

Hosea's Prophecy to Israel—Indictment, Punishment and Restoration – Part 1 (c. 743 BC)

Hosea 4–9

Jezreel: A General Complaint

- 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites!
 For the LORD has a covenant lawsuit against the people of Israel.
 For there is neither faithfulness nor loyalty in the land,
 nor do they acknowledge God.
- 2 There is only cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery.
 They resort to violence and bloodshed.
- 3 Therefore the land will mourn,
 and all its inhabitants will perish.
 The wild animals, the birds of the sky,
 and even the fish in the sea will perish.

Lo-Ammi: Three Guilty Groups—Priests, Common People and Women

- 4 Do not let anyone accuse or contend against anyone else:
 for my case is against you priests!
- 5 You stumble day and night,
 and the false prophets stumble with you;
 You have destroyed your own people!
- 6 You have destroyed my people
 by failing to acknowledge me!
 Because you refuse to acknowledge me,
 I will reject you as my priests.
 Because you reject the law of your God,
 I will reject your descendants.
- 7 The more the priests increased in numbers,
 the more they rebelled against me.
 They have turned their glorious calling
 into a shameful disgrace!
- 8 They feed on the sin offerings of my people;
 their appetites long for their iniquity! [cf. [Lev 6:26–30](#); [Heb 13:10–11](#)]
- 9 I will deal with the people and priests together:
 I will punish them both for their ways,
 and I will repay them for their deeds.
- 10 They will eat, but not be satisfied;
 they will engage in prostitution,
 but not increase in numbers;
 because they have abandoned the LORD
 by pursuing other gods.
- 11 Old and new wine
 take away the understanding of my people.
- 12 They consult their wooden idols,
 and their diviner's staff answers with an oracle.
 The wind of prostitution blows them astray;
 they commit spiritual adultery against their God.
- 13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops,
 and burn offerings on the hills;
 they sacrifice under oak, poplar, and terebinth,
 because their shade is so pleasant.
 As a result, your daughters have become cult prostitutes,
 and your daughters-in-law commit adultery!
- 14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit prostitution,
 nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.
 For the men consort with harlots,
 they sacrifice with temple prostitutes.
 It is true: "A people that lacks understanding will come to ruin!" [cf. [Prov 10:8, 10](#)]

Lo-Ruhamah: Three Warnings for Israel and Judah

- 15 Although you, O Israel, commit adultery,
do not let Judah become guilty!
Do not journey to Gilgal!
Do not go up to Beth Aven!
Do not swear, “As surely as the LORD lives!”
- 16 Israel has rebelled like a stubborn heifer!
Soon the LORD will put them out to pasture
like a lamb in a broad field!
- 17 Ephraim has attached himself to idols;
Do not go near him!
- 18 They consume their alcohol,
then engage in cult prostitution;
they dearly love their shameful behavior.
- 19 A whirlwind has wrapped them in its wings;
they will be brought to shame because of their idolatrous worship.
- 5:1 Hear this, you priests!
Pay attention, you Israelites!
Listen closely, O king!
For judgment is about to overtake you!
For you were like a trap to Mizpah,
like a net spread out to catch Tabor.
- 2 Those who revolt are knee-deep in slaughter,
but I will discipline them all.
- 3 I know Ephraim all too well;
the evil of Israel is not hidden from me.
For you have engaged in prostitution, O Ephraim;
Israel has defiled itself.
- 4 Their wicked deeds do not allow them to return to their God;
because a spirit of idolatry controls their heart,
and they do not acknowledge the LORD.
- 5 The arrogance of Israel testifies against it;
Israel and Ephraim will be overthrown because of their iniquity.
Even Judah will be brought down with them.
- 6 Although they bring their flocks and herds
to seek the favor of the LORD,
They will not find him—
he has withdrawn himself from them!
- 7 They have committed treason against the LORD,
because they bore illegitimate children.
Soon the new moon festival will devour them and their fields.
- 8 Blow the ram’s horn in Gibeah!
Sound the trumpet in Ramah!
Sound the alarm in Beth Aven!
Tremble in fear, O Benjamin!
- 9 Ephraim will be ruined in the day of judgment!
What I am declaring to the tribes of Israel will certainly take place!
- 10 The princes of Judah are like those who move boundary markers.
I will pour out my rage on them like a torrential flood!
- 11 Ephraim will be oppressed, crushed under judgment,
because he was determined to pursue worthless idols.
- 12 I will be like a moth to Ephraim,
like wood rot to the house of Judah.
- 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness
and Judah saw his wound,
then Ephraim turned to Assyria,
and begged its great king for help. [cf. [2 Kgs 15:19](#)]
But he will not be able to heal you!

