

THE BOOK OF HOSEA
Lesson 19, Chapters 10 and 11

I ended our previous lesson speaking about a most crucial understanding that is necessary for a proper perspective not only of the source of our salvation, but also of what that means for us in a broader sense. The source is Yeshua: Jesus the Christ. But what it means is that through the most selfless act of courage and love that the world has ever known, or will ever know, He has joined us who were at one time strangers to the Covenants between God and Israel...those who were excluded from them...in order for us to be in union with those Covenants and with Jesus Himself as the goal and embodiment of those covenants. And yet, this can only happen for those who trust in Yeshua as Messiah and in His Father as the God of Israel.

CJB Ephesians 2:11-13 ***¹¹ Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth- called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised- ¹² at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. You were in this world without hope and without God. ¹³ But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood.***

Moving down a little further in Ephesians 2:

CJB Ephesians 2:19-22 ***¹⁹ So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's family. ²⁰ You have been built on the foundation of the emissaries and the prophets, with the cornerstone being Yeshua the Messiah himself. ²¹ In union with him the whole building is held together, and it is growing into a holy temple in union with the Lord. ²² Yes, in union with him, you yourselves are being built together into a spiritual dwelling-place for God!***

But, this trust MUST be maintained; it can't be only a one-time declaration or event. Hosea, and the Torah, teach us that God will rescind redemption should this trust prove itself to have been abandoned by us, despite our urgent

pleadings that it is not so, the abandonment being revealed through our wrong behavior and through our improper worship of God.

CJB James.5:19-20 ***19 My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return, 20 you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.***

Let's re-read the final 3 verses of Hosea chapter 10.

RE-READ HOSEA 10: 13 – end

It is hard in our time to internalize the depth of terror such a thought of what happened at Arbela must have brought to Hosea, and then as he communicated it to his people. Yet, both the Bible and history prove that the vast majority of the Israelites didn't believe it. It is probably not that different between the actuality of the Holocaust against the Jews in the 1940's and how even when invoking such an image as a warning today against what is coming in the End Times, or even in such wars as is happening today in the Ukraine, that people shy away from thinking about it in realistic terms because it seems that such genocide and mayhem could not possibly be repeated by more modern civilized people. Even so, history proves that not only *will* such atrocities be repeated, they can happen at an even greater intensity and scope that is unfathomable to our minds; and it seems like human nature often responds by simply blocking out the unpleasant possibility.

The Lord says such atrocities will be done to Ephraim/Israel because of their great wickedness. And then a place that is symbolic of their great wickedness is mentioned: Beth-El. This is because Beth-El is one of the places in Israel that the golden calves that Jeroboam had fashioned as images of Yehoveh was set-up and where thousand of Israelites would regularly go to pay homage and sacrifice.

The mention of the king perishing at dawn misses the essence of what the verse means. The Hebrew word **melekh** that can be translated as "king" can also be translated as "monarchy". That is, while king is a person, the monarchy is the government structure. Here the meaning clearly is that Israel's entire government shall be cut-of, permanently, and not just a change to a new king

(something that had been happening with alarming regularity over the past few decades in Israel). The usual Hebrew word for cut-off is *kareth*, but that isn't what is used here. Rather the word is *damah* and it means to terminate or come to an end. *Kareth* invariably includes a spiritual sense and source, in that God is part of what one is being cut-off from. But here since *damah* is used, no spiritual sense is meant. It simply means that the government of Israel, with Israelite kings sitting on the throne, will no longer exist for Israel. The end of a nation's government is the end of that nation. Ephraim/Israel's time as a Hebrew nation (a kingdom) unto itself is being prophesied as soon to be over. Let's move on to chapter 11.

READ HOSEA CHAPTER 11 all

Hosea chapter 11 is immensely poetic. It is also immensely intense, expressing pain and love. In my estimation, it expresses God's pain and yet His enduring love for a set-apart people that He has carefully nurtured since their beginning. It is, I think, the most emotional and passionate passage in the entire Old Testament that deals with God's relationship with Israel. The depth of the emotion involved could only be expressed by poetic words as opposed to mere historical narrative.

