

2019

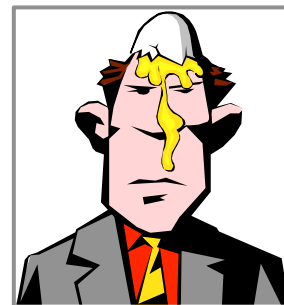
All the verses quoted in this lesson are from the paraphrase - The Living Bible.

because of its writing style. It is filled with Hebrew **idioms**.

To explain, let me start with an example of an idiom in our language.

Suppose a person makes a dogmatic statement and loudly tells everyone else in the group that they are wrong. About a week later he discovers **he** was wrong. We might say, *he sure had egg on his face*. Do we mean that literally? Of course not. Because we speak English, we automatically know it has a different meaning. It is an **idiom** - a phrase which means something totally different than the literal words.

Now suppose I want to translate this example into Spanish. When I come to the idiom, I will have a problem. If I translate it word for word, in the new language it will be taken literally. So I have to explain it with a paraphrase. Instead of saying, *he sure had egg on his face*, in Spanish, I would say, *His mistake sure made him look foolish*.




The book of Hosea is full of Hebrew idioms. Unfortunately most Bibles translate them word for word with their literal meaning. Because the Bible is God's Word and we want to protect it, we would assume that a literal word for word translation would be the most accurate. But if the Hebrew idioms are done word for word, they will be very inaccurate. This is why the most ideal Bible is a word for word plus thought for thought translation. It is why I ordinarily use the New International Version or the English Standard Version.

However just for this book, I am using the Living Bible. Because it is a paraphrase, the editor *has* done some interpretation. But he captures the Hebrew idioms in a way that takes us into the very heart of God the Father. It becomes one of the most emotional books in the Bible.

We usually miss the depth and beauty because Hosea wrote the original in poetry form. But poetry is always harder to understand. This is why the Living Bible has changed it to prose. It makes it much easier to follow the story.

The book and **OUTLINE** is very basic



His Life	1-3
His Message	4-14
Israel's sin	
Israel's judgment	
Israel's forgiveness	

HOSEA

Once again we begin by getting all the information we can find about the prophet himself.

Where he was born is not mentioned. But where he spoke is given in 4:1. Hosea says,

Hear the Word of the Lord, O people of Israel... When the Bible leaves out the birthplace and just tells where the prophet worked, it means his ministry is to his own people and country. So Hosea is **from** the northern nation and is a prophet **to** the northern nation.

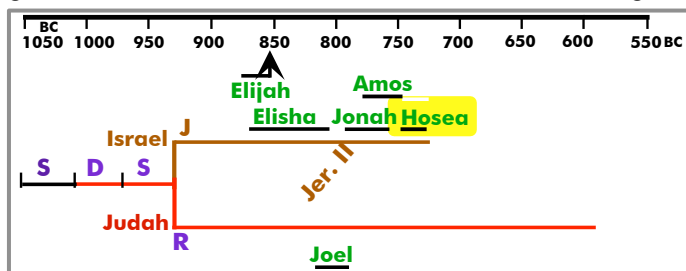
Back in 1:1 we find out **WHEN** he was a prophet. Four kings of Judah are mentioned, but we are interested in the king in Israel – Jeroboam, son of Joash, or Jehoash. This is **Jeroboam II**, the king who ruled 41 years. 783-743 BC

King	Reign (BC)
Jeroboam I	928-908
Shallum	885
Zimri	885
Tibni	885
Omri	885-842
Ahaziah	842
Jehoram	842-814
Jehoshaphat	842-750
Jehoram	750-746
Jehoshaphat	750-746
Jehoram	746-743
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Jonah came at the **beginning** of his reign, telling him he would double the size of the nation. 790-755 BC

Amos began 17 years later, near the **middle** of his rule. 773-745 BC

Hosea comes at the end, 745-743, during the **last** 3 years of Jeroboam II.



The lives of Jonah, Amos and Hosea are connected not only with Jeroboam II, but also with each other. Since Hosea is from Israel, from childhood he would have seen and listened to both Jonah and Amos. It is during the **last** year of **Amos** that **Hosea** begins his **first** year of ministry.

Hosea is a prophet in Israel some 23 years, until the nation goes into exile. To the west in southern Greece, the Olympic games started during the time of Jonah and are a regular event during the life of Hosea.



