

## The Prophecies of Hosea ~ Part 11

### Recitation Of Isra'el's Sins

**12<sup>1(11:12)</sup> "Efrayim surrounds me with lies and the house of Isra'el with deceit. Y'hudah still rules with God and is faithful with holy ones.**

**Efrayim has surrounded me with lies ... but Y'hudah still walks with God** (11:12). **Y'hudah** and the northern tribes (**Efrayim**) both suffered lapses in fidelity to the **Lord**, but **Y'hudah**, unlike **Efrayim**, had some good kings (in particular, **Hezekiah**). One of the highest points in **Y'hudah's** history was the victory over the **Assyrians** when **Hezekiah** was king (see **2 Kings** 18–19, 20 years after **Shamron (Samaria)** fell).

**2<sup>(1)</sup> Efrayim is chasing the wind, pursuing the wind from the east. All day, he piles up lies and desolation— they make a covenant with Ashur, while sending olive oil to Egypt.**

**Efrayim** depends on what is elusive and unprofitable graphically describes the duplicity of **Isra'el** and **Y'hudah's** covenant-making. **Oil ... to Egypt** could refer to an inducement offered to **Egypt** for relief when **Isra'el** paid tribute to **Assyria**.

This section offers challenges to the reader. Not only are there problems in translation (e.g., 11:12b; 12:4a, 11), but the two references to **Y'hudah** (11:12; 12:2) and the separating of the allusive **Ya'akov** traditions (12:3–4, 12) add to the continuity difficulties for readers. Nevertheless, a basic theme for the chapter is set by the programmatic charge in 11:12, which states that the house of **Isra'el** surrounds **GOD** with deceit, a theme that one should remember when dealing with grammatical or literary problems. One must deal with these, but they should not be allowed to divert matters unduly to hinder **Hosea's** critique. **GOD's** case against **His** people comes in 12:2–14, where the chapter concludes with similar words about **Efrayim's** failures. The material in 12:2–14 does not have the formal properties of a court case, but more that of a didactic presentation, alternating between various descriptions of **Ya'akov/Isra'el**, past, present, and future (vv. 3–4, 7–8, 11–12, 14), and references to **GOD**, past, present, and future (vv. 5–6, 9–10, 13). In his critique, the prophet employs traditions about **Ya'akov** to define and instruct that ancestor's descendants (his namesake **Isra'el!**), along with references to **GOD's** act in bringing them to the promised land (12:9, 13).<sup>2</sup> He interprets the fate of **Isra'el** in his own day by recourse to the past. As v. 14 has it, **Isra'el's** future resides under the negative consequences of its deceit and bloodguilt. Its fate, therefore, appears more somber than that of its ancestor. Whether redactional or not, the references to **Y'hudah** in 11:12 and 12:2 show concern for interpreting divine activity concerning the whole covenant community.<sup>1</sup>

**3<sup>(2)</sup> Adonai also has a grievance against Y'hudah; He will punish Ya'akov according to His ways and pay him back for his misdeeds. 4<sup>(3)</sup> In the womb, he took his brother by the heel; in the strength of his manhood, he fought with God. 5<sup>(4)</sup> Yes, he fought with an angel and won; he wept and pleaded with him. Then at Beit-El he found him, and there he would [later] speak with us— 6<sup>(5)</sup> Adonai Elohei-Tzva'ot; Adonai is His name!**

**Hosea** rebuked **Isra'el** by pointing out that although their namesake **Ya'akov** (whose name **God** changed to **Isra'el**) had once been a faithless, self-centered conniver, he met **God** first at **Bethel** and was later changed

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<sup>1</sup> J. Andrew Dearman, **The Book of Hosea**, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 294–295.

in the encounter at the **Jabbok River**. The people of **Isra'el**, on the other hand, met **Ba'al** at **Bethel** (Beth-Aven) and, in effect, died (13:1).

*<sup>7(6)</sup> So you, return to your God; hold fast to grace and justice; and always put your hope in your God. <sup>8(7)</sup> "A huckster keeps false scales, and he loves to cheat. <sup>9(8)</sup> Efrayim says, 'I have gotten so rich! I have made me a fortune! And in all my profits, no one will find anything wrong or sinful.' <sup>10(9)</sup> "But I am Adonai your God, from the land of Egypt. Again, I will make you live in tents, as in the days of the established festival.*

**God** would cause **Isra'el** to live in the wilderness again, in tents, as during the **Feast of Booths**.

*<sup>11(10)</sup> I have spoken to the prophets; it was I who gave vision after vision; through the prophets I gave examples to show what it would all be like. <sup>12(11)</sup> Is Gil'ad given to iniquity? Yes, they have become worthless. In Gilgal, they sacrifice to bulls; therefore, their altars are like piles of stones in a plowed field."*

The second line of verse 10 can be rendered *"and I am the one who caused visions to abound."* But **Isra'el** disposed of **God's** revelation and pursued pagan sacrifices at **Gilead** and **Gilgal**, for which they would receive **nothing** but **heaps of rocks**.

*<sup>13(12)</sup> Ya'akov fled to the land of Aram. There, Isra'el slaved to win a wife; for a wife, he tended sheep. <sup>14(13)</sup> By a prophet Adonai brought Isra'el up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was protected.*

The prophet picks up where he left off in verse 4 and compares **Isra'el's** experience in **Egypt** to that of **Ya'akov** in Aram. Both man and nation sought refuge in a foreign land, but ended up being enslaved. But whereas **Ya'akov** came out shepherding flocks (Gen. 31:17–18), the nation was led like a flock by a shepherd (Moshe; see Exodus 13).

*<sup>15(14)</sup> Efrayim has given bitter provocation, so the penalty for his bloodshed will be thrown down on him, and his Lord will repay him for his insult. <sup>13</sup> <sup>1</sup> "When Efrayim spoke, there was trembling; he was a power in Isra'el. But when he incurred guilt through Ba'al, he died.*

**Efrayim** had preeminence among the northern tribes but threw it away through their **contempt** of **God's** law. Their worship of **Ba'al** is called **bloodguilt** or murder because that was a capital offense.

*<sup>2</sup> So now they keep adding sin to sin, casting images from their silver; idols they invent for themselves, all of them the work of craftsmen. 'Sacrifice to them,' they say. Men give kisses to calves!*

This verse echoes **God's** judgment in 12:11 to bring the people "to nothing". The people have become nothing because of their idolatry, since idols are "nothings."

*<sup>3</sup> Therefore, they will be like a morning cloud, like the dew that disappears early, like chaff blown by wind from the threshing-floor, or like smoke that goes out the window. <sup>2</sup>*

Next, we will continue to explore **Hosea**.

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<sup>2</sup> Hosea 11:12-13:3.