

Dr. Gary Yates, Book of the 12, Session 13, Israel's Spiritual Infidelity, Part 1, Hosea 4-14, Part 1

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Book of the 12. This is lecture 13, Israel's Spiritual Infidelity, Hosea 4-14, Part 1.

Our study of the book of Hosea up to this point has focused on the first three chapters of the book where we have this powerful metaphor and image of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer being representative of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In the same way that Gomer had been unfaithful to Hosea, and yet God commands him to love this woman and to restore that relationship, God will continue his covenant relationship with Israel in spite of their spiritual infidelity and in spite of the fact that they have not loved him in the way that they should have.

Instead, they have loved and given their service and devotion to these other gods. The metaphor is given to us in chapters 1 to 3. It sets the stage really for the rest of the book, chapters 4 to 14, where we have more of the preaching of Hosea to the people and the specifics of how they have committed infidelity against the Lord. We are going to turn now in our study of the book to those specifics and those details and what the preaching and the message of Hosea were all about.

Before we do that, I'd like to cover just a couple of things about historical background and historical detail that I think will enhance our understanding of the book and the message that's there. In our study of Amos, we talked about the Assyrian crisis and the rise of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in 745 BC, Tiglath-Pileser, and ultimately the fall of Israel in 722 BC. Let me mention just a couple of things about the internal history of Israel during this time.

In the superscription or notation that's found at the beginning of the book of Hosea, it says, "...the word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel." It's interesting as we look at the superscription that the reference is primarily to the kings of Judah in the south when we know that Hosea carried out his ministry in the north. It also reflects, by the fact that we have mention of King Ahaz and Hezekiah, that Hosea's ministry continued after the time of the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 and 721. So, it seems likely that with the fall of Israel, Hosea is going to migrate to the south and he'll carry on and continue his ministry there.

When the superscription talks about the northern kingdom, it only mentions Jeroboam II, the son of Joash, the king of Israel. There were actually a series of kings

that came after Jeroboam II. So, the question is raised: why do we only have a mention of Jeroboam and the mention of all of these kings of Judah? I think the simplest answer to this is that the kings that come after Jeroboam simply are not important.

Jeroboam II had reigned for more than 40 years. He had restored Israel's boundaries and borders. He had brought about great prosperity.

But the kings who come after that, all of them are weak and ineffective rulers. What we end up having in Israel is that even the monarchy itself is just sort of swallowed up in chaos and violence. There are a number of coups where one weak king is replaced by another.

From the time of Menahem, the king of Israel in 752 forward, all of these kings are going to ultimately be subject to the Assyrians. The kings that are in that period are often going to make the foolish decision to try to rebel against Assyria. None of those plans, conspiracies, alliances are ever going to work.

But following the reign of Jeroboam II, we have the reign of Zechariah. Zechariah reigned for six months and he was killed by a coup that was led by Shalem. Shalem had the privilege of reigning for one month.

But with the death of Zechariah in 752 BC, that was the end of the House of Jehu and of the dynasty of Jeroboam II. Shalem reigned for one month. He is killed and replaced by Menahem, who has owned the throne for ten years but who becomes a vassal of the Assyrians.

Pekahiah is on the throne for two years. He is killed by a coup that is led by Pekah. Pekah comes to the throne and attempts to form a coalition with the Assyrians to withstand the onslaught of the Assyrian army and empire.

That did not work. He is replaced. Hoshea is on the throne for ten years.

The monarchy itself, being a king in Israel in the 8th century, was one of the most dangerous jobs anyone has ever held. I would rather drive a nitroglycerin truck than be a king in 8th-century Israel because you have this chaos, this confusion. People are looking for a new leader, someone who will help them, someone who will have the military resources or genius to deliver them.

Their problem is not political. Their problem is spiritual. They don't need a new ruler and a new king.

