

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Lesson 07, Chapters 3 and 4

As we continue with Hosea chapter 3 today, perhaps this is an appropriate moment to remind you that, much like a Parable, we have to be careful not to read into this prophetic narrative more than was intended. We are dealing with an actual account of what Hosea was told by The Word and what he did, yet at the same time the point of it all was symbolic in order to send a divine message to Ephraim/Israel. So, the words have been laid down in a mixed literary style... almost certainly at the hand of a hired Scribe... that involves poetry, metaphor, irony, illustration, hyperbole, and more. Thus, since the point is to get a symbolic message across, then details are slanted and engineered to accomplish that purpose, and thus we shouldn't look for precision; it's the bigger picture that matters. At the same time, we are challenged with the hard reality that this prophecy of Hosea was fashioned within an 8th century B.C. Middle Eastern culture, and aimed towards the people who lived within that culture. The recipients were intended as the residents and leaders of the 10 tribes that formed Northern Kingdom called Israel and alternately, Ephraim. However, as with all divine instruction, the God-principles embedded in Hosea's prophecy and their application, can and do transcend time and culture.

Let's re-read this rather short chapter 3. Open your Bibles there.

RE-READ HOSEA CHAPTER 3 all

We can only conclude that this wife of whoredom (Gomer) whom Hosea had married some time earlier (she was not a prostitute at that time), indeed for some reason left Hosea and engaged in some kind of adulterous affair. Or perhaps for whatever her reason she lost her way and took up prostitution as a profession. We don't need to get terribly concerned over whichever it was because the point is that she became unfaithful to Hosea, and this was immediately likened in the second half of verse 1 to how the people of Israel became unfaithful to Yehoveh. All along the actual crime being committed by Israel is idolatry, by mixing up their worship of the God of Israel with the worship of Baal, including apparently much of the Baal worship system.

Although I've addressed this in earlier lessons, and will again in future lessons, I want to editorialize for a few minutes not so that we can point fingers and help beat up Gomer or ancient Israel, but rather because (as sad and gut wrenching as it is for me to expose) it accurately reflects the dangerous infection that the faith Christ promoted has been struck with after the 1st century; an infection of syncretism and so now, unwittingly, operating predominately on manmade doctrine. In fact, the same had already infected the Hebrew faith by Yeshua's day.

CJB Matthew 15:3-9 ***³ He answered, "Indeed, why do you break the command of God by your tradition? ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ⁵ But you say, 'If anyone says to his father or mother, "I have promised to give to God what I might have used to help you," ⁶ then he is rid of his duty to honor his father or mother.' Thus by your tradition you make null and void the word of God! ⁷ You hypocrites! Yesha'yahu was right when he prophesied about you, ⁸ 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. ⁹ Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines.'"***

We've all been infected by manmade doctrine and are in need of a remedy. Like the proverbial frog in the kettle, things like this don't happen overnight. Error and evil creeps in slowly, stealthily, but never think it is accidental; it is quite purposeful and always is leader-led. King Jeroboam of Israel had an agenda of making his people loyal to him alone, and this begins with making his kingdom prosperous. A kingdom or nation must be at peace with its neighbors to allow the conditions for prosperity to flourish. So, in those days as it is presently, treaties and accommodations are made with neighboring nations to establish and maintain that peace.

As of the time this lesson was created, Russia has attacked Ukraine and they are at war as the world wrings its collective hands in a state of shock and anxiety. The result is that both nations are suffering economically, and due to the connectedness of the world today, all of the world's economies have taken a hit, and so the world's overall prosperity is in danger. In ancient times the religion practiced by a nation played an integral role in everyday life and in politics, and

so the treaties among nations necessarily involved respect for one another's god-systems. Jeroboam also had the problem that he wanted his subjects to stay within his kingdom to practice their religion, and to not travel to their sister kingdom that lay to the south, the Kingdom of Judah, because he didn't want divided loyalties. Yet, it was in Judah where Jerusalem and the Temple were located, which the Law of Moses dictated was to be the one and only Temple to Yehoveh that was to be built, the one and only place of ritual sacrifice was to occur, the one and only place where the God-authorized priesthood was to operate, and where the one and only priesthood was to be comprised of Levites that had been set-apart for service to God. This circumstance was a major fly-in-the-ointment for King Jeroboam, so he decided to break away from the ancient Hebrew faith of Abraham and Moses, and instead created a unique customized and blended religion for his people, with its own new holy places, its own new and separate priesthood. This had the effect of appeasing his gentile treaty partners as he folded in aspects of their religion: Baal worship. He began with fashioning golden calves and declaring them images of Yehoveh. From that point forward it became easier for the people to accept more and other god-images (idols), and specifically to incorporate the god-images of the Baal system.