- He cannot cure your wound!
- 14 I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I myself will tear them to pieces,
then I will carry them off,
and no one will be able to rescue them!
- 15 Then I will return again to my lair
until they have suffered their punishment.
Then they will seek me;
in their distress they will earnestly seek me.

The Prophet's Call to Repent

- 6:1 "Come on! Let's return to the LORD!
He himself has torn us to pieces,
but he will heal us!
He has injured us,
but he will bandage our wounds!
- 2 He will restore us in a very short time;
he will heal us in a little while, [cf. possible connection to [1 Cor 15:4](#)]
so that we may live in his presence.
- 3 So let us acknowledge him!
Let us seek to acknowledge the LORD!
He will come to our rescue as certainly as the appearance of the dawn,
as certainly as the winter rain comes,
as certainly as the spring rain that waters the land."

Yahweh's Frustration

- 4 What am I going to do with you, O Ephraim?
What am I going to do with you, O Judah?
For your faithfulness is as fleeting as the morning mist;
it disappears as quickly as dawn's dew!
- 5 Therefore, I will certainly cut you into pieces at the hands of the prophets;
I will certainly kill you in fulfillment of my oracles of judgment;
for my judgment will come forth like the light of the dawn.
- 6 For I delight in faithfulness, not simply in sacrifice;
I delight in acknowledging God, not simply in whole burnt offerings. [[Matt 9:13; 12:7](#)]

Sins of Adam, Gilead and Shechem

- 7 At Adam they broke the covenant;
Oh how they were unfaithful to me!
- 8 Gilead is a city full of evildoers;
its streets are stained with bloody footprints!
- 9 The company of priests is like a gang of robbers,
lying in ambush to pounce on a victim.
They commit murder on the road to Shechem;
they have done heinous crimes!

Apostasy of Ephraim—and Judah

- 10 I have seen a disgusting thing in the temple of Israel:
there Ephraim practices temple prostitution
and Judah defiles itself.
- 11a I have appointed a time to reap judgment for you also, O Judah!

Unforgiven Sins of Israel, Ephraim and Samaria

- 11b Whenever I want to restore the fortunes of my people,
7:1 whenever I want to heal Israel,
the sin of Ephraim is revealed,
and the evil deeds of Samaria are exposed.

- For they do what is wrong;
thieves break into houses,
and gangs rob people out in the streets.
- 2 They do not realize
that I remember all of their wicked deeds.
Their evil deeds have now surrounded them;
their sinful deeds are always before me.
- 3 The royal advisers delight the king with their evil schemes,
the princes make him glad with their lies.
- 4 They are all like bakers,
they are like a smoldering oven;
they are like a baker who does not stoke the fire
until the kneaded dough is ready for baking.
- 5 At the celebration of their king,
his princes become inflamed with wine;
they conspire with evildoers.
- 6 They approach him, all the while plotting against him.
Their hearts are like an oven;
their anger smolders all night long,
but in the morning it bursts into a flaming fire.
- 7 All of them are blazing like an oven;
they devour their rulers.
All of their kings fall—
and none of them call on me!

Folly of Ephraim

- 8 Ephraim has mixed itself like flour among the nations;
Ephraim is like a ruined cake of bread that is scorched on one side.
- 9 Foreigners are consuming what his strenuous labor produced,
but he does not recognize it!
His head is filled with gray hair,
but he does not realize it!
- 10 The arrogance of Israel testifies against him,
yet they refuse to return to the LORD their God!
In spite of all this they refuse to seek him!
- 11 Ephraim has been like a dove,
easily deceived and lacking discernment.
They called to Egypt for help;
they turned to Assyria for protection.
- 12 I will throw my bird net over them while they are flying,
I will bring them down like birds in the sky;
I will discipline them when I hear them flocking together.

Yahweh's Lament

- 13 Woe to them! For they have fled from me!
Destruction to them! For they have rebelled against me!
I want to deliver them,
but they have lied to me.
- 14 They do not pray to me,
but howl in distress on their beds;
They slash themselves for grain and new wine,
but turn away from me.
- 15 Although I trained and strengthened them,
they plot evil against me!
- 16 They turn to Baal;
they are like an unreliable bow.
Their leaders will fall by the sword
because their prayers to Baal have made me angry.