They need to turn to Yahweh as their king and recognize that he is the one who can save them if they trust in him exclusively and if they will live the kind of lives that

God wants them to live. As Hosea lives in this culture and in this context, there are a couple of passages in the preaching of chapters 4-14 where Hosea is going to address the violence and the chaos that was involved in these different dynasties and these coups that were taking place as Israel is coming to an end. In chapter 7, verses 4-7, he says this: The people of Israel, they are all adulterers.

All of them are like a heated oven, whose baker ceases to stir the fire from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine. He stretched out his hand with mockers, for with hearts like an oven, they approach their intrigue, and all night, their anger smolders.

In the morning, it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All of their kings have fallen, and none of them call upon me.

The reason that we have this murder and conspiracy and intrigue, the death of Zechariah, the death of Shalom, the death of Pekahiah, the death of Pekah, the reason that you have these constant coups is that the people are consumed with a lust for power and they have turned to extreme measures because instead of trusting in God, they are trusting in themselves and they realize that what they are doing is not going to work. Hosea presents a culture where there are people in positions of authority who are consumed with a burning passion for power, even to the point that they will murder and kill to achieve the throne. One prince becomes drunk, they murder and assassinate, they become involved in a conspiracy, and then we turn around, and the same thing happens to them.

Hosea says this is symptomatic of the overall apostasy and adultery of these people because they are trusting in their leaders rather than trusting in God. They are consumed with this desire for power and that is part of what is going on. Chapter 8 is going to address the same issue.

It says in chapter 8, verse 4, they made kings but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

The political intrigue in Israel, there are these constant coups and conspiracies, political intrigue is as symptomatic of their defection from Yahweh as their idolatry. The Lord himself was the one who was to choose and select the kings. That is not what is going on.

God does not approve of this. God does not sanction this. God is not raising up these different dynasties.

This is part of the selfishness, lust, and infidelity of the people, and it is reflected in the people themselves and their apostasy and their idolatry all the way to the top

with these conspiracies and intrigues. That is part of the background of the book of Hosea and part of the history of what is happening in all of this. As we go to chapters 4 to 14, one of the struggles that I have with this book, and again, it goes back to the way that prophecy and the prophetic books are laid out, is that it is often difficult to determine the arrangement and the structure of this.

As you are reading chapters 4 to 14, if you have done this, you know that the argument at times tends to become kind of circular because the prophet seems to be going back to these same issues over and over again. We are going to look at what some of those major themes are, but how do we determine a structure? These books do not read again like the books that we normally read. We do not have a nice table of contents.

We do not have them arranged by sections the way that we do our books on Kindle. We do not have a chronology. This message is not going to take us from day one and year one of the prophet's message until his final words and his closing message.

Messages from various times in the prophet's ministry are joined together. We have an anthology of his sermons. Obviously, Hosea had a long ministry that definitely goes beyond the words that we find in these chapters in this one book.

So, how do we understand the structure? The structure that I am going to give us here is one that Dr. Bob Chisholm raises in his commentary on the Minor Prophets. He sees chapters 4 to 14 as a series of what we refer to as covenant lawsuits. The covenant lawsuit is a prominent genre in prophetic books.

We will see one of them when we look at the book of Micah, chapter 6. But what happens in a covenant lawsuit is that the prophet creates the backdrop of a court case, and God is the judge. The prophet is the prosecuting attorney. Any time the judge and the prosecuting attorney are working together the defendant is in trouble.

The defendant is going to be the people of Israel. In these court cases, the prophet will bring the people into the courtroom. He will remind them of God's covenant faithfulness but will also charge them with unfaithfulness.

The word that is often used to describe these is the Hebrew word *rib*, which can be translated as a lawsuit or a contention, or a dispute. This is going to be laid out in a very formal legal way. I think the purpose of this genre, again as a metaphor, is to create for the people the image of having to be brought in court and standing before God and being charged in a legal way with their covenant infidelity.

In the book of Hosea, Israel is an unfaithful spouse. They have committed adultery against the Lord. I think the way that we can imagine chapters 4 to 14 is that here are the formal legal proceedings that establish their guilt.

