continue faithfully, despite the reaction, to proclaim that a storm is brewing for a people who only want bread and plays.

### **Hos 9:8 | Watchman With God**

*8 Ephraim [was] a watchman with my God, a prophet;  
[Yet] the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways,  
[And] there is [only] hostility in the house of his God.*

The prophet is a watchman with God for the benefit of the people (Eze 3:17). He is kept informed by God of His plans and with that he may serve the people (Hab 2:1). Being a watchman with God is a great privilege. This privilege is enjoyed by relatively few, even though the Lord Jesus says to all: “Be on the alert!” (Mk 13:37).

In addition to warning of impending doom, watchmen may also look forward to the morning (Isa 21:11-12). They may hear what God says (Hab 2:1). As already mentioned, the warnings of the prophet are not received in gratitude. An explanation of the sentence “the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways” may be that people see the prophet as a snare. This may mean that they feel imprisoned by his words, that if they listen to him, they lose their freedom to live according to their own pleasures. They love sin too much to give up that life again.

Another explanation could be that the prophet must be aware that snares are hidden on his ways. The people to whom he addresses his message will do their best to silence his voice (cf. Amos 7:10-17). To do so, they will set traps and make pitfalls. They are lurking in wait to silence the prophet, or to catch him at his word, as they have always tried to do with the Lord Jesus.

The prophet does not experience this enmity from people outside God's people. The bitter thing is that the prophet encounters such fierce opposition in the very house of his God. Where he wants to serve God, is where he experiences the most enmity (cf. Psalms 55:12-14).

### **Hos 9:9 | What Used to Be There, Is Still There Today**

*9 They have gone deep in depravity  
As in the days of Gibeah;  
He will remember their iniquity,  
He will punish their sins.*

The prophet points not so much to the place of Gibeah as to "the days of Gibeah" (cf. Hos 10:9; Judges 19-21). With this he points to what happened in the days of the judges in Gibeah, but also to how they dealt with it, how the people reacted to it. It indicates the atmosphere in which that terrible sin is taking place and in which it becomes public what lives in the hearts of all who are involved.

By referring to the days of Gibeah, Hosea says that it is no different in his days with the people. It is possible that sin does not manifest itself in the same way as it did in Gibeah, where it is clearly perceptible. But certainly, the atmosphere of that time is present in his days. That is why "they have gone deep in depravity".

It is terrible, but the worst evil can happen, even now in the church. It is even more terrible if that sin is not judged or is only judged in a spirit of haughtiness and pride and for its own sake. God will ensure that sin is judged and that His people, in the midst of whom sin has taken place, learn to think about it and thereby learn to act as He does.

Sin never dies a natural death, but must be judged completely. When sin is admitted whether in the life of a person or in a local church, it will continue to do its work until it is judged. This judgment must be made by the person himself, or by the church; otherwise God will do it.

### **Hos 9:10 | The Object of Their Love**

*10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;  
I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first [season].*

*[But] they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,  
And they became as detestable as that which they loved.*

In the following section, the prophet refers three times to the beginning of the existence of Israel as a people (Hos 9:10; 10:1; 11:1). Each time he shows how unfaithful Israel has become to his Divine calling. God found Israel (Deu 32:10a). At that time, He saw the whole people as grapes and figs. He had the joyful expectation of the full harvest. As an Owner He saw His people as someone who discovers the first grapes on his vine or who sees the first early figs on his fig tree in spring. This is how God looked at His people in the beginning and had His expectations of them. God reminds Israel of their feelings toward Him at that time (Jer 2:2-3).

Unfortunately, what was joyfully expected turned out to be a bitter disappointment. Baal-peor became a trap and exposed the unfaithfulness of the people (Num 25:3-18). Peor is a mountain in Moab to which the idol Baal is connected. Hosea not only points back to that first unfaithfulness, but also says that they have been behaving like that ever since. By devoting themselves to that “shame” or “shame-god”, the people have become just as horrible to God as the shame-god itself.

People start to look more and more like the object that is being admired. One will identify more and more with it and that will only increase as one becomes more absorbed in and surrendered to this object of his love. If something receives more attention and love than God in this way, we become “detestable” to Him. God cannot allow us to give the honor that belongs to Him to others.

### **Hos 9:11 | Barrenness**

*11 As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird —  
No birth, no pregnancy and no conception!*

After the hunger in verse 2 and the deportment into captivity in verse 3, barrenness now follows as a judgment of God. This is a punishment that has never been threatened before. Ephraim means “double fruitfulness” (Gen 41:52), but “their glory”, the power of having many children (Psa 127:3-5; 128:6), will not be there. The people will not increase, but decrease. No more children will be born; the earlier stages, conception and pregnan-

cy, will also be a thing of the past. Contrary to the general social views of today, it was then a great lack, almost a disgrace, not to have children.

### **Hos 9:12 | Child Mortality**

*12 Though they bring up their children,  
Yet I will bereave them until not a man is left.  
Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them!*

Of the children who have already been born, they will not enjoy for long. God Himself will see to it that they will die, perhaps because of a disease. The generation of people to whom Hosea addresses will be completely eradicated. There will be no succession. The way in which God will carry out this judgment is simple, but painful: He will depart from them. When God departs from someone, it is truly a “woe”. Outside of God, no life is possible. Everything that someone creates without God will perish.

### **Hos 9:13 | Ephraim Like Tyre**

*13 Ephraim, as I have seen,  
Is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre;  
But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter.*

Tyre stands for strength and wealth, but also for pride and self-assurance. This is how Israel has developed. Unfortunately, they used all their prosperity for themselves and forgot from Whom they received all their blessings. Just as Tyre boasts of his own efforts, so has Israel (Deu 32:15). Those who raise their children in that spirit seek their doom. That doom is that they are slaughtered by someone who takes the life of the child.

The ‘slaughter’ can also happen by the circumstances we create ourselves that will make our children totally unwilling to live with God. This can happen when they see the character traits of Tyre in our lives as well. To see a child perish is bad, but it is even worse when we have to realize that it happened because of our own fault, because we searched for the things of the world and did not listen to God’s voice.

### **Hos 9:14 | The Prayer of the Prophet**

*14 Give them, O LORD—what will You give?*



| *Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.*

Hosea asks God to judge His people. With this he clearly chooses God's side against the unfaithfulness of the people. Thus, Elijah prays for drought (Jam 5:17). This may seem harsh, but only in this way can the people be reached and hopefully come to repentance. Hosea leaves the punishment to the LORD. The proposal he makes is the worst he can think of. He knows no worse judgment than death by miscarriage and lack of maternal nutrition.

It seems that he prays with bumps and knocks. He wants to ask something, but does not really know what. He leaves it to God, God must know. In that surrender he expresses what is necessary to strike God's people. You feel how he struggles to save his people, to bring them back to God.

### **Hos 9:15 | What God Cannot Love**

*15 All their evil is at Gilgal;  
Indeed, I came to hate them there!  
Because of the wickedness of their deeds  
I will drive them out of My house!  
I will love them no more;  
All their princes are rebels.*

God cannot tolerate sin in His house. His house here is the people of Israel. God can no longer say anything in favor of them, therefore He can no longer love them. God can never approach rebellion against His authority with love. It is good to think of that, especially in our time, when the love of God is so light-heartedly talked about. Someone can say: 'He accepts us with our sins because He knows how we mean it.'

### **Hos 9:16 | No Fruit For God**

*16 Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up,  
They will bear no fruit.  
Even though they bear children,  
I will slay the precious ones of their womb.*

Ephraim is compared to a sick plant. It will be similar to the cursed fig tree (Mk 11:12-14,20-25). The miracle in which the Lord Jesus curses the fig

tree so that it withers from its roots is His only miracle of judgment. The meaning of this miracle is, that of the people who live in their own righteousness, there will never be any fruit for God. Ephraim, that is Israel, has proven this clearly in his history: all his descendants have shown the same rebellion. They have presented this rebellion to their children, raised them in it. God has no choice but to judge them.

### **Hos 9:17 | Rejected**

*17 My God will cast them away  
Because they have not listened to Him;  
And they will be wanderers among the nations.*

Hosea here speaks of “my God”. With this he indicates that he fully agrees with God in His dealings with the people. He also indicates that He is no longer the God of Israel when the people will have been taken away. The reason for their removal and scattering among the people is clear, namely that they did not listen to God. Also, the first king of Israel, Saul, is rejected because he did not listen to God (1Chr 10:13; 1Sam 15:23). This clearly indicates the importance God attaches to how we deal with His Word and what we do with it. But God never speaks like that.

## Hosea 10

### Introduction

Prosperity, also now, is a matter that separates man from God. Instead of honoring God for the prosperity obtained, the people practice idolatry. For the dangers that threaten from outside, the people seek support from Assyria. The prophet brings to light the cause of the alienation from God: the sin of Gibeon is still alive. The evil done in the past has not been judged in its origin. God gives the people a new chance by summoning them to break up fallow ground (verse 12). Unfortunately, they do not seize that opportunity. That is why the judgment cannot fail.

### Hos 10:1 | For Whom Is Our Fruit?

*1 Israel is a luxuriant vine;  
He produces fruit for himself.  
The more his fruit,  
The more altars he made;  
The richer his land,  
The better he made the [sacred] pillars.*

This verse points to the prosperity that is in Israel, especially in the days of Jeroboam II. But the more God blesses them, the more zealous they become in their sinful worship: altar after altar appears. And the fruit is for themselves (Hos 9:4). How do we use what the Lord has given us? Our mind, memory, strength, health, possessions? To satisfy our own desires or for Him?

Israel is the vine and vineyard of the LORD (Psa 80:8; Isa 5:7). But he brings forth bad fruits (Isa 5:2). Then the Lord Jesus comes as “the true vine” (Jn 15:1). Everything He does is perfect fruit for the Father. Everyone who remains in Him also brings forth much and good fruit for the Father. Without the Lord Jesus, which is apart from Him, we cannot do anything that means fruit for the Father (Jn 15:5).

For that prosperity the people do not thank God, but the idols. More and more altars are being built. An altar is a symbol for worship. Building all those altars means nothing other than that they seek the sources of prosperity more and more outside of God. Possibly they have an altar for the sun, and one for the rain, another one for trade, and another one for health. Each time a new altar is invented, is for fear that an idol will be forgotten.

Man is still like that, even today. He seeks his salvation in all kinds of forms of spirituality. Amulets are worn more and more, rings, necklaces, piercings, you name it. As a result, one expects to get prosperity, protection or a safe feeling. God is completely excluded.

The more and larger the fruit, the more there is for the altars, the more there is to worship the idols. There is much religiosity perceptible through the many altars, but none of it can be accepted by God. The denunciation here is that the people have failed because they seek their own benefits instead of fulfilling God's intentions. The altars are centers of their own interest instead of symbols and centers of holy offerings.

This is a great contrast with Christ, Who never sought His own interest. It is also a great contrast with Timothy, of whom Paul can testify that he does not seek his own interest, but that of others (Phil 2:19-21). In this he resembles Christ. This is the calling of every Christian.

True service to God takes place on only two altars: the bronze burnt offering altar and the golden altar of incense. The first altar is more connected with the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross as a burnt offering to God; the second altar is more connected with the glory of His Person, with all the features of Him Who is God and Man in one Person. God wants to hear from us what we think of His Son. Worship is: to tell God Who the Lord Jesus is for Him and for us.

When He disappears from our worship, that place is taken by something of creation or something of ourselves and God cannot accept that. Then we lower the standard, the content and the object of worship to the level of creation and bring honor to the demons (1Cor 10:19-20). God can only accept what is in connection with the Person and the work of His Son and He desires to share it with us.

**Hos 10:2 | One Thing**

*2 Their heart is faithless;  
Now they must bear their guilt.  
The LORD will break down their altars  
[And] destroy their [sacred] pillars.*

They have a faithless heart, which is divided and deceitful, because they still serve the LORD outwardly, but have also erected more and more altars for the idols. The prayer of the faithful Israelite is: “Unite my heart to fear Your name” (Psa 86:11b; Jer 32:39; 1Kgs 18:21). A faithless, divided heart gives trouble. If we allow something else besides God to take precedence over our desires, it is certain that we will add a new chapter to the history of our failures.

