

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Lesson 09, Chapter 5

Besides the problem of disfavor, even anger, that comes from Yehoveh on account of idolatry, there is also the reality that idolatry is indelibly tied to the sin of immorality. We have been reading, and will continue to read in Hosea, of the immoral condition of Israel...something which they were not self-aware and even denied. Verse 6 of chapter 4 pinned the reason for Israel's inability to recognize their immoral (and therefore defiled) condition on the lack of knowledge of God's Torah. Not my words; not my thought. That is literally what is written. That is, what God defines as right and wrong, good and evil, moral and immoral was no longer even known to them because they rejected the source of that knowledge.

I doubt that there is any Christian or Jewish scholar, pastor, or Rabbi that would quibble too much with that last statement. So, since that is case, how has a blindness towards idolatry and immorality enveloped our Judeo-Christian faith institutions and darkened our minds if not our souls? Why has the search for truth become a quest for a peaceable consensus with our culture, instead? Equally importantly, what has been the result is this pervasive theological perspective? I would offer that it is chaos and confusion among God worshippers. Charles Malik, a Lebanese theologian, philosopher and diplomat once said this:

"There is truth, and there is falsehood. There is good, and there is evil. There is happiness, and there is misery. There is that which ennobles, and there is that which demeans. There is that which puts you in harmony with yourself, with others, with the universe, and with God, and there is that which alienates you from yourself, and from the world, and from God... the greatest error in modern times is the confusion between these orders."

Notice that Malik speaks only in absolutes. This only or that only; nothing in the middle. Our modern Western democratic societies have politically and socially evolved to despise absolutes. There is a belief that there is no absolute right or wrong; there is no absolute morality. Our intellect doesn't allow for it. In fact, using the word evil to describe something is frowned upon because it is now believed to represent a narrow-minded, ignorant judgment on our part, which is the opposite of universal tolerance of all religious and secular belief systems.

This worldview is the same that Ephraim/Israel had adopted, slowly over time, and that Judah was in danger of moving towards. It led to moral confusion for them and it has ended in confusion for us to the point that the most foundational and self-evident identity of our biological physical being, gender, is also no longer considered to be an absolute. Tragically, millions of people now live in a miserable muddle of alienation from others and from the God who made them, so many not totally aware of their condition. Is this an overly dramatic view? Perhaps. But it might also be an understatement of the seriousness of our modern reality. Something that Ephraim/Israel was about to have taught to them in a most severe way.

Let's re-read Hosea chapter 5.

RE-READ HOSEA CHAPTER 5 all

We briefly discussed last time that this chapter begins with a summons to judgment by Yehoveh. Three categories of people are being summoned: Israel's priests, Israel's residents, and Israel's royal house. In other words, everyone that can be identified as belonging to the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel. After the summons comes a prophecy about their exile and oppression, then the evidence against Ephraim, and finally the judgment. So, this narrative is very much in the style of a judicial trial as it was commonly conducted in the Middle East of the 8th century B.C.

Since that the mention of Mizpah and Tabor in verse 1 is probably meant only as being representative of cities and places throughout Israel, then the general sense of verse 1 is this: a true knowledge of Yehoveh their God has been obscured and even outlawed throughout Israel, and this has been accomplished intentionally by the political and religious authorities, which had worked together to fashion this hybridized new religion. From God's viewpoint the entire purpose of the religious establishment and the government of Israel was to guide, educate, and protect the people, and it was to be based on the Torah. Instead, they caused the people to stumble by committing idolatry that led to blatant immorality, and they did it so that they could profit from it.

Verse 2 adds the place name of Shittim, which can only refer to the final place that Israel encamped on the west side of the Jordan River before they crossed

into the Promised Land. Because this verse is very poorly preserved, translation has been difficult and involved much guess work. I suggested one possible reconstruction of it last time but it really is so hazy that I'm afraid we probably ought not to spend too much time on it because in the end there is no consensus of opinion, only speculation.

