

## A Summary of God's Dealing with Israel

### Hosea 11

Hosea 11 - *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. <sup>2</sup> As they called them, so they went from them. They sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images. <sup>3</sup> I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. <sup>4</sup> I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."*

#### Background Notes

The United Kingdom of Israel was formed in about 1051BC. It was ruled by three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. Each of these kings had a forty-year reign. In about 931BC, after the reign of King Solomon, the United Kingdom split up. It was divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim) and the southern kingdom of Judah. The capital city of the northern kingdom was Samaria, and Jerusalem remained the capital city for the southern kingdom of Judah.

Hosea's ministry was primarily directed to the northern kingdom, where Hosea lived, but his ministry extended down to the southern kingdom of Judah as well. For example, verse 12: *"Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One who is faithful."*

This verse reveals that the northern kingdom of Israel had totally departed from the Lord by the time of Hosea's ministry in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC. However, the southern kingdom of Judah still had a sizable remnant of godly Jews who were following the Lord, and worshiping the Lord at His Temple in Jerusalem.

Keep in mind that the faithful worshipers in Judah included believers from **all twelve tribes**, not just people from the tribe of Judah. You see, after the United Kingdom divided, godly believers from the north migrated south in order to continue the worship of the Lord at His Temple in Jerusalem. This migration is described in 2 Chronicles 11:16 - *"And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers."*

Godly people from the north continued to migrate south periodically, especially during times of revival in the southern kingdom. Furthermore, archaeological evidence confirms that during King Hezekiah's time, when the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, Hezekiah expanded the city of Jerusalem to accommodate people from the northern ten tribes who made their way south to the southern kingdom of Judah.

It's important to keep this point in mind, because it means that the Jews who were taken into captivity in Babylon, and returned seventy years later, represented all twelve tribes of Israel - not just the southern kingdom tribes of Judah and Benjamin.. It further means that Jews today represent all twelve tribes. There are no "lost tribes" of Israel! And it means that future re-gathered Israel (predicted in the second half of this chapter) will be comprised of Jewish believers representing all twelve tribes.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God was gentle with His called-out people.

Verses 1-4 give us a beautiful picture of the tenderness and patience of the Lord in dealing with His people Israel. When He brought them out of slavery in Egypt, He called Israel "My son" (v1).

How many of you remember when your child or grandchild took his or her first steps? As a loving parent teaches a young child to walk, holding the toddler by both hands for safety, so God patiently and tenderly established the infant nation of Israel (v3). In just that way, the Lord cared for the new nation in the wilderness. He healed them. He fed them with manna - even on the day they made and bowed down to the golden calf!

God took the yoke of slavery from Israel's neck because He loved them (v4) - yet Israel did not respond in love to the Lord. Rather they turned away and sacrificed to the pagan Baal idols (v2).

What about us? What is our response to God's gentle and gracious care? All of us must admit that God has been very patient and gracious with us. Even if you're not yet a believer, think of how God has taken care of you, provided for you, and given you health and strength. More than that, the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins. God is drawing you to Himself with gentle cords of love (v4). Why not respond to His gentle love today? Why not admit that you're a sinner and that you need salvation? Trust in Jesus Christ, and become a believer today.

Believers, we are God's called-out people. How often do you thank the Lord for His patience and His gentle care for us? Let's not fail here, as ancient Israel failed. God was gentle with His called-out people.

### 2. God is disciplining His willful people.

Hosea 11:5-7 - *"He shall not return to the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king because they refused to repent. 6 And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them, because of their own counsels. 7 My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him."*

God had to punish and discipline His people of Israel because of their willful and rebellious ways. The deal they tried to make with Egypt was to no avail. Because of their backsliding and hypocrisy, Israel was about to experience the Assyrian

sword (v6-7). This was God's discipline of His people. Isaiah 10:5 says that God used Assyria as His rod of anger to discipline Israel.

This is Israel's position today. They are still willful, and trusting in themselves. They still refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, and as a result they are still under God's discipline.

God will always discipline his willful children - and that applies to believers today as well. Why? Because God **loves** His people! Hebrews 12:6 says that **God disciplines those He loves**. Are you suffering under God's discipline? Maybe for a willful spirit? Whether Israel, or individual believers - God will discipline His willful people.

### 3. God will re-gather His scattered people.

Hosea 11:8-11 - *"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim?*

*My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. <sup>9</sup> I will not execute the fierceness of My anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come with terror.*

*<sup>10</sup> "They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west. <sup>11</sup> They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," says the Lord."*

There's the good news: the return of Israel in the future! Although God would have to discipline His people, He would not allow them to be eliminated or extinguished. He will re-gather them.

God's heart of love for His people is certainly seen here in verse 8: *"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred."* Admah and Zeboiim were two of the cities that were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Notice - the re-gathering of Israel predicted here is **not** a prediction of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity (as some commentaries teach), because verse 10 says that they will return from the **west**. West from Israel is Europe and the United States. Not until modern times have Jews ever returned to Israel from the west.

Besides the physical re-gathering, notice that there will also be a **spiritual return to the Lord**: *"They shall walk after the Lord" (v10)*. The lion is already beginning to roar - but there's much more to come! God will re-gather His scattered people.

## Practical Application

### Allow for the fuller meaning of Scripture.

“Allow for the fuller meaning of Scripture” is really a principle for interpreting Scripture - and it’s important to know for proper application.

Look at verse 1: *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.”* When Hosea wrote that Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was thinking of the exodus, when the Lord called the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

But Matthew quoted this Scripture in reference to Jesus Christ! Matthew 2:14-15: *“When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”*

So what’s the answer? Does Hosea 11:1 refer to Israel’s exodus from Egypt - or does it to refer to the young child Jesus returning from Egypt to Israel? The answer is: it refers to **BOTH!**

This is known as the “fuller meaning of Scripture.” ***Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit***, Matthew wrote of a fuller meaning for the text of Hosea 11:1. So allow for the fact that there may be a fuller meaning of certain Scriptures.

The danger, of course, is that it’s all too easy for us to start reading our own “fuller meanings” into Scripture – ideas that spring from our own imaginations, or of our own thoughts. And we may come up with “interpretations” that the Holy Spirit did not intend. Be careful! We are not inspired writers, as Matthew was. Perhaps it’s a good idea to allow the writers of Scripture to identify fuller meaning, as they were led by the inspiration of the Spirit.

So let’s be very careful in our biblical interpretation, even as we allow for the fuller meaning of Scripture.