

The Prophecies of Hosea ~ Part 11

Recitation Of Isra'el's Sins

12 ^{1(11:12)} "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(1) 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).² 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.¹

3(2) 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(3) In the womb, he took his brother by the heel; in the strength of his manhood, he fought with God. 5(4) 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(5) 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

¹ 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).

⁷⁽⁶⁾ **So you, return to your God; hold fast to grace and justice; and always put your hope in your God.** ⁸⁽⁷⁾ **"A huckster keeps false scales, and he loves to cheat.** ⁹⁽⁸⁾ **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.'** ¹⁰⁽⁹⁾ **"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**.

¹¹⁽¹⁰⁾ **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.** ¹²⁽¹¹⁾ **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**.

¹³⁽¹²⁾ **Ya'akov fled to the land of Aram. There, Isra'el slaved to win a wife; for a wife, he tended sheep.** ¹⁴⁽¹³⁾ **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).

¹⁵⁽¹⁴⁾ **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.** ^{13 1} **"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.

² **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."

³ **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.** ²

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

² Hosea 11:12-13:3.