

# **Getting Into The Promised Land Without Falling Asleep In Leviticus**

## **10. The Divided Kingdoms The Northern Kingdom – Israel – The Prophets**

Tim Attaway

**A Teaching Commentary  
of the Old Testament**

**Note – This piece has been segmented out of a larger document.**

© Copyright 1996, 1999, 2007 by Tim Attaway  
All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the author.

Unless otherwise stated, the Bible translation used in this commentary is taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society.

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>ELIJAH AND ELISHA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1	ELIJAH AND THE DROUGHT .....	6
1.2	THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH .....	6
1.3	ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL .....	7
1.4	THE CALL OF ELISHA.....	10
1.5	ELIJAH AND NABOTH'S VINEYARD .....	10
1.6	ELIJAH AND AHAZIAH.....	10
1.7	ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN .....	11
1.8	ELISHA PURIFIES WATER .....	11
1.9	DON'T MESS WITH ELISHA.....	11
1.10	ELISHA AND THE MOABITE REVOLT .....	12
1.11	ELISHA AND THE WIDOW'S OIL .....	12
1.12	ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON .....	12
1.13	ELISHA AND THE POISONOUS STEW .....	13
1.14	ELISHA FEEDS A MULTITUDE .....	13
1.15	ELISHA AND NAAMAN'S LEPROSY.....	14
1.16	ELISHA MAKES AN AXHEAD FLOAT .....	14
1.17	ELISHA AND THE BLIND ARAMEANS .....	15
1.18	ELISHA AND FAMINE IN SAMARIA.....	15
1.19	ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND .....	16
1.20	ELISHA AND THE MURDER OF BEN-HADAD.....	16
1.21	ELISHA AND THE ANOINTING OF JEHU .....	17
1.22	THE DEATH OF ELISHA .....	18
1.23	THE LEGACY OF ELIJAH AND ELISHA.....	18
<b>2</b>	<b>AMOS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1	ORACLES AGAINST ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS.....	21
2.2	ORACLE AGAINST ISRAEL .....	22
2.3	ISRAEL HAS NOT RESPONDED TO MERCY .....	23
2.4	REPENT! .....	24
2.5	THE COMPLACENT AND THE PROUD .....	25
2.6	THE VISION OF THE PLUMB LINE.....	25
2.7	AMAZIAH.....	25
2.8	THE VISION OF RIPE FRUIT .....	26
2.9	THE DESTRUCTION AND RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.....	26
<b>3</b>	<b>JONAH.....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1	DON'T MAKE ME GO!.....	28
3.2	IN THE BELLY .....	29
3.3	TO NINEVEH .....	30
3.4	DISPLEASED WITH HIS OWN SUCCESS .....	31
<b>4</b>	<b>HOSEA.....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1	UNUSUAL FAMILY .....	33
4.2	REBUKE AND RECONCILIATION .....	33
4.3	FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION .....	34
4.4	JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL .....	35
4.4.1	<i>God's Love for Israel</i> .....	37

4.5	ISRAEL'S SIN AND GOD'S ANGER .....	38
4.6	REPENTANCE AND BLESSING.....	38
<b>5</b>	<b>INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>TOPICAL INDEX .....</b>	<b>42</b>



# 1 **Elijah and Elisha**

1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 13:20

Elijah and Elisha were two prophets of the Northern Kingdom. Their lives and their ministries were closely intertwined. They stand out as different from most of the prophets we know. Two main things set them apart from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, etc.

- We have no record of anything that they may have written. They were not "writing prophets."
- Their ministries were accompanied by signs and wonders unlike anything that we know about the other prophets mentioned above.

The events of their careers span 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 13. Of the two, we have a great deal more information about Elisha. It seems that more miracles occurred in the ministry of Elisha. Still, for whatever reason, Elijah seems to have been the greater prophet. It was Elijah, and not Elisha, who appeared to Jesus at the transfiguration. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, not Elisha. Still both were great men of God.

## **1.1 *Elijah and the Drought***

1 Kings 17:1-6

We first meet Elijah when God gave him a message to take to Ahab. God was about to bring drought upon the land for several years. There would not be rain, nor would there even be dew in the mornings.

Taking a message like this to a king was a risky venture. Men had been executed for much less. A king in those days had the right to do whatever he wanted to do to people who made him mad. Delivering such a message could be considered an act of treason.

In spite of the risk involved, Elijah was faithful to deliver the message to Ahab. Ahab did not strike out against him immediately, but God told Elijah to go and hide himself in the Kerith Ravine. He would drink from the brook there and God sent ravens to feed him. We have no idea what the ravens fed him, but somehow God arranged for birds to bring food to Elijah, sustaining him during this time.

## **1.2 *The Widow of Zarephath***

1 Kings 17:7-24

Famine spread over the entire land due to the drought. Eventually the brook that supplied Elijah dried up. God instructed Elijah to go to a town called Zarephath. A widow there would provide a home for Elijah.

Elijah went. When he came to the town gate, he met a widow gathering wood. He asked her to bring him some water to drink. She went to get it. He also asked her for some bread to eat. She replied that her food supply was almost exhausted. All she had left was a little flour and a little bit of oil. She was now in the process of gathering wood so that she could bake what was left into a loaf. She and her son would eat the last of what was there and then they would die.

Elijah told her that if she would make him bread first, God would make sure her supply of flour and oil lasted until rain returned to the land.

Who knows what ran through the mind of this woman? She had no clue who this man was. As far as she knew, he was scheming to take the last bit of nourishment that was available to her and to her son. She acted in faith, however. Somehow the Spirit of God had prepared her for this event, and she did as Elijah asked. She made him bread first. From that point on, the oil and the flour never ran out. She, her son, and Elijah were all sustained by the supply for the duration of the drought.

Sometime later the woman's son became ill and died. The woman perceived that Elijah was a man of God and felt that somehow his presence revealed the sin in her own life. She felt that her son's death was a punishment for her sin and was a result of Elijah's presence in her home. It is strange how we tend to feel like our sins are more visible when we are around people that we consider to be more righteous than we are (e.g. clergy-types). In fact, the standard (and the only judge) is God and he sees our sin all of the time. He also sees the sins of those we consider to be so much better than we are. In his eyes, we have all fallen short and we are all in need of his redemptive mercy.

The widow cried out to Elijah. He felt her pain. He took her son and carried him up to room that they had provided for Elijah. He laid him on his bed and prayed to God to restore the boy. Elijah stretched his body out over the boy three times and each time cried out to God to bring the boy back to life. God honored his request and the boy returned to life. Elijah took him back down to his mother.

### **1.3 *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal***

1 Kings 18:1-19:18

The best-known story about Elijah is probably the one about his contest with the prophets of Baal.

God told Elijah that the time for the drought was about over. It was in its third year. During this time, Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had been busy executing the prophets of God and trying to convert the nation to Baal worship. Ahab had been searching for Elijah because he wanted to kill him. He viewed Elijah as being responsible for the drought and the famine.

Elijah sent word to Ahab to meet him at the top of Mount Carmel. Ahab did. Ahab accused Elijah of bringing trouble on the land. Elijah told Ahab that he (Ahab) was the cause of the trouble. He had been the one to bring idolatry into the land. There was obviously a difference of opinion about who was at fault.

Elijah suggested a contest. He told Ahab to bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah to the mountain. Get two bulls. There would be an altar to Baal and one to God. A bull would be sacrificed to Baal and later one to God. Each would be put on its respective altar. Wood would be put under the altars but would not be lighted. The prophets of Baal would call out to their god to consume the offering with fire. Elijah would call out to God to do the same. Whichever god/God responded was the one that should be revered by the people.

They did as Elijah suggested. The prophets of Baal went first. They sacrificed their bull, putting it on their altar with wood under the altar. They cried out to their god. Nothing happened. Elijah began to taunt them, suggesting perhaps that Baal was asleep. Maybe if they shouted louder

they could wake him up. They cried louder and louder. They cut themselves. Until evening they tried everything they could.

Elijah was now ready. He repaired the altar of God, which was in ruins. He sacrificed the bull and put it on the altar. He put wood in the altar but then had the people pour several buckets of water over the wood until it was thoroughly drenched. Elijah then prayed (1 Kings 18:36-37):

O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.

When Elijah prayed this, fire fell down from heaven, consuming the sacrifice and the wood and drying up all the water that had been poured. The people were impressed.

Elijah called to the people to seize the prophets of Baal. They were taken and executed.

Elijah then told Ahab to go home and eat and drink because rain was approaching. Before long, clouds began to form. Eventually a great storm moved in and rain was restored to the land.

It did not take long for Jezebel to find out what had happened to her prophets. She swore to kill Elijah in revenge. He was afraid and ran for his life. He ran to Beersheba in Judah and hid. He sat down and prayed that God to just let him die. He fell asleep. An angel came to him twice and woke him up and gave him food and drink. Once his strength had returned, the angel told Elijah to travel to Mount Horeb and to wait there in a cave. Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. It is interesting that God led him there. God is going to reveal his presence to Elijah, and he chooses to do so at the same location where he revealed his presence to Moses.

While in the cave that night, God appeared to him and asked him why he was there. Elijah replied (1 Kings 19:10):

I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.

At this, God told him to go stand on the mountain while the presence of God passed by. 1 Kings 19:11-18 describes what follows:

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any

who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

So what's going on here?

