

## HOSEA

Hosea is the first of the twelve ‘Minor Prophets’ (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) ... They are described as ‘minor’ *not* because they are of less importance than the ‘*major* prophets’ (Isaiah, Jeremiah/Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel), but because of the comparative brevity of their prophecies and also because they refer to a more confined subject-matter.

Hosea was a familiar Hebrew name in both the Old and New Testaments. It is another form of ‘Joshua’ which means ‘God is salvation’. It is also translated as Hoshea (Dt. 32:44), Oshea (Num. 13:8), Yeshua (Aramaic), Jesus (Greek).

In common with many of the prophets, little is known about Hosea’s family background ... In fact, it is an illustration of how the message is more important than the messenger!

Hosea was the son of a man called Beeri (1:1), whose name means “my well” (cf. *Beerlahairoi* [*the well of the living One Who seeth me*], Gen. 16:14; *Beersheba* [*the well of the oath*], Gen. 21:14). He likely came from one of the tribes belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel, since he identified the king of Israel as “*our* king” (7:5). His tribe, therefore, was one of the ten tribes who followed Jeroboam, rather than Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, the king of Judah. From then onwards, - until 721 BC, - the national history of the Jewish people was divided into two ... the two southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin), known as the kingdom of Judah, - who had their capital in Jerusalem, ... and the remaining ten northern tribes, known as the kingdom of Israel, - who had their capital in Samaria.

... Hosea, along with Jonah, were the only “Minor Prophets” from the northern kingdom ... but his prophecy addressed both Judah and Israel.

As 1:1 indicates, he prophesied during a lengthy period of around sixty years, from about 785-725 BC. In relation to the Kingdom of Judah, this was during the reigns of kings Uzziah (790–739 B.C.), Jotham (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.) ... and in relation to the northern Kingdom of Israel, during the reigns of king Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.) to king Hoshea (c. 732-723/721 BC).

To understand and appreciate the times of Hosea requires an historical perspective ... Following Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), his son Zechariah (753–

752 B.C.) began to reign, **II Kings 15:8** In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. **9** And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. **10** And Shallum (a captain in the army of King Zechariah) the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. **11** And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

... And that was the end of that family dynasty, - the family of Jehu. ... Jehu – Jehoaz – Jehoash – Jeroboam II – Zechariah ... And that is what was prophesied in Hosea 1:4, And the LORD said unto him [*Hosea*], Call his name Jezreel [*his and Gomer's first son*]; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel [*i.e. I will bring the house of Israel to an end*]. ... For after the death of Zechariah, the men who became kings had usurped their authority and *murdered* their way to the top position!

... Shallum ('retribution'), - a captain in the army, - had killed king Zechariah ... and then Menahem, - another captain in the army, - murdered Shallum, **II Kings 15:13** Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah [*Uzziah/Azariah reigned fifty-two years altogether, II Kings 15:2*]; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. **14** For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. **15** And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. **16** Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up. **17** In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah [*Uzziah*] king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria. **18** And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. **19** And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. **20** And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land. **21** And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Menahem seemed to die of natural causes and was replaced by his son, Pekahiah, **22** And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his

stead. <sup>23</sup> In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. <sup>24</sup> And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin), ...

... And then another captain of the army, - Pekah, - rose up against Pekahiah, <sup>25</sup> But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room. <sup>26</sup> And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. <sup>27</sup> In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah [*Azariah's/Uzziah's last year*] Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years. <sup>28</sup> And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. <sup>29</sup> In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. ... And then there was another insurrection ... <sup>30</sup> And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah [*King of Judah*] ... And so Hoshea became the last king to reign over the ten northern tribes of Israel (732–722 B.C.) for in 722/721 BC the Assyrians conquered the land and its people. ... This was because the ten northern tribes had rejected God, and He handed them over to the enemy. ... Meanwhile, during the prophet Hosea's lifetime, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah ruled respectively in Judah.

