

# Hosea Preaches God's Accusation against Israel

Printed Text · Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1-2; 12:8-9

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: ANALYZE the need to confess and be forgiven, SENSE that although God is displeased when we sin, He forgives and restores us when we truly repent; and ASK God to forgive us for any known sin of acting callously or selfishly.

## In Focus

Aaron and Regina were high school sweethearts who attended the same church. When they went to different colleges, they committed to stay faithful to their relationship.

In college, Regina remained faithful to God and to Aaron. She attended weekly campus Bible study and did not date anyone else. Back then, she called Aaron a couple of times a week and wrote to him when she had time.

Aaron, however, was at college on a basketball scholarship and did not have much time between studying and practicing to attend church, talk to, or write Regina. He loved Regina, but he had many female admirers and did not remain faithful to her.

One Christmas, the year before they were to graduate, Aaron proposed to Regina and she accepted. Soon after they married, the couple decided they wanted to start a family. When they did not become pregnant immediately, Regina became concerned. After many years of trying, she made an appointment with her physician for a thorough exam. One week later, the doctor called her back for a follow-up appointment and requested that both Aaron and Regina come in. Once seated, the doctor said the reason Regina could not conceive was because she had a sexually transmitted disease that has caused some scarring. The doctor wanted to treat Regina immediately and check Aaron as well.

Regina was speechless, 'how is this possible,' she thought? Aaron was shocked and at a loss for words, realizing that it was his past behavior that had caused this dilemma. How could he tell Regina the truth about his past unfaithfulness?

*How could Aaron tell Regina the truth about his past unfaithfulness?*

## Keep In Mind

"Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1, KJV).

## Words You Should Know

**A. Truth** (Hosea 4:1) 'e m e t h (Heb.) – Faithfulness, sureness, stability. The prophet Hosea used the term to show that there was no stability in the land because God's statutes, God's edicts, were not being obeyed

**B. Mourn** (v. 3) 'ab a l (Heb.) – To lament (agonize, grieve, groan). Because the sin and disobedience of God's chosen people is so rampant, there is individual and environmental agonizing, grieving, and groaning throughout the land—widespread suffering

## Say It Correctly

**Abal.** ah-BAL

**Amal.** ah-MAL

### KJV

**Hosea 4:1** Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

**7:1** When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

**12:8** And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

9 And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

### NLT

**Hosea 4:1** Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel! The Lord has brought charges against you, saying: "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land.

2 You make vows and break them; you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere—one murder after another.

3 That is why your land is in mourning, and everyone is wasting away. Even the wild animals, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea are disappearing.

4 "Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! My complaint, you priests, is with you.

**7:1** "I want to heal Israel, but its sins are too great. Samaria is filled with liars. Thieves are on the inside and bandits on the outside!

2 Its people don't realize that I am watching them. Their sinful deeds are all around them, and I see them all.

**12:8** Israel boasts, "I am rich! I've made a fortune all by myself! No one has caught me cheating! My record is spotless!"

9 "But I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. And I will make you live in tents again, as you do each year at the Festival of Shelters.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Hosea.** The name Hosea means "salvation." Hosea served from 753 to 715 B.C. as a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He came to be called a "minor" prophet due to the relatively short length of his prophetic book. Hosea was obedient to God's directive to marry a whore, Gomer, who was unfaithful to him and would cause him many headaches and heartaches. Hosea's marriage to Gomer is a picture of the relationship between a faithful God and an unfaithful Israel. It illustrates the love of a merciful but jealous God for His sinful people.

**Gomer.** Gomer was Hosea's unfaithful wife, the daughter of Diblaim. According to the Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, the name Gomer comes from a Hebrew term signifying "lump or double cakes of figs and raisins." Some theologians believe that the name is figurative, i.e., "Gomer, the daughter of raisin

cakes,” meaning that she was wholly given up to her harlotry since raisin cakes were used in certain fertility cult rites (457). She was also the mother of Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi (the second and third children may not have been Hosea’s). As Gomer violated her sacred vows of marriage to Hosea, so did Israel act toward God.

