

# Hosea 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

## Analysis

---

Stubborn backsliding: 'For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.' The imagery contrasts stubborn heifer refusing yoke with lamb in open pasture. Israel, like untrained heifer (פָּרָה סוֹרֶרָה, parah sorerah—rebellious cow), resists God's discipline. The consequence is ironic: God will feed them 'as lamb in large place' (כֶּבֶשׂ בַּמֶּרְחָב, keves bamerchav)—not blessing but judgment. A lamb in open space without shepherd faces predators; Israel scattered among nations faces destruction. Or possibly: God will pasture them extensively (not protectively) like exposed lambs. Either way, refusing disciplined covenant relationship results in dangerous freedom/abandonment. This echoes Romans 1:24,26,28: God 'gave them up.' Only Christ bears the yoke perfectly (Matthew 11:29-30) and shepherds His flock securely (John 10:27-29).

## Historical Context

---

The heifer metaphor appears in Jeremiah 31:18 (Ephraim as untrained calf) and throughout Scripture depicting Israel's stubbornness (Exodus 32:9, Deuteronomy 9:6,13). An untrained heifer resists plowing, making agricultural work impossible—similarly, Israel resisted God's purposes. The historical fulfillment came through Assyrian exile: scattered among nations without land or protection, Israel faced assimilation and loss of identity. The 'ten lost tribes' disappeared historically, fulfilling the judgment of dangerous exposure. Yet Jeremiah 31:18-19 promises

eventual restoration when the rebellious heifer learns discipline and returns. This hope finds fulfillment in Christ gathering the scattered (John 11:52).

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

---

1. How does resisting God's discipline and instruction paradoxically lead to more dangerous 'freedom' rather than genuine liberty?
2. What is the difference between Christ's yoke (easy and light, Matthew 11:30) and Israel's resistance to any yoke?

## Interlinear Text

---

כִּי	הַפֶּהֶר	סֹרֵר	סֹרֵר	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	עֲתָה	יִרְעֵם
H3588	heifer	as a backsliding	as a backsliding	For Israel	H6258	will feed
	H6510	H5637	H5637	H3478		H7462
יְהוָה	כֶּבֶד בָּשׁ	בְּמִקְוֵה:				
now the LORD	them as a lamb	in a large place				
H3068	H3532	H4800				