

Hosea

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Author: Hosea · Written: c. 755-710 BC · Category: Minor Prophets

Introduction

Hosea is both a love story and a tragedy, a prophetic book that transforms the prophet's own heartbreak into a window into the heart of God. God commands Hosea to marry Gomer, a woman who would prove unfaithful, as a living parable of Israel's spiritual adultery against their covenant Lord. Through this painful personal experience, Hosea comes to understand the depth of God's wounded love for His wayward people. **The book exposes Israel's idolatry while revealing that covenant love persists even when spurned**, and that the faithful God pursues His unfaithful bride with relentless grace.

Writing during the final, turbulent decades of the northern kingdom (roughly 755-710 BC), Hosea witnessed Israel's moral and spiritual collapse. Outward prosperity under Jeroboam II masked inward corruption—Baal worship flourished, often syncretized with worship of Yahweh. The people attributed their agricultural blessings to the fertility god Baal rather than to the LORD who had brought them from Egypt. This spiritual adultery wounded God deeply, and Hosea's own marriage becomes the metaphor through which this divine heartbreak is expressed. **God is portrayed not merely as offended sovereign but as betrayed husband**, agonizing over His beloved's unfaithfulness.

The book alternates between searing indictments of Israel's sin and tender appeals to return. God's emotional struggle is laid bare—His justice demands punishment, yet His love yearns for restoration. The question 'How can I give you up, Ephraim?' (11:8) reveals the internal tension within God's heart between righteous judgment and covenant love. This tension finds its ultimate resolution at the cross, where God's justice and mercy meet in Christ. **Hosea teaches that God's love is not sentimental tolerance but covenant commitment that pursues, disciplines, and ultimately redeems.**

Symbolic acts dominate the book—Hosea's marriage, the symbolic names of his children (Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi), and his redemption of Gomer. These enacted parables communicate truth in ways that mere words cannot. The reversal of the children's names in the restoration promises—from 'not my people' to 'my people,' from 'no mercy' to 'mercy'—demonstrates that God's final word is always grace. Hosea prepares God's people to understand that while sin has consequences, the pursuing love of God will not let His chosen people go. This covenant love (*hesed*) becomes the foundation for understanding God's character and His relationship with His people throughout Scripture.

Book Outline

- **Hosea's Marriage to Gomer** (1-3) — God commands Hosea to marry Gomer as a living parable of Israel's unfaithfulness. The symbolic names of their children—Jezreel (God scatters), Lo-Ruhamah (no mercy), and Lo-Ammi (not my people)—announce coming judgment. Yet even here, promises of restoration appear. Chapter 3 records Hosea redeeming Gomer despite her adultery, illustrating God's redemptive love that pursues and buys back the unfaithful beloved at great cost.
- **Israel's Unfaithfulness Detailed** (4-7) — These chapters indict Israel's sins in detail: lack of knowledge of God, priests who fail to teach, rampant idolatry, political instability, and dependence on foreign alliances instead of God. The metaphors multiply—Israel is compared to a stubborn heifer, a half-baked cake (not turned, burned on one side and raw on the other), a silly dove flitting between Egypt and Assyria. Religious observance continues but without genuine heart devotion, making it worthless.
- **Judgment Announced** (8-10) — These oracles announce the certainty of coming judgment. Israel has 'sown the wind' and will 'reap the whirlwind' (8:7)—their sins will bring disproportionate consequences. The golden calves of Bethel, their political machinations, and their false security will all fail. Captivity is coming, a return to 'Egypt' (symbolically Assyria), undoing the Exodus deliverance. Yet even in judgment, God remembers His people.
- **God's Persistent Love** (11-14) — The metaphor shifts from husband-wife to father-child, revealing God's parental anguish. Despite Israel's rebellion, God cannot give them up—His compassions are kindled. Chapter 12 rehearses Israel's history through Jacob, showing patterns of both blessing and deception. Chapter 13 announces destruction but also hints at resurrection hope. The final chapter is an extended invitation to return, promising healing, free love, and transformation—God will be like dew to Israel, causing them to blossom and flourish.