It is about only one thing (Mk 10:21; Lk 10:42; Phil 3:14; Psa 27:4). There are people who do not want to be someone with merely just one object that is important. They want more. They are not satisfied with only ‘one thing’, that is too limited for them. But why should we want more than that ‘one thing’? It all depends on the value that that one thing has for us. If it is great enough, there is no room for anything else. If we do add something to it, that one thing turns out not to be great enough for us. We will also see that the value of that one thing decreases further and further if we take another thing next to that one thing.

The difficulty with us is that the desire for diversity puts God on one list with other things. That should not be the case. God must be everything. He does not give His honor to someone else and cannot share it with someone else. The people stand guilty before Him, just as we stand guilty when we worship something instead of Him or next to Him. God will judge with which we have loaded guilt on us and have not confessed. As far as Israel is concerned: God will judge their idols Himself.

**Hos 10:3 | Intellectual Acknowledgment Is Not Repentance**

*3 Surely now they will say, “We have no king,  
For we do not revere the LORD.  
As for the king, what can he do for us?”*

They do have a king, but he is of no use to them. It seems that he is not there. At least that is their experience. It is with their king, just like with many other things: if he brings them an advantage, they accept him; if he does nothing for them, they rather get rid of him. But also the kings think only of themselves. Nor do such kings contribute anything to turning the impending doom.

Moreover, the people are aware that the appeal to a man is in vain, however powerful that man may be (cf. 2Kgs 6:27). Unfortunately, that realization does not bring him to his knees to beg God for an outcome. It is an intellectual realization; heart and conscience do not get into unrest.

### **Hos 10:4 | Hollow, False Words; Acting Wrongly**

*4 They speak [mere] words,  
With worthless oaths they make covenants;  
And judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.*

Their acknowledgment of verse 3 is one of hollow, empty words. Their words mean nothing, they have no content. Therefore, you cannot rely on them. This is evidenced by the swearing of worthless oaths. This means that they are consciously deceiving others with words. For example, King Hosea acts against the king of Assyria (2Kgs 17:3-4), with whom a previous king, Menahem, made a covenant (2Kgs 15:19).

Such words and such actions are unacceptable to God. His judgment is as quick and deadly as a poisonous plant in the furrows of the field. It is sown in the furrows and that is where the fruit must appear. But the poison plant has corrupted the harvest. This judgment is finally carried out by the king of Assyria, who deports Israel.

### **Hos 10:5 | The Downfall of the Idols**

*5 The inhabitants of Samaria will fear  
For the calf of Beth-aven.  
Indeed, its people will mourn for it,  
And its idolatrous priests will cry out over it,  
Over its glory, since it has departed from it.*

The inhabitants of Samaria are not worried by the approaching judgment that sprouts like a poisonous plant. Samaria means the inhabitants of the ten tribes realm that is named here after the capital. Rather, their concern is for the loss of their prosperity, which they believe is due to the calves in Bethel, which is again called Beth-aven here (Hos 4:15).

The calves, who bear witness to material prosperity, are at the same time their idols. The thought of losing the calves with their ornaments makes them sad and miserable. Instead of idols caring for them, they are caring for their idols.

It is sad to see how people can mourn the loss of external prosperity when they are not at all concerned about their relationship with God or what happens to their souls.

### **Hos 10:6 | Shame on the People of God**

*6 The thing itself will be carried to Assyria  
As tribute to King Jareb;  
Ephraim will be seized with shame  
And Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel.*

If Assyria leads Israel into the scattering, the calf will be brought to their king as a trophy. This shows once again how foolish it is to rely on something that can just be taken away from you. Ephraim, that is Israel, will be ashamed for the surrounding nations.

The prophet insists that the people should not put their trust in anything or anyone other than God. If they do, they will be ashamed. All their cleverly conceived political plans only lead to disappointment.

We too may ask ourselves to what extent we expect help from non-believers. Do we sometimes deliberate in a way they do? That would be contrary to what we should do: expect our salvation only from God and submit our deliberations to Him.

### **Hos 10:7 | Like a Stick on the Water**

*7 Samaria will be cut off [with] her king  
Like a stick on the surface of the water.*

The idols are useless, as are the people and the priests. Could some help then be found in the king? The comparison of the king with a stick leaves no doubt that no outcome can be expected from that side either. A stick on the surface of the water is a plaything of the wind and the waves. It has no foundation, possesses no strength in itself and around it finds no hold whatsoever. Insignificant and defenseless it is carried away by the current.

It is a telling picture of the king of Samaria and of what is going to happen to him and his subjects. Without any grip he will become a plaything of violent events. He has no defense against whom by whom he will be deported and who will make him disappear.

### **Hos 10:8 | Destruction, Withering, Fear**

*8 Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed;  
Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars;  
Then they will say to the mountains,  
"Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!"*

The great sin of Israel referred to here is the high places of Aven, that is the calf service at Bethel. Possibly there are more idols there, because there are "high places", plural. God will destroy the places where idolatry is committed. He will make those places overgrown by thorn and thistle. In this way they will become a permanent reminder of His judgment on that terrible sin of idolatry.

Thorns and thistles entered creation after Adam and Eve sinned (Gen 3:18). That is a lesson for us. If we have to remove something from our lives because it has come in the place of or beside God, we should always see it as sin. Otherwise there is a great danger that we will start longing for it again. However, if we recognize that what used to take us away from God is covered with thorns and thistles, we would not soon give it a place in our lives again. After all, thorns and thistles are not attractive at all.

Israel, if it has got into desperate fear and hopeless despair during the judgments that God will bring upon the people through the Assyrians' invasion, will wish for quick death and destruction. Speaking to the mountains and hills is more than just the desire for shelter. It expresses the desire to be buried under the collapsing mountains and hills to no longer



have to endure the distress and horrors of judgment. It is an example of the judgments that will come over Israel and the rest of the world in the end times (Rev 6:16-17; Lk 23:30; Isa 2:19).

### **Hos 10:9 | Again the Sin of Gibeah**

*9 From the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel;*

*There they stand!*

*Will not the battle against the sons of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?*

The sin of Gibeah (Judges 19-21) is still practiced. It is referred to here again (Hos 5:8; 9:9) as a typical low point of their iniquity. However, it is not just a historical low point, after which the people are doing better. No, the iniquity that characterizes the days of Gibeah is also present in the days of the prophet Hosea.

They fought sin, but they did not remove it from their hearts. They did not really say goodbye to the sin of Gibeah. They will therefore be judged by God. Above all, they should not think that He will not be able to reach them. Just as in Hosea 7, they simply do not think that no one can escape God's arm (Hos 7:2).

### **Hos 10:10 | God's Desire for Holiness**

*10 When it is My desire, I will chastise them;*

*And the peoples will be gathered against them*

*When they are bound for their double guilt.*

This verse begins with the desire of God to chastise His people. For that chastisement He will use other nations. That desire of God to chastise them has a purpose, of course. God wants Israel to truly become His people again. That is only possible if they get rid of what He has to condemn.

By "double guilt" can be meant the two golden calves, one of which is in Dan and one in Bethel. It also can mean: leaving the LORD and deviating from the government of the house of David under Jeroboam I. It can also refer to the literal, physical fornication and the spiritual fornication, the connection with the idolatrous nations (Jer 2:13).

### **Hos 10:11 | No More Threshing, but Ploughing and Harrowing**

*11 Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh,  
But I will come over her fair neck [with a yoke];  
I will harness Ephraim,  
Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself.*

Threshing is an easy and pleasant activity for an ox. While threshing, he may also eat (Deu 25:4). Thus, it has always been God's intention that His people, while serving Him, can freely enjoy the products that the land of Canaan provides. But through their unfaithfulness, they have forfeited this privilege. Now God will have to force Ephraim to plow and harrow much heavier. To do this, He must impose a yoke on them.

"Her fair neck" shows Ephraim's own fame. The LORD will come in judgment, that is to say, He will impose the yoke of submission to foreign rulers on Ephraim for that reason. They will become slaves to strangers and will be forced to cultivate the foreign land, so that the inhabitants of that land may have a good harvest (cf. Exo 1:11). In this way they will have to be touched in heart and conscience and then return to the LORD.

Regarding their sins, there is no distinction between Judah and Ephraim (= Israel). Both realms will fall under this judgment. "Jacob" represents the entire former Israel of the twelve tribes.

### **Hos 10:12 | A New Start Can Always Be Made**

*12 Sow with a view to righteousness,  
Reap in accordance with kindness;  
Break up your fallow ground,  
For it is time to seek the LORD  
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.*

Righteousness and mercy are no longer found in the land. It is high time to start a new life in which righteousness is sown and reaped in mercy. This cannot happen at the bottom of hardened hearts. To do so, the soil must first be cultivated, plowed over (cf. Jer 4:3-4). The land to be plowed (or: cultivated) relates to a heart that has been cleansed from sin by self-judgment and in which the desire to ask and do God's will has arisen again.

With unceasing compassion, Hosea, through this call, points once more to the possibility of escaping God's judgment. The plowing of unplowed land represents true conversion to God. It means the cleansing of the heart of all corruption.

It means a radical break with the old, the life in sin. Responding to this call does not have to wait until tomorrow. Now is the time to seek the LORD, tomorrow may be too late (Isa 55:6-7). If they return to Him and sow with a view to righteousness, they will reap kindness. But such sowing is impossible in uncultivated soil. First the soil has to be cultivated.

The plow must go through conscience. This can mean that things from the past that we have hidden away come back to the surface. These are often things through which life with God has become blocked. These things can then be cleared away. We can think, for example, of paying forgotten debts, of getting rid of bad habits, of putting right disturbed relationships with brothers and sisters, of forgiving old pain.

### **Two types of soil**

In an article, the origin of which I was unable to trace, I read an application of plowing uncultivated land or cultivating new land:

There are two types of ground: fallow ground and ground that has been torn open by plowing.

The fallow ground represents a state of complacency. It is satisfied and does not know the shock of the plow and the turmoil of the harrow. When a field is like this, it becomes a trusted beacon for the birds in the sky. It possesses constancy. It never changes, while the fields around it change from brown to green and then turn brown again. Safe and undisturbed it is a picture of sleepy contentment. But itself never sees the miracle of the fruit, of life, the bursting seed and the beauty of ripening grain. It knows no fruit because it is afraid of plow and harrow.

In contrast, there is the ground that has allowed plowing. The peace is disturbed, the field has felt the change. The miracle of life can begin. The seed shoots and all over the field the hand of God is at work. The miracles of nature always follow the plow.

There are also two types of life: the fallow and the plowed. Man, who looks like fallow ground is satisfied with himself and with the fruit he once carried. The spirit of activity he once possessed is now dead. He is steadfast and faithful, always in his own place. In a certain sense he can even be a beacon. But how infertile he is! He has shut himself off from God and the miracle of growth.

The plowed life is the life that opened the fence for the plow. He has allowed the plow of confession of guilt into his life. It has brought his soul to deep repentance. Through the pressure of circumstances, the Spirit has shown the soul how barren its existence is. The Spirit has also made him realize that the cause of that infertility is the fruit killing evil of materialism and that one's own effort cannot give life. When God will let 'rain righteousness', life and growth begin.

This is also how it works in a local church. There are static and dynamic churches. A dynamic church changes the safety of stagnation for the dangers of God-inspired progress. The early church is an example in this respect. The result of their joy and unity is a miraculous and daily fruit to the honor of God. God's power goes when and where His people go, and is stopped when His people stop.

Static periods are those times when the people of God withdraw from the battle and seek a life of peace and undisturbed rest. These are the times when it destroys itself by trying to preserve the gains it made in the days of more courage when the power of God was still working among them.