The thing we should grasp and internalize is that while Jeroboam had an agenda he was fulfilling that was in no way righteous, in all his power and authority he spun it to his people that it was. Over time his people learned to accept it, stop questioning and to believe it, and within a generation or so this newly fashioned religion became the norm for Israel, apparently with few asking if what they were doing was right in God's eyes. Those in Israel who pushed back (those such as Hosea) were branded as heretics. It was assumed that this new religion must be right because their new priesthood (their religious experts) and their political leadership said it was right, and because most Israelite were going along with it. This brings us to a question that as Believers we truly need to ask ourselves. Whatever became of original orthodox Christianity, a 100% Jewish movement, as we find it in the Bible? The reality is that I don't have to speculate; how we got here from there is quite well documented.

When gentile leadership took over the fully legitimate faith movement of Christ and His disciples, things changed. Within 200 years of Christ's death, the religion

called Christianity began to break away from the Holy Scriptures and from its Hebraic heritage and a new Holy Book had been created called the New Testament. The Old Testament was all but phased out, and all observances and ways of worship that were ordained by divine commandment in the Holy Scriptures were officially abolished by written decree in the 4th century by a council of Bishops representing the now dominant Rome-based Church. The still existing records of the Church Councils of Nicaea and Laodicea lay it all out. There in those records we discover a determined agenda of the gentile leadership to take over full control of this rapidly spreading faith in Jesus (with the adherents to it at that time already numbering in the hundreds of thousands) and to do so for their own benefit. This meant rewriting history, refuting the original orthodox faith in Christ, and creating an essentially new religion to replace it that bore little resemblance to its true beginnings. Within a generation or so after this decree there was widespread acceptance among the gentile followers of Jesus, and it became the norm.

Over the centuries, as other ambitious men with agendas sought their own religious power bases, Christianity eventually fractured into literally a few thousand denominations as it is today. While what I've told you is recorded and available for all to see, then a glaring question is: are Church leaders asking themselves: are we being properly obedient to God and to His commandments? Is what we practice biblically correct? "Yes" most will claim, because even though we may have long ago subtracted the Old Testament and added some elements of pagan religions to the faith of Christ, it was done for good reasons, and besides, we have changed the use and meaning of those formerly pagan elements into righteous worship of God and to praise Jesus.

When someone like myself (and there are a growing number of others) questions the rightness of some of our faith beliefs and ways of worship (certainly not all), we are sometimes labeled as heretics. I, for one, accept that label because as it concerns **manmade** religious doctrines and paganized worship practices, I am a heretic. In fact, I ask you to join the heresy to that kind of religious practice by doing our best to rediscover our faith roots, and returning to a God-ordained, Spirit filled, Bible based faith; the same one that Yeshua practiced and taught to His disciples. The same one that foretold of, and produced, Our Lord and Savior. This sorrowful situation that our faith institutions have fallen into is precisely

what The Word was communicating to Hosea about Israel. There isn't much difference other than the era in which it is occurring. And just as with Israel when soon the common people will suffer exile, it will be because their leadership has failed them by leading them astray. I say this as one who has been part of the Church my entire life, even though a goodly part of the Church likely thinks I have, or wishes would, abandon it. I pray (and ask you to pray) for revelation, repentance and reformation, not destructive revolution. Hosea's prophecy, as with nearly all prophecy, is fulfilled, and then later it happens again under similar circumstances. Those with ears, hear.

In verse 2, Hosea obeys God and goes after this unfaithful wife, even paying someone so that he can bring her home. However, verse 3 shows that the old secular proverb of "forgive and forget" doesn't accurately reflect how God operates. Hosea, at God's direction, loves this woman and forgives her sufficiently to pay a price to redeem her from her fallen ways, but at the same time her sinful deeds cannot be easily forgotten. We see that she is going to pay a dreadful price for her folly and will not be allowed all the typical benefits that a wife can expect. This is explained in graphic, highly sexualized terms. Remember: the way this story is constructed is so that Israel understands that this prophecy built around Hosea's family is symbolic of what God is going to do with the people of the Northern Kingdom. Gomer is going to be placed into seclusion at home. Actually, this restriction is somewhat par-for-the-course for a woman who has shamed herself and her husband. A shamed woman was not allowed out to wander the streets. Further, this seclusion and shaming in Gomer's case can be likened to house arrest, largely for her own good. Hosea says that she is "to be mine" and no longer a prostitute. That is, she will be returned to a monogamous relationship with him and prevented from fraternizing with other men. This is expressed by not allowing her to continue to share sexual favors with anyone else than Hosea. But, Hosea says that despite bringing her home he won't accommodate her normal female desires of intimacy with her husband. So, to use modern vernacular, she's cut off. This is punishment. At the same time, I see it like a treatment of sorts. I liken her to a drug addict; and the only way for an addict to kick the habit is to stop doing the addictive behavior. I see it this way because there is no explanation provided as to why this married woman would leave her husband and become so promiscuous. May she have been thrown out by Hosea? Had she become sexually dissatisfied in their relationship? Even so,