Key Themes

- **God's Covenant Love (Hesed):** The Hebrew term hesed (steadfast love, covenant faithfulness) defines God's relationship with Israel. This is not mere emotion but **covenant commitment that persists despite betrayal**. God's love for Israel is likened to a husband's love for his wife—deeply personal, legally binding, and emotionally profound. Hosea reveals that this love endures rejection and pursues the wayward beloved.
- **Israel's Spiritual Adultery:** Idolatry is portrayed as **marital unfaithfulness against the covenant Lord**. Israel's worship of Baal and other gods is not merely theological error but personal betrayal. The graphic imagery of adultery and prostitution shocks readers into recognizing the relational dimension of sin. What we might view as abstract religious deviation, God experiences as intimate betrayal.
- **Knowledge of God as Relationship:** Hosea emphasizes that God desires **intimate, experiential knowledge** (da'at) rather than mere ritual observance. 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (4:6) and 'I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings' (6:6) reveal that relationship with God transcends ceremonial religion. True knowledge involves covenant love, not mere intellectual awareness.
- **Judgment as Covenant Discipline:** The announced judgments—exile, loss of national identity, destruction—are not arbitrary punishments but **covenant curses that flow from broken covenant vows**. Yet even judgment serves redemptive purposes, intended to bring Israel to repentance. God's discipline aims at restoration, not merely retribution. The metaphor of the wilderness journey (2:14-15) shows God leading Israel back to first love.
- **The Relentless Pursuing Love of God:** Even after repeated betrayals, **God pursues His wayward people**. The command for Hosea to love his unfaithful wife 'again' (3:1) parallels God's persistent love for Israel. This pursuing love is costly—it requires redemption, patience, and suffering. Yet God will not abandon His covenant people, demonstrating that divine love exceeds even the most faithful human love.
- **Repentance and Return:** The call to 'return' (shuv) echoes throughout the book. True repentance involves **turning from idols back to the LORD with whole-hearted devotion**. Hosea distinguishes between superficial repentance (like morning mist that quickly disappears, 6:4) and genuine conversion that bears fruit. God desires the heart, not mere words of confession.
- **Restoration Through Grace:** Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, **God promises ultimate restoration**. He will heal their backsliding, love them freely, and restore them to covenant relationship (14:4). The reversal of judgment—transforming the

Valley of Achor (trouble) into a door of hope (2:15)—demonstrates God's power to redeem even the darkest circumstances. Grace has the final word.

- **The Father's Anguished Love:** Chapter 11 shifts the metaphor from husband to father, revealing God's **parental anguish over rebellious children**. 'When Israel was a child, I loved him' (11:1) introduces God as the father who taught His child to walk, who healed and fed him, yet was rejected. The father's cry 'How can I give you up?' exposes the emotional cost of divine love.

Key Verses

And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

— Hosea 2:19-20 (This verse presents **God's covenant renewal in marital terms**, promising eternal betrothal characterized by righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness. The five-fold repetition emphasizes the certainty and comprehensiveness of this commitment. The culmination—'you shall know the LORD'—points to intimate relationship as the goal. This covenant ultimately finds fulfillment in the new covenant through Christ.)

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

— Hosea 4:6 (The destruction of God's people stems not from external enemies but from **willful ignorance of God's character and covenant**. This 'knowledge' is not mere information but relationship—they have rejected intimate acquaintance with God. The priests, who should have taught this knowledge, have failed in their calling, bringing consequences upon generations. True religion requires knowing God personally.)

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

— Hosea 6:6 (Jesus quoted this verse twice (Matthew 9:13; 12:7) to challenge religious leaders who emphasized ritual over relationship. Hosea reveals that **God prioritizes covenant love and intimate knowledge over ceremonial observance**. This does not abolish sacrifices but subordinates them to what they represent—wholehearted devotion to God expressed through love and justice. External religion without internal transformation is worthless.)

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

— Hosea 11:1 (This verse, applied to Christ by Matthew (2:15), reveals the **pattern of God calling His beloved son from Egypt**. It establishes the father-son relationship between God and Israel, grounded in electing love. The application to Jesus demonstrates that He recapitulates Israel's experience as the true Israel, the obedient Son who fulfills what Israel failed to accomplish.)

How shall I give thee up, 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 repentings are kindled together.