The response of the people of Israel to the charge of adultery and infidelity may have gone something like this. Hosea, we don't understand what you're talking about. We still have our sanctuaries.

We still have Gilgal, Bethel. We're still doing our religious duties. How could you possibly charge us with being unfaithful to the Lord? We're not like the pagan people around us.

We know the true God. We confess our belief in Yahweh, but the problem was they had become just like the pagan people around them. So, the prophet, in a formal way, the entire message and ministry of the prophet Hosea is laid out as a formal legal charge.

In these covenant lawsuits, often the witnesses will be brought into the courtroom. The Lord calls heaven and earth. They witness the establishment of the covenant in the days of Moses.

Now they're being brought into the courtroom. Let's hear what has happened over the last five to six hundred to seven years. How has Israel lived up to the covenant? The prophet will formally indict them for their unfaithfulness.

In the book of Hosea, we have actually three of these different covenant lawsuits. The structure of each of these lawsuits is that they are going to include an indictment. Here are the formal charges.

Remember, prophetic judgment speeches are going to include both accusation and announcement. Then, the announcement of the judgment is going to come. These are the specific things that God is going to do to you.

In these three different lawsuits, there's always an indictment, there's always an accusation, and there's always an announcement. In some of these sections, the prophet is going to go back and forth. Here's what you have done.

Here are the ways that you've been unfaithful to God. Now, here's the announcement. Here's the judgment that's going to occur as a result of that.

But what we also have in these covenant lawsuits, and I think it's interesting as we look at the structure of Hosea, is that all three of these lawsuits, each one of them, are going to conclude with a word of hope and restoration. Again, we see even in the structure of the dual role of a prophet. The dual role of a prophet was to indict the people to announce God's judgment, but also to promise to them restoration when the judgment was over.

In Hosea 1-3, the sequence and the scheme of judgment and restoration were laid out in the names of Hosea's children. Jezreel, God is going to sow judgment, but then God is going to sow Israel back in the land. Lo-Ruhamah, not pitied.

Well, the people that God does not have pity for as he sends them away, ultimately, he will show mercy to them. Lo-Ammi, the people who are no longer God's people because of the fractured covenant, will once again become God's people. In these covenant lawsuits, as they are laid out in three cycles in Hosea 4-14, there is indictment, there is accusation, there is announcement, but then there is an offer of hope.

Let's look at the first one. This first covenant lawsuit is going to extend from Hosea chapter 4 all the way through to Hosea chapter 6 verse 3. Chapter 4, verse 1, chapter 6, verse 3. That's the first cycle, the first covenant lawsuit. Here is the indictment at the very beginning of this.

Listen to verses 1-3. Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy. That's the way it is translated in the ESV.

That is the word rib in Hebrew. The Lord has a rib, a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, no knowledge of God in the land.

There is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery. They break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Five of the Ten Commandments that are central to the Mosaic Torah are mentioned here, and so this is a formal indictment.

Imagine the scene of being brought into a courtroom. I've been in court for traffic offenses and it is a nerve-wracking thing. It is a scary thing to stand in front of a judge.

Imagine when that judge is God Himself. The people need to see the seriousness of this. They are being brought up on charges, and the specific stipulations of the law are laid out.

This accusation is going to go all the way through chapter four into chapter five. The leaders of Israel are specifically going to be indicted here. The priests are largely responsible for the people not keeping the law because there is no knowledge of God in the land.

They have not fulfilled their responsibility to teach the people their covenant obligations. As a result of that, the priests have become the cause of the judgment, and they are especially targeted in this first section. It goes through chapter four, it extends to chapter five, and at the end of this indictment, the Lord says in chapter

five verse fifteen, I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.

The people were not going to respond to God bringing them into the courtroom. God was ultimately going to have to judge them. In every one of these courtroom proceedings, and I think this is what is interesting about covenant lawsuits, the Lord does not simply indict them and pass sentence on them.

