

## The Prophecies of Hosea ~ Part 4

### Charge Against Isra'el

*4<sup>1</sup> Hear the word of Adonai, people of Isra'el! For Adonai has a grievance against the inhabitants of the land: there is no truth, no faithful love or knowledge of God in the land; <sup>2</sup> only swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery! They break all bounds, with one blood crime following another. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, the land mourns, and everyone living there languishes, wild animals too, and the birds in the air; even the fish in the sea are removed.*

The prophetic call to *hear the word of ADONAI* is found 29 times in the **Tanakh** (13 times in **Jeremiah**, 6 times in **Ezekiel**, 4 times in **Isaiah**, 3 times in **1 and 2 Kings**). Still, only twice in the **Minor Prophets**—here and in **Amos** 7:16. This central indictment section begins with a summary of the **Lord's** charges and a call to the *people of Isra'el* to recognize the moral and spiritual corruption of the rest of their countrymen who have abandoned their **God** and forfeited their right to be called His people. These adulterous *inhabitants* have abandoned (1) *truth* or integrity, the quality of being reliable and genuine; (2) *faithful love* or kindness and mercy to friends and associates; and (3) the *knowledge of God*. They had ceased to care about knowing Him or the truth about Him (Romans 1:18–32). As a result, they were violating the **Ten Commandments** (Hosea 4:2) and suffering the consequences (v. 3).

*4<sup>4</sup> But no one should quarrel or rebuke, because your people are having to quarrel with the cohen. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, you will stumble by day, and the prophet will stumble with you at night. "I will destroy your mother. <sup>6a</sup> My people are destroyed for want of knowledge. Because you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as cohen for me.*

Both *Cohen* and *Prophet* are blamed because of their willful *lack of knowledge*. God's people were *destroyed for want of knowledge*; they had *rejected the law of their God*.

### Sins of the Priests

*<sup>6b</sup> Because you forgot the Torah of your God, I will also forget your children. <sup>7</sup> The more they increased in number, the more they sinned against me. I will change their glory into shame. They feed on the sin of my people and are greedy for their crimes. <sup>9</sup> But the cohen will fare no better than the people; I will punish him for his ways and pay him back for his deeds.*

*The more they sinned*, the more sin offerings the priests greedily received. So, *like people, like Cohen*, they were both corrupt. Their punishment would be their enslavement to harlotry, wine, and new wine, indulging and never becoming satisfied.

### Adultery of Idolatry

*<sup>10</sup> They will eat but not have enough, and consort with whores but have no children, because they stopped listening to Adonai. <sup>11</sup> Whoring and wine, both old and new, take away my people's wits.*

*They will eat, but not have enough.* If this is still directed to the **Cohens**, it means that though they eat the sin offerings, they will be spiritually hungry. But v.10 may expand the focus to speak of punishment for all the people, in which case **God** says that no food will satisfy their hunger. *they consort with whores*. An allusion to **Baalism**. The prophet here distinguishes little between abuses of **God's** law and **Ba'al** worship. *Whoring, old wine, and new wine ... take away people's wits*. In addition to the moral perversion of "whoredom," **Hosea** warns against the common link between sexual immorality and the effects of alcohol, both of which cloud one's thinking, taking away one's ability to discern good and evil. False gods cannot

satisfy. Their failure shows the folly of false worship and points by contrast to the one true **God**, and ultimately to His way of salvation in **Yeshua** (John 14:6).

***<sup>12</sup> My people consult their piece of wood, their diviner's wand speaks to them; for the spirit of whoring makes them err, they go off whoring, deserting their God. <sup>13</sup> They sacrifice on the mountain peaks and offer incense on the hills under oaks, poplars, and pistachio trees; because they give good shade. Therefore, your daughters behave like whores, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.***

These verses describe ritual violations against **God's** laws, in accordance with Canaanite practices. ***Consult their piece of wood.*** They would ask for guidance from an idol carved out of wood. ***They go off whoring*** like sheep following a wicked shepherd. ***Therefore, your daughters behave like whores.*** There is a connection between following a false religion (which is spiritual adultery, vv. 12–13a) and the immoral conduct (physical adultery) of the next generation ("Therefore," v. 13b; cf. v. 6). The parents turned away from **God**, and as a consequence He allowed their daughters and other young women to stray into sexual immorality.

***<sup>14</sup> I won't punish your daughters when they act like whores, or your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men are themselves going off with whores and sacrificing with prostitutes. Yes, a people without understanding will come to ruin."***

***I won't punish your daughters.*** Perhaps spoken in sarcasm, as if to say, how can anyone blame them when the whole people are unfaithful? ***Sacrificing with prostitutes*** is the only place in **Hosea** where shrine prostitutes are mentioned. **Hosea's** wife is never called that. But here, an unfaithful spouse is grouped alongside those who participate in sexual activity at pagan places of worship.

***<sup>15</sup> If you, Isra'el, prostitute yourself, still Y'hudah has no need to incur such guilt. Don't go to Gilgal or up to Beit-Aven, and don't swear, "As Adonai lives." <sup>16</sup> For Isra'el is stubborn as a stubborn cow; will Adonai now feed them like a lamb in a big pasture? <sup>17</sup> Efrayim is joined to idols; let him alone! <sup>18</sup> When they finish carousing, they start their whoring; their rulers deeply love dishonor. <sup>19</sup> The wind will carry them off in its wings, and their sacrifices bring them nothing but shame.***<sup>1</sup>

***Y'hudah*** is warned not to follow **Isra'el's** wicked example. **Isra'el** is stubborn, refusing to be separated from its idols and loving shame more than glory.

When reflecting on **Hosea 4:1-19**, you may be struck by the personal connection between your faith and the way it influences your behavior in the workplace. If you feel challenged by unethical practices among colleagues, commit to being a beacon of integrity. Lead by example: uphold honesty and transparency in your dealings, making it clear that your decisions are guided by biblical principles, even when it may be difficult.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Hosea 4:1–19.