When Hosea **begins**, Jeroboam II is still in power. So the conditions are the same as they were during the days of Amos – a time of success, security and prosperity.

But after Jeroboam II dies, over the next 20 years everything changes.

Hosea describes changes in the **political** condition in 7:7 – God is speaking.

They kill their kings one after another, and none cries to Me for help.

When Jeroboam II dies, there are 6 more kings - 4 of the 6 are assassinated. The son of Jeroboam II comes to power, rules for 6 months and is assassinated. His killer becomes king, rules just one month and is killed. The one who kills him rules 5 years and amazingly, dies a natural death. His son takes over, is in power for just one year and he is killed. His killer rules 7 years and he is assassinated. The final ruler is in power for 9 years and then is taken into exile by Assyria.

During the time of Hosea, all their security has changed to **instability** and **chaos**. Assyria meanwhile has increased her power.

Chapter 12 tells us more about this instability.

The people of Israel feed on the wind; they chase after the east wind all day long. They pile up lies and violence; they are making an alliance with Assyria while sending olive oil to buy support from Egypt. 12:1

Under Jeroboam II, Israel had been independent and self-sufficient. Now with all the chaos, she wants to find satisfaction and power by make treaties with Egypt and Assyria. But they are her most dangerous enemies. In the previous verse God said, *none of the kings cries to Me for help*. God's people would rather get help from their enemies than from God. Other background information that tells about the kings and Israel's situation during this time is found in 2 Kings 14:23-29; 15:8-12; 17:1-23.



Israel's **spiritual** condition is described in 4:1.

Hear the Word of the Lord, O people of Israel. The Lord has brought charges against you, saying, 'There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. You make vows and break them; you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere, one murder after another.'

God's people are going down the list, breaking the 10 commandments, one by one. Notice the phrase, *no knowledge of God in the land*. In a moment I will come back to it, but first, let's look at the **rest** of her spiritual condition.

4:11 *Wine has robbed My people of their understanding*
God's people have a problem with drunkenness.

Verse 12 *They ask a piece of wood for advice. They think a stick can tell them the future!*

The word *stick of wood, rod, wand or staff* is the literal Hebrew. Hosea is talking about a divination rod that was part of the pagan religions. It was a stick some 18-24 inches long that their religious leader threw into the air. On the ground he had drawn a large circle, divided into sections, with special markings. Based on where the stick landed in the circle and the direction it pointed, determined what a person should do. In other words, it was a means of guidance.

Instead of asking God for guidance, God's people are getting answers from the spirit world that was part of Satan's kingdom.

Verse 12 continues with the spiritual condition of God's people

Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the prostitute, serving other gods, and deserting their God. They offer sacrifices to idols on the mountaintops. They go up into the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks, poplars and terebinth trees. That is why your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. But why should I punish them for their prostitution and adultery? For your men are doing the same thing, sinning with whores and shrine prostitutes. 4:12-14.

There is extreme idolatry and immorality.

The condition of the Jewish priests is described in chapter 6:9 *Priests form bands of robbers, waiting in ambush for their victims. They murder travelers along the road to Shechem and practice every kind of sin.*

The Jewish priests, are flagrantly breaking God's laws, killing and robbing people.

Back in chapter 4:8 there is even more about their actions. *When the people bring their sin offerings, the priests get fed. So the priests are glad when the people sin!*

In the Old Testament when people disobeyed God, in order to be forgiven, they had to bring an animal as a sin offering. At the time of sacrifice, the priest was given some of the meat for his food. In the days of Hosea, the priests want to live it up and have unlimited meat for banquet-type meals. To get it, they encourage the people to sin. This means the people have to bring more animal sacrifices and the priests get to keep more for themselves. *They feed on the sins of the people. They are glad when people sin!*

The spiritual condition in Israel is tragic. God's people are breaking the 10 commandments, getting drunk, looking for answers apart from God. There is idolatry and immorality. Their spiritual leaders are committing murder and encouraging the people to sin. How could things get so bad?

It all happens because of that little phrase in chapter 4:1 *no knowledge of God in the land.*

Obviously they know **about** God. In their worship they listen to readings from the books of Moses, they sing some of the Psalms of David and repeat Jewish prayers. They bring animal sacrifices as God's law required. They have knowledge **about** Him. But they do not have a knowledge **of** Him.