## Background

The prophet Hosea wrote the book of Hosea around 715 B.C. and recorded events that took place between 753 and 715 B.C. Hosea’s prophetic years spanned the reigns of Uzziah through Hezekiah as kings of Judah. Jeroboam II was the first of seven kings of Israel during this time, all of whom were wicked and promoted oppression of the poor, increased taxation, and idolatry with no regard for God. Because of political turmoil, the kings turned to foreign alliances. They had illicit relationships with Assyria and Egypt in an effort to bolster their military might. Israel became subject to Assyria and was required to pay tribute, and the Assyrians robbed Israel of her resources. After Samaria fell in 722 B.C., Israel went into captivity.

When Hosea prophesied, the people were greedy. The Children of Israel had accepted and were practicing the idolatry and immoral behavior of the Canaanites who surrounded them. They were unfaithful to God. God sustained Israel through agriculture, but there was an economic crisis due to Israel’s sinfulness. Thanks to God’s covenant agreement, Israel had provisions of grain, oil, clothing, and wool. Although God provided, Israel stepped outside the covenant relationship and worshiped other gods, including Baal, giving these other gods credit for providing them with gold and silver. The Israelites ignored the fact that these other gods were false. Instead, they attempted to combine God and Baal to receive all the benefits of a good harvest. God, through Hosea, let His people know that they needed to turn from their wicked ways and turn back to Him.

## At-A-Glance

1. Purpose Over Pressure (Daniel 1:8–14)
2. Faith Over Fear (vv. 15–16)
3. Testimony After the Test (vv. 17–21)

## In Depth

### 1. God’s Disobedient People: God Charges Israel (Hosea 4:1–4)

Hosea charged Israel with disobedience. The nation of Israel was suffering from moral and spiritual decay. God was not pleased that the religious leaders of Israel had not turned the people from idolatry. The people did not have faith in God. Instead, they turned to Baal, a false god.

God does not accept behavior that does not recognize His lordship. Murder had occurred in Israel without much concern over its existence. The behavior of the Israelites resulted in ecological crisis and violence.

Leaders are held accountable because they provide instruction. God held the religious leaders accountable for the events that had occurred in Israel. The religious leaders led the Israelites into idolatry and immorality. The priests exhibited faithlessness. The leaders lacked good judgment due to sexual indulgence and insobriety. God blamed the religious leaders and held them accountable for their failure to lead.

Israel had broken her covenant with God, just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. Israel did not have “truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God” (Hosea 4:1). There was no loyalty, devotion, or

intellectual understanding of God's authority and covenant relationship with Israel. When Hosea charged Israel with sin, he listed five of the Ten Commandments. The punishment for their sins was a drought that would have a direct impact on the people. The religious leaders, including the priests, did not teach God's law. As a result, God would end the line of priests. The priests did not teach the people the knowledge of God, and He held the priests accountable. Although God loved Israel faithfully, she did not respond to His love. Like Gomer, Israel was unfaithful to God and was spiritually adulterous toward Him. Later, God warned Israel, through Hosea, of a final judgment.

Even as believers, we make mistakes. We must turn to God and ask to be forgiven in order to restore our fellowship with Him. Although we can blame others for our sinfulness, we must take responsibility for our actions and seek God. When we blame others, we do not feel a need to seek forgiveness. We do not think that we have committed sin. We can easily see the sins of someone else, but God's focus is on us. We must look within ourselves and see our lack of faith and our own sinfulness. We must seek the forgiveness of God, who is merciful. He will restore us if we repent and turn to Him.

## **2. God's Disobedient People: God Knows (7:1–2)**

God desired the love of Israel, just as Hosea desired the love of Gomer. God allowed Hosea to feel what He felt many times with Israel. Israel's faith wavered. Although other prophets had warned the people, they continued to sin. Israel's relationship with God deteriorated through spiritual adultery, even as Gomer's relationship with Hosea deteriorated through physical adultery. Both types of adultery lead to alienation, disappointment, estrangement, and hurt.

God knows everything. He is omniscient. God also sees everything. He is present everywhere (omnipresent). We dare not believe that we can go through life with no accountability. Israel persisted in her sinfulness and had contempt for divine justice. Several kings were murdered in coups. God's gracious dealings with Israel exposed the "sins of Ephraim . . . and the crimes of Samaria" (Hosea 7:1, NIV). Israel seemed to be useless to God.