— Hosea 11:8 (These rhetorical questions expose **God's internal struggle between justice and mercy**. Admah and Zeboim were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah, representing total judgment. Yet God's heart is 'turned' (literally 'overturned' or 'changed')—His compassions are kindled. This reveals that God's love wars against His wrath, finding resolution ultimately in Christ bearing the judgment that mercy might triumph.)

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.

— Hosea 13:14 (Paul cites this verse in his resurrection chapter (1 Corinthians 15:55) as **God's triumph over death itself**. What appears in Hosea's context as a rhetorical question or ironic statement becomes, in light of Christ's resurrection, a genuine promise. God will defeat death, redeeming His people even from the grave. The irrevocable nature ('repentance hidden from my eyes') guarantees the certainty of resurrection.)

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

— Hosea 14:4 (The book's climactic promise reveals that **restoration comes entirely from God's initiative and grace**. He will heal their apostasy, love them 'freely' (literally 'as a volunteer' or 'spontaneously'), and turn away His anger. Nothing in Israel merits this—it flows entirely from God's covenant commitment. This models the gospel principle that salvation is by grace alone, not earned but freely given.)

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.

— Hosea 14:9 (The book concludes with a **wisdom appeal**, inviting readers to discern God's righteous ways. The same truths that lead the righteous to walk faithfully cause the rebellious to stumble. This demonstrates that the issue is not clarity but willingness—hearts open to God receive wisdom; hearts closed to God find offense. The paths of God require both understanding and obedience.)

Historical Context

Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel during its final, turbulent decades before the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC. His ministry spanned roughly 755-710 BC, overlapping the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah. The period began with prosperity under Jeroboam II—territorial expansion, economic growth, and military strength. But beneath the surface, rot had set in.

Religiously, Baal worship had thoroughly infiltrated Israelite life, often syncretized with worship of Yahweh. The fertility cult of Baal, with its agricultural focus and ritual prostitution, appealed to an agrarian society. Many Israelites saw no contradiction in worshiping both Yahweh and Baal, attributing their harvests to Baal while maintaining covenant rituals. This syncretism constituted the spiritual adultery Hosea denounced.

Politically, the northern kingdom experienced chaos after Jeroboam II's death in 753 BC. Within 25 years, six kings sat on Israel's throne, four by assassination. Political instability led to desperate foreign policy—seeking alliances with Egypt and Assyria alternately, trusting in military might rather than in God. The moral decay was evident: injustice, violence, lies, theft, adultery, and bloodshed characterized the society.

The Assyrian threat loomed increasingly large. Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC) began aggressive westward expansion. In 733 BC, Assyria conquered much of northern Israel. The final blow came in 722 BC when Sargon II destroyed Samaria and deported the population, ending the northern kingdom. Hosea witnessed much of this decline and prophesied its ultimate catastrophe, though he likely died before the final fall.

Literary Style

Hosea's literary style reflects emotional intensity and passionate engagement. The Hebrew is sometimes difficult, with abrupt shifts in imagery and speaker. This stylistic roughness mirrors the turbulent emotions—divine anguish, prophetic passion, Israel's confusion. The book alternates between accusation and tender appeal, judgment and restoration promise, reflecting God's own internal struggle.

Domestic and agricultural imagery pervades the book. Metaphors of marriage, childbirth, and family relationships make abstract theological concepts viscerally real. Israel is portrayed as wife, child, vine, olive tree, dew, lion's prey. God is husband, father, shepherd, dew, lion, bear, moth, and dry rot. This rich imagery engages readers emotionally and imaginatively.

Wordplay and puns abound in the Hebrew, though often lost in translation. The symbolic names (Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi) create a narrative arc from judgment to restoration when later reversed. The lawsuit (rîb) form appears, with God bringing covenant charges against His people. Historical retrospectives (chapters 9-13) reinterpret Israel's past to explain their present judgment.

The book's structure is debated, but generally moves from judgment with hints of hope (1-3) through extended indictments (4-10) to balanced judgment and restoration (11-14). The final chapter forms an extended call to repentance with promises of healing. This literary movement from crisis through judgment to hope mirrors the spiritual journey God desires for His people.