men were obligated to support their wives, whether they liked their wives or not. So, whatever her reason for being away from Hosea and adopting the shameful lifestyle she did, it certainly wasn't because she was escaping some desperate situation, so far as we know; she entered into, or caused, this adulterous life because that's what she sought after, perhaps not unlike the Prodigal Son.

We also need to notice that, from a 30,000-foot view, Hosea's intent was not to bring Gomer home to harm her, but rather to rehabilitate and protect her, even though severe discipline was certainly part of that rehabilitation. He wanted her to stop her sinning ways before it went even further. I adopt this view and explanation because in the end it is God's character that is being expressed through Hosea's actions, and it is Israel's character that is being expressed through Gomer's actions.

Verse 4 then makes the direct symbolic connection of why and what Hosea is going to do with Gomer to what God is going to do with Israel. It says that like Gomer, Israel too will suffer seclusion, and then 6 separate things are listed that Israel will be forced to do without. First, they will have no king. This of course means no Hebrew (Israelite) king. This also means that Israel will not be a nation, and without a nation their societal framework is dissolved. They will also be without what is usually translated as a "prince", but I think that misses the point in modern English. The Hebrew is **sar**, and in this use it more means a government official or agent. So, lest Israel think they'll be without a Hebrew king, but still be under some type of Hebrew government rule led by an official instead of a king, that thought should be abandoned. And since we know in hindsight that Israel would fall under the rule of Assyria and then the Israelites would be scattered to many gentile nations, this prophecy proved to be quite accurate.

While the first 2 consequences Israel will face involves government, now the next 4 involves the practicing of their religion. They will be without sacrifice; this means that they will not be able to perform sacrificial ritual, which had many purposes. The biblical Hebrew faith has, at its core, sacrifice; but, so do virtually all pagan religions. Even though what Israel had been practicing for at least a century was not right or righteous, what 2 of these next 4 restrictions are speaking of is elements of the proper orthodox biblical Hebrew faith. So, Israel

will not be able to immediately return to what is right and effective worship, which is essentially the most important component of having a relationship with God. At the same time, we see God is going to keep them away from important pagan ritual worship elements. The pillar, or standing stone, that they were accustomed to incorporating in their worship, was a standard item that was erected like a monument at the many scattered pagan sacred shrines. Standing stones were connected to whatever deity that particular shrine was glorifying. In the Torah we read this:

CJB Deuteronomy 16:21-22 ²¹ ***"You are not to plant any sort of tree as a sacred pole beside the altar of ADONAI your God that you will make for yourselves.*** ²² ***Likewise, do not set up a standing-stone; ADONAI your God hates such things.***

So, the use of these standing stones is specifically prohibited by The Law. Next the text shifts back to listing something that is legitimate: the ephod that was worn by the High Priest. This was a special garment that seemed to have a pouch sewn onto it in order to hold the Urim and Thummim stones. No one knows precisely how these stones operated, but they apparently provided provide yes or no answers from God to questions brought before Him by the High Priest. After that item, we go back to something pagan: teraphim. Teraphim was the common name used for images and idols used by Baal worshippers. So here we have been presented with Israel's customized, blended, syncretized, and thus idolatrous worship practices laid out, almost item by item. Israel rationalized their use of these pagan worship practices and objects by melding them into their worship of Yehoveh, but Yehoveh rejected it. The truly terrifying thing for Israel is that God says this so-called seclusion they will endure is going to go on for a long time. And, indeed, it has been a long time because only recently have the descendants of those 10 tribes begun their journey back to their homeland.