Typically, what happens in these formal proceedings is that God is still trying to get them to repent. So, it is not simply we bring you into the courtroom, you are guilty, here is your charge, do not pass, go directly to jail. God is still giving them an opportunity to repent.

The problem is Israel will not avail themselves of this. They are still protesting as the defendant. What are you talking about? I am innocent. I want to appeal my case.

So, in chapter five, verse four, their deeds do not permit them to return to God, for the spirit of whoredom is within them; they do not know the Lord. So, we have a long indictment that goes from chapter four all the way through chapter five. It indicts the leaders of the people, it indicts the people themselves, and they are still going to say, we don't get it.

Why are you charging us with these crimes? But at the end of this, again, God's heart calls his people back; there is a call to repentance, and there is a promise in the midst of this that, ultimately, Israel is going to be restored. Chapter six, verses one to three, says this, come and let us return to the Lord for he has torn us that he may heal us. He has struck us down but he will bind us up.

After two days, he will revive us; on the third day, he will raise us up so that we may live before him. And so, the judgment is going to come, and it's going to be two days, and it's going to be a severe judgment, but on the third day, the Lord will raise up his people. So, as a result of that, there is an exhortation that Hosea gives to the people.

Let us press on to know the Lord. His going out is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. So that's the first cycle, chapter four verse one through chapter six verse three.

We have a second covenant lawsuit that extends from chapter six, verse four, to the end of chapter eleven. So, chapters six to eleven, kind of a middle section of the book here, there is another formal court case, there's an indictment, Israel is guilty, and then there's the sentence that's passed on them. Chapter six, verses four to seven, let's hear the beginning of the case.

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Their devotion to God is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Their devotion to God is completely transitory.

Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice the knowledge of God rather than burn offerings. Here's the basic things that God wants from them, devotion to him, faithfulness to him, a knowledge of him that's not just information, but a commitment to him, it's not there.

And verse 7 says this, but like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant, and there they have dealt faithlessly with me. So, the covenant lawsuit is going to raise specifically the issue of the covenant, and here's an explicit statement: like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant, and they have dealt treacherously and faithlessly with me. Now, I want to raise a question about when it says, like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant; what does this mean? Are we going back to the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3? That is the interpretation that some people have given to this verse, and they have viewed this as proof that there is a formal covenant between God and Adam from the time of creation itself.

The word covenant in Genesis does not appear until the time of Noah in Genesis 6-8. So other theologians have argued that the relationship to Adam is not formally a covenant; that is something that does not enter in until after the fall, and so we're sort of left with this theological question. Ultimately, I'm not sure that it's a major issue.

The relationship between God and Adam is certainly like a covenant. There are obligations that are placed in front of Adam, and he is expected to obey them. There are promises that are made to him that he will be allowed to rule as God's vice-regent.

So, the relationship with Adam and Eve is certainly laid out like a covenant. Is it formally understood in the Old Testament as a covenant? I'm not sure we fully have the answer to that question. The word here, Adam, could be Adam, or it could simply be a reference here to mankind in general.

Israel is no different than the rest of humanity. They have transgressed the covenant just like that. And so, Israel, they think they're special; they think they're exempt because they're God's chosen people, but in a sense, they have broken the covenant with God just like all of humanity.

All of humanity has broken the Noahic covenant. That's the second interpretation. A third interpretation is that Adam here could actually be a reference to a place.

We don't know exactly where this is, but he could simply be, again, alluding to a time in Israel's past history. There are a number of these types of allusions in the book of Hosea that we will look at, and so this could simply be a reference to them, just like that time at Adam, when they transgressed the covenant. Look at what's mentioned in the verses that follow here.

They have dealt faithlessly with me. And then it says, Gilead is a city of evildoers. It is tracked with blood.

As robbers lie in wait for a man, the priests band together. They murder on the way to Shechem. They commit villainy.

