

Hosea 4:1-19

1. This chapter begins the second part of Hosea's book.
2. Hosea writes no more about himself or his family.
3. The rest of the book (4:1-14:8) is made up of accusations against Israel that mixed with statements promising ultimate redemption of Israel in the future
4. Outline here:
 - a. 4:1-3 – YHWH's case against Israel
 - i. 4:1 – No Faithfulness, No Love, No Knowledge of God
 - ii. 4:2 – Social crimes identified
 - iii. 4:3 – Result of Israel's acts of corruption
 - b. 4:4-14 – YHWH identifies two guilty groups:
 - i. 4:4-10 – priests and prophets
 - ii. 4:11-14 – the people
 - c. 4:15-19 – Warning to Judah to NOT follow the northern nation of Israel
5. General thoughts about chapters 4-14:
 - a. The time and setting of the words of Hosea in the remaining chapters (4-14) cannot be known and guesses can become misleading.
 - b. The rest of the book does not breakdown into clear divisions of individual messages, oracles or prophecies
 - c. Chapters 4-14 is a book or literary production and not merely a collection of Hosea's messages
 - d. The theme continually switches from accusations with announcements of judgment to promises of redemption and restoration of a intimate relationship with Israel and YHWH.

Hosea 4:1 – **“Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land;**

1. “Hear the word” is a clear introduction to the second part of the book. The personal narrative of Hosea has ended.
2. “YHWH's case (Hebrew – *rib*) against Israel.
3. The accused are identified by two phrases, but the same group is meant:
 - a. “children of Israel”
 - b. “inhabitants of the land”
4. Problem:
 - a. No faithfulness
 - b. No steadfast love
5. Reason for this lack of character:
 - a. No knowledge of God
 - i. Israel was meant to “know” the Lord
 - ii. By knowing the Lord Israel would have the character of God
 - iii. The problem then is ignorance
 - iv. Truth has been replaced with a lie
 - v. The Lord's plan for Israel was to be “married” to him. They were to become like the Lord because “they shall know the LORD” as claimed in Hosea 2:19-20:

“And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.”

- vi. The direction the Lord is taking Hosea here is the same direction he took Jeremiah about 140 years later in Judah as recorded in Jeremiah 2:8 – “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’

Those who handle the law did not know me;
the shepherds (or, rulers) transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal
and went after things that do not profit.

6. “Land – *‘eres* – is mentioned 2x in 4:1.

a. “land” refers to the people

b. But, also, the people’s behavior will have a direct effect on the physical land they live in

4:2 – **“there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”**

1. When there is no character of the Lord in the people (loving-kindness and faithfulness) the results are social vices and crimes. To live as a community mankind must demonstrate the nature of YHWH.

2. The social crimes listed are FIVE with ONE basic trait of abandonment to self-serving human passion which concludes with ONE ultimate cultural result:

a. “swearing”- *‘aloh* – swearing an oath which is a curse for selfish motive and, likely, using the name of the Lord

b. “lying” – *kahes* – deceitfulness including defrauding someone of their rights or possessions and bringing false legal charges

c. “murder”- *rasoah* – in Hosea 6:9 the priests are accused of this. – “As marauders lie in ambush for a victim, so do bands of priests; they murder on the road to Shechem, carrying out their wicked schemes.”

d. “stealing”- *ganob* – possessions or kidnapping

e. “adultery” – *na’op* – this appears to be focused on marriage between man and wife and not a metaphor for the Lord and Israel here.

f. “break all bounds” – *paras* – This verb indicates this list of vices is done vigorously and aggressively without restrained, boundary or limits.

i. Or, this word means the first 5 social crimes “break out” in society

ii. All societies have some of these 5 social crimes, but in this case these crimes “break out” or have no limits or boundaries to restrain them. This is lawlessness.

g. “bloodshed follows bloodshed” which literally means “bloodshed touches bloodshed” which is the description of a deconstructed society. “Bloodshed” is *damim* in Hebrew and is used 2x here

4:3 – **“Therefore the land mourns,
and all who dwell in it languish,
and also the beasts of the field
and the birds of the heavens,
and even the fish of the sea are taken away.”**

1. “Therefore” - The consequences of human behavior has an effect.

a. Not only is human society destroyed, the natural environment is destroyed.

b. Human society is rotten. Nature becomes sick.

- c. The animals are listed “beasts...birds...fish...” as in Psalm 8:5-8 which describes the Lord’s exaltation of man on the earth:
 “what is man that you are mindful of him,
 and the son of man that you care for him?
 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
 and crowned him with glory and honor.
 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
 you have put all things under his feet,
 all sheep and oxen,
 and also the beasts of the field,
 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
 whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”
- d. The land “mourn” (*abal*) and “languish” (or, “wastes away”) (*amal*)
- i. These two words describe disorder and weakness in the land
 - ii. Israel out of fellowship (or, mankind) with the Lord bring destruction to their environment.
 - iii. When Israel is restored to their covenant position the land will be healthy and bountiful

4:4 – “**Yet let no one contend,
 and let none accuse,
 for with you is my contention, O priest.**

4:5 – “**You shall stumble by day;
 the prophet also shall stumble with you by night;
 and I will destroy your mother.**

4:6 – “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
 because you have rejected knowledge,
 I reject you from being a priest to me.
 And since you have forgotten the law of your God,
 I also will forget your children.**

4:7 – “**The more they increased,
 the more they sinned against me;
 I will change their glory into shame.**

4:8 – “**They feed on the sin[b] of my people;
 they are greedy for their iniquity.**

4:9 – “**And it shall be like people, like priest;
 I will punish them for their ways
 and repay them for their deeds.**

4:10 – “**They shall eat, but not be satisfied;
 they shall play the whore, but not multiply,
 because they have forsaken the Lord
 to cherish**

4:11 – “**whoredom, wine, and new wine,
 which take away the understanding.**

4:12 – “**My people inquire of a piece of wood,
 and their walking staff gives them oracles.**

**For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray,
and they have left their God to play the whore.**

**4:13 – “They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains
and burn offerings on the hills,
under oak, poplar, and terebinth,
because their shade is good.**

**Therefore your daughters play the whore,
and your brides commit adultery.**

**4:14 – “I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore,
nor your brides when they commit adultery;
for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes
and sacrifice with cult prostitutes,
and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.**

**4:15 – “Though you play the whore, O Israel,
let not Judah become guilty.**

**Enter not into Gilgal,
nor go up to Beth-aven,
and swear not, “As the Lord lives.”**

**4:16 – “Like a stubborn heifer,
Israel is stubborn;
can the Lord now feed them
like a lamb in a broad pasture?**

**4:17 – “Ephraim is joined to idols;
leave him alone.**

**4:18 – “When their drink is gone, they give themselves to whoring;
their rulers dearly love shame.**

**4:19 – “A wind has wrapped them[d] in its wings,
and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**