This principle still works today, in that He works as long as His people live with courage. He stops when we no longer need or seek His help. As soon as a child of God seeks protection outside of Him and finds support in his possessions that materialism can bring him, he will suffer loss. And what a loss to God and His work!

The power of God comes only where it is given the opportunity to work. It only becomes public in the church if the church does something for which strength is demanded. And 'doing' is not just activity, but activity led by God, animated by the Holy Spirit. We can see the power of God in missionary areas. Simple miraculous things go hand in hand with effort; they stop at the same time that the missionaries think they can be satisfied and stop.

What is the result of this truth for the individual and for the local church? What are the difficulties for everyone when they stop producing fruit? God is immutable. His intentions with the church and the individual have not changed in the slightest. No, the individual and the church themselves have changed.

A little research will show that they have become 'fallow'. They may have tarred on earlier works and have now accepted an easier way of life. The church maintains in the right way and obeys the remembrance meal of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. But in other meetings it is more a school than a barracks. Its members are more students than soldiers; a group of people who are more inclined to study other people's experiences instead of seeking the experiences for themselves.

The only way for such a church to regain its strength is to return to the path of obedience, which is surrounded by danger. The 'safety' of the local church is its most deadly enemy. The church that fears the plow writes its own tomb-script. The church that uses the plow walks in the path of strength and blessing. [End of article]

If uncultivated ground has been plowed, the LORD can also be searched for. Then the time has come for this. What He answers connects to our questions and activities. If we sow righteousness in that new ground, if we do in our lives what is right for Him and we ask Him to bless us, then His answer will be in agreement with His Person. This is where the true blessing for man lies hidden.

Righteousness reigns in the millennial realm of peace, which means that sin has no chance to cause discontent. God's right will ensure that everything lives in harmony with Him and with each other. Every element that wants to disturb that harmony is judged by the law. This life can already be lived by anyone who, with his activities and questions, focuses on God's right.

### **Hos 10:13 | Trust in One's Own Way and Heroes**

*13 You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice,  
You have eaten the fruit of lies.*

*Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors,*

The practice of the people described in this verse contrasts sharply with the call and promise of the preceding verse. The established practice makes that call all the more compelling. Instead of justice there is wickedness in the land and instead of love there is injustice. Israel has experienced the bitter result of their wickedness and injustice as the fruit of the lie. This is because they have gone their own way and not God's way.

If the people will come to repentance in the future and accept the Lord Jesus as the true Servant of the LORD, they will come to the following confession of guilt: "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa 53:6a). They will then be allowed to add the continuation of that verse: "But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." Because of this they know that the punishment has been borne by the Lord Jesus and that they may go free.

But this is not yet the case here. Besides mapping out their own path, they also rely on the strength of their heroes. The Israel at the time of the prophet Hosea is a foreshadow of the Israel in the future. If they are attacked from all sides, they will also rely on their own strength and perspicacity. They will always be busy plotting the best tactics and with their own skill and heroism they will try to follow these tactics.

### **Hos 10:14 | Relying on One's Own Strength Does Not Benefit**

*14 Therefore a tumult will arise among your people,  
And all your fortresses will be destroyed,  
As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,  
[When] mothers were dashed in pieces with [their] children.*

Israel relies on its armed forces. Well, they will hear war noise. But they will not emerge victorious from the battle they will wage. All the fortified cities they rely on will be destroyed. To reflect the horror of the coming war, the prophet recalls what Shalman had done to Beth-arbel. Shalman is the abbreviated form of Salmaneser, the king of Assyria (2Kgs 17:3).

It is not clear which event Hosea is referring to here, but that would not have been a question for those to whom he is addressing. As with Beth-arbel, also now the "mothers (= Israel) ... with [their] children (= all inhabitants)" will perish.

### **Hos 10:15 | The Cause of All Misery**

*15 Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness.  
At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.*

All the misery that will come over Israel is the result of the calf service in Bethel. The second part of this verse is an allusion to the fact that the king of Assyria captures King Hosea of Israel (2Kgs 17:1-6).

“At dawn” can refer to the speed of judgment, because in the east the sun rises quickly. It can also be an indication of a time of which one wrongly believes that new happiness is coming, while the destruction is coming.

## Hosea 11

### Introduction

In compassionate terms, the LORD speaks about Israel. He speaks about how He loved the people as a child and son, liberated them, taught them to walk, cherished them in His arms, cared for them, nurtured them and raised them. How painful is the great ingratitude with which the people have answered all that love of God. That is why God must punish the people and take distance from them. But not forever!

God will ultimately take care of His people in love and accept them again. In this chapter there is more talk about Israel's hope than about his downfall. The theme changes from judgment about Israel into blessing for Israel.

### **Hos 11:1 | God's Love for His People**

*1 When Israel [was] a youth I loved him,  
And out of Egypt I called My son.*

In verses 1-4, God introduces Himself to His people in various ways. In verse 1 He is a loving Father and Israel is a youth and His son. In verse 3a He is the Teacher Who teaches Ephraim to walk and the Comforter Who takes him in His arms when he has fallen. In verse 4 He shows Himself a loving Husband who is connected with Israel through bonds of love. He is also his Redeemer Who lifts from him the yoke of slavery under which he suffers.

He is not far away from them, but descends to their level to be close to them as a Neighbor to be able to give them food as a Caretaker. Paul also points to God's care for His people, especially during the wilderness journey: "For a period of about forty years He put up with them [or: took care of them] in the wilderness" (Acts 13:18).

The love of God, that is what His people, then and now, must constantly be reminded of. That love is the secret why He does not completely and definitively stop dealing with His unfaithful people. God's love finds reason



in Himself to keep expressing Himself, even though the way in which that love expresses Himself is not always the same.

All God's actions originate from His own love and not from the objects on which His love focuses. Israel has no added value for God above other nations (Deu 7:7-8). Unlike many great nations of the earth who all build and sustain their kingdom through strength and violence, God has built and sustained His people through love. There is no power in the universe greater than the power of God's love.

However, God reminds Israel not only of His love for them, but also of the beginning of His relationship with them: "When Israel [was] a youth." In Ezekiel 16 we also read about God's love for Israel in the early days of the people. There the LORD tells how He found Israel as a helpless baby and how He took care of the baby in His love (Eze 16:1-14).

As we get older, it is good that we remember God's love in our youth. Our 'youth' means the period in our lives that we have heard about the Lord Jesus and we have become aware of His love and care for us. This can be when we were children, young in age; it can also refer to being young in faith, the time after we had come to faith, which can also have happened at a later age.

Thinking back to being receptive to God's love in the early days is of great importance. After all, God's love has never changed. If we no longer enjoy it, it is not because of Him, but because of ourselves. Certainly, we miss a lot ourselves, but Who misses it even more, is God. He wants so dearly to express His love to His people as His child.

Let us not close ourselves off to that, but open ourselves (again?) to it and thus take the admonition to heart: "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 1:21). This means that we constantly realize that God's love goes out to us. We often forget this and go outside the realm of God's love. Towards each other we may have the desire that Paul has for the believers in Thessalonica: "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2Thes 3:5a).

Then there is something else. The LORD does not only call Israel "a youth" or "a child", but He also calls him "My son". With Israel as a "child" we can think of a certain helplessness. A youth or child asks for care and endears the feelings of the parents. With 'son' we think more of adulthood,

someone with whom a parent can discuss certain things. A son is someone with whom you can consult and who can think and act independently. He knows his father's thoughts and can make them his own and thus act in the spirit of his father. He can represent his father. Youth and son are the same person, but with a different approach. It was the same with Israel and so it is with the believer who belongs to the church.

God has called Israel as His son from Egypt (Exo 4:22-23). He has freed the people from bondage, so that He can share His thoughts with Israel and show through Israel into the world Who He is. Unfortunately, Israel did not respond to this. But there is Another Who has answered that. That is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. It is not for nothing that this verse from Hosea is quoted when the Lord Jesus is born and has to flee immediately into Egypt because of Herod and then return to Israel (Mt 2:14-15).

Israel has failed, but God puts His Son in their place. His Son will go through the history of Israel again, but He does so without failure and everything to the glory of God. We have seen such a comparison also with regard to Israel as a vine (Hos 9:1).

### **Hos 11:2 | God's Effort and the People's Reaction**

*2 The more they called them,  
The more they went from them;  
They kept sacrificing to the Baals  
And burning incense to idols.*

We would think that the people would be very grateful that they have finally been freed from the heavy slave yoke. In the beginning this is also true. In Exodus 15 they praise their Liberator (Exo 15:1). But soon after that it becomes clear how wandering they are. Again and again they wander away from God. In the book of Judges we see them leaving God over and over again. He calls them back again and again, but each time they make it worse than the time before. They sink deeper and deeper into the swamp of their own will and idolatry (Jdg 2:10-19).

"The more they called them", indicates the efforts God made to call "them", the people, back to Him through His prophets, "they". He has done this over and over again. But the people no longer want to face the prophets.

They walk away from them. As soon as they see a prophet, they avoid to encounter them. They prefer to continue their idolatry undisturbed.

### **Hos 11:3 | Teaching to Live as Child of God**

*3 Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them in My arms;  
But they did not know that I healed them.*

God taught Ephraim to walk, He taught him to stand on his own two feet, He raised him to independence. God gives His children teaching, lessons. That teaching does not just consist of giving them directions, showing them the way from beginning to end. Teaching to walk is mainly about our behavior on that road and what we can encounter there: the speed, the dangerous intersections, the places where we can take a break, where we can get food and what kind of food is best. God has given the whole Bible to His people for this purpose.

Especially the book of Deuteronomy is full of statutes and ordinances that the people have to learn. If they listen to it, they will do well and continue to enjoy the blessings of the land God has given them (Deu 4:1). Paul says to Timothy – and over his head to us – how important the Scriptures are as the only means by which we can learn to walk (2Tim 3:14-16). He points out to him the holy Scriptures “which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation” (2Tim 3:15). By “salvation” is meant: the achievement of the end goal.

Timothy is already a child of God, but he must also ‘learn to walk’. The equipping for this lies for every child of God, just like for Timothy, in reading the Bible. And when things go wrong, when we fall, there is the helping hand of God. He lifts us up, comforts us, puts us down again and we are allowed to walk again. In this way we get to know God as the God Who “carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place” (Deu 1:31).

In spite of all the evidence of care and comfort, the people do not acknowledge all of God’s loving concerns. The word “healed” at the end of this verse refers to the injuries a child suffers when it falls while learning to

walk. The Israelites will often have literally hurt themselves while going through the wilderness with its many sharp stones and boulders.

Still, the healing Hosea refers to seems to relate not so much to the body, but more to the spirit. How many times have the people doubted the love of God, for example when they have no water or food. And God always gives what they needed. He heals them from their grumbling. He is also in this respect “the LORD ... your healer” (Exo 15:26). But they do not acknowledge that He does this, they have no eye for it.

### **Hos 11:4 | God Leads His People to Himself.**

*4 I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love,  
And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws;  
And I bent down [and] fed them.*

Incessantly and by ever-changing means, God has shown and let His people feel how much He loves them. The “cords of a man” are cords that fit human weakness. They are means that God has given to man as aids and that perfectly match his weakness. They are cords that are adapted to man and are therefore able to help him to stay on God’s way and go that way to His honor.

We can think of the whole priestly service that God has instituted. It is completely focused on the fact that the people can remain in fellowship with God, or can come back when that fellowship has been disturbed by sin. Thus “we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as [we are, yet] without sin” (Heb 4:15).

We can also see such cords as “bonds of love”. Everything God does to connect His people with Himself happens out of and with love. God’s love is a searching and leading love. Whoever goes to the Lord Jesus as a sinner, goes to Him because the Father leads him there. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (Jn 6:44a).

He who loves the Lord Jesus also feels his own weakness to follow Him and will ask Him if He wants to draw him: “Draw me after you” (Song 1:4a). If God pulls, it is His love: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness” (Jer 31:3).