Like Israel, we may be full of sin and even seem useless, yet we can have a relationship with God that makes us worthwhile in this world. God is holy and detests sin, but God is also love; therefore, He seeks the best for the sinner. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, justice met grace and mercy. They are gifts from God, and we could never merit them on our own. There is nothing the world can offer that is more worthwhile than a life lived for God and with God. We must turn and commit ourselves to living a life committed to God. God calls us to love and obey Him.

## **3. God's Disobedient People: God's Invitation (12:8–9)**

Hosea teaches a lesson to Israel that is based on the story of Jacob, who wrestled with God. Jacob recognized his spiritual dependence on God. Hosea wanted Israel to recognize that she needed to return to God. The Children of Israel needed to reestablish a relationship with God based on justice and trust in Him completely. Likewise, we must submit to God in all areas of life.

Israel thought they were self-sufficient and ignored their history. They failed to realize that God had always provided for them. Israel continued to reject the messages from the prophets. God would send Israel into exile, away from their land and homes. God compared the exile to the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated His protection of the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years. Israel was condemned because she was materialistic and dishonest in her transactions. This condemnation would come in the form of bondage.

As believers, we expose ourselves to the judgment of God when we are disobedient to Him. God does not want to destroy or condemn us; He loves us, but He also desires that we as His children are loyal and just. We should never be arrogant about our accomplishments. God provides all opportunities, resources, and blessings.

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. Why was Israel suffering (Hosea 4:1)?
2. How many of the Ten Commandments had Israel disobeyed (v. 2)?
3. Why was Israel suffering (Hosea 4:1)?
4. How many of the Ten Commandments had Israel disobeyed (v. 2)?
5. What had Israel “considered not in their hearts” (7:2)?
6. What was God’s promise to the Children of Israel (12:9)?

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. As believers, we must constantly seek to serve God and turn from sin. There is a constant battle between our flesh, or sinful nature, and our spiritual nature. When we sin, why doesn’t God immediately confront us in our sin? Discuss the opportunities that God gives us to repent.
2. Ask the students to recognize that leadership is an important responsibility. Remind the students that God blamed Israel’s leadership for not teaching the people the knowledge of Himself. Discuss why God blamed the leadership. Ask the students who serve in leadership positions if they realize the significance and the responsibility that accompany their position.
3. God compassionately loves all of humanity. When we sin and sever our relationship with God, He desires that we repent, or turn wholeheartedly from our sin to Him. Ask the students to personally consider their emotions when they sin.

### **Liberating Lesson**

In today’s lesson, the prophet Hosea personally experiences the relationship that God had with Israel. As Christians, we must turn from the temptations of the world and turn to God. God desires a loving, faithful relationship with each one of us. Although all blessings come from God, we cannot hold them in higher esteem than we do God. When we sin, we must repent, make a definite change in our behavior, and return to a faithful relationship with God.

Although we sin, God loves us and desires to have an intimate relationship with us. When we sin, we create a barrier to our relationship with God. Our commitment to God has been affected because we have been disloyal to Him. When we live in total disregard for God and become self-sufficient, we no longer focus on Him. The safety and security of a relationship with God is gone. We must repent and ask Him for forgiveness. We must never let personal gain, material possessions, or achievement make us forget God.

As believers, we must not compromise with the standards of society. We are accountable to God. The world may be selfish, but we stand on the foundation of our Heavenly Father, who is able to sustain us. We base our standards on the Word of God, our “instruction book” for life.