It is important that we recognize the literary device called anthropomorphism that is at play here. Another less fancy and easier word for it is figurative. Anthropomorphism means to apply human traits to non-human creatures, gods or objects. The Bible is full of metaphor and anthropomorphism that often is taken by a misinformed Christianity as something meant fully literal. Thus, human emotions and human institutions can be ascribed to God and it is a very big mistake because it greatly mischaracterizes in ways that lead to very strange doctrines. For instance, as concerns both the Father and the Son, marriage terms are often used to describe their relationship with their worshippers to the point that a thought like "bride of Christ" is taken fully literally to mean actual marriage with Christ, and thus members of His Church becoming Yeshua's spouses. That is, Jesus is often portrayed as exactly a husband in human marriage terms and we, His followers, are exactly His wife in those same terms. We also have God speaking of Israel as a "son" or as a king of Israel being called a "son of God". These are anthropomorphic terms... figurative terms... and not literal. Israel is

not God's actual son (or child) as we think of it in human family institution nor does any king of Israel have some kind of actual father/son biological or mysterious organic relationship with Yehoveh like we have here on earth between father and a son even if that earthly relationship were to be nearly perfect. Rather it is that in order to best help we mere humans to understand our relationship with God... how He sees it... and how He operates and makes decisions... human terms and examples are used because it gives us an approximation using vocabulary that we have and use in everyday life, and therefore gives us something that we can relate to.

So even though the major theme of chapter 11 is God's fierce fatherly devotion and love to His child (His son) Israel, we must not take this theme to extremes. Just as when we are told that Yehoveh is sending Israel "back to Egypt", it is not used in the sense that Israel is actually making a true reverse-exodus and literally forming up columns and marching back to Egypt. It is instead designed to connect the ideas of the original exodus for the sake of Israel's redemption from an oppressor with the new reality of Israel entering into a process that once again puts them into the oppressive hands of a foreign nation, and that they will at some time in the future need to be rescued from it by God.

At the risk of becoming too repetitive, I'll say this: to correctly interpret Hosea we must begin by understanding that God's problem with Israel is entirely, 100%, covenant based. Israel is no longer at peace with God because they have broken the covenant (the Covenant of Moses, the Law) by their unfaithfulness that consists primarily of perverted manmade beliefs, disgusting worship practices, and bad behavior. Therefore, since the anticipation of this situation was built-in to the Covenant of Moses at its inception at Mt. Sinai, then naturally what we see playing out are the specific penalties and consequences for the equally specific, spelled-out violations of the covenant. This isn't God making it up as He goes. Thus, as God begins to use figurative and anthropomorphic terms to explain His thought process...what Israel did and how God is responding to it...these potential violations and accompanying penalties were contained and spelled out in the Covenant of Moses, and had been fully available for Israel to see...had they wanted to know.

Verse 1 begins:

CJB Hosea 11:1 *"When Isra'el was a child, I loved him; and out of Egypt I called my son.*

Israel was never an actual child nor an actual son of Yehoveh (the way that pagan religions often thought of their god-to-human relations). Even so God relates His thoughts to Hosea using words that bring to mind an earthly father/son relationship. Let us always also remember that we must discard any modern Western notion of a typical father/son relationship as we practice it today. The character and nature of a Middle Eastern father/son relationship was quite different than anything today. A father and son relationship...especially when involving a firstborn... was essentially as a senior and junior family authority. A father's family authority was absolute. He controlled all. He owned all in the family. He could kill his child if he thought that was the proper punishment for a serious infraction. Once a son matured sufficiently, his job was to become as an extension of his father; even as an agent of his father's authority if such an authority was granted to the son. Until his father passed away, the son's actions were always to reflect his father's will and wishes. So, it is in that context that in the opening of verse 1, Israel was characterized as that child...a son...even a firstborn. Israel's collective will was supposed to reflect their father's (God's) authority and will as it was expressed in the Law of Moses. So, to make a finer point of it, what we've been reading about thus far through the first 10 chapters of Hosea is that Israel is likened first to an unfaithful wife (Gomer) and later to a rebellious child... a rebellious son. A rebellious son was, for an ancient Middle Eastern father, a disaster. Rebellion was defined as a child that goes his own way and does his own will and not that of his father. Yes, there is typically a warmth of relationship included; but never think of that warmth as being the overriding factor of that relationship. The love of a son was to express itself in his clear and visible determination to carry out the will, and always to display the character, of his father and never his own. This male child would, after all, carry on the blood line and reputation of the family patriarch and nearly always the family wealth. In the case of the relationship between God and Israel, in return for his (Israel's) obedience and devotion to his father (Yehoveh), God says "I loved him".