If God has drawn His people so much in love to Himself and also leads them, it also means deliverance from the yoke of slavery. God acts out of love and proves His love to the object of it. Hereby no yoke fits under which one is burdened (Gal 5:1). To walk at the side of God is to walk lightly, where the burden of sin no longer presses down.

Unfortunately, a Christian, just like the Israelite, can allow sin into his life again. Then the pressing yoke is felt again. Life becomes heavy again. David also experiences this after his sin with Bathsheba, when he has not yet confessed it: “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me” (Psa 32:4a). Only when he confesses his sin will there be songs of deliverance (Psa 32:5-7).

The words ‘bent down’ mean ‘to lean over’, ‘to go down’. It is: coming closer. God comes down in the Lord Jesus, leans over to man and comes close to him. The Lord Jesus, who is God, has become Man. In Him, God has come so close to man that He becomes His Nearest. In that position He wants to take care of man, His people, and He feeds him.

In the beginning of this verse God is the ‘leading’ God who takes His people to Himself. At the end of the verse God descends to His people and wants to be with them. He wants to share their needs and provide for them. God is the same for us. He comes to us in our need and wants to give us what we need.

In our verse the giving of food still seems to refer to the ‘child Israel’. Food is important for growth. Also, spiritually we can only grow if we take the spiritual food that God gives us. That spiritual food comes from the Bible. A spiritually healthy Christian will have a healthy hunger and thirst for the Word of God (1Pet 2:2).

### **Hos 11:5 | Back to Egypt**

*5 They will not return to the land of Egypt;  
But Assyria—he will be their king  
Because they refused to return [to Me].*

Verses 1-4 give a comprehensive overview of God’s attitude of love and acts of grace toward His people. Everything is appropriate to bring the people to voluntary dedication. Nevertheless, God has pointed out Israel’s

ingratitude between the lines in these verses. Therefore, if it has turned out that all of God's declarations of love have been rejected by Israel and God has to announce that He, in turn, must reject them, this does not come as a surprise.

"The land of Egypt" here symbolizes a land of slavery, a slavery that they will actually endure in Assyria. "Assyria—that will be their king" means that they will come under the rule of the Assyrians (cf. Hos 9:3).

### **Hos 11:6 | The Downfall Is Certain**

*6 The sword will whirl against their cities,  
And will demolish their gate bars  
And consume [them] because of their counsels.*

The sword of war in the hand of the king of Assyria, their enemy, will strike them. He will overcome them. Their gate bars, i.e. the fortresses and other defenses, will not ultimately keep the enemy outside their gates. This will happen "because of their counsels", which seems to indicate that it is precisely through their self-conceived solutions, through which they believe they can stop the enemy, that they give the enemy access to within their walls. The human being who does not take God into account is always playing into the hands of the enemy.

We have an example of 'self-conceived gate bars' in the rules set up by some local churches about separation from evil. Boundaries are meant to keep evil out of the church. But if more and heavier bars are devised than Scripture indicates, then what God wants to see in the church as His testimony on earth is 'demolished'. Believers who live with the Lord and in obedience to His Word are refused to take part in the Lord's Supper because they do not conform to "their counsels", which are the counsels of that local church. Such a fellowship loses the hallmark of a church of God.

### **Hos 11:7 | Bent on Turning From the LORD**

*7 So My people are bent on turning from Me.  
Though they call them to [the One] on high,  
None at all exalts [Him].*

Although the people have been told that they will be deported, God here again speaks of “My people”. This should serve to make the people aware again that they have a relationship with God. The people do not only wander off, but they also “bent on turning from” Him. Nothing can bring them on the right path, let alone remain on it.

“They”, that are the prophets, “call them”, that are the people, “to [the One] on high”. A prophet is an intercessor. They also call upon the people to return to the One on high. But the people do not listen. As a whole, “non at all”, they do not honor Him, but they choose to persevere in sin.

### **Hos 11:8 | How Can I ...?**

*8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim?*

*How can I surrender you, O Israel?*

*How can I make you like Admah?*

*How can I treat you like Zeboiim?*

*My heart is turned over within Me,*

*All My compassions are kindled.*

Verses 8-11 are like a window through which we can look into the heart of God. We can see that there is a future restoration for His people. After the announcement of the judgment, which must come, it is as if God wants to prevent the thought from coming to an end with His people.

With Admah and Zeboiim it is. Those cities no longer exist. At the same time as the turning upside-down of Sodom and Gomorrah, they disappeared from the face of the earth. God has threatened to treat His people like Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim (Deu 29:23).

The reminder of what He had to do with those cities causes great inner turmoil with God. “My heart is turned over within Me” means that His heart resists, it ‘takes a different direction’, it ‘changes its mind’. God repents the evil He intends to do to them. This is only possible because God foresees that His people will repent (cf. Jdg 10:16; Jer 31:20).

His compassion, which is kindled fully and not just a little, is a guarantee that the people will be freed from the misery into which they have fallen through their own guilt. This is always the case with Him in relation to man and His people. With Him is always present what is appropriate for

the situation, both the feelings of love and compassion and the power to act.

The question “how can I give you up, ... surrender you?”, did not occur to God when He gave up His Son on the cross, when He did not spare Him. From that giving up and surrendering His Son comes a new and miraculous ‘How?’ in view of us: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Rom 8:32).

### **Hos 11:9 | God Is God and Not Man**

*9 I will not execute My fierce anger;  
I will not destroy Ephraim again.  
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,  
And I will not come in wrath.*

In this verse we find the answer to the ‘how?’ of verse 8 and the reason why He does not execute His burning wrath and does not destroy Ephraim further. This answer is: He is “God and not man, the Holy One in your midst”. When a man is harmed by what has been done to God, this man reacts very differently from God. Man inflames in anger and pays back the evil that has been done to him. God acts very differently. He will let the announced punishment come over Israel, but will not destroy His people completely like He did with Admah and Zeboiim, cities that lie forever under the curse of God’s wrath.

That Israel will not be under the curse forever is because God has found a solution that no man can think of. The fact that He is God and not man also means that in His sovereignty He completely ignores man. His ways far exceed those of sinful man. God’s solution does full justice to His righteousness and holiness, but also to His plans of love with His chosen people. That solution is found in the Person and work of Christ.

In Christ on the cross, full justice is done to God’s righteousness and holiness. There, God has judged the sins of everyone who confesses them sincerely before Him. Also, Israel will in the future repent of the sins committed. Based on the work of Christ, they too may know that their sins have been forgiven. That is why also God’s love becomes visible in Christ.



When the sins have been borne by His Son and thereby removed, the way is free to carry out His plans of love.

Israel will eventually be able to enjoy all the blessings promised by God, while God as “the Holy One” will dwell in their midst. He will not come to the city to destroy it. That God does not let His wrath burn permanently is because the Lord Jesus has been in God’s wrath.

### **Hos 11:10 | Roaring like a lion**

*10 They will walk after the LORD,  
He will roar like a lion;  
Indeed He will roar  
And [His] sons will come trembling from the west.*

What a change! Here we no longer have what we found in verse 7, a “turning from Me”, but a “walk after the LORD”. This will happen in the future. On the basis of that fact and what has been explained in the previous section, the people will enter the millennial realm of peace and enjoy the blessing.

There is always a blessing attached to following the Lord, also for us who live now. When Peter asks the Lord Jesus a question about the reward for following Him, He answers with a remark about the future and the present (Mt 19:28-29). In Hosea it is about “the regeneration” the Lord Jesus speaks about. By this is meant the future realm of peace when everything in creation will be new.

Just before that, He will not roar against His people for the purpose of tearing them apart (Hos 5:14), but against the nations that have subdued His people. He will then openly act as a Protector for His people. He will do so on the day He will appear as the Lion from the tribe of Judah. Earlier, He is a lion who tore them apart, now He is a lion who roars to call them back to Himself. He will bring Israel back from exile.

It is also possible that we should see this “roaring like a lion” in the political upheavals and events that precede salvation. The voice of God will be recognizable to God’s people in what will take place in the political field at that time.

### **Hos 11:11 | Finally at Home**

*11 They will come trembling like birds from Egypt  
And like doves from the land of Assyria;  
And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD.*

The speed and certainty with which the scattered of Israel will return to the land at the call of the LORD is compared to flying like birds and especially doves (cf. Isa 60:8). Egypt is the south, Assyria the northeast. Both countries are mentioned as countries of exile, but also as a symbol of the many nations to which Israel is scattered. The fact that they “tremble” probably has to do with the fact that they are impressed by the majesty of the LORD.

Once they have arrived in the land, He will make them live in their homes. That will be their permanent abode. They will never be driven out again. This promise is reinforced by the “speaks the LORD”. If He has said it, who will be able to change that?

### **Hos 11:12 | God’s People Surround Him With Lies**

*12 Ephraim surrounds Me with lies  
And the house of Israel with deceit;  
Judah is also unruly against God,  
Even against the Holy One who is faithful.*

[According to the Hebrew numeration this final verse is the first verse of chapter 12.]

Ephraim is untruthful in his dealings with God. All their serving of Him when they come to His altar is hypocritical and feigned. When they surround Him with their praises and prayers or approach Him with a request, they lie to Him with their mouths and flatter Him with their tongues. They may utter beautiful sentences, but their words do not tell the truth.

They come to God with selfish intentions. He must grant their wishes. They do not shy away from the lie, as if they can fool Him! God sees that they surround themselves with their sins (Hos 7:2). However, they do not think that He sees it. Here God is surrounded by them with lies and deceit because they come to Him in that state. The thought, that He does not want to have anything to do with them that way, does not occur to them.

Judah is not yet as apostate as Ephraim. There is still a certain outward loyalty to God. There also still reigns a king from the house of David. But Judah is also unruly against God, the Holy One. God in His holiness is the only One Who is faithful (cf. (2Tim 2:13).

## Hosea 12

### Introduction

After the beautiful Hosea 11, in which we find so much love and promise from God for His people, this chapter focuses again on the sin of Israel. In a renewed attempt to make the people aware of their sinful condition, Hosea speaks about their father Jacob. Different events in Jacob's life should make the people think.

The prophets are also mentioned. They have spoken on behalf of God. Moses is the most important of them. He led them out of Egypt. He is also a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who will deliver His people in the last days from all the powers that oppress them.

### Hos 12:1 | The Folly of Political Covenants

*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 carried to Egypt.*

Ephraim makes a tremendous effort to keep himself standing between Assyria and Egypt, the political superpowers of those days. The foolishness of this is indicated by the prophet by saying that Ephraim "feeds on wind". Now, how can you feed on something as elusive as wind? The pursuit of wind indicates how vain the hope is that rests on people. How unteachable is the people – and that goes for every human being – who, despite the disappointment that the search for help with people always brings, look for help with people the next time.

This pursuit not only gives no advantage, but even has a major disadvantage: it works its own downfall. That is why it is not only the feeding on the wind, which indicates the futility of the efforts, but is also referred to as the east wind. This east wind, or sirocco, is the scorching wind from

the wilderness, which, like a scourge, strikes down upon the harvest and destroys it (cf. Hos 13:15).

Israel's persistent attempts to seek help from neighboring countries are also evidenced by the fact that they are working on it "continually". Earlier, the complaint has been made that they keep on making covenants (Hos 10:4). They make a covenant with Assyria and also try to get Egypt on their hand by supplying them with oil. Their whole policy is to play off these superpowers against each other (2Kgs 17:3-4). In this we can also observe the unreliability of Israel. Sometimes they deal with Egypt, sometimes with Assyria, as it suits them.

### **Hos 12:2 | Judah and Jacob**

*2 The LORD also has a dispute with Judah,  
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;  
He will repay him according to his deeds.*

Again, God's finger points at Judah and now in a negative sense. Things are going from bad to worse with Israel, but Judah is also bending in the wrong direction. Judah will have to account for deviating from God. In Jacob, the ancestor of the twelve tribes, we may certainly see Ephraim and Judah, the ten and the two tribes together. God will have to punish them all for the way they went and what they did. But in the following verses, God first uses the history of Jacob to show that the way of repentance is still open for the whole people.

