

## July 11 Answers

- 1) To the very end, Hosea kept exposing the spiritual rottenness and decay that festered in the northern kingdom. During the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel prospered: "Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit." But the richer Israel became "the more **altars** he built; as his country improved, he improved his **pillars**" (Hos 10:1). Israel took the wealth God gave them and used it to pursue other gods. Instead of sowing righteousness, they had "plowed **iniquity**." Instead of reaping a harvest of faithful love, they had "eaten the fruit of **lies**." What was the solution to their plight? "**Break** up the fallow ground, for it is the time to **seek** the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos 10:12–13). God wanted more than anything to be able to do good to Israel. Indeed, as God thought about the sword that was about to rage against Israel's cities, He cried out, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender" (Hos 11:8). Admah and Zeboiim were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut 29:23), and God recoiled from the thought of bringing such a devastating end to Israel. God would punish them, yes, but He would not destroy them completely. The time would come, in the distant future, when God would "roar like a lion." Israel would "come trembling from the west," and God would "return them to their homes" (Hos 11:10–11)! The last verse in Hosea serves as an epilogue to the entire prophecy: "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 upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them" (Hos 14:9). This teaches us that God wants us to learn three things from reading Hosea. First, God's "ways," His covenant commands, are the "**right**" ways. Second, if we are wise and discerning, we will **walk** in His ways and **obey** His commands. Third, if we are **foolish**, we will reject God's ways and ignore His commands. When we do this, God's commands will become a stumbling block in our path. We will trip over them and fall to our own destruction.