### **Application For Activation**

Reach out to someone who has been victimized. Tell him or her about the love of God and the strength that God gives. Encourage youth to seek a standard that transcends the idols of name brands, materialism, and wealth. Each of us as believers can make a difference when we pray to God for direction and take action. God does not want us to sit on our hands. We must set our standards according to God’s Word. Seek God’s guidance in starting a discussion of trends and standards of the world. Give God’s response to the many things that keep us from being faithful to Him.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light on the Text

Hosea 4:1–4; 7:1–2; 12:8–9

**1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.**

This chapter opens with a “call to attention” from the prophet. It has to do with God’s lawsuit against His people Israel, because of their failure to keep the terms of their covenant with Him. The word “controversy” (Heb. rib, reeb, meaning “dispute, quarrel, case at law, or charge”) in this context implies a violation or abuse of the terms of the covenant, which was founded on the principles of an intimate relationship like a marriage covenant. Given this unhappy situation, the Lord summoned His people to understand the reason why He was so concerned for them. They had created for themselves a bad situation by committing evil deeds. God brought a case against His own people. Truth, mercy, and knowledge were qualities that should have been the fruit of covenant faithfulness. Israel should have exhibited these qualities as manifestations of God’s grace, but she took them for granted. The lack of these qualities resulted in untrustworthiness and infidelity. However, God called this lack to the Israelites’ attention because these attitudes and actions were inconsistent with His nature and character.

God loves the sinner but hates sin. The obvious lesson to be learned from this fact is that no matter how far or deep one thinks he or she has gone into sin, it is important to realize that God does not readily give up on His children. His grace and love reach out to even the vilest sinner who has lived in the prison of evil or disobedience all of his or her life (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–10). The depth, length, width, and height of one’s sin cannot surpass the capacity of God’s saving grace. However, it is important to understand that this theological truth does not give sinners the freedom to callously continue in sin. God’s love and mercy call us to repent in order to receive forgiveness from Him, but He will take us to task when we take His graciousness for granted (Hebrews 10:26–30; 6:3–6).

**2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.**

Some people wrongly think that just a “little sin” is not too serious an offense against God or a fellow human. Sin is always sin, and God will punish it if there is no repentance. However, there is

enough evidence in both the Scriptures and human history to teach us valuable lessons.

The “little” sinful habits and attitudes that people take for granted can become “big” having serious and damaging results for individuals and society (James 1:13–15).

The Hebrew word translated “break out,” *parats* (paw-rats), means “to break through, burst out (from the womb or an enclosure), or breach.” It suggests an outbreak of sin on an epidemic scale. Violent and bloody crimes were all too prevalent among God’s people. When the people failed to repent of their “first sins” and turn to God for forgiveness and restoration, it led to breaking the covenant. The Bible teaches that by our arrogance and hardness of heart, we fail to submit to the convictions or dealings of God’s Spirit. As a result, we slide down into the “deep waters” of sin. The fact is that we as believers may still fall into sin by yielding to temptation (1 John 1:8–10; 1 Corinthians 10:12–13). However, we should promptly seek God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness through confession and repentance. Failure to repent incurs God’s judgment since we are all accountable for our own words and actions. We need to rely on God’s Holy Spirit as children of God’s divine covenant of grace to help us live in ways that please Him.

**3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.**

The consequence of Israel’s sin was that God judged her. Both individuals’ lives and environmental conditions were negatively affected. The Hebrew word translated “mourn,” *abal* (aw-BAL), means “to mourn or lament.” The Hebrew word translated “languish,” *amal* (aw-MAL), means “to be weak, droop, or be exhausted.” These words express both the spiritual and physical consequences of God’s judgment upon Israel because of her failure to repent of her sin. The effect of sin on people who are arrogantly living in ways contrary to God’s perfect will can be devastating in many areas of their lives. When the first humans committed sin in the Garden of Eden, it affected them personally and environmentally (Genesis 3:15–24). The sins of individuals, families, and nations can have multiple direct or indirect effects on the social, spiritual, material, and economic situations of people. From the text, it is evident that God had a case against Israel because they had committed evil and abomination without repentance. God’s judgment on them affected everything, including plants and animals.

According to the biblical worldview, everything we treasure has Almighty God as its source. Sin can deceive God’s people into thinking that everything they possess or aspire to have in their lives can be acquired or achieved irrespective of their lifestyles. If we understand the principles of God’s Word and the dealings of His Spirit, we should always keep in mind that God is the ultimate source—not only of what we have but of who we are. Our vocation and identity are found in God. We should never allow anything or anybody to stand between us and our covenant relationship with God. God has the power and ability to take away everything we have acquired in this life if we do not continue walking with Him in holiness and integrity.