In the Bible, the phrase **knowledge of God** or **knowing God** means:

A relationship that produces obedience, thanksgiving, praise, awe, reverence of God Himself and fear of consequences for disobedience.

No knowledge of God means:

No relationship, obedience, praise, awe of God and absolutely no fear of His consequences.

In the days of Hosea the people think they can do anything and it does not matter how they live. This is why God says, *I want you to show love for Me thru obedience, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know Me more than I want burnt offerings. 6:6*

Amos, in his last year of ministry, had told the people in the northern nation of Israel,

Because you have deliberately rejected God's mercy, judgment is coming. Israel will be destroyed as a nation. There is nothing you can do to change it.

It is when this message is given that Hosea starts his ministry. There will be 23 years before the judgment actually comes, so God wants everyone to know 4 things.

1. Their willful disobedience is bringing **national** judgment to this generation that cannot be stopped.
2. God is grieving that He has to bring this judgment.
3. **Individuals** will have God's grace and strength during the judgment if they respond to God now.
4. This generation will be judged and remain in exile, but in the future, Jews will be restored as a united nation.

To make sure everyone knows these facts and fully understands them, God uses Hosea to not only teach them but also to demonstrate them.

Most people do not realize there are two very different ways of learning and teaching.

People in the West learn and teach thru **factual concept**.

We state what we think is true - a **theory** or idea.

We then give **logical facts** that we know or can prove.

We give lots of **explanations**.

Then to pull it all together we have a **conclusion**.

We often say, "in summary then..." The conclusion is stated clearly and specifically.

It is the way I teach these lessons. When I use pictures, it is to illustrate a factual concept.

People in the Middle East - Jews and Arabs - tribes people in Africa, Indians in South America - all of these people teach and learn in a very different way.

They start with a **story, picture language or symbol**.

With just a short **explanation** they automatically understand the **conclusion**.

It never needs to be stated.

A perfect example of this is Aesop's fables.

They were written in Greece about 75 years after Hosea, in the 600's BC. These animal stories - like *The Tortoise and the Hare* (*The Turtle and the Rabbit*) - were written to teach lessons. But the lesson is never explained or even stated. The author knew everyone would understand on their own.

However in our culture, in order to know the meaning, a written Aesop's fable has to explain the lesson at the end, both for adults as well as children.

Most of the parables of Jesus in the New Testament were not explained, because the people knew the meaning automatically.

Our culture learns thru **facts**; other cultures learn thru **picture language**. The Jews learned best thru picture language and stories.

In the days of Hosea, God knows the people will be asking,

if God has chosen us and loved us then why will He let us be destroyed as a nation?

If He gave us this land, why is He going to remove us from it?

God answers their question in the most effective way possible - thru a real life story - thru the life and experience of Hosea.

Let me emphasize, this was never intended as instruction or guidance for physical marriage. It is God's instruction to Hosea, only for him at that time. It is to answer the questions of Israel in that generation.

In 1:2 God tells Hosea to begin his ministry by marrying a prostitute.

This is the literal meaning of the Hebrew. They are to have children together. I am sure this comes as a shock to Hosea.

But the people would be even more shocked. Talking among themselves, they would ask, *Did you see who the prophet Hosea married?*

Hosea's wife is one of the religious prostitutes.

If anyone else had married her, no one would have thought a thing about it. But God's prophet?

Many Christians cannot believe God would do this, so they say he marries a virgin who then goes into prostitution after marriage. Many Bibles translate it this way. However the literal Hebrew phrase - *woman of fornication* means *religious prostitute*.

But how could God who is holy, command His holy prophet to marry a prostitute?

I cannot prove this, but since God always answers a seeking heart, I believe God saw a woman who wanted *out* of this lifestyle. She wanted to live differently. Even tho she will fail, I think her desire was genuine.

The problem in that culture was a woman had no way to support herself. The only way out for a prostitute would be marriage. But who would treat her with love, respect and acceptance? God answers her need and uses Hosea to rescue her.

Hosea marries her and gives her his name. Instead of being known as the prostitute, she is now the *wife of the prophet*. He gives her a **new name**, a **new way of life**, a **new beginning** and a **tremendous future**.