So people will disdain them in the land of Egypt.

Broken Covenant and Shattered Calf

- 8:1 Sound the alarm!
An eagle looms over the temple of the LORD!
For they have broken their covenant with me,
and have rebelled against my law.
- 2 Israel cries out to me,
“My God, we acknowledge you!”
- 3 But Israel has rejected what is morally good;
so an enemy will pursue him.
- 4 They enthroned kings without my consent!
They appointed princes without my approval!
They made idols out of their silver and gold,
but they will be destroyed!
- 5 O Samaria, he has rejected your calf idol!
My anger burns against them!
They will not survive much longer without being punished,
even though they are Israelites!
- 6 That idol was made by a workman—it is not God!
The calf idol of Samaria will be broken to bits.

Calling Egypt and Assyria

- 7 They sow the wind,
and so they will reap the whirlwind!
The stalk does not have any standing grain;
it will not produce any flour.
Even if it were to yield grain,
foreigners would swallow it all up.
- 8 Israel will be swallowed up among the nations;
they will be like a worthless piece of pottery.
- 9 They have gone up to Assyria,
like a wild donkey that wanders off.
Ephraim has hired prostitutes as lovers.
- 10 Even though they have hired lovers among the nations,
I will soon gather them together for judgment.
Then they will begin to waste away
under the oppression of a mighty king.
- 11 Although Ephraim has built many altars for sin offerings,
these have become altars for sinning!
- 12 I spelled out my law for him in great detail,
but they regard it as something totally unknown to them!
- 13 They offer up sacrificial gifts to me,
and eat the meat,
but the LORD does not accept their sacrifices.
Soon he will remember their wrongdoing,
he will punish their sins,
and they will return to Egypt.
- 14 Israel has forgotten his Maker and built royal palaces,
and Judah has built many fortified cities.
But I will send fire on their cities;
it will consume their royal citadels.

From Festival Days to Punishment Days

- 9:1 O Israel, do not rejoice jubilantly like the nations,
for you are unfaithful to your God.
You love to receive a prostitute’s wages
on all the floors where you thresh your grain.

- 2 Threshing floors and wine vats will not feed the people,
and new wine only deceives them.
- 3 They will not remain in the LORD's land.
Ephraim will return to Egypt;
they will eat ritually unclean food in Assyria.
- 4 They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD;
they will not please him with their sacrifices.
Their sacrifices will be like bread eaten while in mourning;
all those who eat them will make themselves ritually unclean.
For their bread will be only to satisfy their appetite;
it will not come into the temple of the LORD.
- 5 So what will you do on the festival day,
on the festival days of the LORD?
- 6 Look! Even if they flee from the destruction,
Egypt will take hold of them,
and Memphis will bury them.
The weeds will inherit the silver they treasure—
thorn bushes will occupy their homes.
- 7 The time of judgment is about to arrive!
The time of retribution is imminent!
Let Israel know!
The prophet is considered a fool—
the inspired man is viewed as a madman—
because of the multitude of your sins
and your intense animosity.
- 8 The prophet is a watchman over Ephraim on behalf of God,
yet traps are laid for him along all of his paths;
animosity rages against him in the land of his God.
- 9 They have sunk deep into corruption
as in the days of Gibeah.
He will remember their wrongdoing.
He will repay them for their sins.

Ephraim Rejected, Exiled and Unloved

- 10 When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the wilderness.
I viewed your ancestors like an early fig on a fig tree in its first season.
Then they came to Baal-Peor and they dedicated themselves to shame—
they became as detestable as what they loved.
- 11 Ephraim will be like a bird;
what they value will fly away.
They will not bear children—
they will not enjoy pregnancy—
they will not even conceive!
- 12 Even if they raise their children,
I will take away every last one of them.
Woe to them!
For I will turn away from them.
- 13 Just as lion cubs are born predators,
so Ephraim will bear his sons for slaughter.
- 14 Give them, O LORD—
what will you give them?
Give them wombs that miscarry,
and breasts that cannot nurse!
- 15 Because of all their evil in Gilgal,
I hate them there.
On account of their evil deeds,
I will drive them out of my land.
I will no longer love them;

- all their rulers are rebels.
- 16 Ephraim will be struck down—
their root will be dried up;
they will not yield any fruit.
Even if they do bear children,
I will kill their precious offspring.
- 17 My God will reject them,
for they have not obeyed him;
so they will be fugitives among the nations.

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