Verse 3 broaches something that we're going to have to deal with that isn't a particularly pleasant thought. It is that while Israel will think that what is going to happen to them is all about the ambitions of an aggressive enemy, Yehoveh is going to make it abundantly clear that it is He that is causing this approaching disaster. Yes, God is going to harm His own people. This is a thought that seems utterly foreign to Christians. Often it is claimed that this harm only applies to Israel (ancient and modern); or divine anger and harm is explained away by claiming that Jesus changed all that; I assure you He has not. Something we must be careful not to abandon in our study of this prophetic book is that the person or manifestation of God that is still speaking to Hosea is The Word. And yet, since we see at the end of verse 4 that Yehoveh's name is used as the one who is the accuser and judge, then it continues to make The Word as but the vehicle or the agent of Yehoveh's (The Father's) message to Hosea, and not the author of it.

Beginning with the introduction to Hosea, I've regularly inserted the word "Ephraim" when I'm speaking of Israel for the sake of clarity that what this refers to is ONLY the 10 northern tribes of Israel and NOT Judah. Now, however, we see the narrative shift such that the term "Ephraim" is pushed to the front and the term Israel isn't as much, for the time being. Some scholars believe that God is now referring to the tribe of Ephraim as opposed to speaking of the entire Northern Kingdom; I don't see that. The Bible is full of Hebrew literary couplets. Two terms that are virtually synonymous in their meaning even if their more technical sense the two terms might mean something slightly different from one another. It is merely a style of speaking that makes for better transmission of a story orally, which is how it was done nearly exclusively for hundreds and hundreds of years before it was written down. For instance, we'll see the terms Jacob and Israel often used as a couplet even though technically Jacob is the name of one of Israel's Patriarchs, and Israel became the name of the nation of the 12 tribes. So, Jacob and Israel are nearly synonymous in meaning the name

of the same person, and yet both of those terms can be used to refer to the name of the nation he produced. This is what is happening in Hosea with the terms Ephraim and Israel; here they are meant as synonyms.

God says that "I, myself" know Ephraim. In other words, Yehoveh isn't getting His information about the goings on in Israel second hand. Yehoveh directly sees and directly knows, so Israel can't claim that their case is being falsely reported to Him. It also means that God can't be fooled by the denial of Israel that they were whoring with Baal. And, as a result, a people who were meant and equipped to strive towards purity of worship had become defiled. Their idolatry had led to their corporate immorality.

Verse 4 states that their deeds... that is, their choices... simply do not allow them to return to their God. The Hebrew word that is properly translated as deeds is **ma'alelim**; it implicitly means wicked deeds. Some scholars see this verse as meaning that Israel refuses to give up their evil-doing, while others see it as meaning that their evil deeds were so loathsome that they are barred from returning to God. It really doesn't matter which way we look at it, the result is the same. It is their fault that they are no longer near to Yehoveh; they've done it to themselves. And how has this condition come to be? They have allowed in to themselves a spirit of harlotry. Since harlotry is a metaphor for idolatry, then this is saying that Ephraim as a people group have adopted a spirit of idolatry. As Douglas Stewart aptly puts it, the people have oriented themselves towards idolatry rather than towards the truth and towards God.

I am so taken by verses of chastisement such as these in Hosea and my prayer is that you are as well. They strike deep into my mind and are terribly upsetting. They also cause me much introspection (and no doubt that is why these words are there). I feel God's displeased gaze on the back of my neck. His disgust of our society... the world community in general. His anger that those who choose to call Him our God, and who claim to embrace His Son as Savior, reject the one source of knowledge that He gave us as our moral compass: the Torah. If we can in any way call ourselves aware and truth seekers, then when we look all around us... our community, our nation, our Church, our Synagogue... what is the spirit that any of these are oriented towards? Is it truly towards God... the true God of Israel as revealed to us in the Scriptures? Or is towards the god of our own making that