Chapter 1:3 says they have a boy. In verse 6 she has a girl; in verse 8 she has a boy. The Hebrew grammar and meaning of the names tells us Hosea is not the father of the last 2 children. His wife is guilty of adultery.

Several years go by. Then one day his wife leaves him and goes into full-time prostitution. But after awhile, her situation becomes impossible: she is in debt, with no money and no place to live. In desperation she goes to the market place to sell herself as a slave. Whoever buys her will pay her debt, provide her with food and a place to live. In return, she will be this person's slave the rest of her life.

During this time Hosea is raising the 3 children by himself. He is heartbroken because he still loves his wife. On the day she is in the market, for sale as a slave, God tells Hosea to go, buy her and take her back to his house. 3:1-2.

God's law in the Old Testament said the penalty for adultery was death by stoning. Altho the **people** are not following God's laws, God's prophet would be expected to. This situation allows God to demonstrate His message to His people. There has to be consequences for their disobedience as a nation, but in the midst of consequences He wants to show them love and mercy.

So God tells Hosea that his wife is not to be killed. But there must be consequences for her adultery. Altho she will be in his home, she must live alone for a while, without marital relations with him. Later there will be restoration.

This whole experience in Hosea's life - from the time of marriage until he buys her in the market place covers some 5 - 8 years. People are not only watching, but also talking about him. They are still puzzled why God's prophet would marry a religious prostitute and why he still loves her when she went back into prostitution.

But when he goes to the market place and buys her, the people really start talking, *What in the world is wrong with Hosea? How can he keep loving her? And why would he pay good money to buy and take her back? He does not expect her to change, does he?*

During the 5-8 years, with all the people watching and talking, Hosea has said nothing. He has only lived his ministry. But now he is ready to talk.

His whole marital experience in chapters 1-3 are a picture of the people. Since they have seen it, he can now use it to teach them in chapters 4-14. Because they learn thru picture language, Hosea only has to point out the similarity of his action in marriage to the action of the nation. They will automatically understand the rest. Since we think differently, I will explain each point and the conclusion so we also can understand.

HOSEA is a picture of **GOD**.

His **WIFE** is a picture of **ABRAHAM**, the northern nation of **ISRAEL** and the **JEWISH PEOPLE** down thru history.

✳ Hosea's **WIFE** was chosen when she was physically giving herself to other **men**, but was seeking God.

Abraham was chosen when he was spiritually giving himself to other **gods**. Joshua 24:2 tells us,

*Then Joshua addressed them as follows: The Lord God of Israel says, Your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived east of the Euphrates River and **they** worshipped other gods.*

(Ur used to be on east side of River before the course of the river changed) - Pfeiffer - *Biblical World*

Abraham worshipped other gods. In Jewish picture language, this is spiritual prostitution. But Abraham was searching, wanting to find the true God. So as he worshipped idols, God saw his need and rescued him.

✳ Hosea's **WIFE** was given a new name, new beginning, new way of life and a tremendous future.

She is a picture of the **Jewish people** who descended from Abraham.

In the Bible they are called *God's wife* - He is called their husband.

He gave them His **name** - they became known as *God's people*.

When He put them in the promised land, He gave the Jews a new way of **life**, a new **beginning** and a tremendous **future**.

✳ In spite of the blessings, Hosea's **WIFE** was unfaithful - she committed adultery.

She is a picture of **Israel**, the northern nation who has been unfaithful to God by worshipping idols. She is guilty of spiritual adultery. Hosea 1:2

When the Lord first began speaking to Israel thru Hosea, He said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute so that some of her children will be conceived in prostitution. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshipping other gods."

The text in many Bibles, in chapter 11, says God changed His mind and will not destroy the nation. But this is not accurate because it was destroyed some 15 years later. What the text means is that God will not destroy the Jewish people **completely** so they become extinct like their enemies. Sometime in the future, there will be a generation that will follow Him. With that clarification, let's look at chapter 11.

- ✳ **HOSEA'S** heart was broken to see his wife leave and continue in sin.

He is a picture of **God's** heart breaking to see Israel continue in sin. God is speaking in 11:8.

*Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go?
How can I destroy you like Admah or demolish you like Zeboyim?*

These were 2 cities God destroyed in the distant past. God is asking,

*How can I destroy you like I destroyed those cities. My heart is torn within Me and My compassion overflows! No, I will not punish you **as much as** I should, or as you deserve. I will not **completely** destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you and I will not come to destroy **forever**. For someday in the **future**, the people will follow Me.*

These verses reveal the depth of God the Father's emotions. He has profound grief when those He loves will not respond and He has to send the consequences.

- ✳ **HOSEA** wanted to help his wife, but she would not listen.

Again, he is a picture of **God** who so wanted to help Israel, but she would not listen.

God said in these verses, *My heart is torn within Me – all My compassion longs for you.*

- ✳ The sin of Hosea's **WIFE** led to selling herself as a slave.

She is a picture of the **nation's** sin that will lead her into exile.

But since My people refuse to return to Me, they will return to Egypt and will be forced to serve Assyria. 11:5
Egypt was their slavery in the past. Assyria will be their exile in the future.

- ✳ **HOSEA** continued to love his wife, but there had to be consequences for her actions.

It is a picture of **God** who continues to love the northern nation, but there has to be consequences for her actions.

Then I said to her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time you will not have sexual relations with anyone, not even with me. This shows that Israel will go a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifice, sacred pillars, priests ephod or even idols. 3:3-4.

Because this is talking about hundreds and hundreds of years, the name *Israel* here means the Jewish people down thru history. They will live **outside** the land for a long time. Even when they are in the land, they are going to be without peace and security.

- ✳ **HOSEA** will wait for his wife and after a time, their physical relationship will be restored.

It is a picture to say **God** will wait for the Jews.

In the future when the Jews repent as a nation, God will forgive and their spiritual relationship will be restored.

But afterwards the people (Jews) will return and devote themselves to the Lord their God and to David's descendant, their King. In the last days, they will tremble in awe of the Lord and of His goodness. 3:5

Chapter 14 is the description of **how** it will happen. Verse 2 is one of the prayers the rabbis will give to the Jewish people when there is national repentance.

Bring your confessions, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer You our praises. Assyria cannot save us - Assyria in this verse means any nation they have been depending on. Assyria cannot save us, nor can our war-horses. Never again will we say to the idols we have made, 'You are our gods.' No, in You alone do the orphans find mercy. 14:2-3

In response to this national prayer of repentance, plus the prayer of Isaiah 53, Jesus will come and set up His kingdom. The result is described, beginning with Hosea 14:4.

The Lord says, "Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; My love will know no bounds, for My response of consequences will be gone forever! I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. It's branches will spread out like beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedars of Lebanon. My people will again live under My shade. They will flourish like grain and blossom like the grapevines. They will be fragrant as the wines of Lebanon. This is God's national restoration of the Jews, as a people and nation in the future. It is God's kingdom.

Thruout the rest of his ministry, Hosea tells his nation,

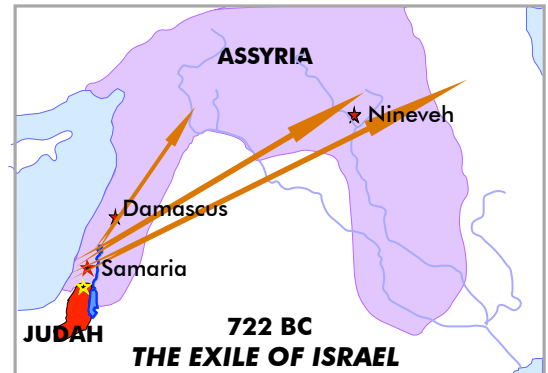
*You wondered why I married a prostitute. You wondered why I still loved her after her adultery. You wondered how I could keep loving her and why I would take her back. My life and marriage is a picture of **your** relationship to God. Because of your spiritual adultery, you must suffer the consequences. But when the nation goes into exile, be assured, God will never stop loving you. He will wait for you as a people. When there is a national generation that responds to God, He will restore the Jewish people to a kingdom of peace and security with Jesus as their king. In the meantime, you as individuals, respond to God so you can experience His grace and strength in the time of judgment.*

Hosea's life and ministry was never offering mercy to Israel as a **nation**. She would be destroyed.

His ministry was offering mercy to the people as **individuals** within the nation.

