



## Vayeitzei (Ashkenazim): Hosea 12:13-14:10

Hosea is the first of the twelve prophets whose small books (Hebrew: “Trei Asar”) conclude the Bible's prophetic section. A contemporary of Isaiah and Amos, Hosea lived in and preached against the Northern Kingdom of Samaria when its kings, Jeroboam II (Yeravam) and his idolatrous successors, reigned. He also had sharp words for Judah, the

Southern Kingdom. As did his contemporaries, Hosea prophesied that Ephraim - an affectionate nickname for Samaria - would soon be destroyed due to its arrogance, religious and ethical corruption, and lack of faith in God.

The Haftarah dramatically describes both sides of the covenant between God and His people. On the one hand, the people no longer serve God, instead imitating their neighbors’ deceitful and idolatrous ways; they’re known for idolatrously “kissing calves.” Samaria relies not upon God’s covenantal promises but upon its own wealth, power, and alliances with Egypt and Assyria. Its false claim of sinlessness further highlights its guilt. The covenant clearly requires God to destroy them for all this; Hosea provides graphic descriptions of these brutal punishments. On the other hand, Hosea powerfully reminds the people that God’s mercy and love for them is boundless; He yearns for them to avoid their fate. Hosea expounds upon major episodes the life of the Parashah’s protagonist, Jacob, pleading with the people to follow his wholesome ways despite the struggles of doing so.

The Haftarah and the book of Hosea conclude with a heart-rending call for the people to return to God and His love for them- a passage that also opens the Haftarah of Shabbat Shuva, recited on the Shabbat before Yom Kippur. Its final verse highlights the difficulties of following God’s straight, righteous ways.

### Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 12:13-15: Ungrateful for God's goodnesses to Jacob and his descendants, Ephraim provokes God to punish it.

Hosea 12:15	הושע י"ב:ט"ו
Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly, so He shall place his bloodguilt upon him; his Lord will place his own disgrace upon him.	הַכְּעִים אֶפְרַיִם תַּמְרוּגִים וְדָמִי עָלָיו יִטּוֹשׁ וְתִרְפְּתּוֹ לְשִׁיב לֹא אֲדַגְּיוּ:

Verses 13:1-3: God will destroy and exile Ephraim which is renowned for its idolatrous sacrifices.

Hosea 13:2	הושע י"ג:ב
Now they sin even more! They made for themselves molten images from their own silver, and idols according to their own understanding- all of it craftsmen’s work. They say of them, “Let the men who sacrifice kiss [their sacrificial] calves.” <sup>1</sup>	וַעֲתָה   יוֹסֵפוּ לַחֲטֹא וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם מַסֻּכָּה מִכֶּסֶּפֶם כְּתַבּוּנָם עֲצָבִים מַעֲשֵׂה חַרְשֵׁים כְּלֵה לָהֶם הֵם אֲמָרִים זִכְרֵי אֱלֹהִים עֲגָלִים יִשְׁקִוּוּ:

Verses 13:4-8: Ephraim’s wealth and power caused it to forget God despite His care for them during the Exodus. God will therefore become their enemy, punishing them as vicious animals attack their prey.

Hosea 13:6	הושע י"ג:ו
When [the flock of Israel] grazed, they were sated; sated, their heart was exalted. Therefore, they have forgotten Me.	כְּמִרְעִיתָם וַיִּשְׂבְּעוּ שִׁבְעוּ וַיָּרֶם לִבָּם עַל־כֵּן שָׁכַחוּנִי:

<sup>1</sup> The phrase, “זִכְרֵי אֱלֹהִים”, is grammatically ambiguous. Rashi interprets it as, “those who slaughter people”; i.e., idolatrous human sacrifice. Radak and the Talmud interpret it as, “people who slaughter [to idols]”; according to this, kissing the calves is an idolatrous act.

Verses 13:9-11: Ephraim, not God, bears guilt for its destruction. God will punish it for its reliance upon kings and their power.

Hosea 13:9	הושע י"ג:ט
O Israel, [you have] destroyed yourself! For you are against Me, against your help.	שָׁחַתְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־גַי בְּעֲזָרָה:

Verses 13:12-14:1: God bewails that He must destroy Ephraim. God will do so soon, calling on natural and supernatural forces to weaken and then brutally destroy it.

Hosea 13:14	הושע י"ג:יד
Shall I [God] ransom them from She'ol [the underworld]? Shall I redeem them from death? O death, where are your plagues? O She'ol, where is your destruction? Compassion shall be hidden from My eyes!	מִיָּד שְׂאוֹל אֶפְדֶם / מִמָּוֶת אֶגְאָלֶם / אֱהִי דְבַרְיָךְ מָוֶת / אֱהִי קִטְבְּךָ שְׂאוֹל / נָחֵם יִסְתָּר מֵעֵינַי:

Verses 14:2-9: Despite it all, if Ephraim repents of its idolatry and foreign alliances, then God's unbreakable love for His people will cause Him to forgive them and make them flourish.

Hosea 14:5	הושע י"ד:ה
I [God] will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away from them.	אֲרַפָּא מְשׁוֹבְתֵיכֶם אֶהְבֶּם נִדְבָה כִּי יֵשֵׁב אַפִּי מִמֶּנּוּ:

Verses 14:10: Hosea's message provides wisdom for the righteous, but a stumbling block for sinners.

Hosea 14:10	הושע י"ד:י
Who is wise and will understand these [ways of God]? [Who is] discerning, and will know them? For the ways of the Lord are straight, and the righteous shall walk in them - yet the rebellious shall stumble on them."	מִי חָכֵם וַיְבִין אֱלֹהֵי נְבוֹן וַיִּדְעֵם כִּי־יִשְׂרָאִים דְּרָכָי ה' וַצַּדִּיקִים יֵלְכוּ בָּם וּפְשָׁעִים יִפְּשְׁלוּ בָּם:

## Connection

Tur (Orach Chaim 98:1) uses the end of verse 14:3 as a source for **prayer to serve as a substitute, in the Temple's absence, for its daily offerings**. The petition that concludes the siddur's "Korbanot" section reflects this idea:

Siddur, Weekday Shacharit, Korbanot	סידור , שחרית לימות החול, קרבנות
Master of all worlds, You commanded us to bring the daily offering at its appointed time... But now, due to our sins, the Temple is destroyed and the daily offering is discontinued... Therefore let it be Your will, Lord our God and our fathers' God, that our lips' words be considered, accepted, and regarded favorably before You as if we had sacrificed the daily offering at its appointed time and stood in attendance at its service, as (Hosea 14:3) said, "We shall pay bullocks with our lips' words."...	רבונו העולמים אתה צויתנו להקריב קרבן התמיד במועדו... ועתה בעונותינו חרב בית המקדש ובטל התמיד... לכן יהי רצון מלפניך קנה אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שיהא שייח שפתותינו חשוב ומקבל ומרצה לפניך כאלו הקרבנו קרבן התמיד במועדו ועמדנו על מעמדו. כמה שאנאמר ונשלמה פרים שפתינו...

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