Theological Significance

Hosea makes profound contributions to biblical theology, particularly in revealing God's character and the nature of covenant relationship. The book teaches that **God's love is covenant love**—not sentimental affection but committed faithfulness (*hesed*) that persists despite betrayal. This steadfast love is both deeply emotional and legally binding, combining passionate feeling with covenantal obligation. God's love is wounded by sin, yet pursues the beloved relentlessly.

The **metaphor of marriage for God's relationship with His people** becomes foundational for biblical theology. Introduced in Hosea, this imagery is developed throughout Scripture—in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and ultimately in the New Testament where the church is Christ's bride. This marital metaphor reveals that sin is not merely legal transgression but relational betrayal, and that salvation involves restored intimacy, not just legal pardon.

Hosea's theology of **idolatry as spiritual adultery** exposes the relational dimension of sin. What might be viewed as mere theological error or cultural accommodation is revealed as intimate betrayal of covenant vows. This understanding deepens our recognition of sin's offense—it wounds the heart of God who loves His people with marital devotion. The exclusive claim of God on His people's worship flows from this covenant relationship.

The book contributes significantly to **understanding divine judgment**. Judgment is not arbitrary divine wrath but covenant curse consequent upon broken covenant. Yet even judgment serves redemptive purposes—God disciplines to restore, not merely to punish. The wilderness motif (2:14-15) shows God stripping away false securities to bring His people back to first love. Judgment and love are not opposites but dimensions of covenant relationship.

Hosea reveals **God's internal struggle between justice and mercy**. The rhetorical questions of 11:8 expose genuine divine anguish—how can God both be just (punishing sin) and merciful (preserving His people)? This tension finds no resolution within the Old Testament framework but points forward to the cross, where God's justice and mercy meet in Christ. Jesus bears the judgment so that mercy can triumph.

The emphasis on **knowledge of God as relationship** rather than mere information corrects intellectualistic distortions of religion. To 'know' God in Hosea involves intimate, experiential acquaintance—the kind of knowledge a husband has of his wife. This relational knowing produces obedience, love, and faithful devotion. It cannot be reduced to doctrinal correctness or ritual performance.

Finally, Hosea's theology of **grace and restoration** demonstrates that God's final word is always redemption. Despite repeated betrayals, God promises to heal, love freely, and transform His people. The reversal of the symbolic names—from 'not my people' to 'my people'—shows that grace overcomes judgment. This restoration is entirely God's work, flowing from His covenant commitment, not from human merit.

Christ in Hosea

Hosea foreshadows Christ and illuminates His work in multiple profound ways. Most directly, **Matthew 2:15 applies Hosea 11:1 to Christ**: 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.' While Hosea referred to Israel's Exodus, Matthew sees Jesus recapitulating Israel's experience. As God called Israel as His son from Egypt, so He called Jesus from Egyptian exile. This identifies Christ as the true Israel, the obedient Son who fulfills what Israel failed to accomplish.

Hosea's marriage to Gomer **prefigures Christ's relationship with His church**. As Hosea loved and redeemed an unfaithful wife at great cost, Christ loved and redeemed His bride, the church, purchasing her with His own blood. Ephesians 5:25-32 develops this marital metaphor explicitly, calling husbands to love as Christ loved the church. The pursuing, redeeming love of Hosea for Gomer mirrors Christ's pursuit of sinners.

The declaration **'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death'** (13:14) anticipates Christ's victory over death. Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 15:55 to celebrate resurrection triumph. Christ's resurrection is God's ultimate 'plague' to death and 'destruction' to the grave, fulfilling what Hosea glimpsed prophetically.

The promise of **renewed betrothal** (2:19-20) finds fulfillment in the new covenant established through Christ's blood. The characteristics of this betrothal—righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness—are all embodied and mediated by Christ. He is the faithful husband who makes the unfaithful bride righteous through His own righteousness credited to her.

Jesus' citation of **Hosea 6:6 ('I desire mercy, not sacrifice')** twice in Matthew (9:13; 12:7) demonstrates that He came to fulfill what Hosea taught—relationship with God over ritual, mercy over ceremonial law, heart transformation over external performance. Christ embodies the knowledge of God that Hosea says is more important than burnt offerings.

