

**Hosea 11:1 ¶ When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.**

In speaking of Israel as a child, the Lord is referencing the young nation. God had set apart Abraham to father a nation that was to be God's special possession among the nations—and He loved them from the very beginning. Though He allowed them to experience a time as slaves in the land of Egypt, He brought them out to bring them into the Promised Land with great strength and wealth.

It is interesting to note that reference is made to this scripture in the New Testament in connection with Jesus as the Messiah.

*Matthew 2:13-15 "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. ....that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."*

This is another example of how all of scripture speaks of the Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus' life exemplified all that the nation of Israel was meant to example before the nations of the world; He was the true Israel. The prophet Isaiah talked about Jesus as Israel; following is an excerpt from my journal in which I believe the context identifies Jesus as Israel, the very Son of God whom He named to Mary while the babe was still in her womb.

*Isaiah 49:1-3 "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."*

Jesus knew from the beginning that He would be a special instrument in the hand of His Father and that He would bring great glory to His Father. In fact, He would be the testimony to the nations of the power of God in the life of a person or a nation that was obedient to the commands of the Father. He represented the true Israel (one that prevails with God) that would follow God in faith and obedience. Jesus was the Father's beautiful secret weapon brought forth at just the right moment in time to defeat the enemy. [end excerpt]

**Hosea 11:2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.**

I think the NIV gives a better understanding of this verse: *"But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images."*

How did God reach out to His people? Through the judges and prophets. The whole book of Judges records Israel's continuing propensity to turn away from

keeping covenant with Almighty God to worship the gods of the heathen nations that were around them.

*Judges 2:11–12 “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.”*

They wanted the LORD’s blessing without any responsibility to serve and honor Him according to His revealed will, His desires. Sadly, I think this is true in much of Christendom today.

**Hosea 11:3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.**

**Hosea 11:4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.**

The beginning of verse three is stating that God didn’t leave His people to try and figure out where to go and then get there on their own; He personally guided His people and provided for them to grow into a great nation with great wealth. Just like a child who learns from the guiding hand of his parents, Israel was taught by God.

Most of the translations reference healing in the last part of verse 3, but I think that the correct idea from the Hebrew is that of being made whole. From the very beginning it was God at work in and around the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to make them into a whole nation both physically and spiritually. He led them with the love of a father and provided for their every need as He rescued them from the bondage of Egypt. They lacked nothing they needed to mature both physically and spiritually as a nation.

I think it is also important to note that God declares that His people were unaware of much that He did to make them a great nation. I can certainly make application in my own life. I know that the Lord has been constantly at work on my behalf to encourage and enable me to grow to spiritual maturity. It is obviously an ongoing process that will never end until He takes me home, but I am trying to be more aware of His hand at work in my life in both the good times and the bad. My prayer is to be like Jesus—to have people observe my life and know that I love my Savior because I am living according to His example—but I am still far from reaching that goal.

**Hosea 11:5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.**

**Hosea 11:6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.**

The Lord is basically saying that though the people of Israel refuse to repent and turn back to Him in faith and obedience, He will not send His people back to Egypt in bondage; they will, however, experience bondage and servitude in

Assyria. Because they chose to ignore God's counsel and His revealed will for them and act according to their own wisdom and purposes, the Northern Kingdom would be attacked and taken captive by Assyria.

**Hosea 11:7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*.**

God sees into the very hearts of men and knows even our thoughts.

*1 Samuel 16:7 "...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."*

*Genesis 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

*Psalms 94:11 "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."*

God knew that though they gave lip service to Him, His people only wanted the benefits of His blessings. The nation as a whole (though I am sure there were some true followers of God among the people) dishonored God by their actions. Again, I am afraid this is descriptive of much of Christendom today.

I decided to look at the meaning of the word *bent* in the Hebrew and in Webster's. Some of the other translations used the word "determined," and I think it is true that their choice was deliberate to rebel against God. The definition from Webster gave a wonderful word picture: "To strain or move out of a straight line; to crook by straining; to make crooked...." Instead of staying in a straight line of fellowship with God by keeping covenant with Him, they exerted great effort to fit in with the surrounding nations and join them in serving the flesh and worshipping their false gods. This is really an amazing choice from a people that had experienced so much to affirm the sovereignty of Almighty God on their behalf, and He had warned them through Moses of the consequences of breaking covenant with Him.

*Deuteronomy 28:15–25 "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field....The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it....The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."*

**Hosea 11:8 ¶ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.**

**Hosea 11:9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.**

Again, as He so often does, the Lord gives the prophet a message of hope to accompany the message of coming judgment. God is a loving Father, and He loves the people of Israel that He set apart as His chosen possession among the nations. Though He will continue to punish and purify them with the fires of judgment, He will eventually bring them to a point of repentance and restoration and establish them under the New Covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah.

*Jeremiah 31:31–34 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

I really like the wording of the NLT with respect to verse 9: “No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal.” Man is prone to be subject to his passions, while God is in total control of His passions. He will not allow His anger to cause Him to break covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I think that so much emphasis today is placed on the love of God and of His role as Father to the child of God, that we have lost sight of His power and authority that He exercises in righteous judgment and is One for whom we should have a healthy fear.

*Matthew 10:28 “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

*Luke 12:4–5 “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”*

To have a healthy fear of God is a sign of wisdom and places us in a position to experience His blessings.

*Psalms 111:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments....”*

*Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

*Psalms 34:7&9 "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them....O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him."*

*Psalms 103:11 "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."*

*Psalms 145:19 "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."*

Historical note: Admah and Zeboim were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.

*Deuteronomy 29:23 "And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:"*

**Hosea 11:10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.**

**Hosea 11:11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.**

These verses give emphasis to the promise of Jeremiah's prophecy quoted above. The lion is known as the king of beasts and is used to paint a word picture of Almighty God determining when the time is right according to His plan to bring all of the children of Israel home in repentance that will result in their everlasting obedience. At that time they will come home trembling in light of the terrible refining fires of the tribulation that they will experience as prophesied by Daniel (see journal on Daniel 9:24-27).

I think that "the west," Egypt and Assyria are representative of all the lands to which the people of Israel were dispersed throughout the nations as part of God's judgment against them for rejecting Him in spite of the covenant they made with Him. The NIV Commentary made a significant observation: "The return of Judah from the Babylonian captivity was from the east. But this mention of 'the west' sets off the future return from the earlier one."

In verse 11 the LORD is basically promising that He will personally see to it that the believing remnant who emerge from the purifying fires of the tribulation will each be placed in homes of their own.

I can't help but think about how so many Israelites had to suffer because their spiritual leaders and their fathers chose to serve false gods rather than the God of Israel. Each individual is accountable before God, but it is also true that children usually example the leadership of their fathers, and in Israel's case—their priests and kings. The child who is privileged to be raised by parents who love the LORD is truly blessed; and parents should never underestimate the influence of their example before their children.

**Hosea 11:12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.**

This verse is basically a statement of comparison between the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. At the time of Hosea's ministry Ephraim was characterized by a false spirituality before the LORD, and Judah was still characterized as recognizing God as LORD and respectful of those who acted in obedience to Him.

It seems to me that America, a nation that I believe was founded on the principles of scripture and recognized as a Christian nation, is quickly moving from an identity with Judah to an identity that corresponds more closely with Ephraim. I believe that the coming judgment of our nation is just as sure as was Ephraim's. I also believe that it will happen just preceding or as an actual part of the coming time of God's wrath against the Gentile nations that will coincide with the purifying fires of judgment directed toward Israel during the time best known as the tribulation, the final seven years on earth preceding the return of Jesus to establish His Kingdom.