Elijah has just come off of what must have been the greatest spiritual experience in his life. He has just teamed with God to defeat the prophets of Baal. He has prayed for fire to fall down from heaven and God has honored his prayer. Why in the world would he not be charged up and empowered at this point and ready to take on the world?

In fact, Elijah's recent experience had exhausted him. In spite of the great triumph that he had, the whole experience was a great drain on his spiritual energy. Once the excitement died down, he was weak from the experience. Not only was he hungry and physically tired, but he was tired in his spirit. His experience is not uncommon for men. Spiritual highs are often followed by spiritual lows.

Right after Elijah had partnered with God in a great spiritual victory, he immediately became the target of an attack by Satan. In his weakened condition, his response was fear rather than faith. Rather than running to God, he ran from Jezebel. Yet even at this time when he did not recognize it, God was with him.

God asked him what he was doing. Elijah responded with a "poor me" assessment of the situation. Israel was unfaithful to God. They were killing the prophets of the Lord. Elijah felt that he was the only one who was holding out for what was right. Oh woe is him! The weight of everything that is right was on his shoulders!

We all get this way sometimes, particularly when we are tired and vulnerable, as was Elijah. We begin to see ourselves as in charge rather than as players and we get tired of carrying the burden that we fantasize is ours. The fact is that the battle is the Lord's and it always will be.

Elijah needed some reassuring. God told Elijah that he would reveal his presence to him. A torrential and destructive wind – perhaps a tornado – followed. Elijah looked for the presence of God in the mighty wind but it was not there. Then there was an earthquake. Elijah looked for the presence of God in the might of the earthquake but it was not there. A fire followed. Elijah looked for the presence of God in the fire but it was not there. Following the fire came a gentle whisper – a still, small voice. Therein was the presence of God.

Elijah had seen some great manifestations of God's power in his ministry. He saw famine, which had a destructive effect on the land, as devastating as an earthquake. He saw a mighty wind that brought the rain, bringing an end to the drought. He saw fire fall down from heaven and consume the altar. It is easy to stand back and look at these and think we are witnessing the presence of God. The fact is, the wind and the fire and the earth are subject to God but they do not represent the presence of God. We must be careful not to confuse the manifestations of God's power with God's presence. If we get confused into thinking that these extraordinary phenomenon are normal barometers of God's presence, then we are going to be disappointed most of the time because most of the time God reveals himself through a still small voice. The God who controls fire and wind and the earth typically chooses to come to us in a gentle, quiet way.

Elijah had gotten high on phenomenon. When they ceased, he did not feel God's presence. God was there all the time. Elijah just had his radio tuned to the wrong frequency.

God gave Elijah instructions to go and anoint some people for special duties. They included Hazael, king of Aram, Jehu, son of Nimshi king over Israel, and Elisha. He was to anoint Elisha

to be his own successor. God also assured Elijah that he was not alone. In fact, God had preserved seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed down to the Baals. God was still in control.

Elijah would be around a bit longer, but God had chosen Elisha to be his helper for a time and then his successor. For the remainder of his ministry, Elijah would be more of a still small voice than he would be fire, wind, and earthquake.

### **1.4 The Call of Elisha**

1 Kings 19:19-21

Elijah had been told to go and anoint three men. The first one that he went to find was Elisha, whom God had designated to be his successor. When Elijah came for him, Elisha left his home and followed Elijah. He became his apprentice for a time so that he could learn whatever he needed to know to eventually take Elijah's place.

What value there is in mentoring. It is really not necessary that we learn everything on our own. God honors the concept of one man discipling another. Proverbs 27:17 says "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." It is a concept that had been lost on the church for a long time but which has been found again in recent years with movements such as Promise Keepers.

### **1.5 Elijah and Naboth's Vineyard**

1 Kings 21

The incident with Ahab and Naboth's vineyard has already been discussed in the section on Ahab's life. It is included here for completeness. God used Elijah to confront Ahab over the sin of taking Naboth's life and his vineyard. He pronounced the fall of the house of Ahab over this incident. The fulfillment of this word came after the departure of Elijah, although Ahab himself died while Elijah was still on the earth.

### **1.6 Elijah and Ahaziah**

2 Kings 1

King Ahaziah sustained injuries from a fall. He sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see whether or not he would recover. God sent Elijah to meet the messengers. When he did, he said to them (2 Kings 1:3-4), "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'"

They went back and delivered this message to Ahaziah. He asked them who had said this thing. They did not know the name of the man but gave a physical description. Ahaziah figured out that it was Elijah. He wanted to confront Elijah directly on this issue.

Ahaziah sent a captain plus fifty soldiers to seize Elijah and bring him to him. The men found Elijah and said (2 Kings 1:9): "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!'" Elijah replied (2 Kings 1:10): "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" This was not good news for the soldiers. As Elijah had said, fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

Ahaziah was not intimidated by this show. After all, it was not his hair that got burned. He sent another captain and another fifty men. The same thing happened to them. He sent a third round of men. This captain had a different approach. We read in 1 Kings 1:13-14:

This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. "Man of God," he begged, "Please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!"

An angel appeared to Elijah and told him to go with the men. They escorted him to Ahaziah. When Elijah met Ahaziah, he said exactly what he had said earlier, that he would die because he consulted Baal-Zebub rather than God. After he delivered that message, Ahaziah died.

### **1.7 *Elijah Taken Up to Heaven***

2 Kings 2:1-18

Elijah knew that his time had come to be taken home. Elisha knew it as well. Elijah wanted to be alone for the event but Elisha would not leave his side. Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken. Elisha asked for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

They were near Jericho at the Jordan River. Elijah wished to cross the river. He took his cloak and stuck the water with it. The river parted so that he and Elisha could walk across. Once they were on the other side, a chariot of fire appeared and took Elijah up into heaven. Elijah was gone.

Elisha took the cloak that Elijah had left behind. He went back to the river and struck the river with the cloak, just as Elijah had done. The river parted once again and Elisha crossed back over. It seemed that Elisha indeed had received the spirit of Elijah.

### **1.8 *Elisha Purifies Water***

2 Kings 2:19-22

Elisha found himself in a city with an unclean water supply. They asked him to do something about it. He threw some salt in it and declared that God had healed the water. The water became pure.

### **1.9 *Don't Mess with Elisha***

2 Kings 2:23-25

Shortly after this, Elisha was traveling from one town to another. Some young men came out and began to make fun of him. They shouted at him (2 Kings 2:23): "Go on up, you baldhead!" We assume from this that Elisha was follicly challenged. Elisha turned and cursed them. When he did, two bears came out of a forest and mauled forty-two of them. Elisha went on his way.

For a man of God, does this seem like an appropriate response to some teasing? On the surface, no. Underneath there may be a different story.

There are different types of teasing. You can tease a friend in fun hoping that the friend will laugh with you. You can tease an enemy in malice hoping to inflict persecution. Let us rule out the possibility that these were friends trying to get him to laugh along. When you tease an

enemy for persecution, even then there can be two motives. You may not like the person – something about his personality, or perhaps in the past he has done something to hurt you. On the other hand, you may not like something for which the person stands. I have a feeling that Elisha would have let the incident pass if these people had simply been making fun of him for being bald. I think that at the heart of this, they were making fun of him because he was a man of God. They were really making fun of his God more than they were making fun of him.

The story says that young men ("youths" in the NIV) were making fun of him. This does not mean two thirteen-year-old boys. A young man could be thirty years old. Furthermore there were at least forty-two of them. This was basically a mob of angry young men who had no respect for Elisha or his God.

Now going back to the original question. Is this an appropriate response – for a man of God to call bears out of the forest to maul his enemies? If it were Elisha's idea, then no. Realize that Elisha did not have the power to call these bears out of the woods; God did. We must assume that Elisha was an agent for bringing punishment on these men for their flagrant disrespect of God. God was the punisher. Framed in that context, yes it is an appropriate response for a man of God to do what God told him to do.

Anyway, if you meet Elisha in the hereafter, don't mention his hair.

### ***1.10 Elisha and the Moabite Revolt***

2 Kings 3

There was a time when Joram of Israel, Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom were fighting the Moabites and they ran out of water. Elisha was used by God to deliver a message to the kings about how they would get water. He also prophesied to them about their defeat of Moab. See the section on Joram of Israel for more details.

### ***1.11 Elisha and the Widow's Oil***

2 Kings 4:1-7

An unnamed prophet in Israel died. His widow was left with two sons, without money, and with debts. Her debtors were going to take her two sons as payment. She cried out to Elisha for help.

He asked her if she had anything of value in the house. She had only a little oil. He told her to go and borrow jars from all her neighbors. Get as many as she could. She went to her neighbors and did so. They took all the jars they could find and went into the house. He instructed her to take her oil and begin pouring it into the jars. God replenished the supply of oil as it was dispensed. Eventually she filled every jar that she had.

Elisha told her to go and sell the oil. She should use the money to pay the debts. Whatever was left over could be used for living expenses.

### ***1.12 Elisha and the Shunammite's Son***

2 Kings 4:8-37

Elisha customarily passed through a town called Shunem. There was a couple there who used to feed Elisha. Eventually they built him a room where he could stay when he was in the area.

Elisha wanted to do something for these people, who were childless. He prophesied that in about a year she would have a son. At first, she asked him not to tease her, but he convinced her that he was serious. She conceived and had a son.

Sometime later the child became sick and died. When this happened, the woman saddled a donkey and went to find Elisha. When she found him, he could see that she was in great grief. She cried out to him, wanting to know why he ever raised her hopes of having a son if this was to be the end of it.