### **Hos 12:3 | The Womb and Maturity**

*3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel,  
And in his maturity he contended with God.*

In verses 3-4 attention is drawn to three events in Jacob's life. These serve as examples for the whole of Israel, the twelve tribes. They are his birth (Gen 25:24-26), his 'victory' at Pniel (Gen 32:22-32) and the cleansing of his house in Bethel (Gen 35:1-15).

The first example concerns his birth. Taking by the heel can mean cheating. It is an allusion to the name Jacob, which means 'heels keeper'. The explanation can also be positive, when we see that Jacob was, so to speak,

already in the womb of the mother busy to possess the birthright, of which it turns out later how little value his brother Esau attaches to it. Esau sells his birthright for a dish of lentil stew (Gen 25:29-34).

However deceitful Jacob may have been, he has always been interested in God's blessing and appreciated it. And that is what the people lack. That is why we can see in the reference to Jacob's birth an exhortation for the people to stretch out and dedicate themselves to the blessing God wants to give. But not in the manner of Jacob. Jacob often wanted to obtain God's blessing in the wrong way, namely through his own effort. He had to learn that this is not the way it goes with God.

Moreover, his own effort makes him struggle with people. That way of doing things has to be unlearned and that happened with the second incident that is mentioned of him: his contention with God at Pniel. That is an allusion to the name Israel, which means 'prince of God' or 'warrior of God'.

#### **Hos 12:4 | How Jacob Prevailed**

*4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed;  
He wept and sought His favor.  
He found Him at Bethel  
And there He spoke with us,*

Jacob contended with God at Pniel. It has been said that Jacob wrestled with an evil angel. That should then be an interesting explanation that opens a new perspective. It would then have been a guardian angel of Esau. But that does not fit with the history mentioned in Genesis 32 (Gen 32:22-32). It also does not fit with what Hosea says here. It is clearly written in verse 3 that Jacob contended with God.

It is also clear that God in the form of an angel contended with Jacob. Everywhere in the Old Testament the form God takes when He shows Himself to people is that of an angel. Often there is then talk of 'the Angel of the LORD'. In our verse "Angel" should be written with a capital letter.

The point of Hosea in quoting this history is to show how Jacob wrestled and prevailed here. Jacob wrestled in his maturity. But that did not give him the victory. It was in that power that God had to strike him. God hit him in his hip muscle, which contains the strength to walk. From that mo-

ment on Jacob walks crippled, as a constant reminder of his wrestling with God.

Yet Jacob has prevailed. Not by his strength, but by his weakness. His weakness has become the strength by which he has prevailed. In this he has gained the experience of Paul, who in his weakness is told by the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2Cor 12:9a). Jacob prevailed by weeping asking God for mercy. He fought with the weapon of prayer (cf. Col 4:12). This does not require physical strength, but spiritual strength. Therefore, God always allows Himself to prevail.

The moment when someone begs God for mercy is always the moment when the fight stops and God is no longer an opponent, but becomes a supporter. You cry because you repent for your sins when you realize how much evil and wickedness there is in your life. You beg for mercy because you may trust that God will forgive all that evil and wickedness. Jacob won the victory by being weak. When we are lame and broken and can do nothing more than cling to God, we will experience His grace. Then God's hidden treasures of blessing will open for us.

What a blessing it will be for Israel if they use Jacob's method of fighting. What a blessing it will be for the Christian who learns to fight like Jacob did here.

At his birth Jacob has, as it were, already demonstrated that he appreciates the blessing of God by keeping his brother's heel. In his fight we see that he receives the blessing by taking the right attitude towards God. Then there comes another event from which Israel and also we can learn the necessary things. It has to do with the relationship between God and His people. This is expressed in words "there He spoke with us", which means fellowship.

It says "with us" and not 'with him'. Jacob represents the whole people. Hosea says as it were: 'In His speaking to Jacob He spoke to us. What He says to Jacob there applies equally to us.' A people that longs for fellowship with God has to get rid of the idols. That is what happened at Bethel. After Jacob cleansed his house, he meets God in Bethel (Gen 35:9-12). Ephraim and Judah should also do what Jacob did – cry out to God, humble themselves, get rid of the strange gods – but they did not do it.

## **Hos 12:5 | The LORD Is His Name**

*5 Even the LORD, the God of hosts,  
The LORD is His name.*

From Jacob the spotlight now goes to God Himself. Here we see God in His glory and majesty. He is the leader of the hosts of Israel and of all earthly and heavenly hosts. He, Who now speaks to His people through Hosea, is the same Who appeared to Jacob at the time and spoke to him. They have to do with Him alone and with no one else, neither a calf in Bethel nor Baal in all kinds of other places.

His name “LORD” guarantees the connection with His people. It is His covenant name, the name with which He has revealed Himself to His people to be their God. Because of this, He will fulfill the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exo 6:1-7).

The fulfillment of all His promises lies also in His power. He is the God of hosts, which means that He is at the head of all powers. Everything is subject to His authority and everything is available to Him in order to reach His goal. What an encouragement for Israel to willingly submit to that great, impressive God, Who has so committed Himself to them. What a foolishness it is to distance oneself from that God, by which all blessing is lost.

## **Hos 12:6 | Return to God!**

*6 Therefore, return to your God,  
Observe kindness and justice,  
And wait for your God continually.*

Having set the events of Jacob’s life as an example and pointed to the LORD Himself, now follows the call to return “to your God”. It is striking to see how much effort God exerts to make a return to Him attractive. Again and again He makes it clear what that yields. Anyone who thinks for a moment, must come to the conclusion that returning to God is the only right thing to do. The striking “your” before “God” must give an extra impulse to the people to take that step.



Hosea addresses the whole people. He speaks to it as a unity. In order to enjoy that blessed relationship in which He connected Himself with Jacob in Bethel, Israel must repent or return to God, as Jacob did. Repentance can only take place in the sense of one's own powerlessness, true humility, and a removal of the idols.

Once returned to God, the consequence will be that the attitude towards one's neighbor will also change, with the characteristics of "kindness and justice". Kindness will manifest itself in care for the poor and comfort for the sad. Justice will express itself in giving to everyone what is due to him or her.

There will be no more wandering away from God. Rather, it is to look forward to His intervention instead of expecting their redemption from earthly superpowers. Waiting for God means: wanting to be dependent on Him alone and on no one else, especially in circumstances when we need help and it does not seem to come.

### **Hos 12:7 | What Canaan does**

*7 A merchant [or: Canaanite], in whose hands are false balances,  
He loves to oppress.*

How necessary the call to repent of the previous verse is, is evident from the verses that follow now. The people here are called "a Canaanite" to indicate that they are not acting like their ancestor Israel, but according to the customs of the former inhabitants of the country. The sudden introduction of this name implies contempt for the attitude that Israel now adopts. Israel has had to give a clear testimony of his God to the Canaanites and their horrors. Instead, they have adopted the atrocious practices of the Canaanites.

An application of the name Canaan for this time is that God addresses a local church with 'World!' There are churches where hardly any difference can be seen between the church of God and the world. The borders have practically disappeared there. The church is supposed to be a blessing for the world, but she has merged into it by allowing the world into her midst.

Canaan means 'trader'. The Phoenician Canaanites were at that time one of the most successful trading people (cf. Isa 23:8; Ezekiel 26-27). Hosea

thus connects the wrong attitude to his neighbor, which always follows a wrong attitude to God. This is manifested in the trade with one's neighbor where "false balances" are used (Lev 19:36; Deu 25:13-16). False balances seem to be fair, but the counterweight does not meet the standard.

In this way they oppress their neighbors. That is already wrong, but they also find the greatest pleasure in it. Conscience does not react at all with these people anymore. But even if the buyer does not notice that he is being deceived, God sees it.

He also sees how we 'weigh' things in their spiritual application, also within the church. If things are to be judged there, it must also be done with honest 'balances'. Unfortunately, that does not always happen. James points to the use of 'false balances' when he points out the difference in treatment of the rich and the poor (Jam 2:2-4). Every good or bad deed should be judged without regard to the person. And let's be honest: how inclined are we to charge a bad deed of someone we do not like more than that of one of our friends? Then deeds are weighed with false balances.

### **Hos 12:8 | I Have Become Rich**

*8 And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich,  
I have found wealth for myself;  
In all my labors they will find in me  
No iniquity, which [would be] sin."*

Hosea's accusation of verse 7 has not hit a target. What Ephraim says here is reminiscent of what the church in Laodicea says: "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (Rev 3:17a). By pronouncing this, it turns out that, just like Ephraim, they are completely blind to their sins. In the last days, Christianity will be characterized by the same self-satisfaction as Ephraim was then.

For Ephraim, their richness is proof that it is all right with them. They think in the sense of: 'If we were wrong, would God bless us like this?' But riches are never proof of blessing. Prosperity often blinds us to sin. It is foolish to place your hopes in something like the uncertainty of wealth. James warns us about this miscalculation of wealth (Jam 1:9-10). Those who know the relative importance of riches will take the word to heart,

“not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God” (1Tim 6:17).

With all riches, Ephraim moderates that no sin has been committed. Every accusation is declared unfounded in advance. Apparently, they have discovered loopholes in the law that allow them to delude themselves that their actions do not violate the law. People who only focus on themselves and their own advantage always have a good opinion of themselves. If there is any sin, it will be dealt with as ‘not worth talking about’. There is no iniquity in them, they declare.

For carnal Christians, worldly prosperity and the success they have often confirms that they are correct as far as their way of life is concerned.

### **Hos 12:9 | Living in Tents as Judgment and as Promise**

*9 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.*

The word “but” with which this verse begins indicates the contrast between Who is God and the attitude of the people as given in the preceding verse. When the people have sinned, God often reminds them of where they have come from. It should make the memory of the time when they were in bondage and by Whom they were redeemed from it alive. From that time on He is their God. If they would think about it quietly, they would have to acknowledge that God has always surrounded them with love and care ever since. But they do not take the time for that.

Now God will drive them out of their land because of their sins and they will have to live in tents again, just like when they were in the wilderness. Those tents speak of the temporality of the dwelling place they will find. It will not be final. After all, a tent has the characteristic that it is a temporary residence. This means that at the same time as the judgment of the exile, a promise is given to the people that this exile is not definitive and that it will come to an end.

“The days of the appointed festival” can be related to the feasts. The only feast where people live in tents is the Feast of Booth. This reinforces the thought that Hosea, with his judgement about living in tents again, is at

the same time making a promise. The Feast of Booth is the last of the seven feasts of the LORD (Lev 23:33-43) and points prophetically forward to the millennial realm of peace.

### **Hos 12:10 | The Prophets**

*10 I have also spoken to the prophets,  
And I gave numerous visions,  
And through the prophets I gave parables.*

Prophets are the people through whom God connects with His people when the people have turned their backs on Him. Prophets have called the people time and again to return to God. In the end time, two witnesses of God will act as prophets (Rev 11:3,6). These two prophets will do things that Moses and Elijah also did. Moses as a prophet is also discussed later in verse 13 of our chapter.

It testifies of God's goodness that He gives prophets. They pass on His thoughts to an errant people. To the people as a whole they proclaim the judgment. For the few among the people who listen to their words, they have promises, as encouragement.

### **Hos 12:11 | Sin Destroys Former Glory**

*11 Is there iniquity [in] Gilead?  
Surely they are worthless.  
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,  
Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps  
Beside the furrows of the field.*

In this verse, the actual situation appears again in its entirety. We can see "Gilead" on the east side of the Jordan and "Gilgal" on the west side as the representatives of the situation as it is throughout Israel. Gilead is a place that is proverbial for luster and power (Jer 22:6a), a place also of healing (Jer 8:22). But nothing is left of all that glory. Sin has corrupted everything that is beautiful and offers healing. Gilead is no longer capable of anything good. Also of the former glory of Gilgal as a place of sacrifice nothing is left.