seeks compromise and consensus? The thing is, this verse is not speaking of individuals, but rather of a group. There's no doubt that there were others than Hosea that refused to succumb to the defiling way of life of his society or to adopt pagan worship practices, just as there are today the same. Yet, those who worked hard to remain faithful apparently were still firmly affixed to the Israelite society of the Northern Kingdom and so were in a way acquiescing to an orientation of idolatry and the accompanying immorality. I doubt it was easy to escape. Where would one go? I suppose one could have uprooted family and moved to Judah, but simply figuring out to how to survive the process would have been daunting. And as we learn in a couple of verses, Judah was drawing closer to the end of God's patience with them. So, in the end, we're all pretty much stuck where we are as were the faithful few of Israel. While we can and should prepare for what is prophesied and bound to come from this situation, it almost certainly doesn't involve escape.

Although the CJB translates verse 5 dynamically and not literally, I think it gets across the sense of the words better than most any other Bible version. Most Bibles will speak of Israel's pride; but what it is referring to their arrogance. However, the next words "testify in his face" (Ephraim's face) are a little tricky. When we look closely this translation is literally word for word correct; but the sum of the words amounts to more of an expression. What this means is that Ephraim's arrogance is proof enough of their guilt. Their arrogance alone reveals that God's indictment of idolatry against them is right. So, exactly what is it that Ephraim/Israel is arrogant about? It is all their religious activities that they thought were so very wonderful and right. Yet, God calls all their religious activities "crimes". The Hebrew word that the CJB translates as crimes, and most others translate as iniquities, is **avon**. This is another of those Hebrew words that can be translated quite well literally, but the sense of it was requires some nuance. **Avon** indeed means iniquity, but also guilt. However, when it is used as it is here and by other prophets such as Amos, it inherently includes the idea of punishment for that iniquity and guilt, rather than simply guilt as a fact. So, the fall that Israel will experience will be as a punishment inherently associated with their guilt. This is a critical piece of information because it reinforces that the punishment (which will be their exile and oppression at the hand of Assyria) will be orchestrated by God, and He is going to cause this to happen as His means to punish Israel for their arrogance of claiming to worship Him by means of their

bastardized religious practices. The final words of verse 5 then introduce the idea that Judah, too, is going to fall right along with Ephraim (although not necessarily for the same reason). And yet, as was clearly said earlier in Hosea, Judah's fall will come sometime after Israel's (it turned out to have been around 130 years later).

There's much tied and bundled together in verse 6 that is intended to both jog some memories, but also to make this story quite memorable and impactful when it is told generation to generation. The mention of bringing flocks and herds to seek Yehoveh harkens back to the time of Egypt and of their exodus.

CJB Exodus 10:8-9 ***⁸ So Moshe and Aharon were brought to Pharaoh again, and he said to them, "Go, worship ADONAI your God. But who exactly is going?" ⁹ Moshe answered, "We will go with our young and our old, our sons and our daughters; and we will go with our flocks and herds; for we must celebrate a feast to ADONAI."***

The Pharaoh of course fought against this and threw all sorts of conditions out to try to prevent Israel from going to worship Yehoveh and taking their flocks and herds with them. Now in the case of their actual exodus the flocks and herds were to serve as sources of food for their journey. But here in Hosea this is referring to taking overwhelming amounts of animals to be sacrificed in hopes that the volume of them would so impress Yehoveh that He would forgive them and they could avert disaster. But it also carries an underlying impression of Israel having brought their flocks and herds to sacrifice to the religious cult they had created that added Baal and pagan festivals to the mix. All these sacrifices, even if Israel were to repent, return to the Torah and the good ways, are too late. God's judgement has already happened even if the punishment wouldn't start for a few more years. There is an interesting story that occurs around 250 or so years prior to the time of Hosea that I think is a good illustration that highlights this part of God's nature that we just hate to wrestle with; but it's there and we need to face it.

