

Hosea

Chapter 11

God's Love for Israel

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ² But the more called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. ³ It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them. ⁵ “Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? ⁶ Swords will flash in their cities, will destroy the bars of their gates and put an end to their plans. ⁷ My people are determined to turn from me. Even if they call to the Most High, he will by no means exalt them. ⁸ “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. ⁹ I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath. ¹⁰ They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. ¹¹ They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes,” declares the LORD.

11:1 A third appeal to history (see 9:10; 10:9) traces God’s choice of Israel back to Egypt, the exodus from that country (cf. 12:9; 13:4) having given birth to the nation. Israel’s response to the Lord is now illustrated by the wayward son rather than by the unfaithful wife (chs. 1–3). For Israel as a son see Ex 4:22–23; Isa 1:2–4; and for God as Father see Dt 32:6; Jer 2:14. Hosea saw God’s love as the basis (cf. 3:1) for the election of Israel. Matthew found in the call of Israel from Egypt a typological picture of Jesus’ coming from Egypt (see Mt 2:15 and note). (CSB)

Hosea repeatedly reminds Israel of how graciously God has dealt with them in the past (cf 9:10a, 13a; 10:1a, 11a). (TLSB)

out of Egypt I called My son. Recalls the time nearly seven centuries before Hosea’s time when God elected Israel as His “firstborn son” (Ex 4:22–23) and rescued him from bondage in Egypt. This event anticipated the appearance of God’s only-begotten Son and the Father’s care during the Christ Child’s return from Egypt, after He narrowly escaped Herod’s attempt to destroy Him. (TLSB)

11:2 *called.* The Lord continuously raised up prophets to urge trust and obedience in the one true God. (TLSB)

images. See Dt 7:25; 12:3. (CSB)

Baal was the most alluring pagan deity for Israel and during the reign of Ahab was actually decreed the national idol (1 Ki 16:20-34). (TLSB)

11:3 *Ephraim*. Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

walk. This picture of a father teaching his child to walk is one of the most tender in the OT. (CSB)

Continuing the parental imagery of v 1, God is pictured as a father tenderly holding his child by the arms as the little one learns to walk. (TLSB)

did not realize. See 2:5–8. (CSB)

healed. See 5:13; 6:1; 7:1. (CSB)

11:4 The imagery is unclear, but the figure seems to change to a farmer tending his work animals. Another interpretation sees a continuation of the son image, with the father lifting the son to his cheek. (CSB)

CORDS OF HUMAN KINDNESS – Possibly imagery for a guide rope, halter, or lead rope. (TLSB)

the yoke on their jaws. A yoke can impede an animal's ability to chew, esp as it leans forward to eat from a trough. (TLSB)

When a man slips back the yoke on the neck of a draft animal in order to give it the liberty to eat freely. (Kretzmann)

feed them. God supplied miraculous food in the desert (see Ex 16; Dt 8:16). (CSB)

Gently offering them food for their souls. The entire passage refers to the many evidences of love which the Lord showed His people on the way through the wilderness and in the Promised Land. (Kretzmann)

BENT DOWN – God compares Himself to a caring master who ensures His that animals basic needs (and even comfort) are supplied. (TLSB)

11:5 *Egypt ... Assyria*. The tender tone (vv. 1–4) changes to threat of exile to the two countries between which Israel had vacillated. It is ironic that the people rescued from Egypt should be returned there because of their disloyalty to the one who had rescued them. (CSB)

God forewarns Israel of impending judgment by means of the Assyrian invasion. (TLSB)

11:6 **DESTROY THE BARS OF THEIR GATES** – Crossbeams used to lock doors and gates. (TLSB)

their own counsels. Plans and deeds made without dependence on the Lord and His Word. (TLSB)

Because they were determined to leave the Lord and His ways. (Kretzmann)

11:7 *bent on turning away.* To pursue wickedness. Constitutes original sin, which is the root of all unbelief and disobedience. Luth: “Where, do you think, lies the reason why we cannot believe the Word of God although everything up to the article of the resurrection of the dead has happened as Scripture says? The reason is original sin” (WLS § 1442). (TLSB)

My people are bent to backsliding from Me, they were ever inclined to fall away and to reject the Lord. (Kretzmann)

call to the Most High. See 7:16. (CSB)

Although they pray, they more steadfastly turn away from Him. (TLSB)

Pointing them upwards to the one Rock of their Salvation. (Kretzmann)

EXALT THEM – “all together they refuse to arise.” If men are lost, it is not due to a lack of love on the part of the Lord, but altogether to their own stubbornness in refusing His invitation. (Kretzmann)

11:8 The stubborn son was subject to stoning (Dt 21:18–21), but the Lord’s compassion overcame his wrath and he refused to destroy Ephraim (Israel). (CSB)

Admah ... Zeboiim. Cities of the plain (Ge 10:19; 14:2, 8), overthrown when Sodom was destroyed (Ge 19:24–25; Dt 29:23; Jer 49:18) and symbolizing total destruction. (CSB)

Two cities in the Valley of Siddim destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. (TLSB)

My heart. Using anthropomorphic language to emphasize His fatherly love for Israel, God again underscores His abiding mercy and unending concern for His people.

Being most violently stirred at the contemplation of Israel's condition. God is ever more ready to show mercy than to let His stern justice punish men. (Kretzmann)

11:9 *God, and not man.* Although Israel has been as unreliable as man, God will not be untrue to the love he has shown toward Israel (see vv. 1–4; see also 1Sa 15:29; Mal 3:6). Israel was to be punished, but not destroyed. (CSB)

Humans often permit emotions to control their actions and even pervert justice. Not so with God. While angered, He still deals with people in accord with a perfect balance of justice and mercy. (TLSB)

the Holy One among you. God's holiness is alluded to only here in Hosea. (CSB)

God is true to His promise to preserve His people. He is also personal, making Himself known in the midst of His people. He continues to do the same through the Church's preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

11:10–11 God will gather His people from the nations. (TLSB)

11:10 The return from exile. (CSB)

roar like a lion. Rather than threatening destruction (cf. 5:14; 13:7), God's roar was now a clear signal to return from exile. (CSB)

Lions announce their arrival and mark their territory by roaring. This metaphorical roar not only declares to the world that God has returned for His people but also announces His rule and power. (TLSB)

the west. The islands of the sea (as well as coastlands). (CSB)

Lit, "from the waters," the seas over which they dispersed. *Egypt ... Assyria.* South and east of Israel, respectively. When He returns, all of His faithful people will be gathered from every corner of the world. (TLSB)

Literally, "from the sea," along the shores of the Mediterranean, that is, throughout the Western world. (Kretzmann)

11:11 *from Egypt ... Assyria.* See 9:3. (CSB)

All the quarters of the earth would be affected by His call. (Kretzmann)

like birds ... like doves. Suggests swiftness of return (cf. Isa 60:8) and is not derogatory, as was the earlier comparison to a silly dove (7:11). (CSB)

SETTLE IN THEIR HOMES – So that they would enjoy His inheritance. The reference is clearly to the blessings of the Messianic period. (Kretzmann)

declares the LORD. See 2:13, 16, 21. (CSB)

11:12 *lies ... deceit.* See 7:3; 10:13 and note. (CSB)

On account of the hypocrisy with which its members still tried to create the impression that they clung to the true God. (Kretzmann)

unruly against God. See Jer 2:31. (CSB)

Judah still wanders unrestrained over against God, against the faithful Holy One," so that both kingdoms were guilty before the Lord. (Kretzmann)