He instructed his servant to take his staff and to lay it on top of the child. The implication is that he would come back to life when this happened. The Shunammite woman would not be satisfied with this. She clung to Elisha until he agreed to come.

The servant went on ahead of them and did lay the staff on the child as Elisha had requested, but nothing happened. When Elisha arrived, he stretched his body out over the child (as Elijah had once done). Warmth returned to the child's body. Eventually the child sneezed and came back to life.

Would it have been enough to put the staff on the child if the mother would have accepted that in faith? It is easy to understand why she did what she did. She was in great anguish and needed her friend Elisha to comfort her. Also, to her, this must have been more important than anything else that Elisha could have been doing. It would be hard to understand why he could not come personally and minister to this need. Still, if God told Elisha to send the staff to the child to bring about healing and if she would have accepted that solution, then it would have brought him back to life. In spite of her objections to the solution offered, God was faithful and merciful to meet her at her point of need and to provide Elisha for her to personally bring her through the crisis.

### **1.13 Elisha and the Poisonous Stew**

2 Kings 4:38-41

Elisha was traveling in the company of some men. One night they gathered some wild plants to make a stew. The stew was served and the men began to eat. Only then did they discover that the stew contained something poisonous. They were growing sick and asked Elisha to help. He took some flour and threw it into the pot and declared that it was OK to eat. The stew was no longer poisonous.

### **1.14 Elisha Feeds a Multitude**

2 Kings 4:42-44

There was a time when Elisha found himself in the company of a hundred hungry men. A man among them had twenty small loaves of bread, which was not a great deal of food a hundred people. Elisha told him to distribute the bread among mass of people. The man objected and said that it would not even begin to feed them. Elisha said that it would feed them fully and there would be food left over.

The man did as Elisha said. Everyone ate plenty and there was food left over.

The same Holy Spirit that equipped Jesus to feed the multitudes knew how to do that same thing in the day of Elisha. The same Holy Spirit still knows how.

## **1.15 Elisha and Naaman's Leprosy**

2 Kings 5

Naaman was a commander of the army in Aram (Syria). He was a great leader and a valiant soldier. He was also a leper. He heard about a prophet in Samaria who might be able to help him.

The king of Aram sent Naaman to Israel to get help. He took gifts of gold and silver and sets of clothing. The king of Aram sent a letter to the king of Israel asking him to cure Naaman of leprosy. Naaman took the letter and presented it to the king of Israel. The king of Israel read the letter and tore his clothing, knowing that he could do nothing for the man. (Tearing one's clothing was a physical display of grief or outrage or some other strong emotion.) Elisha heard what had happened and told the king to send Naaman to him.

Naaman appeared to Elisha. Elisha told him to go and bathe himself in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman was irritated at this. He was expecting Elisha to put on some sort of show and wave a magic wand and cure Naaman. He thought this Jordan River business was stupid. They have perfectly good rivers in Aram. Why did he need to come here and bathe in the Jordan?

Naaman had a wise servant with him. The servant pointed out to Naaman that if Elisha had asked him to do something big (give a great sum of money, cut himself, sacrifice a child, whatever) he would have done it. Shouldn't he be grateful and obedient to do something small? Naaman was humbled by this perspective and he bathed in the Jordan seven times. When he came out the last time, his leprosy was gone. His skin was pure and new.

He came back to Elisha subdued, excited, and grateful. He wanted to give Elisha the expensive gifts that he had brought. Elisha would not accept them and he sent them on their way.

Elisha's servant was overcome with greed. He went after the men. When he caught up with them, he lied to them and told them that Elisha had just had two guests arrive and he wanted Naaman to provide each of them with some clothing and some money. Naaman was more than happy to comply and he gave the clothing and money to the servant.

When the servant returned, Elisha knew what he had done. As a punishment, the servant became leprous.

The moral of the story: Don't look to claim personal rewards for something that God has done. Give him his glory and let him be your provider.

## **1.16 Elisha Makes an Axhead Float**

2 Kings 6:1-7

Elisha's companions were building a house. They were cutting down trees near the Jordan River. One of the men accidentally dropped his ax into the water. He was upset because the ax had been borrowed. He asked Elisha for help.

Elisha threw a stick in the water and the iron axhead rose to the stick. The man reached in and took the axhead back.

### **1.17 Elisha and the Blind Arameans**

2 Kings 6:8-23

The king of Aram and the king of Israel were engaged in war. Elisha kept telling the king of Israel everything that the Arameans were going to do. Thus every time they planned an attack, the king of Israel was ready. It got to the point that the king of Aram believed there was a traitor in his ranks giving information to the king of Israel. He accused his men of such.

One of them informed the king about Elisha, saying that he had been the one helping the king of Israel. The king of Aram told his men to capture Elisha and bring him back. They found out that he was in the city of Dothan and set forth there to find him.

When the soldiers came and surrounded the city, Elisha prayed that God would blind the soldiers. God did. Elisha went out to the soldiers and offered to give them directions since they could not see. They began to follow Elisha. He led them directly into the city of Samaria, right into the midst of the king of Israel and his army. Once there, he prayed to God that they would be able to see again. Again God honored the prayer.

The king of Israel did not know exactly what to do with the men. Elisha convinced him to simply prepare a feast for the captured soldiers and then send them home. Having been treated well, once they returned home, the Arameans ceased to invade Israel for a time.

### **1.18 Elisha and Famine in Samaria**

2 Kings 6:24-7:20

Sometime later, the Arameans besieged Samaria again. The siege lasted for a very long time. The people were confined to their city. Eventually food became very scarce. There was terrible famine in the city.

One day a woman came to the king asking for help. He wanted to know what the problem was. She said that another woman had made a deal with her. One day they would kill her son and cook him and eat him. The next they would do the same to the other woman's son. She had agreed and they had eaten her son. Now the other woman was hiding her son and not living up to the agreement.

The king was repulsed and outraged that things had gotten this desperate. He believed that this disaster was from God and he wanted to kill Elisha, God's representative. He sent a servant to the home of Elisha to seize him. The king himself followed. God warned Elisha that they were coming. When they arrived, Elisha's friends barred the door. Elisha informed them that the next day the famine would be over. Flour and barley would be selling for a cheap price in the city. The king's servant expressed disbelief that this could happen. Elisha told him that it would indeed happen and that the servant would see it but would not be able to eat any of it. Such is the price for disbelieving God.

There were four leprous men who lived at the entrance to the city gate. They felt that their situation was particularly hopeless. They were going to die where they were. If they went into Samaria they would die because there was no food there. They felt that their best hope was to go to the Aramean camp and surrender. If the Arameans took them as prisoners, they would feed them. If they did not and killed the men, they were really no worse off. So they went to the Aramean camp.

Before they got there, God had terrorized the camp. He filled it with sounds of great numbers of chariots and horses coming. The Arameans figured that the king of Israel had enlisted the aid of Egypt and the Hittites and that a massive army was coming to attack them. They hastily fled the camp. The lepers found tents full of food and valuables but no people there to guard them. They began eating and having a good time.

Eventually they felt obliged to go tell the people in Samaria what they had discovered. They went back and shouted to the gatekeepers what they had discovered. Their words were met with a certain amount of disbelief. The king sent some soldiers to check it out. They found the report to be true. They sent word back to the city. The people of Samaria stormed the Aramean camp. It was full of food, clothing, gold, silver, horses, donkeys, etc. Everyone had all he wanted. Flour and barley sold for a cheap price in the city.

About the time that all of this took place, the servant of the king who had doubted Elisha's word was keeping the gate of the city. When the people heard that there was food available, they stormed the gate. He was trampled and killed. He had seen what had happened but had not been able to eat any of it. Such is the price for disbelieving God.

### ***1.19 Elisha and the Shunammite's Land***

2 Kings 8:1-6

This section has as its backdrop a famine. We do not know whether or not it is the same one as in the previous section. Contextually it seems to be a different one.

Elisha knew that there was going to be a seven-year famine. He advised his Shunammite friends to leave the land for the time of the famine. They did.

When the famine was over they returned, only to find that someone else was occupying their home and their land. They wanted it back so they came to find the king and ask him to intervene.

When they came to the king, it just happened that the servant of Elisha was conversing with the king. The king had asked him to tell about all of the great things that Elisha had done. He had just finished telling the king about the time Elisha brought the Shunammite's son back to life when she walked up to petition the king. The servant recognized her and said "This is the woman I was just telling you about."

When the king heard what her problem was, he made sure that her land was restored and that she was paid for any income the land had produced in her absence.

### ***1.20 Elisha and the Murder of Ben-Hadad***

2 Kings 8:7-15

Ben-Hadad was the king of the Arameans. He was the king involved in the siege that resulted in the famine in Samaria. He had fallen ill. Elisha went to Damascus to see him. When the king heard that Elisha had come, he sent a servant by the name of Hazael to ask Elisha whether or not the king would recover from the illness.

Hazael prepared gifts for Elisha and then went to ask him about the king's fate. 2 Kings 8:9-14 says:

He went in and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Aram has sent me to ask, "Will I recover from this illness?"

Elisha answered, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover'; but the Lord had revealed to me that he will in fact die." He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael felt ashamed. Then the man of God began to weep.

"Why is my lord weeping?" asked Hazael.

"Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites," he answered. "You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women."

Hazael said, "How could your servant, a dog, accomplish such a feat?"