CJB 1 Samuel 15:18-26 ***¹⁸ Now ADONAI sent you on a mission and told you, 'Go and completely destroy 'Amalek, those sinners; keep making war on them until they have been exterminated. ¹⁹ Why did you seize the spoil instead of paying***

attention to what ADONAI said? From ADONAI's viewpoint, you have done an evil thing." ²⁰ Sha'ul said to Sh'mu'el, "I did too pay attention to what ADONAI said, and I carried out the mission on which ADONAI sent me. I brought back Agag the king of 'Amalek, and I completely destroyed 'Amalek. ²¹ But the people took some of the spoil, the best of the sheep and cattle set aside for destruction, to sacrifice to ADONAI your God in Gilgal." ²² Sh'mu'el said, "Does ADONAI take as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying what ADONAI says? Surely obeying is better than sacrifice, and heeding orders than the fat of rams. ²³ "For rebellion is like the sin of sorcery, stubbornness like the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of ADONAI, he too has rejected you as king." ²⁴ Sha'ul said to Sh'mu'el, "I have sinned. I violated the order of ADONAI and your words too, because I was afraid of the people and listened to what they said. ²⁵ Now, please, pardon my sin; and come back with me, so that I can worship ADONAI." ²⁶ But Sh'mu'el said to Sha'ul, "I will not go back with you, because you have rejected the word of ADONAI, and ADONAI has rejected you as king over Isra'el."

Here is a situation that operates on the same God-principle that Hosea 5:6 is explaining. If we had read the preceding verses of 1Samuel 15 we'd know that what Saul did was to violate the law of the ban (a command in the Law of Moses). That is, there are things that belong to God alone and which may not be acquired (by war) and used for the benefit of God's people. Saul attacked Amalek, won, and kept the best spoils of war for himself. He was called out for it and told that the punishment would be severe. In order to avoid the consequences Saul wanted to impress God by now doing what he should have done in the first place. No dice, says Samuel. In the Book of Hosea, once Israel recognizes their mistake, they will try to avoid the consequences by running back to Yehoveh. They'll begin by offering lavish amounts of animals from the flocks and herds for sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem; God says He won't accept them. Saul confessed and repented; but Samuel as God's prophet told him that Saul is still being removed from his position as king because God has now set him on the shelf. The same sort of thing is going to happen with Israel.

This is what we are to understand: sacrifices weren't ever meant to placate or appease or persuade Yehoveh. In many cases the sacrifices were to properly worship Him in obedience. Often it was to give to Him things that were already His (that's the concept behind Firstfruits sacrifices). Since we can't tie a cow to a

stake and point to a sheaf of barley and tell God to come and get it, then the only way to give anything to God is to put it on the altar and burn it up with the smoke and ash symbolically going up to Heaven. The entire idea of placating or persuading or making a deal with a god comes from the pagan God systems because that's what everyone was hoping to do. Sacrificial animals were also literally thought (by the pagans) as the very necessary food for their gods so they didn't become hungry. In Yehoveh's system, as regards sin, in once sense a sacrifice is a kind of symbol of a worshipper's defeat. It means sin has won out and now some innocent animal is going to have to pay the price with its own life, as a substitute for the guilty sinning human. As was said in 1st Samuel 15, God would always rather His people simply obeyed Him so that His innocent creatures didn't have to be killed and burnt up on an altar.

Verse 7 says that another way that Israel has betrayed Him is by fathering foreign children. There was much intermarriage that occurred between Israel and their many gentile treaty partners. The Priesthood worked with the kings of Israel to amend and change the religious requirements and doctrines that were laid upon the people so it would work to the economic and nationalistic agenda and policies of the monarchy. It would be easy for us to shake our heads and point fingers of shame towards those terrible Israelites for doing such a thing. But in reality, it all happened quite slowly over many decades of time. Each seemingly minor change built upon the previous one, and each time the change didn't seem like much to be alarmed about. But after a few decades if one had cared to look to the past, what was currently being practiced looked nothing like it used to be. However, that's not generally what people do... is it? Hey: it's working pretty well for me, why would I mess with success?