This "sonship" words used by Hosea are meant to tie in with Exodus 4.

CJB Exodus 4: 22-23 ***22 Then you are to tell Pharaoh: 'ADONAI says, 'Isra'el is my firstborn son. 23 I have told you to let my son go in order to worship me, but you have refused to let him go. Well, then, I will kill your firstborn son!''''***

When we read the words "I love him", we are to take it in the sense of the word as it was understood in ancient times. **Ahav** (meaning love) indeed included the idea of a warm affection, but it also revolved around the idea of loyalty. This same word in Hebrew was used in the Amarna letters where love is proclaimed by a number of vassal kings to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Clearly the ratio of loyalty to warm affection leaned heavily towards loyalty and we would do best to always let this biblical term **ahav** (love) lean more in that direction as we study the Scriptures.

Although the second half of verse 1 is often translated as "out of Egypt I called my son", in reality it is worded a bit differently. The ancient Hebrew expression is **mimmisrayim**, meaning "ever since Egypt". So, in Hosea this expression is definitely meant to recall something that took place from 5 to 6 centuries earlier... the Egyptian captivity and then the exodus. That said, in order for us to get the best understanding of what the thought is in modern English terms, "out of Egypt" probably works best. To call...**qara** in Hebrew... doesn't mean it like we would call someone on a phone and have a conversation. Rather the idea is to proclaim or better, perhaps, it is to summon with authority behind it; it isn't a request. It is a moment in which the person who is in authority intends to gather someone or something to him for a special purpose and tells that person that the time is now. If this verse of Hosea sounds familiar to you, it ought to.

CJB Matthew 2: 13-15 ***13 After they had gone, an angel of ADONAI appeared to Yosef in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave. For Herod is going to look for the child in order to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until Herod died. This happened in order to fulfill what ADONAI had said through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."***

So here we learn that the Gospel writer Matthew was directly referring to this passage in Hosea, and so “the prophet” he cryptically spoke of turns out to have been Hosea. Matthew sees in Christ the latest and newest fulfillment of this prophecy of God calling His son out of Egypt. We’ll regularly see in the Bible that a word or phrase of prophecy can do double-duty. It can have meaning in two or more different scenarios and in two or more different eras, although the fulfillments are closely related. It is not a one-or-the-other situation. For instance, Matthew is not telling us that the “calling His son out of Egypt” prophesy was taken wrongly in times past when applying it to Israel. In the Book of Exodus God indeed called His son, Israel, out of Egypt. In Hosea, God says that He will again call his son, Israel, out of Egypt but it is in another sense that isn’t made clear. And in Matthew the identity of God’s son morphs from national Israel to the ideal Israel, which is represented in God’s Son Yeshua. And, out of Egypt God will call His Son, Jesus. Israel was called to come to the Promised Land from Egypt, and later so was Yeshua and His family called to return to the Promised Land from Egypt.

Verse 2 presents a bit of a problem in that it is hard to extract the thought from it even though the words seem to make some sense. The first problem is that someone called “they” called them (Israel) but the more “they called” the more the people of Israel pulled away from “them”. Who is they and them? I think the CJB has it right in assuming that this has to be referring to the biblical prophets. God summoned Israel through His prophets, but they rebelled and wouldn’t heed the call. And it seemed to God that no matter how much He called through however many of His Prophets, Israel wandered even further away from faithfulness and truth. And in what way did God measure how far away they wandered? It was in their increasing worship of the Baals and offering their sacrifices to images. It might be instructional to understand that worshipping the Baals and offering sacrifices to images really wasn’t merely 2 ways to say the same thing. These were 2 quite different acts on Israel’s part.