"The Lord has shown me that you will become king of Aram," answered Elisha.

Hazael went back and told the king that he would recover from the illness, as Elisha had instructed him to say. The next day, however, Hazael came to the king and smothered him and killed him. Hazael succeeded him as the king of Aram.

When Elijah was at Mount Horeb after the contest with the prophets of Baal, one of the things that he had been given to do was to anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Elijah did not personally accomplish this mission. Elisha, as Elijah's successor, had just completed this task. The other person whom Elijah had not anointed was Jehu.

### ***1.21 Elisha and the Anointing of Jehu***

2 Kings 9:1-13

Elisha sent a servant to Ramoth Gilead to find Jehu, to anoint him as king, and to deliver him a message. He was to do it privately.

The servant went and found Jehu and asked to take him aside privately. He anointed him as the next king over Israel. He gave him a message in 2 Kings 9:6-10:

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "I anoint you king over the Lord's people in Israel. You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the Lord's servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel – slave or free. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her."

The man then left and returned to Elisha. When Jehu came out, his friends asked him what message they had received from Elisha. He told them that he had just been anointed the next king of Israel. They spread out cloaks under him and blew a trumpet and declared him king.

## **1.22 The Death of Elisha**

2 Kings 13:14-21

In Elisha's very last days, Israel was again at war with Aram. The king of Israel came to see Elisha. Elisha prophesied temporary victory over Aram and then he died.

There was a time that some men were burying another man and were startled by some Moabite raiders. They needed to hide and decided to put the body in Elisha's tomb until they could come back and finish the burial. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came back to life.

## **1.23 The Legacy of Elijah and Elisha**

Elijah and Elisha, independently or together, were two men unlike any that the nation of Israel had ever seen. There were no men like them again until the time of Jesus. Although they are not revered by the nation at the same level as Abraham or Moses, they are held in very high regard by the Jews. Their ministries brought signs and wonders to the nation that had simply never been seen before. They were a foretaste of what would be poured out on the world in New Testament times.

Like Moses,

- God led Elijah to Mount Sinai (Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai) for a divine appointment.
- At Mount Sinai, God revealed his presence to Elijah.
- Both Elijah and Elisha saw God part the Jordan River so they could walk across on dry land.

Like Jesus,

- Both Elijah and Elisha raised the dead.
- Elisha fed a mass of people with a few loaves of bread.
- In a miracle similar to the multiplying of the loaves and fishes, both Elijah and Elisha were able to multiply oil or flour and oil.
- Elisha healed a leper.
- Elijah spent forty days in the wilderness. 1 Kings 19 tells us that Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb took forty days. The text implies that he may have fasted during that time like Jesus did during his forty days in the wilderness.
- Elisha called upon the miraculous power of God to help with what we might consider to be ordinary problems of life. In Matthew 17:24-27, Jesus told his disciples to find money to pay the temple tax in the mouth of a fish. In 2 Kings 6, Elisha asks God to make an axhead float to the surface of the water so that they will not lose it.

These were great men with powerful ministries. Elijah's story does not end in 2 Kings. Malachi was a post-exilic prophet of Judah. He looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. He wrote in Malachi 4:5-6,

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

Malachi prophesied that someone would come in the spirit of Elijah as a precursor to the Messiah. This person would prepare the hearts of the people for the message of the Messiah. In Matthew 11, Jesus identified John the Baptist as this one who had come in the spirit of Elijah.

In Matthew 17 we see Elijah again. This is the event known as the Transfiguration. Jesus went up on a mountain with James and John and Peter. While they were up there, Moses and Elijah (representing the Law and the Prophets) appeared to Jesus and talked with him. Jesus was the one who fulfilled the ministries of both Moses and Elijah. The fact that these two were chosen to visit him indicates that they had a very special place in God's ministry to the earth.

This leads me back to a question that I raised at the beginning of the section on Elijah and Elisha. According to the history that we have, Elisha had a "flashier" ministry than Elijah. God worked more miracles through Elisha than through Elijah. Elisha's ministry lasted a great deal longer than that of Elijah. Why then is Elisha basically forgotten in the rest of Scripture and Elijah revered as one of the greatest men in pre-Jesus history? I think the key to this is in the exchange that happened in 2 Kings 2:9. Before Elijah was taken to heaven, Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit. His request was granted. Only when he received this "Elijah anointing" did he begin to see signs and wonders in his ministry. Thus Elisha became a worker in the ministry that had been granted to Elijah. Scripture basically attributes the works of Elisha to the ministry of Elijah. I do not believe that Elisha was bothered by that.

Today, the Holy Spirit allows us to participate in various forms of ministry, which may include signs and wonders. The fact is that the glory for this ministry goes to Jesus. It belongs to him. Anything that we are able to do is because of our "Jesus anointing." Jesus said that believers who followed him would do greater things than he did. Furthermore the ministry of the church has lasted far longer than Jesus' personal ministry. Such it was with Elisha and Elijah.

Perhaps the moral of this story is that each of us should pray for a double portion of the Spirit of Jesus.

## 2 Amos

Amos prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Recall the history that led up to that time. Elisha had anointed Jehu as king over Israel. Jehu started out with great zeal for God. He purged the house of Ahab from Israel and from Judah. He brought about significant change in that aspect. He fell short of completely ridding the land of idolatry, however, and continued to lead the nation in the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam I. Because of his initial zeal for God, God promised him that his descendants would reign for four generations. After reigning for twenty-eight years, he died a natural death and was succeeded by his son, Jehoahaz.

Jehoahaz had no particular zeal for God. He continued to lead the nation in the idolatry of Jeroboam I. Because of his idolatry, God let the Arameans (Syrians) attack Israel and take much of their land during the reign of Jehoahaz. The nation began to experience a great deal of suffering during this time – poverty and food shortages, etc. Jehoahaz reigned seventeen years and was succeeded by his son, Jehoash.

Jehoash also continued with the idolatry of Jeroboam I. Under his leadership, however, Israel experienced military success against Aram and began to take back their lands. He reigned for sixteen years, and was succeeded by his son, Jeroboam II.

Jeroboam II did not introduce any religious reform to Israel. During his reign, however, the nation experienced greater military success than under Jehoash. They reclaimed their lost land. Furthermore, God dealt with the nation mercifully during his reign. The suffering that they began to experience under Jehoahaz was relieved. The nation reclaimed a degree of wealth. Jeroboam II reigned for forty-one years and died a natural death.

By the time that Jeroboam II died, the nation had experienced over a hundred years of political stability (which was unusual for the Northern Kingdom). During those years, they had transitioned from a nation of want to a nation of plenty. As is typical in a nation of plenty, a class system had arisen – the "have's" and the "have not's". The rich were oppressing the poor. This did not please God. God's standard, repeated over and over again in his law, is to take care of the widow and the orphan and the alien and the poor. The reason that he sent plentifulness on the land is that he wanted everyone to have plenty. He was not trying to create an economic climate wherein a few people could get very rich while many others did without.

This is the background for Amos. He came to a nation of God's chosen people who were engaged in idolatry and where the rich were oppressing the poor. He came to a nation that was basically "at ease." They needed to snap to attention or else they would lose the favor of God that they were so busy enjoying.

Who is Amos? We learn from Amos 7:12-15 that Amos had been a shepherd and a keeper of sycamore-fig trees. Furthermore, he was from Judah, not Israel. God had summoned him to leave his business in Judah and take a message to Israel. This would not have been an extremely comfortable situation for him, but Amos was faithful and he went. We really know very little else about Amos the man. It is his message that is important.

## 2.1 Oracles Against Israel's Neighbors

Amos 1:1-2:5

Amos' initial words would have been received with great favor by Israel, because he began by speaking judgment on Israel's immediate neighbors, including Aram (Syria) (immediately northeast of Israel), Gaza (southwest, along the Mediterranean coast), Tyre (northwest, along the Mediterranean coast), Edom (south), Ammon (southeast, across the Jordan), Moab (southeast, across the Dead Sea), and Judah (to the south). The specifics of each oracle are:

- Aram (Syria)
  - Referred to as Damascus in the oracle, because Damascus was the capital of Aram.
  - God is going to punish them because of the destruction that they brought on the land. Recall that during the reign of Jehoahaz, they captured much of the land of Israel.
  - God will bring fire upon them and consume the fortresses. He will break down the gate of Damascus. He will destroy their king. The people will be sent into exile.
- Gaza
  - Gaza is in Philistine territory. God is going to punish them because in the past they have taken whole communities of Israelites captive and sold them into slavery.
  - God will destroy the king of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron (the three big cities in Gaza).
- Tyre
  - Tyre had a peace treaty with Israel. They violated it and (like Gaza) took communities of captives and sold them into slavery.
  - Because of this, God will send fire to destroy the fortresses of Tyre.
- Edom
  - The Edomites are descendants of Esau, the brother of Israel. The Edomites have lived in continual hostility towards their cousins. They have pursued them with swords. For this, God will bring punishment upon them.
  - God will send fire to consume their fortresses.
- Ammon
  - The Ammonites have dealt treacherously with their Israelite neighbors. In an effort to extend their borders, they have slaughtered pregnant women (an example of their atrocities – not the complete list, I'm sure).
  - For this, God will send fire to destroy the walls of Rabbah (a large Ammonite city) and to destroy her fortresses. The king will be sent into exile.
- Moab
  - The Moabites are cited for dishonoring the body of the dead king of Edom. We have no record of what actually transpired here. For their act, God will send fire to consume their fortresses. Her ruler and his officials will be destroyed.
- Judah
  - Judah's crime is rejection of God and his decrees. They are cited for idolatry.
  - For this, God will send fire to consume the fortresses of Jerusalem.

