

HOSEA

People Who Forgot GOD

by S. Franklin Logsdon

"For Israel hath forgotten his maker." (Hosea 8:14)

"My people have forgotten me days without number." (Jeremiah 2:32)

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CHAPTER TWELVE -

THE REMINISCENCE OF THE LORD (Hosea 11)

LOVE-LIGHT from the heart of GOD shines in the darkest places as evidence in the opening of this chapter. **"I loved him . . . I taught Ephraim . . . I drew them . . . with bands of love."**

When we touch upon the love of GOD, we plunge ourselves into an ocean whose depths have never been fathomed. It is all-embracing, all-inviting, all-supporting, all-supplying. And it is this matchless love which underlies every divine warning, the spurning of which, as was true with Hosea's people, makes more terrible the fearful storms of judgment when they break.

This chapter calls to mind GOD's former benefits to His people - a subject which is dealt with copiously in the Scriptures. Joshua, during his memorable convention at Shechem, gave an appealing review of the goodness of the LORD (Joshua 24). The psalmist also delineated the righteous acts of the LORD (Psalm 106). But Israel lapsed into serious ingratitude. Earlier instruction in righteousness was ill-regarded. Former lessons in loyalty were forgotten. Challenges to steadfastness were ignored.

Now they are wanderers, compromisers, spiritual adulterers, threatened with impending judgment. It is against this black background that these choice jewels of JEHOVAH's expressed affection shine. The people are reminded that the love of GOD made possible the deliverance of their fathers from Egyptian bondage.

- It was love that broke Pharaoh's grip.
- It was love that rolled back the waters of the Red Sea.
- It was love that fed them manna each day.
- It was love that kept their garments from becoming threadbare.
- It was love that cleared the passage through the Jordan River.

- It was love that prepared the land flowing with milk and honey and set the table for them in the wilderness.

Attention is called to Matthew 2:15 where Hosea 11:1 is quoted concerning JESUS, the true Israel according to Isaiah 49:1-3. Here we automatically have a contrast. Here we have a perfect gauge to measure the faltering nation. The true Israel affirmed: "**My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work**" (John 4:34). The true Israel countered the deceptive enemy with "**It is written.**" The true Israel turned from the glory of earth by demanding "**Get thee hence, Satan.**" But, when the tempter came to Israel of old, "**they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images**" (v. 2). They fell.

In His reminiscence, the LORD speaks not only of having loved Ephraim, but of teaching him (v. 3). This opens to our view an impressive area of Biblical truth. "**And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that thou mayest teach them**" (Exodus 24:12).

This instruction was given purposely that the people might "**put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean**" (Leviticus 10:10).

The description of their offspring in Hosea proves how far afield they had gone. They had become most unholy; they were spiritually unclean. The line of demarcation was lost sight of. Baal-peor was the filthiest of their idolatrous departures. Add to this the caricatures on the wall of the temple (Ezekiel 8:9, 10), weeping for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14), worship of the queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 44:17), and the abominable "**high places.**" These were the acts of the children who were nourished and brought up by JEHOVAH, now rebelling against Him (Isaiah 1:2).

In His gracious dealings, JEHOVAH "**drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love**" (v. 4). The ordained leadership was the finest - Moses, Joshua and Samuel; Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea. These leaders were sympathetic, compassionate, patient and persistent. Through their ministry, GOD sought the hearts of His people. Even in their disobedience, divine love continued to flow. When bound in slavery, GOD lifted, as it were, the jaw-yokes and extended them meat (v. 4).

As one preferring the lesser of two evils, the people reasoned that Egyptian bondage would be better than Assyrian if they must be carried away. The prophet's message quickly countered this wishful thinking: "**He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king.**" Why? "**Because they refused to return [to the LORD]**" (v. 5).

They forgot that "**it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps**" (Jeremiah 10:23). They gambled on their political intrigue. They played off the king of Assyria against the king of Egypt. It failed. Soon the enemy cavalry would plunder their cities and villages, the sword of judgment doing its complete work (v. 6). The ruined heaps of their destroyed institutions would fill them with sorrow, but would not lead them to repentance.

"**How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?**" (v. 8) is more than a plaintive cry. It is the lament of grief. It is the reverberation of concern. It is the outburst of love.

GOD's heart was turned within Him. But Israel's provocation called for severe judgment. Her licentiousness and spiritual adultery deserved the sternest of treatment. But **"how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"** the LORD inquired, not that He was asking a question of the people, but as further indication of His reluctance to invoke judgment. Admah and Zeboim were companion cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This concern in the heart of GOD found no response in the lives of the people, especially in those of the northern kingdom. With false worship everywhere, deceit was rampant in the house of Israel (v. 12). The more GOD loved, the less He was loved. Little wonder we read such exclamations as **"O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?"** (Micah 6:3).

The epidemic of ungodliness is nowhere more strongly, expressed than in verse 12. **"Ephraim compasseth me about with lies,"** means that everywhere the LORD looked He saw the false - the profane and wicked representations. The house of Israel generally practiced deceit in their unwholesome engagements with heathen worship.

Here again is a striking contrast between Israel of old and the true Israel (JESUS CHRIST). When the FATHER inspected His Lamb for the sacrifice, He assured, **"Neither was any deceit in his mouth"** (Isaiah 53:9).

It must not be construed that Judah was innocent of this blighting plague of idolatry. Jeremiah's conflict with them in their waywardness is a sad commentary on their departure from the faith. However, there were in Judah those that **"yet ruleth with GOD, and is faithful with the saints"** (v. 12). To serve GOD is to rule with Him. Being faithful with the saints indicated some sincerity and devotion on the part of a few. While the LORD must disapprove every false way and condemn every sin, it is beautiful to note how He observes and commends even the faintest trace of devotional earnestness.

History records how this slight glimmer of testimony in Judah faded into the dense darkness of their disobedience, desertion and destruction. Their national existence ceased, and their last king Zedekiah had his eyes thrust out and the fetters affixed. He was held in prison until the shades of death enveloped him (Jeremiah 52:11).

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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