**Hos 12:12 | Jacob – Israel**

*12 Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram,  
And Israel worked for a wife,  
And for a wife he kept [sheep].*

Once again the prophet reminds the people of their ancestor “Jacob”. The name Jacob is usually used to refer to Jacob as a weak man. Jacob is the person who is interested in the blessing of God, but who tries to get hold of that blessing through sneaky ways. He even uses deceit. With this way of acting he often gets in God’s way. Yet God knows how to use everything in Jacob’s life for the execution of His plans.

It is always impressive to read about God as ‘the God of Jacob’. God is the God of that weak Jacob. It is also an encouragement for all of us who often feel like a Jacob: wanting to be blessed by God, but having little patience and trying to secure God’s blessing in his own way. Not that God helps us in this, but He certainly does not let us go. If we then stop our own attempts and take refuge in Him, He is there for us and helps us further.

Jacob has fled because he stole the blessing from his father Isaac by deceit who intended it for Esau. This is now a good example of how Jacob, under the guidance of his mother Rebekah, works to appropriate the blessing God had promised him. God promised that blessing. So why not trust Him?

Because he acted like Jacob, he has to flee like Jacob. But then Hosea talks about “Israel” in connection with his working for a wife. Here Jacob’s faith and faithfulness come to the fore and then he is called “Israel”. Israel means ‘prince of God’ or ‘warrior of God’. The way Jacob worked to be able to marry Rachel has been by way of a faithful service. Later, when he has fled from Laban and has been overtaken by him, he can testify to this. Thereby he gives God the honor (Gen 31:36-42). There he acts and speaks like Israel.

Again, this should appeal to the people to whom Hosea addresses and bring them to repentance. The way God has gone with Jacob has not always been easy. Not easy because of Jacob’s own stubborn actions; not easy either because of what others have done to him. They are the same things that we too can have to deal with in our lives.

### **Hos 12:13 | Moses**

*13 But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt,  
And by a prophet he was kept.*

In verse 10 Hosea speaks about prophets who will play a role in the future for the benefit of the people. Now he looks back to the beginning, because also then a prophet played an important role. The prophet used by the LORD to lead Israel out of Egypt is none other than Moses. In Deuteronomy 15 Moses speaks about himself as a prophet (Deu 18:15).

He speaks in that verse even of “a Prophet ... like me”. This verse is quoted in Acts 3:22. From the verses that precede and follow (Acts 3:18-26), it appears that the Prophet to Whom Moses refers is none other than the Lord Jesus. Just as Moses as a prophet liberated the people of God from Egypt and kept them as a shepherd in the wilderness, so now the Lord Jesus does, and always has. He saves from the world and from the power of the devil. He is the Shepherd who keeps and pastures His flock.

As a prophet, Moses spoke the words of God to Pharaoh in Egypt and confirmed those words with signs and wonders, which for Pharaoh and his subjects are plagues. As a prophet, Moses spoke the words of God to God’s people in the wilderness. In them God shows, after the redemption from Egypt, His care for His people. Whoever listens, does well, whoever disobeys, perishes. God guards and protects His people through His Word.

Even today God still gives prophets to His people. They have nothing to do with predicting the future, but everything to do with passing on the words of God. When the church comes together to listen to God’s Word, brothers can be used as prophets. This happens when they speak “for edification and exhortation and consolation” (1Cor 14:3,26-37).

### **Hos 12:14 | God Punishes Sin**

*14 Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger;  
So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him  
And bring back his reproach to him.*

Instead of being thankful to God for all the goodness He has shown by redeeming them from Egypt and taking care of them in the wilderness,

His people have “provoked” Him “to bitter anger”. They praise Moses as their great leader, but they trample underfoot the words he passed on to them on behalf of God.

All their sins, especially those with which blood guilt is connected, will be paid back to them by the Lord, their Ruler. To bring down blood guilt on someone is the opposite of taking away or forgiving someone’s blood guilt. God is also a God of retribution. As “his Lord”, Adonai, which is like their sovereign Ruler, He will not let evil go unpunished.

## Hosea 13

### Introduction

Also in this chapter the two things are discussed that in the prophecy of Hosea are, as it were, fighting for priority. On the one hand there is God's indignation over the sin of His people and His righteous wrath over it. On the other hand, we see His love and desire, to bless, according to His counsel, this people, which He will do if they have converted to Him in the future. These two sides are brought forward in the abrupt changes known from Hosea. People do not like to be made aware of their sins or the dangers arising from them. But God does not get tired of warning.

The prophet announces the judgment over Ephraim as a last thunderstorm. King or prince can bring them no benefit. Assyria, which is compared to a scorching east wind, will completely destroy the land. But between the lines on judgment, some rays of the future blessing can be discovered. God will not give them up completely to the realm of the dead. He has provided a solution. Christ, through His work on Calvary, swallowed up death in victory. The glorious results of this are given in Hosea 14.

### **Hos 13:1 | From Privilege to Perdition**

*1 When Ephraim spoke, [there was] trembling.  
He exalted himself in Israel,  
But through Baal he did wrong and died.*

The prophet continues to explain the state of Ephraim, but now more from a historical perspective. In the beginning Ephraim – here seen as a tribe and not as a nation of the ten tribes – was always the first and spoke with authority. He had been given a privileged place in Israel. Thus, God calls him His “delightful child” (Jer 31:20). Leaders such as Joshua and Deborah came from Ephraim. These are all things the flesh can boast of.

That is exactly what happened. The Ephraimites abused their privileged place. They think they have more rights because of their position. They are jealous when other tribes do not acknowledge their position (Jdg 8:1-



3). That jealousy has gone so far, that later on, as described in the book of Judges, a civil war starts that costs the lives of no less than forty-two thousand people (Jdg 12:1-6). Ephraim becomes arrogant, he exalts himself. The first king of the ten tribes, Jeroboam, comes from Ephraim. The ten tribes realm is thereafter often referred to by the name of Ephraim.

The history of Ephraim is the spiritual history of many who started well, but ended badly. This is because they did not listen to the exhortation “to remain [true] to the Lord” with resolute heart (Acts 11:23).

Ephraim has a glorious past, but a sad present. That present begins with the introduction of idolatry by King Jeroboam. He places calves in Bethel and Dan (1Kgs 12:28-30). In this way the death of the people begins. Baal can gain a foothold on the path that has been taken. Baal has been served since Ahab. Ephraim is dying further and further away. That dying typifies a life without God. God, the living God, gives life; idols are death and also bring death.

This does not work differently in the church. Diotrefes is a spiritual descendant of Ephraim. He wants to be the first (3Jn 1:9). There have been many ‘Diotrefesses’ in the history of Christianity, all of them people who have claimed a place of authority for themselves. This attitude, leads, via the great Babylon, who “glorified herself” and says in her heart, “I sit [as] a queen” (Rev 18:7), eventually to the judgment of a Christless Christianity in the end times.

History always shows that after blessing comes self-exaltation, followed by idolatry and spiritual death with finally the judgment of God. Leaving God always begins with self-exaltation, which ultimately leads to death.

Contrary to Christianity, there is restoration for Ephraim, the ten tribes, in the future. Ephraim will, freed from his jealousy, be restored in his country (Isa 11:13).

### **Hos 13:2 | Idols According to One’s Own Ideas**

*2 And now they sin more and more,  
And make for themselves molten images,  
Idols skillfully made from their silver,  
All of them the work of craftsmen.*

| *They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"*

Acting according to one's own insight with a view to one's own advantage has already been denounced by Hosea (Hos 8:4). But without result. Ephraim continues to sin. It goes from bad to worse.

In the same way, Paul speaks to Timothy about the developments in Christianity: "But evil men and impostors will proceed [from bad] to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2Tim 3:13). In the following verses, he points out to Timothy how he can prevent being dragged along, namely by sticking to the Scriptures.

Ephraim, attached as he is to idols (Hos 4:17), makes those images according to their own judgment. A molten image can easily be multiplied. First there is a template, a form. Molds are made of it. This is how it goes with every image. It is a religion that is molded into a certain form and can be introduced anywhere. It is a religion of dead orthodoxy that consists only of forms, which can be fulfilled by anyone who feels comfortable with these forms.

The form can be described and anyone can keep to it. There is no need for any exercise of conscience. Whoever observes the established commandments is certainly not troubled by his conscience. One can even think that God is satisfied with them. At the same time one can control oneself, and also others, with them and thus establish how one's religiosity is doing.

The Ephraimites spend their silver for it. It may cost a bit, but then it also becomes their own possession. And although it is the work of human hands, they go into it with all their soul.

Every human being has a built-in need for God. Idolatry is the false answer to the religious consciousness of human nature. Every human being has his god and gives it the most power of his life. For some it is for example music, for others it can be sport, art, business, family, at home. When man has lost the right view on God, he makes a god according to his own insight.

Jeroboam has done that. He does not deny the existence of the LORD, but he devises in his own heart (1Kgs 12:33) how the LORD should be served and in what place. He does so out of political motives and establishes a

new center of worship. He does not deny the LORD, but according to his own insight he makes a likeness of God. With that a false representation of God is born. Evil proliferates and finds its climax, or rather its nadir, with Ahab. Then things are not worshiped as objects to represent God, but the LORD is completely replaced by the idol.

The curse of idolatry always becomes visible. Man becomes equal to his idol, he identifies himself with it. A few actual examples. The tension around the duels of soccer events often results in a large number of heart attacks. Once there was a report in the newspaper that it was possible for soccer fans to be buried in an orange coffin (orange is the Dutch national color). During pop concerts it happens that fans are trampled underfoot. Their idol becomes their death.

There is a vicious circle: man makes an idol that is equal to himself and he himself becomes more and more like the idol made by himself (Psa 115:4-8). They show their love, their reverence for their idol by kissing him (1Kgs 19:18). However, God says: "Do homage to [literally: kiss] the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish [in] the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psa 2:12).

### **Hos 13:3 | He Who Commits Idolatry Evaporates Like Smoke**

*3 Therefore they will be like the morning cloud  
And like dew which soon disappears,  
Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor  
And like smoke from a chimney.*

Persistence in the sin of verse 2 will have only one result. The word "therefore" with which verse 3 begins points back to the previous verse and gives the reason for what follows. Hosea outlines the result in four terms: "morning cloud", "dew", "chaff" and "smoke". This is how Ephraim has become. For centuries, until today, they are untraceable. They have disappeared like a morning cloud disappears, like the dew disappears when the sun rises, like the chaff is blown away by the wind and like the smoke flies away out of the chimney (cf. Psa 68:2). Ephraim's prosperity is just as gone as the things mentioned that give no hold and disappear elusive.

### **Hos 13:4 | There Is No One Outside of God**

*4 Yet I [have been] the LORD your God  
Since the land of Egypt;  
And you were not to know any god except Me,  
For there is no savior besides Me.*

After this presentation of the insignificant idols that offer no security or support, God appears here in all His power and majesty. He declares His Being and His actions. The contrast is enormous! We have to let that sink in well. Read again in verses 2-3 about the idols and the people who make them. Then read again what God is saying here about Himself. Who is foolish enough, then, no matter to what extent, to continue to give His love to any form of idolatry?

God is the LORD. That is to say, He is in connection with His people. He alone is their God. Since He redeemed them from Egypt, they have not known any other God but the LORD, that is, they have not experienced any other God as Helper and Savior (Isa 45:21). As in Hosea 12, we see again the memory of the beginning (Hos 12:9).

In the same way, God is also the Father of everyone who is redeemed from the world by the Lord Jesus, of which Egypt is a picture (Gal 1:4). If God has made Himself known in this way, how would those who have been brought into a relationship with Him follow other gods? Or have many of those who confess Him forgotten that there is no salvation in anyone else (Acts 4:12)? Many who confess that only the Lord Jesus has been able to save them live as if their salvation still depends on something else. Experiencing that unique salvation through the Lord Jesus in everyday life is too difficult for many. After all, life offers, in their opinion, so much that is pleasant.