## 2.2 Oracle Against Israel

Amos 2:6-3:15

So far, Amos' words sound great to the Israelites. Who would not like to hear God pronouncing judgment on his enemies? At 2:6, however, the whole thing takes a nasty turn. Having targeted each of Israel's neighbors, God now turns towards Israel herself. Some of their crimes are outlined in verses 2:6-8:

They sell the righteous for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals.  
They trample on the heads of the poor  
as upon the dust of the ground  
and deny justice to the oppressed.  
Father and son use the same girl  
and so profane my holy name.  
They lie down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge.  
In the house of their god  
they drink wine taken as fines.

Some of the things that are cited are fairly obvious, such as the oppression of the poor and righteous or the celebration in the house of a god – an idol. Others refer to parts of the law that are perhaps less known. One of these is Deuteronomy 24:10-13:

When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God.

The people were violating this and doing it "beside every altar," which implies that the garments that were loan collateral were being taken into pagan temples. The people were sleeping on them there.

Leviticus 18 gives a long list of forbidden sexual relationships. In this chapter, a man is forbidden to have sex with his father's wife. A man and his son are not to have sexual relations with the same woman. The people are ignoring this command as well.

God reminds them that he was gracious in leading them out of Egypt but they had been ungrateful. He had given them prophets but they had forced the prophets to pervert their ministries. God is angry and ready to pour out his wrath. Nobody will be able to escape.

God chose Israel above all other nations on earth. He has done things for them that he has done for no other nation. They have been unfaithful. It is now time for punishment.

The section from Amos 3:3-7 is a bit cryptic. The meaning of it is as follows. It says that there are some things that you can count on:

- A lion does not roar unless he has caught prey.
- A bird does not fall into a trap unless someone has previously set a trap.
- God does not act unless he first reveals his plans to his prophets.

God is now revealing his plan to his prophet. The people should expect him to act.

The citizens of Gaza and Egypt are invited to come and be spectators. They are asked to observe the unrest and oppression in Israel. They will then observe the wrath and judgment of God. An enemy will overrun Israel. The land will be plundered. The people will be consumed. Only a few will be saved. Amos 3:12 describes it: "As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved." God has never changed. His game plan all along has been:

- Provide people with standards.
- Give people a chance to be faithful.
- When they fail, warn them and give them time to clean up their acts.
- Come down in judgment on the masses. Preserve the faithful remnant. Many who believe themselves to be part of the faithful remnant discover too late that they are part of the masses.
- Start over.

That is still his plan. We have another big "step 4" coming our way. The specter of Matthew 7:21-23 and Matthew 25:31-46 looms big as a warning to the faithful and a pronouncement of judgment upon the unrepentant.

But back to Amos. God is bringing judgment on Israel. When it comes, he will tear down the altars of Bethel, built by Jeroboam I, and will destroy the lavish houses of the rich.

### **2.3 Israel Has Not Responded to Mercy**

Amos 4

Chapter 4 opens rather strikingly. One might get the impression that "we are not pleased." Verse 1 says:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria,  
you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy  
and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!"

Bashan was the area that is known today as the Golan Heights. The women there are compared to cows, who laze around all day, nibbling. They take advantage of the poor and whine to their husbands to bring them more for them to consume. Their fate is predicted in verses 2-3:

The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness:  
"The time will surely come  
when you will be taken away with hooks,  
the last of you with fishhooks.  
You will each go straight out through breaks in the wall,  
and you will be cast out toward Harmon," declares the Lord.

Amos points out that the Israelites have religious practices, but God considers them to be sin ("Go to Bethel and sin" in verse 4). He has tried to call the people back in a number of ways: sending famine and drought, striking their crops with mildew, sending locusts, plagues, and foreign enemies, etc. Nothing has brought them back.

One might say, "Who would want to return to a God that hands out famine, drought, and plagues?" The fact is that these were gifts of mercy on the part of God. He was trying to get the people's attention. If they did not respond, then the fate that awaited them was destruction. Famine, drought, and plagues are better than total devastation. And they were in an "age of

grace." If they would respond and return, they would be restored. But they have not responded. In verse 12, they are given the ominous warning, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

## **2.4 Repent!**

Amos 5

Amos looks ahead with sadness at what will happen to the nation. He sees a picture of total destruction. Verse 3 says:

The city that marches out a thousand strong for Israel  
will have only a hundred left;  
the town that marches out a hundred strong  
will have only ten left.

God admonishes them to seek him and abandon the religious practices carried out in Bethel and Gilgal and Beersheba. The people are cited for oppressing the poor, hating truth, perverting the court system so that there is no justice in the land, and creating such an atmosphere that righteous men are afraid to speak the truth. The people are encouraged to repent and turn to God. If they will, "perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph" (verse 15). If they do not, things are going to get very bad around Israel.

The time of judgment on Israel is referred to as "The Day of the Lord." It is described in 5:18-27:

"Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord!  
Why do you long for the day of the Lord?  
That day will be darkness, not light.  
It will be as though a man fled from a lion  
only to meet a bear,  
as though he entered his house  
and rested his hand on the wall  
only to have a snake bite him.  
Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light –  
pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?  
I hate, I despise your religious feasts;  
I cannot stand your assemblies.  
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them.  
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,  
I will have no regard for them.  
Away with the noise of your songs!  
I will not listen to the music of your harps.  
But let justice roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream!  
Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings  
forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?  
You have lifted up the shrine of your king,  
the pedestal of your idols,  
the star of your god –  
which you made for yourselves.  
Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,"  
says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty.

## **2.5 *The Complacent and the Proud***

Amos 6

Amos speaks to the social elite of Israel. Their lives are consumed with luxury. Their thoughts and indulgences are devoted towards indulgence. They have no time or energy to worry about the spiritual state of the nation. Because of this, they will be the first carried into exile.

He next addresses the proud. Amos lived at a time when Israel experienced considerable military success. The nation had gotten proud and took credit for its own military victories rather than giving the glory to God. For this, too, God would rain judgment down upon them.

It is not a good idea to take credit for things that God has done.

## **2.6 *The Vision of the Plumb Line***

Amos 7:1-9

God showed Amos a vision of locusts attacking the crops of Israel and destroying them. Amos pleaded with God not to send this upon the nation because the nation could not survive it. God did not send the locusts. God then showed Amos a vision of fire devouring the nation. Again Amos pleaded with God not to do this and God did not send the fire.

God showed Amos a third vision. The Lord was standing next to a wall that was built "true to plumb," with a plumb line in his hand. A plumb line is basically a string with a weight on the end. Builders use it as a gauge to measure whether or not walls are being built straight up. If a responsible builder discovered that a wall was built that was not true to plumb, he would tear it down and rebuild it. God was about to hold Israel to the same standard. Since they were out of plumb, he would tear down the nation and rebuild it.

God did not turn back from this vision.

## **2.7 *Amaziah***

Amos 7:10-17

The message that Amos brought was not generally considered to be great and encouraging news to the people of Israel. One of the priests in Bethel by the name of Amaziah sent word to Jeroboam II complaining about Amos. He accused him of raising a conspiracy against the king. The exchange that follows gives us the only biographical information that we have about Amos.

He tells Amos to go home to Judah, which is how we know that Amos was from Judah as opposed to Israel. He says "Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there" (verse 12). He assumed that Amos was a professional prophet. When we look back on this time and think of prophets, we think of the ones whose words and deeds are recorded in the Bible. In fact, there were "professional prophets," which were probably the closest thing that the first century had to phony televangelists. Amos replied in verses 14-15,

I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

God told Amos to tell Amaziah that because he tried to pervert Amos' message, his wife would be sold into prostitution, his children would be killed, his land divided up by captors, he himself would be taken off to a pagan land, and Israel would be exiled.

## **2.8 The Vision of Ripe Fruit**

Amos 8

God showed Amos a basket of ripe fruit. He said that the time was ripe for judgment on the nation. He was going to turn the songs in the temple to wailing. He gives a stern prediction in verses 4-7:

Hear this, you who trample the needy  
and do away with the poor of the land, saying  
"When will the New Moon be over  
that we may sell grain,  
and the Sabbath be ended  
that we may market wheat?" –  
skimping the measure,  
boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,  
buying the poor with silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

The Lord has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done."

People could not wait for their religious rituals to end so that they could get on with the dishonest making of money. God would tolerate it no more. God promises to turn their lives to one of bitterness. He also says that he will send a famine, "Not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord" (verse 11). In the past, when things got really bad, they turned to God for some sort of comfort. The day would come when that avenue would no longer be available. Only then would they know how bad life could really be.

## **2.9 The Destruction and Restoration of Israel**

Amos 9

Destruction would begin soon. God would pursue the nation of Israel with a vengeance. People would run but would find no place to hide. Amid all of the gloom and doom, a bit of hope emerges in 9:8. It says:

"Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord  
are on the sinful kingdom.  
I will destroy it  
from the face of the earth –  
yet I will not totally destroy  
the house of Jacob," declares the Lord.