There were so many problems that were introduced when Israelites took on gentile spouses. First, God forbade it so it was a sin. Second, the Law of Moses contains quite a few instructions on inheritance and property rights, and being married to a gentile brought with it enormous complexities and usually resulted in heartache. For instance; if a child was born to an Israelite and a Syrian was the child Israelite or Syrian? Was he Hebrew or gentile? At this point in history the ethnic identity of the father determined the ethnic identity of the children; but that would change over time. And now with this mixed marriage came the issue of religious practices. Neither family wanted their newly married family member to adopt a different religion with a different God and all the obligations that came

with it, so the family tensions in such a case were significant. The solution was to mix a little of each religion together to create a religious stew that would appease both sides, which is what Israel's government had already mandated and the priesthood had done. Jesus talked about this situation used the term "unequally yoked". I have spoken and corresponded with many heartbroken spouses that were Christians, having knowingly married a non-Believer, thinking that in time he or she would come around. Years have passed, there is no interest expressed; and the morality and ethics practiced by the non-believing spouse is so much different than for the Believer that it has become intolerable. Now what?

I've attempted, today, to draw your attention back to a couple of principles and realities that Hosea is built around, and so here's yet another to keep at the forefront of your mind as we move along. The relationship that Israel had with Yehoveh was based on one thing only: the covenants God had made with Abraham and Moses. Outside of that, Israel had no basis for a relationship with God. This was a binding covenant relationship even though Israel, as God said, had forgotten it and become unfaithful to it (like the unfaithful wife, Gomer, had become unfaithful to Hosea). All that we are reading was about Israel's violation of the covenants and how God was reacting to it. However, it is not as though God was bringing in some random consequences that were outside the covenant terms. Rather, especially as concerns the Covenant of Moses, the terms for each party of the covenant were laid out at Mt. Sinai with penalties associated for breaking those terms included. What we see happening here in Hosea is as a trial to prove that Israel actually broke the terms of the covenant, and then to determine the consequences for breaking those terms. So, there's no serendipitous or make-it-up-as-you-go punishment happening. God was merely staying true to the terms of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. The covenant penalty for Israel to do what they did was to be thrown out of the land in exactly the same way the penalty for Adam and Eve doing what they did was to be thrown out of the Garden. Never miss that connection.

Verse 8 begins what is sometimes called The Watchman verses because that is what is being depicted in verses 8 – 11. What the hearer is being asked to do is to imagine a watchman standing dutifully at his station upon the tallest hill around, looking in the direction that an attack might come from. He spots an advancing army and now he must do his job and warn his people. He sounds the

alarm by blowing a ram's horn and a trumpet. This is another of those couplet situations where a shofar (a ram's horn) and a trumpet mean essentially the same thing because here they do the same thing. Technically they are certainly not the same things. While it can't be said that a trumpet was never used to warn or to assemble the army for battle, a trumpet was usually an instrument assigned to the Levites used for religious ritual. A shofar was the equivalent of the old army bugle that, depending on the series or pitch of the blasts, would tell warriors what to do.

It seems pretty clear that this must be talking about the time when the Syrians allied with Ephraim/Israel to attack Judah. Do not confuse Syria with Assyria; these were 2 different nations. So, as hard as it is to imagine, it actually happened that 10 of the Israelite tribes went to their gentile neighbor to the north, Syria, and struck a deal with them so that together they would attack the other 2 tribes of Israel that lived in Judah. Such was the state of confusion and depravity that Israel had sunk. What we read here is historically accurate and the event is recorded in another place in the Bible. So, with the Hosea prophecy as our backdrop, here is the story.

CJB 2 Kings 16:5-9 ***⁵ Then Retzin king of Aram and Pekach son of Remalyah, king of Isra'el, came up to fight against Yerushalayim. They put Achaz under siege, but they could not overcome him. ⁶ It was at that time that Retzin king of Aram recovered Eilat for Aram and drove the Judeans from Eilat; whereupon people from Edom came to Eilat to live, as they do to this day. ⁷ Then Achaz sent messengers to Tiglat-Pil'eser king of Ashur with this message: "I am your servant and your son. Come up, and save me from the king of Aram and the king of Isra'el, who are attacking me." ⁸ Achaz took the silver and gold that was in the house of ADONAI and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a present to the king of Ashur. ⁹ The king of Ashur heeded him- the king of Ashur attacked Dammesek and captured it; then he carried its people captive to Kir and killed Retzin.***