In those times of turmoil and anarchy, the prophet Hosea had been living in the northern kingdom and experiencing all this. We sometimes think of the bad state of affairs surrounding us ... but they hardly compare with the trauma Hosea had to endure ... and yet he remained faithful in the proclamation of God's word.

No matter how hard it becomes, you don't give up. The Lord is in control, and He has everything worked out to His glory. ... History is 'His Story' and it documents how He brings all things together for that purpose and also for the good and benefit of those whom He has called according to that same wonderful and eternal purpose (Rom. 8:28). ... His Story records how He always brings His people through. And that is a lesson He was teaching His servant, Hosea. God never puts us anywhere we cannot cope, because where He puts us He remains with us ... and that is what Hosea was about to learn

through his own family experience. ... It does not always mean God *removes* the difficulties and the barriers, but it *does* mean He helps us through them for **Rom. 8:37** we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

... And that is something of the historical background behind the prophecy of Hosea. It highlights God's enduring love for His covenant people Israel. Despite their unfaithfulness, and the ensuing judgment resulting from Assyria, He guarded and kept them, and, - as we shall see, - the relationship He had with Israel was reflected in the life of this prophet who was instructed to marry an adulterous woman.

Through the relationship of Hosea and Gomer, God would demonstrate in a beautiful way how, - out of their sin and His judgment, - He would turn their circumstances around and bring them forgiveness, **Hosea 13:9** O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. **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? **11** I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. ... **14:4** I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. **5** I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. **6** His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. **7** They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

When God sets His seal of love upon you, it *never* can be removed ... When He loves you, He loves you *forever*. Despite what Israel did, and even though they deserved every aspect of the judgment which came upon them, God's love for His people never waned ... and the prophecy of Hosea is a beautiful illustration of this timeless covenant truth.

... Not as timeless though, are the ways of men. As we have seen, Hosea began his ministry to Israel during the final days of King Jeroboam II when the country had been enjoying peace and prosperity, but was also sadly suffering spiritually and morally. It was in a state of rapid decline which contributed to four out of the next six kings being assassinated by their successors. Anarchy prevailed among God's people, - the economy was expanding, but justice was evaporating. ... Solomon's proverb adequately describes the underlying cause, **Prov. 14:34** Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Another title Hosea used thirty-two times for Israel was Ephraim. Ephraim was one of the two sons of Joseph, - the other son was Manasseh, and their mother was Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, a priest of Heliopolis ('city of the sun') in Egypt, **Gen. 41:50** And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. **51** And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. **52** And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. Jacob, Joseph's father, adopted Manasseh and Ephraim and gave them a share in his inheritance, thus accepting them as his own sons, **Gen. 48:1** And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. **2** And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. **3** And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, **4** And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. **5** And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

The territory of Ephraim became quite influential because it contained both Shechem and Shiloh which were centres of early Israelite religion in the land. For example, it was at Shechem Joshua gathered the people and challenged them, **Joshua 24:15** choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. ... And it was at Shiloh the ark was placed after being recovered from the Philistines ... where Hannah went up to worship the Lord (I Sam. 1:7).

Both the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh were counted as one, - since they were Joseph's sons.



Therefore, they constituted the largest area of all the tribes and for that reason the term Ephraim came to describe the northern ten tribes. ... And Hosea's message was focussed on their moral waywardness and her 'adultery' in breach of their covenant relationship with God. Such spiritual infidelity would inevitably bring upon them His judgment.

The circumstances in the southern kingdom were slightly better, - there was decline, but not as rapid, *initially*. King Uzziah had a good reign but he ended up with leprosy because he had usurped the priestly function (II Chron. 26:16-21). Next, his son Jotham condoned idolatry, opening the way for *his* son Ahaz to encourage Baal worship (II Chron. 27:1 – 28:4). Hezekiah proved faithful to the Lord, however, (II Chron. 28:27ff.) but his reign served only to slow down the inevitable judgment. ...

The people of the ten tribes in the north and the people in the two tribes of the south would not listen to God speaking through the prophets ... And yet, despite all they deserved the theme of the prophecy of Hosea is that God continued to love His covenant people, in spite of their idolatry.