Something would be left. After the message of judgment, the message turns to one of restoration in verses 11-15:

"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent.  
I will repair its broken place,  
restore its ruins,  
and build it as it used to be,  
so that they may possess the remnant of Edom  
and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord,  
who will do these things.  
"The days are coming," declares the Lord,  
"when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman  
and the planter by the one treading grapes.  
New wine will drip from the mountains  
and flow from all the hills.  
I will bring back my exiled people Israel;  
they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.  
They will plant vineyards  
and drink their wine;  
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.  
I will plant Israel in their own land,  
never again to be uprooted  
from the land I have given them,"  
says the Lord your God.

The day would come when God would restore his people to their land, never to be uprooted again. Time will tell, but the best guess that we have of the fulfillment of this prophecy is the events of the late 1940s. The Old Testament is not simply a book of old, forgotten events. It is a plan for the ages, being fulfilled in our own time.

## 3 Jonah

We have very little biographical information about Jonah. The book itself identifies him only as "Jonah, son of Amittai" (verse 1:1). 2 Kings 14:25 tells us that "Jonah, son of Amittai" was a prophet under Jeroboam II. It also tells us that he is from the city of Gath Hopher, which is an insignificant town in Israel. 2 Kings leads us to believe that Jonah had an active ministry under Jeroboam II, but all that we know of his ministry is what we find in the book of Jonah.

Every kid learns the story of Jonah, because it makes such a colorful story. It is so colorful, in fact, that many people do not believe that it is true. It is treated by many, including many Biblical scholars, as a fable or some sort of symbolic parable. That has not always been the case. The Jews did not treat as Scripture things that they considered to be fables. The book was held to be a historical account by the Jews who knew Jonah and by their descendants. There is a Jewish man named Josephus who was a contemporary of Jesus. He was a secular historian. In his writings, he refers to the book of Jonah as if it were a historically accurate account. Furthermore, in Matthew 12:38-45 and in Luke 11:29-32 we find that Jesus himself regarded the book of Jonah as history rather than fable. Those seem like good witnesses to me. I will take the story as true.

### 3.1 *Don't Make Me Go!*

Jonah 1

In the second verse of the book, God gives a charge to Jonah:

Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.

Nineveh was a city in Assyria. It was a large city. It was a pagan city. It was also an enemy city. God wanted to send Jonah as a missionary to call these people into a right relationship with him. This is an interesting point.

We often have a mindset that says that God focused all of his attention on the Jews from the time of Abraham until Acts Chapter 10. Then after a short transition time, he began focusing all of his attention on the Christian Gentiles. Somewhere around Acts 13, he began sending missionaries to bring other people into the fold. It is not too hard to develop this mindset based on 90% of the historical record that we have in the Scriptures. But we have to remember that the Old Testament is a history of the Jews. The New Testament is a history of the Church. Neither is intended to be a World History.

We know from Scriptures that the Jews were God's chosen people, but they were chosen for a purpose. Remember God's charge to them in Exodus 19:5-6:

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

They were never to be a nation unto themselves, with walls around them keeping God in. They were to be God's outreach to the rest of the world. Here, hundreds of years before Acts 13, we see God calling a man to foreign missions. Unfortunately, this man did not want to go.

To Jonah, being sent to preach to Nineveh probably felt a bit like a black man being asked to be the keynote speaker at a KKK rally. These people were the enemy. They were evil. He burned with hatred against them. He did not feel that they deserved a chance to be forgiven and he certainly did not want to be the one to deliver the message of reconciliation to them. So Jonah did the only logical thing that he could think to do. He tried to hide from God.

Jonah went to the city of Joppa (which is part of the modern city of Tel Aviv) and boarded a ship. He intended to sail for a city in the Mediterranean named Tarsus. This act raises a couple of interesting points.

If you think about it, when you read the history of the Jews, you do not hear a great deal about the exploits of the Jewish Navy. That is because they did not have one. In fact, the Jews were not much on traveling by sea. As a people, for whatever reason they generally feared the sea. Travel by sea was not at all uncommon in Jonah's day and age, but it was uncommon for Jews. Getting on a ship was somewhat an act of desperation on the part of Jonah. He really did not want to obey God's call. He was willing to do something that was probably fearful to him in order to escape the mandate.

The other interesting point is that Jonah believed that he could get away from God by going to another land. It was common in that day to believe that gods had national boundaries. The god of one land had no authority in another land. Who knows? Maybe that was true for the demons that men worshipped. Somehow Jonah supposed that his God had the same sort of limitations. He believed that when he got on the ship, he was getting out from under God's authority. Since the God of Israel was being so "mean" to him, he would just go try his luck with the god of some other nation. At the point that he got on the ship, he really did not understand that his God was the God of everywhere. That would soon change.

Jonah got on board and went below the deck and went to sleep. He was a man that felt beaten and exhausted and he dealt with his depression by sleeping.

Shortly after the ship departed, a great storm came. It was violent and shook the boat. The sailors were afraid and verse 1:5 says that each cried out to his own god. They began throwing things into the sea to try to lighten the load on the boat. One of them woke up Jonah and told him to pray to his God as well that they might be spared.

They figured out that somebody's god was angry with him and that this was the source of the trouble. They cast lots and figured out that it was Jonah. They asked him who he was and what was wrong. Jonah's response is in 1:9: "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." His understanding of God's domain had broadened a bit. Intellectually, Jonah would have been familiar with the Scriptures from Genesis through Deuteronomy. Now, in his spirit he understood that God really is the God of everything.

He convinced the sailors to throw him overboard. They did and the storm stopped. They feared God and made a sacrifice to him.

God provided a great fish and it swallowed Jonah. Jonah was in the fish for three days and nights.

### **3.2 In the Belly**

Jonah 2

Being in the belly of a fish must have been a terrifying experience. Being swallowed had to be more than intimidating. Who knows what sort of emotions Jonah experienced while he was

there? He did have time to think, however. During the course of the three days, Jonah apparently saw the error of his way. Chapter 2 contains a prayer that Jonah prayed from the belly of the fish. Verses 2-4 say:

In my distress I called to the Lord,  
and he answered me.  
From the depths of the grave I called for help  
and you listened to my cry.  
you hurled me into the deep,  
into the very heart of the seas,  
and the currents swirled about me;  
all your waves and breakers swept over me.  
I said, "I have been banished from your sight;  
yet I will look again toward your holy temple."

Jonah understood and believed that God would rescue him from this situation. Furthermore, he began to understand God's heart for the people of Nineveh. Verses 8-9 say:

Those who cling to worthless idols  
forfeit the grace that could be theirs.  
But I, with a song of thanksgiving,  
will sacrifice to you.  
What I have vowed I will make good.  
Salvation comes from the Lord.

Jonah understood that the Ninevites were forfeiting grace that God wanted to give them. He said "what I have vowed I will make good." The assumption is that he vowed to be faithful to deliver them the message of repentance.

Jonah's heart was now right. God commanded the fish to swim to the shore and to vomit Jonah onto dry land. It is interesting that if Jonah had just been as obedient as the fish was, he never would have had this experience.

### **3.3 To Nineveh**

Jonah 3

Again, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time he went. He traveled about the city for three days spreading the message that is recorded in Jonah 3:4:

Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed.

The Ninevites took the message seriously. From the king down to the lowest servant, people fasted and repented and dressed themselves with sackcloth (a sign of humility or grief). They turned from evil and violence. They cried out to God to turn away from his fierce anger.

God was impressed with their sincerity. He withheld the destruction that had been threatened.

### **3.4 *Displeased With His Own Success***

Jonah 4

Imagine if Peter had gotten angry on the day of Pentecost because thousands of people responded to his sermon and gave their hearts to Jesus. That is essentially what happened with Jonah. An entire city turned its heart to God because of Jonah's preaching. And Jonah got mad!

The fact is that Jonah still hated the Ninevites. He had gone there because of God's "strong suggestion," but he wanted to see the city destroyed. If you read between the lines a bit, you can probably see exactly what happened.

The message that Jonah delivered to the Ninevites was "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed." He did not say "Unless you turn from your evil ways, forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed." The fact is, that if God said "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed," then in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed, because God's word is true. I believe that the true message that God told Jonah to deliver was "Repent or be destroyed," not simply "You're going to get zapped."

But Jonah did not want the people of Nineveh to have a chance. He turned God's message around to one of judgment rather than one of repentance. When God did spare the people of Nineveh, his only concern was "Now how does this make me look? I told them that they were going to get zapped and now you're letting them off the hook. I will look like a fool." Jonah was so mad that he wanted to die.

He went to a place outside the city to sit and pout. It was hot, and God provided a vine that grew up and provided him shade. He enjoyed the shade. The next day God sent a worm to kill the vine and take away the shade from Jonah. Being in the emotionally stressed state that he was, he got so mad about the vine that again he just wanted to die. Then God spoke to him. Verses 9-11 say:

But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"

"I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Jonah was a man who needed object lessons. God met him at his point of need. If God could show Jonah how he could get so concerned about a plant that he did not even cultivate, then surely he could understand why God was so concerned with a city of thousands of people that he created.

We do not know whether or not Jonah really ever understood. We do not know whether or not he ever softened his attitude towards the Ninevites. We do not know whether or not God was able to use Jonah ever again. But we can learn some things from the book of Jonah.

- God is the God of all the earth. You cannot hide from him.
- God has a heart for the whole earth. He wants the whole world reconciled to him. The people he calls his own are to be a nation of priests, reconciling the world to God.
- God is indeed a God of judgment, but he gives opportunities for repentance first.
- If you pervert the message of God to suit your own agendas, then it is not his problem if you end up looking foolish.