Israel fully knew the Baal god system. They had certain of the Baal gods they bowed down to because in their minds these gods served a functional purpose for them such as fertility, or for providing rain for crops, or protection from enemies. Thus, probably when Hosea speaks of the images that Israel offered incense to, it was always (or nearly always) the golden calves that were those images. Israel

had determined that the golden calves were the representative image **not** of the Baals but rather of Yehoveh, the national God of Israel. They would of course have accepted that this identification of a Golden Calf with the God of Israel was an idea and act that also occurred early in the exodus, resulting in thousands of their brethren being killed for fashioning that calf and worshipping it. So, why would they think it OK now? Israel figured that the exodus incident was a long time ago and the situation had changed. It was a new era or even a different "dispensation", right? Maybe golden calves as images of God were wrong when Israel was wandering in the wilderness but it was wrong no longer. Let's not shake our heads in disgust as we think about these foolish Israelites, but instead perhaps look at ourselves in the mirror. Christianity has steadily developed its own set of head scratching rationalizations. People don't change much as the centuries fly by. We always manage to find grounds to justify our own preferences and choices, and feel good about it. But Israel was finding out the hard way that God does not accept our rationales for disobedience to Him...in any era for any reason...and the consequences for such a lapse can be dire.

Verse 3 is basically saying that Israel's blatant disobedience certainly wasn't God's fault. It was He that personally trained them up, so there could have been no error. Yehoveh says that He personally taught Ephraim "how to walk". The image being portrayed is of a parent helping and teaching a young child to take his or her first cautious and unsure steps. It is meant to evoke a tender, patient father that spends the necessary time with his child making it as easy as he can for him. Although it is a different word, Judaism adopted the term **Halakha** to present their doctrinal beliefs about how God wants them to live. **Halakha** means "to walk in the way". The child had no doubt who the parent was nor that it was they who was there to help them. What did Ephraim/Israel do in return for such loving care by their father? They gave thanks to the Baals; they showed no love or loyalty to the One who actually taught them, raised them up and healed them when they fell or were sick.

Again, looking to the Law of Moses, there is a principle that says that if a parent raises a child correctly but that child becomes a rebel, the parents bear no responsibility for the child's wrong behavior. In fact, that child ought to die for his rejection of his parents' direction and correction.

CJB Deuteronomy 21:18-21 ¹⁸ *"If a man has a stubborn, rebellious son who will not obey what his father or mother says, and even after they discipline him he still refuses to pay attention to them; ¹⁹ then his father and mother are to take hold of him and bring him out to the leaders of his town, at the gate of that place, ²⁰ and say to the leaders of his town, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he doesn't pay attention to us, lives wildly, gets drunk.' ²¹ Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death; in this way you will put an end to such wickedness among you, and all Isra'el will hear about it and be afraid.*

A rebellious child is violating the basic commandment to honor one's mother and father. God is establishing 2 things here in Hosea 11:3 that will quickly come into play. First: He (as the metaphorical father to the young child, Israel) was a good parent and did everything right to teach them well, so He bears no guilt in how Israel turned out. Second: the penalty for such an incorrigible child as Israel is death. Israel deserves death and their blood is upon their own heads. On the other hand, God is a merciful loving father to His son, and the last thing in the world He wants is to destroy His own child. He is torn on the matter. It is so very painful for Yehoveh to have been treated in such a way in return for His kindness.

To give us a fuller sense of what God is saying to Israel, we find the same thought in Jeremiah no doubt because he was greatly influenced by Hosea's writings.

CJB Jeremiah 31:19 ¹⁹ *"Isn't Efrayim my very dear son, a child who delights me so? I speak about him all the time, I can't help but recall him to mind. In sum, I deeply yearn for him; I will surely show him favor," says ADONAI.*

Hosea 11:4 is a continuation of verse 3 and probably is best read as one unified thought.