To try to illustrate what was happening to Israel and make it more real, impactful and personal for us and our faith, I'll give you some examples as illustrations that have full parallels in what God is accusing Israel of having done. Although they are not found in the countless standard Christian depictions of Heaven, angels, and even of biblical characters, halos are not found in the Bible. So where did halos come from? They were borrowed from the regular sun disk symbol of the Mishraim Sun God worship system that was prevalent in the Roman Empire

before, during, and after the councils of Nicaea and Laodicea that created the foundation for gentile Christianity. Rabbits and eggs as used at Easter were and remain strictly fertility symbols of pagan religions, and can be found nowhere in orthodox biblical worship practices. Fir trees, often decorated, were also standard at pagan worship sites. The trees weren't necessarily worshipped, they were meant to honor the presence of Ashtoreth who was thought to be Baal's wife. As we just read, this use of fir trees in religious activity for God's people was specifically outlawed in the Torah. Just as Israel had incorporated some of these attractive and common pagan things into their worship of Yehoveh, seeing no harm in it, it seems so has Christianity fallen victim to that temptation. Both groups claiming that was formerly bad and disobedient is now good and holy.

Verse 5, however, brings good news. Back and forth we read of wrong actions, consequences, and then God comforting Israel by telling them these consequences aren't permanent. He gives them hope that at the proper moment in history, as determined by Him, these sanctions against Israel will be lifted, and their national relationship with Him will be reborn as they are returned to the land they were exiled from. In other words, God doesn't sentence Israel to destruction or divorce. Rather, Israel will fully and finally recognize their guilt and the depth of their depravation by serving other gods, and repent of it. At that time, God will set them on a path to full redemption and a restored relationship with Him. But then we get another amazing prophecy that has long been recognized by Judaism and Christianity as belonging to the End Times.

It says that not only will Israel seek Yehoveh, they will also seek David their king. I have real doubts that those of the Northern Kingdom took this very literally; although I'm sure that the inhabitants of Judah happily did (even though this prophecy was not directly connected to them). As far as Israel was concerned, a rebirth of David's dynasty would be good news for the Southern Kingdom... but not for the Northern Kingdom. David belonged to the tribe of Judah, and therefore to the Kingdom of Judah. Nonetheless, Jews in Christ's day understood that this mention of King David was speaking about a Messiah that would come from David's royal line, and not of David himself; they didn't believe in reincarnation. By the time of Hosea David had been dead for over 200 years. But let's be careful not to confuse the recognition of Yeshua as that Davidic King/Messiah by some Galileans, Judeans and a few others in the 1st century with

who Hosea's prophecy is speaking about. Hosea is speaking about the 10 tribes that were still scattered in Christ's era and had yet to begin their journey home. This can only be speaking about Christ's second advent; Messiah Yeshua's return, or at least the years that immediately lead up to it. So, when I stand at Ben Gurion Airport and watch flights with scores of members of those 10 exiled Israelite tribes migrating to modern Israel from far flung nations in Asia and Africa, it gives me the chills! Are we witness to the 10 tribes at last emerging from their seclusion, as promised 27 centuries ago?

Let's move on to Hosea chapter 4.

READ HOSEA CHAPTER 4 all

Chapter 4 brings us back to a legal court setting, using legal court terminology, with God as the accuser and the judge. This chapter can be divided into 4 sections for the purpose of study. The first 3 sections each make accusations against a specific group of Israel. The 4th section is about the prophesied fall of the false cult that Israel's leaders had created, and the people had been blindly following.

For those of us who are the leaders of those who trust in Jesus, we need to closely notice that the blame for what has brought Israel to this dreadful condition, and the calamity they are about to experience, is placed squarely on the shoulders of their religious leadership. I'm not sure there's a book in the Bible, Old or New Testaments, that doesn't somewhere along the way speak of the leadership of the people, and the great responsibility and accountability that God places upon the shoulders of the leaders He has sent in place. Why? Because poor leadership will lead God's people into much harm and an estranged relationship with Yehoveh.

Sometimes we lose sight that nearly everything God ordains is not so much accomplished supernaturally as it is carried out by humans. For instance: God wants His people to learn about who He is and what His ways and commands to us are; but He gives that responsibility to leaders to teach it to the people. God also wants His people to have good examples to follow so they can see how His ways are to operate on earth. This must necessarily be accomplished by humans

and not angels. God wants His people protected from harm and from evil; more often than not this is accomplished by armies of human warriors. Even so, individuals are held accountable for accepting what poor leadership teaches them. God didn't create robots. So, the contention God has with Israel is that thus unfaithfulness of Israel has happened because of the sins of the priesthood. God makes it clear that because of them, His people have been led to indulge in wickedness instead of the leadership stopping them.