In the house of Israel, I have seen a horrible thing. Israel's whoredom is there, and Israel is defiled. So, what is this referring to? Well, in 2 Kings chapter 15, verse 25, we have the story of one of these royal conspiracies and plots against the final kings of Israel.

And we have the murder there of Pekahiah by the king Pekah, and he is accompanied, as he carries out this treacherous act, by 50 men from the city of Gilead. And so, I think what we've got going on here is another reference to this specific event. I'm not sure there's a reference to Adam violating the covenant in the garden, and Israel as a nation has become as violent and unjust as their leaders have, like leaders like people.

So, this becomes the basis of the covenant lawsuit that's going to work itself out from chapter 6 all the way through chapter 10. Now, in the first covenant lawsuit, I think there's a basic message that establishes the fact that Israel has been unfaithful to the Lord as their husband. The formal charges of adultery are provided there.

They worshipped other gods, they violated the law, and they did not keep hesed with God. In this section, many of those themes are going to come back again, but here, there's going to be more of a focus on some of the political sins that they have committed. They have made alliances with other nations, there has been this violence that has characterized the leadership of the people of Israel, and ultimately, the message that arises out of this, whether it's the spiritual sins of their idolatry and their sin and their worship of these other gods, or whether it's their social sins of making political alliances, practicing injustice, murdering their way to the throne, ultimately none of this is going to work.

It will never save Israel. And so, this is a very kind of somber message that works its way through the middle section of the book of Hosea, and it concludes with this statement. Here's the sentence in chapter 10, verse 13.

You have plowed iniquity, you have reaped injustice. You have eaten the fruit of your lies because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors; therefore, the tumult of war shall arise from among your people, and all of your fortresses shall be destroyed. Verse 15: thus, it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil.

At dawn, the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off. So, there's going to be bloodshed. You've gone your way instead of God's way.

You've trusted in military alliances and political might and the size of your army or whoever you can ally yourself with. As a result of that, the sound of warfare is going to be heard in the land. You have trusted in your kings, and your kings have murdered and conspired and done all of these things, and they've promoted injustice in the land.

They've killed off each other. Ultimately, God's going to cut them off themselves. And so, there's a terrible message of judgment in all of this.

So, after this negative message, this terrible indictment, what do we expect to see at the end of cycle two? More judgment, grief, wailing. However, what we have in chapter 11 when Israel was a child, I loved him. Out of Egypt, I called my son.

They went away from me, but in chapter 11, verse 8, how can I give them up? And so my compassion recoils within me, and after God has carried out this judgment, the Lord says, I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. Then they will go after the Lord. He will roar like a lion when he roars.

His children shall come trembling from the west. They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord. So now we have God roaring as a lion, but instead of that being a sign that God is going to rip apart the people of Israel, as it is in the book of Amos, or even as it is in other parts of the book of Hosea, now the roar of the lion is the alarm, or it's the message calling the people to come home, and it's God's roaring power and strength that will ultimately cause the people to return from exile.

Okay? At the beginning of Israel's history, chapter 11, verse 1, when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son. God brought them out of Egypt. God's going to send them back into exile, but in chapter 11, verse 11, they will come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria.

The return from exile is going to be a second exodus, and the point that the prophets are going to make, especially the prophet Isaiah, is that the second exodus is going to be better than the first exodus because the Lord is actually going to bring his people from various lands, from Egypt, from Assyria, from Babylon, and the Lord will return them. The Lord will shove them. They have not returned to the Lord, but God ultimately will cause them to return to him.

Again, in the midst of all of this indictment, there is a terrible message of judgment. The king is going to be cut off, military defeat, but there is the restoration of the relationship. There is also, in the midst of this, the purpose of this courtroom proceeding is to try to get the people to return to the Lord.

If God simply wants to destroy them, why bother with the proceedings? Simply bring the judgment on. But in the midst of this courtroom case, God is not just sending them to jail. God is ultimately trying to get them to repent, but just as in the first covenant lawsuit, the hearts of Israel are not inclined.