The **reversal of Lo-Ammi** ('not my people') to 'my people' is applied by Peter and Paul to Gentile inclusion in the church (Romans 9:25-26; 1 Peter 2:10). What originally promised Israel's restoration becomes, in the fuller revelation, a prophecy of God calling Gentiles into covenant relationship through Christ. Those who were 'not a people' become 'God's people' through faith in Jesus.

Finally, Hosea's teaching that **God will 'heal their backsliding' and 'love them freely'** (14:4) points to Christ as the great physician who heals spiritual disease and the mediator of God's free, spontaneous love. All healing and restoration flow through

Christ, who reconciles God and humanity, making possible the renewed covenant relationship Hosea promised.

Relationship to the New Testament

The New Testament extensively engages Hosea's theology, particularly regarding Israel's hardening, Gentile inclusion, and the nature of true religion. **Romans 9:25-26** quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to explain God's calling of Gentiles: 'I will call them "my people" who are not my people; and I will call her "my beloved" who is not my beloved.' Paul sees the pattern of restoration promised to Israel finding expanded fulfillment in Gentile conversion, demonstrating the universality of God's grace through Christ.

1 Peter 2:10 similarly applies Hosea's language to Christian believers: 'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.' The transformation from Lo-Ammi to Ammi, from Lo-Ruhamah to Ruhamah, describes the conversion experience of all who come to Christ—outsiders brought inside, those without mercy receiving abundant mercy.

Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 (in Matthew 2:15) establishes Jesus as the true Israel, the obedient Son who fulfills what Israel was called to be. This typological reading sees Christ recapitulating Israel's history redemptively—passing through water (baptism), wilderness (temptation), and ultimately accomplishing the Exodus (cross and resurrection) that brings deliverance from sin's slavery.

Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 twice to challenge religious leaders (Matthew 9:13; 12:7): 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' This demonstrates continuity between Hosea's critique of empty ritualism and Jesus' confrontation of Pharisaic legalism. Both emphasize that God desires heart devotion expressed in mercy and justice, not mere ceremonial correctness. This theme permeates Jesus' ministry and teaching.

Paul's resurrection theology draws on Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55, transforming what might be read as ironic judgment into triumphant promise. Through Christ's resurrection, God has indeed become death's 'plague' and the grave's 'destruction,' defeating humanity's final enemies. What Hosea glimpsed dimly, Paul proclaims clearly as accomplished reality.

The theme of God's pursuing love in Hosea shapes New Testament understanding of divine initiative in salvation. The father running to meet the prodigal son (Luke 15) echoes God's yearning love in Hosea 11. The shepherd seeking the lost sheep reflects the pursuing God who will not abandon His beloved despite their wandering. Grace precedes and enables human response.

The knowledge of God emphasized in Hosea finds New Testament expression in Jesus' words: 'This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent' (John 17:3). Salvation is defined as relationship, not

merely forensic status. This knowing is intimate, experiential, transformative—the covenant knowledge Hosea declared essential.

The marriage metaphor developed in Hosea reaches full flower in Ephesians 5:25-32, where Paul explicitly identifies Christ as the bridegroom and the church as His bride. The sacrificial love, cleansing, and beautification of the bride all echo Hosea's themes while making explicit that this marital union is sacramental, pointing to the mystery of Christ and the church.

Practical Application

Hosea's message remains powerfully relevant for contemporary believers, addressing both individual spiritual life and corporate church faithfulness. First, **the book exposes the danger of syncretism**—blending worship of God with cultural idols. Just as Israel mixed Yahweh worship with Baal, modern believers face temptation to merge Christian faith with materialism, nationalism, therapeutic self-help, or other cultural gods. Hosea calls for exclusive devotion to the LORD, recognizing that divided loyalty is unfaithfulness.

The priority of relationship over ritual challenges religious formalism in every age. Going through spiritual motions without heart engagement—attending services, performing rituals, even theological correctness—without knowing God personally is the empty religion Hosea denounces. God desires 'knowledge of God more than burnt offerings' (6:6). This calls us to examine whether our religion is relational or merely ceremonial.