- God uses his physical world to illustrate his spiritual lessons. Look for it.

## 4 Hosea

The opening verse of Hosea identifies the time frame of his ministry. It lines him up with the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah (which makes him a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah) and Jeroboam II in Israel. Jeroboam and Uzziah overlapped, but if his ministry continued through the reign of Hezekiah, then it extended through Pekah or Hoshea in Israel, almost until the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Amos' primary message was against the excesses of the rich in Israel and their oppression of the poor. Hosea's main message was against the unfaithfulness of the nation against its God. God turned Hosea's life and his family into an object lesson to illustrate the point.

### 4.1 *Unusual Family*

Hosea 1

God loved the people of Israel. The people of Israel had been unfaithful to God and had worshipped other gods. In spite of this, God wanted reconciliation with his people. It may have been difficult for the people to believe that God could still love and accept them after their unfaithfulness. God illustrated to them exactly how he could still love them.

God instructed Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman – probably a prostitute. Her name was Gomer. She was symbolic of Israel. Hosea, with his uncondemning and forgiving love represented God. The way in which Hosea – a righteous man of God – was willing to build a family with Gomer was symbolic of the way that God was willing to build a relationship with Israel.

Gomer conceived and bore a son to Hosea. The child was named Jezreel because God was about to pour out judgment on Israel in the Valley of Jezreel. Gomer conceived again and bore a daughter. There is a subtle wording difference. The first time, Gomer bore a son to Hosea. The second time, she simply bore a daughter. The implication is that Hosea might not have been the biological father of "the unfaithful wife's" daughter. Chapter 2 also infers that the child is illegitimate. This might also be implied by the name given to the daughter: Lo-Ruhamah. Lo-Ruhamah is Hebrew for "not loved." The prophetic implication of this is that they day was coming when God would no longer show love to the people of Israel. Verse 7 says that he would continue to show favor to Judah, but Israel would not be loved. As I said earlier, God used Hosea's family as an object lesson to Israel. The marriage itself was symbolic. So were the names given to the children. One has to feel sorry for the child, however. Anyone who goes through life with the name "Not Loved" does not have a fair chance at growing up to be normal.

Gomer conceived again and bore a son. Again the text does not indicate that the son was born to Hosea. This child is named Lo-Ammi, which means "Not My People." The child was not likely a blood relative of Hosea. The prophetic implication of this is that the people of Israel were ceasing to be the people of God.

### 4.2 *Rebuke and Reconciliation*

Hosea 2

Chapter 2 contains a section of rebuke followed by words of reconciliation. At the beginning, it sounds as if they are delivered to Gomer, but towards the end it is apparent that the real target

for the message is the nation of Israel. Again, the actions of Gomer are symbolic of the actions of the nation of Israel.

Gomer/the nation is rebuked for chasing after other lovers. She is engaged in adulterous activity and bearing illegitimate children. She has failed to recognize the source of her fineries. She has taken the silver and gold and the fine linens that have made her beautiful and used them to attract other men. She is taking the lavish things that are given to her and offering them to the Baals. Therefore God will cut off the flow of these things. She will fall on hard times. She will cease to have the plentiful things that she had before. There will be no beauty in her that would attract other lovers. When this time comes, she will return to her husband.

God will get her attention. Then he will speak tenderly to her. He will restore her vineyards. He will give her hope. The names of other gods will be purged from her lips. Peace will be restored to the land. A true relationship will be restored. Israel will no longer call God "my master," but will call him "my husband." What a significant difference! Verses 22-23 tell us that the people of Jezreel will respond. God will again show love to those previously called "not loved." He will again call as his people those called "not my people."

### **4.3 Forgiveness and Restoration**

#### Hosea 3

In an amazing demonstration of the way in which God loves his people, Hosea buys Gomer back out of slavery. Gomer has prostituted herself and has left Hosea. She has gotten herself into dire straits and has been devalued to the point where she is being bought and sold in a slave market.

Hosea has every right to be incensed towards her. He has every right to let her suffer the consequences of her own actions. Instead, Hosea still has "agape" love for her. In an act that was probably humiliating for him, he goes to the slave market and buys Gomer. This is a transaction that should not have been necessary since she was already his wife. Its necessity was a product of her unfaithfulness towards him. He brings her home not as a slave. He restores her to the place of wife. He forgave her.

It is hard for us to understand how Hosea could do this. We get indignant towards her and we do not believe that she deserves this "easy" treatment. And there is a very good reason that we feel this way. She does NOT deserve to get off this easy. Yet we see Hosea, more concerned about restoring her spiritual health and not concerned about how this makes him look to people around him.

Then we step back and realize that every one of us is Gomer. We had a place of favor with God. Every one of us has left that place and gone and chased after ungodly things. God has been there for every one of us, just as Hosea was there for Gomer. Suddenly the idea of "getting off easy" is appealing.

Verses 4-5 of Chapter 3 contain a prophecy.

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

It is talking of a time when there will be no king of the Northern Kingdom. There will be no priests. The people from the Northern Kingdom would again seek God and a Davidic king. Was this prophecy ever fulfilled?

We know that the north continued to have a king until approximately 720 BC, when the Assyrians overthrew Israel and took the majority of the residents into captivity. Thus the prophecy could not have been fulfilled before that. The nation of Judah survived and had a Davidic king on the throne until 586 BC, but there was not a time when the people who remained in the north sought to resubmit to the authority of any of these Davidic kings. Furthermore they continued to have an apostate religious system well after 586 BC.

The fulfillment of this seems to have begun in John Chapter 4. John 4:4 says that Jesus "had to go through Samaria." In this chapter, we see the son of David fulfilling a divine appointment to bring restoration and forgiveness to the remnant in the north. Many people there believed in him. It seems to be the first time that we see the people in the north truly giving their allegiance to God and to a Davidic king.

#### **4.4 Judgment on Israel**

Hosea 4-10

Chapters 4-10 of Hosea are an extended section alternately outlining charges against Israel and pronouncing judgment on Israel.

- Because of the sins of the people, the land itself is in mourning. The beasts and the birds and the fish are dying. This is an interesting concept. This is before the days of pollution as we currently know it. We would have a tendency to think that the only act of man that could bring such trouble to the animals would be massive pollution of the environment. Long before there was environmental pollution, there was spiritual pollution. We see this same concept expressed in Romans 8:19-22:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

All of creation suffers because of the fall of man. Creation will be redeemed in the end, along with those who are saved. And spiritual apostasy in a nation can bring physical distress on the land.

- This section contains a strong indictment against the priests in Israel. They are leading the people astray and causing the people to sin and fall into idolatry. Hosea 4:6 is a well-known verse:

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

The thought is echoed in 4:14:

A people without understanding will come to ruin!

As a result of the bad leadership, there is a spirit of prostitution among the people and they are seeking after other gods.

- In 4:15-19 there is a warning to Judah not to get caught up in the sin of Israel. Chapter 5 indicates that Judah is indeed participating in some of the idolatry of Israel.
- Chapter 5 is a message of judgment. God is going to bring judgment down upon Israel and Judah for their sins. It is really a two-fold punishment. First, he is going to pour out judgment on them. Verse 14 says that he will be to them like a lion, tearing them to pieces. The second part of the punishment is that he will withdraw his presence from them. He will not be there for their comfort. We saw in the life of David that he could handle the discipline of God but could not handle the absence of God (e.g., 2 Samuel 24:14). God wanted Israel to feel the same way. He would withdraw his presence from them until they would again seek him.
- Chapters 6 and 7 paint a picture of an unrepentant people. God looks ahead to the day when they will turn to him again, mentioned at the end of chapter 5. Verse 6:4 says that their love will be like the morning dew. The implication is that it will be full and rich for a short season but then it will quickly dry up and be gone. The people will come to God for a "quick fix" of healing but then will be anxious to get on with their same lifestyles.

Hosea 6:6 says:

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,  
and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

The message here is NOT that God does not require sacrifice and offerings. The point is that unless the one making the offering is rightly related to his fellow man (mercy) and to God (acknowledgment of God), then the sacrifices and offerings are unacceptable to God. The people of Israel and Judah meet neither criterion. There is class oppression in the land. There is corruption among leadership. Idolatry is rampant.

The beginning of chapter 7 says that God has often longed to restore Israel, but he has been unable to do so because of their sinful state. What a tragedy to realize that we prevent God from blessing us (which is what his heart longs to do) because we have unrepentant hearts. That message was not meant for Israel alone. It is timeless.

The remainder of chapter 7 contains another set of charges against the nation. They include:

- The leaders drawing the people into evil and the people rallying behind the leaders in wickedness.
- Mockery among the leaders, inflamed by drunkenness.
- National arrogance.
- When the nation gets in trouble, rather than turning to God for help they turn to Egypt and Assyria.
- Speaking lies, specifically against God.
- Chapters 8-10 spell out punishment for Israel because of her sin and because she has rejected God, set up her own leaders, and erected golden calves to worship.
  - The golden calves will be destroyed.
  - Verse 8:7 says that they will sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. Their crops will fail and what they can produce will be consumed by foreigners.
  - Because they have sought assistance from foreign kings, they will suffer under the oppression of these foreign kings.
  - Their cities and fortresses will be consumed by fire.

