

It is— **our** story, **O House of Israel**



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He walked the earth, feeling the burning thirst of the foreboding desert. Then he saw a refreshing wonder. He found **Israel**; it was like finding grapes in the desert, when he saw your fathers it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree (**Hosea 9:10**).

There he found **Israel** in a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye (**Deuteronomy 32:10**). For the Lord's portion is His people; **Jacob** is the allotment of His inheritance.

Of all the families of the earth, only **Israel** has he chosen (**Amos 3:2**). And his love is everlasting (**Jeremiah 31:3**).

So long ago it was—he sighs, “What can I do with you, **Ephraim (house of Israel)**? What can I do with you, **Judah (house of Judah)**? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears” (**Hosea 6:4**). He sits silently, remembering their devotion in their youth, how **they loved him as a bride** and followed him through the desert, through a land not sown. **Israel** was holy to the Lord (**Jeremiah 2:2**).



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He remembers the day you were born, **O Jerusalem**; he found you. You were thrown out into the open field and despised and lay dying in your own blood (**Ezekiel 16:5**).

“Live,” he said. He nourished you and you grew into absolute beauty; you became the most beautiful of jewels. When you were old enough to love, he took you as his own and you rose to be a queen, radiant and wonderful (**Ezekiel 16:13**).

Your fame spread among all nations; your beauty was magnetic, irresistible (**Ezekiel 16:14**).

He gave his heart to you and committed himself to love you forever. His love for you cannot be snuffed out nor can he love another; you belong to him. You are a holy people, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. He

did not set his love on you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because **He would keep the oath** which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and

redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (**Deuteronomy 7:6-8**).

But, a horrible thing happened! The darkest of times came upon them. Joy was butchered and pain crippled him as he watched **Israel** walk away following her lovers. She delighted in her beauty and power to allure. She didn't look back, rather intent on doing evil, she made worthless idols that ensnared her further into darkness (**Ezekiel 16:17**).

"Stop!" he pleaded.

The heat burned like hell—everyone blistered. When the gift was accepted, the mechanics of the beast groaned and grunted releasing a shrill that pierced the ear drums. Off the crackling sizzle on the plate, a pungent odor pushed through the nostrils burning into memory—the horror—the fate of every first-born child.



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"You've sunk! You've sunk deep into the filth of wickedness, foolish Israel. You did the unimaginable and refused to hear their innocent screams instead you pounded the drums with such might until only the pain of your beating was felt. **You are my firstborn of all nations**. My kingdom grows to cover the earth beginning with you. Don't you know, my enemies seek to destroy you! Why do you destroy yourselves? What have I done to deserve this?" he asked. Gasping under his breath, he concluded, "**You are not my people**" (**Hosea 1:9**).

"How did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine," he asked (**Jeremiah 2:21**).



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Gripped in agony and straining to breathe, he signed their bill of divorce. He gave **faithless Israel** a certificate of divorce (**Jeremiah 3:8**) and turned away and prophesied, "I will cast you away and you will be **wanderers among the nations**" (**Hosea 9:17**).

He who has all power and glory, allowed **Israel** to go her way.

"**O house of Judah**, you I will love, your sister is no longer my people," he sobbed (**Hosea. 1:7**).

When he looked at the **house of Judah**, his heart dropped. He cried, “I gave **faithless Israel** her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet, I see that you, **unfaithful Judah** had no fear; you also went out and committed adultery” (**Jeremiah 3:8**). Sweat fell like droplets of blood as he pondered his love for **Israel**, his people, his inheritance—disgraced while the nations watched.

He cannot walk away. He promised Abraham that he would be a God to him and his children forever (**Genesis 17:7**). He is bound to keep his oath. He is God and he cannot lie. He does not change (**Malachi 3:6**). **He will keep the oath** which He swore to their fathers (**Deuteronomy 7:6-8**).

Israel will be chastised, he promises. You will be carried off and no one will rescue you, **until you admit your guilt** (**Hosea 5:15**). You will be punished for the days you burned incense to the Baals, decked yourself and went after lovers and **me you forgot** (**Hosea 2:13**).

Ephraim, leader and representative of the **10-tribed house of Israel**, you and your house will return to Egypt, he announces. “Your days of punishment are coming,” he trumpets (**Hosea 9:3**).

“You will be scattered and sifted through the nations, but not one of you will fall to earth (**Amos 9:9**). You will never be hidden from me (**Jeremiah 16:17**), nor will I totally destroy you,” he promises (**Amos 9:8**).

“O, how the past was so beautiful.” He sighs, closing his weary eyes his head falls limp as he sits in solitude. “The sweet memories,” he whispers. He looked up. His eyes wet moved, as if paging through the photos in his mind. “**Israel** as a child, the child I so loved (**Hosea 11:1**) and out of Egypt I called him, but the more I called **Israel**, the further he went from me (**Hosea 11:2**).



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“**O house of Israel** your sins are great and my anger is fierce,” he thunders. He pushes both hands against his heart, his breathing squeezed into ragged gasps. “You will be destroyed!” He drops his head and whispers, “but not totally” (**Amos 9:8, Jeremiah 31:36**). His head collapses into his hands. His shoulders bend under the stress.

He mutters, “**O Israel**, how I long to redeem you” (**Hosea 7:13**). Eternal God who does not need sleep, tires from the relentless sins of his people.

He rubs his fingers across his aching frown and weeps, “How can I give you up? How can I hand you over, **Israel**? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, **nor devastate Ephraim** again. **FOR I AM GOD**, and not man... I will not come in wrath. You will follow me; **I will roar like a lion**. When I roar, you will come trembling from the **west**” (**Hosea 11:8-10**).

Upon his judgment seat, he will announce, “**O house of Israel**, even though you have sinned and **profaned my name wherever you have gone**, for the sake of my holy name and for the nations watching, they will know that I am the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself **holy through you before their eyes**. I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, remove your impurities and idols. **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you and you will be careful to keep my laws**. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. **Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel**” (**Ezekiel 36:22-32**).

“Yet,” his eyes glistened and he stood up and shouted with joy, “I can see though I scattered **Israel**, yet **in that distant land** they will remember me. They and their children will survive and they will return” (**Zechariah 10:9**).

Israel will humble himself **in that day of trouble** and confess his sins. He will say, “You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God. For after I turned back, I repented. And after I was instructed, I smote on my thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth” (**Jeremiah 31:18-19**).



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He will comfort **Israel**. He will say, "Is **Ephraim** my dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; therefore, my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him," declares the Lord (**Jeremiah 31:18-19**).

“Yes,” he assures himself, “Yes, **in that day.**”

Then, he returned to his place, looking back repeating, **“in that day.”**

His wait is enduring. He is waiting for the precious moment of repentance, which he knows is now on the near horizon. He knows his **remnant people** will return because he is the Alpha and Omega, he is their God who he can see into the future. It will be wonderful moment, full of glory.

“O Israel,” he says and gently leaning towards her, “for a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion **I will bring you back**. In a surge of anger, I hid my face from you for a moment, but with **everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you**. To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the water of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now **I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again**. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet **my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed**. All your sons will be taught **by the Lord**, and great will be your children’s peace. In righteousness you will be established” **(Isaiah 54:6-13)**.

On that day the Lord your God will save you as the flock of his people. You will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful you will be! **(Zechariah 9:16)**

In that day, both the **house of Israel** and the **house of Judah**, **together**, will come weeping back to him. They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten **(Jeremiah 50:4-5)**.

In that day Israel will say, “My husband, you are my God” **(Hosea 2:16)**.

In that day, **He** will reply, “My love, you are my people” **(Hosea 2:23)**.



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