Understanding sin as relational betrayal rather than merely rule-breaking transforms our view of repentance. If sin offends a distant judge, repentance is legal pardon. But if sin wounds a loving husband or father, repentance involves restored intimacy. Hosea's marital and parental metaphors make sin personal, calling us to see how our unfaithfulness grieves God's heart. This motivates holy living from love, not merely fear of consequences.

The book's teaching on **God's pursuing love** offers profound comfort to backsliders and wanderers. No matter how far we've strayed, God pursues like Hosea pursuing Gomer. His love is not earned by our faithfulness but flows from covenant commitment. The promise 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely' (14:4) assures prodigals that God welcomes return, not with condemnation but with rejoicing restoration.

The call to return (shuv) that echoes through Hosea addresses believers experiencing spiritual dryness or drift. Return involves more than feeling sorry—it means turning from false securities (political alliances, wealth, human wisdom) back to wholehearted trust in God. The specific invitation 'Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God' (14:1) with its promise of healing shows that repentance is always possible and always welcomed.

Hosea's exposure of **superficial repentance** (6:4) warns against emotional religion that lacks depth. Repentance that vanishes like morning mist—enthusiastic feelings that produce no lasting change—is worthless. God desires transformation, not

temporary sentiment. This challenges revival culture that measures success by emotional response rather than enduring fruit.

The principle of **reaping what we sow** ('they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind,' 8:7) reminds us that choices have consequences. Sin's consequences often exceed our expectations—small compromises lead to great destruction. Yet even here, God's discipline is redemptive, designed to bring us back to Himself. Understanding judgment as covenant discipline rather than vindictive punishment helps us respond rightly to life's difficulties.

Finally, **the vision of God's transforming grace** in chapter 14 provides hope for seemingly hopeless situations. God promises to make faithless Israel flourish 'like the lily,' strike roots 'like Lebanon,' spread branches 'like an olive tree.' Transformation is God's work, not ours—He will be 'like dew' to His people. This encourages believers that the same God who transformed unfaithful Israel can transform us, making spiritual deserts blossom.

Chapter 1

Hosea's Unfaithful Wife

1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. 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.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; 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.

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

9 Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

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.

Chapter 2

Israel's Unfaithfulness

- 1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.
 - 2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;
 - 3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.
 - 4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.
 - 5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.
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- 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.
 - 7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.
 - 8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.
 - 9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.
 - 10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.
 - 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.
 - 12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.
 - 13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

God's Promise of Restoration

14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor 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; and shalt call me no more Baali.

17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

18 And 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: 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; 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 Jezreel.

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, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Chapter 3

Hosea Redeems His Wife

1 Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of 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.

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.

Chapter 4

The Charge Against Israel

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.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.

15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

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

17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.

19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

Chapter 5

Judgment on Israel and Judah

1 Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all.

3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.

4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.

6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.

10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.

12 Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.

15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Chapter 6

Israel's Insincere Repentance

- 1 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.
- 2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.
- 3 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.
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The Sins of Israel and Judah

- 4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.
- 5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.
- 6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
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- 7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
- 8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.
- 9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.
- 10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.
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- 11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.
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Chapter 7

Israel's Wickedness Exposed

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.

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.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.

15 Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

16 They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 8

Israel Reaps the Whirlwind

1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

3 Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him.

4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.

5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?

6 For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

12 I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

13 They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

Chapter 9

Punishment for Israel's Sin

1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.

2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.

4 They shall not offer wine offerings to the LORD, 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.

5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?

6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

8 The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.

9 They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.

11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.

16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.

17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Chapter 10

Judgment for Israel's Idolatry

1 Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.

8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

10 It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

11 And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Chapter 11

God's Love for Israel

- 1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.
- 2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.
- 3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.
- 4 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.
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- 5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.
- 6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.
- 7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.
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God's Compassion Prevails

- 8 How shall I give thee up, 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 repentings are kindled together.
- 9 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: and I will not enter into the city.
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- 10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.
- 11 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.
- 12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.
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Chapter 12

The Lord's Charge Against Judah

1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us;

5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

7 He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

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.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Chapter 13

The Lord's Anger Against Israel

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

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.

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.

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.

5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Chapter 14

A Plea to Return to the Lord

- 1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
- 2 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.
- 3 Asshur 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.
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God's Promise of Healing

- 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.
- 8 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.
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- 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.
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