

# Israel On Trial – The Judgement

Hosea 5

We talked last time about how God was laying out all the charges against Israel through Hosea. God laid the bulk of the blame for their lack of knowledge and disobedience on the priests. This time God is passing judgement on them for all their corruption.

*1 “Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against you: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor.*

Here God is addressing the 3 main groups of people that were responsible for maintaining justice. He tells them that they were a snare and a net. Which of course are things we would associate with catching animals or birds. It is used here as a metaphor for those who by economic and legal schemes took advantage of the innocent.

When God saw the absolute sinful nature of the nation of Israel, He knew it was because of the leaders not leading in a godly way. The leaders wanted to blame the people, but God was letting them know that it was their fault. Specifically mentioning Mizpah and Tabor here is God referring to certain events that illustrated just how corrupt they were. God is simply leaving no doubt as to who is to blame here.

*2 The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them.*

The real tragedy of Israel's sin wasn't so much that they stumbled. It was more so that they did not respond to God's rebuke when they did stumble. He says, "you are knee deep in sin and not listening to your God". Now I am going to discipline you.

The word discipline is a very significant word and was mostly used in those days by the prophets to show God's corrective action towards His people. Sometimes it could be rough.

Isaiah 26:16 says, *“LORD, they came to you in their distress; when you disciplined them, they could barely whisper a prayer.”* I know I wouldn’t want to be punished to the point where I could barely whisper a prayer.

*<sup>3</sup> I know all about Ephraim; Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution; Israel is corrupt.*

God knows everything they have done just like He knows what we have done or are doing. Nothing is hidden from Him. Because of it look at what He says next!

*<sup>4</sup> “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Israel’s arrogance testifies against them; the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin; Judah also stumbles with them. <sup>6</sup> When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them. <sup>7</sup> They are unfaithful to the LORD; they give birth to illegitimate children. When they celebrate their New Moon feasts, he will devour<sup>[a]</sup> their fields. <sup>8</sup> “Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven<sup>[b]</sup>; lead on, Benjamin. <sup>9</sup> Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of reckoning. Among the tribes of Israel I proclaim what is certain.*

Israel had gotten so caught up in their sins that they didn’t even view it as sin. It doesn’t say here that God wouldn’t let them repent, it says their deeds wouldn’t let them return to God. Satan had them caught in a snare or trap of their own doing.

They were like it says in Jeremiah 13:23, *“Can an Ethiopian<sup>[a]</sup> change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”*

They were all so arrogant in their wrongdoing they couldn’t even acknowledge nor had any knowledge of God. They were so deeply engulfed in their sin that they were able to bring Judah down with them. 1 Peter 5:8 says, *“<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

Guys, misery loves company. Satan used Israel to drag Judah down with them. In the same way that sometimes people around us are always trying to drag us into sin. Israel was at the point that when they went to their flocks and herds to offer

sacrifices to God, He didn't listen to them. Why? Because their attempt at repentance was superficial. They did not truly want to repent for their sins they just wanted God's discipline of them to stop. Because of this God is going to completely destroy everything they have and withdraw His protection when enemies rise up against them.

*Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water. <sup>11</sup> Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols. <sup>12</sup> I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah. <sup>13</sup> "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help. But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores.*

Israel had corrupted Judah to the point that they were moving boundary stones. Judah was seizing land that was not rightly theirs. They were the kind of men who would change property boundaries to their advantage if they thought they could get away with it. So even though we know from previous studies that Judah was doing better than Israel, they still needed to come to repentance. I think that perhaps Judah was a little smug that they had not received God's wrath like Israel had in the past. However, God reminds Judah that they have their own sins to deal with.

God is going to pour out His wrath on them just like He is on Israel for pursuing other idols or gods. God says He will be like a moth or rot to them. Which of course are things that consume or destroy.

Job 13:28 says, "So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths." This is what God is going to do to them.

When Israel and Judah realized that God had withdrawn from them and was not honoring their sacrifices they immediately turned back to man for help. They went to the king of Assyria who of course could not help them. However, what they did was reveal their weakness to the king. Everyone during that time knew that Israel was God's chosen and protected people. From the moment He led them out of Egypt everyone knew. But now they had just revealed to the king that God had withdrawn Himself from them.

Assyrian records talk about a tribute paid to Tiglath-Pileser III by the Israelite kings Menahem and Hoshea in 2 Kings 15:19-20 for them to withdraw and leave Israel but still provide them protection.

*<sup>19</sup> Then Pul<sup>[a]</sup> king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents<sup>[b]</sup> of silver to gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom. <sup>20</sup> Menahem exacted this money from Israel. Every wealthy person had to contribute fifty shekels<sup>[c]</sup> of silver to be given to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria withdrew and stayed in the land no longer.*

However, now it says, “not able to cure”. The alliances were worthless because the king knew Gods protection was gone.

*For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them.*

This is where the Assyrian army comes in. God is going to use Assyria to devour Israel and Judah like a lion. Bring about complete destruction and carry them off. Possibly back into slavery. God tells them that He is responsible for their punishment and there is no escaping from it.

Look at what it says in Amos 9:1-4. **9** *I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: “Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape. <sup>2</sup> Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down. <sup>3</sup> Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. <sup>4</sup> Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. “I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good.”*

God is going to punish them from the top down. He is going to let them suffer in their sin. He is going to completely withdraw from them in the same way they withdrew from Him.

God is more than a little miffed at them and rightfully so. They ran around and played Christian when it suited them while constantly worshipping other gods.

Just think about all that God had done for them up to this point and they were slapping Him in the face with their disobedience.

*<sup>15</sup> Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face—in their misery they will earnestly seek me.”*

God is going to watch them suffer at the hands of their enemies and then I am going back into heaven until such a time they acknowledge their guilt and truly repent for their sins. It says here that in their utter and total misery they will finally seek Gods face.

So many times, today, people think they are seeking God when they really aren't. It is purely a superficial act. People hold on to one religion, then the next, and then yet another but they simply can't find Him. The truth is that they are simply running away from Him. They are worshipping other gods. They follow the same pattern over and over again.

When you are persistent in your sin you become arrogant, and repentance is hard to find. God withdraws Himself from us and in some cases let's us wallow in our sin.

Sadly, it is often only in our affliction that we earnestly seek the LORD. Let's not be like the Israelites and earnestly seek His face and know how to be humble before Him.

If a person knows how to humbly respond to God's correction, God can always work with them and through them.