CJB Hosea 11:3-4 ³ *"Yet it was I who taught Efrayim to walk; I took them by their arms. But they did not know that it was I who was healing them, ⁴ who was guiding them on through human means with reins made of love. With them I was like someone removing the yoke from their jaws, and I bent down to feed them.*

The words of verse 4 as we have them today are somewhat corrupted, however the thought that is contained in them isn't terribly hard to discern, especially

when we re-connect verse 4 to verse 3 instead of separating them. The first thing we must notice is a shifting from the metaphor of Israel as a child, to Israel as an animal that is dependent upon a human caring for it. Thus, when we read of the reins of love early in verse 4 (sometimes in other Bible versions called cords or ropes), it needs to be understood in the context of a beast pulling a load or a plough. The idea is of a gentle leading in that instead of putting the young animal to heavy work through the fixing of a large wooden yoke upon its neck, instead it is made more comfortable by removing it for the time being.

Too many times we'll find doctrines of Judeo-Christianity being anachronistically used to interpret verses 3 and 4 and it sends us on road to allegory instead of the intended meaning. I think Mayer Gruber has done a masterful job in unlocking the sense of this passage in modern English, passing along to us what it meant to its ancient readers. It is this: God didn't put a yoke upon Israel in order to direct them by use of the reins attached to the yoke (as humans do in order to control a beast of burden). Rather, He use metaphorical reins of love. Instead of tangible ropes and cords to direct the animal (Israel), God used the intangible bonds of love. In fact, what is ironic is that part of that bond of love included the written Torah. God showed them what love really is: love towards Him and love towards one another. The Torah is more than a Law code, it is a curriculum that teaches what life actually is.

Gruber uses the human example of a Jewish mother who always means well. She is forever attempting to draw her child near to her. But, that attempt can be perceived in different ways: the mother meaning one thing, the child interpreting it as another. From the mother's viewpoint, the ties she seeks are in love and care for her child. For the child, sometimes her attempt can be seen as control or maybe even as enslavement. There is a term called smother-love that while it is not entirely applicable to what this passage is describing, it does explain why a child might rebel against the attempts to train and correct. Smother-love means a relationship between a parent and a child in which the parent is so overbearing and overprotective that the child's normal psychological development is stunted.

From the perspective of an 8th century B.C. Israelite, here is how I think we ought to understand this. Equally importantly, how we ought to *apply* this to our lives as Believers. On the one hand we see God's grace and enduring patience on

display. His desire is not to control or enslave but rather to teach the immature child how to have life within God's economy. God didn't design the Universe and all the creatures that inhabit it in piecemeal fashion. He designed every aspect of it to work in harmony with Him and with a mysterious synergy that can bring happiness to humans... IF only humans will accept it. He fleshes out what that harmony looks like in the Bible, beginning with the Torah, and lays out the boundaries and operating procedures of it in The Law of Moses. When Israel, for a time, understood what an incredible gift of love the Torah and the Law was, they prospered and were secure and were at their happiest. But, now in Ephraim/Israel, it was decided that the Torah and the Law of Moses wasn't an easy and tender bond of love between them and God, it was a heavy yoke that burdened them and restricted and enslaved them, and so they proceeded to shuck it off so that they could do as every man saw fit in his own eyes.

James, the brother of Jesus, understood all this very well. He knew that when a young animal or a small child is just learning, their rearing and training must be done carefully with bonds of love. And so, all must proceed with baby steps; too heavy a load must not be placed upon them too early. By no means does that mean that the child has no rules and boundaries or that they are different rules and boundaries from everyone else. It's only that there is more understanding and less required at first, during the earliest training period, so that there is ample time for the child to grow into a maturity that is capable of the more challenging requirements that will come later. This is reflected in a famous passage in the New Testament that was given the name The Jerusalem Council.

READ ACTS 15: 1 - 31

This passage in Matthew treats the gentiles coming into the Hebrew faith of trusting in Yeshua as Messiah, as young children are treated. It follows the same God-pattern as found in Hosea 11. The question for these children (gentile Believers....Christians) as they grow into maturity is this: will you see the incredible love and importance of what you have been taught and the boundaries you have been given? Or will you shuck it off because you see the increasing obligations and stricter boundaries as enslavement, and become rebellious and ungrateful as did Ephraim/Israel?

We'll continue with Hosea next time.