And through the illustration of Hosea's domestic circumstances God showed His faithfulness. Hosea was instructed to choose a wife of a specific kind, **Hosea 1:2** *And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.* ... He did not tell Hosea to marry a prostitute, but He told him to marry a woman who would become a prostitute. In obedience to God, he married Gomer ... knowing there would be trouble and heartache ahead.

She had three children who would be given names with symbolic meaning reflecting the relationship between God and Israel. The first child was a son called *Jezeel* ('God sows', **4** *And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezeel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezeel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.* **5** *And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezeel*) ... The second child was a daughter called *Loruhamah* ('no mercy', **6** *And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away*) ... and the third child was a second son called *Loammi* ('not my people', **9** *Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.*) ...

And *then* the Lord went on to promise, **10** Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. **11** Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel [*‘God sows’*]. ... God had a plan which He determined to come to pass.

As far as Gomer was concerned, she went off and left her husband ... and he knew exactly where she had gone! He knew she was with other men, **2:5** For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully ... And that is how Jehovah described what Israel had done to Him. They, - all twelve tribes, - had defiled themselves with the worship of Baal ... and yet, God still loved them! ... It was like when Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41) ... His Father also *grieved* over His beloved people. Yes, He was angry and disappointed with them ... but He did not stop loving them.

God’s love is not the kind of love He takes back. He does not love ... and then stop loving. When He separated Israel unto Himself He made a decision that Israel particularly belonged to Him, and He told Moses, **Dt. 7:7** The LORD did not set his love upon you [*2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, i.e. the nation of Israel*], nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: **8** But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers ... and that is the principle upon which He continues to love Israel. ... We say “continues to love Israel” because Paul explains, **Rom. 11:27** For this is my covenant unto them [*Israel*], when I shall take away their sins. **28** As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your [*the Gentiles, concerning their salvation*] sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes [*i.e. the Patriarchs*].

In fact, He made His love for Israel so clear, **Jer. 31:35** Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: **36** If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. **37** Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. **38** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. **39** And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. **40** And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes,

and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever. ... And that is the *covenant* love Hosea also speaks about that God has for His people.

Yes, to express His wrath and displeasure He used such human words of expression, **Hosea 1:6** I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. ... He did not mean, of course, *all Israel forever*, but He meant *that* generation. Otherwise, He would be contradicting Himself throughout this prophecy. ... It was His righteous judgment on *this* generation to send them off into captivity for the complete abandonment of Israel was never God's plan, - no matter how angry He was with that particular generation. It was never His purpose to replace them ... simply to punish this wicked generation.

She has made a disgrace of herself, so He is going to highlight that disgrace in the sight of her lovers (2:10), and He will *cause all her mirth to cease* (v.11). She will become miserable. He will take away from her all the godless pleasures she has prostituted herself for (v.12,13) ... *and then* He says, "Behold" ... and we know that when the Lord says "Behold", He is about to do something new, **14** Therefore, behold, I will allure [*woo*] her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (v.14), He will speak to her heart in the place where God often takes His people to refine them.

He has not finished with her, - He does not believe in divorce (Mal. 2:16), - He has not cast her off for He sent Hosea out to bring Gomer home ... and using this analogy, He promised, **Hosea 2:15** And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor [*trouble, disturbance ... the valley where Achan and his family were stoned to death, Joshua 7:25* And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. **26** And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day] for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. **16** And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [*My Husband ... the symbolism of the Bride and the Bridegroom*]; and shalt call me no more Baali [*'my lord' ... no more adultery*]. **17** For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more [*never again*] be remembered by their name. ... And when the Lord comes to establish His new order on earth among His people ... **18** ... in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of

heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: ... (reminiscent of **Is. 11:6** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together) and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. **19** And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ... (similar to **Ps. 46:9** He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. **10** Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.) ... **Hosea 2:19** And I will betroth thee unto me for ever [**Sons 2:4** He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love]; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. **20** I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. **21** And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; **22** And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear [*they will answer*] Jezreel [*'God will sow'*]. **23** And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people [*i.e. the Gentiles*], Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God. ... Through the former unbelief of the Jews, the Gentiles will be saved ... the saved Jews and the saved Gentiles ... saved the same way, through Christ alone ... Not two separate entities but one, together in Him, the Bride of Christ!