**4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.**

Israel’s decision to prostitute themselves by following the evil leadership of King Jeroboam and paying tribute at the sanctuary in Bethel in the northern kingdom was greatly abhorred by God. This sanctuary symbolized the “heart and mind” of the nation’s apostasy. Their state of apostasy represented an abuse of the grace God had lavished on them as His unique covenant people. It was the task of Israel’s leaders to lead God’s people in a way that prepared them to worship and serve God according to His perfect will. Whenever they failed in this task, the result was spiritual and social strife in the entire society. The nature and character of God does not permit consistent sin to continue forever. He judges ALL who walk in disobedience and ALL who mislead others.

**7:1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.**

Because God is holy and righteous, He not only rewards obedience but punishes evil. Yet He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and compassion on whom He will have compassion (Exodus 33:19). God would have healed Israel and restored her to Himself. But the sins of the northern kingdom (represented by Ephraim) were exposed. These crimes were most blatant in Samaria, the capital city. God declared judgment on the people of the northern kingdom for their attitude and behavior. The temptation was to assume that because God was not acting promptly against their wrongdoings, He approved of or did not really care about their sins.

**2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.**

God's patience should not be mistaken as weakness on His part. God is omniscient; He knows all things. He is also omnipotent, or allpowerful. He rightly claims in this verse that He "remembers all their wickedness" in the land. God's judgment can be instant, progressive, or come in the future. In any case, God WILL judge sin. The nature and scope of sin is such that its perpetrators cannot escape God's justice (see Romans 1:18). However, when we confess our sins and repent, God promises to forgive and restore us. True repentance is not mere mental assent, but a sincere change of heart and spirit (1 John 1:8-9). It is important to remember that "it is with your heart that you believe and are justified" (Romans 10:10, NIV). Let us not be like those who "consider not in their hearts," but let us always search our hearts to make sure we are true to our covenant relationship with God. Let us, therefore, not be beset by sins and wrongdoings as were Ephraim and Samaria.

**12:8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.**

Ephraim boasted in her prosperity in the midst of living in sin. The phrase "become rich" in the orthodox Hebraic sense speaks of advancement, growth, or maturity into a better, higher-quality life. However, the inhabitants of the northern kingdom were attempting to justify their evil deeds by their prosperity. They foolishly and arrogantly began to sing of and celebrate their so-called achievements, which had resulted from evil and injustice. Arrogant attitudes and oppression of the poor characterized Israel's society, yet they expected God to preserve this unjust status quo.

Similar situations exist today. Many who claim to be Christians exhibit behavior similar to that of the northern kingdom of Israel. We are called to test all things and to hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:15). The experience of the northern kingdom teaches us that whatever we desire to have must be acquired ethically and with integrity. We should choose the right means to achieve our end.

**9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.**

The Israelites had an arrogant sense of self-sufficiency because they had forgotten that it was God who had shown them mercy, choosing them as His special people from among the nations. They had also forgotten that He had delivered them with His mighty hand when they were slaves in Egypt, had provided for them supernaturally in the wilderness to meet their needs, and had defended them against other nations that were stronger than themselves. They were boastful about their own abilities as they worshiped false gods. Now God would take away their prosperity and make them live in tents again, just as they had done after the exodus from Egypt in the days of their "solemn



feasts.” In other words, they would go into captivity. Yet God would graciously provide for them as He had in the wilderness.

Among the solemn feasts was the Feast of Tabernacles—a joyful reminder of God’s blessing and generosity. The Israelites were to remember that even when God chastised them, He also displayed His grace. Likewise, we should always rely on the Lord as our sufficiency, wherever we find ourselves in this pilgrimage of faith. Let us also remember that He is our God and we are His people. We must commit ourselves to obey and faithfully serve Him in all circumstances.

# Daily Bible Readings

## **Monday**

Hosea 1:1-11

## **Tuesday**

Hosea 2:14-23

## **Wednesday**

Hosea 3:1-5

## **Thursday**

Hosea 4:1-11

## **Friday**

Hosea 7:1-7

## **Saturday**

Hosea 11:1-11

## **Sunday**

Hosea 12:1-9