So many certainties are offered that it is hardly necessary anymore to rely on the Lord Jesus for daily things. The trust in Him is abandoned unnoticed and we are going to put more and more trust in the things of this life. This is how idolatry is born. Therefore: back to the origin, back to Him Who redeemed us.

**Hos 13:5 | He Cares for Us**

*5 I cared for you in the wilderness,  
In the land of drought.*

Ephraim is not only reminded of the beginning, but also the people are reminded of the hard time in the wilderness, after the redemption from Egypt. God has made Himself known as not just a Friend, but as a Friend in their need. The word “cares” means that He has taken their fate upon Himself, that He has looked down upon them in mercy as His people.

The word “cared” also contains something of election. In the wilderness they only had ‘God and the sand’ and they had to count on Him from step to step. God’s care is not only perceptible in salvation, but also in all the care that is needed afterwards during the journey to the promised land.

This principle also applies to us. God knew how, during our conversion, the world would change for us. At first, we were friends of the world, we felt at home there. Now that we have been freed from it through the work of salvation of the Lord Jesus, that same world where we had our friends and who knew us as its friend has changed into an environment where we experience enmity (Jn 16:33). While the world no longer knows us, it is a great encouragement to know that the Lord Jesus knows us and cares for us.

**Hos 13:6 | Forgetting the LORD**

*6 As [they had] their pasture, they became satisfied,  
And being satisfied, their heart became proud;  
Therefore they forgot Me.*

God took care of His people in the wilderness. This was expressed every morning through the manna He gave them. “As [they had] their pasture” refers to the peace in which they dwelt and in which He satisfied them with manna. All they had to do was collect it and eat it. What you do not expect to find in a wilderness is simply there when the LORD cares for His people. The wilderness then becomes a benevolent pasture.

They have experienced His care from step to step. But their reaction was that their heart became proud and therefore they forgot Him. You can

hear, as it were, the disappointment in the voice of God. This ‘forgetting’ is a guilty ‘forgetting’. God was entitled to expect that the people, through all the goodness He had proven to them, would remain grateful to Him forever. But that did not happen. Thus, the unfaithfulness and ungratefulness of the human heart is revealed.

Moses warns the people not to forget Who cared for them so much and to whom they owe their blessings (Deu 8:11-20). In his prophetic view of the situation that will follow if the people do not take his words to heart, Moses warns them that they will forget the LORD, because they will enjoy the blessings as something from and for themselves alone (Deu 32:15,18).

Like the people, we, too, have difficulty with space, because we get lost in it. We cannot deal with freedom because it so easily leads to debauchery. We also have difficulty with abundance, because we soon think that we no longer need the Lord.

### **Hos 13:7-8 | God’s Retribution for Their Ingratitude**

*7 So I will be like a lion to them;  
Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.  
8 I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs,  
And I will tear open their chests;  
There I will also devour them like a lioness,  
[As] a wild beast would tear them.*

The way in which the people have reacted to God’s care causes the prophet to announce the judgment again. From a good Shepherd who pastures and satiates His people, the LORD now becomes a tearing animal for His people. Because of their gross ingratitude and forgetting Him, God has had to treat them that way. The lion, the leopard, the bear, the lioness and the wild beasts of the field, they are all found in Israel. They are known for the horrible way they kill their prey.

One more word about the lion as an opponent of God’s people. When *the devil* goes around “like a roaring lion” (1Pet 5:8), there is a way out with the Lord. But if *the Lord Himself* becomes a roaring lion, no salvation is possible (cf. Hos 5:14).

**Hos 13:9 | God as Helper**

*9 [It is] your destruction, O Israel,  
That [you are] against Me, against your help.*

If someone needs help, but he consciously rejects it, it causes his destruction. The only hope and help for sinful people is in the sovereign grace of God. Not only do they pass by this grace, but they also even turn against Him. This attitude is tantamount to committing suicide, both nationally and spiritually. They blame their destruction on themselves, precisely because they consciously reject their only Helper. The thought is that they will perish because they live in rebellion against God, while they need all the help they can get from Him.

**Hos 13:10 | Own Choice Does Not Give Support**

*10 Where now is your king  
That he may save you in all your cities,  
And your judges of whom you requested,  
“Give me a king and princes”?*

The people no longer need God as their Helper. They reject Him consciously. In response to their attitude the LORD now mockingly asks for their king. After all, just now they must be delivered from their enemy, haven't they? But no man can replace Him. That is why their king can do nothing for them, just like the princes, who are all responsible in the government of the land. And they have asked for such people themselves (1Sam 8:4-8; 1Kgs 12:8-16)!

**Hos 13:11 | God Gave a King and Took Him Away**

*11 I gave you a king in My anger  
And took him away in My wrath.*

This verse relates to Saul. The people want a king and God gives them Saul as their king (1Samuel 8-10). God does not do this wholeheartedly, but in His anger. The request of the people is not based on faith, but on unbelief. God gives His people a king according to their own 'taste'. Saul turns out to be a king who ultimately does not take God and His will into account. He is therefore a model for the whole people.

Such a king God cannot maintain. He takes Saul away in wrath about his disobedience (1Chr 10:13-14). The same goes for the kings who reign over the ten tribes realm. Every king has come to the throne under the permission of God. But because they are unfaithful, God also permits them to disappear again, in any way. Many die a violent death.

The lesson for us is that God sometimes responds to what we compulsively ask. But He does so that through the hearing we will experience how great the foolishness of our questions has been. Decisive is not what we ask, but how we ask and for what purpose.

### **Hos 13:12 | What Is Hidden Comes to Light**

*12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;  
His sin is stored up.*

Instead of confessing his sin, Ephraim persists in his sin and stores or hides it. This is how Ephraim deals with his sin. But God also stores Ephraim's sin. The words chosen by Hosea are reminiscent of the oriental custom of binding money and other valuables together in a bundle and putting them somewhere. This is done for safety.

The idea is that God preserves and stores the sins that Ephraim has committed and will not let go as a bundle of iniquity until the day of retribution (cf. Deu 32:33-34). Sins that have not been confessed will one day be judged righteously. On the other hand, we know that what has been confessed is truly removed by God: "Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:19b).

### **Hos 13:13 | Pains of Childbirth, but No New Life**

*13 The pains of childbirth come upon him;  
He is not a wise son,  
For it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb.*

Pains of childbirth on the one hand indicate a time of distress and on the other hand they are 'messengers' of new life. When Hezekiah is in similar circumstances as the ten tribes here, he sends a message to Isaiah in which he also describes his situation as that of a woman about to give birth (Isa 37:3). The sequel shows that God hears the prayer of Hezekiah and gives



salvation. Hezekiah and his people get, as it were, new life because God removed the threat of death from Hezekiah.

However, the people to whom Hosea addresses do not react that way. The enemy, Assyria, also threatens them. The distress, the threat of death, is abundantly present. But instead of new life coming, both mother and child perish here. They do not take refuge in the LORD.

The illustration used by Hosea is, in a certain sense, unusual. He compares Israel both with a woman in pains of childbirth and with a child that is born. Of this child Hosea says that it is not a wise child, because “it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb”. This means that God brings punishment on the people, so that they will be reborn, so that they will follow Him again the way He wants them to. But they are so foolish not to seize this opportunity. God, always with this goal in mind, has already disciplined His people in different ways, but always without result.

### **Hos 13:14 | Death Does Not Have the Last Word**

*14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?*

*Shall I redeem them from death?*

*O Death, where are your thorns?*

*O Sheol, where is your sting?*

*Compassion will be hidden from My sight.*

The first part of the verse speaks of the people who are redeemed from the power of Sheol and from death. It is intended as an encouragement to the God-fearing among the people to take away from them the thought that they might also belong to the child that “is not a wise son” of the previous verse. Their feared enemies will never gain power over a people redeemed by God. These are thoughts that refer to the glorious future that lies ahead for the people.

Here, in the midst of the judgments that stand on their doorstep, is just another promise for the future. Again, and unsolicited, God wants to encourage His people. The total hopelessness of man is for God the opportunity to work for His people.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul quotes this verse from Hosea. First he says that death is swallowed up in victory (1Cor 15:54). This will be seen at the coming of Christ. Then the result of the work of “our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light” (2Tim 1:10) becomes fully visible. All the living who believe in Him will be changed at His coming and all the dead who have died in faith in Him will be raised. Then the proof will have been given that through the death and resurrection of Christ, death has been swallowed up in victory.

Then Paul can also say, as a kind of victory call, following our verse here in Hosea, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” What Paul quotes from Hosea and uses in connection with the resurrection from the dead of those who belong to the church also applies in a literal sense to the Israel of the future. If all seems lost, if death from all sides threatens His people, the people will be redeemed by Christ (Isa 25:8-9). Also the ultimate liberation of Israel is based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Hos 6:2).

If the LORD takes the matter in hand, He will not only subdue the enemies, but also Sheol and the grave. The last line of the verse, “repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (Darby Translation) means that when the people return and are liberated, God will restore them without ever being sorry that He restored them.

### **Hos 13:15 | Drought and Plunder**

*15 Though he flourishes among the reeds,  
An east wind will come,  
The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness;  
And his fountain will become dry  
And his spring will be dried up;  
It will plunder [his] treasury of every precious article.*

This verse brings us back to the reality of the moment. The flourishing may refer to the time of prosperity under Jeroboam II. Even if that time were to come once, it would also come to an end. By the east wind the Assyrians are meant, who in the year 722 BC would carry away the people like a sirocco, the aforementioned scorching desert wind. This judgment wind

is called “the wind of the LORD” because this judgment emanates from him. God calls Assyria “the rod of My anger” (Isa 10:5) which He will send against His people (Isa 10:6).

Through the action of Assyria, “fountain” and “spring” will dry up. All the land will wither because of the lack of water. Also, the people will lose all their strength and prosperity. The road that leads away from God is a road full of loss and destruction.

### **Hos 13:16 | Samaria Has to Pay**

*16 Samaria will be held guilty,  
For she has rebelled against her God.  
They will fall by the sword,  
Their little ones will be dashed in pieces,  
And their pregnant women will be ripped open.*

Samaria here represents the entire northern empire of the ten tribes. The constant rebellion against his God is the reason why God has to carry out the judgment, which He postponed for so long. Thus, the punishment announced (Hos 9:11-12) is actually carried out. The judgment is radical.

The sword will do its pernicious work in three stages of life.

1. First the adults fall prey to the sword, especially of course those who can resist;
2. then the little children, for they will be able to resist in the future;
3. finally, the unborn child, which also prevents the growth of the people.

The atrocities described here do not only happen in primitive times or by primitive peoples. They are not only of that time, but they are also there in our time and they will also be there in the end times.

## Hosea 14

### Introduction

In this chapter we find a wonderful description about the future of Israel. This description is like the rainbow after a thunderstorm has disappeared. From verse 1 it can be deduced that the judgment announced by Hosea also came.

But then the turning point comes. The call to repentance has finally found resonance in the hearts of the people. The people come with confession, they repent to the LORD. The answer of the LORD is: glory for Israel, a glory that comes from God Himself.

Verse 9, the last verse, is a summary of the prophecy. In his prophecy Hosea has spoken of the right ways of the LORD mentioned in that verse, both in judgment and in blessing.

### Hos 14:1 | Return

*1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,  
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.*

The long dispute the LORD has had with His people in the preceding chapters ends with a wonderful, positive dialogue. In the section that follows, we see the denouement of God's ways with His people. Here we find no more judgments.

Without a return to God, there is no salvation for fallen man. Therefore, the blessing begins with the call to return or to repent and the answering of that call. It seems that Hosea has already seen in the spirit the fall of the people and from that position calls them to return. This can be deduced from the word "stumbled", which is the actual, complete downfall of Israel.

Repentance means turning back on the path you are going and walking in the opposite direction. First a man walks with his back to God. When he

repents, he turns his back and looks to God and asks Him what he has to do to be saved. In this way Israel also comes to repentance.