Verse 1 begins, "hear The Word of Yehoveh". The first word of those opening words is regularly translated as listen, or taken to mean that and it ought not to be. In the original Hebrew it is **shema**; it means to hear in order to obey. Hear and obey are organically connected. This isn't about a passive "listening" experience because **shema** inherently includes an active response of the ones who heard. After that we again get the Hebrew **dabbar**... The Word. This is not the word, as in speech or what is written down as text; it is The Word as in a special living manifestation of God. But the context of the authority behind what The Word communicates not His own; it is Yehoveh's. The Word is the Mediator... the agent... between Yehoveh and the Prophet. So, let's re-word this dynamically according to the Hebrew thought being communicated. It is this: "Hear and respond to what you receive from The Word, the divine agent of Yehoveh". Who is to hear and respond? The Israelites and their leaders (meaning the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel).

This represents the 1st accusation of God as Prosecutor, and it is against the inhabitants of the land. The land is the Northern Kingdom. The "inhabitants of the land" means the entire population and society. What's the problem? In Hebrew it is the lack of **emeth**, **chesed**, and **da'ath**. Or as it typically translated, no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge. In this context the better choice of English words is no faithfulness, no loving-kindness, and no knowledge. Here's the thing; the Hebrew term **chesed** is another of those complex Hebrew concepts that is expressed in a single Hebrew word. Chesed certainly can entail mercy, kindness, and goodness. But those terms all come bundled together under the umbrella of faithfulness to God. So, the Hebrew concept of **chesed** inherently involves one of a joint and complementary relationship between God and man. Knowing this, then the first word in the series, **emeth**, would be better translated as faithfulness rather than truth. And knowledge, **da'ath**, the 3rd in the series comes

as the result of knowledge of God... His name, His commandments, and His character. None of these 3 godly attributes that ought to exist in Israel due to the expected reciprocal relationship between Israel and God, actually do. This is not unlike what Yeshua's New Testament statement about false prophets and prophecy is addressing:

CJB **Matthew 7:15-20** ¹⁵ *"Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep's clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves! ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every healthy tree produces good fruit, but a poor tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit. ¹⁹ Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire! ²⁰ So you will recognize them by their fruit.*

Israel's (the 10 tribes') fruit bears no resemblance to a people who have supposedly pledged loyalty and allegiance to Yehoveh, God of Israel, and to their covenants with Him. Their idolatrous worship of Baal (Israel's fruit) proves that they have no loyalty or allegiance to Yehoveh despite their urgent pleadings that they do.

In verse 1 we have accusations of **omission** (no faithfulness, no loving-kindness, and no knowledge of God). In verse 2 we have accusations of **commission**: swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery. Each one of these is a specific violation of one or the other of the 10 Commandments. Swearing probably means making a vow using God's name as the guarantor, but doing it falsely.

NAS **Exodus 20:7** *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*

Lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery we find in Exodus 20:13.

NAS **Exodus 20:13** *"You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

The last words of Hosea 4:2 are that bloodshed follows bloodshed. That means that murder begets more murder. This was especially so in Hosea's era when revenge killing was more or less the way of justice (this was at least partly why the Sanctuary Cities were created). Revenge killings would invariably lead to deadly blood feuds that might go on for generations between families. This has direct connection to the next verse, especially with the opening words.

Verse 3 begins with: "Therefore the land mourns", and from there the verse speaks of how everything associated with the land suffers; even the birds that fly over it and the fish in its lake and coastal sea. The Law of Moses in the Torah addresses this exact thing.

CJB Numbers 35:31-34 ***³¹ Also, you are not to accept a ransom in lieu of the life of a murderer condemned to death; rather, he must be put to death. ³² Likewise, you are not to accept for someone who has fled to his city of refuge a ransom that would allow him to return to his land before the death of the cohen. ³³ In this way you will not defile the land in which you are living. For blood defiles the land, and in this land no atonement can be made for the blood shed in it except the blood of him who shed it. ³⁴ No, you are not to defile the land in which you live and in which I live; for I, ADONAI, live among the people of Isra'el."*** (LY: vii)

