

Drawn with Gentle Cords

Hosea 11

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Hosea 11:1-12 – God’s Love for Israel (NIV)

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. ²As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images. ³“I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. ⁴I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. ⁵“He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent. ⁶And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them, because of their own counsels. ⁷My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him. ⁸“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. ⁹I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror. ¹⁰“They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; ¹¹They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,” says the Lord. ¹²“Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; But Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One who is faithful.

v1 – What was God recalling here?

God remembered His tender love for Israel, when more than 500 years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of Egypt.

How was this recollection also a Messianic prophecy?

This is an “unexpected” prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Matthew 2:15 shows how the words *out of Egypt I called My son* were fulfilled when the child Jesus return from Egypt after escaping there on the eve of Herod’s massacre of the innocents.

v2 – Who else called to Israel?

As they called them, so they went from them: God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals called to Israel, and they forsook the LORD and followed the Baals (the local deities of Canaan).

v3 – What did God do for Israel?

I taught Ephraim to walk... but they did not know that I healed them: God does so much for His people that they are unaware of. Often, we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

- *Walk:* get around in this world; the basics
- *Taking them by their arms:* The picture is of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child’s arms as they make their awkward steps.

v4 – What does it tell us that God drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love?

Even when God draws His people, it is with **gentle cords** of **love**, not with harsh manipulation or coercion. God wants to win us over, but not with brute force.

- God made use of every means and method to teach them to walk in the right and only safe path.”

Is it better to be drawn or forced?

The empires of Persia and Greece fought bitter wars and there was big difference between their soldiers...

- In the Persian army, soldiers were like slaves and driven into battle with whips and threats.
- In the Greek army, soldiers were free men who fought out of love for country and a sense of duty.

The smaller armies of Greece usually beat the larger armies of Persia.

Does God draw us today?

John 6:44 – *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*

No one comes to God except he is drawn. God initiates our relationship with Him but it is up to us to respond to His drawing us.

Why does God need to draw us to salvation?

Simply put, if He didn't, we would never come. The natural man has no ability or desire to come to God. Because his heart is hard and his mind is darkened, the unregenerate person is actually an enemy of God (Romans 5:10).

Does God draw everyone to Himself?

There is a sense in which God draws all people. This is known as the "general call" and is distinguished from the "effectual call" of God's elect. Passages such as Psalm 19:1-4 and Romans 1:20 attest to the fact that God's eternal power and divine nature are "clearly seen" and "understood" from what has been made, "*so that people are without excuse.*"

- But men still deny God; those who acknowledge His existence will not come to a saving knowledge of Him outside of His drawing them.
- Only those who have been drawn through special revelation—by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God—will come to Christ.

How do people experience God drawing them to salvation?

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sinful state and our need for a Savior (John 16:8). Next, He awakens in us a previously unknown interest in spiritual things and creates a desire for them that was never there before.

- Suddenly our ears are open, our hearts are inclined toward Him, and His Word begins to hold a new and exciting fascination for us.

Our spirits begin to discern spiritual truth that never made sense to us before:

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned*

Also, we begin to have new desires. He places within us a new heart that inclines toward Him, a heart that desires to know Him, obey Him, and walk in the "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:4) that He has promised.

What does it tell us that God is as those who take the yoke from their neck?

This refers to relaxing and loosening the yoke-collar of a plowing animal, giving the animal rest and the freedom to breathe.

What does it tell us that God stooped and fed them?

God humbled Himself to minister to His needy people. One might almost think it is beneath the dignity and honor of God to stoop so for His people, but He never thinks so. This is the heart reflected in the servant nature of Jesus (Philippians 2).

v5-6 – What would become of Israel because they refused to repent?

It wasn't so much the sin of Israel that got them into trouble. It was their stubborn refusal **to repent** after their sin. For that, God would make sure that destruction and exile waited for them.

v7 – What does it tell us that Israel was *backsliding* from God?

Backsliding means that at one time, Israel had a closer and more real walk with God. Now that is in the past, and their profession is simply empty. They *call to the Most High* in a formal sort of way, but they did not *exalt Him* with their lives.

v8 – What did God think of having to discipline Israel?

How can I give you up, Ephraim? Though the dark clouds of judgment are on the horizon, God takes no pleasure in the chastening about to come upon Israel. Instead He says, "*My sympathy is stirred.*"

- Justice demands that He give them up, yet in His heart He must find a way of salvation. In this, God sends Jesus Christ to be "given up" in our place.

What happened to Admah and Zeboiim?

These were two cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that were also destroyed (Deuteronomy 29:23).

- God says, "I can't bear to allow My people to be caught up in the destruction that will come upon all the nations, as Admah and Zeboiim were caught up on the destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah."

v9 – What does it mean that God *will not again destroy Ephraim*?

Though their sin deserves it, God will not wipe out Israel. He will leave a remnant, and will restore the nation.

What does it tell us that God is God and not man?

The longsuffering, forgiveness, and compassion of the Lord toward His people seems unbelievable until we recognize that He is *not man*, but God. His love and forgiveness are of a different order.

What are some differences between God and man in the matter of forgiveness?

- Man cannot hold back his anger very long.
- Man cannot bear with others when he is tired, stressed, or annoyed.
- Man will not reconcile if the person who offended him is a person of bad character.
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party craves forgiveness and makes the first move.
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party will never again do the wrong.
- Man, when he does reconcile, does not lift the former offender to place of high status and partnership.
- Man, when he is wronged, does not bear all the penalty for the wrong done.
- Man, when he attempts reconciliation, will not continue if he is rejected.
- Man will not restore an offender without a period of probation
- Man will not love, adopt, honor, and associate with one who has wronged him.
- Man will not trust someone who has formerly wronged them.

Suppose that someone had grievously offended you, and he asked your forgiveness... 'Well, yes, I forgive you; but I cannot forget...

- That is lame forgiveness, and is not worth much.

v10 – When will Israel walk after the Lord?

This has to be during the Tribulation when Israel as a nation recognizes Jesus as the Messiah... the ultimate restoration of Israel.

What does God roaring like a lion result in?

It results in Israel returning to the land trembling... they are trembling because they will be awed by His presence.

- This is referring to their return in belief... they are not trembling in His presence when they return in unbelief (going on now).

Why is it Israel will only return from the west?

West is only one of the directions they will return from, but this is the direction from which they will see Him when He returns...

Matthew 24:27 – *For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

The post-Tribulation return to Israel in belief will be supernatural to the point that it will be more memorable than the Exodus...

Jeremiah 16:14-15 – *“behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord*

lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

v11 – From where will Israel come when they are regathered?

Egypt and Assyria were just representative of all the Gentile nations.

What does it mean that they will dwell in their houses?

During the Millennial Kingdom, everyone will have their own house...

Isaiah 65:21-22 – *They shall build houses and inhabit them... They shall not build and another inhabit ... My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

v12 – What does it tell us about God who is making these promises despite the unfaithfulness of Israel?

He is being faithful to His earlier unconditional promises to the patriarchs of Israel; the Abrahamic Covenant.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- God is drawing us to Himself today; we should not resist!
- Mankind’s forgiveness falls far short of God’s forgiveness; we should be more like God.
- God keeps His promises, we should as well.