The judge pounds them with evidence. In chapters 6-10, they still don't listen. Chapter 7, verse 10 is going to say this, The pride of Israel testifies to his face.

Israel is too proud, and they're too arrogant in their sin to admit that they have been unfaithful to the Lord. Yet they do not return to the Lord their God, and they do not seek him for all of this. Okay? Whatever kind of return that Israel does make toward the Lord, whatever direction they try to move toward in moving toward God, ultimately is the wrong direction.

Chapter 7, verses 14-16, says this: They do not cry out to me from their hearts; they wail upon their beds. For grain and wine, they gash themselves, and they rebel against me. So instead of repenting and coming back to God and confessing their sin and revising their ways, what they do instead are engage in pagan rituals.

And in the same way that the prophets of Baal, when they're involved in the conflict and the contest with Elijah on Mount Carmel, when their gods do not answer them, remember what they do? They cut themselves, and they gash themselves. And hopefully by bleeding and gashing and cutting themselves, they will reflect their urgency and their passion to their gods in a way that will cause the gods to respond to them. That's what the Israelites are doing.

They're wailing upon their beds, they're gashing themselves for grain and wine, and in the midst of doing all of these religious acts, they are ultimately rebelling against the Lord. Chapter 7, verse 15. Although I strengthen their arms, yet they devise evil against me.

They return, but not upward. They are like a treacherous boat. They shew, they return, but they do not look upward to God.

They're instead returning, let's do more pagan rites, let's do more pagan rituals. Okay? So, there's an indictment, there's a refusal to return, there's a judgment, then there's a word of hope. The third cycle, the book of Hosea, is going to conclude in the same way.

There is a third covenant lawsuit, and I would actually see this lawsuit beginning in verse 12 of chapter 11, and it extends to the end of the book. And again, we have the same thing. We have various ways that there is indictment, where there's accusation and then announcement of the punishment.

Finally, in chapter 14, there is another promise of restoration that brings resolution to this gigantic drama that's been going on in the book. Okay? As we begin at the front part of the covenant lawsuit, there is a formal indictment, and here's what it says: Ephraim has surrounded me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit.

Okay? Again, let's look at the issue of loyalty and fidelity to the covenant. Israel is guilty, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One. So, there's a contrast.

Judah is not as guilty yet as Ephraim. There are other places in the book of Hosea where Judah is going to be included in the sins of Israel. But Judah is going to be spared for a time because their sins are not as severe as Israel's yet.

And here's the formal indictment. Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long. They multiply falsehood and violence.

They make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. And so, again, there's another indictment. There's another statement of judgment.

This is what we have in chapter 12 and chapter 13 as in the other covenant lawsuits and these other cycles that are in Hosea 4-14. God is again trying to get the attention of the people, not simply to pass sentence on them, not just simply to incarcerate them and put them away, but ultimately to call on them to repent and return. So chapter 12, verse 5 says, so you, by the help of your God, return.

God will even help you to do this. If you will resolve to turn back to God and do what's right, God will help you. Hold fast to love and to justice and to wait continually for your God.

But as they have done throughout their history, there is not going to be repentance. There's not going to be a turning to God. They are simply going to continue in their

sinful ways. Throughout the history of Israel, chapter 13, verse 5, it was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought.

But when they had grazed, they became full. They were filled, and their heart was lifted up, therefore they forgot me. Okay, so what this final covenant lawsuit is going to focus on in some special ways is the past history of Israel.

And there's this long history of disobedience and improper response to the blessings and the covenant faithfulness of God. God brought them out of Egypt. God gave them this just wonderful, lavish land that was flowing with milk and honey.

How has Israel responded to that? They did exactly what Moses warned them not to do. Be careful when you go into the land and enjoy the houses and enjoy the fruit and the agriculture and the benefits and the blessings and the land flowing with milk and honey. Be careful that you don't forget me.

What does Hosea specifically say here? They have forgotten me. So the Lord says, I am like a lion to them, and like a leopard, I will lurk beside the way. I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their breasts.