A couple of things: Aram is another name for Syria. Jerusalem and Judah are another of those biblical couplets; they are meant as synonymous on many occasions even though technically one is a city and the other a kingdom. So, Pekah was the king of Israel at this time, and Ahaz was the King of Judah. Since

Pekah reigned from 752 -732 B.C. in Israel, and Ahaz reigned from 735 to 716 B.C., then there is really only a 3-4 year window during which this war occurred: it was sometime between 735 and 732 B.C. Israel and Judah had been regularly at each other's throats; they had been rival kingdoms for 200 years even though they were all brother Israelites. King Pekah makes an alliance with Retzin King of Syria to attack Judah. They mainly attack the territory of Benjamin, the most of which lay within the Kingdom of Judah, but part of which lay within the Kingdom of Israel. There is a mountain road that runs from the area of Jerusalem to the north and the order of cities given in this account in Hosea follows that route.

The first city is Gibeah, which is only about 3 miles from Jerusalem. Then a couple more miles up the road is Ramah. A little further yet is Bethel. Here we don't actually read Bethel; instead, we read Beit-Aven. I told you in an earlier lesson that this is a Hebrew literary device whereby a name with a certain meaning overlays the real name in order to make a point, usually a sarcastic point. So, Bethel means House of God, but Beit-Aven means House of Trouble. Thus, in this instance Beit-Aven is a derogatory name that God uses for Bethel. In the end, it's the same place.

In verse 9 after telling of the attack upon Judah by Ephraim, we learn about what comes next. While some reconstruction has to be pieced together to get the historical timeline correct, here's what we have. While still under attack, Judah was encouraged not to do as Israel did in seeking a gentile nation for an ally. Instead, Judah was asked to have faith in Yehoveh to deliver them from Syria and Ephraim's hand. However, Judah didn't do that. Instead, their king went to Assyria (the big dog in the region) and after paying them enormous amounts of treasure and gold, Assyria agreed to come to Judah's rescue. We are probably at right about the time Israel is going to change kings yet again. Pekah is about to be overthrown by Hosea (not the prophet Hosea), in 732 or 733 B.C. So, what does all this mean for Ephraim? Verse 9 says that the results of all these illicit alliances that both Judah and Israel had made with gentile nations is that even though Ephraim and Syria are allies, they are no match for Assyria. The Northern Kingdom is going to be ravaged by Assyria's army, calling Assyria's ultimate victory when they take the capital of Israel, Samaria, the Day of Punishment. That is, this is the official time when the Northern Kingdom of Israel ceases to exist and the 10 tribes of Israel become scattered to the winds.

Yehoveh assures both Israel and Judah that these events are going to happen and there is nothing they can do about them. Which, once again, brings us right back to preparedness. It's already been made clear that no amount of repentance, sacrificing, or pleading is going to change what will happen to Israel and later to Judah. God will not relent because some line in the sand has been crossed. So, what did Israel and Judah do? They warred with each other. And knowing in advance that local gentile nations were going to be God's tool to wreck Israel and Judah what did they do? They went out and made allies of those same gentile nations. So, how'd that work out? There's only one reason that Israel and Judah did this instead of taking other measures such as preparing for the inevitable: they didn't believe God. They didn't have the faith to heed the advance warning that could have greatly saved much suffering and death. Were Israel and Judah still going to be handed over to enemy gentile nations no matter how much they might have prepared? Yes. But their circumstances could have been far better involving far fewer deaths. Believing God and taking action could have averted much hunger and disease. Think again to the Egypt connection. God showed Joseph and Pharaoh that Egypt was going to go suffer a series of very bad harvests and nothing was going to stop it. But... He also said that if you will believe Him, and if you will take action and prepare, your people and livestock will survive it, and they can even be a blessing to others. The Pharaoh believed God, he went into preparation mode with Joseph at the helm, and Egypt came out of a 7-year drought stronger than when it began. Prepare, prepare, prepare children of God. We have been told what is coming and nothing will stop it. When we're prepared even the unexpected can be better weathered. How much more after we've been warned can we prepare if only we'll trust and do it instead of (fingers crossed) putting it off?