### **Hos 14:2 | Confession**

*2 Take words with you and return to the LORD.*

*Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity*

*And receive [us] graciously,*

*That we may present the fruit of our lips.*

Repentance is the first step. Then confession must follow. This confession manifests repentance. Of course, it will have to be words that really reflect what is in the heart. The heart must, as it were, dictate the tongue. Sin must be mentioned. The confession of the people clearly expresses the acknowledgment of iniquity. They have done things without taking God into account. The words with which they make their confession are given to them by Hosea. In the same way, we can help people to put their confession into words.

Their outspoken confession is compared to presenting sacrifices. Literally it says: "Then we will honor the young bulls of our lips." This indicates the awareness that God will accept their confession as a sacrifice, with in their hearts the due respect that goes with it. They are aware that their sins are great and many and that a great sacrifice – a young bull is a great sacrifice – is necessary to be able to forgive all those transgressions. That sacrifice was in fact brought by the Lord Jesus. His sacrifice is great enough to be able to forgive all sins up to and including the greatest sin.

Paul quotes this verse from Hosea to exhort believers to praise God (Heb 13:15). In doing so, he says that God is truly worthy of always praising and glorifying Him, not only when confessing guilt or during certain services. We have every reason to do so, don't we?

The people, and that goes for every person who knows he is guilty before God, are encouraged to go to God and ask Him for forgiveness. The people are, as it were, called upon to trust that they are dealing with a forgiving God. Even today, everyone may know that our God is a God of forgiveness (Neh 9:17b). Forgiveness is a mind that belongs to Him, that is present in Him. He is "a forgiving God" (Psa 99:8). He is "good, and ready to for-

give” (Psa 86:5). “He will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). He forgives and remembers no more (Jer 31:34).

The word “forgiveness” means, first, that the punishment that sinful behavior deserves is forgiven; second, that word means that the cause of the transgression is completely removed. God is able to deal with sin in this radical way because He has a righteous foundation for it, namely the substituting and reconciling offering of Christ. For “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22).

After being so impressed by the forgiving God, admiration for Him cannot fail: “Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?” (Mic 7:18). Israel has to deal with such a God. That is how Hosea knows Him and that is why he can urge the people to go to that God. The people may also count on total forgiveness, where no sin remains that is not forgiven. “All iniquity” is forgiven.

### **Hos 14:3 | The Break With the Past**

*3 “Assyria will not save us,  
We will not ride on horses;  
Nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’  
To the work of our hands;  
For in You the orphan finds mercy.”*

After confession and forgiveness, a radical break with the past is appropriate. Away with the former life, the life in sin! God does not forgive sins if we intend to continue with them. We really need to break with sin (Pro 28:13). It is important in the confession that sin is named. Israel does that here.

They will no longer look to Assyria for salvation (Hos 5:13; 7:11; 8:9), but to God. Also, they will no longer rely on their own strength or that of their (war) horses. Possibly riding horses refers to the support they have sought from Egypt (Deu 17:16; Isa 30:16; 31:1,3). By “the work of our hands” the people mean the idols. They also swear them off.

In his confession Israel compares himself to an orphan and counts on the mercy of God for a fatherless child (Exo 22:22; Deu 10:18). They will com-

fort themselves with the words of David: “For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up” (Psa 27:10). With this confession the people show that they have forfeited every right to be a child and that only an appeal to God’s mercy remains. This appeal is not in vain. It is better to be an object of God’s grace than to stand in a relationship of justice with Him.

God is always ready to help the helpless. He wants to protect those who have no protection. He cares for those for whom no one cares and takes care of those who are left to themselves. In this situation Israel will be in the end time and they will find in God what is needed.

### **Hos 14:4 | God’s Answer to the Confession**

*4 I will heal their apostasy,  
I will love them freely,  
For My anger has turned away from them.*

After their confession, God assures them of His love. He has accepted them back as His people. He takes away all the consequences of their sins and replaces their misery with the blessings that belong to the new life. His love was always there, but He could not show it because of their aversion. Now His love can go out to them again without hindrance.

Their forsaking of the LORD has been the cause of all misery. He puts an end to that forever. He does this by cleansing them and giving them a new heart and a new spirit (Eze 36:25-26).

In verses 4-5 the LORD says “I will” three times. The first “I will” has to do with the past, with the sin He has taken away. The second “I will” has to do with the present, with His love they may experience at that moment. The third “I will” has to do with the future glory of Israel, when they will blossom and be established in the millennial realm of peace through His refreshment.

### **Hos 14:5 | Future Glory for Israel**

*5 I will be like the dew to Israel;  
He will blossom like the lily,  
And he will take root like [the cedars of] Lebanon.*

For the third time Hosea uses the picture of the dew. In Hosea 6 he uses it as a picture of the volatility of Israel's love (Hos 6:4) and in Hosea 13 in view of their judgment (Hos 13:3). Both times it says that it is a dew that perishes early in the morning. Here the dew is a picture of blessing and God Himself is like the dew. He is the eternal God, with Whom it is always morning, with Whom the dew never leaves. When God will be like the dew to His people – the people who have been without a drop of moisture for so long – it will blossom like a lily. Then there will be an end to the period when the east wind scorches all that blooms and grows (Hos 13:15).

If the Christian has dry periods in his spiritual life, this is also often the result of a sinful way. After confession and forgiveness there is a longing to read the Word of God again. This is then like the dew (Deu 32:2), through which his life starts to grow and blossom again. With the dew also the manna came (Exo 16:14; Num 11:9). The manna is a picture of the Lord Jesus (Jn 6:48-51).

Israel will blossom like the lily. The lily is a picture of charm and elegance, of the glory that Israel will radiate in the realm of peace. But that is not the only thing. A lily is a delicate, fragile flower. That is why it also says that it will "take root like [the cedars of] Lebanon". With the Lebanon the picture emerges of stability, immobility. Israel's visible glory is carried by the unshakable foundation of Christ's reign that has no end (Dan 2:44). The glory of Israel will be like the lily and that people will be as unshakable as the Lebanon for a thousand years through Him Who then reigns.

### **Hos 14:6 | Israel the Olive Tree**

*6 His shoots will sprout,  
And his beauty will be like the olive tree  
And his fragrance like [the cedars of] Lebanon.*

The glory that Israel will then possess will not be for him alone. His shoots will sprout and go to others to be a blessing for them as well. After the lily as a picture of glory (Mt 6:28-29) another beautiful picture now appears: the olive tree. This also means Israel (Jer 11:16a). The olive tree has to do with being a witness for God on earth (Rom 11:17-24). The olive tree shows



the value of Israel for the LORD: green, always fresh, with beautiful, good fruits.

God desires that Christians now give the same testimony of Him in the world as Israel will give in the realm of peace. The scent that emanates from such a testimony is attractive. What the olive tree produces in fruit is the olive oil. When it is poured out, it spreads a pleasing fragrance (Song 1:3). The fragrance that Israel will spread will also be pleasant.

Again, as in the previous verse, the Lebanon is mentioned, this time to emphasize the unchanging and enduring character of the fragrance that Israel will spread around it. All the time that the people will be under the blessed reign of Christ, they will remain fragrant.

To us Christians already living under the reign of Christ, the question comes: What fragrance are we spreading? It is to be hoped that the fragrance we spread is similar to what is said of the believers in Rome (Rom 1:8). Those believers really spread the fragrance of their faith around them. Do the people around us know us as people who live by faith? Then we spread a good fragrance. The same is said of the believers in Thessalonica (1Thes 1:8).

### **Hos 14:7 | Israel the Vine**

*7 Those who live in his shadow  
Will again raise grain,  
And they will blossom like the vine.  
His renown [will be] like the wine of Lebanon.*

The “those” with whom this verse begins, are individual Israelites. “His shadow” is the shadow of the whole people, the nation of Israel. Israel will offer shelter and protection to its inhabitants because the blessing of the LORD rests upon it. They will be able to sow in that time and enjoy the fruits of the land themselves (cf. Hos 2:9,21-23).

In the vine we have yet another picture of Israel that we have encountered before (Hos 10:1). For a long time, it has produced only bad fruits, despite the care given to it by the LORD (Isa 5:1-7). Now it is a blossoming vine, that produces pure wine. This is because of its connection with Christ, “the true vine” (Jn 15:1). Wine represents joy, rejoicing (Psa 104:15). Israel will

be a source of joy for the whole earth in the future, but above all for God and the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus refers to that time with what He says about the wine of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:29). The moment He says that, He is about to be killed by His people. His death at the same time means the atonement for every single person for whom He has shed His blood. The wine in the cup of the Lord's Supper speaks of His blood (1Cor 10:16a; 11:25). That cup filled with wine also speaks of the glorious result that results from the shedding of His blood.

This applies not only to the individual who comes to faith, but also to the people when they as a whole accept Him in the future. The latter is what we are talking about here. The Lord Jesus and God will rejoice over them with joy (Zep 3:17). That joy is as firm as Lebanon. No one takes that joy away (Jn 16:22).

### **Hos 14:8 | A Two-Way Conversation**

*8 O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?*

*It is I who answer and look after you.*

*I am like a luxuriant cypress;*

*From Me comes your fruit.*

In this verse we listen to a two-way conversation between the LORD and Ephraim. In the first sentence Ephraim speaks. He who has been devoted to the idols (Hos 4:17) will say this. If someone is truly converted, he is satisfied with the Lord Jesus Christ. What could his former idols still mean to him?

In the second sentence the LORD gives a twofold answer to this attitude of Ephraim. In the first place there is talk of an answer. The LORD answers, which means that indeed Ephraim no longer resorts to idols, but asks everything of the LORD. He who goes to Him in confidence receives what he needs.

Secondly, the answer of the LORD has to do with looking after Ephraim. That has to do with the position of favor in which Ephraim may know himself to be placed. God looks at him with love and goodness and Ephraim may be aware of that (cf. Job 35:13). This also applies to the Christian who

wants nothing to do with idolatry and only wants to trust in God. He may also know that God will give him what he needs and that God has made him acceptable in the Beloved (Eph 1:6) and thus looks upon him in favor.

Then we hear Ephraim speak again. Following on from what the LORD has said, he can say that living in the favor of God is the best breeding ground to be “like a luxuriant cypress”. The cypress is the tree that in the realm of peace will replace the thorn bush (Isa 55:13). Usually, there is not much green on a thorn bush. It is a symbol for death as a result of sin. The fact that Ephraim here compares to “a luxuriant cypress” or an evergreen cypress, means that he will symbolize life in the realm of peace. Of the previously mentioned greyness (Hos 7:9) nothing can be discerned anymore. There is eternal freshness and strength, without decay.

Then the LORD is speaking again. Everything comes from Him. Nothing of what is found on or at Ephraim, he owes to himself. The last part of the verse shows this clearly. Everything that Israel brings forth comes from the LORD. It is only through fellowship with Him that all that good is found in Israel and will be maintained.

### **Hos 14:9 | Wise and Discerning**

*9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;  
[Whoever] is discerning, let him know them.  
For the ways of the LORD are right,  
And the righteous will walk in them,  
But transgressors will stumble in them.*

“These things” are the things Hosea mentioned in the previous chapters. The short content of those things reads: “The ways of the LORD are right.” Those ways are what God has determined about the course of human history. God has given fixed rules for that. On that basis everyone’s ups and downs are determined. Everyone can know the rules according to which God acts. Whether we walk or stumble is determined by our attitude towards the right paths of the Lord. In other words: whether we walk well or deviate from the way is determined by God’s standard, His rules, or by ‘the right way’ of the Lord.

A wise and discerning person is one who has been taught in a divine way in his heart about the ways of God (cf. Psa 84:5). The way along which the LORD performs His actions always has to do with right. All His ways go right, no matter how great His mercy. It is therefore just like with the 'chariot of God's government' we read about in Ezekiel 1. That chariot does not deviate, but always goes straight forward and can be stopped by nothing or no one. His ways are straight. We can see this in the punishment God exerts over sin and in the honor He gives them who serve Him.

God's government over the world leads to the glorification of those who fear Him and to the downfall of the wicked. All these actions will above all be for the glorification of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him [be] the glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36).

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