I will devour them like a lion and as a wild beast would rip them open. So again, now we're back to the image of wild animals being used as animals of prey and as images for this powerful God that they need to be in terror of because God is about to judge them. At the end of this, the Lord is going to raise some questions.

In a formal court case or in a controversy, often asking questions can cause the defendant to reflect and establish the Lord's case. And in Hosea chapter 13, verse 14, the Lord is going to ask some rhetorical questions. And the Lord is going to say this, Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol and shall I redeem them from death? O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? And then it says, Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

Now,, our problem in understanding this is that we immediately think of how Paul uses this passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Paul takes these words, and his mind and heart are filled with the Old Testament. So it's natural that he's going to quote it and allude to it everywhere.

But when Paul talks about the resurrection, he will use this passage in a positive way. And when Paul says, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? He's kind of trash-talking death and saying, hey, ultimately death, you don't get to win because the resurrection of Jesus gives us victory. This imagery is being used in Hosea in exactly the opposite way, however.

Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? The answer here is they're everywhere. And there is no deliverance because at the end of this formal courtroom proceeding, Israel is guilty, and God's compassion is hidden. The final statement in chapter 13, Samaria shall bear her guilt because she has rebelled against her God.

They shall fall by the sword, their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open. That's a powerful statement, but it's a fitting conclusion to the formal indictment. But again, as we've had in every one of these courtroom cases throughout the book of Hosea, there is a final word of hope.

And now that word of hope has been expanded to cover all of chapter 14. And the Lord says in chapter 14, verse 4, and I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for my anger is turned away from them. And so, the love issue and the love problem where Israel is giving their heart to everything but God throughout the book of Hosea, ultimately, that's going to be made right because God will heal their apostasy.

So hopefully, as you read Hosea 4-14 now, instead of simply seeing this as kind of a jumbled series of recurring themes that the prophet is referring to and coming back to, it's hard to really make heads or tails of this, hopefully now you have a little better understanding of how this book is put together. Ultimately, what is going to happen to the people of Israel there is going to be a judgment, and there is going to be an exile. Chapter 13, verse 14, Samaria shall bear her guilt, she has rebelled against the Lord our God, they shall fall by the sword, their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.

This is what happened with the fall of the northern kingdom to the Assyrians in the year 725-722. In the Old Testament, in the book of Kings, you can read the record of the fall of the northern kingdom, and the Book of Kings is going to say this happened because they did not listen to the words of their kings. Outside external evidence in the history of the ancient Near East also confirms that this judgment took place.

It's really interesting as you read the kings and as you read the prophets in Israel to see the ancient Near Eastern inscriptions and records and chronicles that narrate for us and confirm for us what the biblical record states is taking place. In the annals of Sargon II, the Assyrian king, and there are two Assyrian kings, Shalmaneser V, and Sargon II, that are going to carry out the besiege of Samaria that lasts for three years from 725-722. The end of this story is kind of found in the annals of Sargon, and here's what the king says.

The ruler of Samaria, the king of Israel, defaulted on his taxes and declared Samaria's independence from Assyria. With the strength given me by the divine assembly, I conquered Samaria and its covenant partner and took 27,290 prisoners of war along

with their chariots. And so, this is the culmination of the warnings of judgment that have been given to us by both Amos and Hosea.

The word of the Lord came to pass, and God had done everything that he could for 40 years to try to warn them through the preaching of Amos and Hosea, and the people did not listen. As a result of that, the exile takes place. This is why there has to be this shocking metaphor at the beginning of the book.

This is why the prophet is asked to do something that to us looks to be morally evil. Go marry a promiscuous woman. This is why the prophet has to bring the people into the courtroom and bring formal charges against him.

The covenant is this desperate. Okay, now, as we look at chapters 4 to 14, and as we're working our way through these covenant lawsuits, I would like to, in this lecture, as we wrap this up and look at this lesson, there are four or five key indictments. Israel has been charged with being unfaithful to the Lord.