In verse 10 attention is turned to Judah. It compares the leadership of Judah to people who move boundary markers. Deuteronomy chapter 27 has along list of things in which God issues a curse upon the person or people who violate certain laws. Among the list is this one:

CJB Deuteronomy 27:17 ***"A curse on anyone who moves his neighbor's boundary marker.' All the people are to say, 'Amen!'"***

Remembering that this applied to the Israelites, then it is necessary to factor in that God was going to allot each tribe and clan their territory in the Promised Land. The Promised Land was never to be imagined as actually being owned by the various Israelite tribes and clans, such that typical human means of deciding on boundaries was involved. God was the owner and landlord, and Israel was the tenant. The land could be used and occupied by an obedient Israel to the exclusion of all others; but never would the land belong to them, in the sense of actual ownership. So, when Yehoveh gave each tenant tribe their piece of land, it would have been an affront to God to move His assigned boundary lines. The boundaries were usually described by natural features such as streams and rivers, certain hills and mountains, sometimes large trees or pre-established villages. Always, however, there were boundary makers that usually amounted to a stack of stones arranged in such a way as to be easily understood by all of its purpose.

When God says that Judah's leaders were like boundary marker movers, it speaks to their poor character and their rebelliousness towards Him.

Consequently, says God, He's going to pour His wrath out upon them like water. The terms "wrath" and "pouring out" (as in pouring out God's anger) are regularly connected in the Bible. There's no particular nuance because the term "water" is used; its only that the pouring out of water is easy to picture in one's mind.

After dealing with Judah's punishment, God turns back to Ephraim/Israel in verse 11 explaining that Ephraim will be oppressed, justice will be abused, and then He explains why. Notice how the descriptions of the offenses that cause God to react are different between Judah and Ephraim. Judah is accused of having the character of boundary marker movers. Ephraim, however, chose to align himself closely with the gentile world (an enemy of Israel). We need not get into the nuances of some of the terms chosen here like "oppressions" and "justice abused". This is the language of the curses God placed in the Covenant of Moses should rebellion occur. The point is that Israel will suffer through very hard circumstances for an undetermined amount of time. They will be subject to the justice of the gentile nations to which they are scattered and they can be certain it will not be like the fair-minded and consistent type of justice God had given to them.

Ephraim's major crime comes down to a lack of faithfulness; I suppose that's why any of us and all of us sin. If we were perfectly faithful, sin gets taken out of the picture. Yehoveh had promised Israel that if they practiced faithfulness towards Him, He would make them secure in their land and God would deal with their enemies.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:1-10 *"If you listen closely to what ADONAI your God says, observing and obeying all his mitzvot which I am giving you today, ADONAI your God will raise you high above all the nations on earth; ² and all the following blessings will be yours in abundance- if you will do what ADONAI your God says: ³ "A blessing on you in the city, and a blessing on you in the countryside. ⁴ "A blessing on the fruit of your body, the fruit of your land and the fruit of your livestock- the young of your cattle and flocks. ⁵ "A blessing on your grain-basket and kneading-bowl. ⁶ "A blessing on you when you go out, and a blessing on you when you come in. ⁷ "ADONAI will cause your enemies attacking you to be defeated before you; they will advance on you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ "ADONAI will order a blessing to be with you in your barns and in everything you undertake; he will bless you in the land ADONAI your God is giving you. ⁹ "ADONAI will establish you as a people separated out for himself, as he has sworn to you- if you will observe the mitzvot of ADONAI your God and follow his ways. ¹⁰ Then all the peoples on earth will see that ADONAI's name, his presence, is with you; so that they will be afraid of you.*

We'll stop here and pick up Hosea chapter 5 next time.