

Hosea 13:1 ¶ When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

Hosea 13:2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, *and* idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

Hosea 13:3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

The KJV wording is confusing, and after reading several translations this is my understanding. Ephraim was a powerful voice among the tribes of Israel. Once they embraced the worship of false gods, they basically sentenced themselves to death. (I think spiritual death is the point of emphasis.) The practices associated with the worship of these false gods drew them deeper and deeper into sin. They basically lost their sense of reason. They were worshipping idols of their own making and expecting their sacrifices to these idols to result in their blessing.

God is and always will be the God of Israel. Because they chose to break covenant with Him, He declares that they will disappear as a nation. He compares them to the clouds that appear in the morning and are gone by the afternoon, to the early dew that evaporates as the morning turns to afternoon, to the chaff (the worthless part of the grain) that is separated from the grain by a strong wind, and to the smoke that comes from the chimney only to disappear as it rises into the air.

Hosea 13:4 Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

In this verse God unequivocally has the prophet identify Him as “the LORD thy God” ever since He brought them forth as a mighty nation from the land of Egypt. He is determined to do whatever is necessary to cause His people to repent and choose to follow Him in obedience. I am reminded of the words of the prophets Moses and Isaiah.

Deuteronomy 4:23–24 “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Isaiah 43:10–11 “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”

Isaiah 45:22–25 “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

**Hosea 13:5 ¶ I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
Hosea 13:6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.**

The people of Israel had experienced the mighty, miraculous hand of God’s provision for them, yet quickly turned away from Him once they were prosperous and no longer “needed” Him.

These verses represent a truth that is a paradox to me. It seems that only when we “need” God are we willing to trust Him. When, however, He chooses to bless us and we no longer “need,” we forget the source of our blessings. Instead, we seem determined in our pride to credit self rather than God and to make choices that dishonor the One Who gave us the talents and abilities to become prosperous. It makes more sense to me that we should remember from whence we came and want to continue to honor the One Who has proven Himself faithful and strong in the hard times. Understanding this truth has caused me to continue to pray, “Lord, please keep me dependent on you.”

Hosea 13:7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:

Hosea 13:8 I will meet them as a bear *that is bereaved of her whelps*, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

In other words, Ephraim’s rejection of God and turning to false gods has incurred God’s wrath. He is pictured as a lion and leopard stalking their prey and as a mother bear driven mad by the loss of her cubs. The fact that He is pictured tearing out their heart is emphasizing that their hearts are wicked. The root of sin begins in the heart. The Lord Jesus made this clear in His teachings.

Matthew 5:28 “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Matthew 15:18–19 “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies....”

The fact that God is declaring His intention to destroy them as a nation is a consequence of their breaking covenant with Him; and, in fact, was foretold by God through Moses.

Deuteronomy 4:25–27 “When thou shalt beget children, and children’s children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.”

Hosea 13:9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

Verse 9 posits a very important truth. Israel brought judgment upon herself—as do we. When we choose sin and self over God, we are headed for eventual destruction. Only in God can we find help, deliverance and protection as declared in the words of Isaiah quoted above “.... I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”

We understand now that provision is predicated on the willing sacrifice of the Son of God, Yeshuah, Jesus the Messiah.

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 3:16–18 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

1 John 2:1–2 “... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Hosea 13:10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

Hosea 13:11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

Israel was established as a nation for whom God was to be their king. They didn’t like being different; they wanted a king like the heathen nations surrounding them. God yielded and gave them a king. When I looked at the Hebrew for “anger,” the word *longsuffering* stood out to me. God had created man to have a will of His own. Despite the fact that He knew they would suffer for their choice, God gave them a king. The time for patience was over, and the time for judgment had come. God would ensure that they would no longer have a king until they were ready to serve the King of kings.

1 Samuel 8:4–7 “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased

Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

Jeremiah 23:5–6 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Hosea 13:12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.

Hosea 13:13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.

I liked the New Living Translation of these verses: *"The sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment. The people have been offered new birth, but they are like a child who resists being born. How stubborn they are! How foolish!"*

The main point—In spite of their resistance, God will eventually bring about the spiritual rebirth of His people.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

This verse emphasizes the truth that it is God who will bring about the deliverance of His people—both physically and spiritually.

He will...

"ransom them from the power of the grave" – The Hebrew equates the grave with Hades, the place of the physically and spiritually dead.

"redeem them from death" – This is a reference to Jesus coming as the Kinsman-Redeemer to rescue His people from Hades. God would personally pay the debt for their sin in the person of His Son Jesus. Jesus would sacrifice Himself on the cross to suffer in their stead. Death would no longer have to result in their destruction or extermination. Instead, they could choose to have everlasting life in the presence of their God.

The last phrase was hard—"repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." As I read the other translations, I understood it to be a statement of God's determination to bring about their redemption; He is a good Father.

The NIV phrases it: *"I will have no compassion."*

The NLT – *"For I will not relent!"*

The CJB – *"My eyes are closed to compassion."*

The NAS 95 – *"Compassion will be hidden from My sight."*

In other words, judgment will not be deferred since it is necessary to producing repentance and obedience.

Hosea 13:15 Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

Hosea 13:16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

God is declaring through His prophet that His people will go from a prosperous nation to one that is robbed of all its treasures. Samaria was the capital of Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, and as such she represented the nation as a whole. A terrible but important truth to understand is that sin brings about destruction. When we sin, those we love—even the helpless and innocent—are often affected by the consequences.