Israel has been indicted as an unfaithful covenant partner. What specifically are the things that Israel has done that cause this charge to be made against them? The first one is that the prophet is going to say to Israel that they had not practiced *hesed* towards God. In chapter 4, verse 1, the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.

There is no faithfulness or steadfast love. *Hesed* was a quality or an attribute that God had shown to Israel. Within the covenant, God expected a reciprocal response to that where they demonstrated faithfulness to the Lord and to each other.

There was none of that. And so, the prophet is going to say, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge. I reject the priest that I have called to be the leader of me.

So, there are a number of places where Israel is charged with a lack of *hesed* in the context of covenant. Chapter 10, verse 12, there's a call for the people: sow for yourself righteousness and reap steadfast love. Break up your fallow ground and seek the Lord.

If they seek God, if they claim to be religious, and if they claim to be people that seek God, they will seek God by practicing *hesed* toward Him. Along with this, a related second charge is that the people have committed infidelity against God by being disobedient to His commands. And remember, the opening charge in chapters 4, verses 1 to 3, again, is that they have not practiced *hesed*.

Well, how have they done that? By not keeping God's commands. Five of the Ten Commandments are sort of the representation of what the Mosaic covenant and the

Mosaic law were all about are the things that they are charged with. And again, the specific reason why they have not kept the commands is that their priests have not emphasized the importance of teaching those commands.

My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. And because the priests have rejected knowledge, the Lord is going to reject them from being leaders. They had a responsibility to teach this law so that the people would know what their responsibilities were, and they haven't done this.

Verse 10 says... I'm sorry, there's a wrong reference. Let me go to chapter 6, verse 7, which we've already looked at. Like Adam, they transgressed the covenant, and they have dealt faithlessly with me.

Chapter 7, verses 1 to 3. When I heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria. They deal falsely. The thief breaks in.

The bandits raid outside. But they do not consider that I remember all of their evil, and their deeds surround them, and they are before my face. So, what has Israel done that has dishonored God? Primarily, they have not kept the commandments.

And similar to, I think, what we have going on in the book of Amos, the people would have come back with a protest. Well, we've offered our sacrifices. We've performed our rituals.

We've done all of the things that God has asked us to do. But the Lord's going to come back and say, Well, what about justice? What about righteousness? What about living the kind of lifestyle that God wanted you to live? Another passage that indicts them for not keeping the law and not keeping God's commandments is Hosea 8, verse 12. Were I to write for him, the Lord says, if I were to write for the people of Israel, my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing.

As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the Lord does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity, punish their sins, and shall return them to Egypt. The Lord, or Israel, has forgotten his maker and has built their palaces.

The Lord says, I could write ten thousand laws for this people, and it still wouldn't be enough because they wouldn't keep them. They offer their sacrifices, but the Lord doesn't accept them because their rituals are to be accompanied by a lifestyle of obedience. We have, in this lesson, introduced the message of Hosea 4 to 14, and we have seen that there are a series of formal covenant lawsuits that are laid out against the people of Israel.

As we look at this part of scripture, I think we are reminded of the nature of our relationship with God as well. God's grace always carries with it an obligation to live the kind of life that grace enables us to live. We do not simply receive God's blessings.

God's love for us is unconditional, but experiencing his blessings do carry with it, just as it did for Israel, the obligation to obey and to keep God's commands. Israel specifically has not obeyed the Lord by failing to practice hesed and by failing to keep his commands. We will learn in our next lesson other specific indictments, and we will be reminded again that whenever God's grace is poured out in the lives of a people, there is always an expectation that a lifestyle of obedience will flow from that.

Whenever God makes an investment of grace in our lives, there is always a demand that that grace be reciprocated with a life of love and devotion, faithfulness, and obedience to the Lord. That's the message of the Old Testament, and it carries over into the New as well.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Book of the 12. This is lecture 13, Israel's Spiritual Infidelity, Hosea 4-14, Part 1.