- Their sacrifices will be unacceptable to God.
- They will be deprived of children, through barrenness, miscarriage, infant death, and by captors taking and/or killing their children.
- Their places of pagan worship will be destroyed.
- They will become litigation-happy, taking each other to court.
- The leaders of Israel will be destroyed.

#### 4.4.1 God's Love for Israel

Hosea 11:1-11

Hosea 11:1 says:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.

This passage has a two-fold meaning. Years ago, when the nation of Israel was in its infancy, God loved and protected the nation. He led it out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land, providing for it along the way.

Matthew 2:15 puts a bit of a different spin on the verse. Matthew sees Hosea looking into the future rather than describing the past. When Jesus was a baby, his family was forced into hiding in Egypt by the terror of Herod. When the time was appropriate, this son of God was called out of Egypt by his father. It is not unusual for passages in the Old Testament to have a double meaning. In fact, many of the events in the Old Testament were foreshadowings of events that would take place in the New Testament. The nation of Israel coming out of Egypt was a foreshadow of Jesus coming out of Egypt.

From Hosea's perspective, however, this refers to the Exodus. God called to his people to bring them into their own land and to make them into his own people. He raised them up and nurtured them and strengthened them. Then when they matured, they turned to other gods.

As much as his anger is aroused against them, his compassion is aroused even more. God says in 11:8:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?

He says in 11:9-10

I will not carry out my fierce anger,  
nor devastate Ephraim again.  
For I am God, and not man –  
the Holy One among you.  
I will not come in wrath.  
They will follow the Lord;  
he will roar like a lion.  
When he roars,  
his children will come trembling from the west.

In spite of everything that they deserve, God wants reconciliation more than he wants revenge. He would like to be able to simply "shake them up" a bit so that they would return to him. It would break God's heart to carry out the punishment that they deserve.

## **4.5 Israel's Sin and God's Anger**

Hosea 11:12-13:16

This section has three themes that are intertwined throughout the text.

What God has done for Israel:

- God brought them out of Egypt.
- God gave their prophets visions and parables to teach them.
- He cared for them in their desert wanderings.
- He gave them a king when they asked for it, even though the request provoked him to anger.

How Israel has responded to God:

- Israel has lied to God. Just as the name "Jacob" means "deceit," the nation is deceitful.
- Israel has formed treaties with Assyria and Egypt.
- The people use dishonest business practices (merchants use dishonest scales).
- They are boastful about their wealth and believe that they can hide their sin behind their money.
- They sacrifice to false gods on false altars.
- They have fashioned idols for themselves.
- They have participated in human sacrifice.
- They have kissed their calf-gods.
- They have taken the provisions of God and become proud and have forgotten God.
- They demanded a king and provoked God to anger in doing so.

The consequences that Israel will endure:

- God will reduce them to living in tents as they did in the desert.
- God will tear down their idolatrous altars.
- They will disappear like the morning mist or like chaff on a threshing floor or smoke coming out of a window.
- God will come upon them like a lion or a leopard or a bear and tear them to shreds.
- The anger of God will tear away their king.
- Their water supplies will be dried up and their storehouses will be plundered.
- They will be forced to bear the guilt of their rebellion.
- Their children will be killed and their pregnant women slaughtered.

## **4.6 Repentance and Blessing**

Hosea 14

Chapter 14 contains an offer of peace to Israel. They do not have to endure things mentioned above. The choice is theirs. They have the option to repent, but it must be on God's terms. He is asking them to:

- Return to God.
- Ask for forgiveness and restoration.
- Quit looking to nations like Assyria for support.
- Turn away from false gods once and for all.
- Become a nation that takes care of the underprivileged, people such as widows and orphans.

If they will do these things, God will receive them back graciously. He will bless the land and make it fertile. He will send down deep roots, which implies that the people will be firmly planted in the land. The young will grow up to be strong rather than being slaughtered by enemies as implied above.

There is an interesting and almost confusing portrait of God painted in Hosea. We see the object lesson of forgiveness and reconciliation played out in the life of Hosea himself, symbolic of the way that God is willing to forgive and reconcile with the nation in spite of its waywardness. Then we see the text of Hosea's message. Chapters 4-10 are a strong message of judgment, provoked by the wrath and indignation of God. In Chapter 11, we see a God overflowing with compassion. He reveals that his heart would break if he had to carry out the judgment dictated in chapters 4-10. He says that he cannot do these things to Israel. It implies that he will give them a "slap on the wrist" to bring them back into line rather than pouring out full-scale judgment. Then in chapters 12-13, we see the wrath and judgment of God again. Then in chapter 14 we see his compassion and desire for reconciliation again. What is going on? What is this on-again-off-again wrath-then-compassion?

The fact is that an accurate portrait of God includes all of this. God is a God of wrath. He is a God of judgment. He is a God of compassion. His overriding desire is for reconciliation. God is also omniscient and he sees time from end-to-end. We tend to focus on what is happening right now and perhaps look at it with some historical perspective. God sees time from "let there be light" until eternity.

God could see the day when judgment would finally fall in Israel and the nation would meet its demise. God could also see that before that end, Israel would be extended one or more "slaps on the wrist" to try to bring her into line. His grace and compassion would first seek reconciliation. His wrath and judgment knew how it would come out and what would finally have to take place.

If the portrait seems confusing, it is because we are looking at a four (or five or whatever) dimensional God through three-dimensional eyes.

Just as Hosea was willing to restore Gomer to the place of wife, God was willing to restore Israel to its place. Hosea was not willing to let Gomer return and continue in her prostitution, however. People would have been indignant against her if she tried to do so. It was difficult for them to believe the grace that Hosea had in restoring her. They would have stoned her if she had continued in her behavior. Why then do we take it for granted that God will accept us back whenever we do whatever we want to, assuming that it is OK for us to continue in our sin?

God's desire was for reconciliation, but it came at the expense of repentance. It is still true.

## 5 Index of Scripture References

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 Kings 1:13-14-----	10
1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 13:20-----	6
1 Kings 17:1-6-----	6
1 Kings 17:7-24-----	6
1 Kings 18:1-19:18-----	7
1 Kings 18:36-37-----	8
1 Kings 19:10-----	8
1 Kings 19:11-18-----	8
1 Kings 19:19-21-----	10
2 Kings 1-----	10
2 Kings 1:10-----	10
2 Kings 1:3-4-----	10
2 Kings 1:9-----	10
2 Kings 13:14-21-----	17
2 Kings 14:25-----	28
2 Kings 2:1-18-----	11
2 Kings 2:19-22-----	11
2 Kings 2:23-----	11
2 Kings 2:23-25-----	11
2 Kings 2:9-----	18
2 Kings 3-----	12
2 Kings 4:1-7-----	12
2 Kings 4:38-41-----	13
2 Kings 4:42-44-----	13
2 Kings 4:8-37-----	12
2 Kings 5-----	13
2 Kings 6:1-7-----	14
2 Kings 6:24-7:20-----	15
2 Kings 6:8-23-----	14
2 Kings 8:1-6-----	16
2 Kings 8:7-15-----	16
2 Kings 9:1-13-----	17
2 Samuel 24:14-----	36
Amos 1:1-2:5-----	21
Amos 2:6-3:15-----	21
Amos 3:12-----	22
Amos 3:3-7-----	22
Amos 4-----	23
Amos 5-----	24
Amos 6-----	25
Amos 7:10-17-----	25
Amos 7:12-15-----	20
Amos 7:1-9-----	25
Amos 8-----	26
Amos 9-----	26
Deuteronomy 24:10-13-----	22

Exodus 19:5-6	28
Hosea 1	33
Hosea 11:1-11	37
Hosea 11:12-13:16	37
Hosea 14	38
Hosea 2	33
Hosea 3	34
Hosea 4:6	35
Hosea 4-10	35
Hosea 6:6	36
John 4:4	35
Jonah 1	28
Jonah 2	29
Jonah 3	30
Jonah 4	31
Luke 11:29-32	28
Malachi 4:5-6	18
Matthew 11	18
Matthew 12:38-45	28
Matthew 17	18
Matthew 17:24-27	18
Matthew 2:15	37
Matthew 25:31-46	23
Matthew 7:21-23	23
Proverbs 27:17	10
Romans 8:19-22	35

## 6 Topical Index

Ahab .....	6
Ahaziah .....	10
Ammonites .....	21
Amos .....	20
Aram .....	21
Assyria .....	28
Baal .....	7
Edom .....	21
Elijah .....	6
Contest With the Prophets of Baal .....	7
Fed by Birds .....	6
Fleeing from Jezebel .....	8
Multiplied Food Supply .....	6
Parting the Jordan River .....	11
Raising the Dead .....	7
Taken to Heaven .....	11
Elisha .....	6
Anointing Jehu .....	17
Call .....	10
Death .....	17
Feeding a Multitude .....	13
Floating the Axhead .....	14
Healing Leprosy .....	13
Multiplying the Oil .....	12
Parting the Jordan River .....	11
Purifying Poisonous Stew .....	13
Purifying Water Supply .....	11
Raising the Dead .....	13
Gomer .....	33
Hosea .....	33
Jehoshaphat .....	12
Jehu .....	17
Jezebel .....	7
John the Baptist .....	18
Jonah .....	28
Joppa .....	29
Joram .....	12
Jordan River, The Parting of .....	11
Moab .....	12, 21
Mount Carmel .....	7
Naaman .....	13
Ninevah .....	28
Philistines .....	21
Plumb Line .....	25
Syria .....	21
Transfiguration .....	18
Tyre .....	21