What is being explained is that blood (meaning unjustifiable killing... murder) in which the killer is not brought to justice and himself executed, has the lasting effect of polluting the land. Therefore, going back to Hosea 4:3, the land of the Northern Kingdom mourns (figuratively speaking) because of all the bloodshed that has not been properly brought to justice and dealt with. I realize that this issue of executing a murderer has become a sensitive one. Modern Western societies have used any number of reasons to justify why execution of a murderer ought not to happen. What this reasoning all falls back on is that humans... primarily Church leaders... have decided that our human definition of mercy and justice overrides God's definition of mercy and justice; or it said that this is the new way that Jesus ordained. The consequence of carrying out this wrong reasoning is that it leaves law abiding people vulnerable to repeat violent criminals, and it defies God after He's told us what MUST be done with murderers. And, that of all crimes, not executing a murder leaves the land itself defiled and this produces many negative consequences. Let's face it, does hardly a day go by

that we don't hear of a jailed murderer attacking or killing a prison guard or another inmate? It doesn't even make the front page any longer, so frequently does it happen. The killers themselves will tell you that there is utterly no deterrent to stop them, because the worst that can happen is to receive another life sentence to go along with the one he already has. What's the difference between 1 life sentence and 10? Apparently Israel was also not dealing with murderers justly and this has negatively affected the land itself, the birds, the animals that dwell on the land, and the fish in the sea. In other words, Israel's sin of not properly dealing with blood crimes and blood criminals in the way Yehoveh commands affects all 3 spheres of nature and life on earth: the land, the sky, and the water.

Verse 4 uses a lot of words to say essentially say one simple thing: the priest and the people behave the same and have adopted the same character. So, no individual has the right to say: we're not evil like the priests. And the priests' have no right to say: we're not evil like the people. There's plenty of blame and responsibility to go around for the absolutely abominable condition Israel has literally brought itself to. So, in verse 5, God says to the priests in general, you will stumble by day, and to the prophets of the land, you will stumble at night. This is called a couplet and the obvious implication is that the many prophets roaming around the Northern Kingdom are seen by God as being false and equally as at fault and corrupt as the priesthood. These prophets did what they did for money; preying upon the people. I think the best way to apprehend the point is to see priest and prophet as together representing the entire clergy of Israel; the entirety of Israel's religious leadership and authority. It's not surprising that God would condemn the prophets since if they practiced the state religion along with everyone else, it didn't matter which god or gods they claimed they were prophets of, they were certainly not Yehoveh's prophets. So, just as the priests of the Northern Kingdom were not legitimate priests for God neither were the prophets legitimate prophets for God.

I'm not certain what the comment that ends this verse, "I will destroy your mother", means, exactly. Some scholars think it is a corruption of the text. That's certainly possible because those words are difficult to decipher. On the other hand, assuming that they are authentic, then one thing is certain: the corrupt priests and prophets are characterized as having a common mother. So, mother

might be an expression that refers to the source of evil that birthed this entire corrupt religious system and all their leadership. Otherwise, I just don't know.

Verse 6, a strong statement for the cause of Israel's fall, needs to be nailed to the front door of every Church and Synagogue in the world so that all of us who have been given the task of leading God's flock remember it.

CJB Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for want of knowledge. Because you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as cohen for me. Because you forgot the Torah of your God, I will also forget your children.*

Why would God's people not have correct knowledge of Him? Because the priests and prophets... those assigned the job of teaching... rejected that knowledge themselves. How can a leader of a congregation reject some or perhaps all of God's Holy Scriptures and then turn around and claim He knows God? Because these religious leaders of Ephraim/Israel have adopted this attitude, God rejects them as priests for Him. And why have they adopted such a ridiculous attitude in the first place? Because they forgot the Torah of Yehoveh. The sense of the term "forgot" doesn't so much mean an unintentional lack of memory or recall as it does to intentionally turn their backs on what has been given to them. Therefore, God will turn His back on them and on Israel.

Even if most Bible versions don't use the term "Torah", which by the way is indeed the original Hebrew, and instead uses the term "law" (which is not a good translation of the word torah), the bottom line is the same. After listing several of the 10 Commandments that the people regularly broke, and refusing to follow God's justice system for murderers as found in the Torah (The Law) God essentially says that it was always available for them, but they rejected it and therefore taught something manmade instead. I find it ironic that the Church likes to tell its congregants that they are the new priesthood of God, and then turn around and not teach this new priesthood the Torah of God. God says here that because those who think of themselves as priests reject His Torah, and so don't teach His Torah, then they don't have actual knowledge of Yehoveh. Interestingly this same thought comes from Jesus's mouth in the Gospel of Matthew.

CJB Matthew 5: 17-19 ¹⁷ *"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

We'll continue in Hosea chapter 4 next time.