And Hosea went out and paid the purchase price to buy back his adulterous wife, **3:2** So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: ... According to Lev. 27:4, it should have been thirty shekels, but he must not have had enough to purchase back his wife, so he needed to give all he had by way of money, - fifteen shekels, - and make the rest of it up in barley ... **3** And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee. ... Through the purchase price, the covenant was renewed and restored, and then the future promise was given, **4** For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: **5** *Afterward* shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days. ... Surely it is obvious what the Lord was saying ... Just as the children of Israel would be carried off literally from out of their land, so also literally they would be returned, and the promise will be fulfilled.

Yes, Hosea prophesies much condemnation, - both towards the nation and the people of that generation, **4:15** Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven [*'house of vanity'*],

nor swear, The LORD liveth. <sup>16</sup> For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place. <sup>17</sup> Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone. ... In the midst of it is the appeal from Hosea, <sup>6:1</sup> Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. <sup>2</sup> After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. <sup>3</sup> Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. ... They had <sup>7</sup> ... transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. ... They have broken away from God *but* the covenant He made with Abram was an unconditional covenant ... a covenant God made with Himself, and not dependent on any other. ... They set up kings, contrary to the desire of God, and with the kings came the outpouring of disobedience until the God of Israel was replaced with the gods of the nations, <sup>8:8</sup> Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. ... There was no difference between them and the Gentile pagan-worshippers!

And look at 9:3, They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt [*captivity, wandering*] ... <sup>4</sup> They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord [*there will be no temple*], neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? ... <sup>11</sup> As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. ... <sup>17</sup> My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

There is nothing but darkness and despair, <sup>10:1</sup> Israel is an empty vine ... but then, - when it seems as if it cannot get any worse, the Lord summons them, <sup>12</sup> Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; ... 'righteousness' and 'mercy' two blessings which were in short supply during those times ... break up your fallow ground [*i.e. the ground which has not been used yet*]: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. ... And at that point, the 'page is turned', <sup>11:1</sup> When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. ... God brought the nation out of captivity and bondage, - He had not abandoned them in the past, and He would not abandon them now, <sup>4</sup> 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. ... I *freed* them and I *fed* them. Because of His covenant with their fathers, He could not stop loving them, even though they had worshipped foreign gods, <sup>8</sup> How shall I give thee up [*surrender thee*], 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 heart recoils at the idea*], my repentings are kindled together. <sup>9</sup> 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 ... <sup>10</sup> They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. <sup>11</sup> 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.

And He promises, <sup>13:9</sup> O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. <sup>10</sup> I will be thy king ... <sup>14</sup> I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.

How can anyone say God has finished with Israel?! For God to stop loving His ancient people He would have to go back on His promise and it would render Him impotent, helpless, and untrustworthy. ... If He had chosen to abandon Israel, they would have disappeared into the historical oblivion ... and it means also, we could have no confidence in His promises either.

... And He pleaded with them, <sup>14:1</sup> O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. <sup>2</sup> Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. <sup>3</sup> Asshur [*Assyria, i.e. putting confidence in the godless*] shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

And when Israel returns to the Lord, He has promised them, <sup>4</sup> I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. <sup>5</sup> I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. <sup>6</sup> His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. <sup>7</sup> They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. <sup>8</sup> Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

These are the promises of God which will never fail. Yes, their original application relates to the children of Israel but it also has a further application to us for it assures us of God's unconditional love for His people. The Israelites did not deserve to be treated with love and mercy ... and neither do we, but it is because of God's grace. We have not earned it. We have never done enough to deserve it, and yet, He loves us ...

Only by grace can we enter,  
Only by grace can we stand;  
Not by our human endeavour  
But by the blood of the Lamb.

**Hosea 14:9** Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. Amen.