After 20 years, Assyria comes from the east and puts Samaria the capital under siege. Three years later she captures the city, the king and the nation. During the time of 19 kings over a period of 208 years, the ministry of the prophets overlapped in the northern nation of Israel. There was never a time when God's message was not being given. But the northern nation of Israel refused to listen and so she comes to end in 722 BC.

Many are killed in the war. Those who survive are deported to the north and east of Nineveh. God promised His grace to individuals who responded during the ministry of Hosea. So to those who were exiled, He gave living grace. To those who were killed, He gave dying grace. We need grace for dying just as much as for living.



In total, Hosea lives and works in Israel some 23 years, from 745-722 BC.

The **THEME** of Hosea is **God's love and justice**.

No matter how great His love, His justice required consequences for their disobedience.

The **PURPOSE** of his book is

To explain God's judgment on the nation of Israel – why there was no escape.

Because of this book, future generations of Jews would always understand **what** God did and **why** He did it.

They would know God's final word to the northern nation had been a message of tenderness and love. It was the last direct word from God they would ever get. Once the nation was in exile, there would be no more prophets. **There would be a famine for hearing the word of God.**

To explain God's final offer of grace to individuals – why there was hope.

In spite of certain judgment, God's grace and strength was available to each person. In addition, there was the promise that sometime in the future, the Jewish people from all 12 tribes would once again be in the land to enjoy it.

The Bible does not tell us about the end of **Hosea's** life, but since we have his book in our Bibles, we know **he** did not go into exile. All the Jewish sacred books were kept at the Temple in Jerusalem, by the Levite scribes. This means Hosea left Samaria, the capital of Israel in the north, before the Assyrians surrounded it. Just before they sent the people into exile, Hosea escaped and went south, across the border into Judah.

This would explain why he mentions the nation of Judah thruout the book. It is only after he gets settled in his new country of Judah, that he puts his life story and message into writing. Some 136 years later, all the Jewish sacred writings would be taken with Judah into exile in Babylon. Then some 70 years later they would be brought back to Jerusalem, when thousands of the Jews and their leaders returned to rebuild the Temple and the city. During all that time it was the Levite priests that God used to protect His written Word that He gave to His people.

The **pattern** that God used with Israel is also the pattern He uses with individuals today.

- ✿ If we are in His family, He gives us **the family rules** in Scripture and expects us to obey.
- ✿ For years and years, He gives us **teaching** and **explanations**
- ✿ He gives us **blessings** and **mercy** to encourage us in our obedience.
- ✿ If we disobey, He gives us **warnings** that are made just for us, so we cannot possibly miss them.

The **patterns** that God uses today **continued**

- ✿ If we ignore Him over an extended time, He sends **smaller judgments** to create a fear of His consequences.
- ✿ If we still reject His commands, He sends **severe consequences**, but His love will continue as He waits for us.
- ✿ If we repent, He will **forgive**, but **some** of the **consequences** are **permanent**.
- ✿ As individuals, if we are following God, then in time of national judgment,
He guarantees to give us His **grace** and **strength** for any situation we have to face.

These are the patterns God uses. They are called the ways or paths of God. Hosea says,

Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen. The ways (paths) of the Lord are true and right and righteous people (people who do what is right) live by walking in them. But on those paths, sinners (the rebellious) stumble and fall.

EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE

This book is not giving instruction about physical marriage, neither in the days of Hosea nor in our day. It is about the Jews' spiritual relationship with God in the days of the Old Testament. It is God's final explanation of what He is doing and why.

There must be consequences for their choices. But His judgment does not mean rejection. They will survive as His people. When there is a national generation that does respond to Him, He will restore them to experience life as He intended for them – a kingdom of peace and security with Jesus as their King.

How to understand trauma and tragedy in our lives.

When tragedy comes as a result of living in a an imperfect world with imperfect bodies and around imperfect people,
God does not give explanations about why. We can know with certainty it is not a judgment from God.

When tragedy comes as a result of deliberately saying **no** to God, God explains and gives answers.
It is clear to all - this **is** judgment from Him.

When it is national judgment, innocent people are hurt.

It is not God's judgment on the individual, but on the **nation**.

All nations have basic knowledge of right and wrong. When there is extreme and deliberate rejection of that
knowledge over a long time, in spite of clear warnings, God will send judgment.

Nothing can stop it, but individuals who have responded to God will be given special grace as they go thru it.